

## Chapter 6: The wider university and socio-political context

### 6.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is the history of the university presses, in other words a social history within a specific institutional context. The values and ideology of specific institutions would be expected to have a clear impact on publishing philosophy and selection decisions (as described in the previous chapter), as well as on the operations and business decisions made. While the previous chapter examined the publishing output of the university presses, in terms of a specific model, this chapter examines the wider institutional and external factors accounting for the publishing decisions. What socio-historical forces, it is asked, impacted on the university presses, either enabling or constraining them in the development of the publishing lists deconstructed in Chapter 5? Thus, an attempt is made to insert the university presses into their wider social context, and examine the constraints imposed by their academic and wider milieu. Without considering such aspects of the presses' history, it is argued, the discussion of the presses' publishing lists risks remaining in the realm of description, and not moving forward into the areas of contextualisation and analysis.

Thus, for the purposes of this discussion, the continuum of intellectual responses will be placed in the context of the publishing value chain or cycle (as elaborated in Chapter 4, in the discussion of oppositional publishers). The publishing cycle structures the analysis: starting with the publishing mission and business model as the foundation of the publishing house, followed by the production value chain, as well as aspects of distribution, readership and impact. An important aspect of the origination and production value chain, the author profile, was considered in detail in Chapter 5 along with questions of gatekeeping, and will thus not be repeated here. Moreover, comparison will be made with the operations of the independent oppositional publishers, to show the differences in approach and the specific constraints under which a university press must function. The key similarity between these forms of publishers – that they are all mission-driven, rather than profit-driven – is also

examined. This chapter thus adds further insights to the application of the model to studying a publisher's history, and the potential benefits vis-à-vis traditional publishing models will be considered.

## **6.2 Mission-driven publishing**

Like the independent oppositional publishers described in Chapter 4, a university press is mission-driven, rather than profit-driven. Once again, this echoes Bourdieu's (1985) subdivision of the field of cultural production into the field of restricted production (dominated by the pursuit of symbolic capital, or the recognition of the symbolic value of its product) and the field of large-scale production (dominated by the quest for economic profit). University presses clearly operate within a field of restricted production and aim at the quest for symbolic capital. However, the mission in the case of the university presses is related to academic merit and prestige, rather than directly to political change as for the oppositional publishers – as may be seen in the founding missions of the South African university presses, outlined in Chapter 3. The university presses, in this way, share a close affiliation with their parent institutions, the universities.

### **6.2.1 Identity and the university**

The insertion of the university presses into their parent institutions, and their inevitable links to that institution's symbolic capital, may be traced through the paratextual elements of their imprints and conventions around their title pages. This examination of the paratext enables us to trace the relationship between the presses and the universities in a way that complements and supplements the archival record.

Wits University Press established its own imprint around December 1937, although all previous titles had made mention of the university in some form or another (see, for example the title page of the press's very first book from 1922, in Figure 3.1, which referred to the "University of the Witwatersrand Press"). All titles would henceforth, after 1937, carry the precise words "Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg" on the title pages and often, but not always, on the spine and back cover. This wording was scrupulously

controlled, with a dispute occurring in 1952 in regard to Dr Hamish Gilliland's *A Student's Key to the Monocotyledons of the Witwatersrand*. The Publications Committee Minutes of 30 October 1952 note that "Dr Gilliland had not consulted Mr. Freer about the final appearance of the book and that consequently the words 'U. of W. Press' appeared on the cover instead of the correct title 'WUP'". This led to a tightening of procedures, revealing the centralised authority structure of the university.

In the late 1970s (around 1977), WUP began to use the crest of the University beside its name, as a colophon, in addition to the text stating 'Witwatersrand University Press' (see Figure 6.1). This suggests that the Press wished to be more closely associated with the symbolic capital and prestige belonging to the over-arching institution, at a time when the Press itself was experiencing some decline. The mission of the Press remained a service function to the university, rather than to publish independently.

After a major review of the Press in 1987, a new logo was commissioned to signal a new, more commercial direction for its operations. This colophon – a curved, more artistic representation of the initials WUP – was used from about 1990. This was also a time of increasing advertising, which showed some growth in the use of desktop publishing and graphics in marketing materials. The mission of the Press was updated around the same time, to reflect a more independent and commercial orientation. In advertising materials from the period, the new colophon is linked to a new, more progressive image for the Press as well.

In the early 2000s, the logo was again updated, and the name shortened to Wits University Press (rather than Witwatersrand). It is now often colloquially known as Wits Press. The current colophon represents a stylised W, which is reminiscent of the shape of two open books. The link to the authority and status of the parent institution has thus diminished over time, as the Press has gained renown in its own right. The output of the Press also became more outspoken over time, with a general shift on the continuum towards the more oppositional categories.

Figure 6.1: Changing colophon for WUP: c. 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s



**WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY PRESS  
JOHANNESBURG**



WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY PRESS



WITS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Natal followed a similar pattern to WUP, once again, with some changes in the wording of its name: Natal University Press, University of Natal Press (finally settled in 1969), and later University of KwaZulu-Natal Press after the mergers in the higher education sector of 2004. At first, the Press used just the words, “University Press, Natal” or “University of Natal Press”, on the title page of its publications (see Figure 3.2, which shows the title page of the first book, using the Afrikaans words “Universiteitspers, Natal”). The wording was definitely *not* Natal University Press – a semantic matter that was debated at some length by the Committee, according to the Minutes of 27 October 1969 – but rather University of Natal Press. For example, the 1953 title, *Manual of a Thematic Apperception Test for African Subjects* by Sidney Lee, used the words, “Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1953” on its title page.

A long process was followed to establish a more appropriate and more individual colophon for the Press, with Percy Patrick first submitting a design in August 1974, shortly before he fell ill. Notably, Patrick was a public relations expert, and was the first to attempt to improve the image of the press as an institution in its own right. Later, his successor Mobbs Moberly took up the task, although it was to take several years and a number of designs before the now familiar graphic design was selected, in 1982. Like WUP's curved letters, this design was based on the initials UNP, with a large U, followed by a smaller n and p running into each other. This design may still be seen on the Press buildings in Pietermaritzburg. The name and logo would change again once the university had merged to become the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2004, with the inclusion of an African-flavour beadwork element and the stylised letters spelling out UKZN Press. Like WUP, then, the Press thus has gradually moved away from a direct identity with the parent institution, in terms of its brand identity.

**Figure 6.2: Changing colophon for UNP, c. 1970s, 1980s and 2000s**

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS  
PIETERMARITZBURG



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UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS

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In contrast, it was only as late as 1970 that Unisa titles would include the words “Unisa Publication” on the inside front cover for the first time, in an initial attempt at branding the university press imprint. Previously, all titles had simply carried the name of the University of South Africa, in Afrikaans or English depending on the language of the title itself. In the 1980s, the crest of the university was increasingly used, in addition to the words, “Published by the University of South Africa”.

From the mid-1990s, the name of the Department of Publishing Services formally changed to Unisa Press, and this wording was used on title pages. It was only after the higher education mergers in 2004, that a number of logo designs were considered for an individualised colophon. For a brief period, a bird design was used as the logo of the press. However, with growing corporatisation of the institution, the parent institution required that the logo be changed to fit in with the standardised corporate image of the university.

**Figure 6.3: Changing colophon for Unisa Press, c. 1980s, 2000s**



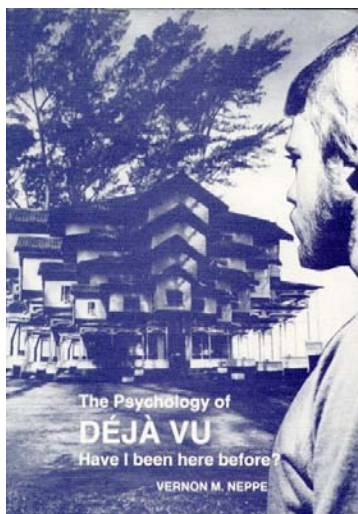
UNISA 1988



The standard elements of the brand name 'Unisa', the colours, and the visual element of the flames, were thus retained, with the word 'PRESS' added at the end. This is the same as for other institutes and centres at Unisa, and reveals the view that Unisa Press is a department of the university, and not in any way an individual entity. The service mandate of the Press, in keeping with this view, is emphasised at Unisa, to a greater extent than its mission to promote and disseminate scholarly communication and knowledge production.

A production problem at WUP illustrates the practical necessity of regulating the use of an imprint at a publishing house. Vernon Neppe's *The Psychology of Déjà Vu: Have I been here before?* was published in only one edition in 1983, with a limited print run. WUP apparently did not communicate adequately with the printers, CTP Book Printers in Cape Town, and thus the back cover did not contain all of the information it should have – as a result, other than the ISBN, it was left blank. Moreover, the spine contains only the emblem of the publisher – WUP – and no title or author's name. These errors, particularly those on the spine, combined with the fact that it was the first and until very recently the only book on the subject of déjà vu and was written by the recognised world expert on the subject, have made this book into a rare and expensive collector's edition. Moreover, the unusual front cover by the photographic artist, Warren Liebmann, adds to its worth as a collector's item (see Figure 6.4).

**Figure 6.4: Cover design of *The Psychology of Déjà Vu***



An examination of the use of imprints and colophons thus reveals interesting aspects of the mission and identity of the university presses. At WUP and UNP, we see increasing independence of identity from the parent institution, while at Unisa an initial move towards independence was curtailed when the university moved to standardise all logos associated with its brand – to assert the centralised identity of the merged institution.

### **6.3 Business models and funding**

The mission-driven nature of university press publishing has led to the use of specific kinds of business models. These have shifted over time, from being almost entirely non-profit, towards a more commercial and professional orientation. Within the apartheid era, the subsidised, non-profit model was dominant. The organisational structure of the university presses was restricted by the institutional set-up in which they found themselves. Initially, they were run somewhat informally, usually from the Library, with a part-time or full-time Publications Officer, as described in Chapter 3. As their duties expanded, so their staff complement also grew, usually along functional lines. Thus, the functions of editorial, administration, production and management were separated and became formal positions as time passed. The status of the manager or director also changed over time. This growing formalisation contrasts with the situation at most of the oppositional publishers, which did not develop, on the whole, beyond the point of a small, informally structured staff.

An important part of both the business model for a publisher, as well as the context for a higher education institution, is the means and source of funding. The universities in South Africa were not autonomous business units, entirely responsible for their own budgets and revenue. Rather, they functioned within a state system, in which they were subject to parliamentary oversight and budgetary control. This limited the scope of what a university could do. Bourdieu has pointed out the link between funding and a publishing list, indicating that, for universities, “[t]he state, after all, has the power to orient intellectual production by means of subsidies, commissions, promotion, honorific posts, even decorations, all of which are for speaking or keeping silent, for compromise or abstention” (Bourdieu, 1985: 27). Thus, “[g]overnment authorities make it clear to university officials that continued good relations, budgetary allocations, and research funds depend on the appropriate academic



and political behaviour on the part of the faculty” (Altbach, 2000: 270). This suggests a structural reason for the intellectual responses of academics, and their leaning towards privatism and cautious activism, rather than radicalism.

