

Price Analysis and Acquisition of Indigenous Books in Nigerian Libraries

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ABSTRACT: Price analysis promotes transparency and professional objectivity. How it is done actually depends, to a large extent, on available benchmarks often provided by book publishers. This paper submits that there are no price check tools for most books published in Nigeria. Therefore, acquisition librarians are oftentimes shortchanged and frustrated. This paper further examines the challenges of acquiring indigenous books in Nigerian libraries. It is revealed that publishers in Nigeria tend to focus on local distribution to bookstores or booksellers whereas internet or online sales channels and other viable means of making indigenous books available to libraries have remained neglected. It is recommended that publishers in Nigeria take advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) to market and distribute indigenous books and that online book databases be developed for indigenous books. This study provides publishers with in-depth insight on the need to provide acquisition librarians with standard price checking tools.

I. Introduction

Regardless of predictions that print collections would vanish with the emergence of the digital paradigm, printed books still play “a central role in library collections and publishing industry” (Ameen, 2008). Libraries are still purchasing printed books and are working hard to make them available to users.

As far as purchase is concerned, price is an important factor. Establishing correct price is an important criterion in the acquisition process. The price of a single item has the potential to affect the availability of other important resources in the library apart from printed books. Price can determine whether or not a potential title is added to the library. The acquisition librarian is saddled with the responsibility to ensure that the library gets the best value for each purchase and that funds are judiciously spent by carrying out price analysis before purchase. It is expedient for acquisition librarians to be keenly aware of their role and impact on the wise expenditure of library funds. “Often, the job of an acquisitions librarian has a financial dimension” (wiseGEEK). This is recognized by the *Statement on Principles and Standards of Acquisitions Practice*, which states that in all acquisitions transactions, the acquisition librarian should “strive

to obtain the maximum ultimate value of each dollar of expenditure” (ALCTS, 1994). Price analysis is, therefore, an integral part of the acquisition librarian’s job.

Price analysis consists of regular check on available prices to ensure that purchases are correctly charged. It entails checking and cross-checking various marketing and purchasing channels in order to ascertain the correct price of a book. This has become very important based on the current economic climate and ongoing inflation. Libraries are experiencing budget cuts and so the funds available must be judiciously expended (Ifijeh, 2012). Price analysis is considered a best practice (Cheshire East Council, 2014). The basic reason for performing price analysis (apart from the fact that it is widely accepted as a sound business practice) is that it ensures that funds are spent in the most effective manner and limited resources are adequately managed. Price analysis helps to ensure that prices are fair and reasonable. It is a time consuming but essential activity for acquisition librarians.

It is important to note that some libraries may also outsource the process of price analysis. Otherwise, the process is usually initiated and reviewed by the head of the library, the acquisition librarian or internal auditors. These people are responsible for ensuring sufficiency and appropriateness of price.

This paper examines the challenges of carrying out price analysis and acquisition of indigenous or local books in Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, indigenous or local books refer to books published in Nigeria, irrespective of the nationality of authors.

II. Statement of the problem

It “is the professional librarians who must continue to maintain the intellectual understanding of what constitutes bibliographic integrity and quality” (Propas & Johnson, 1998, p. 285). The acquisitions librarian serves as the liaison officer between the vendor and the library. Expertise will be required in the consideration and adoption of prices of books before purchase.

Few publishers in Nigeria sell online or take advantage of the internet to sell and market their books. Most libraries in Nigeria find it very difficult to obtain books published in the country. It is easier to know what is published abroad and obtain same easily as there are so many functional up-to-date publisher catalogs, website, and book databases. What will acquisitions librarian in Nigeria do where there are no benchmarks, catalogs, publishers’ websites or databases to determine prices of local books?

III. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify current methods of price analysis employed by acquisitions librarians in Nigeria.
2. To examine the challenge of price analysis regarding acquisition of indigenous books in Nigerian libraries.
3. To identify the price index tools available to acquisitions librarians in Nigeria
4. To examine the price index tools and analysis adopted by acquisitions librarians for indigenous and foreign books.

5. To assess the perceptions of librarians on the acquisition of indigenous and foreign books.

IV. Methods of Price Analysis in Nigerian Libraries

It is most important for acquisitions librarians to understand when quoted prices represent an acceptable offer. While there are many elaborate ways to analyze prices, the easiest and most productive method of analysis is to compare the prices being offered with some forms of benchmarks. In order for vendors to meet library acquisition requirements, there is need to supply bibliographic details of the materials, following standards and procedures.

