

## **Abstract:**

Ever since Professor G.D. Killam of the University of Guelph edited *The Writings of East and Central Africa* (1984), and the conferences that lead to the changes in the English syllabi of Secondary Schools, nothing has brought the writers, booksellers, librarians, literary critics, journalists, and intellectual property lawyers of the region together more than book fairs which take place annually in Harare, Zimbabwe, and Nairobi, Kenya. Names like Ali A. Mazrui, Njabulo Ndebele, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Rubadiri, Charles Mungoshi, Chenjerai Hove, Micere Githae Mugo, which one sees on book covers suddenly stick into one's mind as one meets their owners at either the Zimbabwe or Nairobi International Book Fairs. During the years under review (2000–4), Jared Angira, the internationally known Kenyan poet and chairman of the Kenya Organization of Writers Association (KOWA) could be seen with Dr. Jack Mapanje, the famous Malawian linguist and poet, at the international book fair almost every day. At the meetings of the National Book Development Council of Kenya, one met the stakeholders in the book production and book marketing industry meeting under the aegis of the East African Book Development Association (EABDA), a consortium comprising of the National Book Development Councils of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. As constituent bodies, these councils and the organizers of the book fairs in Nairobi and Harare argue that the challenges facing all the stakeholders of the books is the fight against the monster of illiteracy. A nation that has to operate satisfactorily in the twenty-first century has to be a reading nation. It must celebrate the book.