

International Issues

Serials And The Third World

Tony Read,
Book Development Council, UK
(Presented to the Conference by Penelope Buckland)

We need to start with a little history:

Journals in the Third World

The economic decline of much of the Third World probably started with the first major oil price rise in the mid '70s. A few countries with oil suddenly found themselves very wealthy but, for most non-oil based economies, the economic impact of major price rises was devastating.

In a majority of Third World countries, the economy was so substantially reduced that there is little sign, even to this day, of recovery - even to the levels of the late '60s.

The problem was not just dramatically-increased import bills, but also the reduced world markets for primary products, which caused the export income of many Third World countries to collapse. Even experienced economic management in the First World made heavy weather of the changes, and relatively inexperienced Third World governments found it extremely difficult to cope.

For many countries, education was the heaviest item of state expenditure, and book budgets were the first to suffer. It is a truism that "people vote - books don't" - so it was inevitable that supplies (and particularly library acquisitions) were sacrificed to maintain salary budgets.

Library systems suffered first - particularly primary and secondary schools, and public libraries. Book purchases tended to be stopped before journal subscriptions, but textbook supplies were usually given priority over journals.

Parallel to the decrease in local funds made available for books and journal provision, was a

rapidly declining foreign exchange provision, made worse by high local inflation and steady currency devaluation. Journal imports were cut back to basics to save money, and the already-reduced budgets bought far less anyway.

In higher education institutions, the disintegration of facilities forced many key academics to accept overseas teaching appointments, or jobs with international agencies, and thus there was a perceptible drop in the quality of staff.

It is remarkable, travelling regularly in the Third World, how uniform is the impact of the economic crisis of the '70s. Collections are frozen at the beginning of the '80s. Journal runs stop around 1980-82. Bibliographic material stops around '79/'80 - apart from the occasional second-hand donation.

And the crisis is by no means over.

Students who could not get access to books stole them from libraries, or mutilated books and journals by razoring out key pages or articles. The existing collections in libraries deteriorated rapidly, and library usage fell away. Perversely, the deterioration made libraries less useful and thus less of a priority for the limited funds available.

But the basic financial problem cut even deeper. In an attempt to concentrate funding, essential bibliographic subscriptions were cancelled, so that many institutions no longer knew what was available, or where they could get it

from, even when they had money.

Publishers' catalogue mailings also dried up as institutions stopped buying, and many library suppliers stopped visiting. Higher education institutions - universities, polytechnics, research institutes and training colleges - were suddenly isolated and cut off from information about books and journals.

It is remarkable, travelling regularly in the Third World, how uniform is the impact of the economic crisis of the '70s. Collections are frozen at the beginning of the '80s. Journal runs stop around

1980-82. Bibliographic material stops around '79/'80 - apart from the occasional second-hand donation.

And the crisis is by no means over. Devaluation of Third World currencies against the pound sterling and the US dollar continues. The Egyptian pound, for example, has devalued by five times against the pound sterling in the last seven years.

India, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, most of Africa, the Caribbean and now Eastern Europe, all have dramatically decreasing purchasing power in local currencies for materials (and that includes journals) which have to be bought in foreign currency.

There are bright spots - but, for a large proportion of Third World higher education, library systems have been devastated over a period of twelve to fifteen years. Local budgets have declined to absurdly low levels in real purchasing power. Foreign exchange backing is often absent, even where there are local funds. Annual acquisitions budgets don't keep pace with annual stock deterioration. Libraries have declined in usefulness, librarians are demoralised, and there is no bibliographic information to select journals, even if money does become available. These issues are worth keeping in the forefront of your minds.

Aid Agencies

The aid community is extremely diverse, and it is far larger and more influential in Third World government and education than most people realise.

At the top end of the scale are the large multilateral development banks - the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank - which derive their funding from many different countries, and which provide untied aid, ie: their loans can be spent in any member bank country and they are not tied to any single country.

In the same category of untied aid - but generally with much smaller levels of funding - are the United Nations agencies. The World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UNICEF, UNESCO, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), all regularly invest in book related aid.

The next major group of aid agencies are the bilateral agencies - the governmental aid agencies of individual countries, eg: the ODA (Overseas Development Administration from the UK), CIDA (from Canada), SIDA (from Sweden), USAID (from the US), the European Development Fund (from the EEC), DANIDA (from Denmark), NORAD (from Norway), FINIDA (from Finland), and GTZ and DSE (from Germany).