It is only after each of the prices has been determined that the acquisitions librarian is ready to approve the price quotes from vendors.

Libraries in Nigeria determine and establish the reasonableness of a particular price quote through the use and analysis of a number of tools and factors:

- *Check trade bibliographies.* Trade bibliographies are annual publications, which list titles that are currently available from various publishers mostly within a geographic area. Trade bibliographies provide basic purchasing information such as complete titles, authors' and coauthors' correct names, editors, ISBNs, classification numbers, publishers' details, years of publication, and prices. Newly published titles, out of print titles, and price changes are subsequently included in supplementary publication released at intervals all year round. Trade bibliographies provide helpful information for acquisitions librarians during purchases, especially information on the availability of titles, where it can be purchased, from whom, and how much they cost.
- *Compare price quotes from different vendors.* Different vendors may offer same titles for purchase. More often than not, the vendor with the lowest price quotes gets the offer. This method may be helpful but is time-consuming and cumbersome.
- *Search internet.* Perform a general internet search on the item, using various shopping sites or publishers' website to get an idea of the market and published prices. Websites that allow searching by subject, author, title, and ISBN are very helpful.
- *Check printed trade catalogs.* Publishing houses issue catalogs on both annual and seasonal basis. In addition, they employ a series of advertising blurbs or flyers to showcase particular items with details on upcoming titles, including prices, authors' full name, complete title information, ISBNs, dates of publication, physical description (e.g., hardbound or paperback), and editions. Publishers' catalogs are invaluable tools because many provide individualized summaries of available books, giving good overviews of content, style, and price.
- *Check prices printed on book cover.* Some texts are published with prices on the upper part of the book cover. Prices on book covers can be taken as authentic.
- *Check prices set by law or regulation.* Some times, there are government regulations guiding the pricing of some categories of books published in a given country.
- *Check professional bibliographic databases.* These provide timely, accurate, and comprehensive information for books and other published media. Some databases hold as many as 10 million titles (e.g., [Nielsen Book Data](#) and [LISU Average Prices of British](#)

[and USA Academic Books](#)). Their sophisticated search and discovery tools allow the acquisitions librarian to make informed buying decisions.

Using the aforementioned strategies can help the acquisitions librarian to identify whether there has been any unnecessary escalation in the price of listed items.

V. Challenges of Price Analysis and Acquisition of Indigenous Books in Nigeria

Most African publishers hardly produce advance publication information on forthcoming titles. Few indigenous publishers print promotional leaflets, extra covers or even annual catalogs. These catalogs often have incomplete and outdated information, missing essential bibliographic data such as ISBN, price, and year of publication (Wendy, 1997; Powell, 2004).

The most popular effort towards producing a trade bibliography in Africa came from the African Books Collective (ABC). This is an initiative of eighteen African publishers to effectively market and distribute African books. Their effort still leaves much to be desired (Altbach & Hoshino, 1995). The National Library of Nigeria had made attempts in the past to produce bibliographies of books published in the country. The scheme was not sustained due to challenges of funding and lack of cooperation from indigenous publishers.

Ibegwam and Okwilagwe (2012) reported that 70% of the medical and dental students in Nigeria could not find indigenous text in their fields in university libraries, which suggested that most academic libraries in Nigeria have inadequate indigenous book collection. They further asserted that the dearth of indigenous books in Nigerian libraries may be as a result of the difficulties experienced by libraries in obtaining them. This is a sharp contrast with the European book-selling market that has moved to electronic commerce. Booksellers, serial agents, and publishers have moved their work online. Print catalogs have disappeared as the online databases are more complete and current. Ordering systems moved online as did much of customer support (Kistler, 2003).

Acquisitions librarians are increasingly turning to computerized tools to integrate all of the elements in the select-to-pay process. By doing so, they are realizing the financial benefits of increased productivity and reduced cycle times generated through the automation of routine processes such as requisition and purchase (Cheshire East Council, 2014).

