



ENHANCING THE SELF-EMPLOYMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE GRADUATES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology 18 (1) 2025

<https://doi.org/10.70118/jaist.202501801.20>

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study focused on enhancing the self-employment of library and information science graduates through entrepreneurship education.

Design/Methodology/Approach: An exploratory approach through extensive review of related literature was adopted for this study.

Findings: The paper revealed various entrepreneurial opportunities in library and information science (LIS) profession such as information brokerage, book publishing, printing, book trading, binding services, computer and internet services, library software dealership, freelancing among others. The paper also revealed various skills needed to explore and exploit entrepreneurship opportunities in library and information science such as critical and creative thinking skills, strategic thinking and planning skills, networking skills, time management skills, leadership skills, communication skills, etc. Furthermore, the challenges associated with repositioning library and information graduates for self-employment as revealed by the paper includes access to capital; inability to use technology; inability to identify potential market among others.

Implication: Suggested strategies for repositioning library and information graduates for self-employment include the provision of capital, training on the use of technology, awareness of potential market and favourable government policies.

Originality/Value: It was recommended that LIS schools should introduce and engage in different skill acquisition programmes and introduce entrepreneurship courses in their curriculum; library and information science professionals should enroll in skill acquisition programmes in order to acquire necessary entrepreneurial skills and competencies; government and financial institutions should facilitate access to low interest loan facilities and other support services needed by LIS entrepreneurs; government should also initiate policies that will be favourable to young investors by reduction of excessive taxes and other actions that will sustain both small and medium-scale enterprises among others.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; library; library and information science; employment; employability; graduates; professionals; opportunities.

Paper Type: Conceptual/Exploratory

Introduction

Library and information science is primarily concerned with the organization, access, collection, and dissemination of information, whether in physical or digital

forms. It is the academic and professional study of how information and information carriers are produced, discovered, evaluated, selected, acquired, used, organized, maintained, managed and disseminated.

Traditionally, the programme is meant to produce library and information professionals for all types of libraries, information and documentation centres. But today, the teaching of library and information science has gone beyond the documentation of information sources and the provision of information services. Library and information science education is expected to equip the graduates of the programme with relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills and techniques to develop and enhance their job performance. Onu (2010) argued that the study of library and information science has been extended beyond the frontiers of documentation and the provision of information. Today, the programme has been repositioned to make the graduates more innovative, creative and self-reliant. This is owing to the reason that automatic employment is no longer there for them on graduation.

Igbeka (2008) remarked that tertiary institutions in Nigeria today turn out graduates in such an alarming and intimidating exponential rate that "grows with the toddler's snail speed which can no longer accommodate these graduates by way of providing employment. This situation has inspired the call for library schools to accommodate courses that will expose the

students to the dynamic job creation and self-employment. The paradigm shift here is to create the job, employ self and others. Therefore, entrepreneurship in library and information science is meant to provide the graduates with the additional skills that will empower them to transform their ideas into visible business. It will empower them to create jobs for themselves and possibly employ others. Premised on this background, this paper presents overview of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial opportunities in library and information science (LIS) profession, skills needed to explore and exploit entrepreneurship opportunities in library and information science, challenges associated with repositioning library and information graduates for self-employment. The paper also recommends strategies for promoting entrepreneurial practice in library and information science education.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an opportunity for self-motivated individuals to create their own career path and income, working to develop goods or services that people want or need. Usuka et al. (2019) defined entrepreneurship as the operation and ownership of a business for self-

employment purposes and for creation of job opportunities through production and marketing of goods and services. It is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. On the other hand, Emerole (2015) defined entrepreneurship as a unique blend of innovation, creativity and risk taking propensity with plans to creating and sustaining the value enjoyed by the customers. An entrepreneur is someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits. The best example of entrepreneurship is the starting of a new business venture. The entrepreneurs are often known as a source of new ideas or innovators, and bring new ideas in the market by replacing old with a new invention. Isimoya (2012) state that entrepreneurship emerges when an individual notices a profitable business opportunity unexploited and exploits it, innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit changes as an opportunity for a different business or different service. Entrepreneurs play a key role in any economy, using the skills and initiative necessary to anticipate needs and bring good

new ideas to market. Lucky and Ugeh (2014) sees entrepreneurship as a concept concerned with the development and survival of both individual and the society. They also went further to explain that it is a tool through which social, economic and political development could be achieved. Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, sense of initiation, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage project in order to achieve objectives.

