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## THEATRE WITHOUT BORDERS: EVALUATING E-BOOK PUBLICATION OF PLAY TEXTS IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SPACE

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### Abstract

The theatre ecology had embraced digital technology long before the Covid-19 pandemic entered our lives. The orange economy, as we know it, is driven by creativity from the arts and humanities as well as the sciences. Playwriting pedagogy, as was traditionally taught, pointed to the stage, printing press and elitist publishers as windows to the world. The theatre arts is a discipline that has a value chain of products and services. Adopting the survey and historical-analytic methods, this paper focuses on playwriting and the *playwrightpreneur's* options to the conventional style of publishing for product spread and economic empowerment. The excitement and apprehensions of digitisation on this venture are interrogated via an online survey on consumers of play texts, on the one hand, and playwrights on the other hand. The researcher argues that the availability of online stores does not necessarily translate to the availability of e-books. The results show that even though we are in the digital era, the acceptability of e-books is low compared to hard-copy books. It also reveals that knowledge of online publishing is poor. The gains of digitising theatre projects are illuminated. Furthermore, teachers and students of theatre arts studies will find this option complementary to the age-long style of hard copy inventories as institutional or personal collections. The paper concludes that adequate information on how to publish play texts online is urgently needed especially for writers of dramatic texts. It recommends that workshops on online publication be organised for teachers and students of playwriting.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Digitisation, Playwriting, *Playwrightpreneur*, E-book, Play texts.

### Introduction

The value chain of theatre arts is better appreciated in this era of technological advancement. Before now the whole process of playmaking and playwriting was wrapped in a face-to-face activity where the playwright, director, and actors in a constructivist fashion midwife the play text as Culpeper and Demmen reveal that: the present-day reader is likely to take some of the conventions of play texts for granted, including that the play exists from the outset as an entire visible entity, available to all readers. Indeed, plays are now generally written as a whole, rapidly reproduced for people to read as a whole and published as a whole (162).

This only confirms that it took a long time for a play text to be assembled as a whole for publication. The 'play text' was available in parts, and manuscripts were

given to actors and edited as rehearsals progressed. It is the portions of the text that was finally performed that are canonized into a collection to be published. The technology available to us in the 20th century produced play texts in typed hard copies, or published hard copies supplied directly by either publishers or marketers or obtained from bookshops. The 21st century is witnessing a lot of old play texts going out of print and offers us its gift of digital (re)production of some old classics and new voices. A virtual rehearsal used to be unthinkable not to talk of owning a soft or e-copy of the play text. All this is history now as theatre arts, among other disciplines, has embraced the digitisation of its processes and products for maximum appeal and mileage. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many organisations to go online, the theatre ecology had embraced digital technology long before the Covid-19 pandemic entered our lives (Morash par.1). Today some auditions are done online, rehearsals are held on Zoom or Goggle meet, plays and stand-up comedies are streamed online, drive-in theatres are emerging and playwrights need not worry about the fidelity and availability of their play texts.

Playwriting as a craft of the theatre is slowly but surely catching up with the trend of online publishing. This development has inspired the researcher to investigate the phenomenon of e-play text publication as a panacea to play text scarcity among students of drama and the audience in general. The entrepreneurial angle of play publishing, the traditional way, seems to be wrapped in uncertain economic profit margins compared to the opportunities the play store apps are offering to online publishers of creative works. Publishing a book goes beyond the printing of ink on paper. At the most basic level, it requires a legal framework of registration to acquire the International Standard Book Number (ISBN). A book is, therefore, considered published when this unique identification number is obtained. However, this does not necessarily guarantee that the book so published will be distributed to all bookstores, be a bestseller to allow the author to recoup his or her cost of production or post any profit.

What this article problematises is the fact that play text publication in physical or hard copy format is expensive and, therefore, the need to explore other cost-effective ways to publish, procure and archive copies in formats that guarantee constant availability and affordability. This is a challenge the creative community must address. This study appraises the perception of playwrights and readers of play texts to the emerging trend of online publishing for wider scholarship and economic gains. The objectives of this study, therefore, are to i. identify the preferred book format of playwrights and readers, ii. ascertain playwrights' and readers' knowledge of e-books and publishing, and iii. assess the value of e-play texts to readers and playwrights. To do this, the following questions were raised and sampled among readers and playwrights: i. What is your preferred book format? ii. What do you know about e-books and publishing? iii. How much value do you place on e-books?

