

Statistical Trends in South African Book Publishing during the 1990s¹

Francis Galloway

Introduction

The 1990s can be viewed as a Rubicon era for the South African book-publishing industry. The industry had to make the transition from functioning in a colonial and apartheid context to operating in the arena of the fledgling post-apartheid democracy. On the eve of the 1990s, industry spokesmen were looking forward to an extremely challenging era—full of exciting opportunities, especially in educational publishing, which has long been the backbone of book publishing in South Africa. The time has now come to appraise the transition and to take stock of the shape and size of the book publishing industry. *Did the industry grow during this period of no return?*

One of the frustrating problems confronting analysts of the South African book trade is that statistics are simply not available in any sensibly organised format. This article briefly contextualises the book-publishing sector as a cultural industry, provides a bird's-eye view of the industry's intimate connection with the history of colonialism and apartheid and highlights general trends of the book publishing culture during the first decade of the 'New South Africa'. Statistical trends on the number of books published during the 1990s are presented, according to category and language profile. The information has been retrieved from a prototype database that was developed in the Programme for Publishing Studies at the University of Pretoria.

The history of book publishing in South Africa is intimately connected with the history of colonialism, apartheid and the transition to democracy. Various sources (for example Hofmeyer 1985 and 1987) bear testimony to the fact that South Africa's social history has been sustained, even delineated, by what was and what could not be published.

¹ This article is based on a paper delivered at the international conference *Colonial and post-colonial cultures of the book* (Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6-8 August 2001).

Colonialism, followed by apartheid, circumscribed the exchange of ideas, stunted the development of identities and nurtured the artificial growth of ideologies concerned with exclusion (Evans & Seeber 2000:4). But always there were—and still are—publishers (and books) opposing the order of the day in the hope of a new, democratic order.

The investigation into statistical trends in local book publishing during the 1990s is one outcome of a three-year research programme focusing on the relationship between production figures, publishing philosophy and market expansion or contraction in the South African book publishing industry. Empirical literary studies and systems theory provided the research framework. One of the more recent applications of this approach is the investigation into 'Cultural Identity' as a construction (Segers 1997:272). Within a constructive framework the cultural identity of a nation, or groups within a nation, are construed by the interaction between three factors:

- The formal characteristics concerning that nation or group at a given time in history ('facts', figures and statistics, *including the number of books produced and sold; the ratio of language of publication, genre and local versus imported or translated books, etc.*).
- The self-image of the nation or group (the 'programming of the mind' on which the cultural identity is constructed by the in-group).
- The outside image of the cultural identity of the nation or group (the way in which people from outside conduct a process of selection, interpretation and evaluation concerning the in-group).

Dreaming on the Threshold

On the threshold of the 1990s, book industry leaders and spokesmen had high hopes for (and also some reservations about) the South African book industry in the next decade. The symposium *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*, hosted by the South African Library in Cape Town in November 1990, offered a platform for forecasting future developments and scenarios such as these:

David Philip (of the independent, alternative David Philip Publishers) foresaw that the 1990s were going to be extremely challenging for South African authors and publishers, full of exciting opportunities, especially in education. According to him educational publishing was the one most crucial problem that had to be resolved:

It will require a different kind of courage, a different kind of energy and commitment and expertise In a very real sense the role of an oppositional publisher does not disappear just because the government changes. Publishers of integrity are or ought to be endemically independent, always prepared to give voice to criticism of the establishment, always the supporters of freedom and creativity, holding open the doors for discussion and debate (Philip 1991:21).

Douglas Reid Skinner (of the independent Carrefour Press) stated that book publishing in South Africa has never been separate from its distorted political and economic context. But what of the future?

There is so much change and so much hope in the air. Is not the term 'multicultural' a term with a future, a 'progressive' term? Will all the distortion be ironed out, the discipline of the market be embraced? Will we get an economy less subject to the abuses of the politically powerful? Will we get a country in which everyone's cultural choices are respected, even equally respected? We are more likely to carry on reaping the consequences of years of clumsy and misguided social engineering and interference in the economy We are likely to find ourselves with more government, not less, and we are likely to persist in our bad cultural engineering habits along with it (Skinner 1991:23f).

Kerneels Breytenbach (of the mainstream Afrikaner-owned Human & Rousseau) hoped that the new South Africa would be acknowledged as a multicultural country, that all cultural groups would be equal, and that publishers would be able to publish for any of them, in whatever language was most suitable.

The educational policy of the future must give a clear indication of the definition of a multicultural society This will enable publishers of educational books to establish and follow a publishing policy; as for general publishers, it will eventually mean a normal society whose needs and tastes can be fathomed and at which they may aim their books (Breytenbach 1991:27).

In February 1991 a seminar on *Publishing and Development in the Third World* (Altbach 1992) took place in Bellagio, Italy. Mthobi Mutloatse (of the alternative Skotaville Publishers) represented indigenous publishing in South Africa and he was confident that a new era would dawn during the 1990s:

A democratic government must of necessity remedy the actual publishing situation as swiftly as possible. Call it affirmative action to indigenous writers and the disadvantaged of society if you will Come what may ... we are reconstructing a new African order Out of the ashes of apartheid will emerge a new superpower, there's no doubt about it. And an indigenous publishing house such as Skotaville will find itself being the centre of attraction on an unprecedented level By the year 2000, Skotaville will have grown into a young giant (Mutloatse 1992:216,219, 220).