In turn, the university presses functioned as departments of their respective parent institutions, rather than as autonomous business units. Again, this limited the scope of their activities. The primary source of funding was a subvention from their parent institutions; they were then expected to recover costs as far as possible. In recent years, the pressures to become more profitable have grown increasingly intense, with the result that all manuscripts are now evaluated on the basis of academic merit as well as whether they can cover their own costs. Previously, the non-profit orientation of the university presses meant that they did not always operate according to viable business principles. Concerns are repeatedly raised in the literature about the sustainability of this business model, as in the following report: “Some in-house university publishers in South Africa publish books on a not for profit basis and simply wish to cover costs on the sale of books. These books are by and large sold at a rate far below the market value for equivalent publications” (CIGS, 1998: 41). Nonetheless, income was very important for all of the university presses, even if only intended on a cost-recovery basis.

This section will examine the sources of revenue for the university presses, and the impact of their non-profit orientation on their business models. It becomes clear that the circumscribed sphere in which the university presses operated had a direct effect on their ability to make oppositional publishing decisions; the independence of the oppositional publishers gave them a great deal more freedom when developing their lists.

### **6.3.1 Subsidies and grants**

Funding for university presses is usually mixed, but is based in large part on support from their parent institutions. This funding may be direct or indirect, in the form of operating subsidies, infrastructure, or publication grants, and the proportion of costs that it covers will vary from one institution to the next. In addition, funding is usually supplemented by sales,

as well as by departmental contributions, subventions from the authors themselves, or funds from donors, societies and foundations (cf. Meisel, 2010: 135).

In South Africa, the university presses have been primarily funded by an annual grant or subvention from their parent institutions, although they were later expected to supplement this income. The grant was intended to subsidise the costs of staff salaries, office accommodation, equipment and operating expenses. Publishing expenses were sometimes budgeted in addition to operating costs, but more often were expected to be financed (and cross-subsidised) from sales and other revenue. The basis for this grant is the recognition that these are non-commercial and not-for-profit presses: “The University should accept the principle that its Press is a service and not primarily a money-making organization” (NU Digest, 1981: 4).

The increase in importance and scope of the work of WUP, for example, is reflected in the growing size of its grant from the University: from £500 in 1939, this increased to £600 in 1940, and by 1954 had doubled to £1 200 (NUP’s grant for the same period, in 1952, was just £450). At the same time, income from other sources, and particularly sales, became an important component of the funding of WUP, with a memo in 1960 remarking that two-thirds of the Publications Committee’s funds were derived from the sales of its books (Memo of the Publications Committee, 1962). In the 1970s, the subvention from the University rose to around R6 000 annually. The early 1980s, however, saw the loss of the subvention altogether, as the University indicated that it would not continue to fund a “revenue-making” concern (Publications Committee Minutes, S83/380, 17 March 1983: 362). This reflects a misunderstanding of the role and function of a university press, which has to balance the needs of merit and the market (cf. Jeanneret, 2002).

Funding has always been problematic for the university presses, with their planned expenses usually exceeding their annual grants. As early as the 1950s, WUP was already considering a change of editorial policy, to publish schoolbooks, as a means of gaining a regular source of income. However, despite a number of proposals, no schoolbooks were published, apart from Bantu Treasury titles. A stark reminder of the economics of scholarly publishing is provided in a 1983 report on cost-cutting measures at WUP:

Tight financial control is maintained to squeeze value from each cent. At least two quotes are obtained for book printing; no invoices are passed without meticulous checking; cost-cutting is routine. For example, staff supply old newspapers for the inner wrapping of book parcels; incoming envelopes of all types are re-used; old proofs provide scrap paper; cartons are re-labelled; one telephone extension has been relinquished; no lights are used in passages, stores and cloakrooms unless essential. (Wilson, 1983b: 2)

With a lack of sustained institutional support, WUP, like the other university presses, would always be attempting to improve its financial situation, battling with the constraints of being part of the university administration. In particular during the 1970s, the Press struggled to remain viable, and seldom managed to cover its costs. The chief source of revenue during this period was the Bantu Treasury Series, and especially those titles that had been prescribed for use at black or Bantu Education schools. Oppositional titles made very little money for the Press, and so the financial situation was inextricably bound up with publishing decisions. Moreover, the Press was to undergo several reviews by the University, questioning its very right to existence, usually on the basis of costs and affordability. One such discussion at the Publications Committee concluded: “If the long-term objective is to make the Press financially independent of the university – and this has been stated – then it follows that ultimately the Press must become administratively independent of the University” (Publications Committee Minutes, 16 March 1984; 15 June 1984). But this was not to be, and the constraints on WUP’s operations – and thus inevitably on its intellectual and ideological stance – continued.

In contrast, UNP does not appear to have experienced the same ongoing intensity of pressure as WUP to be self-sustaining, although correspondence from the 1960s reveals the Press arguing strongly for the right to retain its subsidy, even when a profit was made in a financial year. It was even necessary for the Chairman of the Press Committee, Professor Nienaber, to write to the Finance Officer, E.L. Beyers, spelling out the mission-driven nature of the university press:

It is not the function of the University Press to compete with the publishing trade in the production of commercially profitable books. If we were to venture into that field, our activities would soon lead to sharp criticism of the University. The University Press has the special function of publishing books which are academically meritorious and which should be published, but which because of their specialised

nature, seem to be of interest to a limited body of readers, usually subject specialists, and are therefore not acceptable to commercial publishers as economic propositions. (Nienaber, 1968)

Twenty years later, Mobbs Moberly was still making a very similar argument: “Despite repeated protestations that academic publishing cannot be a profitable enterprise we are still being urged to publish more books that sell large numbers, to make profits, to become self-supporting, etc.” (Minutes of the Press Committee, 23 March 1988). This “competition with the publishing trade” included the decision not to publish less academic, more politically activist books, and the press continued to focus on books of a “specialised nature”. This would lead to the press being more cautious in its publishing decisions, and even to veer into the areas of ‘scientific neutrality’ and ‘privatism’.

UNP’s financial records do show some growth in sales and income, but the costs of publishing high-quality scholarly books were an ongoing concern. In 1970, for instance, the balance sheet reveals an operating loss in spite of improved sales, largely due to increased costs (Press Committee Minutes, 20 August 1970). The publishing list was also unbalanced, in that in any given year a single title might account for up to a third of the income – in 1968, for instance, the top seller was Audrey Cahill’s *T.S. Eliot and the Human Predicament*, with the sales of 636 copies accounting for 28% of the total income of R4 376 for the year. This is a title that could have no political impact, by reason of its subject matter. By the mid-1970s, however, the Press was regularly operating at a profit; 1975 saw a profit of R2 121,93, and a university grant of R6 000 – about the same level as WUP at this point. The non-commercial nature of the Press may also be seen in the fact that the book *The Eland’s People* took four years to break even – a state of affairs that was considered “highly satisfactory” (Minutes of the Press Committee, 1980).

The University of Natal Press also aimed to cut costs where possible, and improve sales through the following means:

1. Careful selection of titles with particular consideration of their saleability;
2. Publication of small editions;

3. Cutting of costs in book production (largely through the use of in-house production capacity);
4. More realistic pricing;
5. Greater attention to promotion and marketing. (NU Digest, 1981: 3)

This list shows the growing importance of gatekeeping – “careful selection” – and the global trend of an increasing focus on marketing and saleability. With such measures and mindset in place, in 1981 sales were to reach an “unprecedented peak” of R50 000 (compared to ‘just’ R29 000 in 1980). A letter from the Principal, P. de V. Booysen, to Moberly in 1984 reveals the university’s ongoing interest in the Press becoming self-sustaining: “Both the productivity and the profitability of the University of Natal Press are noted with considerable pleasure” (Booyesen, 1984). The Press thus moved from a situation where it had insufficient funding for more radical, potentially loss-making works, to one where its income was seen as important for university coffers.

At a comparable time, in 1988, Unisa’s Publications Committee recorded in its minutes that it required an average subsidy of R83 000 per year. This indicates that Unisa Press received a much larger grant than the other university presses, but at the same time, a far greater scope of work was required of the Press. In particular, the Press was responsible for a great many more service publications, such as compiling readers for students. The subsidy was thus very closely related to the production of certain categories of publications, and these certainly did not include the more activist kind of books. The subsidy has become more modest over time (in real monetary terms), and the ensuing need to adhere to the University’s financial practices and procedures has introduced a level of red tape that is unfortunate in a publishing house. The Press had very little latitude, within the rigid funding allocations and bureaucratic constraints of Unisa, to develop a real publishing list for much of the apartheid period. Notably, however, its niche publishing and the continuing subsidy insulated the Press from the difficult period experienced by many other publishers in South Africa in the 1990s, with changes in the school curriculum and reduced buying of school textbooks.

Yet, over time, Unisa Press was also required to examine its own sustainability and the possibilities of cost recovery. Thus, in 1989, a consultant named Milly F. du Bois and Associates sent in a proposal to Unisa for evaluating “the viability of a fully fledged publishing house within the university environment” (Van der Walt, 1989a), with the aim of ensuring that “it no longer constitutes an undue drain on the finances of the organisation” (Du Bois, 1989). The proposal was not approved, but resulted in a change in terms of which the financing of Unisa Press became much more dependent on sustainability. Previously, the University Council had provided all funding for publications, but after this time the Press had to generate funds for its scholarly books. A self-sustaining, separate budget was created for this purpose, and it indeed proved possible to finance scholarly books through sales, permissions income, cross-subsidisation, and occasional sponsorships. The journals and other service publications, and the operations of the Press as a whole (i.e. staff salaries and overheads) continued to be subsidised by the University, lending a form of protection that is common in scholarly publishing.

The change in financing led to a shift in priority and focus in terms of the publishing philosophy of Unisa Press. The Press had previously been prevented, up to a point, from publishing books which were expected to be commercially successful, so as not to compete with other publishers. This policy meant that certain titles had to be relinquished once production costs were recovered, as they were deemed too profitable! One example was the *North Sotho Dictionary*. The policy was spelt out clearly: “When a person applies to the Publications Committee to have his/her manuscript published, written proof should be tendered, where applicable, together with the application that two or more external publishers have been approached and that they are not interested in publishing the manuscript” (Senate Publications Committee minutes, 18 April 1980: 3, my translation). With the later shift to a self-sustaining, cost-recovery model, the Press was able to attract different kinds of titles, and develop a credible front- and back-list as well as a reserve fund. This is reflected in the gradual liberalisation of the publishing output, as described in Chapter 5.

