

Nigerian Scientific Journals

PRESENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

According to Katz[1], journals can be defined as:

Professional, scientific and technical society magazines which tend to stress basic research; which are technical in both content and style of writing; and which form a significant part of the body of periodicals in a subject field.

When compared with other sources of information such as books, journals are the most current. According to Crane[2]:

a book is soon out of date but a live journal can and does keep up to the onward march of scientific discovery.

Because journals contain technical articles and are produced more frequently than any other source of scientific information, they are much sought after by specialists and researchers, who require them to keep abreast of developments in their fields.

Contrary to the above, however, because of the irregularity and unreliability of Nigerian journals, authors tend to avoid publishing articles in them. When it comes to using journal publication for promotion assessment, a clear distinction is drawn between local and foreign (international) journals with the latter ranked higher. Marketers and distributors will barely tolerate Nigerian journals since they require a steady flow of stocks which cannot be guaranteed. End-users (Libraries and individuals) prefer foreign journals because of their continuity, while indexing and abstracting services, most of which are published abroad, fail to include Nigerian journals, thereby making it impossible for widespread dissemination of their contents.

Even within Nigeria, information about local journals is scanty, so much so that many authors, marketers and end-users are not aware of their existence.

This has led to low or non-existent patronage which is threatening the very survival of many Nigerian journals. Our belief was that, in order to investigate the full ramifications of the problems of irregularity and unreliability, to publicize these journals for adequate patronage, and bring end-users and producers together, the establishment of a subscription service was necessary. So we decided to tackle the problem from this angle. We also planned to introduce an indexing and abstracting service, if the subscription service succeeded.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation was carried out using the facilities of Gbabeks Publishers Limited, Kaduna, where a Periodicals Division was created for the purpose. The intention was that, if the idea succeeded, the project would form a major division of Gbabeks Publishing with the objective of marketing Nigerian primary-publications.

Three-hundred journal titles were identified using *The Nigerian File of International Standard Serial Number*[3]. The publishers of these journals were contacted by Gbabeks in March 1987 through a questionnaire designed to update both the publishers' addresses and the bibliographic details of their journals. The details requested in the questionnaire included: name and contact address of publisher, journal title(s) published, frequency of publication, price(s), date of last issue, trade discount allowed, method of delivery and preferred method of payment. An envelope, stamped and addressed to Gbabeks accompanied each mailed request.

By the 15 July 1987 deadline 208 journal publishers, comprising 24 private companies, 112 academic departments in higher institutions, 12 professional societies, 15 academic associations and 11 professional societies, six student associations and 28 Government