

100 Years of Scholarly Publishing at Makerere
KEY NOTE ADDRESS presented at
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BY

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Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

I am honored to be here at Makerere University, the epitome of success of higher education in Uganda. First I am here to thank University management for inviting me back home to share with you the little I remember about scholarly publishing at this university over the 100 years. It is a journey down the memory lane that brings on board a period of reflection. Rest assured there will be some gaps here and there given that the invitation came only four days ago. I am trained in publishing both at bachelors and master's degree. I have in the past been a general manager in one Publishing house in this country. I am Professor John Robert Ikoja Odongo who has been part of this institution for a long time and somehow associated with efforts to establish Makerere University Press. I thank this institution for shaping me and my destiny.

I was invited to present a key Note address on 100 years of scholarly publishing at this prestigious institution. Like all teachers do, my approach is to begin from a shallow end towards the deeper. For this I begin with two questions: has Makerere been publishing scholarly products? And do we know what scholarly publishing is all about? If yes, that is good and if no, I will make that the point of departure for my presentation.

For all, scholarly publishing is one branch of publishing that specializes in publishing for an academic and professional or scholarly market or scholarly community and the public with interest in a particular area of research. The outputs of scholarly publishing are researched material that are disseminated in universities, at conferences and during seminars and symposia; then these may be published as proceedings or in refereed journals as articles. Monographs or books are part of this arsenal.

For purposes of deepening our understanding of the topic, I propose to inform the audience that publishing is an industry running the world with its products. Its other branches are: Book publishing, trade publishing, journal publishing, newspaper publishing, magazine publishing, self-publishing and music publishing. These branches show that publishing is a broad activity for different markets of consumers of literature. In Uganda there was and still there is what we call informal publishing (survival publishing), the kind of publishing where owners type or word process their scripts, get an attractive cover, bind and present or sell to whomsoever finds good use of them. Similarly products of publishing are many. Books, journals, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, music scores etc. I wanted to mention these to bring all of us on board so that we concentrate on the core ... Scholarly publishing which is for a specific audience and from a specific place ... Universities. Scholarly publishing is part of academic publishing.

Back to the main question and I want us to reflect on this question for a while: Has Makerere been involved in scholarly publishing over the last 100 years? I wish I existed for that long I would have given the best answer. But the power of life gives a human, a shorter life to do anything over hundred years. Fortunately education the social construct, gave us an opportunity of documentation to keep this history for future generations that we are today and for those who will be present in the future. The fact is Makerere has been publishing over all those years. And we add the simple question: how do we know it happened? What evidence is there? The answer is Makerere has existed for this long. Can we believe it did nothing? It did. To prove that I provide examples for this:

The University has a production unit called a printer that was established way back in 1945 and it is still working today. University

managers at that time sent one Yeko Mukasa to train in Britain so that he comes back to run the printer. His successors followed his footprints. We thank Sir Philip Mitchell for championing and forecasting Makerere to be an icon of education in the region for recommending the establishment of the Press at Makerere. And it is my opinion it was right to name one of the halls in his name. Within the University printer we have been seeing copies of published books or journals printed by it either in faculties responsible for their publication or its noticeboard. For example over the last forty years I have seen titles published that include *Commercial law in East Africa* by Katende, *Medical statistics, Psychiatry*, and *African indigenous education* by Prof. Ociti. Many professors like David Rubadiri, Margaret, Donohue, etc. and many more published locally and abroad. For example by Prof. Kanyeihamba who published a book on *Constitutional law*, Prof. Kayanjawho published one on the anatomy of a cow. Prof. Mbiti who published *African religions*, Mr. Bukenya who published *Beautiful ones are not yet born*. Prof. Mamdani who has extensively researched and published many books. Ali Mazrui, Okot p'Bitek wrote and published many monographs. Prof. Langlands who specialized in publishing *Occasional papers* that were deposited in the library, Prof. Kiapi who cyclostyled his manuscript *Administrative Law* and made it on the law reading list. Prof. Kiwanuka of history published something on *Desecration of the Buganda Kingdom*, etc. This is just part of the evidence I tell you to make my case. However, one thing I have to state though is that scholarly publishing at Makerere crossed borders. There were publications done within Campus and those published abroad by Makerere researchers. Reason for outside publishing was political safety in some cases, economic emancipation in some while in other, and inability of Makerere to handle their works internally and on time.