With hindsight one can today compile a list of questions based on this wish list, including: What happened to the independent book publishers during the 1990s and to the dream of a new (African) order for the industry? What became of the 'bad cultural engineering habits' of the previous era? Did the vision of a multicultural (and multilingual) celebration of homegrown books materialise? Did the relationship between the industry and government change? Did this 'cultural industry' (DACST 1998:5) grow during the 1990s? *Was there statistical evidence of growth?*

Book Publishing Culture During Apartheid

Book Publishing in Afrikaans

In the African context the Afrikaans book publishing industry occupies a special niche as an indigenous accomplishment. It developed from a two-pronged cultural agenda. On the one hand it grew out of its liberation from the Dutch linguistic heritage and the struggle against Anglicisation; on the other it was politically and culturally entrenched after the victory of the National Party in 1948. Prior to 1948 the lucrative school textbook market was relatively open (being also subject to the more liberal influence of the missionary press). After 1948, however, the Afrikaner-owned publishing houses played a dominant role in providing school textbooks whose uncritical approach to apartheid ideology posed no problem for the government (as pointed out in various essays in Kromberg 1993). From the 1920s an increasingly vibrant general and academic Afrikaans book publishing industry was maintained; the 1960s, in particular, heralded a growth spurt in Afrikaans literary production. During the 1970s and 1980s this growth was threatened by state censorship—which, ironically, stimulated the development of alternative and oppositional writing and publishing in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. The dominance of Afrikaans can be measured in terms of the number of books published at the height of apartheid. On the eve of the 1990s the Afrikaans literature was the

most flourishing indigenous literary tradition of the colonial era. Yet, with a few exceptions, black Afrikaans-speaking writers were not included in this mainstream celebration.

Book Publishing in African Languages

After 1948 the indigenous African languages and literatures were 'de-linked from their missionary patronage and inserted within the overall designs of apartheid's ideology of ethnic nationalism' (Oliphant 2000:117). On the one hand there was a growth in the published output of these languages, but on the other the growth was controlled and directed towards providing a brand of didactic and moralistic literature for a school market encapsulated by the Verwoerdian system of Bantu Education, including Language Boards created to 'develop' these languages and to recommend prescribed books. Referring to the state of writing and scholarship in the African languages, Maake (2000:127) stated:

It can be said with a degree of truth that the literature has not yet, qualitatively or quantitatively, achieved the standards of Afrikaans and English literature, and that both creative *écriture* and critical writing are unpolitical, and have not fully established a bond with African literature as a whole.

This condition, he feels, is a result of the fact that literature in African languages 'has been under siege since its birth' and the victim of prevailing publishing conditions and gate keeping (Maake 2000:128).

Book Publishing in South African English

By 1966 writing in South Africa became 'virtually white by law' (Rive 1982:3). English writing by black South Africans produced during this period was systematically repressed through bans, arrests and exile. According to Oliphant (2000:118), what remained of English mainstream writing consisted of a compromised variant that, while compassionate, existed in uneasy complicity with the status quo. It was overseas publishers that provided an outlet for more radical anti-apartheid voices within the country as well as for the revolutionary literature written in exile. The oppressive policies and intimidating practices of the apartheid government made the 1960s and 1970s the decades of expatriate literature written and published in English.

Alternative/ Independent Publishing

The 1960s and 1970s were, however, also the era of courageous local oppositional publishers, including David Philip Publishers, AD Donker, Ravan Press, Skotaville, Taurus and others. With the exception of the first two, most independent publishing houses were dependent on overseas donors for support. Cloete (2000:43-72) provides an overview of the development and valuable contribution of alternative publishing from the early 1970s.

High hopes were pinned on the growth and vitality of indigenous publishing in the post-apartheid dispensation, based on the legacy of the oppositional publishing houses and indigenous language publishing. *What happened to this vision during the 1990s?*

Book Publishing during the Transitional Era

In order to contextualise the statistical trends presented below, general developments and issues concerning the book publishing culture of the 1990s are highlighted.

Mergers and Acquisitions and the Demise of the Independent publishers

The scale and rate of mergers and acquisitions during the 1990s completely changed the face of the book publishing industry. This phenomenon also changed

the complexions and cultures of companies in ways that render apartheid 'collaborators' and 'non-collaborators' simplistic and unreliable categories for classifying the publishing houses of the 1990s; not only have political allegiances shifted in the South African publishing arena, but their threads have become inextricably interwoven (Evans & Seeber 2000:30f)².

² Examples of mergers and acquisitions: Hodder & Stoughton Educational Southern Africa bought a majority share in Ravan Press in 1994. During 2000 Macmillan South Africa acquired Hodder & Stoughton Educational Southern Africa, which included the list of Ravan Press. New Africa Education and David Philip Publishers merged during 2001 to form New Africa Books. Nasionale Pers merged Nasou and Via Africa, and offered almost half of its shares to individual black shareholders and to the black consortium Thebe Investments. De Jager-HAUM sold half of its shares to the black-owned Kagiso Investment Holdings in 1994, resulting in a change of name to Kagiso Publishers. Maskew Miller Longman (itself a result of an earlier merger between Maskew Miller and Longman) took over Sached Books in 1995 (and closed it in 1999) and in 1998 they acquired Kagiso.

