Infopreneurship and Professional Relevance: Rethinking Library and Information Science for Sustainable Economic Development

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Abstract

The rapid transformation of the information environment, driven by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, social media, online platforms and the knowledge economy, is changing the nature of Library and Information Science (LIS) education and professional practice. This paper examines infopreneurship as a strategic pathway for repositioning LIS and strengthening the professional relevance of librarians and information professionals in the digital economy. The paper adopts a conceptual and opinion-based approach, drawing on recent literature and policy documents on infopreneurship, entrepreneurship education, digital skills, LIS professional development and sustainable economic development. It conceptualizes infopreneurship as the creation, packaging, marketing and commercialization of information products and services. The paper argues that infopreneurial awareness, entrepreneurial competencies, digital skills, innovation and the ability to develop market-oriented information services are increasingly important dimensions of professional relevance. Infopreneurship can provide opportunities for self-employment, income generation, career diversification, innovation and job creation while simultaneously expanding the contribution of LIS to economic development. However, inadequate entrepreneurial and digital competencies, weak curriculum integration, insufficient ICT infrastructure, limited funding, poor marketing capabilities, institutional constraints and inadequate professional support may hinder its development. The paper recommends curriculum transformation, practical entrepreneurship education, digital-skills development, innovation hubs, industry partnerships, mentorship, supportive policies and sustainable financing. It concludes that infopreneurship should be regarded not as a departure from the traditional values of librarianship but as an innovative extension of LIS competencies into the knowledge-based economy.

Keywords: Infopreneurship, Library and Information Science, professional relevance, entrepreneurship education, digital skills, innovation, economic development, sustainable development.

Introduction

The world is experiencing a profound transformation from an industrial economy towards an increasingly digital and knowledge-based economy. Information, knowledge, data and digital competencies have become critical resources for economic competitiveness, innovation, employment and social development. The expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, digital platforms, social media, electronic publishing, data analytics and mobile technologies has fundamentally changed how information is created, organized, accessed, distributed and consumed. This transformation has significant implications for Library and Information Science (LIS). Libraries and information professionals have traditionally been responsible for acquiring, organizing, preserving, retrieving and disseminating information. These functions remain fundamental to the profession. However, users can now access enormous quantities of information independently through search engines, digital repositories, social media, online databases and AI-powered systems. Consequently, the professional value of LIS cannot depend exclusively on conventional information provision. The contemporary LIS professional must increasingly demonstrate the capacity to create value from information. This requires moving beyond the traditional role of information intermediary toward roles involving digital content creation, information consultancy, research support, data services, knowledge management, information marketing, digital publishing, information brokerage and entrepreneurship.

Infopreneurship represents the intersection between information and entrepreneurship. It involves identifying information needs, developing information products or services, packaging and marketing them, and creating economic or social value from information. In LIS, infopreneurship provides a mechanism through which professional information competencies can be converted into innovative services and sustainable economic opportunities.

Recent evidence from Nigeria reinforces the importance of this shift. Fagbola et al. (2024) found that LIS undergraduates recognized several entrepreneurial opportunities within the profession and possessed competencies including initiative, creativity, innovation, communication and networking. However, the authors identified infrastructural and funding limitations as barriers to effective entrepreneurship education. More recent evidence is even more relevant. Ahmadu et al. (2025), studying LIS graduates in Kano State, found that respondents possessed high levels of entrepreneurial skills but demonstrated relatively low perception, readiness, utilisation of entrepreneurial skills and self-reliance. This finding is important because it suggests that possessing skills does not automatically result in entrepreneurial action.

Similarly, Ikokoh (2026) found among final-year LIS students that entrepreneurial curiosity had a positive and statistically significant relationship with infopreneurial intention, suggesting that entrepreneurial orientation and practical exposure deserve greater attention in LIS education. At the international level, the World Bank identifies digital skills as essential for individuals and organizations to compete in an increasingly digital economy and highlights digital entrepreneurship, innovation hubs and digital platforms as mechanisms for creating employment and new income opportunities.

