Framework of Infopreneurship Pathways for Sustainable Economic Empowerment of Librarians through Interrelated Professional Governance in Academic Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focuses on exploring ways that infopreneurship provides a strategic pathway for repositioning the LIS profession for sustainable economic empowerment, particularly in environments characterized by graduate unemployment, limited public-sector employment opportunities and growing demand for specialized information services. Relying on extant literature, the paper examines infopreneurship through four interrelated professional governance themes: copyright, ethics, data protection and standards to encourage LIS professionals to create and commercialize intellectual products lawfully, not undermining professional values, personal and organizational data, the quality, interoperability and credibility required for sustainable information enterprises. It was concluded that sustainable LIS infopreneurship is not merely the commercialization of information but the professional transformation of information into knowledge and data that can be found trustworthy, lawful, ethical, and standards-based economic value.

Keywords: Infopreneurship, Library and Information Science, economic empowerment, copyright, information ethics, data protection, standards, entrepreneurship, information professionals.

Introduction

Beyond the walls of library schools, Library and Information Science professionals employed in academic libraries face numerous assumptions during discourse on information commercialization. Professionals are trained to sustain information for its relevance and value, as institutional memory and a resource in the digital economy. This situation calls for a professional repositioning and recognizing information competencies as economic assets that must be possessed by professionals to become capable of generating new forms of employment, consultancy, indexing and abstracting, computer services and enterprise. Evidence from extant works indicated that LIS professionals in Nigeria already participate in activities such as information brokerage, research assistance, reprographic services, internet services and book vending (Akidi & Udoh, 2021; Friday & Sawyer-George, 2023). Identifying other information-related activities as viable infopreneurship opportunities. Other salient areas are yet to be exploited.

There are numerous factors restricting the infopreneurial thrust among Nigerian LIS professionals, such as weaknesses in business skills, technical skills, ICT, and managerial skills (Makinde et al., 2023). These weaknesses affect and negate the financial independence, job creation, information consultancy, digital-content creation, outsourcing, and the socioeconomic development yearnings of LIS professionals (Ramugondo & Ocholla, 2022; Olarongbe et al., 2026). Professional librarians and librarianship as a profession do not primarily suffer from an absence of entrepreneurial opportunities; rather, it suffering from a weak entrepreneurial orientation and insufficient capacity to convert LIS competencies into implementable information enterprises.

Infopreneurship can reposition librarians beyond encouraging them to "do business" to equipping librarians with the legal, ethical, technological, and professional competencies necessary to do so sustainably. The discourse is based on examining infopreneurship through four interrelated areas of professional governance that comprise: copyright, ethics, data protection, and standards, as follows:

Copyright as the Legal Foundation of LIS Infopreneurship For Sustainable Economic Empowerment

Copyright occupies a central position in any serious discussion of information entrepreneurship; apart from being the raw material, it also provides the rules governing the protection of intellectual property rights. These rules are applied to books, journal articles, photographs, databases, audiovisual materials, software, reports and digital content. What this implied that the LIS professional who seeks to transform information into a commercial product must understand the difference between access, ownership, reproduction, transformation, and commercial exploitation, which are categorically explained within the context of copyrights.

The literature establishes that copyright literacy remains an important professional challenge because when librarians know the rules, they are also expected to practice and disseminate them to their stakeholders. Khan and Basir (2023) found that in Pakistan, the 279 LIS professionals were somewhat familiar with copyright and related issues. A gap that needed to be filled because professionals who lack copyright competence may unintentionally build an enterprise upon unauthorized reproduction or commercial use of protected works that is detrimental to infopreneurship and sustainable economic empowerment.

Earlier, Coates, Owen, and Reilly (2022) provided a broader international framework for understanding the relationship between copyright, information access, limitations and exceptions,

licensing, and emerging digital-information practices in their IFLA presentation "Navigating Copyright for Libraries". The work called for repositioning librarians and information professionals at the intersection between copyright protection and access to knowledge. Osuchukwu and Udem (2022) shared the same position, speaking about limitations and exceptions. Their focus was on examining plagiarism and copyright infringement among LIS professionals in Nigeria. They reported that copyright infringement and plagiarism remain relevant concerns within the profession. Therefore, these issues should not be taken for granted, and encouraged professionals to study about the infringement to be able to understand that information expertise does not automatically translate into adequate intellectual-property literacy.