### **The Import of Books in Scholarship**

The epistemology of books in textual scholarship dates back to the 3rd century BCE, when the scholarly activities of copying, comparing, describing, and archiving



texts became professionalised in the library of Alexandria (McLeod 3). Books metamorphosed from symbols on tablets, papyrus scrolls, and parchment to the paper revolution. The writing styles ranged from right to left, left to right, up to down, and down to up. It was the German invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in printing the Gutenberg Bible that revolutionised the concept of books and publishing. Publishing books through the printing press has a long history, from the medieval to the modern. The purpose of a book is to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behaviour of mankind. Play texts contain the story of a people, and the humanity of societies and serve as a pedagogical tool for the training of artists. Publishing houses pick and choose which manuscript to publish for different reasons. OI posits that:

As an author, your ultimate goal is to publish your work. The publishing process is a long and critical one, and not every manuscript escapes scrutiny and rejection. A publisher can refuse to publish a book if they don't think they have a good chance of selling. (1)

Printing and publishing units at institutions of higher learning have helped to fulfil the author's ambition of getting published and contributing to knowledge production. Popularly known as the university printing press in Nigeria, this printing and publishing arm has contributed greatly to the affordability of books in schools thereby bridging the gap between the commercial-driven private publishing houses and the college printing press. Some of these educational institutions' presses include the University of Ibadan Press, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Press, Ahmadu Bello University Press, the University of Benin Press, the University of Jos Press, and Babcock University Press among others. Sadly, most of these university presses no longer meet up with their obligations due to the rising cost of printing materials especially 'paper.'

### **Theatre and Digitisation**

Brennen and Kreiss's definition of digitisation fits in well as they define 'digitalisation' as the form in which an increasing number of fields and disciplines are being remodelled around digital communication and media infrastructures. That is, an augmenting use of digital technologies for daily activities (1). The theatre is one of the disciplines that is embracing digitisation. This is happening in all its elements like lighting, sound, set design, acting, costume, makeup, and playwriting. Other departments of theatre running with digitisation are pedagogy, publicity, marketing, and publications. One institution that is maximizing digitisation globally in an interesting area is the National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway which digitised the archive of the Abbey Theatre between 2012 and 2015 and the outcome was revealing as Cox, reports that:

New international connections with other universities have developed and boosted NUI Galway's profile in theatre and drama, making it a frequently referenced institution in this field. This is significant since mentions of an institution play an important part in university ranking systems, helping NUI

Galway into the top 250 brackets in several tables. Patrick Lonergan, Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at NUI Galway, has commented that ‘Digital access to the Abbey Archive has been vital in strengthening academic participation in international research networks in digital humanities and other fields. This heightened level of external engagement has included multi-partner funding bids and the hosting of major conferences. (24)

This brave project resulted in the restoration of the under-listed items:

**Table 1**  
**Abbey Theatre Archive: Volumes of Digitised Material per Category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Volume</b>
Administrative files	320,674 pages
Scripts	135,131 pages
Prompt scripts	126,740 pages
Programmes	66,628 pages
Photographs	38,402 items
Press cuttings	33,815 items
Stage management files	13,077 pages
Audio	3,068 recordings
Set designs	1,977 pages
Posters	483 items
Lighting designs	334 items
Video	324 recordings
Venue designs	87 items
Handbills	10 items

### **2017 (NUI) Digitisation Project with Dramatic Impact**

Castelo was right when he advanced the profitability of embracing digitisation in the theatre. He claims that among the benefits that theatres can get from digitalisation are: better connection for better data gathering, elimination of boundaries (time and space), and greater control of the organisation’s activities resulting in the development of more suitable strategies, space-saving, improved communication and even sharing of information (80). It is evident, therefore, to state that the theatre profession is not averse to digitisation. It is even open to more daring interfaces with the possibility that these technologies extend to the industry at all levels of engagement with the audience whether they be viewers, readers or other receptors of theatrical art.

## **Playwriting and New Media**

This research narrows into the medium of playwriting and how one of its products – the play text is faring in the digital space. Many Nigerians who have gone through the secondary school system would have read a play text before graduating, especially those who offered literature in English. While those studying theatre, creative or performing arts as they are referred to in their respective institutions should have read some lists of play texts too. But the digital collections of Nigerian cum African play texts domiciled in university libraries or the repertory of theatre outfits are nearly non-existent in Nigeria. However, a diachronic observation of theatre pedagogy in other climes suggests that their playwrights are writing with the new media in mind and their institutions are committed to protecting these documents with the use of technology that guarantees easy access and affordability. As a result, the number of e-plays/texts available for their digital ‘natives’ and digital adaptive readers is many. One verifiable institution blazing the trail in this regard is Bloomsbury, aka, Drama Online (<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/discover/bloomsbury-digital-resources/products/drama-online/>).

