Africa Bibliography 1985–2012

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The *Africa Bibliography* has been published by the International African Institute (IAI) as a print volume since 1985. The first editor was Hector Blackhurst, a social anthropologist turned academic librarian at the University of Manchester. In the inaugural volume, Jacob F. Ade Ajayi, the then Chairman of the International African Institute wrote that 'Greater technical experience will, it is hoped, facilitate typographical improvements'.[1] A second concern of the *Bibliography*, as expressed by Ajayi, was to monitor and record material produced in Africa 'that does not always circulate widely and might otherwise escape notice'.[2]

Ten years later the subsequent editor C.H. Allen set out the achievements of the *Bibliography* under Blackhurst: for 'making it the best one-volume general Africana bibliography'.[3] But Allen was also frank about the weaknesses, which he would set out to address: fragmentation and poor bibliographic control in the humanities and social sciences, inclusion of knowledge produced outside the universities, inadequate computerisation, language coverage and subject indexation in an area of study where interdisciplinary is a hallmark of attractiveness.

Into its third decade Peter Limb, Africana Librarian at Michigan State University, set out the challenge as needing to pull together the best Africana literature in one place given the explosion of online information; and the danger of thinking that 'Google will do it all; there is still a need to detect, select and classify relevant information'.[4]

Such is the value of resources such as the *Africa Bibliography*. Limb further recommended that 'In the future, a single, easily searchable, cumulative *Africa Bibliography* online database linked to full-text would help make this excellent resource more effective and ensure its continued existence in both print and electronic formats'.[5]

Africa Bibliography is now 30 years old. The two basic aims as set out by Ajayi – to record Africana materials, including those published in Africa or in hard-to-find publications such as chapters published in non-Africa specialist books (in publisher parlance, 'to promote discoverability'), and to make the bibliography more technologically adept and user-friendly – remain central. We are pleased that the Institute's long held ambition to transform the *Bibliography* from a print volume stocked by specialist academic libraries into an online database containing new and retrospective records with links to full text has been fulfilled. Our publisher Cambridge University Press (CUP) has been instrumental in investing resources and technical expertise in this digitisation project. The capability of the online *Bibliography* is described in more detail by Daniel Pearce from Cambridge University Press below. And as Daniel illustrates, the online database allows us to track with more accuracy trends in research publication, and equally, countries and subjects which remain understudied. Yet whilst the Press's priority is to improve the database driving the online version, an annual print volume of some 480 pages is still published, bearing in mind the needs of some academic libraries, staff and students in Africa for printed resources.

The *Bibliography* continues to be compiled on an ongoing basis and is expanding. Up to 6,000 entries are now added annually. One reason for this is the increased interest

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[1] J.F. Ade Ajayi (1985) 'Foreword', *Africa Bibliography 1984*, p. x.

[2] Ibid, p. x.

[3] C.H. Allen (1993) 'Africanist Bibliography', *Africa Bibliography 1991*, p. vi.

[4] P. Limb (2005) 'African studies bibliography: a state-of-the-art review', *Africa Bibliography 2005*, p. xiii.

[5] Ibid, p. xiv.

in Africa of general disciplinary journals. Another is the expansion of certain disciplines in recent years, for example gender studies. And see p. xix of this volume for further detail on new subject categories added from 2012. There is also better coverage of titles published in Africa: content aggregation projects such as African Journals Online (AJOL), of African published journals,[6] and the African Books Collective, a distributor of African-published print and e-books,[7] have greatly facilitated the collection of this data. However ease of online access to bibliographic records, including for an increasing number of online only publications, does pose new challenges to criteria for inclusion: notably considerations of quality and of how to handle ephemera, and writing and research emanating from outside the academy and mainstream publishing.

Introductory essays

Most volumes of the published *Bibliography* have included an introductory article. These essays, published annually from 1984, have now also been digitised. A part of the published record, together they provide an archival resource on subjects such as African(a) publishing, libraries and bibliography, bookshops, broadcast media and new information technologies.

In the first such article Michael Crowder[8] wrote in an essay titled 'The Book Crisis: Africa's Other Famine' of 'the terrible dearth of books and other teaching materials that afflicts nearly all African countries south of the Sahara, and which if not remedied soon may mortgage Africa's future for several generations to come';[9] further of the 'lack of books, journals and the chance to travel to other countries to attend conferences or conduct research'[10] besetting African academics. Today Crowther's insights may be understood as the pernicious consequences of structural adjustment policies with their assault on the knowledge industries and universities in Africa, which still haunt us today.

