

# PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

Special Issue on  
African Publishing

NAIROBI, KENYA  
JUNE 2019



## SPECIAL ISSUE: AFRICA RISING

Experts at the IPA's second seminar on African publishing discuss opportunities and issues in the book business.

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Kenya Publishers Association president Lawrence Njagi on challenges ahead. **Page 4 »**

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# PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

*Publishing Perspectives* is the leading source of information about the global book publishing business. Since 2009, we have been publishing daily email editions with news and features from across the book world.

Our mission is to help build and contribute to the international publishing community by offering information that publishing and media professionals need to connect, cooperate, and work together year-round and across borders.

In addition to our daily online coverage, we also offer an online monthly rights edition, as well as print magazines at special events including the London Book Fair and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Founded by the German Book Office New York and now a project of the Frankfurt Book Fair New York, *Publishing Perspectives* works with our colleagues in Frankfurt and the fair's international offices, as well as IPR License, to share with you the latest publishing trends and opportunities, people to know, companies to watch, and more.

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# From the Editor: Listening for the Future

In creating the agenda for the International Publishers Association's (IPA) "Africa Rising" seminar in Nairobi, IPA vice president Bodour Al Qasimi and her colleagues at the Kenya Publishers Association are guided by a bold mission statement for the Africa Seminars series: *to transform the future of African publishing*.

With its 81 member-associations of publishers from 69 nations, the IPA, based in Geneva, has a lot of resources to bring to the table. And yet, as is easily seen in a look at the Nairobi program, the key intent is to bring forward the resources of Africa and its many publishing communities.

*Publishing Perspectives* is the news medium of the international book trade industry, established 10 years ago by Frankfurt Book Fair New York. And we're pleased to offer you this magazine created expressly for the IPA Africa Seminar series because we, like the IPA, are eager to bring more international attention to publishing in Africa.

The opportunity to produce this collection of articles has given us the chance to listen to South Africa's Elinor Sisulu and her Puku Foundation colleagues speak in such beautiful indigenous languages—at least one of them direly endangered.

We've heard from twin Nigerian entrepreneurs Chidi and Chika Nwaogu who are making a go of their third company, Publi-seer, at age 29.

We've learned about copyright challenges from the Arab League's Maha Bakheet, about audiobooks in Africa from Ama Dadson at Ghana's AkooBooks Audio,

from Lawrence Njagi about the challenges to be discussed, and from Gbadega Adedapo about the Lagos Action Plan's potential to address them.

We have even more coverage of this seminar's speakers and issues online at [publishingperspectives.com](http://publishingperspectives.com), where we report on the world publishing industry five days a week. Our content is always free of charge, and we hope you'll read us.

With this magazine, we wish you a meaningful and thoughtful experience, and we're glad to join you here in Nairobi to share with our worldwide readership the important conversations we're all listening to, the sound of "Africa Rising." •

**Porter Anderson**  
Editor-in-Chief  
*Publishing Perspectives*



## ON THE COVER:

Delegates to the International Publishers Association's first seminar on African publishing, which took place in Lagos, Nigeria on May 9, 2018. (Image: Nabs Ahmedi / Emirates Publishers Association)

From left: Dr. Timothy Olatayo; Bibi Bakare Yusuf (Founder of Cassava Republic, Nigeria); Adepoju Tolulope Medinah (Rasmed Publishers, Nigeria); Bodour Al Qasimi (Kalimat Group, UAE / VP of IPA); Bayo Agunbiade; Lola Shoneyin (Founder of Ouida Books, Nigeria); Taiwo Akanni (Head of Corporate Sales, Rasmed Publications International).



# From the Organizers: Africa Rising

When *Publishing Perspectives* asked IPA president Hugo Setzer and vice president Bodour Al Qasimi for brief comments about this second African publishing seminar, we heard back from them a clear message: that it's for Africa to decide what's ahead and how to get there.

## Hugo Setzer

"I am very excited at the opportunity to take part in our IPA Africa Seminar in Nairobi, because it will allow us to do what we do best: building bridges, learning, and sharing experiences with colleagues from all over the world, especially in a region with such a huge potential.

"I look forward to hearing enlightening discussions and learning from my colleagues about the African publishing industry."

## Bodour Al Qasimi

"The IPA Africa Seminar series is an important catalyst for the publishing industry in a continent full of potential and untapped talent.

"I am sure the conversations that will take place will energize the publishing sector in Africa, and will be a step forward to transform the African publishing industry into a truly global leader.

"I am delighted to meet up with all our delegates for the seminar to discuss near-term impact actions, and I'm looking forward to hearing ideas and suggestions from all the speakers and participants."

## From the Program Notes

In just one year, the seminar has evolved into a continent-wide, multi-sectoral platform for creative thinking, collaboration, and action.

What differentiates this seminar from other events is its focus on near term impact. This focus—on moving from words to action—is captured in the seminar-specific action plans which gain consensus on key industry challenges and identify scalable pilot projects as possible solutions.

After the event an action plan committee implements pilot projects to present their learnings at the next seminar. In this way, industry stakeholders learn and grow together by being exposed to innovation, replicable solutions for the African publishing industry's most pressing challenges.

Through its seminars, action plans, partnerships and collaborations, the International Publishers Association is promoting progress and building a community of doers that are transforming the future of African publishing.

## Africa's Time to Shine

As we enter a new phase in the global publishing industry's development—in which future readers are increasingly likely to be found in emerging publishing markets—this is the African publishing industry's time to shine. Africa has some of the fastest mobile and internet connectivity growth rates in the world and nearly 60 per cent of its population is below 24 years old.

If proper investments are made in literacy and education, and there is an enabling economic environment for jobs and investment, Africa's youth blue can be a catalyst for the future of African publishing and accelerated social and economic development.

This year's seminar will attract more than 600 attendees from over 50 countries to discuss sectoral innovation and revitalization. The seminar will feature keynotes by globally renowned authors, decision makers, and industry thought leaders, in addition to panel sessions and workshops on the most pressing challenges facing the African publishing industry. •

*"Africa Rising" is the second seminar on African publishing organized by the International Publishers Association. It takes place on June 14-15, 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, in partnership with the Kenya Publishers Association.*

*The IPA's inaugural seminar on African publishing was held in May 2018 in Lagos, Nigeria, in partnership with the Nigerian Publishers Association.*

*More information can be found online at [internationalpublishers.org](http://internationalpublishers.org).*



## International Publishers Association



The International Publishers Association (IPA) is the world's largest federation of national, regional and specialist publishers' associations. Its membership comprises 81 organisations from 69 countries in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe and the Americas.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, IPA represents the interests of the publishing industry in international fora and wherever publishers' interests are at stake.

[internationalpublishers.org](http://internationalpublishers.org)

## Kenya Publishers Association



Kenya Publishers' Association is the umbrella body for book publishers in Kenya. This association encourages the widest possible spread of printed and digital books in Kenya and beyond. Apart from promoting and protecting by all lawful means the interests of the publishing industry in Kenya, the association also seeks to protect its members by dealing collectively with problems which can best be so dealt with.

[kenyapublishers.org](http://kenyapublishers.org)

# Five Questions for Lawrence Njagi, Chair of the Kenya Publishers Association

Lawrence Njagi, a publisher and advocate for the country's local publishing industry, looks at agenda-setting issues in African publishing.



Lawrence Njagi (Image: Nabs Ahmed)

By Porter Anderson

The hosting Kenya Publishers Association for this year's "Africa Rising" seminar in Nairobi is chaired by Lawrence Njagi, managing director of Mountain Top Publishers.

An experienced lobbyist for Kenyan publishing, Njagi's work has contributed to the growth of the Nairobi International Book Fair, now a self-sustaining event for East and Central Africa. He sits on educational boards both in government and private-sectors programs, and is leading the formation of the Publishers Association of East Africa.

He is the treasurer of the African Publishers Network (APNET); director of the Kenyan reproduction rights organization (RRO) Kopiken; and directs the National Book Development Council of Kenya.

In looking to Njagi for his executive viewpoint on African publishing, we begin by asking him to name several top-line challenges for him and his colleagues. He names four: inconsistent government policies, value added tax (VAT) on books, competition from non-governmental organizations, and copyright infringement and piracy.

**Lawrence Njagi:** First, a lack of consistent book policies that govern how books and instructional materials are developed and procured.

In a lot of African countries, textbooks form about 90 percent of all books procured by government. Governments also form about 80 percent of the market. This makes it very

critical to have book policies that successive governments use in administration of books and learning materials.

The second problem is with government taxation of books. Taxing information is like shooting yourself in the foot: it limits the spread of knowledge and ensures that the poor get only poorer. A lot of African countries are now levying VAT on books.

Third, there are quite a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are now taking on the role of publisher, and offering various governments books at highly subsidized prices. These NGOs don't take into account the initial costs of book production, and also don't offer solutions when they abandon a program, moving on to other fields. This brings into question the issue of sustainability, and most governments are exposed—not least because they frequently will have killed the local publishing industry.

And fourth is piracy and copyright theft. With digital advancements, it has become quite easy to pirate books, especially popular textbooks, and get them onto a market at very reduced prices. This of course denies revenue to both the author and the publisher.

