Infopreneurship as a Catalyst for Transforming Library and Information Science Practice in the Digital Economy

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of the digital economy has fundamentally reshaped the creation, access, and dissemination of information, thereby challenging the traditional roles of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals. This paper examines infopreneurship as a catalyst for transforming LIS practice to remain relevant and economically viable in a technology-driven environment. Infopreneurship, defined as the creation and commercialization of information-based products and services, provides a strategic pathway for LIS professionals to move beyond conventional service delivery toward innovative and income-generating activities. Adopting a conceptual and analytical approach, the study draws on existing literature and emerging practices to explore how infopreneurial initiatives—such as digital content creation, online information services, data curation, knowledge consultancy, and information brokerage—can redefine professional identity and practice. The paper highlights how the integration of digital tools, entrepreneurial competencies, and market-oriented thinking can empower LIS practitioners to participate actively in the knowledge economy. Furthermore, the study identifies key challenges hindering the adoption of infopreneurship, including inadequate entrepreneurial training, limited digital skills, infrastructural deficiencies, and resistance to change within the profession. The paper concludes that infopreneurship is not only a viable strategy for enhancing the relevance of LIS professionals but also a critical mechanism for sustainable economic empowerment. By embracing this approach, LIS practitioners can transform from traditional custodians of information into dynamic knowledge entrepreneurs capable of creating value, generating income, and contributing meaningfully to the digital economy.

Keywords: *infopreneurship, library and information science, digital economy, knowledge economy, entrepreneurship, information professionals*

Introduction

The global shift toward a digital, knowledge-based economy has altered the mechanisms through which information is produced, packaged, distributed, and consumed. Knowledge has become a primary factor of production and a source of competitive advantage, rivalling capital and labour in economic significance (Powell & Snellman, 2004). This transformation, driven by automation, artificial intelligence, and networked digital platforms, is simultaneously displacing routine information-handling tasks and creating new categories of knowledge work (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). For Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals, whose traditional mandate centred on the acquisition, organization, preservation, and mediated access to information resources, this shift represents both a disruption and an opportunity.

Historically, librarians and information professionals have functioned as intermediaries between information and its users, operating largely within publicly funded or institutionally embedded settings. However, the disintermediation enabled by search engines, open-access repositories, and self-publishing platforms has eroded the exclusivity of this mediating role, exposing LIS professionals to the risk of professional irrelevance if they do not adapt (Ivwurie & Ocholla, 2016). At the same time, the same digital infrastructure that threatens conventional practice also lowers the barriers to entry for independent information enterprise, enabling professionals to package their expertise into marketable products and services delivered directly to end users.

It is within this context that infopreneurship has emerged as a strategic response. Infopreneurship, a portmanteau of "information" and "entrepreneurship," refers to the identification and exploitation of opportunities to create, package, and commercialize information-based products and services (Rosenbaum & Cronin, 1993; Yatin et al., 2019). For LIS professionals, infopreneurship offers a pathway to diversify income sources, extend professional relevance beyond the physical library, and actively participate in value creation within the digital economy. This paper adopts a conceptual and analytical approach to examine how infopreneurship can serve as a catalyst for transforming LIS practice. It reviews the conceptual foundations of infopreneurship, surveys the opportunities it presents for LIS professionals, examines the challenges constraining its adoption, and proposes strategies for embedding infopreneurial competence within the profession.

Conceptual Clarification

Infopreneurship

The term infopreneurship is generally traced to Weitzen's (1988) characterization of the information entrepreneur as an individual who gathers information from diverse sources and recombines it in novel ways to meet the needs of a target audience (Dangani & Moruf, 2015). Infopreneurship is thus distinguished from conventional entrepreneurship by its focus on information as both raw material and finished product. Masron et al. (2017), as cited in the wider infopreneurship literature, describe infopreneurs as professionals who leverage specialized knowledge and information-handling skills to create viable, income-generating ventures. Within LIS, infopreneurship denotes the application of entrepreneurial thinking—opportunity recognition, value proposition design, marketing, and monetization—to the traditional competencies of the information professional (Amakiri & Marie, 2019).

The Digital Economy and Knowledge Economy

The digital economy refers to economic activity that results from billions of daily online transactions involving people, businesses, devices, data, and processes, underpinned by digital

technologies. It is closely related to, though not identical with, the concept of the knowledge economy, in which the production and exploitation of knowledge play a predominant role in wealth creation (Powell & Snellman, 2004). In the digital and knowledge economy, information is no longer a peripheral support service but a tradable commodity; content, data, and expertise are packaged into products such as e-courses, digital reports, curated datasets, and consultancy services. This economic reorientation has direct implications for LIS professionals, whose core expertise in organizing and evaluating information positions them to participate meaningfully in knowledge-based value chains, provided they develop the requisite entrepreneurial and digital competencies.

LIS Practice in Transition

Contemporary LIS practice is increasingly hybrid, combining custodial functions such as collection development and preservation with emergent functions such as data curation, digital scholarship support, and knowledge management (Halder, 2009). The convergence of library science with adjacent fields—data science, records management, and information systems—has expanded the skill repertoire expected of LIS graduates while simultaneously creating openings for professionals willing to operate independently of institutional employment. This transitional environment forms the backdrop against which infopreneurship is best understood: not as an abandonment of LIS values, but as an extension of them into new economic arrangements.

