
REFLECTIONS ON PROSPECTS OF ENTERPRENEURIAL LIBRARIANSHIP IN NIGERIA:

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Abstract

This paper conceptualizes entrepreneurial librarianship. It presents the librarian as an entrepreneur, that is able to initiate or provide information services and products to meet user's need in new and creative ways; if given the right kind of training/education that is capable of stimulating entrepreneurial spirit with a view to creating innovation or original thinking in terms of information resource use and development taking into consideration the competitive environment of information delivery visa viz the competition pose by Google, Amazon, Wikipedia and Myspace. It highlight necessary ingredients required for every librarian who intends to be innovative and fit into the global information service equilibrium, such as risk taking, collaboration, change initiators, reading outside the profession and constant assessment with international best practices. Key business prospects in entrepreneurial librarianship were presented.

Keywords: Innovation, Entrepreneurial, Librarianship, Nigeria, Information service

Introduction

Librarians often lack prior training in entrepreneurship (Atterbury and Finnell, 2009). This perhaps stem from the “free library culture” that libraries are not-for-profit institutions whose reasons for existing is service rather than financial gain. Consequently, library personnel need not be trained on business models, commonly employed in entrepreneurial ventures with its associated elements of personal financial risk and potential financial gain (Scanlon and Crumpton, 2011).

However, the arrival of the information age where information provision is an increasingly important commercial activity coupled with new technological development, bringing together hitherto disparate activities in information supply, (Norris, 2007) has led to a change in the role of libraries and librarians. This is further worsened by new entrants into the field of information management

hitherto was the preserve of librarians, thereby leading to unemployment crisis. The problem of unemployment in Nigeria is particularly pathetic as the number of those coming out from institutions including graduate of library and information science (LIS), looking for employment is increasing day by day. The situation is soof such concern that thousands of unemployed university graduates mounted a demonstration in front of the presidential offices to express their concern (Dabalin, Oni and Adekola, 2010). It is therefore pertinent for librarians training to foster entrepreneurial thinking amongst librarians and graduates of LIS that may not be engaged in libraries but will be able to cater for their needs through knowledge and skills acquired from librarianship education. This kind of approach is needed with a view to raise a generation of LIS graduates that would be able to create a living based on their skills, knowledge, talents and passion related to librarianship.

The intent of this study therefore is to shift the focus to entrepreneurial librarianship and consider in great detail, various librarianship related entrepreneurial activities that graduates of LIS can engage in. specifically it offers a model that librarians can adapt in engaging in research and instruction related to entrepreneurship. It is hope that issues raised in this discourse will provoke and stimulate further thoughts, comments and research in this regard.

Conceptualizing Entrepreneurial Librarianship

Entrepreneurial education distinguishes itself from other aspects of business curricula by emphasizing the notion of an entrepreneurial perspective that can be learned through theoretical and practical training (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2004). For this reason, a significant of entrepreneurship education entails learning opportunities that stimulate venture creation processes and heavily incorporate co-curricular activities like business plan competitions, prototyping product and service ideas and engagement with successful entrepreneurs in the form of guest lecturers, tours and socials (Solomon, 2007). Accordingly, the literature of entrepreneurship education points not only to a growth of entrepreneurship programs in the context of business curricula, but also its applicability in interdisciplinary context across various academic departments (Kuratko, 2005) including librarianship. Altman (2006) provides as insightful contextualization of entrepreneurship in this regard as a “way of managing, that involves the creation of

opportunity without regard to the resources currently controlled". Osborne (1995) described the process for creating this kind of opportunities to include:

- Studying the environment to identify unmet marketplace needs
- Developing a product or service to respond to marketplace needs and trends
- Creating a marketing and financial plan to animate the selected product/service concept
- Sorting out the suitable level of personal and business risk that corresponds to the entrepreneur's capacity and potential marketplace rewards and
- Marshalling the requisite resources to launch the business

Various studies (Lawal, 2009, Mohammed 2003, and Ochogwu, 2007) clearly highlight the lack of entrepreneurship content in the Nigerian library and information science curricular. For this reason, many librarians turn to other professional literature for models of entrepreneurship that can be applied to librarianship. By promoting the socially responsible role of librarianship, it is generally agreed that the more common business and financial considerations should not apply; but in essence entrepreneurship is not only about this. It is in this light that Drucker (1995) defines entrepreneurship as innovation- the effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprises economic or social potential. The Kauffman Foundation (2006) considers entrepreneurship to be an exercise in social responsibility. An ideal that libraries and the field of librarianship conceptually embraced.