**Publishing Perspectives:** How far do you feel the African industry has come in addressing some of these issues?

**LN:** Some countries like Kenya now have a fully developed comprehensive "instructional materials policy," and I believe this will very much help sanitize the issue of book development and provision. I'm aware that APNET has prioritized this, and I believe a lot of other

African countries will follow suit.

On taxation, we've engaged our governments to try to get VAT removed from books. This is work in progress.

As for the NGOs, we've insisted that they look at the long-term effects of their activities. We think it's possible to achieve these NGOs' goals while promoting local publishing.

And as for piracy, we're working closely with government anti-counterfeit boards and copyright boards to detect and prosecute offenders. Marketing campaigns have also been created in a few countries.

**PP:** Is it possible to say that educational publishing at this point needs more help and support than trade publishing, or do both of these book sectors face serious challenges of their own?

**LN:** Both need serious support. Educational publishing, being the mainstay of most African publishers, requires support with relevant legislation to ensure that it thrives.

Trade publishing require urgent promotion to ensure that Africans read for genuine acquisition of knowledge, for entertainment, and for keeping abreast of world happenings. A lot of Africans, unfortunately, read only to pass examinations. This can only be reversed if we make available and promote more trade and general books.

**PP:** Can you give us an impression of how the action plan started in the first IPA Africa Seminar in Lagos last year? Are you pleased with where that work is going?

**LN:** The Lagos Action Plan [read more on page 16] is a major departure from the kind of workshops and seminars that have been held on African soil in the past. A lot of times, those workshops yield very little in terms of tangible pro-active actions that remedy problems. A lot of times, such events end up as "talk shops" with very little workable solutions.

The Lagos Action Plan, which was as a result of the IPA Lagos seminar, is a clear departure from this. Follow-up meetings have been held, and I'm happy that concrete actions taken will be presented at the Nairobi seminar, so stay tuned.

**PP:** Lastly, if one major thing comes out of the seminar in June—one big change or development or agreement or new plan—what would you like it to be?

**LN:** If we can provide an environment conducive to the promotion of publishing and the protection of the industry from adverse policies, we'll all have a bright future, one that we can confidently bequeath to our children and therefore ensure the security of publishing, literature, and reading for generations. •

# GLOBAL PIONEERS FOR EMIRATI PUBLISHING



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# Quantifying Markets: Nielsen's Andre Breedt on Industry Research in Africa

Currently, South Africa is the only African country where Nielsen tracks book sales, but plans are underway to expand data and sales research across the continent.

By Porter Anderson

Many in the world book publishing business are accustomed to Andre Breedt arriving on a conference stage with layer after layer of data on a given market or region.

When he speaks on publishing's ecosystem, however, at the International Publishers Association's (IPA) "Africa Rising" seminar in Nairobi, hosted by the Kenya Publishers Association, Breedt will be addressing something he rarely talks to a Western audience about at a publishing conference or trade show: why extensive industry data is important.

In a conversation with *Publishing Perspectives*, Breedt says, "As you know, we measure book markets all around the world. In Africa, we actually only measure the product in South Africa. We're in some early discussions with the Kenya Publishers Association and some others, to see if there's more that can be done."

Retail sales data collection systems aren't yet dominant in many African book markets. "I'd say more markets don't have a measure than do," says Breedt. "It isn't only the African continent that lacks measurement."

Setting up systems to measure book sales can be difficult, Breedt says. "You need the volume of the retail trade and the publishing trade. You also need the centralized metadata database. What you really need is consensus among the organizations to work together to everybody's benefit. That's actually the hardest part," he says.

## Nielsen Data on South Africa

Breedt is South African, as it happens, and he says that the metrics in that market are "really well up and running," in partnership with a local firm that supports Nielsen's work there.

Some of what Breedt will show the audience in Nairobi illustrates the kind of comparative clarity he can get on the South African market, including a comparative look at the levels of revenue being achieved there by the Top 10 publishers operating there across four years, from 2015 to 2018—from one publisher's low in 2016 of under 40 million rand (US\$2.8 million) to a high in 2015 for another publisher of 120 million rand (US\$8.3 million).

In another glimpse of the data coming from the South African market, we see 41.3 percent of sales going to adult trade nonfiction in 2018, down from 45 percent in 2014. On the other hand, you can see adult fiction holding steady at between 20 and 21 percent for all five years. Annual book sales in South

Africa appear to have peaked in 2010, though in 2015 a bump occurred, and since then sales have declined somewhat but not precipitously.

One way Breedt says he looks at the cooperative environment needed is "as something I'd describe as a feedback loop more than an exchange of data," he says. "When you start, you realize that one of the most valuable side effects is that you have a good centralized metadata database of all the available books in your market, because you're measuring everything that's out," which means that retailers, libraries, and consumers can more easily find the books they're interested in.

Breedt says that Nigeria has special challenges, in that it's a very large market. He

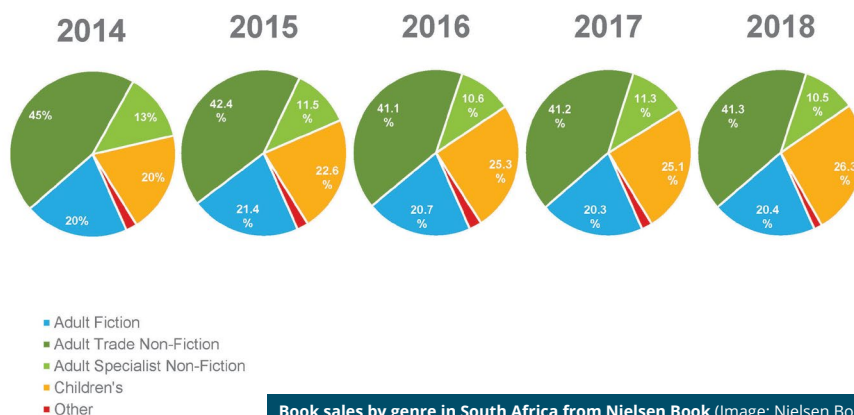
expects Nielsen to first be looking at Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania, one of the primary criteria for selection being which markets are organized to a degree that their retailers, publishers, and associations can work together.

"For now, I think it's more like a research document than a plan," Breedt says about the pathway to getting sales research into the African markets outside South Africa.

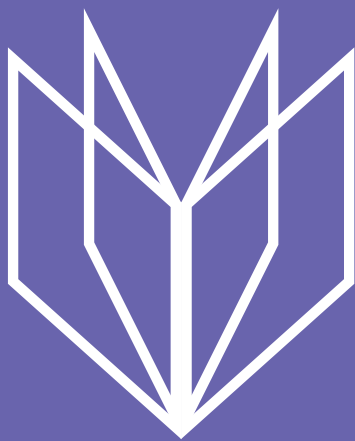
And it's in Nairobi that the seed can certainly be planted to get the dream of a multiple quantified and analyzed African book markets into place. The leadership on this, Andre Breedt says, likely will lie with the publishers' associations, making the IPA "Africa Rising" seminar a great place to start. •



## GENRE SHARES



Book sales by genre in South Africa from Nielsen Book (Image: Nielsen Book)



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# South Africa's Puku Foundation Creates Children's Books To Save Languages

In South Africa, Puku gathers writers, designers, and speakers of endangered languages together to create children's books that preserve their linguistic traditions.



By Porter Anderson

There are only four people left alive who speak the N/uu language in South Africa, and they're members of one family. The matriarch is Ouma Katrina, 86 years old. Her daughter is Lena du Plessis. Her granddaughter is Claudia Snyman. And little N/aungkusi Snyman is Ouma Katrina's great-granddaughter.

Elinor Sisulu, executive director of South Africa's Puku Children's Literature Foundation is creating children's literature that captures some of the dying languages of Africa, like N/uu.

"It's much easier to learn a language when you're a child than later," Sisulu tells *Publishing Perspectives* in an interview. Many indigenous languages today in Africa are threatened by the major commercially dominant tongues.

"The endangered languages," Sisulu tells us, "are those spoken by the bushmen. And the government of one of South Africa's provinces, the Northern Cape, where most of the endangered-language speakers are, is concerned and working with us in developing a strategy to produce children's books in those languages to ensure their survival."

It's not just endangered languages that need help, Sisulu says. "Even some of the big languages, the most widely spoken languages, may not yet be fully threatened, but they're receiving the impact of the hegemony of English. They're being eroded. There's too



little children's literature in the endangered languages, and people are being paid too little to work in those languages."

This is where Ouma Katrina comes in. "She is the queen of a small group of people called the N/uu," Sisulu says. "We're working with her" and her family "to make the first children's books in the N/uu language."

## Puku's Workshops: Gathering Linguistic Diversity

One way the Puku Children's Literature Foundation approaches content creation in these languages is by organizing workshops that bring together writers, designers, and linguists to work as teams in generating indigenous-language content.

In addition to Ouma Katrina and her family, others brought into the workshop by Puku are writers and editors in the Nama, Setswana, and Afrikaans language groups. In a video explaining how Puku achieves its mission, Sisulu says that one effort of the foundation's work is gathering catalogs of what children's work actually is available: a database is needed, she says, "because you can't build a reading culture if you don't know what you have" in the way of content already available.

