



## A Comprehensive Auditing and Mapping of University Press Publications in Kenya from 2020-2023

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### ABSTRACT

*Research publications are a fundamental requirement for university academics worldwide, shaping their tenure and promotion prospects. They represent the essential scholarly output that academics must produce to advance or maintain their careers. University presses bear the responsibility of disseminating research generated in institutions of higher learning. Thus, they play a crucial role in the scholarly communication ecosystem. This paper mapped and audited scholarly publications produced by university presses in Kenya. It specifically examines the types and quantities of scholarly publications produced by university presses and deposited in university libraries and bookshops in Kenya. The study was informed by revised Boyer's Model of Scholarship. Conducted using a mixed methods research approach and survey research design, the study employed a census and purposive sampling to select key informants of the study and university press staff respectively. The target population was fifty-one respondents comprising 36 staff from university presses, 7 university librarians, 7 university press managers and one bookshop manager from the selected universities. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires while qualitative data was collected using interviews and documentary review. Qualitative data was analysed thematically using Nvivo data management software version 12, while quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.0.1.1). Quantitative data was presented statistically using tables and graphical representations, while qualitative data was presented using descriptive narratives and verbatim quotations. Findings revealed that university presses in Kenya produce more of non-scholarly publications than the scholarly ones. Additionally, the study revealed that these publications are hardly deposited in university bookshops and libraries. This limits their visibility and uptake. The study concludes that university presses in Kenya are not fully meeting their mandate of disseminating scholarly knowledge. The study recommends improved productivity of scholarly publications by university presses as a means of increasing their scholarly value. The study also recommends a regular auditing of university press publications to continually assess their quality and visibility within and beyond their parent institutions. The findings of this study may be used by university management to develop policies which systemise, promote and sustain their presses for better productivity and visibility.*

**Keywords:** Kenya, Publish or Perish, Scholarly Productivity, University Presses, Visibility

### 1. INTRODUCTION

University presses are publishers which obtain, create, promote and sell books, journals and other scholarly communication materials. Parsons (1988) defines a university press as a not-for-profit educational publishing house that is attached to a university. They are extensions of their parent institutions. According to Darko-Ampem (2005), a typical university press is an essential division or section of its parent university, usually organised as an administrative department. Therefore, its existence in a university should be considered natural, just like any other department in the university. Day (1991) argued that no effort should be expended to decide whether there should be a

university press in a university or not. Universities should take the existence of a press in their locality as a typical division of the scholarly community.

University presses are essential for promoting local research and knowledge production. They are at the centre of the global knowledge ecosystem (Association of University Presses, 2019). This study sought to illuminate the effectiveness of Kenyan university presses in fulfilling this role, thereby advancing the broader objective of enhancing local research capacity and visibility in the global academic community. Aithal and Kumar (2017) recommended a regular auditing and mapping of scholarly publications from university presses to assess their performance. This recommendation was anchored on the understanding that the main function of university presses is to publish scholarly publications. At the core of academic publishing by university presses is the mandate to disseminate scholarly research and knowledge through diverse products such as journals, books, and conference proceedings (Oladokun et al., 2023). Thus, university presses play a crucial role in advancing disciplines in their respective universities by sharing new discoveries, theories, and insights with the global academic community. Scholarly publishing process involves a rigorous peer review to ensure a high quality and credibility of published works. Academic publishing also facilitates collaboration, debate, and the validation of research findings, fostering intellectual discourse and innovation within academia and beyond.

Publishing in Kenya dates back to 1894 when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) established a press for printing Christian teaching materials at Rabai Station in the Kenyan coast. The press was used to print translated hymn books, Bible scriptures and school books in local languages for the gospel to be spread successfully. The missionaries educated converts to help them read the Bible, books and other Christian materials. In 1899, the Government Press of Kenya was established as a state publisher. It printed notices, reports and other government communication materials. Ndia Kuu Press was established in 1940 due to increased demand for quality education by Africans (Callaghan, 1997). According to Chakava (1996), Charles Richards, the then experienced missionary publisher and printer for the CMS was appointed to run Ndia Kuu Press. It was the first local commercial educational publishing firm in Kenya that produced Christian teaching and adult education materials, text books for schools and novels for Africans (Makotsi & Nyariki, 1997).

In 1948, the East African Literature Bureau (EALB) was set up by the British East Africa government (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) with offices located in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam. According to Callaghan (1997), the EALB was established after Kenyans demanded appropriate indigenous African publications. This was due to pressure by African war veterans on the colonial government to offer them with literacy training in preparation for leadership positions. The EALB published education and literacy materials in local languages for the growing African literate population thereby shaping the local publishing industry in Kenya. Ogechi and Bosire-Ogechi (2002) observed that materials written in Kenya were printed in London. The EALB outsourced publishing services from printing companies overseas. Therefore, the ongoing practice of outsourcing printing processes is not a recent occurrence in the publishing industry in Kenya.