This innovative kind of approach is needed with a view to raise a generation of library and information science graduates that would be able to outperform other competitors in the service of library and information delivery. This is the crux of this discourse.

Entrepreneurial librarianship therefore, concerns itself with exercising initiative or providing information services and products to meet user needs in new and creative ways. Collaboration is an essential ingredient in this new concept of entrepreneurial innovation. In this way librarianship training that is able to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit with a view to creating innovation or original thinking in terms of information resource use and development is required.

Entrepreneurial librarianship provides a means to not only integrate business skills, particularly financial marketing and fund raising, but also to apply them towards a variety of goals from commercial enterprise to social or non-profit initiatives (Chung, 2010). Entrepreneurship librarianship involves fostering entrepreneurial thinking which is aimed at developing the social, cognitive, career and management skills. Drucker's (1995) definition of a successful entrepreneur is also based on behaviour, not innate personality. "Successful innovators use both the right and the left sides of their brains. They look at figures, they look at people, they work out analytically what the innovation has to be, to satisfy an opportunity, then they go out and look at potential users to study their expectations, their values and their needs".

In Nigeria, the provision of information is increasingly becoming an important commercial activity. Although unrecognized in economic statistics, there is now an expanding "trade able information sector" which encompasses the supply of financial and business information, printing and publishing, technical information etc. there is increasing demand for more and better services without a corresponding increase in funding across public, academic and special/research libraries. In fact some authorities now want their libraries to generate revenue to offset a proportion of their costs. This has led to some libraries charging fees for some services, while others require library managers to find more innovative ways.

The Librarian as an Entrepreneur

There exist some level of uncertainty about the future of libraries, occasioned by the competition posed by Google, Amazon, Wikipedia, MySpace etc. which are veritable sources of information. In New Zealand and many other Western countries, there is increasing resistance by the public to increase in local taxes to fund libraries (Best, 2011). Understandably, libraries, in Nigeria are worried of their roles in the dynamic landscape of information provision/delivery that is shifting away from the traditional enterprise. Librarians therefore are expected to create new ventures, embrace challenges associated with this new order and make improvements where necessary. The following, adapted from Matthews (2006) are necessary ingredients required for every librarians and would be librarian who intends to be innovative with a view to face the current technological challenge in information service delivery:

- **Risk Taking:** Innovation is stifled when risk is avoided. This is often the case with strict bureaucratic machinery combined with comprehensive scrutiny of transactional activity of all kinds (Vassarotti, 1997). Libraries as service oriented enterprise should be more flexible in organizational structure and policies. Librarians should have the freedom to act professionally and responsively and to address patron needs in a quick and appropriate manner. Different units in the library should be run like entrepreneurial companies, providing autonomy, risk and reward for searching out and successfully implementing new and innovative information products and services
- **Collaboration:** librarians should develop relationships that blend across personal and professional contexts. The advent of social networking tools such as instant messaging, wikis, blogs and networking sites could be used to foster this new kind of collaboration. Opening the channels of communication encourages innovation that stretches across various backgrounds. Titles and status should be downplayed in this kind of collaboration. The library should find ways to incorporate staff including those from other departments, to be able to gain genuine and effective influence.
- **Initiating Change:** There should be a solutions based approach towards problems and not necessarily settle for what is offered or for what has been traditionally accepted. Librarians should be change initiators. We must demonstrate the entrepreneurial spirit by embracing solutions based approach towards problems and building a network of experiences with colleagues
- **Read Outside the Profession:** There is more to learn when we read outside the professional literature, particularly in the areas of information technology, customer service, marketing, management and allied fields.
- **Constant Assessment:** Libraries should be more involved in constant deep assessment beyond the regular circulation statistics and gate counts. There is need for constant examination of how collections, services and physical space are used and how they can be used and adjust accordingly. Old boundaries no longer exist in library and information service delivery. The patrons involvement is critical towards what we can become. This can be

achieved through watching, listening and interacting with our users in a more friendly manner.