Conceptual Meaning of Infopreneurship

The term infopreneurship combines "information" and "entrepreneurship." It describes entrepreneurial activity based primarily on the creation, processing, organization, packaging, distribution, marketing and commercialization of information. An infopreneur identifies an information problem or market opportunity and develops a product or service that addresses the

problem. The information may be presented as a database, report, newsletter, consultancy service, training programme, digital publication, research service, information portal, data product or other knowledge-based service. Infopreneurship should therefore not be narrowly understood as selling information. However, literature recognizes infopreneurship as a growing opportunity for LIS professionals and students. Olarongbe et al. (2026), for example, argue that there is a need to expand awareness and strengthen strategies for enhancing infopreneurship opportunities among

Infopreneurship Relevance in LIS Professional

Professional relevance refers to the continuing usefulness, adaptability, employability and contribution of a profession within changing social, technological, economic and organizational environments. For LIS, professional relevance means that graduates and practitioners should be able to respond effectively to contemporary information needs and technological developments.

The traditional LIS professional was primarily trained to manage information resources and provide information services. The contemporary professional must additionally understand how information is transformed into products, services, knowledge and economic value. However, this mean that librarians should abandon traditional professional values. Rather, the profession should extend its existing competencies into emerging areas. However, the evidence from Ahmadu et al. (2025) that LIS graduates may possess entrepreneurial skills without effectively utilizing them for self-reliance demonstrates that competency development must be accompanied by practical application and opportunity creation.

Digital Skills

Digital skills refer to the knowledge and ability required to use digital technologies effectively, safely and productively. The World Bank emphasizes that digital skills are fundamental for participating in changing labour markets and identifies digital content creation, digital solutions, advanced technical skills, innovation hubs and digital entrepreneurship as important components of digital economic development. Therefore, digital competence is not merely a technical addition to LIS. It is increasingly a foundation for professional relevance.

Economic Empowerment in LIS

Economic empowerment refers to the ability of individuals or groups to obtain and control productive resources, generate income, secure employment or self-employment, develop sustainable livelihoods and participate meaningfully in economic activities. Within LIS, infopreneurship can contribute to economic empowerment through: self-employment, income generation and creation of information businesses. The connection between entrepreneurship education and economic development has received increasing attention in Nigerian LIS literature. Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2025) argue that entrepreneurship should be integrated into LIS education to promote relevance, sustainability and economic development.

Sustainable Economic Development

Sustainable economic development refers to economic progress that improves livelihoods and creates opportunities while maintaining long-term social, environmental and economic viability. Infopreneurship can contribute to sustainable development because information businesses generally depend heavily on knowledge, skills and digital resources rather than the intensive extraction of physical resources. However, digital entrepreneurship should itself be sustainable. UNCTAD's Digital Economy Report 2024 emphasizes that digitalization can drive economic

growth but also produces environmental pressures and unequal distribution of benefits, particularly between developed and developing economies.

According to Singh (2024), sustainable development means attaining a balance between environmental protection and human economic development and between the present and future needs. He further stated that sustainable development also refers to equity in development and sectorial actions across space and time. However, it requires the integration of economic, social, and environmental approaches towards economic development. Sustainability is a development effort, including those aimed at protecting the health and the environment that should be undertaken in a manner that will not frustrate the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Moreover, Sustainable development is the process of judicious use and conservation of natural resources for the overall improvement in the quality of life for the present and future generations on a long-term basis. The concept of sustainable development was formulated as a welding tool as well as a framework for the realization of economic growth in an environmentally viable world. Three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development are recognized worldwide in the transition towards a sustainable society (Erhun, 2023).

Infopreneurship and the Changing Role of LIS Professionals

Infopreneurship does not require LIS professionals to abandon librarianship. The profession therefore needs to become more adaptive, innovative and entrepreneurial while retaining its ethical commitment to equitable access to reliable information. Recent research among LIS students supports the existence of multiple entrepreneurial opportunities within the profession, while newer work emphasizes the need for practical strategies to strengthen infopreneurship opportunities. Evidence from Nigerian LIS research consistently points toward the importance of practical training and infrastructure. Fagbola et al. (2024) recommended improved infrastructure and funding for entrepreneurship education, while Iwuoha (2024) identified inadequate entrepreneurship workshops, poor infrastructure, insufficient funding and limited entrepreneurial awareness among challenges affecting LIS students' employability.