Through mergers and acquisitions, alternative publishing has been absorbed into mainstream publishing. Reasons for the decline and demise of the independent publishing houses include factors such as under-capitalisation, declining markets, dwindling funding and loss of staff through the dispersal of intellectuals and activists into the State apparatus, accompanied by a kind of political exhaustion (Cloete 2000:68f). This is a major loss, since mainstream publishing cannot perform the role of innovation and renewal. (An interesting development in the late 1990s has been, however, the emergence of new independents focusing on Afrikaans language publishing.)

Publishing and the New School Curriculum

During the 1990s a new school curriculum was introduced—with ground-shifting consequences for textbook publishing. Curriculum 2005, founded on outcomes-based methodologies, shifted the emphasis from rote learning and regurgitating of authoritative knowledge gleaned from prescribed textbooks to the development of critical faculties on the basis of a wide variety of learning resources. A highly polarised debate developed around the role of learning support material, especially prescribed textbooks, and the educational publisher and author as authorities of knowledge (Evans 2000:195-201).

The shift in educational approach forced educational publishers to develop learning material suitable for the new learning environment. They invested heavily in new projects. Then in 1996 some provincial departments announced that they would develop and publish their own educational materials—state publishing seemed imminent. This threat did not materialise, but by the end of 1997 the national Department of Education announced that it did not have sufficient funds to purchase books. One source claims that government expenditure on schoolbooks dropped from R800 million in 1997 to R120 million in 1998 (Seeber 2001:17). Given that the industry was dominated by educational publishing, the blow was severe. Downscaling in production led to many job losses and contributed in a large degree to the acquisitions and mergers discussed earlier. This crisis highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the publishing industry and the state in a developing democracy (Evans & Seeber 2000:38f).

Changing Higher Education Policies

Academic publishers also faced major shifts during the 1990s. Publishing programmes had to be adjusted according to a new market profile, caused by the increasing numbers of black students enrolling at historically white institutions

(Strauss Van der Linde & Plekker 2000: Fig 9 & Fig. 11), and to curriculum change and changing language profile (Smit 2000). Other factors that impacted negatively on the academic book sector included changing state funding formulas for tertiary education; large numbers of financially disadvantaged students entering the market; a dwindling book-buying culture and high levels of illegal photocopying. On the one hand the market for local titles fulfilling the need for relevant post-apartheid content grew. On the other hand, however, imported British and American titles continued to dominate the academic textbook market. During the apartheid era and in the transitional period, scholarly books on South African issues had a broad appeal and a potential international market, but this trend started to reverse. According to Horwitz-Gray (2000:161-171), we remain colonised in academic life. South African scholarly publishers seeking to publish leading authors now often find it necessary to co-publish with or buy rights from international publishers.

General Book Publishing

The textbook crisis of the 1990s spilled over beyond the educational arena, and the effects were felt in a reduction of certain small-market titles, including less viable projects such as literary genres and special-interest non-fiction, which many publishers customarily subsidise from their textbook profits. The local trade-publishing sector was vulnerable because it now had to operate in a multilingual society where books for leisure and pleasure should ideally be available in eleven languages (Van Zyl 2000a; Van der Merwe 2000a; Van der Merwe 2000b). The lack of a strong reading and book-buying culture hampered the expected growth of this sub-sector—books are luxury items for the majority of South Africans. And in spite of various programmes and initiatives to counteract illiteracy, the statistics remained daunting.

General publishing in Afrikaans seemed to hold its ground, due largely to the support of its language community (Van Zyl 2000b; Van Zyl 2001b). But no new market demand developed for general books in the African languages. English dominated the trade book market, despite being the first language of only 8,6% of South Africans (Deprez & Du Plessis 2000:101). At the same time the market was flooded with imported titles from the UK and USA, and the cream of local writers published internationally.

The Role of the Government

During the 1990s the government focused on service delivery—providing health care, housing and infrastructure to previously disadvantaged communities. Books (and

literacy and reading) were not amongst its priorities; nor was strengthening and stimulating the book industry (Evans & Seeber 2000:12).

The role of the government, according to Wafawarowa (2001:11) should not be to control but to facilitate and enable book development. The economic laws of supply and demand cannot be the sole regulator of book development. A democratic government should provide a suitable environment for the growth of the book sector and ensure that the country gets good returns on the incentives it gives to the private sector for book development.

As far as direct government involvement in generating partnerships between industry, government and civil society is concerned, only DACST became involved during the 1990s. (This involvement included the funding of the Centre for the Book; initiating emerging policy on the 'cultural industries' and the setting up of the Print Industries Cluster Council with the Department of Trade and Industry.) By the end of the 1990s South Africa, however, did not have a national book policy or a book development council.

Did the predicted growth of the book publishing industry (both in the number of books published and in the variety of language befitting the new multicultural democracy) materialise during the 1990s?

