



Scholarly Publishing in the Third World

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THE CREATION AND DISSEMINATION of knowledge is a complex process in any society, and is particularly difficult in the Third World, where the economic, intellectual, and institutional structures of the scientific community are not well established. This article¹ focuses on the dissemination of knowledge in the Third World. The article is predicated on the idea that knowledge dissemination is especially important in the Third World context, since the emergence of an independent intellectual life and some self-sufficiency in the scientific realm depend in part on building the structures for knowledge dissemination. Traditionally, the principal means of dissemination are scholarly journals and publishers of books and related materials. Focus will be mainly on one element of this equation, i.e. scholarly publishing and especially university publishing, since this is seen as a key to supplying the needs of Third World nations. This discussion begins with the special problems facing the Third World in terms of scholarly publishing and then discusses the possible roles of the university press in this context. Given the paucity of data on this topic, the discussion is necessarily somewhat general and is aimed both at analyzing some current problems and at stimulating thought concerning one creative means of fulfilling an urgent building block in the structure of intellectual development.

This article focuses largely on universities in the process of creation and dissemination of knowledge, and special attention is paid to the university press as a means of communication. While universities do not have a monopoly on either creation or distribution of knowledge, they are, especially in the Third World, the key institutions in this process. They house the large share of creative scholars, sponsor most functioning re-

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search institutes, provide stimulation for scholarly life through the norms of academic life, and in the Third World are often the center of the intellectual life of the nation. This has not always been the case; up to a century ago many scientific discoveries were made by independent intellectuals, and at present, work in the applied sciences in some countries is often done in industrial or government-sponsored laboratories. While universities play a key role in knowledge distribution in the English-speaking countries, some European nations rely on books and journals issued by private publishers for much of their scholarly publishing. Despite these exceptions, universities stand at the center of the scientific and intellectual process in many nations, especially those of the Third World, and therefore deserve considerable attention.

This discussion is based on several simple but not widely discussed ideas regarding the Third World. The need for Third World countries to establish independence in all spheres of modern life, including intellectual life, is critically important, and publishing is one small way to build such independence. As one observer put it, "To establish an indigenous publishing house is an act of liberation, and therefore a necessity, because it breaks the control, indeed the monopoly which the white races have over the world literature, for which reason they have controlled the mind of the African."² The intellectual "system" of which publishing is a part is complicated and requires considerable infrastructure.³ It is not enough for an author to write a manuscript. There must be technical means of transforming that manuscript into a book, the editorial expertise to coordinate the process, the means of distribution and promotion, and a readership interested in reading the products of research and intellectual work. While publishing is relatively inexpensive in terms of investment of capital and equipment, it requires coordination of such elements as educational institutions, printers, authors, editors, booksellers, journals, and others.⁴

SPECIAL THIRD WORLD PROBLEMS

Publishing, as well as other elements of an industrialized society, faces special problems in the Third World. The infrastructures which are so important to publishing are often missing. In particularly short supply are skilled editors, designers, distribution experts, and others who are necessary in the book production process. While printing equipment and paper supplies are often available, they are in many cases imported and therefore expensive. Modern publishing is very much part of a network of communications within a society, and it is very difficult to establish one element of the network without the entire circle of communications.

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Books need to be publicized and distributed. Scholarly books are particularly difficult to distribute adequately since the market is small and dispersed over a wide geographical area. In the Third World, distribution is especially difficult because of transportation problems, an especially small market, few channels for publicizing books, limited bibliographical tools, and the general level of poverty.⁵

Literacy rates in the Third World tend to be low — from 30 percent in India, more than 50 percent in many Latin American nations, to as little as 10 percent in some African nations. Perhaps more relevant to a consideration of scholarly publishing is the fact that the number of academics tends to be small and enrollments in higher education limited. General purchasing power is very limited, with per capita annual incomes of \$300 or less in many nations, and it is impossible for the large majority of the population to buy books. In many Third World nations, even academics, who rank near the top of the income scale, find it difficult to afford to purchase books and journals. A network of libraries — which in industrialized nations account for up to 80 percent of the total purchases of scholarly books — is generally lacking in the Third World, thereby denying the publishing industry of a key market. It is estimated that in India, libraries account for between 80 percent and 90 percent of purchases of scholarly books. India, with its 3000 colleges and 100 universities, provides a fairly substantial institutional market for books. Most other Third World nations have fewer libraries and similar institutions.