Drama Online is an award-winning digital library of nearly 3,500 play texts, over 400 audio plays, 365 hours of video and over 450 books of criticism and performance practice from leading theatre publishers and companies. Together, these resources offer a complete multimedia experience of theatre designed to meet the full range of teaching needs for theatre studies, literature courses and drama schools; individual collections can also be purchased separately to tailor Drama Online to your institution’s specializations. The core collection on Drama Online features the pre-eminent theatre lists of Bloomsbury’s Methuen Drama and Arden Shakespeare imprints as well as those of Faber & Faber. It also includes production photos from the Victoria and Albert Museum and The American Shakespeare Centre. Further play text collections include Nick Hern Books, Aurora Metro Books and Playwrights Canada Press. The platform also offers collections of filmed live performances including those from leading theatres such as Shakespeare’s Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, as well as a wealth of audio plays from L.A. Theatre Works.

While filming and live streaming of theatre performances are present in our institutions today, their archiving or storage for easy retrieval is a huge challenge in Nigeria. We seem to be ‘content flaring’ our artistic resources even with the availability of repositories like ‘YouTube’ and ‘Google Drive’; thus, too much content is lost to the immediacy of theatre. This ought not to be when advanced technology in cloud computing has come to the rescue. No creative content should be lost in this digital age. Playwriting churns out hundreds of plays every year, some make it to the stage and printing press while very few make it to online stores as e-play texts. It can be argued that while attention was given to the ‘spectacular’ elements of theatre such as dance, acting, singing and the use of costumes and sets with digitised collaborations and technologies, the very act of digital playwriting was happening simultaneously with the evolution of the typewriter to personal computers.

Play texts in soft copy formats became a reality in the 1980s with the commercialization of computers to the public. New possibilities of writing scripts and

carrying out performances became the order of the day. So, play text moved from being accessed only on paper to floppy disks, CD ROM and flash drives. The history of a published e-play text can be situated within the history of the e-book publishing itself. From the late 1990s, e-book readers began to emerge and online e-bookstores made access to e-books a little easier. In 2004 Galsworthy John's plays: four short plays were published as an e-book but it was in 2007 that Amazon's Kindle e-reader simplified the process and the e-book market for the ordinary consumer. E-play digitisation started in the United States of America (USA) while in Nigeria playwrights like Bode Sowande, Nkechiyere Ishima, Helen Ibezim, Yotunde Yoroye, Chijoke Nnabuchi and Ugochukwu Obi have contributed to the drama genre at Okada Books.

### **Playwrightpreneur**

Playwrights in academics especially have contended with how to make profits from their creative works. This is an age-long concern as Culpeper and Demmen, discovered that even Ibsen looked forward to the profits from publication, as he was writing in a period in which the reading public had rapidly expanded and was to expand further (something which in the UK was assisted by the Education Act of 1870, making school compulsory) (162). Some Nigerian playwrights have been able to migrate selling their works from traditional bookshops to online stores like Amazon, Selar, and Okada Books but their works remain in hardcover and paperback versions. Okada Books is an internet platform and Android app for publishing and reading electronic books founded by Okechukwu Ofili, a writer, and engineer. Very few playwrights have been able to transition from hardcover and paperback to softcopies that come in formats like PDF and Kindle versions, which are the future of book publishing. Wole Soyinka has over 20 of his plays sold on Amazon but none of his plays is in the kindle format as of the time of carrying out this research. The only book authored by Soyinka on kindle is titled *Of Africa*. Its kindle version goes for \$11.99; the paperback goes for \$16.00 while the hardcover goes for \$29.88 and this pricing alone should point the discerning reader to the economy of e-books.