Statistical Trends during the 1990s

The Availability of Statistics

It is very difficult to obtain useful and reliable numeric data on the South African book publishing industry. In the UK the annual *Book sales yearbook* provides the industry with market intelligence (including new titles published during a specific year and comparative tables for three years) as well as category analysis. The analysis is based on primary data obtained from electronic point-of-sale driven tracking systems, which do not exist in South Africa.

In the past the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) made several efforts to conduct surveys of the South African book trade, but the results were so incomplete that no full picture could emerge; the government did not keep track of book trade statistics either. The *South African National Bibliography* provided some statistics of value, but it is primarily organised as a tool for librarians and its inclusiveness limits its use as a source of book trade statistics (Van Rooyen 1996:8).

The South African Publishing Industry Report (DACST 1998:72) did not provide any new primary statistical data on the book industry. The report stressed the need to generate and collate reliable statistics about turnover, volumes produced,

human resources, government spending and the like. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa* (Evans & Seeber 2000) claimed to be the only

... single work available to date that analyses the issues surrounding book publishing in South Africa; that treats publishing as a strategic industry; and that provides a social and historical context as part of its analysis.

However, no primary statistical data was offered. Wesgro's Sector Research Section commissioned a report (Wesgro 2000) on the publishing industry in the Western Cape during 2000. This report confirmed that 'statistics are not readily available' in the book publishing industry. The compiler tabled turnover statistics for local book publishers, based on interviews with industry informants; production figures were not included. The publishing market profile produced by Global Publishing Information (GPI) tabled a 'fairly crude' estimated turnover for the fifteen top publishing houses, derived from 'best estimates based on various sources within the book trade' (GPI 2001:17); reference to turnover and production statistics were based on the Wesgro report and the University of Pretoria's *Production Trends Database* (Rall & Warricker 2000) respectively.

The Production Trends Database

During 2000 Nasboek, the book division of the media house Naspers, requested the Programme for Publishing Studies at the University of Pretoria to investigate the possibility of extracting useful statistical information regarding the number, categories and language profile of books published annually in South Africa from existing sources. A pilot research project, aimed at developing a prototype database for book production trends, was formulated. The objective was to retrieve comparative statistical data on the number of books (according to category and language profile) published during the 1990s.

Two Honours students in Publishing Studies addressed the following issues:

- To find a suitable primary source that contained the basic data needed to establish statistical trends.
- To find ways and means of extracting data from the primary source in order to compile cumulative statistics.
- To create an electronic database that could be updated on an ongoing basis in order to retrieve reliable data in the future (Rall & Warricker 2000).

The research design type was an empirical study based on secondary numeric data analysis. The analysis of the data involved breaking it down to manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The aim of the analysis was to see whether there were any patterns or trends that could be identified or isolated. The researchers were well aware that the strengths of secondary data analysis included savings in time and costs because of the use of existing data and the possibility of re-analysing previous findings. The limitations, however, were also taken into consideration: the researchers were not able to control all primary data collection errors; they were also constrained by the original objectives of the compilers of the primary data and by the effectiveness of the legal depositing of books by publishers.

The only source containing cumulative data on local publications, the *South African National Bibliography* (SANB) published by the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), was used as primary source. The SANB lists all published material submitted to the NLSA under the terms of the Legal Deposit Act (No. 54 of 1997). At the time when the pilot project was undertaken the SANB was compiled by means of an electronic database (DOBIS), which could be accessed at the NLSA and through the South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET). The printed format of the SANB ceased to exist in 2000. From 1997 it had become available on CD-ROM as part of the *African Studies Database*, produced and distributed by the National Inquiry Services Centre (NISC).

The three different formats were examined for their suitability for data retrieval. Each format posed unique problems. The major problem concerning the data contained in the printed volumes was that the records reflected the books received from publishers during a specific year and not necessarily the year of publication. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that there was a backlog in the capturing of the data into the SANB database. Although the search facilities on the CD-ROM were more user-friendly and searches could be conducted according to year of publication, comparative statistics could not be retrieved and it was not possible to distinguish between records containing an ISBN and those containing an ISSN. The CD-ROM, however, supported the facility of exporting retrieved data as ASCII text. This facility was used to import the required data into a searchable MS Access database. The following fields of data were selected for inclusion:

- Title;
- Publication date;
- Source (publisher and physical description of the publication);

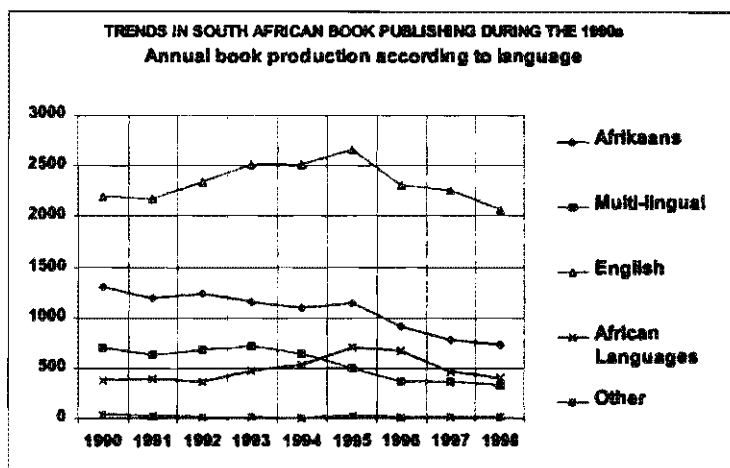
- Language;
- SANB Call Number (Dewey Decimal Classification number);
- Category (e.g. fiction, juvenile);
- ISBN (International Standard Book Number);
- Keywords (broad subject headings).