Infopreneurship as a Catalyst for Transforming LIS Practice

Infopreneurship transforms LIS practice along three interrelated dimensions: professional identity, service delivery, and economic sustainability. First, it repositions the LIS professional from a passive custodian of information to an active creator and seller of information value, altering how the profession is perceived both internally and by the wider labour market (Ramugondo & Ocholla, 2022). Second, it diversifies service delivery channels, moving library and information services beyond the physical or institutional repository into digital marketplaces, subscription platforms, and direct client engagements. Third, it introduces a revenue logic into a profession historically dependent on public funding or institutional budgets, offering a pathway to individual and institutional financial sustainability (Adetayo & Hamzat, 2021).

Several infopreneurial initiatives illustrate this transformation in practice. Digital content creation, including e-books, blogs, podcasts, and online tutorials on information literacy or research skills, allows LIS professionals to monetize expertise that was previously delivered as a free institutional service (Aregbesola et al., 2019). Online information services, such as virtual reference, document delivery, and subscription-based current-awareness bulletins, extend the traditional reference function into a fee-based model. Data curation and management services respond to the growing demand from researchers and organizations for structured, discoverable, and reusable datasets, drawing directly on core LIS competencies in classification and metadata. Knowledge consultancy positions the LIS professional as an advisor to organizations seeking to design knowledge management systems, records retention policies, or digital archiving strategies. Finally, information brokerage—the practice of conducting specialized literature searches, competitive intelligence, and information packaging for paying clients—remains one of the most established forms of infopreneurship within the profession (Ali, 2021).

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that infopreneurship does not require the wholesale abandonment of LIS training; rather, it repackages existing competencies—information

organization, evaluation, and mediation—into market-oriented products and services. The catalytic effect of infopreneurship therefore lies in its capacity to convert latent professional expertise into visible economic value, thereby enhancing both the perceived and actual relevance of LIS professionals in the digital economy.

Challenges Hindering the Adoption of Infopreneurship in LIS

Despite its evident potential, the adoption of infopreneurship within LIS practice remains limited, constrained by several interrelated challenges. A recurrent finding across the literature is the inadequacy of entrepreneurial training within LIS curricula; library schools have traditionally emphasized technical and custodial skills over business planning, marketing, and financial management, leaving graduates ill-equipped to translate professional knowledge into viable ventures (Dangani & Moruf, 2015; Ali, 2021).

Limited digital skills constitute a second barrier. While digital literacy is often assumed among information professionals, the specific competencies required for infopreneurship—web development, digital marketing, e-commerce platform management, and content monetization—are not uniformly taught or practised, particularly in developing-country contexts (Aregbesola et al., 2019). Infrastructural deficiencies, including unreliable internet connectivity, inadequate access to digital devices, and limited institutional support for independent practice, further constrain the capacity of LIS professionals to establish and sustain information enterprises, especially within resource-constrained regions (Ivwurie & Ocholla, 2016).

A related challenge is the empirical gap between awareness and action: studies of LIS students' and professionals' attitudes toward infopreneurship consistently report limited practical engagement despite generally positive perceptions of its value, suggesting that awareness alone is insufficient to drive adoption (Akter & Biswas, 2024; Lose & Khuzwayo, 2022). Finally, resistance to change within the profession—rooted in a longstanding service ethos that privileges free and equitable access to information—can create ambivalence or scepticism toward the commercialization of information services, even among professionals who recognize its economic necessity (Amakiri & Marie, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated intervention at the levels of curriculum design, professional development, institutional policy, and individual mindset change.

Challenges Facing Infopreneurship in LIS Practice

1 Inadequate Technological Infrastructure

Poor internet connectivity, unreliable electricity supply, inadequate hardware and limited access to digital platforms can restrict the development of information businesses.

2 Lack of Entrepreneurial Skills

Many LIS professionals have strong professional information skills but limited training in business planning, financial management, marketing, customer relationship management, pricing, negotiation, branding and business development.

3 Financial Constraints

Startup capital may be required for computers, internet services, software, hosting, digitization equipment, office space and marketing. Limited access to funding can discourage professionals from establishing businesses.

4 Resistance to Change

Some professionals may continue to perceive librarianship primarily as an institutional service profession rather than as a field capable of entrepreneurial innovation.

5 Copyright and Intellectual Property Issues

Digital publishing and information brokerage raise important questions concerning copyright, licensing, plagiarism, data protection and intellectual property.

6 Competition from Technology Companies

Technology companies increasingly provide search, data, publishing, knowledge-management and digital content services. LIS professionals must demonstrate distinctive value through expertise in information quality, evaluation, organization, ethics and user-centred information management.

7 Limited Institutional Support

In some institutions, entrepreneurial activities may not be adequately recognized or supported.

8 Weak Professional Visibility

Although LIS professionals possess valuable competencies, potential clients may not always understand the range of services they can provide.