For most bilaterals, aid is "tied" - ie: it must be spent in the country of origin - but this is by no means always true, and books and journals are often an exception. Canada often provides library funding and is prepared to buy US and British journals if requested. The Australian government has just provided a substantial book donation to the National Teachers Training College in Maseru, Lesotho, supplied by James Bennett, the Australian library supplier - but all the journals were British and American, and 90% of the books were British. DANIDA is supporting the chemistry faculty library in the University of Dar-es-Salaam, but the books and journals - procured and supplied by Munksgaard in Copenhagen - are all British and American.

The British Council Book Presentation Programme regularly supplies books and journals to Third World higher education institutes at an annual value of over £4 million. All are procured and supplied through British suppliers, but they all finish up in Third World countries.

For journal publishers in particular there is a message in this. Many bilaterals require local libraries to choose their own books and journals. The British Council provides quite high level bibliographic support to assist in selection, but many of the other bilaterals don't.

The journals that are selected depend very heavily on what information is available locally and, if there are no bibliographic facilities available and you haven't been mailing, you are unlikely to achieve a sale. This doesn't mean that you should mail every conceivable institution - but it does mean that you need to know about aid activity in the world at large and respond accordingly. Aid funding has radically changed the pattern of journal supply in many Third World countries. Journal purchase is frequently dependent on aid support. When that aid support begins to come on stream, you need to be sure that your serials are available for selection. Miss the boat by six months, and you may not get another shot for five years.

This pattern has created an *opportunistic* marketing situation, where market and aid knowledge - and correct timing - are all important. It also means that back issues become relatively more important. If a library has been five years without any effective funding, it is often very anxious to fill in the gaps in its serials runs, and aid-supported journals' acquisition is often characterised by heavy back issue ordering.

And don't think that you can rely on your local agents to know what is happening. The aid process is extremely complicated, and the local book trade is often the last to know about the details of an agreement - particularly in higher education journal supply where traditional supply routes have been

from specialist subscription agents in the UK and the USA, and the local trade has little expertise and involvement.

Another group of aid agencies are the private foundations and trusts. Some of these (like the Aga Khan and the Gulbenkian Foundations) are very large but have very specific geographical areas of operation. Some (such as Rockefeller and the Ford Foundation) have a long history of higher education support in books and journals. Others (such as the Biet Trust in the UK, the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation and Obor) are relatively small. There are also potential, major new organisations - such as the Toyota Foundation, which is beginning to take a very specific interest in "books" aid.

In this presentation I can only skim the surface of the aid community. At the last count, IBD has identified almost 150 agencies - some very large, some very small - which have an interest in books / journals support. The pattern is different in every country, but they are all there - somewhere in the world - providing funding in their own idiosyncratic way for journals acquisitions.

I hope you begin to feel that you need to know a little more about them.

Policy Issues

Aid agency interest in the book trade goes back a long way. British government funding of ELBS (Educational Low-Priced Books Scheme), the Book Presentation Programme and the Library Development Scheme, goes back to the early 1960's - and an early predecessor of ELBS (the British Book Export Scheme) operated in Balkan countries before the Second World War.

The biggest of big spenders - the World Bank - took a tentative interest in the '60s, but started serious interest in the '70s.

Most of the early investments were textbook projects for the primary system, and a large proportion were concerned either with the construction of printing plant or with large scale curriculum development activity. Although "big" aid was heavily textbook-and primary-oriented, there has always been a considerable amount of "spin-off" finance available for journal acquisition at the higher education level.

Universities were built, and stocking and maintenance budgets were plucked out of the air and left for local procurement, often with disastrous results. Journal budgets were included with general equipment budgets, or were not specified at all.

For many years the problem of identifying big journal budgets funded by hard currency aid budgets was a serious problem. A subscription agent would get an order out of the blue from an institution that hadn't ordered for years and would have no idea where the funding came from.

The difficulty was simply that libraries in general often didn't get mentioned in project descriptions, and specific journals budgets - even very large ones by our standards - were almost completely invisible until they were activated - and by then it was usually too late for any selection input.

Libraries and library development ranked very low in priorities, and were often lumped into miscellaneous budget headings. Detailed project planning and investment in the design of library projects was virtually unheard of.

This situation began to change in the mid '80s, and a number of important journal supply projects emerged where information was available *prior* to implementation, and where publishers and suppliers had an opportunity to promote and consciously to bid for supply.