Once the data had been converted into MS Excel it was exported to MS Access. The data were exported in batches according to the year of publication and kept in different tables within the database. MS Access allows the user to sort records alphabetically or numerically. Using this function a total of 11 510 duplicate records was traced and, by defining the 'title' field of each record as primary key, these duplications as well as records for reprints (not revised editions) were removed. Records containing an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN)—issued for periodicals, magazines and loose-leaf publications—had to be removed manually. Incomplete records were verified by means of the publisher number within the ISBN.

The pilot project resulted in a prototype *Production Trends Database*. By July 2001 this database was the most sensibly organised source available on statistics of book production during the 1990s. The next phase of the research project was to verify the data and to update and expand the database.

Statistics on Overall Annual Book Production

During the period 1990-1998 a total of 40 057 new book titles were published in South Africa. This figure included all publications issued with an ISBN and published by a wide variety of role-players in the book publishing industry, including commercial publishing houses, self-publishers, organisations, institutions and government departments.



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Afrikaans	1295	1189	1236	1159	1092	1137	914	782	733	9537
Multilingual	704	630	683	717	643	500	369	370	333	4949
English	2197	2174	2350	2518	2519	2664	2306	2263	2069	21060
African Languages	372	394	361	470	531	710	662	458	401	4359
Other	33	21	17	16	4	21	17	13	10	152
Total	4601	4408	4647	4880	4789	5032	4268	3886	3546	40037

Fig. 1 Annual book production according to language (Rall & Warricker 2000: 21).

Annual book production peaked at 5000 in 1995. This marginal growth during the first five years of the decade was reversed during the latter part of the decade (during 1998 the production of new titles fell by 1000 compared to 1990). The general downward trend for all the languages reflected the effect of the educational crisis of the late 1990s. As far as the language profile of local book production was concerned, the following trends were manifested:

- A slight upward trend in the number of titles published in *English* between 1990 and 1995 and then a decline in numbers.
- A downward trend for titles published in *Afrikaans*.
- An upward trend in *African languages* until 1995 and then a downward one.

Because of the relatively small number of titles published in the nine African languages they were grouped together in this graph. (The naming of the African languages was based on the designations used in the SANB.)

The next graph reflects the breakdown in production figures according to the individual African languages:

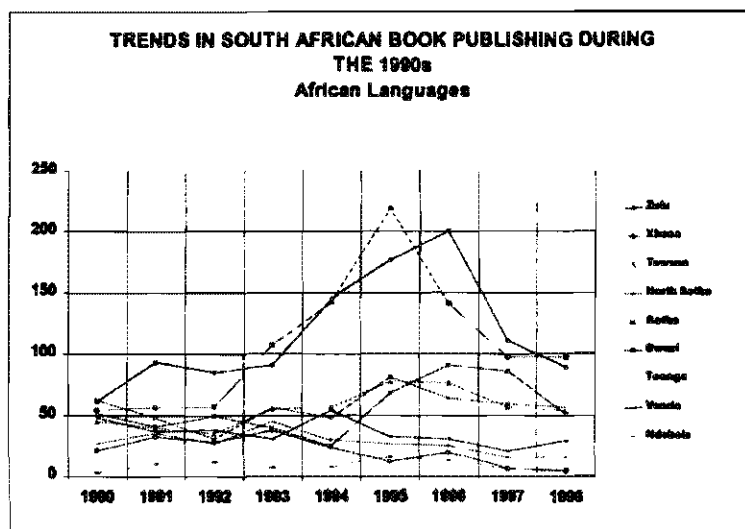
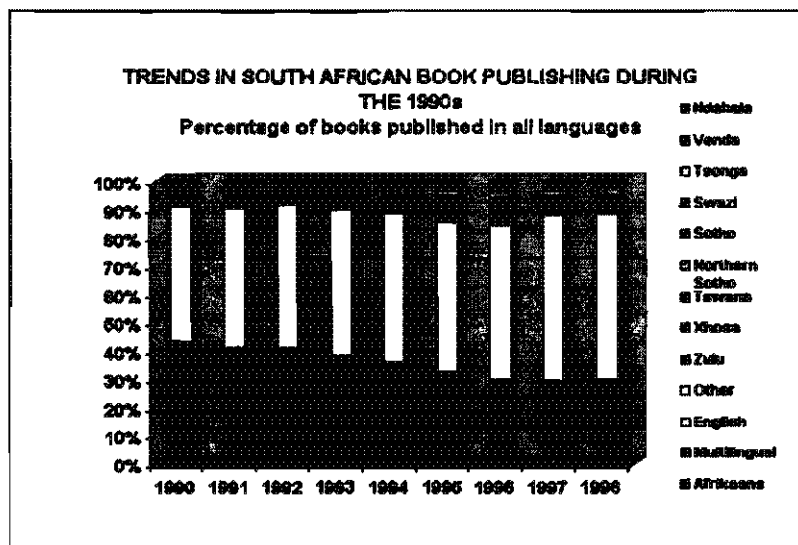


Fig. 2 African languages profile (Rall & Warricker 2000:22)

During the mid-1990s there was an upward trend, as well as an overall dominance, of publications in isiZulu and isiXhosa. From 1996 a downward trend in overall production was manifested.