There is need to encourage and expose library and information science graduates to engage in entrepreneurial enterprises especially in Africa where there is high rate of unemployment. Library and information professionals should be trained to identify a societal problem and using entrepreneurial principles, such as innovation, to create and implement ventures that achieve change. Today's librarians are innovators who explore new technologies and novel ideas in the relentless pursuit of excellence. Babalola (2011) argued that entrepreneurship in library and information science is all about attitudinal change and development. Librarians must embrace entrepreneurship by applying new business models in

response to patrons' demands. Emphasizing on the characteristics of entrepreneurs Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013) affirms that they must endeavour to possess the applicable skills in order to succeed in any business venture. Entrepreneurs create, nurture and grow enterprises using a reasonable degree of initiative, skills and competencies necessary to transform change into opportunities thereby stemming personal satisfaction, monetary rewards and independence. The importance of entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized. Entrepreneurship helps in creating job opportunities, curbing crime rate, shaping the life of people in a society, promoting business initiatives, reducing the level of dependence on the government to create jobs by the citizenry, nurturing people in wealth creation and to become employers of labour (Usuka et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship therefore demands that individuals must develop the ability to manipulate ideas and turn them into reality.

Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Library and Information Science (LIS) Profession

Library and information science (LIS) is a merging of library science and information science. It is an interdisciplinary field of study that deals generally with

acquisition, collection, organization, access and dissemination of information. According to Abubakar (2021), library and information science education is an interdisciplinary field of study that has integrated many new and related areas such as information science, computer science, information system, knowledge management, information architecture, digitization, content management and archives related areas. It is expected to equip the graduates of the programme with relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills and techniques to develop and enhance their job performance. It is also meant to produce library and information professionals for all types of libraries, information and documentation centres. Library and information science (LIS) professionals are experts in the provision of information services in a systematic and defined manner that meet the information needs of users. Usuka et al. (2019) argued that globally, library and information science (LIS) professional are held in high esteem in the business and management of information in all spheres of human field. Today, library and information science professionals have grown to be innovative, creative and developed mastery in the use of Information and Communication

Technology (ICT) in providing library and information services to the users. They went further to affirm that the contemporary library and information science professionals have shown readiness to compete favourably in the information service provision business. Such readiness include acquiring new skills, integrating information technologies in library house-keeping activities, engaging in continuous professional development (CPD) programmes, exploring entrepreneurial opportunities in LIS profession and engaging self-development programmes for personality growth in the profession and the society at large.

There are many entrepreneurial opportunities for library and information science graduates that can make them self-employed and reliant. Major areas of these opportunities includes: indexing and abstracting services, library automation services, documentation services, technical translations, information consultancy services, bibliographic services, editing services, computer and internet services, information brokerage, book vendor services, library software/database development, maintenance, troubleshooting services (Igbeka, 2008). Additionally, Usuka et al. (2019) listed varieties of

entrepreneurial opportunities that exist for library and information science graduates.

These include:

Information Brokerage: Librarians acquire information brokerage skills in library and information science schools. Librarians can invest and make money from information brokerage. An information broker is an individual who gathers information about individuals and organizations, assembles the data to create individual profiles and sale the profiles to companies, agents or institutions that need them for various purposes. Onaade (2012) state that “information brokers provide their clients with information for a fee.” Information brokerage involves sorting out information available on a mass scale and delivering it on personalized basis. Librarians can utilize variety of information sources (print and non-print) to provide information brokerage services. This business requires little or no capital to start. Users will find this services useful especially researchers thus will be willing to pay for it. The types of information brokerage librarians can invest in are indexing and abstracting, literature search (print and non-print), selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services (CAS), document delivery, bibliographic compilation,

retrospective conversion; cataloging and classification (contract cataloging) for private libraries, management of private libraries, book editing, literature reviews, packaging and repackaging of information, volunteerism, community information services for rural dwellers and sensitization programs.

Book Publishing: Publishing is a very lucrative business especially in the academic environment. This is why publishing is taught in library and information science schools. LIS professionals can start publishing business by collecting manuscripts from writers or authors especially children books or story books for publishing. Typeset manuscripts can be stored in CD ROM as soft copy or printed as hard copy. One can decide to carry out all the activities or can take one or two categories and specialize in them. Also, a librarian can decide to be publisher, an editor, a reference book critic or children's books reviewer. With technological advancements, LIS professionals can engage in e-mail publishing also known as newsletter publishing, web publishing and desktop publishing. Publishing is a special and precise job in which one has to be skilled, knowledgeable and up-to-date if

he/she is to succeed in this entrepreneurial venture (Usuka et al 2019).