Author Dina Christiaan says in the video that being a writer in Nama "helps me as a woman to empower myself through teaching others and developing my skills as a Nama woman ... Being part of the Nama tribe not

only gives me joy, but it pleases me to know my roots."

The Setswana group's Gontse Chaane talks of how developing children's literature in her language is "about getting children to believe in themselves and reach for their dreams." Author Johannes Majiedt speaks of being involved in Puku's workshop "to write my first children's book" in Afrikaans. "It has always been my dream."

## The Biggest Challenge: Funding

The workshop we see captured on video had funding from South Africa's Swiss Embassy and the Pretoria-based National Heritage Council. Tembeleni Maso, the agency's funding coordinator, speaks to the fact that, "These projects come with economic spinoff, and at the end it brings back our pride as a nation."

And yet, Sisulu tells *Publishing Perspectives*, the struggle to develop adequate and dependable financial support is the main hurdle.

"Our experience with the government," she says, "is that they approve of what we're doing. Politicians say, 'What you're doing is fabulous and our constitution promotes the languages.' There's praise, and they talk about us in their policy statements.

"But when it comes to actually investing," she says, the money isn't there.

"And without actual investment, the work is volunteerism. Many of the people in these languages, when you think about it, are materially deprived" because some of these languages are spoken in the poorer parts of the region. "You can't expect them to work as volunteers. It's actually not quite fair."

Literature specialists in many parts of the world will understand immediately what she's saying. When economic times tighten, she says, "Grants to support social and cultural work are the first thing to go."

She takes a breath. "And we're struggling. We're constantly looking for support for our work, and especially for Pukupedia," the foundation's growing online reference work that gathers books created for children in endangered languages of Africa. It's called Pukupedia "because *puku* means book in one of our languages," Sisulu says. "We're hoping to get more support for that." •

*Pictured above: 1. Ouma Katrina (Image: Puku Foundation); 2. Elinor Sisulu (Image: Goosebumps Productions); 3. At a Puku children's book workshop (Image: Puku Foundation)*

# African Publishers Network Goes Global in Frankfurt

By Hannah Johnson

For the first time this year, the African Publishers Network (APNET) will organize a collective stand at the Frankfurter Buchmesse with the goal of fostering more international connections for African publishers and publishing associations.

"One of the cardinal objectives of APNET," acting executive director Ernest Oopong tells *Publishing Perspectives*, "is to promote book trade for African publishers within and outside Africa.

"The network has had some success stories but more work needs to be done as publishing expands with untapped opportunities," says Oopong.

One of those successes, says Oopong, was his participation in the Frankfurter Buchmesse's Invitation Program in 2018, which covers the costs for independent publishers from developing book markets to attend and exhibit at the fair. He says APNET's presence "served as a converging business point for Af-

rican publishers" in Frankfurt.

The fair was also the launch point for APNET's "Africa Day" event, which Oopong says "brought together some African and foreign participants."

This is one of the initiatives Oopong plans to continue in 2019 at APNET's collective stand in Frankfurt. At the second "Africa Day" event, Oopong says that APNET chairman Samuel Kolawole will share news and insights on African publishing with foreign publishers. The stand will also serve as a place where African publishers can hold business meetings.

Building up the presence of African publishers at the world's largest and most international book fair is one of the ways APNET is working toward its goal of supporting the development of African publishing, though Oopong says more needs to be done.

"African publishers have made headway with the publishing of quality books which are useful for both African and international markets," he says. "However, there has been unsatisfactory exposure or visibility of such books to the international book market." •

## Frankfurter Buchmesse Invitation Program

The Invitation Program offers small independent publishers from Africa, the Arab world, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean the chance to attend the world's biggest book fair.

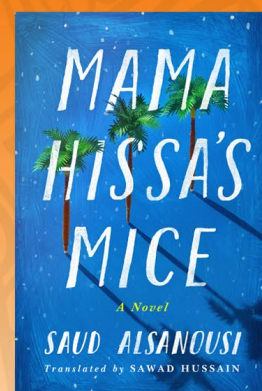
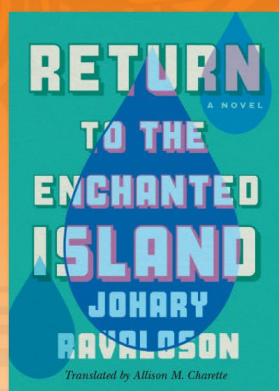
Carefully selected participants receive travel expenses and accommodation, as well as the use of an exhibition stand in Frankfurt at no charge. Funding is provided jointly by Frankfurter Buchmesse and the German Federal Foreign Office.

Participants will also attend a two-and-a-half-day seminar before the book fair, which not only prepares them for the event but also provides them with wide-ranging information on the German book market.

[www.buchmesse.de/invitation-programme](http://www.buchmesse.de/invitation-programme)

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# Audiobooks in West Africa: AkooBooks' Ama Dadson Sees Big Opportunities

Adapting to consumer interests and regional dynamics, AkooBooks Audio CEO Ama Dadson is dedicated to creating African audiobooks for African listeners.



AkooBooks CEO Ama Dadson, left, with Elliot Agyare, CEO of Smartline Publishers and president of the Ghana Book Publishers Association

By Porter Anderson

As the Frankfurter Buchmesse prepares its new Frankfurt Audio dedicated area at this year's fair (October 16–20) and the accompanying Frankfurt Audio Summit, one of the exhibitors you'll be able to find involved is Ghana-based publisher AkooBooks Audio.

The rise of audiobook downloads and streaming is a major publishing story, and the trend can be seen in large and small book markets across the globe.

In our exchange with AkooBooks Audio founding CEO Ama Dadson, we started by asking just how popular audiobooks are in her region.

**Ama Dadson:** Not much in the way of statistics from Africa yet. We're hoping to change that.

Mobile platforms offer new sources of digital data to inform decision-making. We'll share this data with African publishers and writers to help them make the right choices for future catalogues.

Our key performance indicators for our audiobooks include relevance, as in how many users start listening to an audiobook; drop-off rates, meaning how many users stop listening to an audiobook; and finish rate, which of course is how many users finish a book to the

end. Also, we're looking for data on preferences, narrators, and genres.

Last year, I did a consumer survey among the 10,000 students on campus at the University of Ghana. Among the 200-odd respondents, 57 percent had never downloaded or listened to an audiobook. Out of the 43 percent who had, only 10 percent listed the audiobooks they'd read as by African writers.

This contrasted with the 60 percent who had downloaded ebooks by African authors and 80 percent of respondents who said they'd spent no money on audiobooks in the past year—and cited the very limited choice of African audiobooks as a barrier.

We're currently growing by word of mouth. Most people hear of audiobooks from their friends.

## Attracting African Consumers to Audiobooks

**Publishing Perspectives:** When consumers respond well to audiobooks in Africa, what sort of factors do they seem to value most? In the States and the UK, many audiobook fans say they like listening to audiobooks because they can do other things—household chores or driving to work, for example. Is that the kind of input you get, too?

**AD:** Yes, convenience is a big plus. In Af-

rica, there's the challenge faced by the busy urban working class in many of our high-traffic cities: they spend hours commuting to work each day, either walking or by public transport, and are unable to read during such commutes. Audiobooks can be extremely convenient for them and a way to use their time profitably, keep them enthralled, and escape from the chaos for a little while.

**PP:** What's selling best? Any genres that stand out more than others?

**AD:** The student survey indicates that audiobook interest closely follows the trends in

“Audiobooks appeal to Africans because we tell African stories in our own voices.”

**Ama Dadson**  
Ghana

“Achieving goals and success are important to young Africans, and with audiobooks, we offer a solution that will help them slay their goals like superheroes and make them more productive.”

**Ama Dadson**  
Ghana

African ebooks: fiction, romance, and self-development audiobooks top the list, followed by comedy. Surprisingly, sci-fi was at the bottom, followed by nonfiction. I can't wait to introduce our readers to fabulous writers such as Nnedi Okorafor, whose audiobooks aren't yet available in our market here.

**PP:** What type of format is preferred?

**AD:** Downloads and streaming—with mobile phones being by far the most commonly used tool. Audible from Amazon and Google Play are the top sources for audiobooks cited. There are a small number of imported audiobooks available on CD in the bookstores.

**PP:** How does pricing go for an audiobook in your market, on average?

**AD:** As there are no local audiobook sellers, consumers have to buy audiobooks at international prices. We price our audiobooks very competitively at a retail price equivalent to US\$5 to \$25 on our platform.

Moving to a subscription model will help with affordability, and affordable pricing is the chief factor cited by customers in determining how we can make buying audiobooks invaluable to our readers.

**PP:** What are your greatest challenges in being specialized in audiobooks and based in Accra?

**AD:** Growing the market and driving the habit of reading with audiobooks. We have a poor reading culture and so few bookshops and libraries.

African writers and publishers are very open to licensing their audiobook rights, [but] it can be a challenge to sort out the audio licensing rights issues and who owns what in which territories.

The costs of production are quite high, too, making it expensive to build a backlist and

and get a catalogue to the market. We're looking for long-term investors and also offering attractive royalty-share models that will incentivize publishers to contribute to the costs of audio production.

