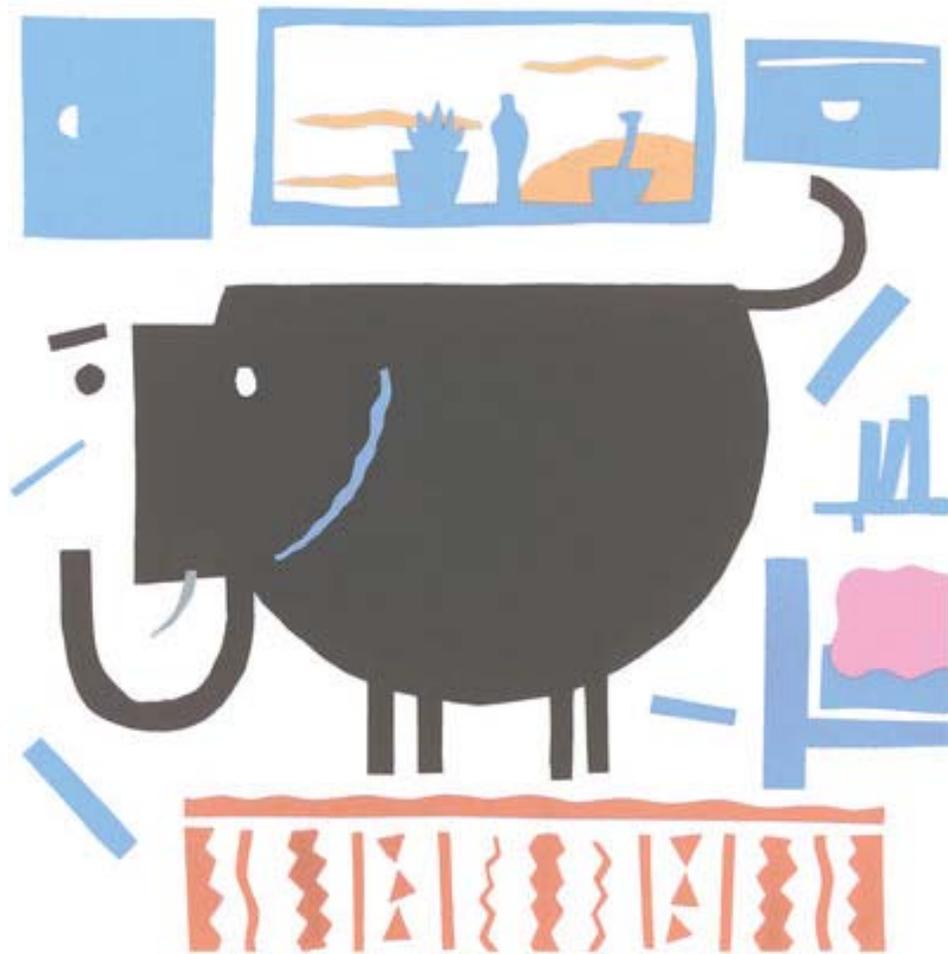# Elephant in the Room: The Rise of Open Licensing in Early Literacy in Africa

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Elephants and the rooms they inhabit

Digitization & open licensing are disruptive.

Africa needs a vibrant indigenous publishing industry for economic, cultural, & educational reasons.

Willingness to explore, understand, & experiment with open licensing are required for future sustainability.

Don't ignore this elephant.

Hewlett Foundation early literacy grant to Neil Butcher & Associates (NBA)

NBA received funding for:

- Research on publishing costs in content production;
- Action research on new business models, such as an experiment with open licensing by Sub-Saharan Publishers, Ghana;
- Action research on community libraries in Uganda (& possibly Ethiopia), on open licensing, content production, & use;
- Research on costs & work entailed in translation into mother tongues by students at Uganda Christian University.

Open licensing

- An open licence specifies what can & cannot be done with a work.

- Open licences substitute 'all rights reserved' with 'some rights reserved.' Not a replacement of copyright, a complement.

