

ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION
SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine entrepreneurial opportunities available to library and information science graduates. It examined the concept of entrepreneurship, job opportunity, librarianship, contemporary era as well as highlighting the skills required by library and information science professionals, the paper further identified challenges such as poor attitude of library and information science graduates towards entrepreneurship, lack of entrepreneurial spirit, poor sources of funds among other factors hindering professionals from engaging fully in entrepreneurship and suggested use of skills acquired during training and development of entrepreneurial spirit by LIS graduates as some of the way forward. The paper concludes that LIS Professionals should embrace the entrepreneurial opportunities available to them having acquired all the skills required to embark on the business of entrepreneurship in the course of training to become professionals.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial opportunities, Library and Information Science professionals, contemporary era

Introduction

The world over has embraced entrepreneurship including professions like medicine, accounting, law, etc; librarianship is not left out too. Gone are those days when white-collar jobs were present everywhere for Library and Information Science professionals (LIS) for taking upon graduation. Today those jobs are no more there, and even if they were there, there are too many unemployed graduates chasing them. However, information has exploded with its attendance problem of access and this has posed the need to link people with their information. This has created entrepreneurial gaps for library and information science professionals to fill.

It would appear that LIS graduates are unaware of these entrepreneurial opportunities for them in the profession arising from the information explosion managed by ICTs. As such, they are mostly seen visiting government ministries and parastatals for jobs that are not there. They do not know the important position occupied by their profession in society as such have not fully explored the entrepreneurial opportunities open for them in the profession. Oaikhinam (2006) stated that Library and Information Science (LIS) graduates are not only intelligent and highly skilled, but they are also creative. There is a need to open their eyes and direct their attention to areas that can provide jobs for them for wealth creation.

This paper, therefore, is aimed at identifying entrepreneurial opportunities open to LIS graduates and enlightening them on the skills they possess to venture into them profitably in a competitive environment. It also discusses possible problems faced in venturing out for entrepreneurial opportunities and proffers suggestions. Concepts such as entrepreneurship, job opportunity, librarianship, and contemporary are clarified.

Conceptual Clarification

Entrepreneurship: The concept of entrepreneurship has variously been described and interpreted by many writers. But some of them can suffice for this discourse. Entrepreneurship has long been described by researchers and Writers with terms such as new, innovative, flexible, dynamic, creative, and risk-bearing. Identifying and pursuing opportunities is an important part of entrepreneurship Krackhardt (2000). It can be seen as developing something new with one's skills and creativity and undergoing a lot of risks to make available what has been produced go public, especially for profit gains. Morrison (2006) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire Educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities and establish and manage a successful business enterprise. Nwaka (2009) opined that entrepreneurship

education prepares an individual for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work as well as preparation for responsible citizenship and a tool for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and a way of alleviating poverty for individuals who take the risk and start something new.

According to Babalola (2011), entrepreneurship in library and information science is all about attitudinal change and development, the behavior of library and information science practitioners at the individual level to pursue opportunities through innovative leveraging of resources that for the most part are not controlled internally. Entrepreneurship makes an individual to be self-reliant, focused, functional, realistic, productive, reliable, and creative where he/she can manage and utilize available resources for income generation and survival. According to the Bureau of Public Reforms (BRP) (2009), an entrepreneur is simply a person who can come up with a specific business idea and the skills, ability, and finance to transform it into a viable business concern.

Job Opportunity: Job opportunity means a job opening for employment. Entrepreneurship, therefore, provides job opportunities in different spheres for individuals. Entrepreneurial opportunities consist of a set of ideas, beliefs, and actions that enable the creation of future goods and services in the absence of current markets for them.

Librarianship: This is a profession that is concerned with the selection, acquisition, organization, and dissemination of relevant information materials to different categories of information users/seekers in order to satisfy their burning desire for information according to their various areas of needs. This is supported by the view of Mole (2019) that librarianship is a profession concerned with the collection, organization, and preservation of information resources available to patrons for instructional and intellectual purposes. It is a profession whereby professionals link people with information in society. In librarianship, such

entrepreneurial opportunities can be identified in the areas of collection, organization, consultancy, etc. They are in the contemporary era available because of the information explosion.