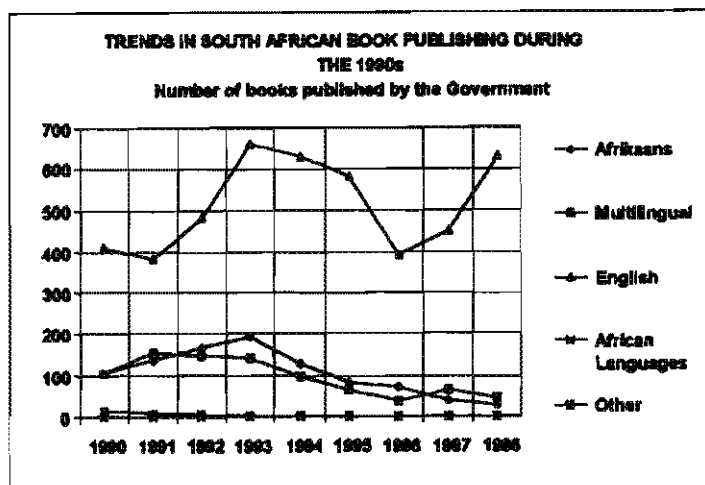
The publishing scene in South Africa during the 1990s was dominated by English language titles:



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Afrikaans	28.15	26.97	26.60	23.75	22.80	22.60	21.42	20.12	20.67
Multilingual	15.30	14.29	14.70	14.69	13.43	9.94	8.65	9.52	9.39
English	47.75	49.32	50.57	51.60	52.60	52.94	54.03	58.23	58.35
Other	0.72	0.48	0.37	0.33	0.08	0.42	0.40	0.33	0.28
Zulu	1.33	2.11	1.83	1.86	3.03	3.52	4.69	2.86	2.51
Xhosa	1.17	1.27	1.23	2.19	2.97	4.35	3.30	2.52	2.74
Tswana	0.98	0.91	0.75	1.13	1.17	1.53	1.78	1.47	1.49
Northern Sotho	1.35	1.09	0.67	1.15	1.00	1.61	1.50	1.52	1.58
Sotho	1.11	0.93	1.05	0.82	0.52	1.35	2.13	2.21	1.44
Swazi	0.46	0.75	0.60	0.78	0.50	0.24	0.47	0.15	0.11
Tsonga	0.59	0.82	0.58	0.92	0.63	0.54	0.61	0.39	0.45
Venda	1.04	0.84	0.82	0.64	1.13	0.66	0.73	0.54	0.82
Ndebele	0.07	0.23	0.24	0.14	0.15	0.32	0.30	0.13	0.17
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Fig. 3: Percentage of books published in all languages (Rall & Warricker 2000:25).

The next graph represents the language profile of books published by state departments during this period. The numbers clearly reflect the fact that the government was not implementing a multilingual approach to its internal publishing programme.



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Afrikaans	105	135	167	193	127	81	71	39	28	946
Multilingual	105	154	147	143	98	65	37	66	45	858
English	412	382	482	680	628	582	392	451	828	4817
African Languages	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	13	9	5	2	3	3	1	1	0	37
Total	635	680	801	898	854	731	501	557	701	6458

Fig. 4: Number of books published by the government (Rall & Warricker 2000:37).

Statistics on literary publishing

All types of South African literature, from the advent of colonialism up to the transitional process of the 1990s, have been directly shaped by the economic, political, institutional and technological factors affecting publishing. Literary publishing in post-apartheid South Africa presents its own complexities and it is laced with what Oliphant

(2000:109) called 'historical ironies' such as 'the relative strength of local publishing output compared with the rather meagre output of South African literature in all the literary genres and languages'. The following graph, providing statistics on adult poetry, drama and fiction production (Galloway 2000), testifies to this meagre output of literature compared to the overall book publishing output presented in Fig. 1.