- Open licences permit reproduction, adaptation (for content & language), & distribution without requesting permission.

- Author, illustrator, & publisher must receive attribution.

- Creative Commons licences are the most commonly used open licences in education.

Creative Commons licence conditions

- Attribution (BY): Share & adapt.

- Share-Alike (SA): Copy, distribute, display, perform, & modify, as long as you distribute any modified work on the same terms.

- Non-Commercial (NC): Copy, distribute, display, perform, & modify for any purpose other than commercial.

- No Derivatives (ND): Copy, distribute, display, & perform only original copies. Written permission is required for any modifications.

Open and quality can be synonymous

- Storyweaver in India and African Storybook are well-known for the quality of their Creative Commons picture books.

- Stories have been written, adapted, & translated to different languages throughout the world.
  - 3,590 stories in 69 languages on Storyweaver. Read 470,467 times.
  - Almost 800 stories in African Storybook in 100 languages.

- These high-quality resources are free to the user, but not to the producer. Someone always has to pay development costs.

Open licensing and IPR

- Both 'open' and 'closed' content require attribution.

- Plagiarism may be easier on the Internet, but easier to detect through Google searches and plagiarism software.

- Theft and piracy of print are major problems. Kenyan educational publishers lose millions of shillings from counterfeit textbooks. Pirated software, movies, and music are ubiquitous everywhere.

- Rather than focus on plagiarism, theft, and piracy, why not explore monetization, as Akoss Ofori-Mensah of Sub-Saharan Publishers is doing?

Action research on the impact of open licensing and early childhood publishing in Africa

Fati and the Honey Tree

Osu Library Fund
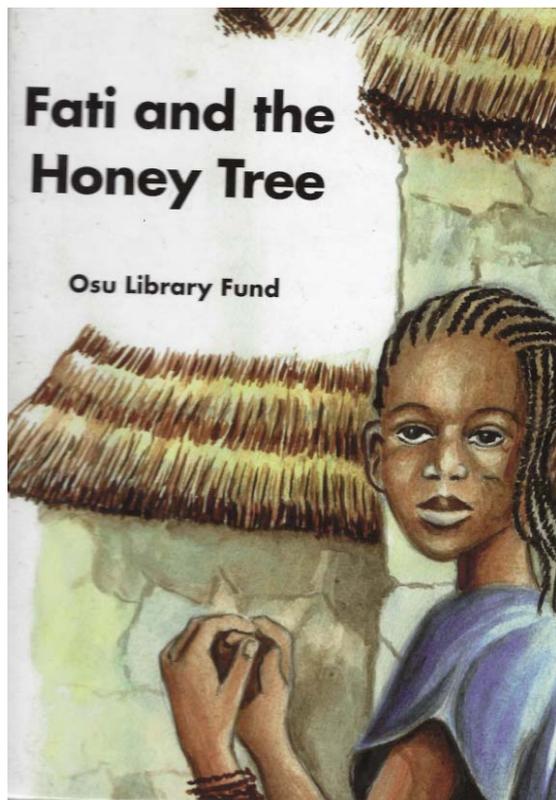
- Akoss Ofori-Mensah will mount the 4 *Fati* books on Storyweaver & African Storybook, with a CC licence, & translate them to 3 Ghanaian languages.
- Uploaded books can bring publishers more visibility, a wider audience & a new revenue stream for print.
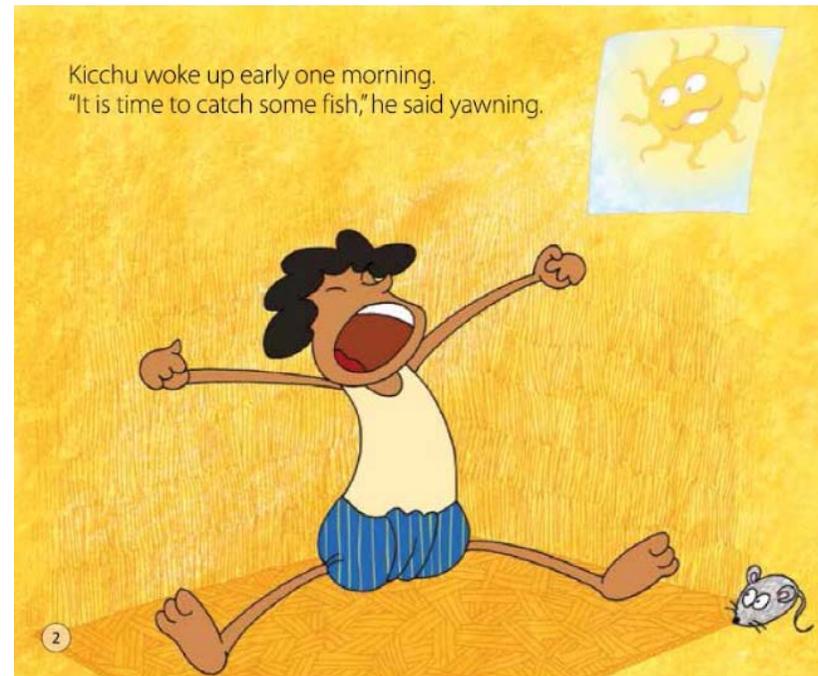- Digital complements print, but does not replace it.

