



Repositioning Librarianship Through Entrepreneurship: The Nigerian Case

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the repositioning of librarianship through entrepreneurship: the Nigerian case. There is need for librarians to shift from traditional library services to new innovations and business oriented services. The world today is full of innovations and new products are regularly brought to the market. Librarianship as a profession in Nigeria cannot be an exception whereas there are fallow areas in the profession where such opportunities exist. This article therefore focuses on some business opportunities in librarianship. It also highlighted the skills necessary for librarians and information scientist. The article also discusses the characteristics of entrepreneurship and factors hindering librarians from venturing into entrepreneurship. The paper recommends that librarians should develop entrepreneurial culture and also acquire ICT skills in order to exploit the opportunities in the profession and be self-employed.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, entrepreneurship and librarians.

Journal Reference Format:

Nwakuna, U.E. & Edom, E.U. (2020): Repositioning Librarianship Through Entrepreneurship: The Nigerian Case of Social Enterprise. *Humanities, Management, Arts, Education & the Social Sciences Journal*. Vol. 8 . No. 2, Pp 71-78
DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.22624/AIMS/HUMANITIES/V8N2P4](https://doi.org/10.22624/AIMS/HUMANITIES/V8N2P4)

1. INTRODUCTION

Social enterprises are the organizations founded, owned, and/or managed by the social entrepreneur(s). Their organizations can take different (sometimes multiple) legal forms, such as foundations, cooperatives, or limited liability companies. Some countries introduced separate organizational forms to do justice to the dual mission of social enterprises, such as low-profit limited liability company (L3Cs), benefit corporation (B-Corps), and community interest company (CICs) (Ebrahim et al. 2020). This is to create an enabling environment for social enterprises in which they can operate. Social entrepreneurship emerges as a response to the complex society needs. The concept of social entrepreneurship has been rapidly emerging in the private, public and nonprofit sectors over the last few years.



1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship requires creativity, vision and ability to implement new idea. Anugwom (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the process of generating ideas and venturing into business risks created by dynamic environment and making the best of opportunities for profit purposes. The Gale Encyclopedia of small business (2013) defined an entrepreneur as one who organizes a new business venture in the hope of making profit. That is to say an entrepreneur. Creates, nurtures and grow enterprises using his initiatives and skills to transport ideas into business realities.

In view of the above, Librarians being at the centre of information sourcing and management and having received training in book publishing, bindery, ICT and other skilled areas in the profession should be able to maximize the opportunities. Careers in Librarianship offer opportunities in different spheres of life but barely maximized. That is why Ekuoye (2007) stated that it is said that, there are so many earnest and hardworking Liberians who think excelling in Librarianship is inconceivable. In this era of information age, information explosion and information overload, it becomes necessary that Librarians being information managers should be properly skilled to organize information for economic gains because, information is a marketable commodity and a social wealth. UNESCO adumbrated that information is a commodity, a valuable resources which is exploitable as coffee, cotton, machinery, mineral resources, human resources and which can be used wisely to produce more goods for the consumption of society. Technological innovations are borne out of information sourcing, processing and dissemination thereby empowering and creating wealth for librarians and information scientist.

The emerging trends in ICT have led to an expansion in the role of librarians and information scientist in different and modernized ways with a shift from traditional book processors to information managers. Onaade (2012) opined that with the recent revolutions in ICT, knowledge societies have been expanded, modified and exemplified. Thus, ICT have enhanced librarianship. However, Librarians can act as freelance librarians, publishers, information brokers and provide services to other libraries, government agencies and companies.

2. FEATURES OF LIBRARIAN ENTREPRENEURS (LIBRAPRENEURS)

There are some distinguishing features of an entrepreneur. Onuegbu and Obiah (2013) identified the following entrepreneurial traits of an entrepreneur. These features include:

1. **Demonstrate Initiative:** According to them, research reveals that successful entrepreneurs take initiative and put themselves in positions where they are personally responsible for success or failure. In other words, their initiative set the pace of the business.
2. **Business Conscious:** Most successful entrepreneurs are business-conscious people. Their eyes and ears are mostly focused on hearing about or seeing a business opportunity and they easily notice when it appears.
3. **Enterprising:** An entrepreneur has the ability to venture into new business area. He may start from the scratch or buy an existing business and bring creative innovations that are bound to succeed. In the same vein, he may bring new ways of doing things and make them successful.