Contemporary Era: This is the present time we are in. Infinix (2020) defined it as a time or period or age presently in. Shonhe (2017) refers to it as the 21st century. It is the present or current time lived in. In other words, it is the information explosion age managed by ICTs. Time has enabled more entrepreneurial opportunities for LIS because of ICT. The fact that librarians are not taking advantage of it does not mean others are not taking those opportunities.

Skills Required by Librarians for Entrepreneurship in the contemporary era

Library and information science graduates require some basic skills to equip them for any entrepreneurial opportunities open to them. Some of the skills include:

Managerial skills: Managerial skills are the knowledge and ability of the individuals in a managerial position to fulfill some specific management activities or tasks. This knowledge and ability are learned and practiced. They are also acquired through the practical implementation of required activities and tasks. There are acquired by LIS graduates during six months Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in various organizations. They entail marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning, goal setting, decision-making, human relations, and managing growth. They are essential in launching and growing a new venture. Included here is also the knowledge of records management principles and electronic bookkeeping. Library and information science professionals should acquire these managerial skills to be able to adequately fit into the business of entrepreneurship.

Communication Skills: Communication skills are those skills that are needed to speak and write properly. Communication is the act of transferring information from one place to another. Library and information science professionals are required to communicate effectively and properly to their users, hence this encourages the users to patronize their products and services as expected. There are various categories of communication and more than one may occur at any time. The different categories of communication are: • Spoken or Verbal Communication: face-to-face, telephone, radio or television, and other media. • Non-Verbal Communication: body language, gestures, how we dress or act. • Written Communication: letters, e-mails, books, magazines, the Internet, or via other media. • Visualizations: graphs and charts, maps, logos, and other visualizations can communicate messages.

Information technology skills: Information technology skills are technical skills necessary to work within technical support, maintenance, and development. IT skills are a rather wide skill set that range from hardware installment and software development to troubleshooting and data analysis. According to Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013) Technology skills — also called technical skills — are your ability to use computer-based technology to complete different tasks. Some of the most important technical skills to have are computer literacy, database management, website development, digital marketing, project management, and cyber security skills. Some of these skills are acquired in library school. They can only be improved upon by reading applicable books and magazines, practicing your skills, and workshops. Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) supporting posit that LIS professionals should strive to improve their overall skills and develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset to render quality services in the library for a fee, achieve self-employment and remain relevant.

Marketing skills: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." – (American Marketing Association, (ND)). Marketing skills mean being able to identify customers' problems, sometimes before they do, and find a way of addressing those needs and problems through the products and services that you provide. This requires the use of two skill areas: communication skills and analytical skills. In librarianship, these skills is learned through public relations activities in the library

Entrepreneurial Opportunities for LIS Professionals

There are so many entrepreneurial opportunities for LIS professionals not known to them. Ekuoye and Igbeka in Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) identified some business opportunities open to LIS professionals to include information brokerage, book publishing, and trading, Email Publishing, Web Publishing, and Desktop Publishing, establishing and maintaining libraries for organizations, organization of private library, compilation of directories, information services to visually impaired, indexing and abstracting services, freelancing and others.

Information Brokerage- Information brokers provide information for their clients for a fee. The ability to deliver documents, copies of unpublished articles, and similar materials to the academic, business and professional communities on demand presents an opportunity for those with enough foresight and entrepreneurial spirit to turn these varied needs into business. As a result, information brokers provide their clients with information for a fee. Information brokers use various resources including the internet, online services that specialize in databases, public libraries, books, and CD-ROMs. From convenience, and confidentiality of the services they offer, packaged answers which save time and effort, cheaper to hire a professional or expert, speed in information provision, and flexibility in information service rendering among others (Ikenwe, 2021) It will therefore not be possible for information

brokers to do the same thing or perform the same type of jobs. Consequently, no two information brokers' jobs are exactly alike.

The following, according to the submission of Ocholla (2009), fall into information brokering: gathering competitive intelligence in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial, telecommunication and energy; searching patents and trademarks; creating databases for organisations; preparing research reports in response to staff requests for specific information; verifying facts for external and internal reports and duplication; identifying research done at other organisations to avoid unnecessary duplication; evaluating and comparing information software and sources of data before purchase; training other staff to efficiently and cost-effectively use databases; research analysis, information services, information management and consulting services.