Digital and print are not the same

MY FISH, MY FISH IN DIGITAL
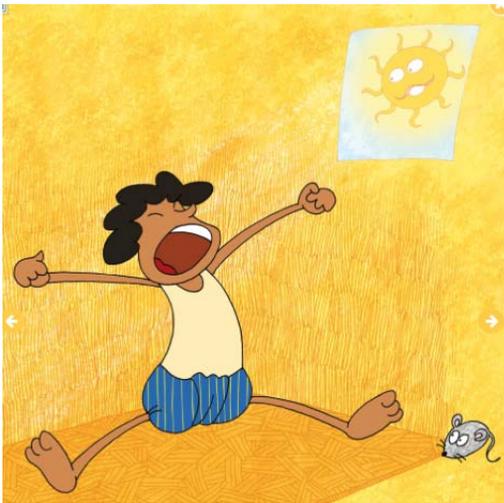
Kicchu woke up early one morning."It is time to catch some fish," he said yawning.

MY FISH, MY FISH IN PRINT

Kicchu woke up early one morning.
"It is time to catch some fish," he said yawning.

Digital free...print for a fee

- Some scholarly publishers make online copies of research publications available for free, sometimes with a CC licence. They sell print on Amazon & elsewhere.

- Book Dash in South Africa is similar. Digital stories are free & have a CC licence. Books in print are sold.

- Akoss Ofori-Mensah wants data about downloads, translations into additional languages, and the countries readers come from. She hopes that increased visibility through Storyweaver and African Storybook will lead to more visitors to her website & increased sales.

What role do donors play in open licensing?

- Donors fund much of educational publishing.

- Many now require grantees to share learning materials under CC licences & are encouraging governments to do the same.

- Book production costs are not always clearly defined so may not be properly covered.

- If this model grows, new business models are needed to enable publishers & other content creators to retain capacity to create high-quality content.

How much does it cost to publish a picture book in Africa?

- Gathering data on publishing costs, using questionnaires and interviews.

- Aim is to help content creators, funders, and governments understand how costs to produce resources.

- 14 responses received from both commercial and NGO publishers to date.

What are we learning from the responses?

- African content producers understand the need for mother-tongue languages, but may publish in English to maximize sales.
- Authors typically receive royalties; illustrators receive flat fees.
- Illustrators earn more than authors everywhere.
- Translation is an important cost driver when governments require children to learn to read in their mother tongue.
- The economics of printing vary from country to country.
- Many African publishers hope that large orders will make up for the local discounts government requires, but this is detrimental to the long-term sustainability of African publishers.