4. **Goal-Oriented:** Success in business depends upon being able to set realistic goals or targets and to work with determination to achieve them. This ability to set goals and work to achieve them is fundamental to being an entrepreneur.
5. **Profit Oriented:** Interest in generating money is a clear indicator of an entrepreneur's suitability for being a business owner. Therefore, he focused on profit he can make and his goal in any venture into which he ventures is what he can gain from it.
6. **Ready to Take Risk:** While most people try to avoid risk, entrepreneurs understand that risk is a natural part of trying to achieve goals. Their self-confidence and courageousness helps them accept the challenges of the risk they take.

The Librarians trying to reposition librarianship through entrepreneurship, must see himself as an entrepreneur and in relation to that endeavor to possess the above mentioned traits of an entrepreneur and many more of it in order to enable him succeed.

3. SKILLS NEEDED BY LIBRARIANS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP (LIBRAPRENEURS)

Entrepreneurs possess some applicable skills in order to succeed in their business. Librarians therefore need such skills so as to excel in entrepreneurial opportunities in Librarianship; Okechukwu (2009) broadly categorized the skills into two Viz management skills and interpersonal skills. However, Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) identified the following requisite skills for Librarians in entrepreneurship

1. **Information technology skills:** This involves networking, library automation and digestion, web based services, reprography micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation, library management software including CDS, ISIS, LIBSYS, content development desktop publishing, internet and hardware software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitates the indenting and retrieval of information and thesaurus development.
2. **Information Literacy Skills:** These have to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively and use information critically and competently. Also included here is the economics and marketing of information product and services, information resource management, information processing and organizing, e-mail, multimedia and video conferencing.
3. **Managerial Skills:** These entail marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal getting, decision making, human relations and management growth. They are essential in launching and growing a new venture included here is also the knowledge of record management principles and electronic book keeping.
4. **Personal Entrepreneurial Skills:** This has to with inner control/discipline; risk taking, innovativeness, change orientation and ability to manage change, persistence and visionary leadership.

If the above mentioned skills are combined together by Librarians, ideas and opportunities in Librarianship will become a viable business.



4. ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIBRARIANS

According to Isimoya (2012) an entrepreneur emerges when an individual notices a profitable business opportunity that is unexploited and exploits it. That means an Entrepreneur Librarian should be able to see fallow and business oriented areas and exploit it.

However, Ekuoye (2007) and Igbeka (2008) identifies the following areas that can be harnessed for business purposes in Librarianship

- ❖ **Information Brokerage:** Information brokers provide information to their scientist for a fee. Onaade (2012) stated that the nature of information brokerage as a profession had its roots in 1960s, when a few individuals and library organization realized that the computer and the photocopier are harbingers of the significant role technology plays in the information revolution, which would have an impact on information retrieval. The ability to deliver document, 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 those varied needs into business. As a result, information brokers use various resources including the internet, online services that specialize in database, public libraries, books and CD ROMs. They also set up telephone call centers. They provide research and other information services.
- ❖ **Book Publishing and Trading:** Librarians can venture into publishing business where there are a lot of things to do. One can become a publisher, an editor, a reference book critic, children's book reviewer, do promotion-marketing books in libraries or own a bookshop as well as review reference and children's books. Ekuoye (2007) also opined that, to be in the publishing business, you will have to source for authors and manuscript by electronic mails. One can as well venture into journal publishing which is interesting but more demanding. The reason for it is that you need more articles and by implication involves various authors, collating, reviewing, peer reviewing. However, for the business to run smoothly a personal computer and a secretary/ typist is needed.
- ❖ **Email Publishing, Web Publishing and Desktop Publishing:** As entrepreneurs, Librarians can venture into e-mail publishing, web publishing and into desktop publishing.
- ❖ **E-mail Publishing:** Which is known as newsletter publishing, is used mainly by readers who receive news items, articles and short newsletters in their email box some businesses have now resorted to providing services that mainly deliver news letters to consumers. Librarians can do better in such services.
- ❖ **Web Publishing:** Most companies and business have their own websites and most media companies provide large amount of web-based content. Web-publishing is very popular as new web programming languages are being introduced. All these need thorough training.
- ❖ **Desktop Publishing:** This can accept keyed input and / or scanned graphics to a micro computer, make-up pages with varying degrees of flexibility and graphical facility and output be compatible with laser printers or other high quality output device, and use industry standard type fonts, among others. Publishing is a special area and one has to be up to date, skilled and knowledgeable on it.
- ❖ **Establishing and Maintaining Libraries for Organization.**
Librarians can delve into establishing, and maintaining libraries for organization. It could be a traditional library or electronic library. 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 and strategically located to house the equipment.