According to Darko-Ampem (2005), the EALB established academic journals such as the *East African Economic Review*, *Zuka* and *Azania* which were discontinued after being handed over to the Oxford University Press. They were discontinued because they were considered to be no longer viable. However, *Azania* is still being published by the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA) based in Nairobi. After the collapse of the East African Community in 1977, each of the three East African countries established their own publishing units. In Kenya, the Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB) was established in 1979. When the EALB wound up, the local publishing sector started experiencing problems and most journals ceased publication. As such, scientists and researchers had limited local mechanisms for sharing their views, findings and inventions. This was despite the fact that several publishing houses had been established in Kenya after the country's independence in 1963. These included educational publishers such as the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) which was set up in 1965 to work alongside the KLB to publish educational materials from the then Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), now known as the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). Both JKF and KLB are state publishers established primarily to produce curriculum materials developed by the KICD (Darko-Ampem, 2004). The University of Nairobi Press and Moi University Press were the first university presses in Kenya. They were established to fill the gap that was felt by academics and researchers in Kenya who by then had no local mechanisms for sharing their inventions, views and research findings.

Public universities with university presses include Moi University, Egerton University and Kenyatta University. However, there are other public universities with print production units such as Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Cooperative University and Multi Media University. Moi University press established in 1989 focusses on electronic publishing and outsources printing services from printers in Nairobi while editorial, typesetting, layout and design are done in-house. Egerton University Press (EUP) also set up in the year 1989 has a fully functional printing press producing text books, research publications, journals, Newsletters, examination booklets and brochures (Weng'ua et al., 2024). Kenyatta University Printing Press (KUPP) established in 2011

includes design and printing divisions and produces books, journals, conference proceedings and internal documents such as graduation booklets, brochures and magazines among other printed products. Similarly, JKUAT Printing and Publishing unit established in 1982 offers design, printing and publishing services for books, journals, conference proceedings and training manuals.

Other universities such as Multimedia University and Cooperative University of Kenya (CUK) provides general printing services with less emphasis on scholarly materials. Cooperative University of Kenya also publishes African Journal of Cooperative Development and Technology annually with the first volume launched in 2016 (CUK, 2020). Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) stands out as the only private university with a dedicated university press in Kenya publishing educational text books and peer reviewed journals since 1984 (CUEA Press, 2019). Daystar University's publication unit, established in 1992, supports scholarly publishing and research dissemination through journals, monographs and conference proceedings. Generally, these university presses and print production units are significant in promoting scholarly publishing and research dissemination in Kenya. Each institution addresses various aspects of printing and publishing to meet the needs of both the academic community and the public.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya requires academics to undertake research and publish findings in credible channels. To be hired or promoted, academics in Kenya must have published a number of articles in books and peer reviewed journals (CUE, 2014). Doctoral students are also expected to publish at least two peer-reviewed journal articles before they can graduate and similarly, Master's students are expected to publish at least one peer-reviewed journal article before being processed for graduation (Weng'ua et al., 2017). Despite these well-intended CUE policies, there is insufficient information on where and how Kenyan academics and postgraduate students publish. Although university presses in Kenya are best positioned to support scholarly publishing in universities, the extent to which they fulfil this mandate is unclear.

The academic publishing landscape is rapidly developing, with university presses playing a primary role in the dissemination of scholarly research output and intellectual discourse. In Kenya, these presses are crucial for advancing knowledge and providing a platform for academics to share their research findings with local and global audiences. Despite their significance, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the comprehensive mapping and auditing of university press publications within the country. Although various studies have been done on scholarly communication and university presses in particular, but there is no known study undertaken on auditing and mapping of university press publications in Kenya. Related studies addressed functions, practices, policies, provision of learning materials and challenges of university presses (Darko-Ampem, 2004; Luescher & Schalkwyk, 2018; Kogos, 2011; Ngobeni, 2012). There seems to be little attention devoted to auditing and mapping of scholarly products from university presses in Kenya and hence the study.

The purpose of this study was to establish the publications produced by university presses in Kenya. The specific research objectives pursued by this study were to examine the types and quantities of scholarly publications produced by university presses and deposited in university libraries and bookshops in Kenya.