Many Third World nations are faced with language problems which impinge directly on book publishing. The legacy of colonialism has left many Asian and African nations with educational systems which function largely in a foreign language — English or French — which is understood by only a small fraction of the indigenous population. The lack of a common indigenous language in many Third World countries, the wishes of an entrenched elite, and the inherent difficulties of shifting communications media for education, government and the economy are among the problems which have led to the continuing influence of European languages throughout the Third World.⁶ The language problem is a serious one for the Third World in many respects, and it has major implications for publishing as well. For example, close to one-half of the books published in India annually are in English, yet only 2 percent of the Indian population is literate in English. Efforts to develop Swahili in East Africa have been hindered by the lack of a publishing apparatus, reluctance of some Africans to use the language, and other factors. Indonesia has been

more successful in establishing one of its languages as the national language and the key medium for book publishing. Policy-makers and scholars are faced with the dilemma of whether to publish in a European language and thereby broaden the market for their books, or to use an indigenous medium and immediately truncate the market — and probably the impact — of their books.

Third World nations are in many respects still dependent on the industrialized countries. One of these dependencies is in the area of knowledge creation and distribution. The major universities, research institutes, libraries, journals and publishing firms are located in the industrialized nations. The bulk of the funds spent for scientific research is spent in the West. The major languages of intellectual discourse and of scientific research are Western languages, predominantly English and French. In much of anglophone Africa, for example, publishing is dominated by firms based in the industrialized nations, especially Britain.⁷ These firms publish most of the scholarly books, as well as a large share of the textbooks of those countries, and because of their entrenched position, make the emergence of indigenous publishers difficult. Third World nations are, in a sense, at the periphery of the world system of knowledge, with the industrialized nations at the center of that system.⁸ This situation, which some analysts have called dependency, is in part a natural result of the legacy of colonialism, the imbalance in the world's scientific production, and the general internal problems of the Third World — poverty, illiteracy, the lack of a large educational system, and many others.

Another element which contributes to the continued intellectual domination of Western countries over the Third World is the deliberate policies of the industrialized nations to maintain their power. These policies have been called neocolonialism, and they operate in the arena of education and intellectual life, as well as in other areas.⁹ Neocolonialism is maintained through foreign aid programs, loan policies of the industrialized nations, and in other ways. While a detailed analysis of neocolonialism is beyond the scope of this essay, it is a factor which must be considered in any analysis of publishing in the Third World.

SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING — THE CURRENT SITUATION

Given the seemingly insurmountable problems mentioned above, it is surprising that any scholarly publishing takes place in the Third World. Yet, scholarly books — those publications which report research findings, comment on academic matters, or in general are aimed at an audience of intellectuals — do get published. This section discusses some of the prob-

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lems of scholarly publishing and surveys the current situation in some Third World nations.

In part due to the work of international agencies like Unesco, Third World governments have at least given some attention to the development of a book industry and the production of books. Most Third World nations have built up at minimum a rudimentary publishing industry, and are now able to issue school textbooks, literacy materials, and similar educational book materials.

There has been relatively little recognition at the governmental level of the importance of scholarly publishing. Universities have not taken much interest in fostering scholarly publishing, and when they have been involved in the publishing enterprise at all, it has with a few exceptions been at the level of providing textbooks for their own students, often in fields where indigenously produced texts did not exist. The concern for educational publishing in the Third World has for the most part been aimed at the production of textbooks and other curricular materials for all levels of the educational system, and for nonformal educational programs such as literacy efforts. Among the most successful government-sponsored publishing efforts in the Third World are the Casa de Libros in Cuba, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Malaysia and the National Book Trust in India, all of which have been concerned with the production of basic literacy materials, textbooks, and to some extent with sponsoring books on cultural and intellectual topics.

It is not surprising that official concern with publishing has been for the very practical — and usually elementary — book needs of developing Third World economies. Scholarly books are considered to be less urgent than provision of textbooks where none at present exist. Even at the university level, scholars have been concerned with writing textbooks for undergraduate courses or simply with translating Western textbooks into indigenous languages because of a lack of such books. The minority of Third World universities with printing and publishing facilities has generally used these facilities for the immediate printing needs of their institutions — usually examination forms and textbooks — rather than for scholarly publishing.