Book Vendor: Entrepreneurial potentials exist in the area of book dealership and trading for librarians. ICT has made it possible for online publishing, online book stores, online publishers and union catalogues. With these, a librarian can at the comfort of his office build contacts with the publishers (local and international) and connect with libraries that need supplies of information resources online. A librarian can also open book shops or stores through within the tertiary institution environs.

Printing: Printing is a very lucrative venture that librarians can invest their financial resources and energy in. Printing has become diversified. Librarians can start with printing library bulletins, library newsletters, library posters, signage and many more. Librarians can also undertake in printing journals for research groups, books written by lecturers and students, handbooks and manuals.

Binding Services: In the academic environment, binding business is booming. LIS professionals can bind projects and thesis for students and other literature resources emanating from the academic institution. Binding business requires little

capital and tools to start and it is not time consuming.

Computer and Internet Business Services:

A large number of librarians have grown to be information and communication technology (ICT) experts. They also possess internet surfing skills. This knowledge can be harnessed by starting computer and internet services for students' registration, online payments, typesetting and printing, blog creation, website development and sourcing of information resources for assignments, term papers, projects etc.

Library Software Vendor: Library automation has become global best practices in library and information science profession. In order to automate library services, library oriented software packages are needed. Librarians can become entrepreneurs by dealing on library software and installation. Software packages are important for library in-house operations. A librarian can become a middle man between the software developers and various libraries that want to upgrade to automated services.

Supply of Library Facilities and Equipment: LIS professionals are in the best position to know the best and state of the art facilities and equipment for modern libraries such as furniture, cabinets, seats, trolleys, shelves etc. Hence, a librarian can

start supply of library facilities for school libraries (especially private schools), private libraries, special libraries, academic libraries and public libraries.

Establishing and Managing Libraries for Organizations and Individuals:

Library and information professionals can delve into establishing and managing libraries for organizations or individuals. It could be a traditional print library or electronic library. Some individuals acquire lots of information resources (books, journals, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts, audiovisuals etc) but don't have organization knowledge. Hence, librarians can make prominence by taking up such task.

Compilation of Directories: Compilation of directories is another entrepreneurial opportunity that library and information professionals can venture into as entrepreneurs. There are so much that need to be compiled. It can be "Who is who" in virtually anything, profession, village, organization, etc. The 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. Library and Information Science professionals, as entrepreneurs can earn sustainable income

through publishing of subject and trade bibliographies.

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, proof reading, real estate editors, etc. The internet has helped to enhance this discipline as freelancers can always find substantial information from the internet. Many retired LIS professionals can undertake freelancing jobs in their free time and earn money after retirement.

Skills Needed to Explore Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Library and Information Science

Entrepreneurship education in library and information science will equip the graduates with much needed skills to focus and drive the realization of profit maximization opportunities. Skills refer to the ability to perform an action with determined results, often within a given amount of time, energy, or both. In the work of Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) cited by Elonye and Uzuegbu (2013), it was stated that LIS professionals should strive to improve on their overall skills through the acquisition of various forms of ICT skills and develop

entrepreneurial culture and mindset in order to render quality services in the library, achieve self employment and remain relevant. There are various skills required to explore entrepreneurship opportunities in library and information science. These include:

Critical and creative thinking skills:

Critical and creative thinking skills are essential for LIS entrepreneurs to build and expand their information services. Critical thinking allows them to objectively analyze information using the evidence to make informed decisions and solve problems. Eke, Igwesi and Orji (2011) affirmed that entrepreneurship programme inculcates in students creative and innovative skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance and national development. Creative thinking provides a way to look at issues from various angles, consider alternative perspectives, and come up with original ideas.

Strategic thinking and planning skills:

Strategic thinking and planning skills allow library professionals to analyze information, adapt, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions. Onu (2010) stated that an entrepreneur must be an astute and strategic management planner and manager

of men, financial and other resources to make his products and services unique to his customers or clients. These entrepreneurship skills are vital in helping them overcome challenges and ensure efficient allotment of resources and achievement of goals.

Networking Skills: In today's competitive business environment, networking skills are essential for scaling the business and boosting opportunities. These skills enable entrepreneurs to promote and market information services. Alex-Nmecha and Bassey (2017) argued that networking has become a popular term in the day to day conversation and it's often considered to be related to job seeking and personal advancement with an emphasis on self-promotion and trying to use others for one's own ends. Networking builds relationships and allows LIS professionals to connect with potential customers, partners and suppliers.