### 1.2 Research objective(s)

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To Identify the types of publications by university presses in Kenya
- ii. To establish the quantity of scholarly publications produced by university presses in Kenya

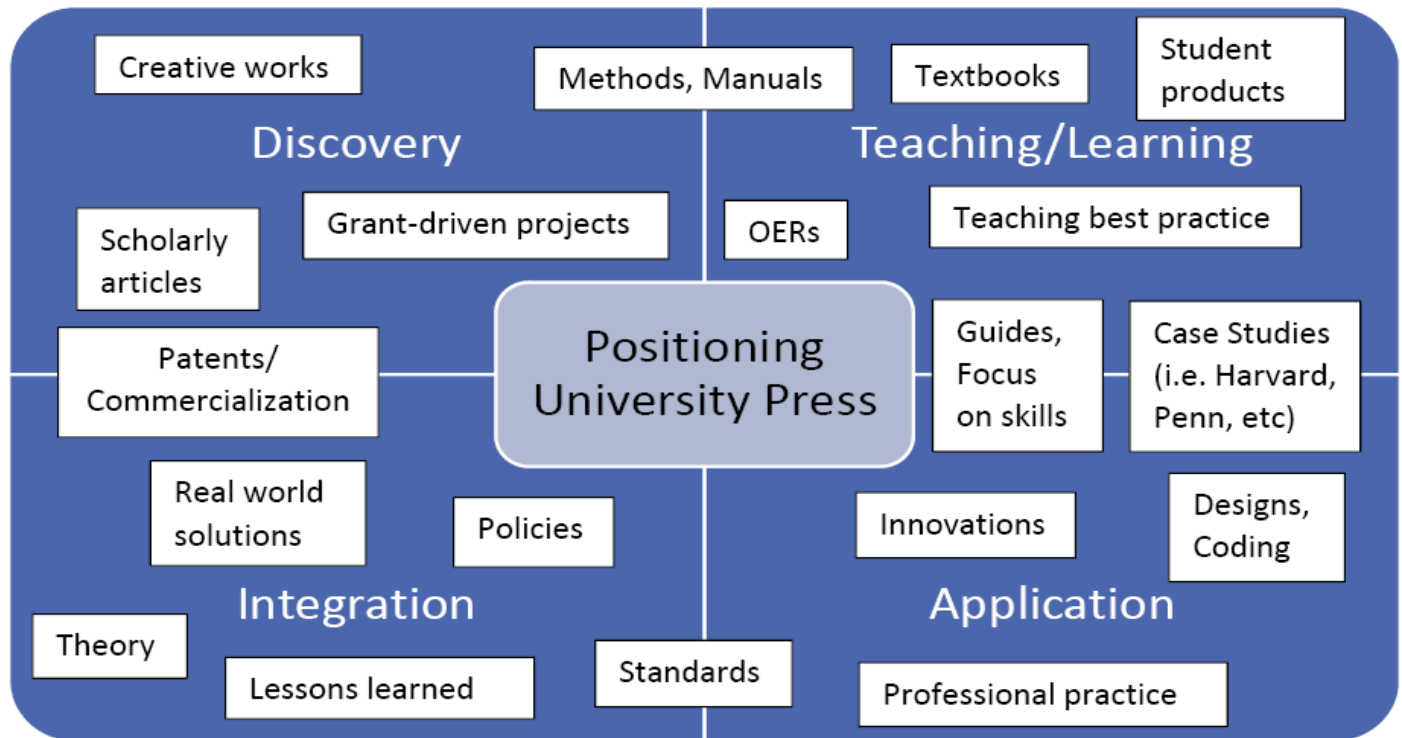
## II LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Revised Boyer's model of scholarship by Kaspar (2019).

#### 2.1.1 Revised Boyer's Model of Scholarship by Kaspar (2019)

The model was developed by Ernest Boyer in 1990. It was revised and adapted by Kaspar in 2019. Boyer (1990) presented an argument that traditional models of scholarship should be broadened to include additional scholarly elements. The model includes four domains: scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application and scholarship of teaching as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1**

*Revised Boyer's Model of Scholarship*

This model advocates for expansion of the traditional definition of scholarship and research. The scholarship of discovery includes original research that advances knowledge while the scholarship of integration involves synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time. Scholarship of application goes beyond the service duties of a faculty member to those within or outside the university and involves the rigour and application of disciplinary expertise with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers. Scholarship of teaching and learning involves the systematic study of teaching and learning processes and requires a format that will allow public sharing and the opportunity for application and evaluation by others.

According to McNabb and Pawlyshyn (2014), scholarship of discovery includes search for new knowledge, traditional definition of knowledge, discovery of new information and new models and sharing discoveries through scholarly publications such as research projects, working papers, peer reviewed journals, book chapters and books, compositions and presentations. Through scholarship of discovery new knowledge is generated and disseminated thus fulfilling the function of university presses.