The Uganda project and higher education projects in Indonesia and China all had large journals budgets, and actively sought assistance on selection, bibliographic provision, consolidation techniques and procurement methodologies.

The British Council and the then staff of the Book Development Council were extremely active in lobbying governments and aid agencies to raise higher education library provision in the scale of priorities, and to approach project design in a more organised and systematic fashion. In 1986, Ivor Kemp and Tony Read were invited to present a seminar to senior policy-makers in the World Bank on library development issues, and this led directly to a request from the World Bank for policy papers and project design guidelines on library development, which Ivor Kemp produced during a sabbatical year from the British Council.

The importance of library development was given a further push forward by the World Bank acceptance of the concept of the "Book Sector" as a viable area of research and policy development prior to project design in the education field.

The "book sector" was very simply a recognition that books and journals were both vital to education, and the subject of great complexity if long-term sustainable provision were to be assured.

As a result, the ODA and the World Bank combined to fund a series of major research studies covering book, supplementary material and journals provision, at all levels of the education system, accompanied by detailed studies of authorship, publishing, manufacturing, distribution, import policy, copyright, new materials supply, foreign exchange availability, and a host of other issues related to the development of a national book policy.

The first studies were all Africa-based and took place in Tanzania, Nigeria, Zambia, Angola and Kenya. The Government of Quebec funded a

parallel study in Cote d'Ivoire. The immediate result of these studies was a series of nationally based policy recommendations and investment proposals, and all included investment in higher education libraries and thus in journals budgets. The first outcome of this activity is the suite of polytechnic and university projects in Nigeria.

The impact of the book sector studies in Africa has not been limited to the countries listed above. Two staff members of IBD are currently in Washington on secondment to the World Bank engaged in preparing a summary report of all African book sector studies undertaken so far. This paper will be used as the basis of a policy discussion on books and journals provision involving *all* African countries.

There is a group of donor agencies - 54 in all - which meets regularly to coordinate aid investment in education in Africa in close consultation with African Ministers of Education. This group - the Donors to African Education (DAE) - wishes to sponsor a major conference of African education ministers to debate book and journal development policy. Discussions are still under way but, with luck, this should take place in the UK sometime late in 1991, hosted by the British Council and the ODA.

A more recent policy development has been the sponsoring by the World Bank and the British Library of a series of country studies focusing on books and journals in Higher Education.

Three studies have been completed so far - Senegal, Egypt and Hungary - and four more will be completed this year in Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Chile.

The purpose of these studies is to develop a higher education policy paper for book and journals investment by the World Bank and other agencies. IBD is undertaking these studies.

The book sector concept referred to above is growing in acceptance very quickly. The Joint Assistance Unit (JAU) of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office/ODA and the World Bank, is funding book sector studies in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria to form policy and to guide investment.

The Asian Development Bank has required book sector work in Laos from IBD, and we are also working for CIDA on a book sector in Cambodia.

A major study on books and journals in higher education in Nepal is just about to start, and discussions are in hand for full book sectors in Egypt and Brazil.

To sum up all of this policy activity:-

The concept of books and journals as a viable and priority area of aid investment is now widely accepted. The specific acceptance of the key role of higher education libraries, and the need to restock and refurbish them, and maintain them in being with regular, annual acquisition budgets, is accepted. The need for detailed, systematic project design work on higher education library system is accepted. All of these issues are accepted not just by one, isolated agency - but by a wide range of multilateral, bilateral and private aid agencies and by a rapidly growing number of governments.

The Future

If the battle for the hearts and minds of agencies and governments - so far as higher education libraries are concerned is now won, we must also recognise that this situation is very new. The impact of organised, hard currency investment in libraries has hardly yet been felt, and there are still many difficulties to be overcome. Achieving investment is one thing, making it work is another.

In a paper of this length, there is no possibility of a detailed analysis of the planning and implementation problems that still remain.

Procurement is a major issue, and IBD have been requested by the World Bank to develop model procurement systems for book and journal procurement for higher education libraries.

A working group of library suppliers and subscription agents has been established and is working on the problem with expectations of delivering documents for discussion in September. Selection policy and bibliographic support, consolidation of journals, and budgeting for risen costs, are other key areas.

For publishers and suppliers, the key issue is information. There is a great deal of activity; much of it is confused and misty, and it is often very difficult to perceive policy, budgets and the right time to do something.

Acquiring and monitoring the information is expensive and time-consuming but, with 150 agencies operating in around 100 countries, the potential for new journal markets is obviously very great.