An experienced and competent individual with superior online searching skills and resources can start this business single-handedly. According to Onaade (2012), the international potential of this business is unlimited. There is no telling where a client may reside. If you have access to the information they seek, you can e-mail it to them and this makes the borders of your business purely virtual and governed solely by language. Furthermore, Onaade (2012) emphasized some qualities expected of an information broker to include a good educational background, experience, and training. Ocholla (2009) suggests that in addition to research skills, one must know how to run a business, that is marketing oneself, developing and implementing a business and marketing plans, handling the day-to-day operations of a small business, invoicing, accounting, cash flow monitoring, continuous upgrading of information skills through professional development and managing clients. Some of the works information brokers are doing in Nigeria include indexing; abstracting; retrospective conversion; cataloging and classification (contract cataloging); literature reviews; online literature search;

print searches for users; owning a library or bookshop with the cooperation of nearby libraries in the area of an interlibrary loan; packaging and repackaging of information; editing and publishing; organizing of seminars, conferences, and workshops; undertaking electronic presentation services (e.g. Microsoft PowerPoint; creating databases and website design).

Book Publishing and Trading: Librarians and information professionals can venture into the publishing industry business where there are a lot of opportunities and prospects. One can become a publisher, an editor, a reference book critic, children's books reviewer, do promotion-marketing books in libraries or own a bookshop. One can decide to carry out all the activities or you can take one or two categories and specialize in them. For example, one can decide to own a bookshop as well as review references and children's books. One can also own a bookshop and seize the opportunity to promote one's type of stock. Some booksellers also specialise in acquiring a lot of CD-Rom databases like ERIC, AGRIS, etc. which they sell to libraries. Ekuoye (2007) opines that to be in the publishing business, you will have to source for authors and manuscripts. But with diskettes, you do not go about again with manuscripts and typescripts. You can receive manuscripts by electronic mail. More so, one can venture into journal publishing. Journal publishing is interesting but more demanding.

Email Publishing, Web Publishing, and Desktop Publishing: As entrepreneurs, LIS professionals can venture into e-mail publishing, web publishing, and desktop publishing. Email publishing. E-mail publishing, also known as newsletter publishing, is used mainly by readers who receive news items, articles, and short newsletters in their e-mail boxes. Some businesses have now resorted to providing services that mainly deliver newsletters to consumers. As such LIS professionals can undertake such services. Web publishing: Most companies and businesses have their websites and most media companies provide a large

amount of web-based content. Web publishing is very popular especially as new web programming languages are being introduced. One must go for additional training in the different types of publishing discussed above especially if one is going to embark on this type of information business.

Establishing and Maintaining Libraries for Organisations: Library and information professionals can delve into establishing and maintaining libraries for organisations. It could be a traditional print library or an electronic library. An electronic library synonymously referred to as a digital library, is a collection of full text or bibliographic information sources which incorporate human services such as electronic publishing, personal information management, distant education, and information technology tools such as those that support browsing, Udofot, (2021) opined that digital services are done using computers, online, web and internet browsing through library integrated management system. Before setting up an electronic library, one has to consider the issue of sourcing proprietary rights. Every document or data hosted and intended to be distributed through the e-library must have the approval of the original owner of the data or the publisher. In addition, a prospective e-library owner has to consider the provision of the necessary infrastructure. Since access will be open to public patronage there should be a place that is preferably strategically located to house the equipment (Igbeka, 2008). Apart from the infrastructure and equipment, a good and fast internet connection is necessary for providing access to electronic/digital libraries. Most of the e-library activities involve downloading than uploading.

In another development, Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013) identified entrepreneurial opportunities for Library and Information professionals to include:

Organization of a Private Library: This is another job an information scientist can do to earn some money. Many scholars have a lot of books, documents, and journals, especially after their retirement which they can organize into a library.

Compilation of Directories: Compilation of directories is another entrepreneurial opportunity that library and information professionals can delve into as entrepreneurs. There is so much that needs to be compiled. There can be "Who is Who" in virtually anything, profession, village, organization, etc. A telephone directory is a wonderful tool.