Time Management and Organizational Skills: Effective time management and organization skills can enable LIS graduates to achieve goals, manage stress, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and improve well-being and satisfaction. Ziekye (2016) observed that time management actually represents the tool, skills and abilities required in doing the right thing at the right

time, with minimum effort, and resources, effectively and efficiently, leading to the achievement of your goals and the things you personally prioritized and value. Time management and organizational skills include prioritizing, goal setting, multi-tasking, decision making and collaboration. The failure or success of any entrepreneur is determined by effectiveness of use of time. Therefore, one of the key formulas for success is good organization of time.

Teamwork and Leadership Skills: Teamwork and leadership are highly critical entrepreneurship skills that foster a positive and collaborative organizational culture, leading to increased employee satisfaction and improved performance. Prior research by Chang and Lee (2013) found that certain dimensions of teamwork competencies, such as conflict management skills, improve learning performance in business planning. Knipfer, Schreiner, Schmid and Peus (2018) concluded that during the pre-founding phase, which is reflected in most entrepreneurship projects, the way in which teams work together is key in leveraging performance. These qualities can enable LIS professionals to effectively inspire, motivate, work in teams, and lead to realization of targets.

Communication Skills: Communication skills allow individuals to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings clearly through speaking, writing, and other forms of expression. Lakoy (2015) opined that communication is needed to establish a relationship of mutual respect, respect for each other, in the framework of one goal to succeed in the work well according to expectations for the progress of the business. This is essential entrepreneurship skills that can make a difference in how you run your business as they help you to build trust, maintain relationships, resolve conflicts, understand needs and perspectives, and make informed decisions.

Also, some professional and managerial skills required by LIS professionals for successful entrepreneurship as highlighted by Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) are:

Information Technology Skills: This is the process of acquiring skills that are associated with networking, library automation and digitization, web based services, reprography, micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation, library management software including CDS ISIS, LIBSYS, KOHA DSPACE content development, desktop

publishing, intranet, presentation, hardware/software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitates the indexing and retrieval of information and thesaurus development. Ganapathi (2014) stated that it is becoming increasingly apparent that library professionals, working within the technological environments, needed strong Information Technology Skills. The IT skills in terms of understanding the hardware, software, or knowing about application of computers to library services is essential.

Information Literacy Skills: This has to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently and using information accurately and creatively. According to Adeleke and Emeahara (2016), information literacy skills are imperative for accessing information in this generation of technology advancement that most of the information needed for research can be retrieved from electronic sources. It provides LIS graduates the opportunity to manage information in creative and innovative way by gathering, organizing and disseminating information as a commercial venture.

Managerial Skills: These are the business management skills that have to do with marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal setting, decision making, human relations and managing growth. Agbim (2013) identified the planning and budgeting skills; detecting changes; maintaining good customer relations and ensuring correct financial records as the managerial skills related to small and medium enterprises. These are essential in launching and growing a new venture.

Challenges associated with repositioning library and information graduates for self-employment.

Notwithstanding numerous entrepreneurial opportunities that exist in library and information science profession, there are some challenges that may hinder the LIS graduate from becoming successful entrepreneurs. These challenges are discussed below:

Access to Capital: Lack of fund has been a major setback to many businesses including library entrepreneurship. Library and information science graduates often times lack funds necessary to start up a business venture. According to Anthony (2014), the major problem faced by entrepreneurs in Nigeria is the problem of insufficient capital

to start a new business. This has caused a setback for library professionals to venture into a worthwhile business.

Inability to Use Technology: Operating a modern information service business requires knowledge of the use of advanced technologies and tools. Some of these modern technologies and tools require training. In some instances, technical training may not be readily available to the LIS graduates. Many of them cannot operate these modern technologies. Furthermore, many graduates find fixing basic computer problems troublesome, as they have no knowledge in this area.

Inability to identify potential market: The inability of library entrepreneurs to identify and locate a potential market outlet has constituted a serious setback to success of establishing a business venture. Lack of awareness of potential business areas where information products and services will be delivered has posed a serious challenge to the library entrepreneurs. Abdullahi, Barkindo and Ezeabasili (2021) highlighted the different consumers of library products and services to include companies, farmers, schools, banks, hospitals, individuals and government ministries. Entrepreneurs need to identify these target areas for profit maximization.

Unfavourable Government Policies:

Government themselves are responsible for many collapsed businesses, through their unfavourable and inhuman policies. Usuka et al (2019) pointed that some government policies in African nations are not favourable to aspiring investors and entrepreneurs. There are numerous past incidents where some governments have demolished houses, shops, markets and business buildings even with short notice to the owners of the structures. More so, the incessant revenue charges, high interest rate, inflating tax charges are frustrating entrepreneurial ventures.