We also need to have flexible payment options for a wide range of consumers. Many of our consumers don't use credit cards and prefer 'mobile money' or have irregular patterns of salary payments and are reluctant to enter subscriptions. This is a challenge for us and our app developers.

### Focus on African Stories

**PP:** What's your outlook for audiobooks in Africa for the next 5–10 years?

**AD:** We want to bridge the reading gap with AkooBooks. Audiobooks appeal to Africans because we tell African stories in our own voices, speaking to a part of us that not only identifies with storytelling but also bonds with it as it reminds us of folklore and oral traditions that are slowly dying.

We're dedicated to finding indigenous narrators who can accurately portray African voices, characters, and experiences. AkooBooks Audio promotes audio literacy and pilots it in local languages, bringing a wealth of ideas and experiences to people who are illiterate in English. We can attract many consumers who might not consider themselves to be readers.

AkooBooks employs acting talent from theater and film for audiobooks, providing new work and income for African actors. We also provide new skills for the sound engineers and other experts needed for specialized technical audio production. Within two years, we aim to be the largest single employer of voice talent in West Africa.

We're excited about the growing use of smart speakers and voice assistants. AkooBooks Audio will be at the forefront of utilizing voice interaction and machine-learning technology to connect African books and authors to new readers worldwide.

Young Africans are fascinated by trends and building community. We believe that they'll jump onto the habit once they know about it and there's sufficient variety. Achieving goals and success are important to young Africans, and with audiobooks, we offer a solution that will help them slay their goals like superheroes and make them more productive.

### AkooBooks at Frankfurt in October

**PP:** What sort of expectations do you have for the Frankfurter Buchmesse's new Frankfurt Audio space and programming?

**AD:** I'm super-excited about participating in the Frankfurt Book Fair. I'll be taking part in a panel session at the Audio Summit, and it's an amazing opportunity for me to sit at the table with the giants of the industry, learn from them, and put Africa onto the global audio literature map.

We're putting up an AkooBooks Audio stand in the Audio area, the first African au-

diobook company at the Frankfurt fair. It's such a wonderful opportunity to give our visitors exciting opportunities to listen to African stories in our listening station at Frankfurt.

We'll launch our fabulous new children's audiobook, *Suma Went Walking: A Pan-African Symphonic Story*, by my mother, Nana Dadson. We'll launch it in six languages—English, Twi, Ga, French, German, and Mandarin.

Master flutist Dela Botri from Ghana, the composer for the *Suma Went Walking* audiobook music, is a genius with the Atentenben flute, xylophone, kora, and firikiwa—all key instruments featured in the story. He's accompanying me to Frankfurt and will be manning the stand with me and plans to hold music demo sessions and practical lessons for children and adults on how to play the Atentenben flute. It's a beautiful instrument made of bamboo similar to a recorder, and it's used to represent the main character in the story *Suma*.

We also plan to hold a couple of "African Story Time" sessions for children using smart speakers and entertain them with African stories and music and have some giveaways of the Atentenben flute. So, there's a lot for visitors to look forward to. •

## AkooBooks Audio

 **akoobooks audio**  
GIVING VOICE TO GLOBAL AFRICAN AUTHORS

The idea for AkooBooks Audio began in 2004, when founding CEO Ama Dadson's mother Nana Dadson, a children's book author, lost her sight. Ama started African Audio Publishers, a books-on-cassette tape service for distributing African books to the blind and visually impaired.

With the explosion of African writing talent and the advent of new digital technologies for distribution and mobile payment options, came the opportunity to offer new digital publishing services to a global community.

AkooBooks Audio is Ghana's first publisher and digital distributor of African audiobooks, and offers a wide range of audio services. It was incorporated in November 2017 under the Founder Institute Accra program and Ama was one the very first graduating cohort.

[www.akoobooks.com](http://www.akoobooks.com)

# Litprom Recommends: Five African Authors

Providing information on top literary talent from Africa, Asia, the Arab world, and Latin America, Litprom encourages the publication of more diverse books in translation.



By Hannah Johnson

Founded on the principle of increasing the diversity of books published in Germany, Litprom is a leading source of information on literature from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Arab world.

Among its many activities, Litprom publishes its quarterly “Weltempfänger” lists of author recommendations meant to raise the visibility of top literary writers from many world regions. Each list is chosen by a jury of journalists, media professionals, and writers.

We asked Litprom director Anita Djafari to highlight a number of African authors who have been selected to Litprom’s “Weltempfänger” lists in the past. Below are her five author recommendations.

## 1. Lesley Nneka Arimah

Lesley Nneka Arimah was born in the UK in 1984, raised in Nigeria, and now lives in the US. Her story “Skinned” was shortlisted for the 2019 Caine Prize. Her debut short story collection *What It Means When a Man Falls From the Sky* won the 2017 Kirkus Prize among other honours. Arimah is a 2019 United States Artists Fellow in Writing and currently working on a novel. (Image: Emily Baxter)

**Jury statement on *What It Means When a Man Falls From the Sky*:** “This young author masters the art of writing in versatile ways. Set in Nigeria, the US, or somewhere in-between, her stories about timeless topics such as family and home are told in a refreshingly new way. Stunningly bright and clear, affectionate and angry. Global literature at its best.”

## 2. Yvonne Owuor

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor was born in Kenya in 1968. Her short stories have been published in international magazines. She published two novels, *Dust* (2015) and *The Dragonfly Sea* (2018), and she received the Caine Prize for

African Writing in 2003. (Image: Bobby Pall)

**Jury statement on *Dust*:** “Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o put Kenya on the literary world map. Yvonne Owuor adds color to this map, with bold concise sentences, charged metaphors and iridescent secrecy. Without simple explanations, she leads us into African mindsets. A panorama of contemporary history, leading back to mass murders by British colonialists, a book of intimate intensity.”

## 3. Jamal Mahjoub

Jamal Mahjoub was born to British and Sudanese parents in London in 1966. He writes in English and has published seven novels under his own name. In 2012, Mahjoub began writing a series of crime fiction novels under the pseudonym Parker Bilal. (Image: Ekko von Schwichow)

**Jury statement on *In the Hour of Signs*:** “Mahjoub describes the classic colonial conflict between Sudan and the Empire, the wars on the Mahdi at the end of the 19th century and their consequences that are still visible today. Mahjoub masterly changes perspectives, from those of cooks and prostitutes to those of warriors and visionaries. Abundant and elegant, thrilling and very smart.”

**Jury statement on *The Golden Scale*:** “In his crime novel, Parker Bilal (aka Jamal Mahjoub) takes us to the Cairo of the late 1990s. Private detective and ex-cop Makana has ended up there on his flight from radical Islamic forces in his home country, Sudan. Looking for a missing soccer player, he digs deep into the city’s swamps, uncovering more and more dirt. The style is unagitated, and yet thrilling to the last page.”

## 4. Mia Couto

Mia Couto, born 1955 to a family of Portuguese immigrants in Beira, Mozambique, is one of the most renowned writers of Lusophone Africa. He worked as a journalist and editor. Since 1983, he has been publishing

novels, stories, and poems and has received several awards. (Image: Alfredo Cunha)

**Jury statement on *Woman of the Ashes*:** “A poetic love story set in the colonial war, told from two perspectives: inner monologue and report, skilfully arranged. A black woman and a Portuguese officer work together, African thinking meets western pragmatism. At the end, both see the world in a different way.”

## 5. Aminatta Forna

Aminatta Forna was born in Scotland in 1964, raised in Sierra Leone and Great Britain, and spent parts of her childhood in Iran, Thailand, and Zambia. She is the award-winning author of the novels *Happiness*, *The Hired Man*, *The Memory of Love* and *Ancestor Stones*, and a memoir called *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. She also won the LiBeraturpreis in 2008. (Image: Nina Subin)

**Jury statement on *A Memory of Love*:** “After years of civil war, three men meet in a Sierra Leone hospital: Adrian, an English psychologist; Kai, a young surgeon [tending] to the war’s victims; and Elias, who is on his death-bed, full of regrets. Their fates are linked by one woman. Concisely and visually, Forna tells a story of love, betrayal and the healing powers of reconciliation.” •

## About Litprom

Founded in 1980 in Frankfurt, Litprom is a non-profit organization that aims to get more literature from Africa, Asia, the Arab world, and Latin America recognized and published in German.

[www.litprom.de](http://www.litprom.de)

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# Ghana-UK Literary Agency Specialized in African Middle-Grade and Teen Fiction

Wanting to see more African characters in books for younger readers, publishers Sarah Odedina and Deborah Ahenkorah have launched Accord Literary.



Deborah Ahenkorah

“Without diverse books, what we are telling children is, ‘Hey look, the world looks only like the people you read about.’”

**Deborah Ahenkorah**  
Ghana

By Hannah Johnson

A cross-continental publishing duo—Deborah Ahenkorah and Sarah Odedina—has launched a literary agency called Accord Literary with the goal to broaden the range of African middle-grade and young adult fiction published in Africa and internationally.

Odedina, an editor-at-large for Pushkin Children’s Books in the UK, and Ahenkorah, founder of Golden Baobab and publisher at African Bureau Stories in Ghana, first met at a conference in Singapore, and then again at the 2018 Pa Gya! literary festival in Accra.