❖ **Indexing and Abstracting**

Indexing and abstracting services is another area that librarians can venture into as a human enterprise. 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 computation of the index most indexes combine indexing, with other jobs like cataloguing, copy editing and proof reading. Indexing fees are open to negotiation. You may accord him or number of pages.

Having x-rayed the entrepreneurial opportunities asserted by the above mentioned authors. There is need to emphasize on publishing, Indexing and abstracting. In addition discuss binding services as these are areas that entrepreneurial opportunities abound for librarians.

A. Publishing in Librarianship: Is taught as a course, book production at starting point and publishing at advance stage. This course gives the Librarian theoretical and practical knowledge of publishing. Publishing is profit-oriented and a fast growing business. Imo State alone has six (6) tertiary institutions four out of it are Federal institution while the two owned by the state have multi-campuses. Books and journals are published regularly in these institutions for students and promotion purposes. An entrepreneur Librarian who knows his onion will never go out of business in this type of environment and will continue to thrive if he/she works hard.

B. Indexing and Abstracting: Book indexing is the process of preparing a systematic guide to the location of major words, terms concepts, subject, topics, names, corporate bodies and geographical places mentioned in a publication. This is a major area in Indexing and Abstracting as a course in librarianship. Every standard book must have an index which should serve as a pointer to the major terms and subjects discussed in the book. A librarian who has been armed with this knowledge by his profession should be able to see the opportunity and maximize it; He/she can charge according the pages of the handles the work a properly, his work will advertise for him.

C. Bindery/Reprographic Services: A reprographic librarian also receives training in book binding. Student's projects can be bound for a fee and a good job attracts another job. Some libraries can as well give you contracts on book binding, because sometimes libraries do not discard rare materials easily but, such materials when in, bad condition can be repaired. However, the entrepreneur librarian delving into this area must have the required equipment.



5. CHALLENGES OF NIGERIAN LIBRARIANS IN UNDERTAKING ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The entrepreneurial opportunities in Librarianship are not without problems. Some of these challenges include-

1. **Lack of Business Knowledge:** Most Librarians find it difficult to associate with necessary entities in business like suppliers, customers, and advertising agencies. Some of the librarians do not have background knowledge in business.
2. **Lack of Interest in Business:** Some Nigerian Librarians do not see business venture as part of their profession, They rely so much on institution based employment and chant the course of free library services
3. **Fear of Failure and Inability to take Calculated Risk-** Due to the poor condition of Nigerian business environment, the librarians finds it difficult to venture into a business of which he is not sure of the profit not minding the popular axiom of “ Taking the risk to join the millionaires.
4. **Lack of Capital;** Money has always been the life wire of every business, because of the economic situation in Nigeria; Librapreneurs find it difficult to fund their business.
5. **Poor State of Infrastructure in Nigeria:** The state of infrastructure in Nigeria, does not in any way encourage business librarians on seeing it finds it difficult to delve into business.
6. **Unstable State of Nigerian Economy:** Dollar rate continues to increase against naira and this affects the purchasing power in Nigeria. Nigerian Librarians may find it difficult to purchase equipment as most of the publishing machines are very expensive.
7. **Poor Business Planning:** Due to lack of business knowledge, some Nigeria librarians find it difficult to make a good business plan.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Conclusion

The answer to unemployment in Nigeria is entrepreneurship. Librarians in Nigeria should maximize the entrepreneurial opportunities in librarianship and reposition the profession from free services to profit oriented services.

In this paper we highlighted the entrepreneurial opportunities in Librarianship and it is concluded that those business oriented services will make librarians to be self employed and job creators.

6.2 Recommendations

- Librarians should develop entrepreneurial culture and mind set. They should be innovative, creative and should be able to take risk as well as the reward.
- Entrepreneurship workshop and training will help them a lot, librarians should always make themselves available for such trainings
- Librarians being at the centre of information organization and dissemination, should acquire skills in information communication technology (ICT) to enable them excel in information brokerage business
- Librarians should be able to seek for loan from financial institutions in order to support the business
- Entrepreneurship education should be introduced in library schools in order to create business consciousness and skills in the life of the upcoming librarians.



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