While clear statistics are unavailable, it is possible to estimate that the bulk of scholarly books in the Third World come from two main sources at the present time. These two sources are: (1) publishers in the industrialized countries, who export their books to the Third World; and (2) commercial and, occasionally, governmental publishers in the Third World. Universities have only recently entered publishing, although in a

few cases they are actively participating in scholarly publishing programs. It is likely that the majority of scholarly books still originates outside the Third World and is published in Western languages.

The foreign origin of many scholarly books has several implications. Most are written by Western scholars and scientists. Good scholarship is in many ways culture-free, but the ideological orientations of Western scholars, the nature of their training, and the kinds of interests which are engendered by Western academic culture certainly have an impact on scholarship. Furthermore, the research questions which may be relevant to Western scientists may not be especially useful to the Third World. Books published in the industrialized nations are in many cases more expensive than domestically published works, and their distribution in most Third World nations tends to be slow and difficult. Imported books are a small drain on the foreign exchange reserves of the Third World as well, and international copyright regulations and patterns of book distribution generally work against the Third World.¹⁰ Perhaps most important, books published in the industrialized nations are written, edited, and published for an audience in these countries and not to meet the needs of the Third World.

At the present time, most scholarly books published in the Third World are issued by private commercial publishers, except, of course, in those countries which do not have private publishers. In most of Africa and in parts of Southeast Asia, the majority of such indigenous scholarly publishing is carried out by local branches of foreign publishing firms such as Oxford University Press and Macmillan. This situation is a remnant of colonialism and has had a major impact on indigenous publishing.¹¹ Most of these "expatriate" publishers are from the former colonial power, although in recent years American firms have been increasingly active in Third World nations.

With the exception of a few university presses, the publication of scholarly books, research monographs, and the like is very much a sideline for indigenous Third World publishers. Scholarly publishing is not viable commercially as a mainstay of a profit-making business, although publishers in some countries indicate that scholarly books do break even or make a small profit, but only after a long period of time. Editions tend to be small — 1000 seems to be an average printing, with 800 not unusual.¹² Private sector publishers find their main profit in textbooks and sometimes in general book publishing, and scholarly books are a sideline done as a public service or to maintain prestige in the academic community, often the major customer for textbooks.

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Distribution of scholarly books is a problem in any nation, and it is particularly difficult in the Third World. The national book markets, even in nations as large as India or Indonesia, are small due to the lack of purchasing power of individual academics, the limited number of libraries, and similar factors. Book exports to other Third World nations are a problem which has not been solved. Networks of publicity and commerce tend to run between England, France, and more recently the United States and the former colony. It has been said that it is easier in the Ivory Coast to obtain a book published in Paris than a book from neighboring Senegal. Publishers, distributors, and the intellectual public tend to look to the major Western centers for most intellectual needs, and the products of other Third World nations are not considered prestigious. Thus, intellectual tradition has combined with commercial patterns to make trade among Third World nations difficult. There have been few efforts to bridge this gap, perhaps in part because Third World publishers have turned to the relatively lucrative and easily reached academic markets in the United States and Britain as an outlet for their scholarly books.

As noted earlier, the lack of the usual infrastructures for book distribution constitutes a severe problem for the dissemination of scholarly books in the Third World. It is often easier for a Nigerian librarian to find out what books have been published on a given topic in Britain or the United States than it is to locate relevant titles published in the Ivory Coast, India or Tanzania. This is simply because there are well-developed bibliographical resources in the industrialized nations, but few such resources in the Third World. Similarly, the major media for scholarly book reviewing, the academic journals, are for the most part published in the West, and these seldom review books published in the Third World. Local journals are few in number and seldom read beyond their nation of publication.

The term *Third World* has been used in this article as if it were possible to generalize broadly about a range of nations which share little except a low per capita income and a common desire to industrialize. There are many differences among Third World nations with regard to scholarly publishing, as well as in most other spheres. Third World nations range from India, which has a large and active publishing industry and which issues a large number of scholarly books each year, to small nations such as Swaziland or Burundi, which have virtually no possibility of creating a viable publishing industry of any kind due to economic realities and a tiny potential reading public.