During that second meeting, the two realized they shared a similar ambition to help get more African writers published and recognized internationally, Odedina told *Publishing Perspectives*.

“Our meeting, which was scheduled for an hour, went on all day,” said Odedina. “We hatched the plan to work together on bringing African writers for young readers to a worldwide audience and we haven’t stopped since.”

“Our mission,” she said, “is to reach as many writers working in the field of children’s literature on the [African] continent as possible and to find ways of helping some of those writers find worldwide publication.”

Both Ahenkorah and Odedina have impressive backgrounds in the book world.

Dismayed by a lack of black characters in books available to African children, Ahenkorah founded her literary nonprofit organization Golden Baobab in 2008 with the goal of supporting African writers and increasing the number of African books on the market.

To complement the work of Golden Baobab, Ahenkorah launched her publishing company, African Bureau Stories, in 2015, publishing African authors exclusively.

Odedina’s long career in children’s book publishing includes stints at Penguin Books and Orchard Books. She was the publisher at Bloomsbury Children’s for 14 years, during which time she worked on each of the Harry Potter books. She also helped launch Hot Key Books and now works on Pushkin Press’s children’s book program.

## Global Promotion for African Authors

Accord Literary, according to its newly launched website, aims to “mentor, develop, and encourage writers based in Africa writing books for young readers ... and get their books into the hands of readers around the world.”

This is very much in keeping with the kind of work that Ahenkorah is already doing through Golden Baobab and African Bureau Stories.

“We are discovering authors from Africa, providing mentorship, and then publishing their work,” Ahenkorah told *Publishing Perspectives*. “We put in the work to make sure that the books have a global reach but also a very African reach.”

In describing how Accord Literary fits in with her current activities, Ahenkorah said that “African Bureau will have African rights” to books represented by Accord Literary, and the agency will “license to other African publishers” as well as publishers outside of Africa.

Through Odedina, Pushkin Press plans to

publish some of the titles in the UK, and the pair is also reaching out to their industry contacts to find additional US, UK, and international publishers for the titles Accord Literary represents.

Outreach plans, said Odedina, include meetings at book fairs, “talking with publisher friends, and all the usual ways of helping find co-publishers for the books. We will possibly appoint a sub-agent in the USA to represent the titles to American publishers and possibly the same in the UK.”

“The main thing will be to find all the authors we work with the right home.”

## The Demand for Diverse Books

Recently, the UK publishing industry, in particular, has made a broad, public effort to embrace diversity, both in terms of the books published and hiring decisions. Similar changes are taking place in other book markets.

But why now? What’s behind this rise in diversity-oriented publishing?

Ahenkorah attributes this recent realization of the importance of diversity to technology and online communication.

“The Golden Baobab Prize was started 10 years ago when Internet access was just penetrating the African continent,” she said. “We designed the prize to function completely online: receiving submissions, jury meetings, and even announcing winners of the prize. It was the only way we could be a truly pan-African prize, given that we were run by a small team.”

“At the time we started,” said Ahenkorah, “there was no real conversation about diverse books happening anywhere. Then it started



Sarah Odedina

“African writers ... are a fantastic part of our global literary culture. But there aren’t enough voices in that canon for children to enjoy.”

**Sarah Odedina**  
UK

online ... parents, readers, librarians, and book lovers who have for a very long time not understood why there were not enough diverse books, could talk to each other, organize, advocate, talk loudly; and all of that is what has crescendoed into the response we now see from mainstream publishing.

“The demand is too loud now and too viable to be ignored, and the industry is responding. We live in a capitalist world, and the easiest way to move the cursor of supply is with demand. It’s almost as if technology came and fueled demand for diverse books, which always existed but was latent.”

### African Stories for All Readers

Despite the rising desire for stories told by diverse authors, Ahenkorah and Odedina believe there is still a lot of work to be done to meet that demand.

Ahenkorah said she feels “a deep frustration and disappointment with the fact that children are not being given windows into the world as it really looks. Without diverse books, what we are telling children is, ‘Hey look, the world looks only like the people you

read about.’”

A few of the African authors the pair has on their radar right now include Ruby Goka, “who writes fabulous books for teens and young adults,” said Odedina; Dela Avemega, writer and illustrator of books for preschool children about life in Accra; and Bontle Senne, South African author of middle-grade books “the world should watch out for,” said Ahenkorah.

Odedina added, “I have read world literature for as long as I can remember because I want to read about the world. African writers from Buchi Emecheta, Amos Tutuola, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Ousmane Sembene, as well as more contemporary voices like Ayesha Haruna Attah, Ayobami Adebayo, and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi are a fantastic part of our global literary culture.

“But there aren’t enough voices in that canon for children to enjoy. That’s what we’d like to work on to change.”

### Creativity in African Book Distribution

This announcement of the Accord Literary launch came just ahead of the International Publishers Association’s second seminar on African publishing, this year taking place in Nairobi on June 14 and 15, where Ahenkorah is scheduled to speak in a session on the new generation of publishing industry leaders.

One aspect of the business side of African publishing that both Ahenkorah and Odedina emphasized is its creative approach to current supply chain issues.

“There are many challenges in the market mainly to do with distribution, and publishers are incredibly creative about how they get their books to readers,” Odedina said, “from working with schools, having relationships with supermarket chains, running book clubs, and supporting literary events like festivals and readings.”

Ahenkorah agreed, saying, “I believe the real opportunity in book publishing across Africa is in redefining what book distribution can look like.”

Right now, the responsibility of getting books to readers mainly falls to the publishers themselves, and Ahenkorah said that the speed of innovation in this sector is largely “influenced by the publisher’s risk appetite and often by their background prior to their becoming publishers.”

For example, she said, one publisher with a supply chain background “has created an exciting online book distribution channel,” while another publisher with an advertising background “develops creative fun pop-up shop stands to stand out in mainstream retail locations.”

Ahenkorah’s distribution approach for her own publishing house, African Bureau Stories, is to form partnerships.

“Especially when you are publishing fiction that does not always fit directly for the school market,” she said, “distribution becomes a wide-open space for innovation.” •



**GOLDEN  
BAOBAB**

## Golden Baobab

Golden Baobab is an arts and culture literary nonprofit that seeks to increase African representation in children’s storybooks. They discover and support African children’s writers and illustrators through their literary award, the Golden Baobab Prize. Through this prize, they offer publishing opportunities and skills development to the most talented children’s writers and illustrators they find.

[www.goldenbaobab.org](http://www.goldenbaobab.org)

## African Bureau Stories

African Bureau Stories, the sister organization of Golden Baobab, publishes award-winning stories and ensures that children around Africa have access to relatable and imaginative books and media materials.

[www.africanbureau.com](http://www.africanbureau.com)

## Accord Literary

Accord Literary is a partnership formed by Deborah Ahenkorah and Sarah Odedina to mentor, develop and encourage Africa-based writers of books for young readers. Their mission is to find original and unique voices and get their books into the hands of readers around the world.

[www.accordliterary.com](http://www.accordliterary.com)

# Nigeria's Gbadega Adedapo: African Publishers' Lagos Action Plan

Nearly one year after the IPA's inaugural seminar on African publishing, held in Lagos, Gbadega Adedapo reviews the changes this event has brought to the industry.



Gbadega Adedapo (Image: Nabs Ahmed)

By Porter Anderson

The inaugural program in the International Publishers Association's (IPA) series of Africa Seminars was held in Lagos, with the Nigerian Publishers Association hosting.

Among the outcomes of that first meeting, the Lagos Action Plan was one of the most structured and, as it turns out, productive. A working group of eight members was established for the plan, and key stakeholders were charged with developing and implementing a program to be sure that concrete actions came out of the 2018 event.

A driver of the plan and the president of the Nigerian Publishers Association, Gbadega Adedapo, led the organizational work on the ground that went into making the Lagos IPA seminar a widely praised success.

Adedapo is CEO of Rasmed Publications and chair of the Nigerian Book Fair Trust. A member of IPA's executive committee, he also is on the board of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

At the IPA's second Africa seminar in Nairobi this June, Adedapo will deliver an update on the Lagos Action Plan. Adedapo will be joined in the discussion by Lawrence Njagi, chair of the Kenya Publishers Association; Samuel Kolawole, chair of the African Publishers Network; John O. Asein, director general of the Nigerian Copyright Commission; Ernest Oppong, acting executive director of the African Publishers Network; Anges Félix Ndakpuri, president of the Ivory Coast Publishers Association; and South Africa's Brian Wafawarowa, director of Lefa Publishing and Research Services, and chair of the IPA's Inclu-

sive Publishing and Literacy Committee.

Because these seminars' viability depend largely on their follow-up, this will be a centerpiece of the program in Kenya, and we wanted to get something of a preview from Adedapo about how things have gone since that first seminar last year in Lagos.

We began by asking Adedapo how he now sees the Lagos event in retrospect.

**Gbadega Adedapo:** The effort channeled to making the IPA Lagos Seminar happen was borne out of the passion of IPA in carrying out its mandate of promoting and protecting the publishing industry—including providing necessary support at scale to see the industry grow exponentially, irrespective of the continent.

The Lagos IPA seminar left an indelible mark already in the hearts of the key players in the industry, affirming that IPA is an association for all the continents.

