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Ed. by Lomer, Cécile

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Reports

Published Online: 2009-07-23 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1985.11.4.191>

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Reports

Organized jointly by the Africa Centre and ABPR, *Bookweek Africa 1985* took place from 17–19 October at the Africa Centre (see ABPR XI/3, 1985, p. 139). The organizers report here on the event.

Bookweek Africa 1985

Following the success of the first Bookweek Africa in 1982, a second Bookweek Africa, partly funded by UNESCO, was held from 17–19 October 1985, at The Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2.

The main hall of the Africa Centre was given over to the African Publishers' Collective Exhibit, the centre-piece of the exhibition, and the individual stands of African publishers. The collective exhibit covered some 900 titles from a total of 130 publishers, representing 24 African nations. The stress, as in the first Bookweek Africa, was on scholarly and academic works in the arts and social sciences, creative writing by African authors, and children's books, published between 1983 and 1985. The books were largely in English or French, but there was a sample, albeit small, of titles in a number of African languages. For the first time, some of the very significant output of African research institutions with publishing programmes was also represented. To keep the exhibition to manageable proportions, books for the collective exhibit were pre-selected by ABPR, based on information supplied to it over the past three years for inclusion in its bibliographic section. Publishers were, however, given the option to send display copies of additional new and recently published titles, not pre-selected, with the exception of school books and educational texts, which were not included in the exhibition. A small number of South African publishers were included, being those who continue to publish socially-committed writing despite operating under a repressive regime which faces them with threats of banning, harassment or arrest. Moreover, a sizeable number of titles in the collective exhibit were available for purchase on the spot from the appointed retail organization, Third World Publications, which occupied the Africa Centre's front shop for the duration of Bookweek Africa.

Twelve African publishers displayed material at their individual stands in the main hall; and a number of these were publishers who had sent representatives to the African Publishers Working Group Meeting, which was held earlier in the week (see following report in this issue). The twelve publishers were Dar es Salaam University Press, Daystar Press (Nigeria), Ghana Publishing Corporation, Heinemann (Kenya), Ibadan University Press, Lagos University Press, Mambo Press (Zimbabwe), Nwamife Publishers (Nigeria), Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Skotaville Publishers (South Africa), the Tanzania Publishing House and the Zimbabwe Publishing House.

Also accommodated in the main hall was the non-African publishers' Joint Exhibit, which included publishers from the UK, Switzerland and the USA.

Non-African publishers were accommodated off the main hall and in the gallery. There were 16 publishers' stands, the distributors Leishman & Taussig and the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. UK and USA publishers with major African studies lists were well represented, including Cambridge University Press, Rex Collings, Christopher Hurst, Oxford University Press, Collins Educational, Heinemann Educational Books and the Longman Group. James Currey Publisher was represented, as were several publishers specializing in books from a black British perspective.

Finally, the exhibition included a special display in the gallery of

80 African magazines and periodicals, a number of which had started publication in the last year or so.

The crowded Opening Ceremony was held on the evening of 16 October. Professor Abiola Irele of Ibadan University Press welcomed exhibitors and many guests from the world of African books and studies. He stressed the importance of African indigenous publishing, and the great importance of the book in Africa as well as the cultural links between Africa and Europe. He reported on the African Publishers Working Group Meeting which had just ended, and stressed one of their main conclusions that intra-African book trade was of vital importance.

The second Bookweek Africa provided a valuable setting, not only as a window on the range and vitality of African publishing, but also for publishers to meet and exchange views on common problems, to do business with each other and, far from last and least, to bring their books to the market place. The three-day event was well attended by educationists, librarians and booksellers; and it is hoped through this means that the exhibition will further knowledge amongst the general public of the exciting scope of what is coming from African presses today.

Supporting Programme

A lively and varied supporting programme took place during the week. Jaki Seroke recounted the three years experience of the all-black publishing house Skotaville of South Africa; Professor Abiola Irele talked about "The Challenge of Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria"; and *Index on Censorship* organized a panel discussion chaired by Cameron Duodu, including Mohammed Babu, former Minister of Planning and Finance in Tanzania, and the Nigerian writer Kole Omosoto. The International African Institute held a one-day Symposium on "The Book Famine in Africa", chaired by Michael Crowder, and introduced by Dr. Arthur Porter, former Vice-Chancellor of Sierra Leone University. Participants included the British Library, the British Council, Books for Development, the ODA Book Presentation scheme, the Ranfurly Library Service, the School of Oriental and African Studies, writers, editors, publishers and academics (see report later in this issue).

Exhibition catalogue

An 80-page classified "Guide to Exhibitors and Catalogue to the African Publishers' Collective Exhibit" was published, intended both as a convenient guide to the exhibition, as well as a ready means for ordering any of the material displayed. A limited number are still available from the organizers at a nominal charge of £1.00/US\$3.00, which includes postage by surface mail (£2.00/US\$4.00 if airmail is required). All orders must be pre-paid, either in cash, by UK postal orders or by UK cheque. Libraries in the USA should remit US\$2.00 in cash; alternatively a dollar cheque is acceptable provided a sum of US\$3.00 is added to cover bank collection charges, i.e. a total sum of US\$5.00. Orders and remittances should be sent to Bookweek Africa, *The African Book Publishing Record*, PO Box 56, Oxford, OX1 3EL, England.

📄 About the article

Published Online: 2009-07-23

Published in Print:

Citation Information: The African Book Publishing Record, Volume 11, Issue 4, Pages 191–196, ISSN (Online) 7865-8717, ISSN (Print) 0306-0322, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1985.11.4.191>.

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