On the whole, then, the university presses in South Africa were supported by their parent institutions through subventions. External funding was sometimes sought to supplement

this capital, especially for large projects. In 1956, to cover the production costs of the images for the textbook *Bantu Gynaecology*, WUP co-published the work with the Photo Publishing Company of South Africa. Later, WUP's Tsonga dictionary project received additional financial support in the mid-1970s. At UNP, a large-scale history of the city of Pietermaritzburg was partly funded by the local Chamber of Commerce and by subscriptions from the general public. Interestingly, the Wits Publications Committee occasionally made loans or grants to academics for their work to be produced by another publisher. For instance, when in the 1930s Dr Ian MacCrone was thinking of publishing his *Race Attitudes in South Africa* through Oxford University Press, he was given a loan of £275 to be repaid later out of profits (cf. Hutchings, 1969: 9–10). The title was published “on behalf of the University of the Witwatersrand, by the Oxford University Press”, according to its title page (1937).

Another form of support from the universities was the indirect subsidy in the form of the provision of office space and facilities. In this study, I will not go into detail about the office accommodation provided for each of the presses over the years – although the records provide much information and a great deal of agonising. What is striking, in brief, is the way in which the small staff complements of each press have been moved around, shuffled from building to building or even campus to campus as convenient, with little consideration for what form of offices and accommodation would be most suitable for a publishing house and its book warehouse.

The presses have also struggled to obtain funding to update their equipment, for instance when desktop publishing and computer facilities began to be widely used in the publishing industry. This lack of dedicated facilities – in contrast to the facilities provided for, say, the libraries of these institutions – strongly suggests that the importance of the university presses to their parent institutions has fluctuated, and that they are seldom seen as being of primary interest to the university administrators.

### 6.3.2 Sales

Sales may also be considered an important part of funding. However, it is not clear whether the growth in South African universities and their libraries after the 1950s increased the sales of local university press titles. The larger number of university libraries did lead to a regular sale of a certain number of copies of most titles, but sales appear to be linked more closely to the prescription for student sales of a textbook, or the cross-over appeal of a scholarly study – the wider social impact. What we find, in fact, is that while the average number of titles published by the university presses rose between 1960 and 1980, the number of copies sold per title dropped. Moreover, international interest reached a peak at the height of the anti-apartheid activist period, and then declined to some extent.

In the 1970s, for instance, WUP experienced a decline in sales and thus in revenue, with a deficit – an “over-commitment”, according to the Minutes of the Publications Committee (3 August 1971, S71/620) – being incurred for several years in a row (e.g. 1971, 1972, and again in 1976, 1977). For instance, 1977 saw a sales decline of around 10% compared to 1976 – this after 1976 had already seen a decline. This led to a reduction in the publishing list, as the number of titles previously published could not be sustained. At this time, the fortunes of the Press were highly dependent on sales of the Bantu Treasury titles, most of which were prescribed for use in black schools, for teachers’ certificates, and at Unisa. Reprints of 10 000 or 20 000 copies were common (even up to 75 000 copies in one memorable case), and brought in welcome revenue to supplement the low income from monograph sales. This suggests that the Bantu Treasury titles were not being published for a primarily ideological purpose, but rather for the very functional purpose of making money out of Bantu Education schools. However, their continuing sales made it possible to diversify the publishing list, to include more titles that lacked ‘saleability’.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, sales at WUP began to pick up again, with the 1978 sales figures reaching a high of R43 378 (as compared to just R22 713 in the previous year, 1977). The recovery from the 1970s slump is illustrated in Table 6.1. Thus, by 1980, Wilson could record that “[t]he first year of the eighties was a bonanza for the Press. Book sales exceeded R80 000 and were the highest ever” (WUP Annual Report, S81/135, 1981: 220). Of these



sales, 57% came from the Bantu Treasury Series, which provided a “steady income” (Ibid.). Similarly, of the sales in 1982 (which were only slightly up on 1980), 62% of revenue may be attributed to the Bantu Treasury Series.

The dependence on sales from the Bantu Treasury Series meant that a decline was recorded whenever prescriptions fell. Thus, in 1981, sales income declined once more – not quantified in the records, as may be seen by Table 6.1 – due to reduced prescriptions for the following year.

**Table 6.1: Sales from Bantu Treasury in terms of revenue and units sold, WUP**

Year	Revenue	Units
1977	R22 713	14 936
1978	R43 378	47 642
1979	R69 096	58 611
1980	R80 000 (approx.)	n/a
1981	n/a	n/a
1982	R88 960	92 207

Source: WUP archival documentation.

But the slump in sales was not only due to local factors, as there has been a world-wide trend of declining sales of university press books. As John B. Thompson (2005: 93–94) writes,

The decline in sales of scholarly monographs has undoubtedly been one of the most significant trends with which academic publishers have had to deal over the last two decades – more than any other single factor, it has transformed the economic conditions of scholarly publishing. The unit sales of scholarly monographs have fallen to a quarter or less of what they were in the 1970s, and what was once a relatively straightforward and profitable type of publishing has become much more difficult in financial terms.

Examples of texts with significant numbers of sales – “bestsellers” – at the university presses may nonetheless be found. For instance, a successful title at Unisa was the third in Series D: *A Select Bibliography of South African History* (1966). This text had a high print run for the time (the 1960s), of 1 000 soft cover and 1 000 hard cover copies, and printing costs were

considered very high at R2 450. The optimistic print run (the average was between 200 and 600 copies) was made on the basis of good advance orders from schools:

The Cape, Natal, O.F.S. and Transvaal Education Departments have been approached and the Cape and Natal have expressed their interest in the publication. It is confidently believed that large orders will be received from high schools in all four provinces once the education departments have reviewed the publication. ... Besides enjoying a very much wider publicity and appeal than any earlier publication, it seems certain that the History Bibliography, apart from its prestige value and its publicising of the University (as well as its other publications), is the first truly economic proposition the Publication Committee has had... There is a very distinct possibility that the profits on this publication will contribute substantially towards the financing of later publications. (Report on Publication Committee Affairs Prepared for Board of Tutors Meeting, 1966: 4–5, my translation)

Notably, the report quoted above mentions the symbolic capital – the “prestige value” – of this book, in addition to its importance in terms of income. Even when considering sales, then, the university presses remained true to their missions.

At WUP, field guides such as *Trees and Shrubs of the Witwatersrand* (John Carr, 1964) and *The Frogs of South Africa*, and the English-Zulu dictionary sold very well, as well as textbooks like *Man's Anatomy: A Study in Dissection* (Tobias, Arnold & Allan, 1963). Reuben Musiker's bibliographical guides were popular too. At UNP, books prescribed for students tended to sell well, such as the “regularised text” of *Sir Gawain and the Grene Gome* (R.T. Jones, 1960) and *Digtters uit die Lae Lande: An Anthology of Modern Netherlands Poets* (A. Grové & E. Endt, 1963). The latter text continued to be reprinted well into the 1990s. Significant scholarly texts such as *A History of Natal* (Brookes & Webb, 1965) and *A Guide to the Official Records of the Colony of Natal, 1843-1910* (C. Webb, 1965) went through numerous reprints and new editions, reflecting ongoing demand and good sales. Moreover, titles such as *Aids to Bird Identification* (selling 2 700 copies) and a textbook on obstetrics may be singled out. Significantly, none of these top sellers was political in tone, suggesting that the core market was scholarly or academic, but not politically minded. The university presses have thus experienced some success in supporting their publishing programmes through subventions, sales and other sources of funding.

## 6.4 List-building and diversity of output

The production value chain at the university's was heavily influenced by their missions, and by the missions and agendas of their parent institutions. As has been seen, the subvention of the presses was closely linked to the kinds of publications they were expected to produce – a direct influence on their attempts at list-building. Thus, even where university presses may have sought to play a more oppositional or progressive role through their publishing output, they were often constrained by the university's demand that they provide services to the parent institution.

### 6.4.1 *Service to the university*

A significant aspect of the publishing philosophy and operations of the university presses is thus their service orientation. The university presses did not only publish scholarly works such as monographs and later edited collections, but also various publications in service to the universities, their parent institutions. This dual role was recognised by UNP: "The Press should be allowed to grow in order to expand both its book publishing activities and its direct services to the University" (NU Digest, 1981: 4).

For example, a key role for the local university presses, at least at their inception, was the publication of the inaugural lectures of new professors and the lectures given by distinguished visitors. Indeed, the university presses, in South Africa as elsewhere, have played an important part in standardising the expectations and requirements for professors to attain that status, thus contributing to the professionalisation of academia in South Africa. The early publications at Unisa Press, for one, clearly reflect this role: the first title came in at just 33 pages, and the majority were under 50 pages, with a few as large as 90 pages at a time – which is typical of the inaugural lectures that these early publications represented. Thus, the publishing of inaugural lectures was considered an integral part of the mission for Unisa Press from the very beginning.

Indeed, Unisa's somewhat limited and service-oriented publishing programme was considered highly successful over its first ten years. Six inaugural lectures were published in

the first year, and up to 145 titles were published in the three main categories in the first 12 years. As of 1965, bibliographies were added to the list (series D), and later works of a more mathematical or scientific nature (series M). A typical title in series D was the annual *Summaries of Theses Accepted by the University of South Africa* (clearly showing the publishing department's role as providing services to the university), while the first M series title was *Invariance Properties of Variational Principles in General Relativity*.

The service mandate was thus of great importance at Unisa, where, “[i]n addition to its task of attending to the publication of the University’s Communications, the Committee has to take care of the publication of the Handbook and Reprint Series, and it has also had added to its functions the watching brief over departmental bulletins” (Goedhals, 1970: 1). There were also problems with various research departments and institutes in Unisa starting up ‘mini-publishers’ to produce their own publications; these included the Institute for Foreign Law and Comparative Law, Transport Economics Research Centre, and the Institute for Criminology. Van Heerden complained of this unregulated proliferation of publishing in the name of the university, asking whether it was “desirable that there are now, especially where Institutes and Centres will from now on manage their own book production, various small publishers mushrooming up with occasional references to UNISA as the mother body? Can all these publications not, with the necessary prominence given to the Institutes and Centres, and where necessary to their financial benefit, be handled by our own central UNISA publisher?” (Van Heerden, 1977, my translation). This query reveals that, where Unisa was responsible for the publication of more politically aware and possibly contentious material, it was usually under the auspices of an independently funded research institute, and not the (centrally funded) university press.

Later years saw a gradual shift in emphasis from service publications to scholarly books. A separate ISBN was later created for the publication of inaugural lectures, to distinguish such ‘service’ publications from the increasingly professional books and monographs being produced. The publication of another service publication, the *Summaries of Theses*, ceased in 1972, due to high costs and low sales (Senate Publications Committee Minutes, 21 June 1972). However, while the Press was moving in a more professional and commercial

direction, analysis of the actual output shows that the commitment to and focus on Unisa study material and services to the university would remain a high priority.