Action research on community libraries and open licences

- Research on the role of community libraries in Uganda in promoting good reading habits and a love of reading by young children. Parents, librarians, and teachers will be involved.

- Cornelius Gulere will work with 10 community libraries where a number of Ugandan languages are spoken.

- Work includes: writing & translating stories; forming reading, writing, & translation clubs; library reading camps; training; & promoting the sharing of resources between libraries.

- Stories will be mounted online using a Creative Commons BY licence.

The importance of books in a child's own image
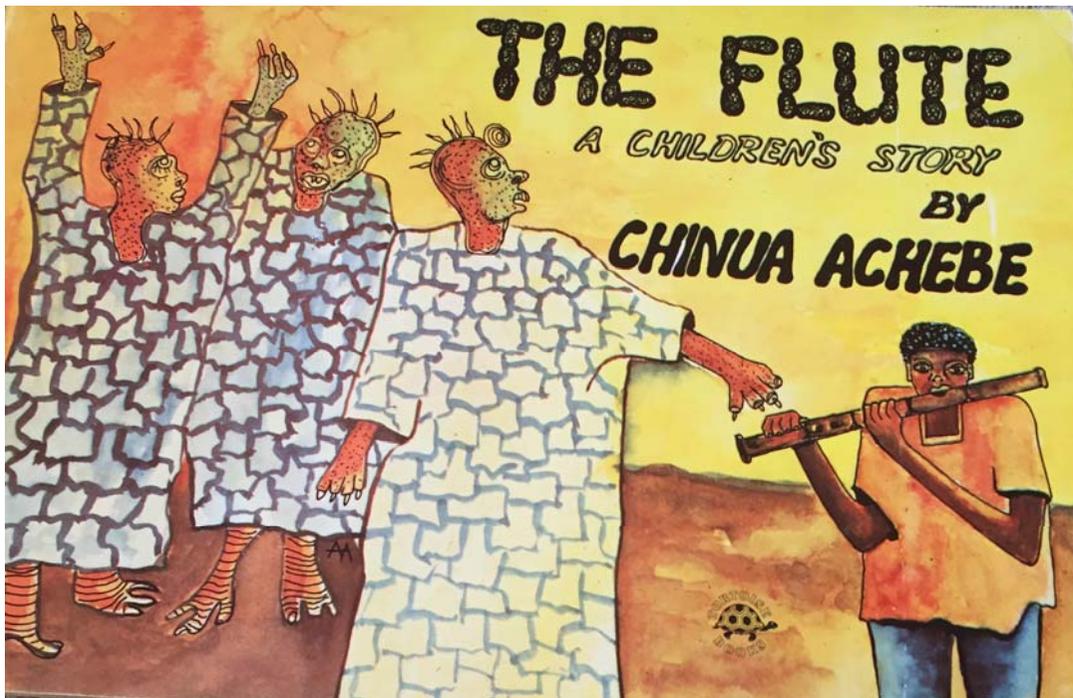
Chinua Achebe called European children's books 'beautifully packaged poison' at the 1987 Zimbabwe International Book Fair.

Digitizing and translating content

- Cornelius Gulere is working with students at UCU to translate stories into Ugandan languages. 82 stories in 10 languages now online.
- Read 550 times & downloaded 80 times on StoryWeaver (in less than a month).

QA for translations is essential

UCU Vice Chancellor, Rev Canon Dr John Ssenyonyi, volunteered to help review stories in the Luganda language: 'I will peer review two books next week. You know I studied Luganda.'

Towards business models that incorporate open licensing

- Publishers can benefit by engaging with how paradigms are shifting & innovate accordingly.

- Many new business models depend on donor funding &/or voluntarism.

- Some show promise: e.g. combine 'content-as-a-service' with other income streams.

- Diversification may enable specialized teams of early literacy & publishing experts to remain sustainable.

- New business models are in their infancy.

- Urgent need for action research to find suitable, sustainable new organizational forms.