## Three Key Insights from Lagos

**Publishing Perspectives:** What would you say were the three key insights that came out of the Lagos seminar?

**GA:** First, the IPA since its Lagos seminar has gained in presence and mentions in Africa. One-on-one conversations with publishers revealed that prior to Lagos, the international association's interests had been misunderstood. The going opinion was that the IPA hadn't been giving adequate attention to the African region. But IPA Lagos seminar was thrilling and left publishers from across Africa surprised. It erased the misconception about IPA's level of interest in the continent.

Second, the Lagos seminar provided a

platform for book industry players. They could meet and discuss challenges facing the industry in their respective countries and on the continent, while putting forward realistic solutions. The event also gave industry players an opportunity to assess their contributions to quality education delivery in Africa.

And third, the Lagos seminar created an avenue for stakeholders to use in networking with each other for business, promoting cross-border business relationships. Attendees were able to meet their counterparts face-to-face, relate in a friendly manner, share contacts. And I am optimistic several positive post-seminar conversations would have ensued since we had the seminar.

**PP:** What can you tell us at this point about the Lagos Action Plan? How have things gone with the plan, and where does that work stand now?

**GA:** The 2018 Lagos Action Plan—which we shorthand as “2018 LAP”—was primarily created to help document and synchronize the outcomes and recommendations from the Lagos seminar so we could track the progress made against the seminar goals and evaluate response to identified targets, which can then be assessed at future seminars.

The 2018 LAP is meant to be a reference point for a great reformation in the African book industry and also to serve as the foundation on which other seminars can build their plans for progressive and consistent action.

An eight-member committee was set up and tasked with holistically looking into the outcomes of the seminar. The committee initiated the process of developing the LAP by drafting an analytical framework, prioritizing challenges, and gaining consensus on possible solutions, the bulk of which were suggested during the course of the seminar. A consultant is currently being engaged to draft the action plan as well as soliciting stakeholder input to ensure validation and buy-in by the wider publishing ecosystem in Africa.

A survey was sent to the national publishers' associations in the African regions, asking them to rank a list of challenges shared at Lagos, indicating to us where they see each challenge in their respective countries' priorities. About 17 national associations responded. The responses were analyzed, and we decided on three top priority areas: national book policies, copyright protection, and national statistics.

These three streamlined challenges, then, are being aggressively worked on by IPA, along with a progress report on the Lagos Action Plan for presentation at the 2019 IPA seminar in Nairobi. •

# Maha Bakheet: Supporting Copyright and Intellectual Property in the Arab Region

Working with policymakers and publishing stakeholders, Maha Bakheet aims to improve copyright awareness and legislation in the Arab League's 22 member states.



“There are many challenges, but we try to overcome them in several ways, all based on raising public awareness of the challenges and building respect for intellectual property.”

**Maha Bakheet**  
Egypt

By Porter Anderson

Maha Bakheet directs the Intellectual Property (IP) and Competitiveness Department for the Arab League, based in Cairo. Ten of the league's member states are in Africa, while 12 are in Asia.

Bakheet joined the Arab League's staff in Egypt in 2000 and established the IP unit at the Cairo center with a brief of coordinating issues in intellectual property in the Arab region, in cooperation with the 22 member states of the league.

*Publishing Perspectives* has had a chance to put several questions to Bakheet to get a better sense for the copyright-related issues addressed by the Arab League, and we started by asking her for an assessment of how critical are the issues her team is seeing.

**Maha Bakheet:** In our department, we work to support cooperation and coordination among copyright offices in the Arab region, to combat piracy and stop infringement of copyright. This is done through exchanges of information and with visits and missions among Arab countries to publicize best practices.

We coordinate and cooperate with different stakeholders, in order to ensure that the publishing industry is covered by modernized legislation and the regulations it needs.

There are many challenges, but we try to overcome them in several ways, all based on raising public awareness of the challenges and building respect for intellectual property.

**PP:** Are there specific areas of intellectual property that seem to be struggling with infringement more than others?

**MB:** In our cultural industries—publishing, cinema, and music—we see infringement at roughly the same levels. At the same time, governments in the Arab region have made many efforts to curb infringement through the development of tools for combating piracy and by raising public awareness, in addition to joining international treaties and conventions.

At the Arab League, we provide political support, because we have access to the policymakers in all of our Arab countries through our work with their ministerial councils and to the leaders who are engaged in our annual Arab summits.

In our department, we can say that although the piracy and counterfeiting of con-

tent still exist in the Arab region, there are genuine efforts to change this.

**PP:** How strong is the support you can expect from various public and governmental agencies you work with?

**MB:** Our governmental entities are showing their commitment to stopping copyright infringement. They're joining us in our meetings and workshops, making themselves part of our ongoing dialogue about the protection of copyright.

We also have very good relations with publishers' associations in the Arab region and in other areas, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the IPA for their efforts and persistent work in support of the publishing industry.

**PP:** And what will be your main message in Nairobi when you're part of this discussion?

**MB:** My key message in Nairobi is that through cooperation in public and private partnerships, we can strengthen the publishing industry in Africa and stop the counterfeiting of books. Let's work together to raise awareness and promote the culture of intellectual property in the field of copyright and neighboring rights. •

# Nigerian Entrepreneurs Chidi and Chika Nwaogu Help Creators Monetize Content

After selling two successful companies, the Nwaogu twins have launched PubliSeer, an online platform where writers and musicians can publish and sell digital content.

By Porter Anderson

Chidi and Chika Nwaogu of Nigeria are the co-founders of a publishing platform with a unique character: PubliSeer is for authors and for musical artists.

But despite initial appearances, you're about to hear Chidi Nwaogu tell you why PubliSeer is not a self-publishing platform.

In terms of the division of interests at PubliSeer, Chidi Nwaogu is a serial software entrepreneur, writer, publisher, and computer programmer. He and his brother—they're now 29 years old—have created and sold two companies in the last 10 years. One of them was PRAYHoUSE, which delivers prayers and articles to subscribers. Chidi serves as the co-founding CEO of PubliSeer.

Chika Nwaogu is the team member close to the musical side and serves as CTO at PubliSeer. One of his and his brother's successes has been LAGbook, a social media network that was developed during the brothers' university days as a kind of directory of students. Chika is a gospel recording artist and a songwriter.

## 'A Chance To Compete in the Global Market'

In our interview with Chidi Nwaogu, we started by asking him to describe for us what PubliSeer does for authors and for musical artists—and how it is that he says it's not a self-publishing platform.

**Chidi Nwaogu:** Founded in August 2017, PubliSeer lets independent African writers and musicians publish, protect, promote, and monetize their creative works through more than 400 partner stores in 100 countries, at no charge and with a single click.

Our partner stores include Amazon, Google Play, the Apple Store, Barnes & Noble, Spotify, Kobo, and Deezer. Our users can monitor their performance across all stores using our centralized dashboard. When a unit of any work—book, audiobook, song, music video, and short or feature film—is sold, PubliSeer shares in the revenue generated from sales.

PubliSeer isn't a self-publishing platform, and here's why: we don't publish every work sent to us. We review every submission, accepting or declining.

If we accept, we contact the author or artist who sent the work to us, notifying him or her of our decision. Then, we proceed to provide what we term "the best publishing experience possible."

By contrast, purely self-publishing plat-



Chidi (left) and Chika Nwaogu (Image: PubliSeer)

forms publish works as they receive them, but PubliSeer fine-tunes the works submitted to us, at no charge, to industry standards so that our creatives have a chance to compete in the global market. We edit and format books sent to us, creating beautiful and professional book covers that make our books stand out, and these foster sales.

Also, we re-master songs before publishing them, giving them beautiful artwork that attracts new listeners.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Did the creative work that one or both of you are doing prompt your establishment of PubliSeer? Where do your individual talents intersect with the creation of the company?

**CN:** After selling our second startup company, PRAYHoUSE, Chika and I decided to take a break from Internet entrepreneurship, and pursue other dreams.

I wanted to be a published author, and my twin pursued a career as a recording artist. I wrote a novel titled *Odd Family Out*, and my twin recorded a studio album titled *Higher*, and now it was time to monetize our hard work.

Chika heard of a music aggregator based in the United States and decided to distribute his studio album with them ... and within a month, he had sales of more than US\$1,200. Now, it was time to receive payment, and that's where the problem came in.

The music aggregator primarily pays royalties via PayPal, and in Nigeria and many African countries, we cannot receive money via PayPal, but can only send money, so that payment method was out of the picture. So he had to fall back to the only payment method left and that was check payment. However, after two months, the check never came, so he reached out to TuneCore to ask what's causing

the delay.

It was discovered that someone in Oslo had used a fake ID to take his money, and Chika was heartbroken. He had to take down his album from TuneCore and look for local means of monetization.

About a year later, he said to me, "Chidi, a lot of independent African musicians have gone through what I went through trying to monetize music internationally. And I think we should solve this problem for every African creative out there, including ourselves."

And that was when the idea was born: a digital content distribution platform tailored for African creatives. On August 4, two years ago, we launched PubliSeer. Our creatives receive their royalties via local bank payments with no transaction fee, thus making monetization convenient and risk-free.