So, how did Nigeria begin her publishing journey? Kole gathered that "the colonial civil administration sold surplus printers to the general population between 1939 and 1945 after the Second World War" (par. 1). These were purchased and printed by some business-minded Nigerians. Almanacs, handbills, pamphlets, short stories, and novels, including biographies of politicians, were all printed by them. How else could we have known more about Patrice Lumumba than what the penny newspapers had to offer? The genre of writing that came to be known as "motor park literature" or "Onitsha market literature" is where Cyprian Ekwensi first published his short stories. For a very long period, writers like Niyi Oniororo published their stories and political polemics on this platform. The next stage of home publishing can be said to be the pacesetter series stage. Here, local branches of a British publishing company as well as locally formed publishing companies went into popular publishing, publishing the indigenous for national development. Evans Brothers, Heinemann, Longman's, and McMillan along with Onibon-Oje, Fagbamigbe and Arthur Nwankwo's Third Dimension Publishing all flourished until structural adjustment 'crippled' them. Now,

the old debate still exists about Nigerians having a poor reading culture. However, Hållén disagrees and opines that: Nigerians read, they continue to read and they will always read! The important question is ‘What do they read? In the past, they read newspapers and news magazines. They read novels like *King Solomon’s Mines* by Rider Haggard and *She Died in the Bloom of Youth* by Cyprian Ekwensi. Today, they read popular American novels encouraged by television series like *Telemundo*. And they read online. I won’t say we have replaced printed books in any way. Digital and printed books are both important in Nigeria and some people prefer one to the other. Some people love the smell of printed books and others love the fact that they can carry 200 books on their mobile phone (n.pag.).

How writers get paid for their intellectual properties remains a contentious matter. Stories abound of middlemen in the retailing of authors’ books simply appropriating to themselves the proceeds of the sale. Some bookshops have failed to remit authors’ money from books that no longer stand on their shelves, and marketing outfits have been found culpable of defrauding the author in the sales and distribution of his or her works. Yet the platform that guarantees that the author gets his/her due is poorly patronised by playwrights. How does one pay for books he or she downloads on Okada Books for example? Hållén again responds that:

First, you don’t need a bank account or a bank card to pay. “You simply buy the airtime (or recharge card as it is popularly called in Nigeria) and load the pins on the platform. It is like entering your card number and it is fast. Authors get paid 70% on each sale while Okada Books automatically remits 30%. If you are in Nigeria you’ll be paid in Nigerian Naira. International authors get paid via PayPal. So much tears for those who moan that we are finished, that we can never go forward. These are people who think that governments are all. Governments in this country have had nothing to do with the successes of Nigerians. Think Nollywood. Think Nigerian writers and intellectuals. Think Nigerian doctors overseas. Now think of Okada Books. (n.pag.)

This approach to paying for books and the authors getting what is due to them is very reassuring and should motivate writers and playwrights especially to take advantage of the digital innovation to spread their works across continents and still get paid.

### **Theoretical Fortification**

Christensen’s original theory in 1997 focused on disruptive technologies. This theory at inception referred to the technology and not the business model at play in the economic dynamics. Over the years this theory has been engaged to include other factors in the business world thus, it has been able to separate the disruptions in technology, methodology, and product (goods and services) while offering them its core goal: to change the way an organisation is run while superior ideas must push out or challenge the old to perform better (Christensen, Raynor and McDonald par.1; Omoera and Ojieson 130-131). Winston’s theory of technological innovation further helps to explain the impact of the e-book phenomenon, and the effect it is having on

society especially when the combination of factors that turn an innovation into a marketable product is known. This article stands on these theories from the angle of a business model since the primary product of playwriting – the play text is not a new-to-the-world invention but its transformation into electronic copies is innovative and thus can make a valuable contribution to the publishing industry. Markides clarifies that:

It is important to note that business model innovators do not discover new products or services; they simply redefine what an existing product or service is and how it is provided to the customer. For example, Amazon did not discover bookselling; it redefined what the service is all about, what the customer gets out of it, and how the service is provided to the customer. (21)

Li, Porter and Suominen have maintained that there is an interplay between technological emergence, disruption, and innovation. Innovations that focus on various aspects of a good or service are inevitably interesting (at least initially) to a different customer than those who want what the established competitors have to offer (285). As a result, compared to the established markets, the markets developed around the new rivals frequently consist of different types of customers and have unique essential success elements. The new markets necessitate a distinct combination of targeted efforts on the part of the company because they have various essential success elements. For instance, Amazon's value chain, internal procedures, organizational structures, and culture are fundamentally different from those required by Borders or Barnes & Noble to compete in the same market for the online distribution of books. The e-book has the potential to disrupt the processes for the production, distribution and use of authorial text, and is already in the process of doing so, rather more rapidly than the printing press (Wilson 2).