Secondly, promotions at Makerere since and till this day, have all the time been based on publications, another of such evidence of scholarly publishing in this institution. But I have to remind you not all publications by Makerere are scholarly. Some are trade books for a school or general market. Example of them are novels or story books.

Thirdly, an academic institution for which Makerere is, is known by its research output. Makerere from the period of a college of University of East Africa into the university status in 1970, has been doing research all the time. Output of these researches have been presented in conferences and published as a record of proceedings or later as research papers supporting individuals for promotion or quest for scholarship. School of Graduate Studies and Research since its formation has been strong in this area supporting and encouraging academicians to go for conferences and present their works. I am sure these efforts have produced many researched publications.

Also, Makerere has before had a bookshop as its trade outlet. This was later closed since it ran dry, and there was nothing to sell anymore, there was no money to import required books and other supplies. This closure was prompted by removal of students' book allowance and introduction of Book Bank system. This unfortunate happening could also have been infuriated arguably by lack of local titles. Unknowingly, it was a scheme for helping British publishers to do better. It is only with entry of Fountain publishers that a semblance of indigenization of published knowledge came in.

Before I forget, allow me revisit the 1940s to 60s. This was a period of the growth of African nationalism with Makerere becoming a hive of militant students. African strand of students started a writing scheme from which Makerere harvested many story book manuscripts that were later published including those published under the Crow Press of

the East African Literature Bureau. Some of these publications have been published and listed in the Library catalogue of Makerere though not many.

The Makerere University Press was launched in 1995 and it has been publishing to date although intermittently. This is the press for scholarly publishing and evidence of the thirst by its scholars to publish. For example a recent orthography or dictionary from the Department of Linguistics, School of Liberal Arts.

Perhaps the richest area of evidence is in journal publishing. Journals are not sold through regular trade channels like bookshops. They are subscribed for and the recipients are the buyers like libraries or members of associations. A small catalogue for inside Makerere are the following research output is the excluding *Uganda journal* that started coming out of the press in 1923. *Makerere Medical Journal (MMJ) 1964, Mawazo 1968, Makerere Law Journal 1975, Journal of African Religion and Philosophy 1989, East African Journal of Rural Economy, African Crop Science Journal, 1993, Dialogue 1994, African Journal of Peace and Human Rights 1995, Makerere Journal of Higher Education 1998.* Some monographs came from MISR.

In all efforts, all books and journals published by Makerere and still are given ISBN by IPA. Journals are given ISSN by ISI. These are "number plates for identifying its publications. How? ISBN for instance is crafted in a way that there are territorial codes, country codes, publisher's code and title code. Similarly ISSN though has 8 digits, can identify where in the world the journal originates. The whole purpose is for location where in the world a publication originates. It also helps in trade (ordering), or selling. This approach helps in the visibility of their publishers and promotes the voice and image of an institution through the institutional logo of its imprint.

Let me turn my attention to the crucial matter of visibility of Makerere scholarly publishing. Some of our publications have been appearing in international databases like African Journals Online (AJOL) and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and some are deposited in Makerere Library Institutional Repository (IR) in a granary called D Space. This is very good.

A situational analysis shows briefly that first there has been scholarly publishing going on. Second, efforts of scholarly publishing are dispersed to individual departments or faculties. And thirdly it has been experienced that it is difficult to see our books internationally or even across the national borders. Why? Continuity is never guaranteed. Publications come once and go into limbo and resurrect at some point in history. Secondly quality control remains difficult to achieve since publishing is not centralized to one unit to make an institutional Imprint. Publishing is irregular. Most likely it is because there is no publishing policy to guide this form of publishing. A policy should define management structure and expectations. Less attention has been paid to promoting titles beyond the gates to the institution. Also there is no backlist to remember what was published in the past and by who. Reprints are not seen of some of the most successful titles. Co-publishing as a means of scholarly cooperation is lacking. Other issues I have noted are:

Financing is a problem, sustainability therefore is difficult to achieve, there appears to be limited awareness of scholarly publishing at the university.