Compilation of Bibliographies: This involves the compilation of bibliographic details of a given discipline, subject, or topic for a given target audience. LIS professionals, as entrepreneurs, can earn a sustainable income through the publishing of subject and trade bibliographies.

Information Services to the Visually Impaired The library and information professionals can propose to some authors whose books are making a good sale or whose materials are a must for some courses to have it on tape. Once the agreement is made, the LIS professional can begin to sell the tapes to the visually impaired or sell to Visually Impaired Libraries and clients.

Indexing and Abstracting Services: Indexing and abstracting services are an entrepreneurial opportunity that LIS professionals can venture into as a business enterprise. It is common knowledge that the final stage in the production of many documents such as books, technical manuals, and other learning resources, whether print or non-print, is the compilation of the index. The job of the indexer is to analyse the text so that users can find information on a particular topic, return to the passage initially read, scan the index to see what the document is about, and find out how particular themes or ideas are developed. The shelves of many

bookshops and publishing companies reveal that a lot of nonfiction books are being published. New textbooks are being published every day and most of these need professionally produced indexes. To work as an indexer one needs to have access to a computer and be computer literate. Most indexers use computers to automate routine indexing processes and to run their businesses.

Most indexers combine indexing with other jobs, especially as information brokers. They combine it with related activities like cataloging, copy editing, and proofreading. Indexing fees are open to negotiation. One may charge by the hour or by the page, or negotiate a fixed fee for a particular job. The more experienced one gets, the higher the fees charged especially for more complex and highly specialised works. On the other hand, abstracting services require skills to excel as an abstractor. As an information tool, abstracts help to organise the literature of published information so that specialists can locate documents of interest easily. The ideal abstractor should be a person with subject expertise, foreign language abilities, and abstracting and information skills.

Freelancing: LIS professionals can also engage in freelancing. A freelancer is a self-employed person offering his/her service where needed and not contracted to any single employer. Freelancing can be in many fields like outdoor writing, copy editing, publishing, proofreading, real estate editors, etc. The internet has helped to enhance this discipline as freelancers can always find substantial information from the internet. Many retired professionals can undertake freelancing jobs in their free time and earn money after retirement.

Reprography services: According to Musa and Tsafe (2019) reprographic services consists of repairs of minor/major damaged books to restore them to their original shape and prevent further deterioration. The binding of books, documents, research materials/projects, and other

vital documents, is a very brick business especially, in educational institutions. This business can go a long way in supporting LIS graduates to be self-employed, employ others and also attend to their basic/domestic needs.

Selective dissemination of information/Current Awareness Services: These services are designed to keep the user abreast of information in their area of work or interest that has recently been published and received or identified by the libraries or information units. Libraries can provide content pages for subscribed journals and can be published a new monthly newsletter, which could contain links to resources and information on developments in subject areas.

Library consultancy services This is where a professional librarian will use his wealth of experience to offer professional pieces of advice and other consultancy services to his clients especially, newly established institutions in setting up their libraries, either for private organizations or individuals who are willing to establish libraries for an agreed fee. He/she can serve as a resource person and undertakes manpower training development as well as other consultancy services requested by his/her clients.

There are a lot of other businesses apart from the ones mentioned above that library and information professionals can venture into as entrepreneurs. Some still include printing of library and information posters and stickers, document delivery services, records, and archives management, cyber café business, photocopying services, and others so related or embodied in the information brokerage business. Yet, central to the success of any of the entrepreneurial ventures discussed above is the possession of an entrepreneurial mindset, which leads to the conception of viable business ideas that address customers' concerns satisfactorily.

Problems Associated with Entrepreneurial Opportunities for LIS Professionals

The entrepreneurial opportunities available to Library and Information Science professionals discussed in this paper are in no doubt without their challenges, hence, the paper will be incomplete without making reference to some of them. This paper therefore highlights some of the challenges that LIS professionals encounter while trying to venture into entrepreneurship.

Poor attitude of Librarians toward Entrepreneurship- Librarians' mentality in Nigeria is such that they only see job opportunities in libraries and ministries. They never imagine using some of the information skills acquired during their training to identify needs in society to meet people's needs for a fee. This has prevented librarians from cashing in on such opportunities.

