

**Call for Papers**  
**Eastern African Literary and Publishing Networks in the 1960s and 1970s**  
**University of Nairobi**  
**10-11 August 2026**

After political independence, during the early decolonial period, a significant number of new literary and publishing initiatives were founded in Eastern Africa due to the ‘flourishing, vibrant intellectual culture of the 1960s and 1970s’ with all the ‘major writers’ except for Ngũgĩ publishing with ‘local presses’ (Simon Gikandi & Evan Mwangi, 2007, p. 151). These initiatives redefined an African literary canon, more expansively drawing in oral literatures, popular genres, and African languages, and accepting work that would not have been published elsewhere. The 1962 ‘Conference of African Writers of English Expression’ held at Makerere University College in Kampala, alongside newly-established university colleges in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, helped forge city-based creative hubs which attracted writers from other parts of the continent and supported the building of Eastern and pan-African literary communities. Acknowledging that too little concerted conversation has been held to explore the impact of these literary and publishing networks in shaping African literatures, this conference draws together scholars working on this significant period in Eastern Africa’s literary history.

Through this dialogue, we want to explore questions such as: How did these literary and publishing initiatives emerge and how were they sustained? How did arts spaces, publishers and literary magazines in Eastern Africa support the work of writers in this period? What factors influenced publishing decisions? How important were changing educational structures and curricula to literary production? What were the interrelationships between independent African-owned publishing initiatives and international or government-owned publishers? What different geographical affiliations were brought together through writing communities and publishing initiatives (local, national, regional, pan-African, international) in this period? How inclusive were these literary and publishing networks (particularly in relation to constructions of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity)? What traditions did they destabilize or inaugurate? How can we better document and recognize the significance of Eastern Africa-based collaborative exchanges for an African literary canon?

We invite papers on topics that include but are not limited to:

- The work of significant writers and literary producers based in Eastern Africa during the 1960s and 1970s including:
  - Kenyan writers and literary producers such as Jared Angira, Henry Chakava, Samuel Kahiga, Jonathan Kariara, Leonard Kibera, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Charles Mangua, David Maillu, Sam Mbure, Micere Mugo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Hilary Ng’weno, John Nottingham, Pheroze Nowrojee, Rebeka Njau, Bethwell Ogot, Grace Ogot and Miriam Khamadi Were.
  - Ugandan writers and literary producers such as Austin Bukonya, Henry Kimbugwe, Barbara Kimenye, John Nagenda, Peter Nazareth, Rajat Neogy, Richard Nturu, Okot p’Bitek, Okello Oculi, John Ruganda, Robert Serumaga, Elvania Zirimu and Pio Zirimu

- Tanzanian writers and literary producers such as Mohammed Said Abdulla, Ndyanao Balisidya, Walter Bgoya, Ebrahim Hussein, Faraji Katalambula, Euphrase Kezilahabi, Martha Mandao, Penina Muhando Mlama, Mathias Mnyampala, Shaaban Kajatto Msuya and Shaaban Robert.
- African writers and literary producers such as Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Noni Jabavu (South Africa), Taban Lo Liyong (South Sudan), Esk'ia Mphalele (South Africa) and David Rubadiri (Malawi).
- Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam as publishing and university centres and creative hubs
- The impact of collaboration, care and intimate personal relationships (friendships and marriages) on Eastern African literatures, including relationships between writers, relationship between writers and particular literary and publishing initiatives, regional and pan-African exchanges
- Eastern African-based literary and publishing initiatives including:
  - African-owned independent publishing initiatives
  - Magazines and newspapers (for example: *Joe*, *The Weekly Review*)
  - Literary magazines (for example: *Ghala*, *Zuka*, *Nexus*, *Busara*, *DarLite*, *Umma*, *PenPoint*, *Makerere Beat*, *Dhana*, *Joliso*, *Transition*, *Drum*, *Cheche*)
  - Bookshops (for example: Dar es Salaam Bookshop, ESA Bookshop, S.J Moore, Text Book Centre, TPH Bookshop, Uganda Bookshop)
  - Literary events and festivals
  - Arts spaces and creative writing workshops (for example: Paa Ya Paa, ChemChemi, Kibo Art Gallery)
- Publishing strengths including work in African languages, oral literatures, crime thrillers, romance, translations
- School and university curricula and their relationship to publishing and an African literary canon
- Colonial legacies and publishing infrastructures including the role of UK-based publishers in the region, religious publishing, and the visibility of the African Writers Series
- Questions around textual mobility, distribution, circulation and value.

Prospective speakers should submit a 300-word abstract of their proposed paper to [nairobiliterarynetworks@gmail.com](mailto:nairobiliterarynetworks@gmail.com) Please also include a brief biography (no more than 100 words) and contact information. **Deadline for the submission of abstracts: 15 March 2026.** Applicants will be notified no later than 30 March 2026. Registration will be free.

Linked to this event, conference organizers Godwin Siundu, Kate Wallis and Billy Kahora will be editing a new collection of essays focused around *Eastern African Literary and Publishing Networks in the 1960s and 1970s*. Conference speakers will also have the opportunity for their work to be considered for publication as part of this book.

As part of the conference we will also be hosting an optional workshop session on working with publishing histories and publishing studies methodologies.