Challenges and Prospects of Infopreneurship among Library and Information Science Professionals in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rapidly changing digital information environment has transformed the roles and responsibilities of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals, creating opportunities for entrepreneurial engagement beyond traditional library services. Infopreneurship, which involves the creation, packaging, management, and commercialization of information products and services, offers significant prospects for enhancing professional relevance, self-employment, and sustainable economic empowerment among LIS professionals in Nigeria. This paper examines the challenges and prospects of infopreneurship among Library and Information Science professionals in Nigeria. The paper adopts a conceptual approach based on a review of relevant literature on infopreneurship, entrepreneurship, digital technologies, and LIS practice. The discussion identifies inadequate entrepreneurial and digital skills, limited access to finance, poor technological infrastructure, unreliable electricity supply, inadequate institutional support, limited awareness of infopreneurial opportunities, and concerns relating to copyright and information security as major challenges. Despite these constraints, emerging technologies, digital content creation, information brokerage, online consultancy, research support services, e-learning, digital publishing, data services, and knowledge management provide opportunities for LIS professionals to develop sustainable information-based enterprises. The paper recommends the integration of entrepreneurship and digital innovation into LIS education and continuing professional development, improved access to technological infrastructure and funding, institutional support for innovation, and stronger awareness of intellectual property and digital business practices. Infopreneurship can therefore contribute to repositioning the LIS profession and expanding opportunities for sustainable economic empowerment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Infopreneurship, Library and Information Science, Entrepreneurship, Digital Economy, LIS Professionals, Economic Empowerment, Nigeria

Introduction

The Library and Information Science (LIS) profession has historically been associated with the acquisition, organization, preservation, retrieval, dissemination, and provision of access to information resources. Libraries and information centres have traditionally served as institutions through which individuals, researchers, students, organizations, and communities access knowledge. However, the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), the internet, digital libraries, social media, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, mobile technologies, and other emerging technologies has significantly altered the information environment.

In Nigeria, these developments have particular implications for the LIS profession. The growth of the digital economy has created new forms of work and new markets for information products and services. LIS professionals can potentially move beyond conventional employment by developing information-based enterprises. Such enterprises may include information consultancy, research support, digital publishing, content creation, information brokerage, database services, indexing and abstracting, records management consultancy, digital literacy training, online research services, knowledge management, information marketing, and other specialized services.

The concept is increasingly relevant to LIS because the profession already possesses many of the competencies required for information entrepreneurship. LIS professionals are trained in information organization, retrieval, evaluation, research, information literacy, knowledge management, digital resources, reference services, metadata, preservation, and information dissemination. These competencies can be transformed into marketable information products and services when complemented by entrepreneurial, technological, managerial, marketing, financial, and communication skills.

The present paper therefore examines the challenges and prospects of infopreneurship among LIS professionals in Nigeria and proposes strategies for strengthening its contribution to professional development and sustainable economic empowerment.

Conceptual Clarification

Concept of Infopreneurship

Infopreneurship is derived from the combination of information and entrepreneurship. It refers broadly to the entrepreneurial creation, organization, packaging, marketing, distribution, and commercialization of information products and services.

An infopreneur identifies an information problem or unmet information need and develops a product or service that provides a solution. The product may be delivered physically or digitally. Examples include electronic books, newsletters, databases, research reports, online courses, consultancy services, information alerts, digital publications, market intelligence reports, bibliographic services, data services, and specialized information portals.

Library and Information Science Professionals

Library and Information Science professionals include librarians, information scientists, records managers, archivists, knowledge managers, information consultants, information officers, and other specialists trained to manage information and knowledge resources.

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment refers to the ability of individuals or groups to acquire skills, resources, opportunities, and capacities that enable them to participate productively in economic activities and improve their livelihoods.

Infopreneurship and the Changing LIS Profession in Nigeria

The traditional LIS profession developed around libraries, archives, documentation centres, schools, universities, research organizations, and government information centres. Employment was consequently structured largely around institutional positions.

The digital environment has expanded the range of possible professional activities. Information can now be created, distributed, marketed, and consumed through websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, cloud systems, online databases, podcasts, webinars, e-learning platforms, and digital publishing systems.