Nonetheless, the mix of publications produced at Unisa Press also changed over the years, to include more cross-over texts in the 1990s, as Phoebe van der Walt (then Director of Unisa Press) explained:

It used to be University policy to concentrate on research and publications of high academic merit. Now we are moving into the textbook market. We are developing joint ventures both locally and internationally which could be very advantageous to the publishers as well as to our students. Distance education is seen as one of the solutions to the educational backlog in the country. (quoted in Taylor, 1997)

It has often been taken for granted that the local university presses have always published textbooks, especially for their own students. For instance, Andrew (2004: 76) notes that: “The South African University Presses therefore tend to publish at the upper end of the general book market, as well as publishing tertiary textbooks”. This has been the case more in later years, but the majority of textbooks for South African students continue to be published by commercial academic publishers, both local and international. The local university presses have published tertiary-level textbooks where possible, in an attempt to supplement their income and cross-subsidise more scholarly works with a niche audience. An example of a successful textbook may be found at Unisa in 1967, with *Handbook of the Speech Sounds and Sound Changes in the Bantu Languages of South Africa* (simultaneously published in Afrikaans as *Handboek vir die Spraakklanke en Klankveranderinge in die Bantoetale van Suid-Afrika*), edited by Dirk Ziervogel. This hardcover, 335-page book would go through several editions and reprints. UNP would also publish tertiary textbooks, where possible, and was even known to reject manuscripts for publication where the necessary prescriptions could not be obtained.

The inaugural lectures published under the imprint of the various presses would at times have been handled by the Administration rather than by the presses themselves. WUP only took over the publishing of inaugural lectures for Wits in 1948, and this function continued until the mid-1980s, when rising costs made it unworkable to continue publishing all inaugural lectures (Publications Committee minutes, 15/10/1985, S86/179: 2). In addition to

regulating its own publications, WUP had to regulate other university publications, not all of which were published under the auspices of the university press. A 1965 report to the Wits Publications Committee complained that publications were “periodically produced with the name of the University as publisher but without the knowledge or approval of the W.U.P.” (Hutchings, 1969: 74). Authority was delegated to the Publications Committee to supervise and, in a sense, approve all publications by members of the academic staff, academic departments and institutes within the university. This was clearly an ongoing problem: new regulations promulgated in 1984 state that “University publications” must:

- 2.1 have their layouts approved by the Publications Committee;
- 2.2 carry the full official address of the publisher;
- 2.3 carry an ISBN, ISSN or both;
- 2.4 be lodged in the copyright libraries [legal deposit libraries of South Africa].  
(Regulations, 18 July 1984)

In the 1980s, WUP’s editorial policy began to change. There was a growing feeling that “service” to the University was over-emphasised and that it should be replaced with an aggressive and competitive policy of more commercial publishing. The Publications Committee set up a Working Group (consisting of Professors B.D. Cheadle, R. Musiker, H.E. Paterson, and C. van Onselen, as well as Press Director Nan Wilson), who “strongly argued that the Press has become rather passive and even negative in its approach, and that its future health and viability depended on the adoption of a much more active publishing policy in which opportunities be created and worthwhile works sought out and even commissioned from the academic community” (PC Working Group, 1983: 1). Suggestions for a new philosophy included:

- active solicitation of manuscripts in specific fields such as Black writing in English, labour relations and African studies generally, in which innovative work was being done within the university, and also in areas such as law and the medical sciences for which Wits had a good reputation;
- student and school textbooks;
- “books with a more general appeal such as anthologies”. (Ibid.: 3)

There was some disagreement, it seems, as to whether the Press required “a new role and a new policy” allowing it to “operate as a profit-earning trade publisher similar to Ravan, David Philip or Ad Donker”, or whether “[t]he new policy should not be seen as an attempt to convert the Press into a profit-earning trade publisher, but rather as an attempt to wean academics at the University to the idea that there are advantages in publishing their scholarly work through the Press” (Ibid.: 4). Significantly, all of the publishers named here were oppositional publishers. But the publishing policy did not change to a great extent at this time, neither becoming much more oppositional nor much more commercial. It is only perhaps ten years later, in the 1990s, that a real shift in both of these directions could be seen.

At UNP, too, inaugural lectures were the preserve of the Press until 1975, and then resumed after a brief hiatus. In the 1980s, there was much discussion as to the best means of publishing such lectures, which were considered, frankly, unnecessary and even a waste of money. This discussion led to the gradual phasing out of inaugural lectures as part of the press’s service mandate. In general, though, UNP did not have a service-oriented mandate to such an extent as Unisa and WUP, although the manual, ‘A Short Guide to Publishing’, was produced in 1982 to assist academics to produce and to standardise their publications in accordance with university regulations. As a result of this role in standardising university publications, as at Unisa, there was tension at times between the Press and those departments that regularly published in their own name, such as the Department of Economics and the Institute of Social Research. Again, these independent institutes produced some of the most oppositional research outputs that came out in the name of the University and its Press, but the role of the Press was one of service rather than commissioning.

In the early 1990s, after discussion relating to the direction and editorial policies of the Press, an imprint was especially created at UNP, named Hadedha Books, to publish books that “look beyond the academic community to the wider reading public” (Hadedha publicity leaflet, 1993). This is a clear signal of growing commercialisation, and a shift in the mission of the university press, in the post-apartheid era.

The editorial policies of the university presses thus shifted over time from a dual role, of publishing scholarly books and providing services to the university, to a more commercially oriented role focusing on scholarly and cross-over books for a wider audience. From the late apartheid era into the post-apartheid period, this would involve more list-building and commissioning than before, as well as more of an outward than inward focus in terms of authors and audience. In spite of differing roles and mandates within their institutions, this happened at much the same time for all three of the university presses, perhaps largely due to increasing pressures towards commercialisation at the universities themselves. At the same time, the independent oppositional publishers were struggling for survival in a post-apartheid world which saw their funding diminish and sales fall. That the university presses managed to survive is due, in part, to continuing support from the universities, as well as the enduring importance of providing a platform for scholarly publishing and knowledge production.

#### **6.4.2 Journals**

Another aspect of product or list diversity is the publishing of academic journals. Again, the trajectory of journals publishing at the university presses reveals the competing pressures of anti-apartheid activism and growing commercialism. At first, all of South Africa's university presses combined the publishing of journals and books, but today only Unisa Press has an active journal publishing programme. This is largely due to economic considerations, rather than symbolic capital or ideological or political factors.

For instance, WUP published *Bantu Studies* (later known as *African Studies*) from its inception, as well as the *South African Journal of Medical Science* (founded in 1935 by the Medical Graduates Association, the journal was taken on by WUP from 1939) and *English Studies in Africa* (founded in 1958). However, a journal-publishing programme is often a costly exercise. Thus, in later years, with the Press coming under increasing pressure to be self-sustaining, and to produce an income from its publishing programme, journals were shaved from the list. This would lead, among other consequences, to the decision to cease publication of the *South African Journal of Medical Science* altogether in 1976 (after 41 years of publication), and in the mid-1990s, to move *African Studies* to a commercial publisher



(then Carfax, now part of Taylor & Francis). At around the same time, *English Studies in Africa* took over its own production, and later moved to the stable of Unisa Press journals.

In turn, UNP was closely associated with the publication of *Theoria* as of volume 4 in 1952 (it was previously published by Shuter and Shooter), while its Publications Committee was involved with the journals from as early as 1948: “For many years now *Theoria* has been firmly established as a publication of the University of Natal Press, serving as a record of scholarship and criticism within the University, while also welcoming contributions from outside, nationally and internationally” (*Theoria*, 1987, 70: i). An editorial note from volume 50 (1978) describes the aims of the journal, within the wider political context, referring to the censorship regime of the time:

We issue this number of our journal in a mood of reflection. To have reached the fiftieth volume is perhaps notable when we consider the short life-span of many periodicals and the distance separating us from larger centres of the academic world (a distance which widens as this country becomes more isolated). In the first issue of *Theoria* in June 1947, the editors stated that their aim would be to “try to build bridges” and “promote an outlook of humane criticism in as many fields, and as many groups of people, as possible”. Whether we can uphold such an ideal is sometimes in doubt. We have support in a growing amount of articles sent in year by year. But there are stumbling-blocks like the difficulty of interpreting laws of censorship and the possible muzzling of contributors. Above all, material resources are meagre and we know that every page counts, only too literally. Having resources at all is cause for gratitude.

Some very critical articles would be published in *Theoria*, such as an incisive critique of censorship (volume 55, 1980) and Mervyn Frost’s ‘Opposing apartheid’ (volume 71, 1988). The journal thus also served to cement UNP’s reputation as a critical and even oppositional publisher, even though it provided only a publishing service rather than having editorial input into the direction and tone of the journal.

Approaches were later made to the UNP to publish other journals, such as the *Journal of Behavioural Sciences* in 1976. While the Press was amenable to such requests (although concerned about its capacity and resources, naturally), the Principal rejected the idea, instructing the Press to concentrate on books. The following decade, in 1989, UNP was again being asked to “look into the question” of journal publishing, by examining how other

university presses managed these publications (Press Committee Minutes, 22 March 1989). This did not lead to an extension of their journals programme, however. Indeed, the opposite occurred in the 1990s, with *Theoria* also being taken on by a commercial academic publisher. Since 1997, the journal has been published by Berghahn Books, although it still makes references in publicity materials to being “based in South Africa”.

Unisa’s journals programme was both more ambitious and better funded from the start. From the beginning, Unisa supported the publication and dissemination of journals:

... the journal *Mousaion* for library science, under the editorship of Professor de Vleeschauwer, was taken over as a university publication. The Faculty of Law’s *Codicillus* was a worthy and widely circulated forerunner of several journals published by various departments, while the inter-faculty journal, *Acta Classica*, owed much to the initiative of the teaching staff of the Department of Classics. (Boucher, 1973: 321)

In 1969, approval was given for the publication of three more departmental journals at Unisa: *Kleio* (History), *Ars Nova* (Musicology) and *Semitics* (Semitics). Established journals at this time included *Codicillus* (Law), *De Arte* (History of Art and Fine Arts), *Dynamica* (Business Economics), *Theologica Evangelica* (Theology), *Unisa English Studies* (English), *Limi* (Bantu Languages) and *Mercurius* (Economics) (Senate Publications Committee report, 1969: 2). *Africanus* (Development Administration and Politics) and *Educare* (Education) were approved in 1971 (Publikasiekomitee Minutes, 26 February 1971), and *Communicatio* (Communication) and *Unisa Psychologia* (Psychology) in 1974 (Dagbestuur, 14 March 1974). These were later joined in the fold by *Musicus* (Music), *Politeia* (Political Sciences), and *Theologia Evangelica* (Theology). Figure 6.5 depicts a selection of these journals. The journals policy advocated that “[a]ny journal produced by the University should in the first place be aimed at University students. The key principle is that a Unisa journal should always speak to the student, i.e. purely student-oriented although no prescribed study material may be included...” (Boucher, 1973: 374). In other words, the publishing of academic journals was for some time seen as a support function for students, rather than a significant platform for research.

The journals programme continued to grow over the years, as subventions fell away, and the Press was able to attract journals that were no longer subsidised or produced by their own institutions (e.g. *English Studies in Africa* from Wits). It became the home for a good many important South African journals, especially in the humanities and social sciences. A significant international co-publishing agreement was later signed, in the mid-2000s, between Unisa Press and Taylor & Francis to jointly publish a number of journals, which sought to improve their visibility and accessibility while maintaining affordability for scholars on the African continent. Thus, while WUP and UNP scaled down their journal publishing programmes, outsourcing these over time to international commercial academic publishers, Unisa Press has remained the only local university press with a strong journals publishing programme. Once again, this may be linked to the University's stronger subvention and its perception of journals as having a teaching or student support function.

