



June 21, 2007

Bridging the Book Gap Project: Request to enter into a MOU

Invitation

ON behalf of the Board of directors of Spread Corporation I wish to invite you to partner with us to implement one small radical initiative of ours—Bridging the Book Gap Project (BBG)—that will help toward solving a major problem that afflicts Africa’s tertiary education sector—the book (or study material) problem. The goal of the initiative is to keep selected African institutions that will participate in the pilot program up to date with respect to the relevant books, journals and study materials that you, together with other publishers, will be publishing beginning from the academic year that the initiative takes off and for the following five years. This initiative, when it becomes full blown, will help to circumvent and terminate the acute unavailability of current up-to-date books to university and college students and to scholars and the general public in the target African countries and consequently make continental African scholars’ reliance on outdated study materials a thing of the past. Through this program, several copies of all study materials, books, videos and reference materials that are officially required and recommended for use in the participating schools every academic session will be accessible at selected Spread’s Book Centre by institutions that are grouped around each such centres.

Towards piloting Spread Corporation’s BBG initiative, we are putting up an application for a major grant under the “Partnership for Higher Education in Africa” joint initiative of several leading funding organizations (the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Kresge Foundation) and we are optimistic that enlisting the prior cooperation of publishers like you in this worthy project of international development and social equity will not only enhance the quality of Spread Corporation’s application and increase its chances of securing a major grant for the program, but also, will be of benefit to your business, as well as eventually and most importantly, help a generation of Africa’s students whose quality of education would otherwise remain substandard.

The Problem

Permit me, therefore, to introduce you to the problem that Spread Corporation is inviting you to be party to solving with us.

For some two decades going, the education sector in many African countries has suffered from a combination of many maladies. The result is the all too obvious fall in quality at all levels of the public education system. Some of the problems have political and administrative causes, but the most fundamental cause relates to poverty and the downturn in African countries' economic well-being since the early 1980s.

AN aspect that has suffered needlessly and to the ghastly hurt of the continent and the quality of its education at all levels is the provision of current and up-to-date learning materials; particularly textbooks, monographs, compilations, reference materials, journals, magazines, audio-visuals and other types of print and electronic education publications.

This problem is more acute at the tertiary and the university levels where a large percentage of materials used are not locally produced but must be imported. The best university libraries in African countries lack current publications, all holding mostly volumes that are no less than two decades old. Journals are scarce and study materials reflecting current advances in knowledge are unavailable. Both teaching morale and standards are drastically low and top quality research is thereby made doubly difficult. Research facilities are woefully poor, as primary and secondary source materials are simply not available. These and other factors have contributed to the unfortunate brain drain from Africa and help to define the poor state of the continents education. Many reports from concerned NGOs, including many from UNESCO, have underlined the dire nature of the post-primary education sector in these countries and have been seeking for solutions.

Suggested Terms of the MOU

With the anticipation that our grant application for funds to run the pilot project will succeed, we wish to table for your consideration the following. We propose that. :

1. you sell Spread Corporation 100 copies of each of the *relevant* titles that you carry each year at 50% - 60% discount
2. for every 20 copies of a book that Spread Corporation orders for its BBG project , you supply at least 1 copy each as review/examination material for onward transfer to scholars and to students in the institutions participating in the program
3. you commit to donating *n*. copies of every *relevant* title that you publish annually for the next 5 years [where *n*. is no less than 2]
4. you match every copy of the books and materials we order on behalf of our affiliates, (i.e.,separate from the BBG order) by a copy thus, ensuring a 50% discount pricing for them as well.

5. you agree to enter into discussions with us on the possibilities/conditions for Spread Corporation to produce African reprints of select titles in your catalogue within 3 - 5 years of implementing the BBG program.

Which books and other learning materials out of all that you publish yearly will be included in the order (list of “*relevant* books”) is going to be a matter for other experts to look into at the appropriate time.

We would like to interest you with the fact that Spread Corporation’s mandate covers all educationally disadvantaged groups worldwide. Hence, the possibility is high that this project, if it succeeds well, could be expanded and refined to work for other places. We therefore will appreciate your partnering with us in this regard in order that we may eventually assist in the creation of a sustainable program that will enhance the basic human right to education of disadvantaged groups and peoples in the selected African countries.

We look forward to your response, hopefully either in terms of the revision of the above terms or in terms of your own counter proposals.

Yours faithfully

F. J. Kolapo Ph.D.
Executive Director.