The challenges inhibiting the availability of indigenous books in Nigerian libraries are resulted from:

- *Self-publishing*. In Nigeria, many authors patronize local printers because it is low cost, more profitable since this would eliminate paying editors (Nwali, 1991; Justine, 2010).
- *Dearth of marketing and advertising*. Poor marketing and advertising of local books are a big hindrance. There is also no clear-cut policy on marketing and distribution of published books. This has been the bane of the publishing industry in Nigeria for many years.
- *Lack of reliable publication data*. There is lack of information on books published in the country (Amina, 2013). Not knowing how many titles published annually in different

categories has also been identified as one of the factors not helping the industry to advance (Edem & Okwilagwe, 2011; Belinda, 2010). If book sellers and buyers are not aware of the existence of a particular book, how can such a book be stocked and bought? The quest to purchase indigenous books is often stalled by the problems of unavailability and inaccessibility of published texts.

- *Poor distribution network.* Distribution remains one of the biggest hurdles local publishers have to overcome. Indigenous books are not as widely distributed as should be due to the fact that there is no effective or centralized distribution chain for books. Instead, most publishers employ sales representatives nationally and deal with lots of individual booksellers, retail outlets, and schools scattered around the country (Böcker, 2012).

Though there have been an increase in the number of books produced by African publishers in recent times, these books often did not reach those for whom they were published because of problems of infrastructure—poor transport, a paucity or absence of bookshops and book distributors, and poor communication channels in general (Ibegwam & Okwilagwe, 2012).

VI. Research Methodology

A structured questionnaire was sent to acquisitions librarians of 20 private universities in Nigeria. A telephone interview was also conducted with the respondents. All the copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned, representing a 100% response rate. The responses were thereafter analyzed by the researchers.

The private universities were chosen because they are relatively new institutions in Nigeria and are required to stock their libraries as requirement/criteria for accreditation by the Nigerian Universities Commission. It was assumed that this requirement would make the acquisitions unit of the private universities vibrant and most relevant for this study.

Data obtained were analyzed using tables and simple percentages.

VII. Findings

Table 1. ICT in acquisition process

Access to Internet	Yes %	No %
	100	0
Is acquisition process in your library ICT-driven?	Yes%	No%
	100	0

Table 1 shows that all the libraries under study have access to the internet and that their acquisition process is ICT-driven. This involves contacting with vendors through emails and other electronic means, selection of books and price analysis through the internet.

Table 2: Price index tools for selecting indigenous and foreign books

Price Index Tools	From Indigenous Publishers/Booksellers	From Foreign Publishers/Booksellers
Publisher's print catalogs	2%	95%
Bookseller's website	0	100%
Publisher's website	0	100%
Trade bibliographies	0	40%
Vendor price list	100%	0

Table 2 shows that the vendor price list from the indigenous or local booksellers is the most popular index tool available to acquisitions librarians in Nigeria. In the process of acquiring indigenous books, the acquisition librarian depends solely on the vendors. This implies that the acquisitions librarian does not have a variety to choose from. There are no indigenous publishers' catalogs, bookseller sites, or trade bibliographies. For the acquisitions of foreign or imported texts, acquisitions librarians have a variety of resources at their disposal. Publishers' print catalogs, and booksellers' and publishers' websites are the most popular price index tools available and used for price analysis by the libraries. From the interview conducted with the respondents, only 1% of the libraries listed have a professional bibliographic database and 4% have trade bibliographies. Table 1 shows that there are a variety of tools for ascertaining the correct prices of foreign books but almost nothing for indigenous books.

Table 3. Current methods of price analysis

Current Methods of Price Analysis	For Local Indigenous Books	For Foreign Books
Print catalogs	0	75%
Trade bibliographies	0	0
Different booksellers websites	0	90%
Specific Publishers website	0	73%
Price printed on books	0	8%
Check professional bibliographic database	0	40%
Depend solely on vendor price list	96%	0
Compare different vendor price lists	0	20%

Table 3 shows that acquisitions librarians depend solely on vendors' quoted prices for the purchase of indigenous books. This is consistent with the findings of Ameen (2008) in a study of 40 libraries in Pakistan. He discovered that libraries depended largely on vendors for details of local books purchases.

During the interviews, acquisitions librarians disclosed that they depend on vendors to provide the titles with fix prices. When asked whether they compared different vendors' lists to arrive at a fair price, they were unanimous in their response that different vendors deal on different subject areas. The vendors may not be able to give information on price details of all local texts.