Major Challenges to Infopreneurship in LIS

Infopreneurship involves in identifying information needs, developing information products or services, packaging and marketing them, and creating economic or social value from information. However, on the process it come across a set of challenges among the challenges includes:

Inadequate Entrepreneurial Competencies

Possessing LIS knowledge does not automatically provide the ability to operate a business. Students and professionals may require additional training in marketing, finance, pricing and business development. The evidence from Ahmadu et al. (2025) is particularly significant: LIS graduates may possess entrepreneurial skills but still demonstrate limited readiness and utilization for self-reliance.

Weak Curriculum Integration

Entrepreneurship may be included in LIS programmes without sufficient practical emphasis. A curriculum that teaches entrepreneurship only theoretically cannot adequately prepare students to create sustainable information businesses.

Inadequate ICT Infrastructure

Poor internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, inadequate computers, limited access to software and insufficient digital facilities can restrict practical infopreneurship.

Insufficient Funding

Students and graduates may have innovative ideas but lack the financial resources required to develop them into sustainable businesses.

Inadequate Marketing Skills

Information professionals may be technically competent but unable to market their services effectively.

Professional Culture

Some professionals continue to perceive entrepreneurship as inconsistent with the social-service identity of librarianship. This perception needs to change. Ethical commercialization of professional competencies does not necessarily conflict with librarianship's social mission.

Limited Industry Linkages

LIS schools may have weak relationships with technology companies, information businesses, publishing organizations and entrepreneurship centres.

Digital Inequality

Not every student or professional has equal access to technology, connectivity or advanced digital training. UNCTAD emphasizes that developing countries do not yet receive equal benefits from the digital economy and that digital transformation must become more inclusive and sustainable.

Rethinking Professional Relevance

The central argument of this paper is that professional relevance should no longer be measured exclusively by whether LIS graduates can perform conventional library duties. 16. Role of Libraries in Supporting Infopreneurship.

Conclusion

The information environment is changing rapidly, and Library and Information Science cannot remain professionally relevant by relying exclusively on traditional models of service delivery. The emergence of artificial intelligence, digital platforms, online publishing, data analytics and the knowledge economy has created new information needs as well as new opportunities for LIS professionals. Infopreneurship offers an important pathway for responding to these changes. It enables LIS professionals to transform information knowledge, research skills, digital competencies and professional expertise into innovative products and services capable of generating economic and social value.

The central argument of this paper is not that librarians should abandon their traditional social mission in favour of commercial activities. Rather, infopreneurship should extend the professional capabilities of LIS into new economic and technological environments. Moreover, LIS students and graduates possess entrepreneurial competencies and recognize entrepreneurial opportunities, but the conversion of those competencies into actual self-employment and sustainable ventures remains limited. The challenge, therefore, is no longer simply whether entrepreneurship belongs

in LIS. The more important question is how LIS education and practice can systematically prepare information professionals to identify opportunities, create information products, use digital technologies, market professional services and generate sustainable economic value.

The future LIS professional should consequently be understood not only as a librarian or information specialist, but also as a potential information entrepreneur, digital knowledge worker, consultant, innovator and creator of economic value.

Recommendations

Based on the available literature and arguments advanced in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Infopreneurship should become a core component of LIS education, Entrepreneurship should be integrated into LIS curricula in a practical rather than purely theoretical manner.
2. LIS education should become more practice-oriented, Students should develop real information products, create business plans and test services during their training.
3. Digital skills should be strengthened. LIS schools should provide practical training in AI, data analytics, digital publishing, digital marketing, content creation and information technologies.
4. LIS innovation hubs should be established. Universities should provide dedicated spaces equipped with technology where students can experiment with information-based businesses.
5. Universities should establish industry partnerships. LIS schools should collaborate with technology companies, publishers, research organizations, government agencies and information businesses.
6. Entrepreneurship mentorship should be introduced. Successful librarians, information consultants, publishers, digital entrepreneurs and technology professionals should mentor LIS students.
7. Government should provide an enabling environment. Policies should support digital entrepreneurship, affordable connectivity, access to finance, innovation and intellectual-property protection.
8. Professional associations should promote infopreneurship. Professional associations should establish training, mentorship, competitions and networking platforms.
9. Information services should be designed around users' needs. Infopreneurship should begin with identifying genuine information problems rather than simply attempting to sell existing library services. LIS entrepreneurship should consciously contribute to decent work, quality education, innovation, reduced inequalities and sustainable economic development especially in Nigeria.

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