This model is applicable to this study in as it helps to answer questions on publications produced by university presses. Through scholarship of discovery, the university press's mandate of knowledge diffusion and advancement is achieved. This is because new knowledge generated in universities must be made available to scholars, researchers and students through publications by university presses in different formats and models. Therefore, this model guided the study in knowing the types of publications produced by university presses and models through which they are disseminated, how they are shared within and outside the universities and the application side of knowledge.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

According to Kogos (2011), university press publishing is not well developed in Kenya as most people are not aware of the existence of university presses and their importance in the dissemination of knowledge. University presses should be the effective agents in the diffusion of research results and knowledge transmission. Knowledge creation and dissemination is the core business of universities all over the world. The University of Nairobi Press was the first to be initiated in 1984 and later Moi University Press which was established in 1989. Wafula et al. (2019) noted that out of the then 49 accredited institutions of higher learning in Kenya, only 5(10.2%) have university presses. These were Moi University Press, Strathmore University Press, Egerton University Press, Kenyatta University Printing Press and Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) Publishing and Printing Press.



### 2.2.1 Publications Produced by University Presses

Publications have become a rite of passage in universities all over the world. They are used as critical factors in determining promotion and tenure of university faculty members. It is through publications that research findings are disseminated to others in a particular field. This makes researchers in the field to be aware of the new knowledge and helps to advance and apply the same knowledge. According to Hayes and Holley (2014), products of university presses have typically been grouped into three including books, journal articles and reference or research databases. However, advancement in technology has made scholars to search for alternatives outside the above groups. Avenues for communicating scholarship include academic journals, conference proceedings, research monographs, research reports, working papers, theses and dissertations, patents/standards, books and blogs (Das, 2015). Channels are different in terms of the publishing process, points awarded and visibility of publications, among others.

Research monographs are indispensable in university press publishing. Mudditt (2016) defines a monograph as a medium for scholars to communicate their ideas and views, an indicator of academic accomplishment and status for the author, which is crucial for career development. According to Williams et al. (2009), a monograph is an extensive printed book written by one or more authors on one specific research topic either from their own original research or its equivalent in downloadable digital form or another electronic format. It is a book consisting of 200-300 pages and contains more information than journal articles or conference papers. These works, provide in-depth and exhaustive information on a given subject area. Wright (2018) observed that the vast majority of output from university presses is monographic. A monograph is ideal for long-term knowledge communication as it is more durable and long-lived than articles. However, the increased costs of academic monographs usually limit its availability to numerous scholars and students (Steele, 2008). Monographs are time-consuming, costly and have limited access as compared to journal articles and conference papers although they enable the sharing of new and unexplored ideas, themes and methods in scholarship. Thompson (2005) argues that publication of academic work in monographs is more highly rated than journal articles and is a prerequisite for upgrading to top academic positions in the Arts and Humanities research community. Similarly, Vincent (2013) agrees that the value of a monograph as a channel for communicating scholarship is still valued in the Arts and Humanities community. Despite the problems, there may be hope for the e-monographs as they are likely to be purchased by institutions than individual customers (Thompson, 2005).

Academic Journals are essential in the entire scholarly communication process and fundamental in research. According to Migosi et al. (2012), publication in reputable journals is one way through which research findings are widely disseminated. Journals are the most important medium in which to publish new research results. Thus, scholars and students mostly publish their research results in academic journals. Academic journals not only diffuse knowledge but are means through which authors' ownership rights and precedence are put on record, quality is maintained through the peer review process, research results are communicated to the desired audience, publications are cited and also preserved for future use (Ware & Mabe, 2015). Similarly, Rallison (2015) noted that the basic function of journals is registration, certification, dissemination and archiving. Journals are usually particular and specialised in their scope (Rallison, 2015). Every field of study has its own scholarly journals which publish different kinds of articles. However, there are multidisciplinary journals which publish different types of research output from different fields or disciplines. Quality control mechanisms in journal publishing include the peer review process and journal impact factor that is used for journal ranking. Rallison (2015) defines impact factor as the quantity of citations to a specific journal or number of times articles in a particular journal are cited which often indicates the significance of a journal.

According to the University of Stellenbosch (2018), when academic institutions make decisions on recruitment, promotion, research fellowship, awards and performance assessment, they often consider the number of articles the researcher has published in reputable journals over a given period of time. Rallison (2015) posits that journal articles are the final products of most research and a researcher's achievement and output are determined by the quantity of publications as well as where they are published. Publications in academic journals are essential in professional advancement including financial support and employment. However, today alternative metrics such as article views, sharing and downloads sourced from social media are also used to measure scholarly impact (University of Stellenbosch, 2018).