In Nigeria, it is more compelling for professional librarians to note that the Copyright Act, 2022, signed into law in 2023, introduced provisions relevant to libraries and library activities. The Copyright Act framework is comparatively progressive in relation to library activities and identifies provisions that libraries can use to support legitimate access and use of information, so that we should not claim that there is insufficient copyright literacy; copyright infringement must be treated as a professional concern in Nigeria, and operating within a legal and professional framework is inevitable. As IFLA (2022) demonstrated, there are always consequences of copyright restrictions for information provision, and EIFL (2023) justified that libraries should specifically seek the interpretation of the Nigerian Copyright Act, 2022.

These suggest that copyright literacy, when reconceptualized as an entrepreneurial competency and then espouse infopreneur needs and guide such thrust to know what information can be reproduced, what requires licensing, what can be transformed, how attribution should be provided, and how original information products can themselves be protected. As a vital pillar of interrelated professional governance, copyright should not be treated as a restriction on entrepreneurship, but as an enabling framework for legitimate information commercialization.

Ethics as the Moral Infrastructure of Information Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Economic Empowerment of Librarians

Ethics establishes all the well-articulated moral boundaries of copyright. Speaking of ethical concerns is crucial because an information enterprise can be legally compliant while still being professionally unethical; for example, legally collecting information resources but using them in ways that violate user expectations of confidentiality, exploiting vulnerable communities, or deliberately manipulating information to satisfy a paying client is unethical.

Yusuf (2021) identifies intellectual freedom, equitable access, privacy, intellectual property, and confidentiality as central components of information ethics. As a pillar of interrelated professional governance, according to Yusuf's submission, information ethics encompasses precisely those professional values that can come under pressure when information becomes a commercial commodity. Intellectual property rights and inadequate access to information were identified as forms of ethical misconduct among librarians in Ghana (Owusu-Ansah & Dadzie, 2024). These acts of misconduct are not peculiar to librarians in Ghana only and should not be acceptable, as ignorance of professional codes, insufficient education, and operational pressures. Beyond the field of LIS, entrepreneurs face pressures of numerous types; infopreneurs must also brace up for entrepreneurial purposes by situating their conditions, reconsidering professional obligations, and ensuring that commercial interests are not equated.

Since ethics is an LIS foundational issue, Malanga, Simwaka, and Chifuniro (2024) advocated that it is enshrined and integrated into LIS education and standard operating procedures (SOPs) by LIS

regulatory agencies. Its importance should be prioritized, as well as emphasized, as the moral and obligatory expectations of information professionals. As a competence, it cannot be separated from all matters of professional regulations. Therefore, information ethics has no season before it is reconsidered. Michalak (2023) revealed that the role of librarians with the emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) is such that librarians are generally expected to contribute to the most reliable AI ethical policy, present empirical evidence that exploits identifiable limitations of AI, and create awareness of institutional resistance and resource constraints that abuse ethics and privacy concerns.

Owushi and Anyalebechi (2025) opined on the paths to follow when developing an ethical framework for information provision. They suggested that professional codes of ethics by the local and international professional agencies guiding librarians' responsibilities should form the decisive portions of the framework to make the document an operational component of information entrepreneurship rather than a philosophical appendix to professional practice.

The collective evidence supports the position that an LIS infopreneur should be guided by principles of accuracy, transparency, confidentiality, fairness, accountability, intellectual freedom, respect for intellectual property, and avoidance of conflicts of interest. This is especially important because the economic value of an information enterprise ultimately depends upon trust. Once users perceive that an LIS entrepreneur manipulates information or exploits confidential data for financial gain, the professional reputation upon which the enterprise depends is weakened.

The American Library Association's Code of Ethics is instructive in this regard because it explicitly combines privacy, intellectual property, professional competence, and avoidance of advancing private interests at the expense of users and employing institutions. Thus, entrepreneurship should extend professional values into the marketplace rather than replace them with market values (Rubin & Rubin, 2020).

Data Protection as the Foundation of Trustworthy Information Enterprise

Data has become one of the most important raw materials of the contemporary information economy. Professional librarians have data available to them manifold that they can take the opportunity to develop enterprises around data management, data curation, research-data services, information governance, data literacy, and analytical services when they develop competences and operate within acceptable privacy and data-protection responsibilities.