### **Methodology**

The researcher employed the survey research method to ascertain the awareness levels of students and staff on the evolution of the play text and its publishing formats. While playwrights were also surveyed to know if they were willing to take that leap to embrace the digital option of online publishing during challenges facing the playwriting profession. An online survey approach was used since most students and lecturers were at home due to the industrial action embarked upon by lecturers under the aegis of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Both questionnaires were validated by senior colleagues before the links generated from the Google form were sent to the platform of the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists (SONTA). Members were asked to fill out the questionnaires as lecturers. Also, the link was forwarded to their students' platforms. The second set of questionnaires sent to the SONTA and the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) WhatsApp page was for playwrights only. The questionnaires were made of closed and open-ended questions. A total of 88 questionnaires were filled out and submitted by the first group while for the second group, 17 playwrights filled and submitted as well. They survey

was complemented by the historical-analytic method that helped to historically situate the study.

## Data Presentation and Discussion

**Table 2 General Information on the Two Groups**

Group A: Staff and Students 88	Status	Undergraduates 52.3% (46), Postgraduates 17% (15) Lecturers/staff 30.7% (27)	100%
	Age:	(17-27yrs) 51.1% (45), (28-38yrs) 19.3% (17) (39and above) 29.5% (26)	100%
	Discipline :	Theatre Arts 80.7% (71) Mass Com 13.6% (12) others 6.4% (5)	100%
Group B: Playwrights 17	Gender:	Male 76.5% (13) Female 23.5% (4)	100%
	Category	Full-Time Playwright -Nil, Part-Time Playwright in Academics 88.2% (15) Part-Time Playwright Non-Teaching 11.8% (2)	100%
	started writing	1980 -2000 58.8% (10), 2001- 2020 41.2% (7)	100%
	First published	1997-2006 29.4 (5), 2007-2016 29.4 (5), 2017-2022 29.4 (5) Not Published 11.8% (2)	100%

### Field Work 2022

This table reveals the following information on the two groups: Group A is the sample population of readers of creative texts. They are eighty-eighty (88) in number with 46 undergraduates (52.3%), 15 postgraduates (17%) and 27 lecturers (30.7%). Out of this population, 45 of them fall under the 17-27 age bracket, the ages 17 of them range from 28 to 38 and 26 are 39 years and above. Among this reading respondents, 71(80.7%) belong to the theatre arts discipline, 12 (13.6%) are of the mass communication discipline and 5(6.4%) are a combination of English, linguistics, film, television and psychology.

Group B represents the playwrights. Seventeen (17) of them form the sample population out of which 13 are males (76.5%) and 4 are females (23.5%). The category of playwrights reveals that none was a full-time playwright. However, 15 (88.2%) are academic cum teaching staff who write plays, and the remaining 2 (11.8%) are not academics but write plays.

**Table 3 Research Question 1. What is your Preferred Book Format? (Readers)**

SN	Questions	Response 88			Total
		Hard copy	e-book	Audio book	
1	Which format of books would you prefer?	68.2% (60)	23.9% (21)	8% (7)	100%
		<b>kindle</b>	<b>iPad</b>	<b>Smartphone</b>	
2	When reading e-books which device do you prefer?	4.5% (4)	36.4% (32)	59.1% (52)	100%
		<b>e-book</b>	<b>Hard copy</b>		
3	Between an e-book and a hard copy, which do you prefer?	33% (29)		67% (59)	100%
		<b>Prose</b>	<b>Plays</b>	<b>poems</b>	
4	Between prose, plays and poems, which to you is the least published?	10.2% (9)	23.9% (21)	65.9% (58)	100%

Field Work 2022

On the issue of preference of book format, out of the 88 readers surveyed, 68.2% preferred hard copy books, 23.9% prefer e-books and 8% say they prefer audio books. This shows that the majority of the sampled population prefers hardcover or paperback. Another probe into the preferred device with which readers would appreciate e-books revealed that 4.5% go for a kindle, 36.4% will use an iPad and 59.1% will use their smartphones to read e-books. This demonstrates that a better part of the population would prefer using smartphones to read e-books. A greater part of the population (67%) chose hard copies over e-books while the remaining 33% preferred e-books to hardcover books. When asked which genre of books were the least published, the larger part of the respondents (65.9%) identified poems as the least published, followed by plays with 23.9% and prose netting 10.2%. This again confirms that prose (novels) is the most published genre of literature.