Several Latin American nations, notably Mexico, Brazil and Argen-

tina, have well-developed publishing industries and manage to issue a substantial number of scholarly books. Latin America constitutes a continental market for scholarly books, and this has helped to stimulate publishing. Such regional markets in other parts of the Third World are only now emerging. Efforts are being made in anglophone and francophone Africa, where the continued use of European languages for scholarly purposes is unquestioned. The situation in Asia is more complex due to the existence of several dominant nations which have so far not attempted to establish regional markets for their books. India is the largest publishing country in the region, and has made some efforts to promote its books. Indonesia has as yet only a small book industry, and its commitment to the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the language of education and publishing limits its access to foreign markets. China has thus far not played an active role in scholarly book publishing in the area. At present, only Latin America has a functioning regional market for scholarly books, and other regions are hampered by the lack of such arrangements for book distribution.

It is fair to say that with the possible exceptions of India, Mexico and Argentina, the scholarly publishing needs of the Third World are not being adequately met, regardless of the language of publishing or even of the origin of relevant books. Commercial publishers simply cannot expend the resources necessary to publish scholarly books, and no agencies have emerged in most countries to fill the gap. It is in this context that a consideration of the present role and future possibilities of the university press is relevant.¹³

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS: ITS ROLE AND POSSIBILITIES

The university press is not the only means of scholarly publishing. Indeed, it has strength mainly in the English-speaking nations of the United States, Canada, and Britain, with toeholds in Japan and a few other industrialized countries. The bulk of the world's scholarly output is no doubt issued by publishers other than universities. Even in the United States, specialized private scholarly publishers have recently found it possible to make a modest profit on academic books and journals, while the university presses have had to cut back because of economic stringency and still operate for the most part at a loss.¹⁴ It should also be recognized that government subsidies to academic libraries in the United States were a key factor in maintaining the profitability of scholarly publishing — even in the nation with the largest university system, scholarly publishing could not take place without indirect subsidy. In the Third World, university publishing is in its infancy and libraries are not as well developed or as

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numerous. The reason that the university press is considered at some length in this article is that it offers a unique model for scholarly publishing in the Third World.

Scholarly publishing almost inevitably is an unprofitable undertaking and often requires a direct or indirect subsidy. As one expert noted concerning university presses, "We publish the smallest editions at the greatest cost, and on these we place the highest price, and then we try to market them to people who can least afford them."¹⁵ In the context of the Third World, subsidies are virtually mandatory, and the university press offers a means of accepting outside subsidy — almost inevitably from government sources — and still maintaining independence of judgment and autonomous decision-making. It is almost axiomatic that creative and independent publishing must have a great deal of autonomous judgment. Publishing at its best is a professional activity, and external interference in the direct decisions of a publishing firm can only lower standards. Publishers must, however, be accountable — not only to the scholarly public which will purchase their books, but also to some extent to those who provide subsidies.

While university publishing has a long history — extending from the origins of Oxford University Press in 1478 — it has come into its own in the past century, particularly in the United States, where at least fifty university presses now operate. University presses are well established in relatively few nations. While university presses also exist to a very limited extent in other European countries, they play a small role in publishing in those countries. In much of Europe, scholarly publishing is accomplished by private firms. This is the pattern in the German-speaking countries, in France, and in Holland. In the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, scholarly publishing is carried out both by some general publishing houses (which are, of course, state-owned) and by the publishing arms of various scientific institutes and agencies. The Eastern European model, which is also followed to some extent in other parts of the world (in the United States, for example, the Smithsonian Institute and some other large scientific agencies have their own publishing divisions), may also provide a useful model for the Third World.

In its American manifestation, the university press has as its basic role to publish scholarly books and to distribute them to the relevant audience. Scholarly books are defined broadly to include research monographs, analyses of current problems from a scholarly viewpoint, literary criticism, and the like. In a sense, the university presses try to publish materials of

high quality which are not destined for commercial success (although as direct and indirect subsidies for academic presses have become more limited in recent years, the scholarly publishers have taken commercial viability increasingly into account). The average press run of a university press book is fairly low — 2000 is a common figure — and most scholarly books take three or more years to sell out. University press publications tend to be expensive, in part because of limited printings, and in part because of high-quality production standards and frequently complicated typography.