Okolo and Ivwighrehweta (2021) highlighted some of these and other impending factors that hamper library and information science professionals from getting involved in entrepreneurship for self-development attainment. They are: economic Meltdown, government policies, fear of competition and failure, lack of entrepreneurial spirit, problem of generating compelling business ideas, poor sources of fund, poor attitude of librarians, towards entrepreneurship, excess workload on the librarian.

Strategies for repositioning library and information graduates for self-employment

Despite the challenges hindering library and information science graduates from becoming successful entrepreneurs, there are numerous strategies which can be adopted to reposition them for self-employment. These are discussed below:

Provision of Capital: Librarians who are entrepreneurs requires access to capital to start up their business. This can be made possible through the provision of low interest loans by the government and various financial institutions. In line with this, Anthony (2014) remarked that librarians who are entrepreneurs in the country require access to two broad categories of capital as follows: Equity capital which is owned by the investor and Debt capital. Abdullahi, Barkindo and Ezeabasili (2021) stated that equity capital refers to the contribution of the investors to the business. Entrepreneurs from the field of librarianship can identify potential business investors by selling ownership shares in return for capital to be used to manage the business operations. Debt capital according to them is the type of financing that involves loan or borrowing that often goes with interest. It is provided on short term, medium term and long term basis. They further argued that debt capital is indispensable for take up, maintenance

and general operations of LIS entrepreneurship.

Training on the Use of Technology:

Stressing the need for the use of technology, Nwabueze and Ebele (2019) asserted that library and information science education in Nigeria today cannot be relevant without effective preparation of new librarians to effectively use information and communication technology. This was agreed by Brennan (2007) who noted that practicing librarians should know how to use and apply ICT to library operations because employers are not ready to interview applicants who do not meet their requirements. Therefore, courses should be taught from an Information and Communication Technology perspective with adequate exposure to the use of technologies with the ultimate aim of making prospective LIS graduates employers of labour rather than job seekers.

Awareness of Potential Market:

Identifying potential market is a crucial element in the business planning process. It allows prospective entrepreneurs to determine the feasibility of a business before committing substantial resources to the venture. Abdullahi, Barkindo and Ezeabasili, (2021) highlighted the different consumers of library products and services

to include companies, farmers, schools, Banks, hospitals, individuals and government ministries. The entrepreneurs need to analyze their potential customer base, who their competitors in the target area and analyze the current environmental conditions that may affect market potential. There is need to determine the size and demographic characteristics of potential customers. Important information to obtain includes the population size of the target market, their product preferences and their income. This will reveal the number of potential customers and whether they can actually afford the product.

Favourable Government Policies:

Government should initiate policies and enabling environment that will encourage young entrepreneurs to thrive. Both federal and state governments should create schemes and programmes to help support business ideas of prospective entrepreneurs. Usuka et al. (2019) concludes that the government should create policies that will be favorable to young investors; and the government should control and reduce the rate of revenues and taxes been imposed on entrepreneurial ventures. The high rate of revenue and taxes been imposed on small and medium enterprises should be reduced to encourage the aspiring entrepreneurs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the discourse so far, it's evident that the rate of unemployment especially in Africa is so high. Entrepreneurship education in library and information science provides the students with the knowledge and skills necessary to launch them into a successful venture. The purpose of entrepreneurship education in LIS is to train students to acquire skills, ideas and managerial capabilities to become self – employed rather than waiting for non-existent government jobs. The idea here is to create the job, employ self and others. Entrepreneurship is seen as individual's ability to turn ideas into action. Many entrepreneurial opportunities for library and information science graduates that can make them self-employed and reliant have been extensively discussed. There is need therefore, to encourage and expose library and information science graduates to engage and utilize these entrepreneurial opportunities for self-employment. To achieve this, the following recommendations are made:

1. The LIS schools should introduce and engage in different skill acquisition programmes and introduce entrepreneurship courses in their curriculum in order to

prepare aspiring entrepreneurs through their career path.

2. Library and information science professionals should enroll in skill acquisition programmes in order to acquire necessary entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

3. Government and financial institutions should facilitate access to low interest loan facilities and other support services needed by LIS entrepreneurs.

4. Government should also initiate policies that will be favourable to young investors by reduction of excessive taxes and other actions that will sustain both small and medium-scale enterprises.

5. Government should also provide basic infrastructure such as power supply that will help to boost small scale businesses.

6. There should also be adequate incentives for students of vocational and technical schools. This will motivate them to establish their own ventures after graduation.

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