6. Infopreneurship and the Future of LIS in Nigeria

Nigeria's growing digital economy creates considerable potential for LIS entrepreneurship. The country's large population, expanding tertiary education sector, increasing digital information production and growing demand for online services provide potential markets for information-based enterprises.

At the same time, Nigeria faces persistent challenges involving electricity, broadband access, digital skills, financing and institutional capacity. Successful LIS infopreneurship must therefore be adapted to local realities.

LIS professionals can also contribute to inclusive development by developing information services for underserved communities. Agricultural information, educational resources, employment information, entrepreneurship information and government-service information are potential areas for community-oriented infopreneurship.

Strategies for Strengthening Infopreneurship in LIS Practice

Several strategic interventions can support the wider adoption of infopreneurship within LIS practice. First, LIS curricula should formally integrate entrepreneurship education, including modules on business planning, digital marketing, pricing, and client management, delivered alongside traditional information science content (Yatin et al., 2019). Second, professional associations and library schools should expand continuing professional development programmes focused specifically on digital and infopreneurial skills, enabling practising professionals to update their competencies without necessarily returning to formal study.

Third, institutions should consider policies that formally recognize and, where appropriate, support staff-led infopreneurial initiatives—such as incubation support, seed funding, or flexible work arrangements—thereby reducing the perceived tension between institutional employment and independent enterprise (Ramugondo, 2021). Fourth, deliberate mentorship and exposure to

successful infopreneurs, through case studies, guest lectures, and professional networks, can help translate positive attitudes into concrete entrepreneurial action, addressing the awareness–action gap identified in the literature. Finally, addressing infrastructural constraints will require broader investment in digital infrastructure and affordable connectivity, particularly in developing economies, without which even well-trained and motivated professionals will struggle to sustain online information enterprises.

Recommendations

1. LIS schools should integrate practical infopreneurship education into undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

2. Entrepreneurship should be linked directly to professional LIS competencies.

3. LIS professionals should undertake continuous digital-skills training.

4. Universities should establish LIS innovation and entrepreneurship centres.

5. Professional associations should organize entrepreneurship workshops, competitions and mentorship programmes.

6. Government should improve digital infrastructure.

7. Financial institutions and government entrepreneurship agencies should provide funding opportunities for viable information-based businesses.

8. LIS professionals should develop strong professional brands.

9. Copyright, intellectual property and data-protection education should be strengthened.

10. LIS professionals should collaborate with technology and business specialists.

11. Libraries and information institutions should encourage innovation where institutional policies permit.

12. Research should be encouraged on the economic contribution of infopreneurship to the LIS profession and Nigerian digital economy.

13 Curriculum Restructuring

Library schools should integrate entrepreneurship into LIS education in a practical manner. Students should identify information problems, design products, develop business plans and test services with potential users.

14 Capacity-Building Programmes

Professional associations, universities and library institutions should organize continuous professional-development programmes focusing on entrepreneurship and emerging technologies.

15 Digital Skills Development

LIS professionals should acquire competencies in web development, digital marketing, data analytics, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, database management, digital publishing, cybersecurity awareness and social media management.

16 Governments and Institutional Support

Government agencies and educational institutions should provide supportive policies, grants, innovation funds, digital infrastructure and entrepreneurship programmes.

17 Collaboration and Networking

Collaboration between LIS professionals and specialists in computer science, business, communication, education and statistics can facilitate innovation.

18 Adoption of Emerging Technologies

LIS professionals should explore artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data analytics, blockchain, machine learning, Internet of Things, digital repositories and automated metadata systems.

19 Development of Professional Business Models

Prospective infopreneurs should identify the information problem, target customers, products or services, delivery channels, pricing model, operational requirements, marketing strategy, intellectual-property considerations and sustainability plan.

20 Mentorship and Incubation

LIS schools can establish entrepreneurship clubs, digital innovation laboratories and startup incubation centres.

21 Professional Branding

Infopreneurs need to communicate their value through websites, professional social-media profiles, online portfolios, webinars and publications.

Conclusion

This paper has examined infopreneurship as a catalyst for transforming Library and Information Science practice within the digital economy. As traditional intermediary functions of the LIS profession are increasingly disrupted by digital disintermediation, infopreneurship offers a strategic pathway through which professionals can repackage core competencies into innovative, income-generating products and services. Digital content creation, online information services, data curation, knowledge consultancy, and information brokerage represent concrete manifestations of this transformation, each demonstrating how existing professional expertise can be extended into new economic arrangements. However, the realization of this potential is constrained by inadequate entrepreneurial training, limited digital skills, infrastructural deficiencies, and residual resistance to the commercialization of information services within the profession.

Addressing these constraints through curriculum reform, continuing professional development, supportive institutional policy, and infrastructural investment will be essential if infopreneurship is to move from a promising concept to a mainstream feature of LIS practice. Ultimately, infopreneurship is not merely a strategy for individual economic survival; it is a mechanism through which the LIS profession as a whole can reassert its relevance, demonstrating that information professionals are not passive custodians of the past but active, value-creating participants in the digital and knowledge economy of the future.

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