The American university press emerged at a time when American higher education was declaring its independence from European models and was beginning to emphasize graduate study and research. In a sense, the university press was part of America's effort to declare intellectual independence in the late nineteenth century. It permitted scholarly publishing to develop in the United States at a time when there was little likelihood that private publishers would take on this responsibility. It is not surprising that the early presses emerged at such institutions as Johns Hopkins, Chicago and Cornell — all universities which made a firm commitment to graduate education at the end of the nineteenth century. The "golden age" of the American university press might be considered to be the 1960s and early 1970s, when unprecedented federal funds were available for library purchases and institutions were expanding at a rapid rate. The dissemination of knowledge was a part of this process of growth. The university presses were a useful means of funneling foundation grants and other funds into publishing while still maintaining considerable independence over the publishing operation.

In many respects, the universities of the Third World find themselves in a situation not unlike that of the United States at the turn of the last century. Many Third World universities are moving quickly toward an emphasis on graduate training and research after a long period in which such activities were not emphasized. There is a growing realization that the production of indigenous scientific research and analysis is important. In the social sciences and humanities, indigenous scholarship has been especially emphasized. While links to an international scientific community are still strong, efforts are underway to provide an independent base for research and scholarship. The pressures on Third World universities are immense — to provide undergraduate education to a rapidly growing middle class, to develop graduate programs, to contribute directly to the processes of modernization, and to foster scientific research. Despite these pressures, some universities are moving toward an active research

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and scientific environment, from which scholarly publications have begun to emerge.

At the present time, university presses in the Third World are in an early stage of development. A minority of nations has strong university presses, although few if any are in the Western mold completely. Most university presses have as their major task the production of textbooks and related materials for use in higher education. Scholarly publishing is at best an ancillary activity. Even the branches of Oxford University Press engage in much nonscholarly publishing in the Third World. Given the multiple needs of Third World universities, it is likely that university publishing in the "pure" sense of the term is probably impossible, and there will inevitably be a linking of practical services to the educational community with the more narrow but highly important role as a publisher of scholarly books. In most countries, university presses need to take their scholarly roles more seriously, but some kind of balance must be maintained.

The Indian situation will provide an indication of the role of the university press. With approximately 100 universities and 3 million students in postsecondary education, there are perhaps 20 active university presses. The oldest, the University of Calcutta Press, was founded in 1908 and has published more than 1000 titles. Ninety-one institutions of higher education in India indicate that they have some publishing programs, but most of these are inactive or have no relevance to scholarly publishing. The most active university presses issue a small number of scholarly books each year, and confine the bulk of their publishing efforts to the immediate printing needs of their university and to textbooks for classes in the university. There is virtually no cooperation among the university presses, and even the textbooks which are printed for one institution are not generally distributed beyond that institution. The small output of scholarly books is not distributed adequately — distribution efforts are in almost all cases significantly less adequate than those of the private sector publishers. The quality of production is also generally lower than that of private publishers, although prices of university press books tend to be somewhat below those of the commercial house publications. In a few instances, university presses have turned their scholarly books over to private publishers for distribution, but these arrangements have usually not worked out very well.

Most Indian university presses are governed by academic boards composed of administrators and faculty members at the sponsoring institutions. This has to some extent insulated them from direct interference in their

operations, although the pervasive academic politics evident in India has naturally affected the presses as well. Few university presses publish books by faculty members from outside their sponsoring institutions, and virtually none has attempted to build for itself a reputation of excellence in scholarly publishing. The scrutiny given to individual manuscripts which are submitted is limited, and most academic presses have little or no qualified editorial staff to assure high standards of editing or production. In general, support for the presses is limited and it is not unusual for them to earn a small profit for the university or at least save money by printing examination forms and other academic documents. The university presses, in short, have not developed an ethos or a mode of operation which will encourage excellence in scholarly publishing.