Table 4. Perception of acquisitions librarians on price analysis

Perception of Acquisition Librarians	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
It is easier to order and purchase foreign books than local books.	100	0	0	0
Ordering and purchasing local books is more time consuming and frustrating.	73	27	0	-
I feel overcharged by vendors for local books but I have no proof to this effect.	85	15	0	-
It is no use buying local books because of challenges.	0	0	87	13
There is a decline in budget for local books.	10	50	30	10

Table 4 shows that ordering and purchasing foreign or imported books is considered an easier task by acquisitions librarians compared to ordering and purchasing local books. There is also a general consensus that to order and purchase local books is more time consuming and frustrating. Most respondents (85%) feel overcharged by vendors for local books but have no proof to this effect. Lack of indigenous price index tools affects purchase of local books. 60% of the acquisitions librarians strongly agree or agree that there is a decline in budget for local books. Interestingly, none of the respondents agree that the purchase of indigenous or local books should be discontinued.

VIII. Recommendations

Nigerian publishers pay insufficient attention to the marketing, distribution, and providing information about their books. This is due partly to lack of financial and manpower resources but also reflects weaknesses in management. Far too often, publishers think it enough to produce the books and to place them in warehouses. Although some progress has been achieved, greater emphasis on promotion, marketing, and distribution should be placed.

- *Publisher websites.* For effective negotiations, it is absolutely necessary that publishers establish websites with online catalogs. Publishers in Nigeria should make their publications visible to the world by providing necessary publication details or information on their websites such as the availability of books and their prices.
- *Print catalogs.* Nigerian publishers, like their foreign counterparts, should also send print catalogs of their publications to vendors and libraries for ease of purchase.
- *Publisher databases.* There is also need for price databases to be developed to serve as a price verification tool, which will be beneficial to all concerned. Nigerian publishers should come together to form a consortium and develop a book database for Nigerian publications.
- *Printing suggested prices on book cover.* Publishers should print recommended retail prices on the front cover of books. This would save the time of acquisitions librarian and customers who need to know the correct prices of the books.

- *Mode of distribution.* If Nigerian publishers are truly interested in libraries purchasing their books, then they should develop better ways, through the use of ICT, to promote and distribute information about their publications.
- *Publishing regulatory bodies.* These organizations play an essential role in bringing together those engaged professionally both in the book trade and in literary output. They should ensure that published texts possess all the required data elements of the bibliographic record, which would be useful to librarians. There is dire need for publishing regulatory bodies to review current standards and procedures of publishing in Nigeria. Currently, only the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) has a form of regulation on the publishing industry. But the regulatory powers of the NCC only cover copyright issues. The Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) is pressing on the Nigerian Government for the establishment of Nigerian Institute of Publishing, a chartered professional regulatory body, to help with training and regulation of the publishing practitioners and industry respectively. It is hoped that the establishment of the Institute will help to develop better distribution networks for local books.

Publishers, librarians, and book vendors are expected to possess the required knowledge and judgment of professional publishing and should also work closely with one another to develop and improve the quality of published materials in Nigeria. The NPA should develop a methodology to determine the price of published resources by providing readily available statistical data annually. Publishing regulatory agencies should forge stronger ties with acquisitions librarians to create a better platform, aiming at supplying necessary details and information about new publications in the country and making available price benchmarking tools. This will help librarians and vendors in their quest to collect and compare prices.

IX. Conclusion

Price analysis is an integral part of the acquisition process in libraries. This venture cannot be carried out without veritable price checking tools. Lack of price verification tools creates uncertainties and breeds corruption. It poses difficulties to the collection development staff and can lead to possible halt in purchasing local or indigenous resources. Practical and realistic steps should be taken by Nigerian publishers to improve on promotion and marketing of their publications. The internet should be utilized in the marketing, distribution, and sales of books. Online catalogs are absolutely necessary as a price checking tool and must not be ignored. Despite the obstacles, it is essential that the parties involved in book trade continue to work closely together for mutual and optimal advantage.

If books constitute an important part of the social and cultural capital of society, libraries are the banks where this capital is most productively invested for private and public use and profit. “Thus, the importance of a vibrant book industry and library system cannot be over-emphasized, nor can the challenges be underestimated” (Stringer, 2002, p. 3). The role of the government cannot be underscored. “A sustainable system of book provision and book development, and a flourishing book industry, are possible only with government support that recognizes the strategic importance of publishing, and demonstrates this in official commitment in policies and budgets” (Zell, 2008, p. 188).

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Submitted to CLIEJ on April 12, 2016.

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Iwu-James, Juliana; & Ifijeh, Goodluck. (2016). Price analysis and acquisition of indigenous books in Nigerian libraries. *Chinese Librarianship: an International Electronic Journal*, 41, 85-96. URL: <http://www.iclc.us/cliej/cl41II.pdf>