**Figure 6.5: Journals at Unisa, c. 1970s**



Source: A publicity photograph for Unisa's journals programmes, used in the *Unisa Bulletin* in 1974.

The publication of academic journals by the university presses is thus not a strong indicator of the intellectual responses depicted in the continuum, as was the case for books. The role of the presses was one of service, rather than an extension of their knowledge production and dissemination mandate.

## **6.5 Distribution and reception**

The dissemination of knowledge is a key component of the mandate of a university press, as it seeks to complete the research cycle by making work as widely available and accessible as possible. But the readership of a publisher also has an effect on its reputation, and on the image it develops – its brand or symbolic capital. As we are considering the reputation of the university presses for oppositional publishing, it is worth examining the readership, dissemination and impact of these presses in more detail.

### **6.5.1 Audience**

The readership for university books is by definition a scholarly one – i.e. the producers and the readers are the same group, namely academics – although there is at times an overlap with the educated market for serious non-fiction. In addition to the local academic and university library market, however, the university presses also deliberately aimed at a wider audience. For example, WUP made a point of saying that it “produced work for black readers” (‘Review of WUP’, S87/415, 1987: 2). Given the marginalisation of black academics, this black audience was by definition located outside the university. However, little evidence could be found of a significant black readership for any of the university presses. Their scholarly work was overwhelmingly reviewed by white readers in academic journals, even internationally. Where their books were prescribed for black schools, then a black audience was indeed reached, but this was not the primary aim of publishing such texts. In contrast, the oppositional publishers actively sought out a black readership, often through the use of unorthodox means of distribution.

In addition to a local audience, the university presses also aimed many of their titles at a wider, international audience – what Lewis Nkosi (1994) has described as a “cross-border”

audience. Nkosi was referring to an audience that reads across “borders’, including geographical, racial and other, more esoteric, forms of border. This audience was also not the primary target market, especially in terms of immediate relevance, but given the nature of exile and anti-apartheid politics, they did constitute an important part of the readership.

In terms of their international readership, moreover, the university presses were certainly affected by the international political context, and specifically international activism against the apartheid government and the academic boycott. Censorship was a key factor in the international academic boycott of South Africa, as universities and other bodies strove to underline their “total opposition to the policies of apartheid and of censorship of academic work, books, literature, etc. [believing] that the most effective action is the maintenance of a total boycott on any form of contact with South African universities” (Merrett, 1994: 198; see also Haricombe & Lancaster, 1995). Haricombe (1993: 512) describes some of the effects of the academic boycott as “refusal by some international journals to accept publications emanating from South African authors; denial of participation of South Africans at international conferences; refusal by the international academic community to collaborate with South Africans or to visit South Africa; and the refusal by certain publishers and booksellers to provide information resources”. At the university presses, it is difficult to find such a clear-cut impact of the academic boycott. In one example, Mobbs Moberly of UNP reported in 1975 that the *Conch Review of Books* would not accept advertisements for UNP books from “apartheid South Africa” (Press Committee Minutes, 21 October 1975), while WUP experienced a similar problem in the mid-1980s. The reaction, it appears, was largely one of frustration.

However, the academic boycott does not appear to have adversely affected the local university presses to a great extent in terms of sales. Rather, there was an interest in and appetite for books on South Africa, and the international market continued to purchase books – give or take a few hiccups with distributors – throughout the apartheid period. (Local sales may also have been boosted by the lack of availability of suitable international materials due to the academic boycott, but it was not possible to verify this.) Thus, resistance activism created a ‘ready-made’ audience for many oppositional titles, in an unusual instance of an ethical force outweighing market forces. In fact, as some

commentators have pointed out, there appears to be less interest in South African books since the end of apartheid, and the ending of the anti-apartheid lobby. This large, international and highly engaged audience has all but disappeared with the ending of apartheid, leaving publishers with the unenviable task of seeking out new readerships with an interest in South Africa and its knowledge production.

The question of markets for the current period thus appears to be much more problematic now than it was during the twentieth century. Indeed, some have suggested that the market for university press books has disappeared altogether: “While the essential mission of a university press is to publish works for and by academics, and to keep alive scholarly debate in the community, this has become increasingly problematic in the absence of real markets for university press books” (Gray, 2000: 178). This leads to a related perception, that university presses are in decline: “Scholarly publishing is in decline due to the drop in the levels of funding of universities, libraries and research institutes” (Ngobeni, 2010: 80). The publishing figures available do not bear this out. Scholarly publishing may not be a vigorous commercial success in South Africa, but it is certainly holding its own.

### **6.5.2 Distribution**

Linked to the question of readership, whether local or international, is distribution. A perception which has prevented a number of academics from publishing with the local university presses, is that their reach is very limited. The following quote illustrates the common perception:

There are at present few incentives for local academics or editors to produce books that are locally oriented. Foreign publishers such as Routledge and Blackwell are well established brand names in academic circles, who are receptive to a broad range of academic subjects. The books that they produce are of a high quality and can be aimed at a wider, international reading market. Academics who do have books published by a university press, do not tend to gain much exposure or financial reward for their publications. Academics have for this reason turned to foreign publishers to have books published with international rather than local appeal. (CIGS, 1998: 40)

Similarly, Professor Abbott of UNP would argue that “the main problem of the Press was that it did not have very strong sales organization. As a result of this many members of the university staff were under the impression that their work would receive wider distribution if given to an outside publisher” (University of Natal AP&PC, 1972). The university presses were always to struggle to get their books accepted by local booksellers, who considered them “too specialised and too conservative” (Press Committee Minutes, March 1984). This comment on their apparent conservatism is ironic, given that more oppositional publishers would also struggle to get their books into mainstream booksellers.

Yet, in spite of this concern about limited distribution, the presses have been concerned with marketing and distribution from their inception. In 1922, when WUP published the first title under its imprint, it already used Longmans, Green & Co in the UK as distribution agents because of an awareness of the importance of widespread dissemination of research work. Correspondence regarding distribution can be found throughout the archives of the university presses. For instance, there is ongoing correspondence between WUP and Oxford, concerning possible distribution in the UK, as well as with a range of other booksellers and distributors, including Simpkin Marshall in the UK, and Griggs Bookshop, CNA and Constantia Booksellers (appointed sole agents in 1946) for local sales. Simpkin Marshall would distribute WUP’s books from 1937 until 1940, when the firm was damaged during the Second World War and liquidated. The losses were borne by the Press, which had luckily taken out insurance against war damage for books being sent to the UK. For a period after the war, Kegan Paul became WUP’s UK agent, especially in the field of African studies.

The Wits point of view is put across strongly in a letter written to OUP in 1941: “We feel that publishing in this country, while it is satisfactory as far as the Union is concerned, will not give adequate publicity to what we consider to be useful material” (Raikes, 1941). During the war, however, OUP felt unable to assist WUP in this task. Indeed, even after the war, negotiations floundered and an agreement with OUP could not be reached. The impact of the war had both a local and international dimension: on the one hand, publication of several books had to be deferred due to a shortage of paper, and on the other hand, distribution in the UK was severely disrupted. As late as 1963, negotiations continued, to no

avail, despite members of the Publications Committee visiting the UK and paying visits to various potential agents.

Distribution in the USA was not as successful as in the UK, but efforts were also made in the direction of the largest English-language market for books. In 1948, Percy Freer actually declined representation in New York, writing to the firm of L. Hoffman in Brooklyn, “We have so few publications of interest to the American people” (Freer, 1948). This sentiment would change with time. In the mid-1950s, Dr C Kenneth Snyder, the US Cultural Affairs Officer, gave WUP advice on the matter, and as a result an approach was made to several US university presses to act as agents for WUP books. There was no success from these approaches, but in 1957 WUP participated in its first overseas exhibition, sending books to the Second International Book Exhibition in Chicago. For a time, the Humanities Press Inc. was the agent for a number of books. Approaches were also made to Australian agents, but without resolution. Agency agreements also did not always work out, and with the ongoing lack of success in finding reliable agents overseas, the Press elected to sell all books directly, to all parts of the world, as of 1969. In spite of all these efforts, however, in the early 1980s WUP authors were regularly complaining that “WUP does not sell enough books” (Wilson, 1983: 2), and it was admitted that “recent attempts at negotiating agency agreements have not been particularly successful” (Ibid.: 3).

The University of Natal Press also made a concerted effort to find good distributors and to work on publicity for the books it produced, on the premise that “ways to increase sales further must be sought, particularly in regard to the British and European market” (NU Digest, 1981: 3). From as early as Patrick’s involvement in 1969, he argued that it was “absolutely essential that a highly efficient central distribution office should be equipped to handle *all publications*” (Patrick, 1969: 2, emphasis in the original). Similarly, Brown would quote the *Times Literary Supplement* in a report on UNP, saying, “[i]f the older university presses still dominate academic publishing, their strength is likely to be less in the discrimination of their editorial judgement or their typographical skill (though both are important) than in the efficiency of their distributive machinery and the drive of their sales organisation” (Brown, 1970: 2).



Arrangements were attempted and changed if they did not work out. For instance, an agreement was established with Southmoor Books in the UK during the 1980s, when an earlier agreement produced little revenue. The distributor in the UK later changed to Leishman and Taussig, as well as the Africa Book Centre. Similarly, an agreement with Lawrence Verry for distribution in the US (from the 1960s until the early 1970s) was replaced by an agreement with International Specialized Book Services, or ISBS (1985). The use of a US distributor was also affected by the anti-apartheid lobby. For a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a successful collaboration with David Philip Publishers saw the latter publicising UNP books within South Africa; an earlier agreement with Struik did not work as well.

As for Unisa, distribution appears to have been an ongoing problem. Little attention was paid to the issue of circulation when the Publications Committee was formed and books started to be produced. As a result, internal warehousing became an increasing burden, as the following description shows:

It seems certain that the increased number of titles published each year will continue to increase as the University expands. This is highly desirable, of course, but it has, as a corollary, the intensification of certain problems. These are chiefly: the administration of the Publication Committee, the financing of publications, and directly allied to this, the need to expand, by means of more adequate advertising, the distribution and sales of the University's Communications. These have always been serious problems, but they have now become acute. (Goedhals, 1970: 1)

A report to the Publications Committee in 1970 on the administrative functions accompanying the publishing function (*uitgewerstaak*) of the University (Posthumus, 1970, my translation), criticises their ability to distribute Unisa publications: "At the moment, part of the print run of the series publications are distributed to subscribers and sent out as exchange copies. The rest lie on the shelves – and will just keep lying there." At the same time, it notes, "We cannot expect more of the Publication Committee than some limited advertising aimed at preventing the build-up of stock on the shelves."

A committed distribution partner, however, remained an elusive part of Unisa's publishing programme for a long time, and orders and fulfilment became an integral part of the Unisa

Press staffing and structure as a result. Even though the internal administration of orders and subscriptions was inefficient, the University imposed this constraint by preventing the Press from operating in a more professional manner. International distribution agreements were only finally signed after the end of the millennium, to improve circulation in Europe and the USA.