Academic journals are valid and dependable owing to the fact that authors are necessitated to show evidence of their information sources by providing links and references (Asia Pacific Institute of Advanced Research, 2017). In addition, Panigrahi (2020) observed that journal articles ensure in-depth knowledge over a topic. However, publishing in journals is costly, time-consuming, requires adequate skills in research and face high rejection rates. Jalalian (2012) affirm that it is challenging to write and publish in journals because of the high rejection rates of the manuscripts submitted to academic journals for publication. This owes to the fact that either the author's research is unreliable or the manuscripts are inadequately written. Quagraine and Agyekum (2018) found that among reasons scholars in



library and information science do not publish in academic journals is the high rate of rejection, lack of research skills and difficulty in getting access to journals.

Gillet (2019) pointed out that most African research published in journals abroad has little or no visibility to other researchers, policy makers and the general public. This means that African research experiences low visibility. Scholarly output, particularly in the form of journal publications, is a key indicator of a university's performance. It is mostly used in ranking universities. Other scholarly publications include edited books and conference proceedings. Woodrow (2014) defines an edited book as a compilation or anthology of essays with a consolidated subject and written by different authors. Edited books give a number of presentations with contrasting ideas and opinions of a field but, due to the heterogeneity of the chapters they do not constitute integration. Therefore, editors conclude the book with the synthesis chapter. In most cases, one or more editors write(s) the introduction and coordinates the production of the book. A conference proceeding is the published evidence of a conference or other meeting sponsored by a society or association, usually but not necessarily including abstracts or reports of papers presented by the participants (Pennsylvania State University Libraries, 2020). Conference proceedings are collections of papers presented in a conference that may be published in a book form or on a website (Kampourakis, 2017). Shamir (2020) noted that they are usually produced as books or Compact Discs (CDs) and delivered to the conference participants. Additionally, Shamir (2020) points out that, conference proceedings has conventionally been a faster way of disseminating the results of research and a vital source of knowledge to scientists. This is because the peer review process is rapid and it also sets standards for the degree of excellence of the work presented at the conference.

Luescher and Schalkwyk (2018) noted that many academics in Africa are unaware of the value added by university presses at their access. They further observed that African academics generally prefer to publish abroad due to the presumed lack of sustainable local journals and an assumption that when one publishes outside Africa, he or she gains worldwide recognition and reputation. However, the whole process still remains a daunting task to academics and researchers in Africa because of high rejection rate of manuscripts, exorbitant article handling costs and long turnaround time for peer review (Tarkang & Bain, 2019). Most of the upcoming scholars are at risk of publishing their work with predatory journals due to non-engagement of presses with their clients who are academic authors to reassert their value (Luescher & Schalkwyk, 2018). Furthermore, predatory journals have proliferated and are preying on unsuspecting scholars to publish their work (CUE, 2017). Kenyan researchers often struggle to publish and many resort to predatory journals. According to Wanzala (2019) Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology awarded 118 doctorate degrees in June 2019, but the quality of the graduates' publications and where they were published was questionable. Some of the academic journals in which the students had published their work were non-existent or were pulled down at the height of the probe (Ligami, 2019).

The fact that university presses are best positioned to support the research and disseminate knowledge that comes out of the universities is not in doubt. However, it is unclear why Kenyan scholars are publishing elsewhere and not with university presses. It is also unclear what the university presses actually publish and whether the products are deposited in their libraries for increased visibility, accessibility and use. It is this gap in literature that this study addresses.

### III METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods research approach and a survey research design. Kwanya (2022) avers that mixed methods research is a blended approach to scientific inquiry which does not demonstrate a mutually-exclusive dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methods. Conversely, it facilitates the mixing of assumptions, techniques and tools in proportions and sequences suitable for the purpose and context of specific research projects. In this study, qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently using interview schedules and questionnaires respectively.

The population of the study was 51 and comprised 36 staff from university presses, 7 university librarians, 7 university press managers and one bookshop manager. All the universities with university presses were selected. Out of the total number of (31) public universities and (21) private universities exclusive of constituent colleges in the country, all the seven universities with university presses and print production units were selected purposively. A census was used on all the university press staff in all the selected universities. Thus, all the staff had a chance to participate in the study so as to provide comprehensive and deeper insights into the issues under study and eliminate risks associated with sample biasness. Information-oriented purposive sampling was used to select the press managers, university bookshop manager and university librarians.

Qualitative data was thematically grouped and analysed using Nvivo data management software version 12, while Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.0.1.1) was used to analyse quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential statistics.

#### IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study according to the research objectives.

##### 4.1 Types of Publications by University Presses in Kenya

The study aimed to identify the types of publications produced by university presses in Kenya. The findings revealed that university presses in Kenya predominantly focus on publishing academic books, with some also producing journals and conference proceedings. Furthermore, two presses were identified as publishers of trade books and reference books. In addition to these publications, the presses were found to produce a diverse range of other materials such as examination booklets, writing pads, exercise books, novels, magazines, reports, brochures, graduation booklets, receipt books, and newsletters, as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Type of Publications Produced by University Presses from University Press Staff (n=36)*

Names of universities	Academic Books		Trade Books		Academic Journals		Conference Proceedings		Reference Books	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>JKUAT</b>	2	5.5	0	0	4	11.1	4	11.1	0	0
<b>KU</b>	10	27.7	0	0	7	19.4	4	11.1	3	8.3
<b>MMU</b>	3	8.3	0	2.7	0	0	2	5.5	0	0
<b>EU</b>	2	5.5	0	0	3	8.3	1	2.7	0	0
<b>MU</b>	2	5.5	2	5.5	2	5.5	2	5.5	0	0
<b>CUEA</b>	2	5.5	2	5.5	1	2.7	2	5.5	2	5.5
<b>CUK</b>	1	2.7	0	0	1	2.7	2	5.5	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>

According to responses from university press staff in Table 1, academic books were the most frequently produced publication type, with the frequency of twenty-two (61%), followed by academic journals with a frequency of nineteen (53%) and conference proceedings with a frequency of seventeen (47%). Low publication frequencies emerged for trade books and reference books across all university presses yielded low publication frequencies of four (11%) and five (14%) respectively. Additionally, the study inquired the number of publications produced by the presses from the university press managers. The findings of this inquiry are detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Types of Publications by University Presses from University Press Managers (n=7)*

Name of university	Academic Books		Trade Books		Academic Journals		Conference Proceedings		Reference Books	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>JKUAT</b>	1	14.3	0	0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0
<b>KU</b>	1	14.3	0	0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0
<b>MMU</b>	1	14.3	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0
<b>EU</b>	1	14.3	0	0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0
<b>MU</b>	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3
<b>CUEA</b>	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3	1	14.3
<b>CUK</b>	1	14.3	0	0	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28.6</b>

The data presented in Table 2, shows that all seven university presses included in the study reported publishing academic books. Additionally, six of these presses published journals and conference proceedings, while two presses published trade books and reference books. According to Das (2015) and Hayes and Holley (2014), university presses are reputed for producing a variety of publications such as books, journal articles, research monographs, and conference proceedings. The results are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Luescher and Schalkwyk (2018) indicating that university presses in Africa publish scholarly books across various disciplines, journals, conference proceedings, textbooks, reference materials and teaching aids.



The study further found that university presses also produce a variety of items including examination booklets, writing pads, exercise books, novels, magazines, reports, brochures, graduation booklets, receipt books, and newsletters. Excerpts from the responses of university press managers are as follows:

*Our press prints examination booklets and publishes a university magazine three times a year (UPM 06)*

*We also print receipt books, newsletters and graduation books (UPM 04)*

*Other publications produced by our press include calenders, university policies and reports; usually on a need basis (UPM 05)*