A large number of scientific institutions and government agencies also engage in publishing in India, but in general their efforts are not effective in that their books are not adequately distributed and standards of quality are often low. India, unlike most other Third World nations, has a sufficiently well-developed private publishing enterprise, so that the lack of a scholarly publishing apparatus in the universities is not very damaging to the publication of academic and scientific works. It is clear, however, that the nation would be served much better if current efforts by universities and other nonprofit agencies to publish their materials were better handled. In the long run, given the expansion of knowledge and the inherent difficulties of profitably publishing academic work, the emergence of an effective university press network in India is highly advisable.

Other Third World countries are, in general, less well served in terms of scholarly publishing than is India. Most of the scholarly books concerning a country as large as Nigeria are published outside the country or by expatriate firms within Nigeria. The establishment of university presses at two of Nigeria's leading universities during the past decade or so has improved the situation somewhat, but the output of books of most of these presses is very limited—perhaps ten to twenty new titles per year. The university presses are concerned with scholarly publishing, and have the potential of serving an important need, but the universities have not provided their presses with the necessary resources.¹⁶ The situation in Ghana is similar, with the establishment of at least one university press in recent years and the emergence of a government-sponsored publishing house which has taken some interest in scholarly publishing.¹⁷ Francophone African nations are poorly served by indigenous publishers of any sort, and the majority of the very small number of scholarly books published

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about these countries is generally published in France and exported back to Africa. Anglophone East Africa has seen the development of several private publishers, sometimes with the assistance of British firms, which have a strong interest in scholarly publishing.

Southeast Asia has seen perhaps the most active development of university presses, with especially strong interest in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, where the influence of the British academic model and of Oxford University Press has been strong. The foundation of university presses in two of Malaysia's universities and the commitment of these presses to scholarly publishing have given academic publishing an energetic start. The University of Singapore Press also has a substantial list of scholarly books. In Hong Kong, the English-medium University of Hong Kong has a small but quite active university press, and the new Chinese University has entered the field of scholarly publishing as well. Other Asian nations, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Indonesia, have expressed sporadic interest in university press publishing, and several presses have been established.

Few Latin American universities have scholarly presses as part of their operation, although the University of Buenos Aires Press has been, until the recent political difficulties in Argentina, actively engaged in scholarly publishing of a high standard. Several Mexican universities, including the Autonomous University and the Collegio de Mexico in Mexico City, have established scholarly presses. In most of the region, however, the limited amount of scholarly publishing that occurs is done by private firms.

It is clear that there is a need for more scholarly books in the Third World, as such books constitute one of the underpinnings of an independent intellectual and scientific life. It is also clear that in most Third World nations there is at present an inadequate supply of scholarly books, and that the means required to permit the publication of such books are lacking. There is a growing recognition that research and scholarly publication play an important part in nation-building and development, but there is as yet only a limited understanding of how to foster the necessary publishing apparatus. All of this is at the theoretical level. There is less consensus about whether present conditions in the Third World can absorb more scholarly books — that is, whether the amount of scholarship now taking place and the size of the academic and intellectual communities can organizationally and financially support a scholarly publishing enterprise. As Ronald Barker and Robert Escarpit point out in their analysis of books in the Third World, there is often a difference between the

objective need for books and the ability of a nation to produce and consume such books.¹⁸ However, given the importance of publishing scholarly materials, it is probably better to have a temporary "surplus" of published knowledge than to let market forces take their course.

The dissemination of knowledge in the Third World is a complicated matter.¹⁹ Even at the level of relatively advanced research materials that has been the concern of this article, the issue is multifaceted and relates to such matters as literacy rates, communications networks, the infrastructure of the printing and publishing industries, government policies, the orientation of universities, and other matters.

While scholarly publishing is clearly not the key that will unlock the processes of modernization and development, it is a small part of a total effort to build independent societies in the Third World. The whole process of the creation of an independent intellectual and scientific life has received very little attention in the literature, and the purpose of this article has been to highlight the role of one small element in that process — scholarly publishing — and to indicate how some of the seemingly insurmountable problems associated with it can be handled. Fortunately, the creation of an adequate means of scientific and academic communications in a nation through books and journals is neither very costly nor overwhelmingly difficult. Furthermore, it is a process which is a natural part of the academic enterprise. As universities grow in size and excellence, they will naturally turn to problems not only of creating new knowledge but of communicating this knowledge to the relevant publics.

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