The distribution of university press publications has thus always been problematic and limited, in spite of efforts to extend their reach. Unlike the independent oppositional publishers, the university presses made little attempt to use unorthodox or non-traditional distribution channels. Like the oppositional publishers, however, they struggled with the perennial problem of accessing mainstream marketing and distribution channels.

### **6.5.3 Marketing**

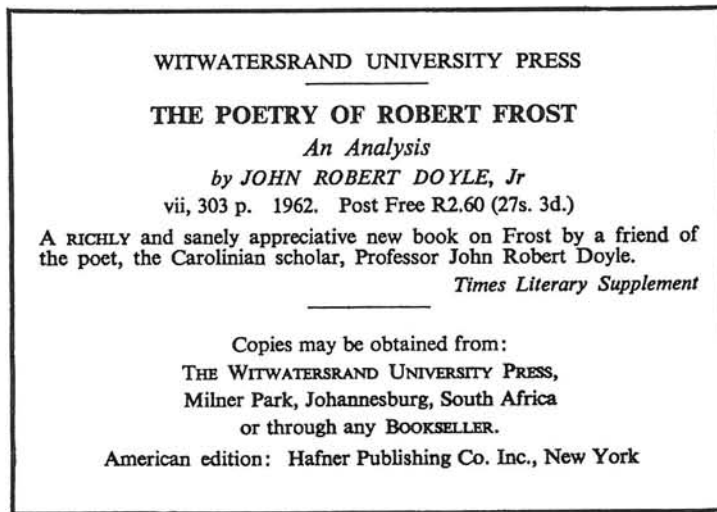
Closely linked to policies and problems of distribution, is the issue of marketing and the creation of awareness among the target audience. Marketing efforts appear not to have featured strongly on the agendas of the university presses – or not as strongly as they would for commercial publishers not receiving a subvention. Nonetheless, a brief analysis of the advertising and reviews of university press books provides another angle on the publishing philosophy of the presses, and on their wider reception and impact. It also reveals how they saw themselves and what image they wanted to portray.

It took a while, for instance, for Wits University Press to professionalise to the extent of actively marketing the books produced. In 1948 (a full 26 years after their establishment), WUP produced their first list of books published – a precursor to later catalogues. They also began to advertise sporadically in journals from around 1947. Their first international exhibition was in Chicago in 1957, and from 1964 WUP began to exhibit at the Frankfurt Book Fair and at other exhibitions in Europe and as far afield as Hong Kong. A representative of WUP first attended the London Book Fair in April 1983, but was disappointed in its scope and suggested concentrating on Frankfurt instead (Publications Committee Minutes, 1 August 1983).

In the 1960s, marketing efforts remained somewhat haphazard, although regular advertisements may be found in WUP's own journals and at times in other local or international journals as well. These are all very simple, text-based advertisements. From the mid-1970s, a consolidated annual list would be produced by Nan Wilson, summarising the marketing efforts of the WUP for each year. This was at the same time as WUP's subsidy was under threat, and the Press was struggling for survival. The marketing lists reveal a wide array of attempts to improve the reach and sales of WUP books: advertisements (both paid advertising and reciprocal advertising in university-affiliated journals), directory listings, advertising on campus, and leaflets and brochures. The lists also provide some insight into the policies behind marketing certain kinds of books. For instance, they show that a great deal more resources and effort were put into marketing the popular, cross-over title *Frogs of South Africa* than the average WUP title, with a launch event, television and radio interviews, and the printing of 6 000 brochures for booksellers and others. Current reviews on Amazon indicate the lasting importance of this work: "Since its first appearance in 1979, this study has been widely regarded as the standard work on the frogs of the region" (Amazon.com, 2012).

An examination of WUP's marketing materials, and specifically its internally generated advertisements, also reveals changes over time in design and orientation – similar changes to those seen in the shift in intellectual response traced by means of the continuum in Chapter 5. As noted, in the 1960s, these were largely sober, text-based adverts, with a minimum of information provided – perhaps an extract from a review at best, in addition to a single-sentence description. Figure 6.6 shows a typical example from 1963, which quotes the *Times Literary Supplement* and reveals a co-publishing arrangement for a US edition. Yet, as the figure shows, there was little consideration of readership or audience needs, and there is no attempt to comment on current affairs.

Figure 6.6: WUP advertisement, 1963



Source: Advertisement in *English Studies in Africa*, 6(1), 1963: 118.

This approach changed, during the 1970s and 1980s, to a more graphic, attractive layout, although images were not yet included. Longer abstracts were included, and extracts from academic reviews were more regularly used to entice readers. Figure 6.7 shows a typical example, dating to 1985. Around the same time, the crest of the university was used alongside the colophon for the Press – as may be seen in the advertisement in Figure 6.7 – and that the paratexts of the books published reveal a greater interest in design for a wider, more popular audience. The content analysis of Chapter 5 reveals a similar opening up in the publishing lists, with an increasing outward focus and a growing oppositional outlook. The example given in Figure 6.7 overtly relates the theme of the historical book advertised to “present-day South African society”, revealing WUP’s growing engagement with current affairs. The racial division of society is also clearly mirrored in the use of racial classifications and terminology.

Figure 6.7: WUP advertisement, 1985

## Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy

**Alan H. Jeeves**


This book is a history of the migrant labour system which developed on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand in the period 1890 to 1920. Two related objectives emerge from this analysis. Alan Jeeves traces the rise and ultimate fall of a fascinating and hitherto little understood group, the independent labour recruiting companies and their ruthless White (and, occasionally, Black) agents. Secondly, he explores the way in which the system of migratory labour, with the emerging industrial colour bar, combined to produce a racial division of labour which is still a source of conflict and controversy for present-day South African society.

xiv, 323 pp. Soft cover. Price R20 + GST + postage

A joint publishing venture with McGill-Queen's University Press of Canada

Please note that this edition is for sale only in the Republic of South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana and South West Africa/Namibia. Residents of other countries should place their orders direct with McGill-Queen's University Press.

**Witwatersrand University Press**  
**1 Jan Smuts Avenue**  
**2001 Johannesburg**



Source: Advertisement in *English Studies in Africa*, 28(2), 1985: 80.

WUP's marketing lists of the 1980s also reveal the impact of politics, and in particular the academic boycott, on the distribution and marketing efforts of South African publishers: in the early 1980s, a note is added that certain international journals, such as *Africa* and the *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*, refused to publish advertisements for WUP books "on political grounds" or due to political sensitivities (S86/307: 3). In the late 1980s, McGraw-Hill refused permission to use a quotation from one of their books in a WUP book, giving the reason that they had severed all commercial links with South Africa (S88/316: 8). The International Association of Scholarly Publishers also refused WUP's application for membership, in 1984. This international engagement contributed to the growing political awareness at the university presses themselves, and may even have assisted in making their publishing programmes more committed and oppositional.

The first indication that the impact of international academic boycotts was on the university press agenda comes in a 1982 letter from “Bookweek Africa” (run by the African Book Publishing Record), which was discussed at the next WUP Publications Committee meeting (Minutes, 17/03/1983, S83/380). The item, “International boycotts”, featured regularly in the minutes after that date. The original letter reads as follows:

There has been a decision by “Bookweek Africa” not to include South African-published material, with the exception of a number of books from radical, anti-apartheid publishers who actively encourage black expression in South Africa. ... We realize that this of course amounts to censorship, but the fact is – and it is a fact not always fully appreciated by South African publishers – that the whole matter is an extremely sensitive issue, and most black African publishers would strongly object to having their books displayed alongside those from South Africa, although I am not suggesting of course that the WUP is a publisher of apartheid propaganda. (Zell, 1982)

Clearly, judging by this letter from Hans Zell, WUP was *not* perceived as one of the oppositional publishers or “radical, anti-apartheid publishers” at this time. It was still perceived in the category of ‘liberal retreat’ and the negotiated, rather than the oppositional, code, to use the terms of the continuum.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, with increasing political commitment on its part – as reflected in the increasingly oppositional publications produced during this time – WUP’s own publicity material began to proclaim it be an “exciting and challenging [publisher] for a new South Africa”. Its advertising design also changed dramatically, to include images of book covers, and new fonts and designs – this may be seen in Figure 6.8, an example from 1991. This also reveals the increasing use of desktop publishing (DTP) in the wider publishing world, as it became easier to include images and use different fonts in even internally generated marketing material.

Figure 6.8: WUP advertisement, 1991

## DRAMA AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE

Martin Orkin



Orkin explores the works of white and black playwrights and, in examining 'alternative' theatre, clarifies what this is 'alternative' to. (*Southern African rights. Co-publication with Manchester University Press*).

## THE WILD SOUTH-WEST

Dorian Haarhoff



Namibia is seen as a frontier in popular South African imagination. This book is about the projection of these frontier images in literature set in Namibia and what these metaphors reveal about those in the cities who project them.

## NEW BOOKS FOR THE NINETIES

### MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!

and selected shorter plays

Athol Fugard



'This one is between me and my country' – Fugard.

A new collection of his shorter plays including previously unpublished works.

(*Southern African rights*)

WITWATERSRAND  
UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

WUP

Source: Advertisement in *English Studies in Africa*, 34(1), 1991.

At UNP, a similar level of advertising and marketing to that shown at WUP was undertaken, and sampled advertisements show very similar characteristics to those of WUP – they have thus not been included for reasons of economy and repetition. Representatives from UNP visited international book fairs from the 1960s. An interesting publicity innovation was the use of brochures aimed specifically at faculty members of the university, who were encouraged to purchase UNP books at a discount of 20% as Christmas presents. A marketing drive in 1982 saw 35 000 copies of a four-page leaflet being distributed by UNP, an astounding number for the time, while in 1979 a leaflet depicting books on Natal and Zululand was produced to coincide with the centenary of the Anglo-Zulu War.

As may be seen from the examples depicted here (Figures 6.6 to 6.8), the university presses also used their own journals to publicise their new titles, wherever possible. For instance, WUP would draw attention to new publications of interest to the readership of *African Studies* or *English Studies in Africa*, while UNP would advertise in *Theoria*. Unisa had a wider selection of journal titles, and would advertise its titles in these where appropriate. At times, the university presses would carry reciprocal advertisements for one another's titles, particularly between WUP and UNP. Interestingly, several issues of *African Studies* carried advertisements for publications from African universities: the Institute for African Studies of the University of Zambia (*African Studies*, 37(1), 1978: 156), and the Publications Office of the University of Zimbabwe (*African Studies*, 46(1), 1987: 144). The journal would also carry a book review for a title from Editions Universitaires du Rwanda, Gilles-Marius Dion's *Devinettes du Rwanda: Ibisakuzo*, a collection of riddles published in 1971 (*African Studies*, 33(4), 1974: 267).