This transformation provides LIS professionals with opportunities to become independent service providers. Instead of relying exclusively on salaried employment, a professional with appropriate skills may establish an information consultancy, provide research support, develop digital learning materials, operate a specialized information platform, or provide data and knowledge management services.

Areas of Infopreneurial Opportunities for LIS Professionals

Information Consultancy

Information consultancy is one of the most obvious areas of infopreneurship. LIS professionals can provide specialized advice to organizations and individuals concerning information management, information retrieval, database development, records management, library automation, digital libraries, research support, and information policies.

Digital Content Creation

Digital content creation provides opportunities for LIS professionals to produce educational materials, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, online tutorials, research guides, electronic books, and specialized information resources.

Digital Publishing

Digital publishing is another emerging area. LIS professionals can participate in electronic book publishing, scholarly publishing support, institutional repositories, electronic journals, newsletters, and specialized online publications.

Research Support Services

Research support constitutes an important entrepreneurial opportunity. LIS professionals possess competencies in literature searching, database searching, bibliographic management, systematic searching, citation management, reference services, information evaluation, and research discovery.

Information Brokerage

Information brokerage involves identifying, evaluating, synthesizing, and delivering information to clients who require specialized knowledge.

Digital Literacy Training

LIS professionals can develop training programmes in online research, information evaluation, digital security awareness, database use, reference management, digital publishing, information literacy, and basic technology use.

Data Services

LIS professionals with appropriate technical training can provide data organization, data curation, data documentation, data discovery, bibliometric support, research data management, and information visualization.

Knowledge Management

LIS professionals can provide knowledge-management consultancy, taxonomy development, document management, institutional knowledge repositories, and information governance services.

Records and Information Management Consultancy

This includes records management, digitization, document control, electronic records, retention schedules, classification systems, and information governance services.

Online Training and E-Learning

The expansion of online learning creates opportunities to develop courses and training materials in research skills, information literacy, academic database use, scholarly communication, citation management, and digital research methods.

Challenges of Infopreneurship among LIS Professionals in Nigeria

Inadequate Entrepreneurial Skills

Traditional LIS education has historically focused heavily on professional library and information competencies. Entrepreneurship requires competencies in business planning, marketing, financial management, customer relations, product development, pricing, negotiation, and risk management.

Limited Digital and ICT Competencies

Digital entrepreneurship requires competencies in web development, digital marketing, data analytics, content management systems, cloud applications, cybersecurity awareness, multimedia production, search-engine optimization, and emerging technologies.

Limited Access to Finance

Finance is an important requirement for establishing an enterprise. An infopreneur may require funds for internet services, computers, software, website development, office facilities, digital marketing, content production, professional registration, and staff.

Poor Technological Infrastructure

Reliable internet connectivity, electricity, hardware, software, and digital platforms are fundamental to many forms of infopreneurship.

Unreliable Electricity Supply

Many digital enterprises depend heavily on electricity. Unstable electricity can increase the cost of running information businesses because entrepreneurs may need alternative power sources.

Inadequate Institutional Support

Institutional policies, workload, bureaucratic procedures, limited innovation funding, and lack of dedicated entrepreneurship structures may restrict professional entrepreneurial engagement.

Limited Awareness of Infopreneurial Opportunities

Some professionals may continue to perceive librarianship primarily as an institutional salaried profession, limiting recognition of opportunities in consultancy, digital publishing, information marketing, research support, data services, and online training.

Marketing Challenges

Infopreneurship requires market research, branding, communication, networking, customer relationship management, social-media engagement, and digital marketing.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Issues

Infopreneurs must understand copyright, licensing, plagiarism, attribution, database rights, privacy, and related intellectual-property requirements.

Competition

LIS professionals entering the digital information market may compete with IT specialists, business consultants, content creators, researchers, publishers, data analysts, journalists, and other professionals.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurship requires initiative, creativity, calculated risk-taking, adaptability, persistence, and willingness to identify problems as opportunities.

Excessive Workload

For professionals employed in libraries and universities, heavy workloads can reduce the time available for entrepreneurial development.