Hunt et al. (2023) appreciate the growing difficulty of protecting personally identifiable information in digital library environments because the environment easily creates new channels to serve diverse users who can collect, process, and share personalized data indiscriminately. The approach to safeguarding data varies from region to region, and from institution to institution. Ocks and Salubi (2024) provide a particularly important African perspective, finding that the adoption of emerging technologies creates tensions between efficiency and privacy and raises questions about compliance with data-protection frameworks. The contributions of librarians are very important because they evolve throughout the data life cycle (da Costa & Prudencio, 2024).

Olusipe et al. (2025) advocated for awareness creation on privacy risks and the gaps that needed to be bridged by underscoring the items contained in the detailed regulatory knowledge. The awareness, when created and sustained, exposed library users to help fight against encroachment into identified privacy concerns, act transparently, and see consent and bias as important concerns. According to Souza (2024), approaching data protection from a legal and operational perspective

protects patron privacy in accordance with professional principles and applicable laws. Libraries and Librarians in Nigeria can benefit from the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023 (NDPA). The Nigeria Data Protection Commission identifies principles including lawfulness, fairness and transparency, purpose limitation, data minimization, storage limitation, accuracy and security, as it affects rights to access, rectification, objection, restriction, portability and erasure. The Act helps provide the regulatory foundation within which information professionals obtain and translate data protection acts into practice when vented into an entrepreneurial opportunity and needing compliance with expected responsibility within applicable legal boundaries.

Standards as the Quality and Credibility Infrastructure of Infopreneurship for Sustainable Economic Empowerment of Librarians

Formalization of standards is a front-burner discourse of librarianship. The issues surrounding standards are sometimes underestimated in discussions of entrepreneurship because entrepreneurial discourse tends to emphasise innovation, markets, and profitability more than quality and interoperability of the economic values. Infopreneurship can only be sustained when a client who pays for a metadata, digitisation, records, data-management, or information-consultancy service receives outputs that are consistent, reliable, or compatible with other information systems.

Standards that facilitate interconnection, metadata containing controlled vocabularies, support interoperability, and FAIR-oriented research-data environments guarantee quality and credible sources for sustainable economic empowerment. Beyond technical prescriptions, the goal of standardized models for infopreneurship is to enhance discoverability and interoperability across information environments (Morris et al., 2022). An enriched and easy-to-adopt standard is contained in IFLA's report. IFLA’s standards infrastructure report encouraged a local approach that can continuously support institutional development and maintenance of professional standards for the purpose of infopreneurship.

This implied that the infopreneurship standards have a direct implication on role-centred applications because they can be converted into marketable professional competence. For instance, an LIS entrepreneur can offer metadata consultancy, digital-collection organisation, repository development, data curation, records-management services, digitisation consultancy and information architecture services. These services are delivered according to recognised standards rather than improvised procedures. Thus, infopreneurs’ standards should be quality assuring and provide a basis upon which clients can judge the reliability, interoperability, consistency and sustainability of information products.

Synthesis of the Four Pillars of Sustainable LIS Infopreneurship

The paper's thrust, using the interrelated professional governance pillars to discuss sustainable infopreneurship, has shown that librarians cannot rest on entrepreneurial motivation alone. It requires a combination of economic initiative and professional governance. Therefore, for infopreneurship to be instituted, copyright competence is necessary to function and be able to protect intellectual creation, enabling legitimate creation, licensing, and commercialization of information products. Ethically, protecting professional integrity and trust so that clients can attest that service providers are not manipulating them, exploiting them, discriminating against them, and are not operating conflicts of interest. That is why it is expected that data protection protects personal and sensitive information, provides responsible data services, and strengthens client confidence. Instituting standards that establish and guarantee quality and interoperability of the

services provided in such a way that makes information products reliable, scalable and professionally credible.

Conclusion

The four interrelated professional governance pillars used to discuss the contribution of infopreneurship for sustainable economic empowerment of librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria have shown that it is not an entirely new phenomenon nor a speculative possibility for LIS professionals because literature establishes that LIS professionals in Nigeria are already engaged in information brokerage, research support, digital services, information consultancy, content development and other entrepreneurial activities. The four interrelated professional governance has helped to reveal significant gaps that need to be bridged in entrepreneurial orientation, business competence, ICT skills, institutional support, and market-oriented training.

Traditional librarianship cannot be abandoned but must extend its professional competencies into emerging information markets. Accordingly, sustainable LIS infopreneurship should be understood as the intersection of skills and their applications when operationalizing the interrelated professional governance for sustainable economic empowerment of librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria.

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