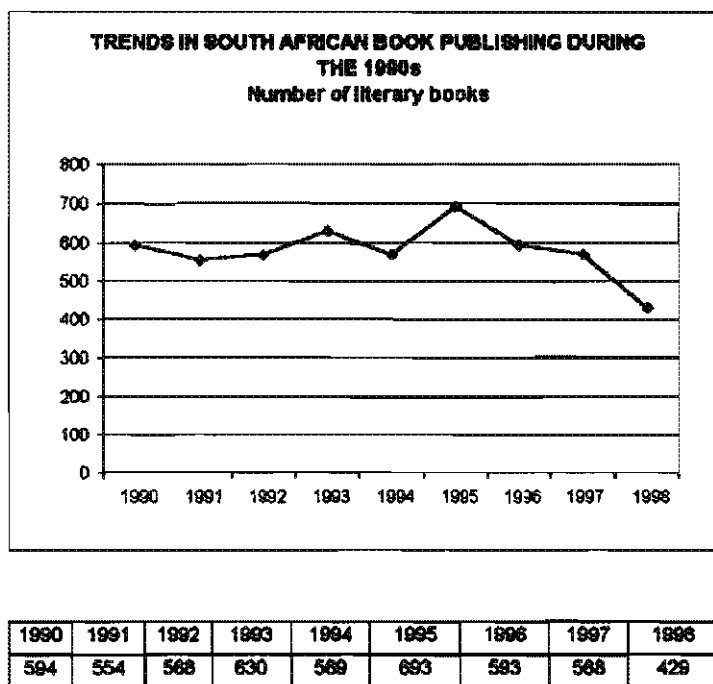


Fig. 5: Number of literary books published (Rall & Warricker 2000:45)

The output peaked during 1995 in anticipation of investment in the new educational curriculum and the traditionally lucrative school textbook market. Since then there has been a rapid decline in overall production of literary titles. The next two graphs represent a profile of literary production according to language and genre.

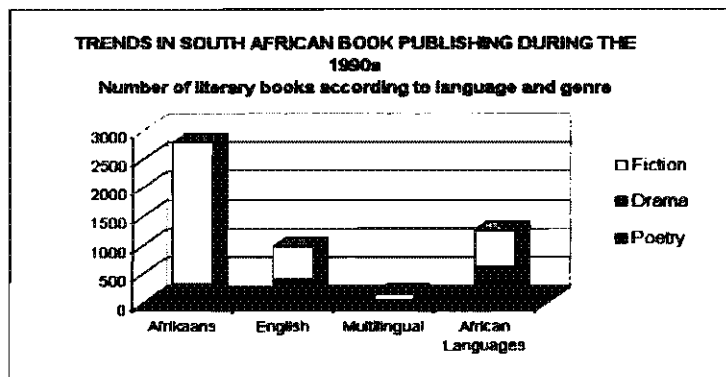


Fig. 6 Literary production profile (Rall & Warricker 2000)

Afrikaans remained the dominant literary language in South Africa; storytelling in particular flourished during the 1990s. But *Afrikaans* literary publishing was no longer politically and institutionally protected and privileged and was numerically on the decline. The output in the combined *African languages* sector was higher than in the South African English literary publishing sector. But when this number was broken down to eleven individual languages, the graph became illegible. In spite of the new official status afforded by the Constitution, literature in the indigenous African languages remained trapped in the school-based and radio-drama markets; the statistics did not reflect the development of a new general adult readership.

More poetry and drama titles were published in *English*. In the past established English fiction writers have turned to international publishers rather than supporting the local publishing industry, but with more new black writers entering the field—preferring to write and publish in *English*—the statistics for local English fiction may reflect an upward trend from 1999.

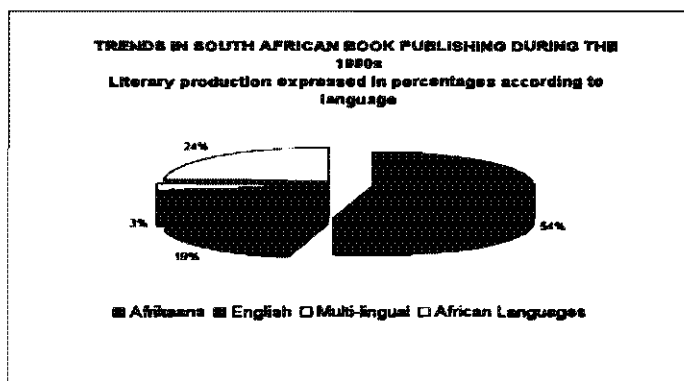


Fig. 7: *Literary production expressed in percentage* (Rall & Warricker 2000:47).

Conclusion

South African publishing regressed during the 1990s—"in terms of diversity in ownership, as well as in the variety of its output, and perhaps also in its social importance" (Oliphant 2000:121). The vision of the growth and vitality of an indigenous industry, "based on the best features of the oppositional houses and on attention paid to indigenous language publishing" was bypassed (Combrinck & Davey 2000:230).

During the 1990s it became clear how fundamentally writing and publishing had been stunted by colonialism and apartheid, to the extent that they have barely been able to survive the political transition, related as they were to the 'two economies'—developed and underdeveloped—in our society, and to the multiple languages and cultures that define us (Evans & Seeber 2000:7).

At institutional level the era of political transition chiselled out a new face for the book publishing industry of the future. According to Oliphant (2000:121) the publishing industry now finds itself in a democratic environment, where it has lost none of its national importance for the literary culture in South Africa, but radical changes are required for the industry to perform its role adequately. The next few years will be the real test for post-apartheid publishing in South Africa. Will the scales tip towards the fostering of indigenous knowledge systems and the

development of a strong multilingual book publishing culture or towards new reading communities, transcending language and cultural groupings, with the advent of digital technologies and their global penetration?

Department Information Science
University of Pretoria

* I acknowledge the contribution made by Pieter Rall and Hendri Warricker who developed the prototype *Production Trends Database* as an Honours project.

