

Solani Ngobeni ~ Scholarly Publishing: The Challenges Facing The African University Press



Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the challenges that face the university press in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. It will start by examining the state of the university press in Africa, the state of the university press in South Africa, the challenges that face university presses, such as the declining purchasing of scholarly monographs by university

libraries since the budgets of most university libraries are now spend on subscribing to expensive journals and serials, poorly paid academic staff that does not purchase scholarly books, poor teaching and research infrastructure where the course pack has replaced the monograph in the classroom, a generally under-developed market, a weakly developed reading culture, short print-runs which are not economically viable, lack of distribution hubs such as bookshops and lack of intra-Africa book trade. Whereas in the past scholarly publishers could sell between 1000 and 1500 copies of a monograph, today they sell between 200-300 copies. Since publishing small print runs is not economically viable due to economies of scale, scholarly publishers are caught between a declining market and high costs involved in publishing small print runs. It will further examine the role that research institutes and science councils play in scholarly publishing and lastly it will examine the opportunities that new modes of communications offers to scholarly publishers.

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