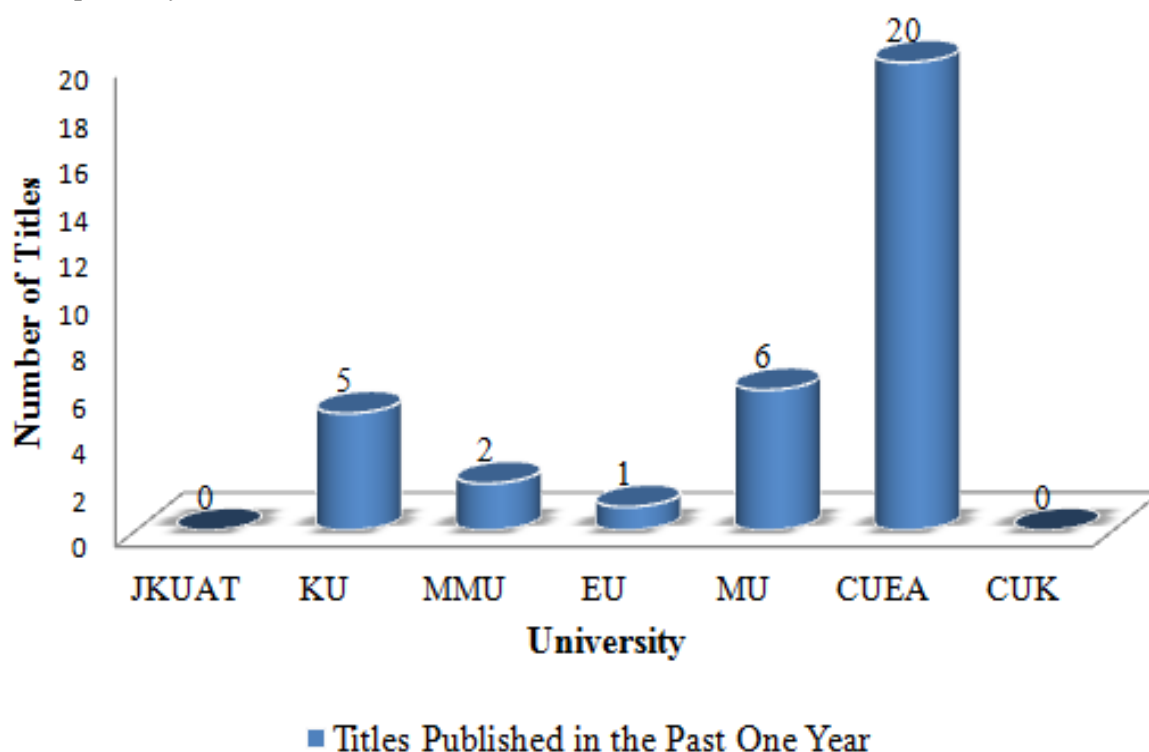
*The press publishes books for other universities and schools. We also print exercise books for our university and others for sale (UPM 03)*

The findings concur with Wafula et al. (2019) that the majority of established university presses are involved in printing publications such as books, journals, and magazines. The results indicate that university presses in Kenya have published a greater number of non-scholarly publications compared to scholarly ones, impacting their overall performance. They suggest that university presses in Kenya have prioritised commercial printing services over scholarly publishing in their business models. The findings agree with Zell (2022) that university presses are frequently seen as opportunities for profit rather than channels for disseminating knowledge generated within universities.

#### 4.2 Number of Scholarly Publication Titles by University Presses

The university press staff members were asked about the quantity of scholarly publications they had released in the previous one year to measure their scholarly output. The findings in this regard are as depicted in Figure 1 which shows that CUEA university press had published 20 titles. MU, KU, MMU, and EU presses had published 6, 5, 2, and one title respectively, while JKUAT and CUK presses did not release any titles in the last year.

Publication titles play a crucial role in indicating the content of books or articles (Hyland & Jiang, 2019). They are essential for easy retrieval and citation when searching for publications online. The findings indicated that one university press had published 20 titles, while 4 presses had published 6, 5, 2 and one title, with 2 university presses not releasing any titles in the past year. In total, all university presses in Kenya collectively produced 34 titles within one year. The scholarly output from university presses in Kenya is notably low, contrasting sharply with Esposito’s (2017) findings that American university presses publish an average of 11,711 books annually. Additionally, in a year, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press publish approximately 6,000 and 1,500 titles respectively (Watkinson, 2021).



**Figure 1**  
*Number of Titles of Scholarly Publications by University Presses in the Past One Year as of March 2025*





The business of university libraries is to support scholars and the entire university community in research and teaching activities (Mierzecka, 2019). The study sought to determine the number of publications archived in the library by university presses. The findings are as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Quantity of Publications Deposited in the library by University Presses (n=7)*

University library	JKUAT	KU	EU	MU	CUEA	CUK	MMU
Publications from press	0	0	3	0	50	0	0

Table 3 shows that JKUAT, KU, MU, CUK, and MMU deposited no publications from their respective university presses in their libraries. The libraries at CUEA had received 50 book titles, while EU received 3 journals from three disciplines. However, it was revealed that university presses were not consistently depositing their publications in the university libraries. The majority of the university libraries in Kenya hardly receive any publications from university presses. Responses from librarians were recorded as follows:

*The university press recently gave us a whole list of books. There is no consistency but on average 50 titles in a year and mostly in print format (L 06).*

*We have only received three journals from three disciplines both in print and electronic format (L 04).*

In contrast, librarians who had not received any titles from their university presses expressed their sentiments in the following verbatim statements:

*We do not get much because the university press does not do much (L 07).*

*No publications, it used to be conference proceedings but I do not remember the last time we received.*

*Mostly publications come from schools so we only take to the printer if we want it printed (L 01).*