**PP:** At PubliSeer, which is the leading side of the business, music or books?

**CN:** At the moment, music is leading and accounts for about 70 percent of our revenue. We have 1,411 artists and 712 authors, with 782 books and 3,046 [music] tracks. So you can see that music has twice the figures for books.

**PP:** How receptive do you find that other parts of the publishing industry are to you and PubliSeer? Does the publishing establishment see you as the future or as a threat?

**CN:** I don't think they see us as a danger or threat, but rather, as leverage to digitization. We've had publishing platforms like StreetLib reach out to us to expand their reach in Africa. We've had big traditional book publishers with no online sales reach out to us to take their content online. We've even had Habari, a digital platform by GTBank, reach out to us to expand their catalogue. I think they find us quite interesting to work with. •

# Bookselling in Lagos and the Politics of Piracy

At Jazzhole, a bookstore in Nigeria that's part of a family-owned chain, owner Kunle Tejuoso sees how piracy affects the book industry's bottom line.



Jazzhole bookstore in Lagos, Nigeria (Image: Roger Tagholm)

By Roger Tagholm

The bookshop called Jazzhole in Lagos is a very cool, if eccentric place. It has a full-sized drum kit and African tom-toms; vintage posters of Nigerian classics like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; a mini replica of a red London phone box; photographs and album covers of American jazz greats including Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, and John Coltrane; and a little café with long, low tables of curated stock next to stacks of records and second-hand *New Yorker* magazines.

It's also a survivor in a country in which bookselling faces some unique challenges.

"Piracy happens when supply doesn't meet demand," says Kunle Tejuoso, owner of the store's parent company, about the rampant piracy sweeping the nation's book market.

"It happens when there's a shortage of a book people want," he says, "such as biographies of local leaders, politicians, or on the politics of our times—Nigerian politics largely, the Nigerian Civil War, books on corruption."

Piracy is a major problem for Nigeria's book industry and was extensively discussed at the International Publishers Association Africa Seminar held in Lagos in June 2018.

Gbadega Adedapo, president of the Nigerian Publishers Association, says: "Publishers are losing more than 40 percent of their revenue to the pirates. It's our biggest challenge and has led to mistrust among authors, publishers, and book distributors. Authors are not motivated to write when the proceeds through royalties are not encouraging."

"Publishing businesses are hard to set up or sustain when the return on investment is greatly affected by book pirates."

And at ground level, the challenges of selling books in Lagos includes the lights going out in the shop because of one of the city's frequent power shortages. An old Lagos joke

says that the letters NEPA, the former National Electric Power Authority, actually stand for "Never Expect Power Always."

Jazzhole was opened in 1991 and moved to its present location on the ground floor of a small apartment block in the suburb of Ikoyi in 1995. The shop is part of the Glendora Books chain, which has five stores across the city.

It has made a name for itself because of its eclectic mix of books, music, and related memorabilia, as well as the events it hosts, and the passion Tejuoso has for jazz, African writing, and black culture.

"My parents opened their first bookstore called Glendora in 1975," says Tejuoso, "with its name made up from all the names in our family."

"Glendora has lived to serve several generations since its opening, and we now occasionally see young grandparents telling their loved ones how they used to basically spend their whole time in our stores."

Tejuoso opened Jazzhole, he says, "to add a serious side to the brand, and to include my love for jazz and music in general. So in Jazzhole we have all sorts of performances."

Events are important to the shop, as they are to the wider Glendora chain. Over the years, the stores have played host to everyone from the playwright Wole Soyinka—first black African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (Algerian-born Albert Camus was the first African)—to the writer Nadine Gordimer.

"We've sold books to the generals in power and radical activists in detention," Tejuoso tells us.

And how big an issue is piracy to Jazzhole and the Glendora shops? "Overall, the pirates are a big concern because they steal a large share of book revenue."

"There are enough cheap second-hand books across the country," he says, "so I don't think fiction is a big market for the pirates, but yes, business books, management, self-im-

"Piracy happens when supply doesn't meet demand."

**Kunle Tejuoso**  
Jazzhole, Nigeria

provement books, popular textbooks, certainly, and religious and spiritual books are all pirated. Those, and local popular fiction such as Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda [Ngozi Adichie]."

Jazzhole stocks copies of Adichie's breakout book *Purple Hibiscus*. Printed on the cover is a special message from the publisher which says: "Fight Piracy Buy the ORIGINAL."

Tejuoso says that piracy is worse in urban areas away from Lagos. "Raids are made," he says, "but usually not systematically enough to eradicate the problem."

Adedapo says publishers appreciate efforts of the Nigerian Copyright Commission, the Standard Organization of Nigeria, the Nigerian Customs Services, the Nigeria Police Force, and other law enforcement agencies.

But, he says, "We still crave more unflinching support [from those] bodies in fighting the battle against pirates. If possible, a special anti-piracy unit should be created within the law enforcement agencies for rapid response on book piracy issues."

And bookstore chain owner Kunle Tejuoso says that for his business, there is a line of defense: the discerning and loyal customer.

"In Nigeria," he says, "there will always be those customers who prefer buying a well-produced book printed properly and supplied by a publisher to a legitimate bookstore." •

# IPA's 2018 Africa Seminar: Calls to Address Piracy and Celebrate African Publishing

At the first IPA seminar in Nigeria on regional issues in African publishing, attendees were assured, 'In a globalized world, almost none of our challenges exists in isolation.'



“We simply haven’t shouted enough, about how important publishing is to the development of all the countries that make up this great continent of ours.”

**Gbadega Adedapo**  
Nigerian Publishers Association

By Porter Anderson

In opening the Lagos IPA seminar on May 9, 2018—titled “Publishing for Sustainable Development: The Role of Publishers in Africa”—Nigerian Publishers Association president Gbadega Adedapo encouraged the African publishing community to look for pride in its work: “To hold its head higher,” he said, “recognize its value, and reach out to the world.”

Rough estimates of the African publishing market put its worth more than US\$1 billion, Adedapo told the audience. And, he said, with more than 500 million book-buyers in Africa, the continent’s book market is showing cumulative annual growth of 6 percent.

“And we simply haven’t shouted enough,” Adedapo said, “about how important publishing is to the development of all the countries that make up this great continent of ours.”

“African publishing has a good story to tell,” Adedapo said in his agenda-setting opening keynote. “But it’s one that’s not being told loudly enough, and it’s a story that’s under threat.”

Adedapo also addressed the issue of rampant piracy as an urgent challenge for Africa’s book markets.

## Tackling Piracy at ‘a New Level’

“Fellow booklovers,” Adedapo said to the assembly, “if we don’t tackle the scourge

of piracy, then, to quote Achebe, ‘things fall apart’”—referencing Nigerian author Chinua Achebe’s debut novel, *Things Fall Apart*.

“When authors’ works are unprotected,” Adedapo continued, “when pirated copies are everywhere, when booksellers themselves are acting as pirates, then authors do not receive royalties and publishers do not receive sales revenue.”

He went on to paraphrase Yeats, as well, saying that if piracy can’t be brought under control in Africa’s markets, “The center cannot hold and anarchy is loosed upon our book world. None of us wants that, and today I hope we can take the discussion of this problem to a new level.”

The level of piracy and the lengths to which it has affected the Nigerian market and others in Africa is compelling. Piracy is a virulent form of copyright infringement, robbing creative industries and their workers of the remuneration they deserve. While in many cases, consumer piracy can be explained, at least in part, by the naïveté of “digital means free,” the African market seems to be facing something far less innocent.

What Adedapo described is a scenario in which physical books, both education and trade titles, are copied and printed, often by printers working in league with bookstores. And one of the results is that authors have come to mistrust publishers. An author who sees his or her book selling at a store will be looking for royalties, only to be told by his or

her publisher that what’s been sold was pirated copies and there’s no money for the author or the publishing house.

Adedapo, who is also an executive committee member with the International Publishers Association (IPA), is a warm, welcoming man, quick to laugh and smile—a good consensus-builder and the kind of personality who seems to be well-placed for leadership in needed regional reforms. He made it clear in his opening remarks that the depth of the piracy dilemma in Africa means that changing the situation is going to take some time.

“You are here at the start of what we hope will be an annual event that will be hosted by a different African city every year.”

## ‘High-Quality Content Coming From Africa’

The seminar was a collaborative effort between of the Nigerian Publishers Association and the Geneva-based IPA, which has 81 member-organizations from 69 nations.

So it fell to Michiel Kolman, then president of the IPA, to give the second welcoming keynote. Kolman brought his energy and zeal for the mission of the association to this regional event in Africa, which was attended by a strong, highly placed delegation from the IPA.

The delegation included IPA secretary general José Borghino, the Freedom To Publish Committee chairman Kristenn Einarsson,



Michiel Kolman, center (Image: IPA)

“For Africa to tap into its enormous creative and innovative potential, a dynamic and trustworthy intellectual property framework is absolutely essential.”

**Michiel Kolman**  
International Publishers Association

and Bodour Al Qasimi (now serving as vice president of the IPA).

As Kolman told the audience in Lagos, “In a globalized world, almost none of our challenges exists in isolation. We can all learn from each other. The challenges faced in Nigeria today may be those faced somewhere else tomorrow. And the solutions of one government may inspire another.