Distribution is limited. As a result most of them are not even indexed in many international data bases, a difficulty that leads to underutilization, being undervalued and under cited in the international and African research arena. It is these issues of poor visibility that

led western countries to help start African Books in Print (ABP), African Book Collective (ABC), African Journal Online (AJOL) to address those challenges and increase visibility, access and use in support of quality African research and higher education. AJOL has hosted African-published, peer reviewed journals from 30 countries, accessed by over 150,000 researchers from all over the world, therefore enabling it to accomplish its aim of increasing scholarly communication within the African continent and the rest. AJOL's policy for journal listing is that the journals must meet the following criteria: be scholarly in content, and contain original research; peer-reviewed and quality controlled; guarantee permission from authors to allow AJOL to operate a document delivery; and journals are published within Africa continent where management of publishing strategy, business development and production operation are all run from African country. The other attempt is the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) that aims at increasing visibility and ease of use of open access scientific and scholarly journals. This directory accepts all open access scientific and scholarly journals that use quality control system to guarantee the content. Again Makerere works are limited there sending a message that the lack of visibility of scholarly works by our scholars is due to poor sustainability, irregular publication and management and poor distribution of their journals. This is evident by the limited number of journals from Africa that are listed in various directories and citation indexes.

The most disheartening is a Makerere that prides itself as a premier university but orchestrating foreign literature to this day. Makerere is a frontier of colonialism. It has very little to offer to solve local problems. Our relevance as a University is tainted for so little of its books and journals being used in teaching and research. This could be a problem of lack of confidence, ideological disorientations, religious

inclinations, academic inferiority complex of some of its staff. On the other hand it could be a matter of inadequate planning, recognition, and enthusiasm to right things. But we have resources. Many educated people to write, the market could be enlarged through more networking with Presses like John Hopkins University Press, Oxford or Cambridge University Presses', University of Nairobi or Dar es Salaam. Association with International University Press would be additional impetus to learn the intricacies of scholarly publishing.

From the above there is evidence that Makerere as an institution of higher learning has struggled to do some scholarly publishing by presence of books and some journals but falls behind in terms of consistency. And therefore what should Makerere do? I make suggestions for strengthening and realigning scholarly publishing here.

I propose that Makerere University should:

- Put in place a publications policy. This is an important document to guide in planning, financing, book development, management of the press.
- Do more to support research and publishing so as to decolonize our great institution. Theorizing should be based on African ideas or contribution, arguments and extant literature. One side of it that the Press would have a scholarly line of production and have book publishing (bread and butter of publishing) for primary, secondary and tertiary education. Here government would see us as being relevant. The Press should also see that it contributes to solving local problems by publishing how to do manuals for farmers, welders or builders in a very simple but well-illustrated format and in languages they know. This is how the Press could recoup its money. Working closely with National Curriculum Development Centre would be a good idea.

- Budget for the Press annually. Makerere should make the Press a cost centre for this Unit and elevate it to a directorate reporting to the Vice Chancellor since it is a cross cutting matter. It must be understood that a chief editor has different activities. How can an editor promote business development in the face of time taking manuscript development?
- MUP should work closely with Graduate School to scope for publishable theses or dissertations. This is the work of the Editorial board.
- Conduct training in authorship, editing, illustration and design
- Develop internal capacity to handle, process research material. Editorial capacity building needs to be done by having a dedicated team
- Work together with other University Presses (international, regional or even local) to develop marketing for Makerere University imprint including African Book Collective, SABINET and CUUL.
- Consider co-publishing with presses in other continents or just use them to include book reviews in the lists
- Explore translations to expand market
- Take advantage of ICT for e- scholarly publications and for online marketing
- Relate with international experts for the purpose of reviewing our manuscripts for quality to avoid plagiarism etc
- University Library should sensitize staff on the value of IR
- Allow the Press be advisor to University on University knowledge framework.

Conclusion

The choice of this Key note address is important because we are living in a knowledge society in which knowledge and information are the

resources that guide all our actions. It is through scholarly publishing that we access this knowledge and information for decision making and problem solving. Accessing this information means we need infrastructure to do the job. We need human capital skilled enough to produce research works and process what will be published. We need to people who will put them together and these are the authors; others to process it and here comes the publisher and there must be someone to use and this is the buyer or reader. This must be kept in mind. Makerere as an institution has had all these. It has human resources called researchers; it has processors who could be the editors, illustrators, printers, copy editors and others; it should have alliance of freelancers like photographers, it has the market from its populations that keep renewing themselves every year on end and in other Universities. The MUP should also exploit international and regional publishing relations and linkages. With all these resources, Makerere can make a bigger case and say in scholarly publishing. I thank all Administrators of Makerere, authors whom we are recognizing today, managers of the Press and all audience for coming to be part of this history on our soil.

Asante Sana, For God and My Country!