Marketing efforts came much later to Unisa Press, reflecting its service rather than commercial orientation. Marketing thus received very little attention at Unisa at first, at least until the advent of a professional manager in the 1980s. Advertisements for Unisa Press publications were regularly featured in the press's journals, a simple and low-cost means of bringing them to a scholarly audience, but these consisted largely of text-based lists of new publications. For instance, an advertisement in *Kleio* from 1970, titled 'Communications of the University of South Africa / Mededelings van die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika' states bluntly: "The following publications are obtainable (postage free, cash



with order) from the *Publication Committee of the University of South Africa*” (1970: 45, italics in the original). It then goes on to list new titles in Series A, B and C, with no attempt made to highlight selling points or to tempt the potential reader.

The first ‘publications list’ at Unisa was produced as late as the 1970s, and catalogues were only introduced in the 1980s under the management of Etienne van Heerden. There was thus little effort to engage the readership until this date. Even afterwards, however, Unisa Press’s marketing efforts noticeably lagged behind those of WUP and UNP, which was reflected in relatively low sales for the majority of titles.

The marketing initiatives of the university presses reveal how these publishers perceived themselves, and how they wanted others to perceive them. There is a shift over time from very sober, scholarly publishers closely associated with their parent institutions, to more ‘progressive’, engaged publishers that have their own identity and philosophy. This echoes the shift in publishing philosophy traced in Chapter 5, in terms of the continuum.

#### **6.5.4 Reception and impact**

An interesting result of the analysis of the wider context of the university presses is the finding that particularly the books published by WUP and UNP (and to a lesser extent those of Unisa Press) appear to have been widely reviewed, world-wide, and received with some respect throughout the apartheid period. This shows a global pattern of circulation, and it would be interesting if further studies could explore in more depth the question of readership and impact for South African books. UNP’s records of such impact are particularly easy to follow, given the common practice of providing details of (and even extracts from) book reviews at every Publications Committee meeting. Reviews in local and international journals will be discussed here as a proxy for, and reflection of, the circulation and reception of these works.

As early as 1942, Dr Kurt Colsen’s *Fractures and Fracture Treatment in Practice* (WUP, 1942) was being hailed in the *British Medical Journal* as “a South African product which should export well” (BMJ, 7 August 1943: 169); a US edition of the textbook was produced by

Gruno and Stratton in New York in 1945, showing that it did, indeed, export well. Moreover, as this was a work highly sought after by military surgeons, WUP had no difficulty in obtaining permission to print from the Controller of Paper, and in sourcing sufficient paper supplies despite wartime restrictions. The textbook was prescribed in South Africa for the next twenty years. (Similarly, Clarence van Riet Lowe's *Elementary Field Gunnery: Theory and Practice* was also permitted to be published during wartime, also in 1942, due to its topicality and immediate relevance.)

Early reviews often mention the publisher explicitly, as well as remarking on paratextual elements such as cover design and binding. For instance, a 1955 review in *The Mathematical Gazette* of J.P. Dalton's *Symbolic Operators* (WUP, 1954) analyses the subject in some depth, noting in conclusion: "The Witwatersrand University Press is to be congratulated on the production of this, its first monograph on a mathematical subject" (Cooper, 1955: 256). Similarly, a review of R.F.A. Hoernle's *Race and Reason* (WUP) notes that "[t]his book consists of a selection from the writings of the late Professor Hoernle, and its publication is a tribute from the Senate of the University to the memory of one of its most distinguished members" (Scott, 1947: 214–215). The initiation of the Bantu Treasury Series, with B.W. Vilakazi's *Inkondlo kaZulu*, elicited a glowing tribute to the publisher and the series editor, Clement Doke (with the language and paternalism of the day):

The University deserves hearty commendation for making possible this first venture of a South African Native in the field of poetry. The title-page bears the title 'The Bantu Treasury', and gives promise of a series to be, in which the best literary work of Bantu writers in their own languages shall be made available for their natural audience, and so shall become a stimulus to intellectual and spiritual growth. There is a steadily increasing group of young Africans who are possessed of literary talent and are working hard to perfect themselves in various media of expression. The invitation that the title page of this first volume of a projected series holds forth will be to them an open door of opportunity. ... The success of the series will depend in large measure upon the support given it by African readers. (Taylor, 1935: 163)

Taylor (1935: 165) went on to comment on the design and paratext of the book: "A word must be said about the outward appearance of the book. The dignity of its simple blue cloth binding, with the seal of the University on the cover, the clear print and perfect proof-reading are not only a credit to the Editors and to the Lovedale Press [the printers of the

work], but they are a quiet testimony to the recognition given to these poems as real literature, worthy of preservation and of presentation to their readers in a form of beauty.” This description of the paratext situates the work and its author as serious, and as meriting the attention of a scholarly press. The association with the University seal once again cements the identity of the publisher with the parent institution.

Reviews of celebrated academics such as Clement Doke and Desmond Cole also acknowledge their contribution to the field internationally, usually without even remarking on their location or place of publication in far-off South Africa; see, for instance, Greenberg, 1963: 1194, who refers to their work as “widely influential” and as laying “indispensable groundwork” in the field. A review of Doke’s work in *Bantu Studies* by G.P. Lestrade (1939: 160) is emblematic of such reviews: “The whole work is particularly rich in examples, and is a mine of idiomatic material, upon which the author is to be heartily congratulated. The University of the Witwatersrand and the Inter-University Committee for African Studies, which jointly made the publication possible, deserve thanks in this connection.” Lestrade goes on to comment on the paratext, suggesting the suitability and quality of the choices made by the university press for its audience: “The book was made and printed by the Replika Process by Messrs Percy Lund, Humphries and Co., Ltd., and is well done, on good paper, with a strong and serviceable binding.”

Percival Kirby was an equally important figure in his field, and his publication of *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (1953) was also well received: “This book is concerned only with African instruments, their physical and musical characteristics, their social use and their geographic distribution ... It is a book which all serious students of African instrumental music must possess” (*Times Literary Supplement*, quoted in *African Studies*, 1966: 56). The terms ‘African’ and ‘Native’ are not problematised in either the text or the reviews, and are seen as geographic or ethnic markers rather than social constructs. A 1967 review of G.F. Hart’s *The Systematics and Distribution of Permian Myospores* (WUP, 1965), states that “[t]here is no question but that this work will form a reference for the student of Permian palynology for some time to come” (Cousminer, 1967: 117). These works were clearly being received and evaluated on their merit as works of international standing, not simply as South African texts intended for a local audience.

In turn, a 1970 *BMJ* (1970: 481) review of De Caire's *Neurophysiology* (WUP, 1970) states that "the author has managed to present the facts of the subject in an integrated and lucid manner and at such a level that interest is maintained without over simplification. It is immediately obvious that he has a wide knowledge of his subject, and that he is quite remarkably adept at getting this across to the reader. He is not afraid of speculation, but never misleads the reader into supposing that speculations are facts. A dry sense of humour is particularly welcome in a textbook, the more so when it serves to point out the logical errors into which research workers fall when they tend to become myopic." A *SAMJ* review of *The South African Textbook of Sports Medicine* (WUP, 1979) is equally complimentary: "To cover so vast a subject as sports medicine, it was necessary that the editors assemble a considerable number of contributors. This they have done wisely and well. The book is well illustrated and beautifully printed. It will be of use to sportsmen and sports administrators as well as physicians. It is a South African 'first', and it is highly recommended" (*SAMJ*, 1980: 102). Both the local nature and the universal usage of the book are thus stressed in this review.

As for Natal, two of the reports published in the Natal Regional Survey (additional report no. 3 and no. 4) under the direction of Prof. H.R. Burrows were reviewed by Edward Munger of the University of Chicago in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Munger, 1954: 200–201). In 1959, two reports (nos. 12 and 13) published by Oxford University Press were reviewed in the journal *Economic Geography*. These are examples of a wide range of international reviews, for texts that focused on very specific South African issues. So too, the authoritative *History of Natal* by Edgar Brookes and Cecil Webb, first published in 1965, was very widely reviewed, both locally and internationally. The 1969 UNP catalogue quotes extracts from a number of reviews:

"A scholarly, well-written history, tolerant in its assessment of even bitterly controversial issues and compassionate in judgments ... a valuable contribution to South African historical literature." (*American Historical Review*)

"In die geheel beskou het die twee skrywers ... 'n nuttige bydrae gelewer en ten opsigte van die Natalse geskiedenis 'n voorbeeld gestel wat met vrug deur ander historici vir geskiedenis van die Transvaal, Vrystaat en Kaapkolonie nagevolg kan word." (On the whole, the two authors ... have made a useful contribution and set an example in respect of Natal history which could be fruitfully followed by other

historians for histories of the Transvaal, Free State and Cape Colony.) (*Historia*, 12(1))

“Scrupulously impartial in their assessment of the conduct and achievements of the various races in Natal.” (*Eastern Province Herald*, 16 March 1966)

“We especially recommend this History of Natal to all history teachers in our African schools.” (*Umafrika*, 26 February 1966)

“An essential tool for the scholar and research worker ... an elegant and scholarly work which should attract wide acclaim.” (*The Star*, 18 February 1966)

“Is sure to take its place among the standard histories. The well-documented text, the excellent critically annotated bibliography and the carefully selected photographs all help to make this an outstanding history book by two authors who know their subject and how to write it.” (*Daily Dispatch*, 23 February 1966)

A different kind of title, the bestselling *T.S. Eliot and the Human Predicament* by Audrey Cahill (also from UNP), was particularly well received in the US: “Not just another Eliot study but a beautifully fresh ‘first book’ for those coming new to the poet, and a satisfying and unobtrusive synthesis for those who know him well” (*Choice*, November 1967, quoted in UNP catalogue, 1969). This distinctly apolitical title was thus well received internationally, and not specifically seen as a ‘local interest’ title, focusing on South African affairs.

In contrast, Unisa Press books were not widely reviewed internationally. One factor is certainly the language of publication; only English-language texts were likely to receive a general readership overseas, and Unisa published in both English and Afrikaans. Some of H.J. de Vleeschauwer’s works on philosophy, published in English, French or German, were reviewed in European journals, including *Philosophy* from the Royal Institute of Philosophy – but then perhaps given his origins in Europe, his name was already known in academic circles and he would have specifically targeted a European readership. We can point, for example, to Devaux (1971), referring to De Vleeschauwer’s work as “vast” and “very useful”.

Another major work produced by Unisa Press, *A Select Bibliography of South African History*, compiled by the well-known historians C.F.J. Muller, F.A. van Jaarsveld and Theo van Wijk (1966), was more widely reviewed than the average title from this publisher. The reviews are not necessarily positive. For instance, Shula Marks reviewed the book for the *Journal of*

*African History* (1967), calling it “reasonably competent” and criticising the paucity of historical research on black people – not a glowing review, by any means. In contrast, the review in *African Affairs* mentions the “distinguished compilers” of this “useful guide for historical research workers” (L.B.F., 1973: 101). The text was also reviewed in South African journals, usually quite positively. The differential reception of the text is probably due to the differing political views of the various reviewers – this is a text that could be considered supportive of the apartheid ideologies or at best mildly critical. Shula Marks, for instance, could be considered part of the ‘oppositional code’ (as she was in exile herself), while the authors and title fall more strongly into the ‘dominant-hegemonic code’. The wider readership and impact of this title could also be ascribed to factors such as the international renown of the authors themselves, the topic of the book and its widespread potential usage, and the greater marketing efforts dedicated to this title than to the average Unisa Press title.