**Table 4 Research Question 1. What is your Preferred Book Format? (Playwrights)**

SN	Questions	Response 17			Total
		Traditional publishing	Self-publish	Institutional publishing	
1	How did you publish?	53% (9)	23.5% (4)	23.5% (4)	100%
		<b>Hard copy publishing</b>		<b>e-copy publishing</b>	
2	Which publishing approach do you prefer?	88.2% (15)		11.8% (2)	100%
		<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
3	Would you recommend electronic publishing to playwrights and students?	82.4% (14)		17.6% (3)	100%

Field Work 2022



The result was not different from the playwrights themselves when tested against these questions. 53% said they preferred publishing using the traditional means of taking their manuscripts to the publisher who goes further to edit as the case may be. 23.5% take it upon themselves to self-publish their work. This simply means they take on the role of the publisher and the playwright at the same time. This type of publishing allows the playwright the free hand to determine how far their work will go. There is another category of playwrights (23.5%) who bank on the establishment of a college or university printing press to get their works published. Even with the challenges facing traditional publishing, especially piracy, playwrights still prefer hard copy publishing with 88.2% of those surveyed confirming it and 11.8% opting for e-copy or online publishing. The study, however, revealed a twist when 82.4% of the same playwrights would recommend electronic publishing to emerge playwrights and students. It remains obvious that hard copy publishing is still a force to reckon with in book publication in Nigeria.

**Table 5 Research Question 2. What do you know about e-books and Publishing (Readers)**

SN	Questions	Response 88			Total
		Yes	No		
1	Have you ever read a play text in an e-book format?	Yes	No		100%
		40.9% (36)	59.1% (52)		
2	Do you find it difficult reading e-books compared to hard copies?	Yes	No		100%
		54.5% (48)	45.5% (40)		
3	Are hard-copy books in the theatre readily available to you?	Yes	No		100%
		70.5% (62)	29.5% (26)		
4	Were you taught publishing in your undergraduate programme?	Yes	No		100%
		42% (37)	58% (51)		
5	If you were to publish your creative work, which option will you choose?	Hard copy	e-book	Audio book	100%
		54.5% (48)	38.6% (34)	6.9% (6)	

#### Field Work 2022

Research question 2 was tested using five questions to gauge the knowledge of the 88 respondents on e-books with a particular focus on play text. 36 respondents (40.9%) said they have read a play text as an e-book while 59.1% have not read a play text as an e-book. This confirms that the majority are yet to read a play text as an e-book. The reason for this might be the difficulty it poses compared to hardcopy books. 54.5% said they find it difficult reading e-books while 45.5% had no difficulty reading e-books. 70% of the respondents said books in their disciplines were readily available, especially in theatre arts; only 29.5 disagreed with that assertion. On the rudiments of writing creative works, 58% affirmed that they never received any teaching or training

on how to publish their works, however, 42% admit to being taught publishing in their undergraduate creative writing programme. On their preferred publication platform, 54.5% still prefer a hard copy, 38.6% will go for online publishing and 6.9% will adopt the audio book format.

**Table 6 Research Question 2. What do you know about E-books and Publishing (Playwrights)**

SN	Questions	Response 17		Total
		Yes	No	
1	Securing ISBN is challenging?	Yes	No	100%
		58.8% (10)	41.2% (7)	
2	Are there disadvantages to publishing e-books?	Yes	No	100%
		100% (17)	0% (0)	
3	Hard copy publishing is more beneficial than e-publishing	Yes	No	100%
		70.6% (12)	29.4% (5)	
4	Have you published any of your plays as an e-book?	Yes	No	100%
		11.8% (2)	88.2% (15)	
5	Were you taught how to publish your play in a playwriting class?	Yes	No	100%
		23.5% (4)	76.5% (13)	

On the issue of securing the International Standard Book Number (ISBN), 58.8% of playwrights agree that it could be a challenge getting the number, while 41.2% of the remaining playwrights reveal that the process is simple, especially when the publisher assists in the process of getting it. Everyone surveyed sees a disadvantage to e-publishing. 70.6% believe the hard copy has more benefits than e-books, while 29.4% disagree. The stark reality showed up when the pointed question was asked if any of the surveyed playwrights had published any of their work as an e-book. Only 11.8% could confirm to have done that, and 88.2% have not done so despite being writers for a long time. 76.5% of playwrights admitted that they were not taught publishing at school, and only 23.5% had the privilege of being taught some aspects of publishing while studying playwriting or creative writing. What this means is that most playwrights are novices to publishing and thus cannot fully appreciate the benefits of migrating to the opportunities that electronic publishing offers.