“On a regulatory level, the foundations of our industry are literacy and education. In fact, these are not just the foundations of our industry—they are the foundations of society. The pillars of our industry that are built on those foundations are copyright and the freedom to publish, both well covered in today’s seminar.”

Copyright and piracy issues, for the IPA, weren’t confined to Lagos this week. While Kolman, Adedapo, and their IPA associates met in Nigeria, the association’s then-vice president, Hugo Setzer of Mexico City, had flown to Toronto and was addressing a hearing of the Canadian parliament’s Standing Committee on Industry, Science, and Technology, on what the world publishing industry sees as the catastrophic blunder of that nation’s 2012 Copyright Modernization Act and its education exception.

“Later this month,” Kolman said to the Lagos seminar audience, “the World Intellectual Property Organization member-states will come together in Geneva to discuss copyright, something they do twice a year. The current discussion around exceptions and limitations pits the global north against the global south in a proxy war for big tech to erode copyright.

“This development directly undermines your efforts in building a sustainable market for African publishers. That’s why I cannot emphasize more strongly the importance of a robust intellectual property regime—as well as its strict enforcement. IP laws protect the ownership of ideas, and as such provide a solid

ground for research and innovation. For Africa to tap into its enormous creative and innovative potential, a dynamic and trustworthy intellectual property framework is absolutely essential.”

Kolman also widened the day’s discussions, looking beyond piracy to say, “Next to protecting copyright, one of Africa’s immediate battles is the fight against illiteracy. Success in our adult lives can often be traced back to just a few key characteristics in school. Learning to read from a young age is a crucial one.”

Now more than ever, Kolman said to the seminar’s attendees, “We see high-quality content coming from Africa, especially in the field of educational publishing.

“Publishers are aware that there are many challenges,” he said, “some of which African publishers can resolve for themselves. Others will depend on local cooperation. And some

will involve international cooperation.”

Most importantly, Kolman said, the IPA seminar in Lagos was a chance for the international association’s leadership to listen, learn, and to help look for solutions.

“This seminar is about the voice of Africa,” Michiel Kolman said. “This is the voice we want to hear loud and clear today.” •

*The inaugural International Publishers Association (IPA) Africa Seminar—entitled “Publishing for Sustainable Development – The Role of Publishers in Africa”—was jointly organized by the IPA and the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA), and held in Lagos, Nigeria on 9 May, 2018. The event drew 180 attendees.*



From left: Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Walter Bgoya, Akoss Ofori-Mensah, Lola Shoneyin, Dr. Wale Okediran (Image: IPA)

# Agenda-Setters at the IPA: A Look at 2019

IPA president Hugo Setzer and vice president Bodour Al Qasimi discuss their goals for the coming year and international publishing issues they intend to address.

By Porter Anderson

**H**ugo Setzer, CEO of Mexico's Manual Moderno, has succeeded Elsevier's Michiel Kolman as president of the International Publishers Association (IPA). And Bodour Al Qasimi, CEO of the Kalimat Group in Sharjah, has become only the second woman to hold one of the two top positions with the association in more than 50 years..

The International Publishers Association, based in Geneva, comprises 81 member-organizations from 69 nations in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, and the Americas.

In what promises to be a year filled with change for publishing—amid deep upheaval in the politics, cultural contexts, and economics of many world markets—the IPA's work covers a strikingly broad range of issues.

*Publishing Perspectives* has had a chance to put some questions to Setzer and Bodour on the year ahead.

## IPA President Hugo Setzer

We started by asking Setzer what his shortlist of key issues might be, looking ahead in his new role as IPA president.

**Hugo Setzer:** The IPA has to work to ensure a better business environment for publishers globally. And such an environment rests on the foundation of having freedom to publish the works we believe are important and that our copyright is respected. That is why we focus so much on those points as our two main pillars.

Having said that, we are also working on other projects as well, like one to show policy makers the value of publishers. In an era of information abundance and fake news, publishers' job as gatekeepers, as curators of trustworthy, reliable information, is as important as ever. We need to convey this message to policy makers around the world.

There's also the work we are doing on diversity and inclusion. There's a lot of research showing the benefits of having more diverse and inclusive workplaces. Because of this, I have asked immediate past president Michiel Kolman to be IPA's envoy for diversity and inclusion.

We'll be working on many issues, especially continuing our support for the Accessible Books Consortium and the SDG [Sustainable Development Goals] Book Club announced last year in cooperation with the UN.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Can you point to any specific issues in the publishing industry in Mexico and other parts of Latin America these days?

**HS:** I think many of the issues we face in



Hugo Setzer

“In an era of information abundance and fake news, publishers' job as gatekeepers, as curators of trustworthy, reliable information, is as important as ever.”

**Hugo Setzer**  
President, IPA

Latin America are similar to those in other parts of the world. What I think is particularly important in having a president coming from Latin America and a highly respected vice president from the Arab world is that this shows the truly international character of IPA.

**PP:** How do you see the “state of the industry” this year?

**HS:** I think publishers are very good at adapting to change. We've been doing so in many ways for years, adopting new technologies in production and delivery of content, and we're still open to adapting our business models to the needs of our readers.

I think IPA plays a fundamental role in fostering inter-cultural thinking and understanding. We are fully aware that we live in a globalized world and that we have to think internationally and understand different cultures. On the other hand, globalization also allows certain issues, like the orchestrated attack on copyright and restrictions to freedom



Bodour Al Qasimi

to publish, to spread more rapidly than ever before. If the work of an international organization like IPA has always been relevant, nowadays it is more important than ever before.

## IPA Vice President Bodour Al Qasimi

**PP:** Looking forward into the year ahead, do you have a shortlist of key issues and challenges you'd like to approach, in particular?

**Bodour Al Qasimi:** Hugo provided a great overview of the IPA's direction over the next year. As a membership-based organization, a key priority of ours is reaching out to members to understand their needs and to see what we can be doing better.

We're planning to work with the secretariat on a membership and industry issues survey. The results will ensure that the services we're offering are aligned with evolving member needs and that our advocacy efforts are focused on the most pressing issues in the global publishing industry.

I'm also working very closely with the Kenya Publishers Association on the second iteration of our regional African seminar series in June. The inaugural event in Nigeria attracted 200 attendees from over 20 countries—making it the largest global forum on African publishing ever held. The regional seminars are a great way to crystalize publishing industry ecosystems in emerging publishing markets like Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia and enhance the IPA's impact by connecting with our members on the ground.

**PP:** As you begin your tenure as a much-too-rare female vice president of the IPA, how do you think that you and the organization can raise awareness of gender issues in publishing?

**BAQ:** The publishing industry has a diversity problem, and it's more important than ever that we take action. In many countries, our sector is not welcoming to outsiders, whether they're female or from other disadvantaged groups.

The UK Publishers Association is emerging as a leader in addressing diversity issues,

“The publishing industry has a diversity problem, and it’s more important than ever that we take action. In many countries, our sector is not welcoming to outsiders, whether they’re female or from other disadvantaged groups.”

**Bodour Al Qasimi**  
Vice President, IPA

and I think there’s a lot our members can learn from their publishing workforce diversity study, “10-Point Inclusivity Action Plan,” and five-year targets. We plan to meet with our UK colleagues on the sidelines of the London Book Fair to see how we can work together to support other IPA members in taking action on our industry’s diversity challenge.

**PP:** Similarly, are there specific insights or dynamics from the Arab world that you’re looking forward to bringing to the fore?

**BAQ:** We’re at a very interesting and exciting stage of publishing industry development in the Arab world. Not only does our region have among the fastest mobile and Internet connectivity growth rates in the world, but we also have a big, technology-embracing youth demographic that we hope will drive the region’s digital economy, and this underscores the importance of digital transformation in the regional publishing industry.

Regional publishers are beginning to see that some of the stubborn industry challenges we’ve faced can be solved by technology and that the rapid rise of the digital economy and the region’s embrace of e-commerce is really going to transform how we do business.

In particular, there are some very interesting publishing technologies that are emerging in the region that can resolve book distribution and retail challenges. Issues like how digital publishing and artificial intelligence will impact educational publishing are starting to be discussed.

We’re also increasingly seeing sensitive socio-cultural issues like the freedom to publish and new media becoming a conversation of public debate.

**PP:** How do you see the “state of the industry” this year?

**BAQ:** I think digital disruption is a key theme underlying many of the current developments in the publishing industry. Technology has made it possible for Bollywood, Nollywood, Japanese manga, and even Turkish soap operas to reach a global audience. A similar transition is happening as global readers are increasingly seeking more diverse books. The digital age is raising some new questions about online freedom to publish as governments globally develop new laws to monitor and control online content.

As Hugo mentioned, publishers are the gatekeepers of trustworthy, reliable information, but, as our industry becomes more digitized, governments, in particular, are cracking down on freedom to publish through censorship 2.0 tactics that increasingly involve cyber-crime, fake news, and other laws regulating the digital space.

Technology is also affecting copyright. A big impetus for Europe’s new copyright framework is the digital economy with the debate focusing on cross-border access to content online and a fairer marketplace for online content. As Hugo says, these industry changes are manageable, but they’re likely to have profound impact on the publishing industry. •

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