University librarians expressed diverse views on the types of publications deposited in their libraries by university presses. Out of 7 librarians, 3 indicated that they had not received any scholarly publications from university presses, while 4 reported receiving only academic journals and books. These findings suggest that libraries in Kenya are obtaining limited materials from university presses and are sourcing books and other learning resources from alternative providers. The results reveal that a significant portion of the journals found in university libraries did not originate from university presses but instead came from the Research Production and Extension divisions of the universities. Interestingly, university libraries showed a stronger collaboration with the research divisions than with the university presses. The findings contrast with Taylor and Jensen's (2019) emphasis on the significance of fostering collaborations and building stakeholder relationships to enhance the production and dissemination of scholarly work. The study found that the majority of respondents from university libraries reported no significant challenges in acquiring and managing publications produced by university presses. The sentiments expressed by the librarians are as follows:

*We have no challenges because, everything the press publishes they give us although not a lot (L 06).*

*Our press has no capacity. I doubt their capacity and would they even really manage, may be unless they hire qualified staff (L 01).*

*No challenge at all. We do not get much from the press (L 07).*

The challenges reported by some librarians included:

*The pricing, poor quality of publications and printing paper and their binding styles are not up to date (L 05).*

*The challenge we have is the currency, relevance and consistency of publications issues (L 02).*

*Considerable delay in meeting set production timelines of the final products is a challenge to us (L 03).*

The study further found that solutions could be achieved through stakeholder engagement, motivation, needs assessment, funding, and capacity building. The respondents' verbatim responses were as follows:

*The challenges can be solved through bringing on board and engaging all the stakeholders (L 05).*

*For now, adequate funding of the press, motivating employees, need assessment and capacity building can address the challenges (L 03).*

*The press should be strengthened to handle publishing (L 02).*

### 4.3 University Press Publications in University Bookshops

University bookshops play a critical role in supporting the academic pursuits and research activities of both students and faculty members (Rayner, 2018). This study found that the case study university bookshop exclusively obtained academic books and biographies from their press, which they subsequently sell to their clients. The manager's verbatim response was captured as follows:

*The kinds of publications we get from our university press are usually academic books and biographies in print format (BM 01).*

These findings indicate that university bookshops in Kenya source books not only from university presses but also from other booksellers, individual publishers, and authors. This practice reflects a broader trend observed globally, where university bookshops collaborate with both local and international publishers and distributors to diversify their product offerings for students and faculty. University bookshops in Kenya, like their counter parts globally, face challenges in acquiring publications independently due to limited budgets, fluctuating demand, and competition from online retailers.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

University presses in Kenya are tasked with fostering scholarly communication through publishing academic books, journals, and conference proceedings. However, this study revealed a significant shortfall in scholarly output, with many presses failing to publish anything in the past year. There is a high prevalence of non-scholarly materials such as examination booklets, writing pads, and novels being produced. A university bookshop showed it primarily acquires academic books and biographies from university presses, indicating a limited availability of scholarly publications. Most university libraries in Kenya receive few scholarly publications directly from their presses, relying more on materials from faculties and schools. University librarians criticised many presses for prioritising general printing over scholarly publishing. The challenges faced by university presses include inadequate funding, high pricing of publications, irregular publication schedules, inconsistent relevance of materials, and issues with publication quality and timeliness. In summary, although university presses in Kenya produce a range of publications, their output of scholarly works is notably low. This deficiency significantly affects the availability and quality of academic resources in university libraries and bookshops.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study reveals that university presses in Kenya are predominantly producing non-scholarly materials, which undermines their role in advancing scholarly communication. To address this issue, it is crucial for these presses to refocus on scholarly publications by re-evaluating priorities, enhancing editorial processes, and actively supporting authors. Setting specific targets and implementing quality assurance measures will be essential in improving the availability and quality of academic resources provided by university presses in Kenya. This study also makes the following specific recommendations:

The study established that university presses in Kenya are publishing fewer scholarly materials than expected, with a predominant focus on non-scholarly publications. Contrary to the primary purpose of university presses which is to advance scholarship, focus on non-academic publications by presses in Kenya poses a challenge to scholarly communication. University press managers should conduct regular mapping and auditing of scholarly publications from university presses to measure their performance. The study recommends that university presses in collaboration with the academic staff work towards improving their production of scholarly publications. They should re-evaluate their priorities, enhance editorial processes and provide support to authors. This could involve setting specific targets for scholarly publications and ensuring that they receive adequate attention. It is also recommended that university presses establish peer review systems, hire experienced editors, and provide training to editorial staff to enhance the editorial process. Additionally, through academic workshops and conferences, presses can actively solicit manuscript submissions from scholars. Assisting authors with manuscript preparation, navigating peer review and promoting their work after publication could help attract more clients and hence improve production of scholarly publications by university presses in Kenya.

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