References

- Altbach, PG (ed) 1992. *Publishing and Development in the Third World*. London: Hans Zell Publishers.
- Breytenbach, K 1991. Book Publishing in a Multicultural South Africa. In South African Library. *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*. Cape Town: South African Library.
- Cloete, D 2000. Alternative publishing in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Combrinck, N & M Davey 2000. 'We will Publish What We Deem to be Great': A Dialogue about Trade Publishing and its Readers in South Africa. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- DACST (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) 1998. *The South African Publishing Industry Report*. Available Online: <http://www.dacst.gov.za>
- Deprez, K & T du Plessis (eds) 2000. *Studies in Language Policy in South Africa: Multilingualism and Government*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Evans, N 2000. 'A Textbook as Cheap as a Can of Beer': Schoolbooks and Public Education in South Africa. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Evans, N & M Seeber (eds). 2000. *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Galloway, Francis 2000. Response to a Round Table Discussion: Multilingualism, Publishers, Readers and the Question of Literary Language in Africa: 'For Whom are Stories Told and Books Written?' Unpublished response to papers delivered at ICLA Conference, Pretoria (13 - 19 August 2000).

- GPI, 2001. *Publishing Market Profile. South Africa*. Available Online: <http://www.publishers.org.uk/gpi.nsf>
- Hofmeyer, I 1985. Setting Free the Books: The David Philip AfricaSouth Paperback Series. *English in Africa* 12,1:83-95.
- Hofmeyer, I 1987. Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902-1924. In Marks, S & S Trapido (eds): *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*. Essex: Longman.
- Horwitz-Gray, E 2000a. Academic Publishing in South Africa. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: Natal University Press.
- Kromberg, S (ed) 1993. *Publishing for Democratic Education*. Johannesburg: Sached Books.
- Maake, N 2000. Publishing and Perishing: Books, People and Reading in African Languages in South Africa. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Mpe, P & P Seeber 2000. The Politics of Book Publishing in South Africa: A Critical Overview. In Evans, N & M Seeber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Mutloatse, M 1992. Indigenous Publishing in South Africa: The Case of Skotaville Publishers. In Altbach, PG (ed): *Publishing and Development in the Third World*. London: Hans Zell.
- Oliphant, A 2000. From Colonialism to Democracy: Writers and Publishing in South Africa. In Evans, N & M Seber (eds): *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press.
- Philip, D 1991. Book Publishing under and after Apartheid. In: South African Library. *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*. Cape Town: South African Library.
- Rall, P & H Warricker 2000. Trends in Book Publishing in South Africa for the Period 1990 to 1999. Unpublished Research Report. University of Pretoria: Department of Information Science (Publishing Studies).
- Rive, R 1982. Books by Black Writers. *Staffrider* 5,1:12-15.
- Segers, RT 1996. Inventing a Future for Literary Studies: Research and Teaching on Cultural Identity. *Journal of Literary Studies* 13,3/4:263-283.
- Skinner, D Reid 1991 Book Publishing in a Multicultural South Africa. In South African Library. *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*. Cape Town: South African Library.
- Smit, F 2000. Talle faktore gryp in universiteitstaal in. *Afrikaans Vandag* 7,3:10-11.
- South African Library 1991. *Book Publishing in South Africa for the 1990s*. Cape Town: South African Library.

- Strauss, JP, HJ van der Linde & SJ Plekker 2000. *Education and Manpower Development 1999*. University of the Orange Free State: Research Institute for Educational Planning.
- Van der Merwe, A 2000a. Notes on General Publishing in a Multicultural Environment, the South African Situation, and the Question: For Whom are Stories Told and Books Written? Unpublished paper delivered at ICLA Conference, Pretoria (13 - 19 August 2000).
- Van der Merwe, A 2000b. 'Ons is van Uiteenlopendheid Aanmekaargesit': Algemene Uitgewerye in Suid-Afrika aan die Begin van die 21ste eeu. Litnet-skrywersberaad. Available Online: http://www.mweb.co.za/litnet/seminaar/31vdm_erwe.asp
- Van Rooyen, B 1996. *How to get Published in South Africa: A Guide for Authors*. 2nd ed. Halfway House: Southern.
- Van Zyl, H 2000a. Notes Towards a Discussion on: Multilingualism, Publishers, Readers and the Question of Literary Language in Africa: 'For Whom are Stories Told and Books Written?' Unpublished paper delivered at ICLA Conference, Pretoria (13 - 19 August 2000).
- Van Zyl, H 2000b. Die boek in Afrikaans. Litnet-skrywersberaad. Available Online: <http://mweb.co.za/litnet/seminaar/34vzyl.asp>
- Van Zyl, H 2001a. Trends in Consumer Publishing. Unpublished power point presentation delivered at the University of Pretoria.
- Van Zyl, H 2001b. NB-Uitgewers: 'Waarom Herskik, Waarheen Vorentoe?' Available Online: <http://www.mweb.co.za/litnet/seminaar/07hannes.asp>
- Wafawarowa, B 2001. Book Policies and Book Development in Africa. *Cape Librarian / Kaapse Bibliotekaris* May / June: 10 - 13.
- Wesgro, 2000. *Wesgro Background Report on the Publishing Industry in the Western Cape*. Cape Town: Wesgro's Sector Research Section.