Lack of appreciation by benefactors- The other external challenge that new entrepreneurs face in starting a business is finding good customers. Good customers can help to build a business where they will always try to do the right thing that can benefit both the company and themselves (Lohitkumar and Reddy 2016). Besides that, they will always appear loyal to the company besides being very forgiving if there is a mistake or apology made by a certain business. Furthermore, they will also provide constructive comments on the service of a certain new business so that improvements can be made to it by the entrepreneurs. However, good customers like this are not many. Bad customers are commonly categorized as those people who are very picky and bossy about minor issues that happen. They will always try to ruin the business where they will exploit the company by looking for loopholes in the company's policy and trying to tear the company apart Kanchana and Beegom (2013).

Lack of entrepreneurial spirit- an entrepreneur should be able to possess the ability to see what others cannot see or simply known as "envisioning the idea". When others see problems, an entrepreneur must be able to see opportunities instead. Only then, these opportunities will eventually turn out and forge into a business idea. In other words, an entrepreneur has to be able in bringing innovative products into existence by "creating value out of nothing" that can satisfy the public. Hence, the process of searching for a business idea is undeniably challenging and entrepreneurs have to possess the ability in transforming problems into business opportunities which is very difficult. Besides that, developing a vision is another crucial aspect of starting up a business.

Poor source of funds- According to Nyanga, T. (2013) challenges that new entrepreneurs usually face when starting a business after developing an idea is the challenge of raising capital for their business start-up. Knowing only the core of a business idea is not enough for a business to get started especially without business capital. Hence, an entrepreneur himself is responsible for searching for investors to raise the capital for his own business. It is one crucial step to be done and indeed a challenging task for new entrepreneurs. According to Kanchana and Beegom (2013), when building the first business, an entrepreneur not only has to convince the investors about something that does not exist but also gain their trust in the task proposed so that they are willing to invest in it.

Hence, gaining investors' interest to invest in their non-established business is always difficult and undeniably a great challenge for them. This is why raising capital for a business start-up can be categorized as one of the internal challenges faced by new entrepreneurs

Other problems include Overdependence on one source of income, Lack of inclusion of entrepreneurship in LIS curriculum, Economic meltdown, Government Policies, overdependence on the government for job offers etc.

The Way Forward

LIS students should put to use the skills acquired during training to enable them to meet up with the needs of society.

- Librarians that are trained in the field of librarianship should develop the spirit and endeavor to venture into the entrepreneurship areas to prevent other professionals from taking food and opportunities from our tables.
- The professional and regulatory bodies like the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Librarians Registration Council (LRCN), library schools, and departments of library and information science should as a matter of urgency continually organize seminars, conferences, and workshops on the best methods to inculcate entrepreneurship education in the LIS curriculum. This will reposition the library and information science graduates to be self-reliant.
- Governments at all levels and other relevant agencies should provide an enabling environment for our LIS graduates to acquire soft loans for a startup of their entrepreneurial business.
- Training and re-training of the lecturers of library and information science concerning entrepreneurial education should be intensified to reposition them to impart positively, the knowledge of entrepreneurship to students of LIS.
- Government should adequately fund the library schools and libraries so that they can provide of necessary materials in our libraries and laboratories in the higher institution for effective and efficient teaching and learning process. Entrepreneurial education should not just be theory based but students should be exposed to practical aspects of the course to see for themselves a real situation

Conclusion

Library and information science professionals are at an advantage so far as entrepreneurship is concerned. This is because so many opportunities exist in the profession, some of them include information brokerage, freelancing, current awareness/selective dissemination of information services, indexing and abstracting services, etc. but the poor attitude towards entrepreneurship, lack of entrepreneurial spirit, poor source of funds and other factors are hindering professionals from engaging fully in entrepreneurship. The way forward, therefore, is LIS graduates to have acquired all the necessary skills required of them to fit into the business of entrepreneurship, they should embrace and hold firmly these entrepreneurship opportunities available to them, and the government should also provide loans to enable them to pick up these opportunities as this will enable them to become more relevant to themselves, the profession and the society at large. The time to act is now giving the consequences of not acting.

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