There were of course books that fell flat as well; that disappeared with barely a ripple in terms of reviews after publication. One such was Simon Davis’s *The Decipherment of the Linear A and Linear B Scripts of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece* (WUP, 1967). Murray (1997: 251) sums up the rather sad story, which shows a discrepancy between local (popular) and international (scholarly) impact:

In 1967, the WUP published his book, *Decipherment...*, in which he claimed to have deciphered Linear A. Acclaimed in the Johannesburg press for “achieving international fame for himself and new lustre for his university”, Davis’s researches proved to be the great sadness of his career. In the English-language classical world his book fell virtually silent from the press, with few of the major journals reviewing it.

Another indicator of reach is the number of languages into which works are translated, through the sub-licensing of subsidiary rights. While none of the university presses has been active in selling rights, all have sold translation rights from time to time, largely as a result of ad hoc requests. In 1957, WUP sold their first translation rights, upon being asked for the rights to translate Martiensen’s *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture with Special Reference to the Doric Temple and its Setting* into Spanish, for the South American market (first published in South Africa in 1956, the Spanish edition was published in 1958 by

Editorial Nieva Visión of Buenos Aires). This title also saw a US edition, with territorial rights being sold. In turn, South African rights were also bought to titles published abroad, such as Joseph Wolpe's *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition* (1958), originally published by Stanford University Press.

There is thus a clear indication that books from the university presses achieved a wide, even a world-wide readership, and that their reception was largely positive. They were seldom reviewed in terms of the political situation in South Africa, except in cases where advertisements and reviews were refused on such grounds. Rather, they appear to have been received purely as scholarly works, contributing to the international literature in a wide range of subject areas. However, some differential treatment of the works can be discerned, and this may be ascribed to the reviewers having differing political views from the authors of the works concerned – i.e. they fall into different positions on the continuum of intellectual response.

#### **6.5.5 Co-publishing and collaboration**

While the presses may be competitors for a small author pool and small market, there has always been a certain camaraderie in their approach to each other. For instance, WUP and UNP regularly advertised each other's publications, and later forged a reciprocal "display and order-taking arrangement" (Wilson, 1983: 3). This informal collaboration dates back to a meeting between the two press directors at the London Book Fair in 1983. A WUP flyer from the 1980s reminds prospective clients: "Don't forget that we take orders for books published by the University of Natal Press". Nan Wilson of WUP noted, however, that collaboration with other universities was limited: "UNISA does not hold stocks of 'outside' publications and UCT has a commercially administered on-campus bookshop. I should like to assess the outcome of the WUP/UNP arrangement before approaching Rhodes" (Ibid.).

As mentioned in the editorial profile, WUP published on the whole in English, and it is interesting to note that a number of Afrikaans titles that would otherwise have appeared under its imprint were published in collaboration with other local publishers. For instance, in 1936, J.D.A. Krige's *Die Franse Familienname in Suid-Afrika (van voor 1800) Etimologies*

*Verklaar* ('French Family Names in South Africa (from before 1800) Etymologically Defined') was published by Van Schaik "for the University of Witwatersrand". Similarly, when Van Schaik published Marais' *Gedigte* (Poems) in 1955 on behalf of the University, the Press received 50% of proceeds from sales.

The university presses also engaged in a co-publishing strategy with foreign publishers, in an attempt to improve the reach of their publications. For instance, a rise in co-publishing with a wide range of partners in the US, UK and Australia may be attributed to a deliberate co-publishing strategy at both WUP and UNP, especially from the 1990s. Books were co-published at this time with a variety of US university presses (e.g. Mercer, Ohio, Wisconsin) and other scholarly publishers, such as Westview Press, as well as university presses and other scholarly presses in the UK (Cambridge, Manchester), Australia and even Zimbabwe. This strategy may have been sparked by meetings between Mobbs Moberly, Nan Wilson and James Currey in the UK in 1987, although earlier examples may also be found. One of these illustrates the ad hoc nature of earlier co-publishing attempts: Arthur Keppel-Jones's huge history of *Rhodes and Rhodesia: The White Conquest of Zimbabwe 1884–1902* was co-published with Canada's McGill-Queen's University Press in 1983, largely due to the contacts of the author himself – having taught for a number of years at the University of Natal, he later moved to McGill-Queen's, and he was responsible for initiating the co-publication negotiations.

Co-publications with local publishers were also undertaken, especially with educational publishers such as Shuter and Shooter, and occasionally with the oppositional publishers, David Philip and Ravan Press. However, the latter efforts seem to have been less successful, in particular a UNP collaboration with Ravan Press in publishing Jeff Guy's study of John William Colenso in 1983 (titled *The Heretic*). Mobbs Moberly wrote bitterly to the Registrar, T. Cochran, that Ravan Press were "most unsatisfactory to deal with, particularly in their refusal to acknowledge our part in the publication" (Moberly, 1985). In part, this difficulty in working together arises from the widely divergent publishing philosophies of the two publishers, and their very different modes of working. Thus, while Ravan Press was promoting Guy's study for its political insights and impact, for WUP this was a scholarly text first and foremost, based on rigorous academic research. Reading between the lines of



Moberly's correspondence, we can speculate that Ravan saw UNP as an inadequate publishing partner and as potentially impacting on their (Ravan's) image as an oppositional publisher. This did not prevent Ravan from finding UNP's financial support for the publication quite useful. Co-publishing with another oppositional publisher, David Philip, was more successful, although it was usually limited to distribution deals – perhaps because of Philips' understanding of and sympathy with the dynamics of scholarly publishing? One could speculate that David Philip's position on the continuum was closer to the university presses than that of Ravan.

In terms of wider industry involvement, the university presses have on the whole remained somewhat aloof. WUP first considered joining the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) in 1960, but decided not to become a member as they felt the benefits were not clear. Both WUP and UNP joined the non-racial IPASA (Independent Publishers' Association of South Africa) when it was formed at the end of the 1980s, and for a time they were seen as part of a community of progressive publishers. Today, however, the university presses are all members of PASA and are seen as an important part of the scholarly sub-sector of publishing in South Africa.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter builds upon the content and author analysis conducted in Chapter 5, to consider the wider social and institutional milieu of the South African university presses, in order to consider factors and reasons behind the publishing decisions of the university presses. Attention is paid, first, to the university presses' business models and funding, which reflects their institutional insertion. The university presses functioned as departments of their respective parent institutions, rather than as autonomous business units, and this constrained the publishing decisions which could be taken, as well as decisions relating to strategy, structure, and staffing. Moreover, it was shown that the varying value attributed to the university presses can be traced in the fluctuating subventions given by their institutions, and by the frequent reviews of their operations and, indeed, their *raison d'être*. It is hardly surprising, given the institutional and funding constraints, that the presses were

not as free in their editorial philosophy and publishing selection as the independent oppositional publishers were able to be.

In addition to funding, the close alignment between the university presses' identities and that of their parent institutions was described. As a brief analysis of the presses' changing colophons shows, the trend has been towards increasing independence in terms of branding – except at Unisa Press, where the corporate identity has become dominant, with an increasing culture of managerialism since the mergers of 2004. Another factor of institutional identity is the setting of the presses within the universities. As 'non-academic' departments, they were expected to play an important service role, supporting the university mandate of research and knowledge production. The service roles – indeed, the dual scholarly and service mandate – of the university presses were thus also examined in this chapter.

Dissemination is a key stage in the research life cycle, too, as research needs to be published and disseminated in order to reach an audience and have an impact. The chapter thus also considers the general readership for university press publications. A widespread complaint against the local university presses has been that their reach is limited, and this complaint is considered from the perspective of the publishers and their efforts at distribution. In order to consider the reception and impact of university press books, attention is paid to the marketing efforts of the local university presses, as well as their impact as gauged through the use of book reviews in academic journals. It is significant to what extent local books reached the international scholarly community, and how well received they tended to be. This insertion into the international community of scholars was tempered by certain factors, including the growing isolation of South Africa in the 1980s due to the academic boycott, the perception that the university presses were not oppositional publishers, and the choice of English or Afrikaans as the language of publication.

What is striking in surveying the history of all of the university presses is the stability and continuity in their operations, in spite of constraints and developments in the wider publishing industry and within scholarly publishing as a niche area. To a large extent, the policies and procedures framing the operations of the presses have remained almost

unchanged since the apartheid period. This has led to a certain amount of stability and even stolidity in their operations, in spite of the almost constant perception that they are living through crisis and decline. The literature (e.g. Abbott, 2008) shows that this balance between stability and change is typical for university presses overseas as well, as these have shown remarkable resilience throughout the twentieth century.

From a theoretical perspective, this discussion of the milieu of university press publishing has certain implications for the dominant models of book history. As noted in Chapter 4, in reference to the history of oppositional publishing in South Africa, these models have certain limitations when applied to highly unconventional modes of publishing. Both university press and oppositional publishing is mission-driven, rather than profit-driven, yet traditional models such as those of Darnton (1982) or Adams and Barker (1993) (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Chapter 1) do not provide sufficient space for the interpretation of mission or its impact on publishing philosophy and decisions. In this study, too, the publishers in question are subsumed within a larger, institutional whole, and their missions are subordinate to a wider university mission, which has great implications for their activities and publishing output.

This discussion of the social history of the university presses thus relies on less orthodox models, in particular the continuum model of intellectual responses to apartheid. These responses have been classified within three main 'codes', to use Stuart Hall's terminology: the dominant-hegemonic code, the negotiated code, and the oppositional code. Using a continuum model, instead of the usual cyclical models, has enabled us to trace shifts over time, as well as ambiguities and inconsistencies. The impact of the environment on the continuum also changes over time, opening up a bigger space for dissenting voices and differences of opinion.

The cyclical model may also break down when placed within the context of a highly constrained institution within a repressive society. Thus, at every stage of Darnton's publishing cycle, a new break or disjuncture could be introduced: for instance, between author and publisher, there may be systemic reasons why authors were unable to access certain publishing platforms. Between publishing decision and production, there would be gatekeeping practices (especially important in a university context, where peer review is

considered primary) that could prevent publication from continuing, as well as self-censorship. Funding constraints could also arise, to prevent publication. Between production and distribution, the threat of government censorship or banning orders loomed. Distribution could also be disrupted by lack of access to mainstream dissemination channels, or, again, by a lack of funding, or even by extraneous factors such as the academic boycott. And even though authors and readers belonged to the same academic community, there was often a breakdown in communication between publishers and the readership they served. This could be related to a disjuncture in aims between academics and the university presses, or to the politics of exile, or to issues as diverse as language, affordability and geographic location.

As a result, the social and geographic setting, and the particular nature of a publisher, may have implications for the kinds of models that are appropriate for structuring an examination of that publisher's history.