Crowder wrote too of a crisis of publishing and bookselling within Africa, which was to focus publishers on promoting exports of books within the continent and abroad. He thus foreshadowed a string of articles in the 1980s and early 1990s on publishing in Africa. Abiola Irele writing on the political economy of knowledge in Nigeria pointed to the inextricability of book markets with broader economies and infrastructural contexts and to the 'only lasting solution to the problem of the supply of books and publication consisting in the development of a viable indigenous publishing industry'.[11] Further thereto, Henry Chakava provided an account of Kenya's publishing context[12] and C.S.L. Chachage gave an historical overview of the situation in Tanzania.[13]

Another major theme of the introductory articles is Africanist bibliography and libraries, both within Africa and outside, with state-of-the-art contributions from Peter Limb[14] and John McIllwaine.[15] Case studies were provided by Hans Panofsky writing on origins and development of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of Northwestern University,[16] and Evelyn Evans on the establishment of the Ghana Library Services as a service financed almost entirely from local funds, and recognised as 'an essential element in the national scheme of

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[6] http://www.ajol.info/; see S. Murray (2009) 'Moving Africa away from the global knowledge periphery: a case study of AJOL', *Africa Bibliography 2008.*

[7] www.africanbookscollective.com; see M. Jay (1995) 'African Books Collective. Its Contribution to African Publishing', *Africa Bibliography 1994.*

[8] The historian, teacher and administrator was Joint Honorary Director of the IAI (with Ioan Lewis) from 1981–82 and Chairman of the IAI's Publications Committee from 1979 to 1982. For further details see J.F. Ade Ajayi and R. Horton (1989) 'Michael Crowder, 1934–88', *Africa* 59 (1): 110–18.

[9] M. Crowder (1986) 'The Book Crisis: Africa's Other Famine', *Africa Bibliography 1985*, p. xvi

[10] Ibid, p. xvii.

[11] A. Irele (1988) 'The Book Publishing Industry in Nigeria. Problems and Prospects', *Africa Bibliography 1987*, p. vii.

[12] H. Chakava (1989) 'Publishing in Kenya', *Africa Bibliography 1988.*

[13] C.S.L. Chachage (1991) 'Publishing in Tanzania', *Africa Bibliography 1990.*

[14] P. Limb (2005) 'African studies bibliography: a state-of-the-art review', *Africa Bibliography 2005.*

[15] J. McIlwaine (2001) 'Plus ça change: four decades of African studies bibliography', *Africa Bibliography 1999*; (2007) 'The three ages of African studies refrence works', *Africa Bibliography 2006.*

[16] H. Panofsky (1995) 'Africana at Northwestern University', *Africa Bibliography 1995.*

educational advancement'.[17] Alli Mcharazo has more recently contributed a paper on the Tanzania Library Services Board'.[18]

The IAI published its first essay on 'The Internet in Africa' in 1996 stressing 'the urgency of providing Africa with ways to enter and participate in a world economy where information and communication technologies are a factor of economic development'.[19] More recently Daniel Reboussin has written a piece on library research methods in African studies in the digital era.[20]

Other contributions include Graham Mytton's essay on radio, the BBC World Service, and broadcasting in African languages, and the role and place of radio on the continent,[21] themes which are enjoying an upsurge of academic interest.[22]

Notable scholars Karin Barber and Paulo F. de Moraes Farias have written on a Yoruba religious archive,[23] and Graham Furniss contributed a paper on documenting Kano 'market' literature.[24]

Such is the breadth and diversity of topics addressed in these published introductory essays. We hope that the digitised archive will make them more widely accessible, inspiring new and rigorous treatment of perennial themes.

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[17] E.J.A. Evans (1996) 'The Ghana Library Services', *Africa Bibliography 1995*, p. xxvi.

[18] A. Mcharazo (2008) 'Serving the bibliography needs of scholars in Tanzania: a study of the Tanzania Library Services Board', *Africa Bibliography 2007*.

[19] O. Coeur de Roy (1996) 'New Information Technologies: networks available or planned', *Africa Bibliography 1995*, p. xvii.

[20] D.A. Reboussin (2010) 'Information Literary: 21st Century Library Research Methods for African Studies', *Africa Bibliography 2010*.

[21] G. Mytton (1997) '40 Years of Broadcasting from London in African Languages', *Africa Bibliography 1996*.

[22] See L. Gunner, D. Ligaga, and D. Moyo (eds) (2012) *Radio in Africa: Publics, cultures, communities*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press; H. Englund (2011) *Human Rights and African Airwaves: mediating equality on the Chichewa radio*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; S. J. Potter (2012) *Broadcasting Empire: the BBC and the British World, 1922–1970*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[23] K. Barber and P.F. de Moraes Farias (2002) 'An archive of Yorùbá religious ephemera', *Africa Bibliography 2000*.

[24] G. Furniss (2000) 'Documenting Kano 'Market' Literature', *Africa Bibliography 1998*.