Prospects of Infopreneurship among LIS Professionals in Nigeria

Expansion of the Digital Economy

The growth of digital technologies has increased demand for information products and services. Businesses, researchers, students, government institutions, and individuals increasingly depend on digital information.

Growing Demand for Digital Skills

Digital transformation has created continuing demand for professionals who can teach individuals and organizations how to find, evaluate, organize, manage, and use digital information.

Expansion of Online Learning

The growth of online learning provides opportunities to develop courses, tutorials, webinars, research-skills programmes, and digital literacy services.

Growth of Digital Publishing

Digital publishing enables professionals to produce and distribute information products without depending entirely on conventional publishing channels.

Growth of Research and Data Services

The increasing volume of scholarly and organizational information creates demand for specialists who can help users discover, organize, evaluate, and manage information.

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

Artificial intelligence is changing information work and creating opportunities for professionals who understand both information management and emerging technologies.

Freelancing and Remote Work

Digital platforms enable professionals to provide information services across geographical boundaries.

Youth and Graduate Entrepreneurship

Infopreneurship provides a possible pathway for LIS graduates who face difficulties obtaining conventional employment.

Institutional Entrepreneurship

Libraries and information centres can create entrepreneurial services such as specialized training, consultancy, digitization, research-support programmes, database services, and professional development activities while maintaining appropriate ethical and institutional standards.

Strategies for Promoting Infopreneurship among LIS Professionals

Curriculum Reform

LIS schools should strengthen entrepreneurship education by incorporating practical activities into the curriculum.

Practice-Based Entrepreneurship Education

Students should be encouraged to develop actual information products and services such as digital newsletters, information portals, research-support services, online courses, electronic publications, databases, information guides, and specialized consultancy projects.

Establishment of LIS Entrepreneurship Centres

Universities can establish LIS entrepreneurship or innovation centres where students and professionals receive mentoring, technical support, business-development training, and access to digital equipment.

Continuous Professional Development

Professional associations and LIS institutions should organize regular training programmes on digital entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, data analytics, digital marketing, information products, copyright, business management, and emerging technologies.

Collaboration with Technology Professionals

LIS professionals should collaborate with software developers, data scientists, business specialists, communication experts, educators, and entrepreneurs.

Access to Finance

Government agencies, financial institutions, universities, professional associations, development organizations, and entrepreneurship programmes can create funding mechanisms appropriate for small information-based businesses.

Development of Digital Infrastructure

Improved internet connectivity, reliable electricity, digital devices, cloud services, and appropriate software are essential for sustainable information enterprises.

Mentoring and Incubation

Experienced entrepreneurs and LIS professionals with successful information enterprises can mentor students and early-career professionals.

Professional Networking

Professional associations can create networking platforms through which LIS professionals share entrepreneurial experiences, identify market opportunities, form partnerships, and access potential clients.

Intellectual Property and Ethical Training

Infopreneurship training should include copyright, licensing, privacy, plagiarism, information security, professional ethics, responsible use of AI, and appropriate handling of confidential information.

Market-Oriented Information Services

LIS professionals should identify actual information needs before developing products. Entrepreneurial activity should be based on customer problems rather than simply on available professional skills.

Integration of AI and Emerging Technologies

LIS professionals should acquire appropriate competencies in AI tools, data analytics, automation, cloud technologies, digital repositories, and other emerging technologies.8.0 Implications for LIS Education in Nigeria

The emergence of infopreneurship has significant implications for LIS education. First, the curriculum needs to balance traditional professional competencies with entrepreneurial and technological competencies.

Second, teaching methods should become more practical. Students should be given opportunities to solve real information problems and develop information products.

Third, LIS educators need opportunities for continuous professional development so that they can teach emerging technologies and contemporary business practices.

Fourth, partnerships between LIS schools and industry should be strengthened. Such partnerships can provide internships, mentorship, entrepreneurship projects, guest lectures, and opportunities for students to understand real-world information markets.

Fifth, assessment methods should include practical entrepreneurial projects rather than relying exclusively on written examinations.

Implications for LIS Professionals

Infopreneurship requires LIS professionals to reconsider their professional roles. The librarian or information professional of the digital era is not necessarily limited to the traditional institutional environment.