**Table 7 Research Question 3. How much Value do you Place on E-books (Readers)**

SN	Questions	Response 88			Total
		e-book	Hard copy	Audio book	
1	If you were to buy a play text which format, would you pay more money for?	e-book	Hard copy	Audio book	100%
		14.8% (13)	76.1% (67)	9.1% (8)	
2	If you were to choose between an e-book and a	e-book		Hard copy	100%

	hard copy of your favourite play text which, will you choose?	33% (29)	67% (59)	
3	If you were to be given a collection of play texts, which format will you wish to have them in?	<b>e-book</b>	<b>Hard copy</b>	100%
		35.2% (31)	64.8% (57)	

### Field Work 2022

Research question 3 was tested using three questions, each one sought to know the value (economic and otherwise) that the respondents attach to e-books. 76.1% of the respondents said they will pay more money to buy a hard copy book than an e-book or audio book. 14.8% placed more money on e-books while 9.1% felt audio books should cost more. When given a choice to choose the format in which to access their favourite play texts, 67% preferred hard copy books while 33% chose e-books. Even when it comes to owning a collection of play texts the e-book supporters only raised their population to 35.5% while the 64.8% majority preferred their hard copy collections. Therefore, we can deduce from this survey that the 88 respondents place more value on hard copy books than on e-books and audio books.

**Table 8 Research Question 3. How much Value do you Place on E-books (Playwrights)**

SN	Questions	Response 17			Total
1	Do you see the creative industry flourishing with the innovation of e-books and digital stores?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	100%
		64.7% (11)	0%	36.3% (6)	
2	What is the prospect of a play in an audio book format?	<b>Very Promising</b>	<b>Less Promising</b>	<b>Not Promising</b>	100%
		64.7% (11)	23.5% (4)	11.8% (2)	
3	Is hardcopy publishing expensive?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		100%
		76.5% (13)	23.5% (4)		
4	Poor patronage of play text is responsible for low play text publication	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		100%
		64.7% (11)	35.3 (6)		

### Field Work 2022

There seems to be some level of optimism though futuristic, that the innovation of e-books and digital stores may result in some flourishing of the creative writing industry. 64.7% agree while 36.3% are not too sure of those predictions. Taking this innovation, the reality of an audio book for a play text is surely going to better a scholarship in this area; 64.7% said it was going to be very promising, 23.5% said it was less promising and 11.8% did not see any prospect in an audio book as a

playwriting venture. 76.5% of playwrights surveyed confirm that hard copy publishing is expensive while 23.5% believe it is not. On the reason for low play text publication, poor patronage was identified as the cause while 35.3% of those who disagree with this position believe that knowledge sharing is their motivation for writing and not the money it will make from sales.

## **Conclusion**

One major point this study has made is the confirmation that the electronic publishing awareness in the theatre arts industry has come to stay. How it will flourish and maybe become the norm is a phenomenon we must all wait to see. It is the researcher's prediction though that the future of playwriting looks good with the innovation of online publishing. It is obvious from the available data that the population surveyed are strongly holding on to the traditional approach to publishing and the reading of works from this means of knowledge production. While both groups agree that there are some advantages to electronic publishing, they seem reluctant to fully embrace it, compared to other regions of the world where the acceptability and utilisation of online publishing have helped to advance knowledge and their economy as well. These sampled groups in this study may as well mirror the Nigerian and African positions on the table of digitally advancing nations of the world. The theatre arts profession needs to do more in Nigeria to be visible to the larger world if the consumption of her creative literary works must reach the end user irrespective of challenges posed by geographical boundaries and bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with traditional publishing. To achieve the foregoing, the following recommendations are proffered: i. Research should be conducted on the availability of digitised plays and their acceptance in Nigerian schools, ii. Regular workshops on e-publishing should be organised for emerging playwrights, iii. As our libraries are migrating to e-libraries, e-play texts of first, second, third and upcoming -generations of playwrights should be archived, iv. Publishing houses committed to play text publications like Kraft Books and Dynasty Tales should learn from Okada Books by selling the prospects of e-book publishing to their clients and students of theatre and allied arts should be encouraged to access books in their disciplines available as e-books online.

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