Prospects

There exists a variety of business prospects in entrepreneurial librarianship-training that foster creativity and original thinking in the creation of information products and services. Information is an asset that can be bought and sold. The information industry comprised a whole gamut of businesses devoted to the delivery of information itself, that librarians and graduates of LIS can be actively involved to eke out a living. Some of such information related businesses includes:

- **Information Brokers:** An information broker is an individual who gather information for others as a professional business. He/she sorts out information available on a mass scale and deliver it on a personalized basis. Information brokers do this by accessing information databases to selectively provide information on specific subjects of interest to a specific person or persons. Information broker rely on a variety of information sources (commercial, government and non-governmental) to help them perform their function. An information broker should be equipped with skills of information gathering in the online world, hardware/software services, online searching and a wide variety of product presentation. Professional information brokers perform information search services from clients for fees. Some act as searchers only, others add research services, awareness and alerting services, document (report) delivery services and competitive intelligence gathering (Synott, 2002).
- **Database Producers/Distributors:** There are a wide variety of database producers creating commercially available online databases which can be accessed for information. They may be publishers, researchers, consultants, government agencies or others who do work in the area covered by the databases they produce. Some collect data prepared by others and package the data into specialty databases, sometimes adding data of their own. Database producers are sometimes also database distributors, but more often, than not they license their database to distributors. Database distributors provide the online services that can access commercial data bases. They provide the computers, software and communications needed for remote

users to gain access to the databases. The corporate information broker is probably more interested in database distributors than producers because access to online Databases is through distributors. Database producers/distributors can either be offline and online, depending on the producer/distributors. An individual can act as an information broker to gather external competitive information or to do product research. It could also package inside information with outside databases and become an information broker for customers. It could become a database producer/distributor as a by-product business from information originally developed for internal use.

On the whole information as a business is sprouting everywhere, information is an asset that can be bought and sold; consequently, selling information has become big business. Everyone participates in the information industry as either a user or a provider. Below is an index of various information services.

Subject	Coverage
Awareness services	DB publishing, information brokerage and retailing, newsletters, loose-leaf services
Business information	Acquisitions, finance, industry, international management, investments
Computer industry	Equipment, industry data
Corporate information	Business data, corporate planning
Corporate planning	Consulting, corporate and management information, strategic planning
DB distributors	Companies supplying DBs, their own or those prepared by others.
DB information	Companies with products that provide information about DBs
DB producers	Companies creating DBs for themselves or under contract to DB distributors
Demographic information	Demographic data, market research, statistics mailing lists, advertising, marketing
Direct mail	Mailing lists, advertising, marketing
Document delivery services	Companies that specializes in information search and retrieval reporting
Electronic publishing	DB publishing, electronic news services
Forecasting services	Financial, electronic

Government information	Legislative, regulatory, procurement, statistics, international
Index publishing	Indexes, DB publishing, electronic publishing
Information brokerage	Information brokers, awareness services, document delivery, research, search and retrieval
Information industry	DB directory services
Information management	InformationDBs, industry information, consulting
Information retailing	Information sellers, awareness, document delivery, research, search and retrieval
International	Country services data, import-export industry
Management information	Management data, business, finance, education
Marketing research	Marketing, advertising, demographics, research services.

Source: synnot, (2007)

Cocclusion

A librarianship training that will help to foster entrepreneurial thinking amongst librarians and graduates of Library and information science that may not be engaged in librarianship, but will be able to cater for their needs through knowledge and skills acquired from librarianship education is required. This innovative kind of training is rightly needed to enable library and information providers meet users needs in new and creative ways. Entrepreneurial librarianship therefore concerns itself with stimulating an entrepreneurial spirit with a view to creating innovation or original thinking in terms of information resource design and development. Nigerian LIS curricula should be tailored in this manner to enable librarians and would be librarians develop skills, knowledge required to outperform other competitors in the service of library and information delivery.

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