The professional may function as an information specialist, digital content creator, information consultant, research-support specialist, knowledge manager, data-information specialist, digital literacy trainer, publisher, information broker, information marketer, or entrepreneur.

This does not mean that every LIS professional must become an entrepreneur. Rather, entrepreneurship should be regarded as one possible professional pathway alongside conventional employment.

Conceptual Model for LIS Infopreneurship

LIS Professional Competencies → Digital + Entrepreneurial Skills → Identification of Information Needs → Development of Information Products/Services → Digital Marketing and Distribution → Customer/User Engagement → Revenue/Value Creation → Professional and Economic Empowerment.

The model suggests that professional knowledge alone does not automatically generate an entrepreneurial outcome. LIS competencies must be combined with entrepreneurial and digital capabilities and applied to identifiable information needs.

Discussion

The literature reviewed demonstrates that infopreneurship is relevant to the contemporary transformation of LIS practice in Nigeria. Existing Nigerian studies identify both opportunities and significant constraints.

Entrepreneurship education challenges include inadequate funding, insufficient teaching equipment, theoretical orientation, and weak implementation environments. This indicates that developing an entrepreneurial LIS profession requires changes not only at the individual level but also at institutional and educational levels.

At the broader professional level, information professionals require continuing development of practical, critical, digital, creative, and other competencies to respond to changes in the information environment.

Infopreneurship should not be regarded simply as an attempt to commercialize library services. Instead, it can be understood as an approach to professional innovation in which LIS competencies are applied to emerging information needs and markets while maintaining professional ethics, information quality, intellectual-property requirements, privacy, and equitable access.

Recommendations

1. LIS schools should strengthen entrepreneurship education through practical projects, business planning, innovation activities, and market-oriented assignments.
2. Practical training should be emphasized, with students developing actual information products and services.
3. Digital competencies should be strengthened through continuous training in AI, data analytics, digital publishing, cloud technologies, digital marketing, information security, and related technologies.
4. Entrepreneurship centres should be established in universities and professional institutions for training, mentoring, incubation, and networking.
5. Access to finance should be improved through grants, training, incubation, and affordable financing for viable information-based enterprises.
6. Professional associations should organize entrepreneurship programmes, workshops, mentoring, networking, and opportunity-sharing activities.
7. Industry partnerships should be strengthened among LIS schools, technology companies, publishers, research organizations, information firms, and entrepreneurship centres.
8. Intellectual-property awareness should be increased, including copyright, licensing, privacy, plagiarism, information security, and ethical information use.
9. LIS professionals should conduct market research and identify genuine user needs before investing in information products or services.
10. Institutions should encourage innovation through supportive policies that allow professionals to develop and test innovative information services.
11. Mentoring programmes should be introduced for students and early-career LIS professionals.
12. Digital infrastructure should be improved, including reliable internet access, electricity, hardware, software, and digital platforms.

Conclusion

Infopreneurship presents an important opportunity for repositioning the Library and Information Science profession in Nigeria. The transformation of the information environment has created new demands for digital information products, specialized information services, research support, digital literacy, knowledge management, data services, digital publishing, consultancy, and information brokerage.

LIS professionals possess many competencies that can support participation in these emerging areas. However, professional expertise must be complemented by entrepreneurial, technological, marketing, financial, managerial, and communication skills.

The major challenges include inadequate entrepreneurial training, digital skills gaps, limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, unreliable electricity, institutional constraints, limited awareness, marketing difficulties, copyright concerns, and competition from professionals in related fields.

At the same time, the prospects are substantial. Digital publishing, information consultancy, research support, digital literacy training, data services, knowledge management, content creation, online education, and information brokerage provide potential pathways for professional diversification.

For infopreneurship to make a meaningful contribution to economic empowerment, it must be supported by curriculum reform, practical entrepreneurship education, continuing professional development, digital infrastructure, access to finance, mentoring, institutional support, and appropriate professional and legal frameworks.

Ultimately, infopreneurship should be viewed as a complementary pathway through which LIS professionals can create value, diversify their careers, develop innovative services, and contribute to Nigeria's emerging knowledge and digital economy.

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