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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSION AS A WAY OF ENHANCING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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#### **Abstract**

*Societies around the world have always been fueled by the innovations and new products that entrepreneurs bring to the market. This article focused on some business opportunities library and information science professionals can venture into as a way of economy empowerment. It also highlighted the skills necessary for LIS professionals in entrepreneurship and also characteristics of entrepreneurship and the challenges hindering LIS professionals from venturing into entrepreneurship. The paper recommended that LIS professionals should develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset and also acquire specific ICT skills in order to exploit the opportunities in the profession, achieve self-employment and remain relevant.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship Opportunities, Empowerment, Economy Empowerment, LIS Professionals.

#### **Introduction**

The position of a librarian is very vital in information sourcing and management in any society. Graduates of Library and Information Science (LIS) do not have to fear being thrown into the labour market. Oaikhinam (2006) stated that LIS graduates are not only intelligent and highly skilled, they are also creative. The market may be crowded but not for librarians, knowledge workers and information professionals. Careers in library and information science offer opportunities in different spheres of endeavours. This is why Ekuoye (2007) opined that it is sad that there are so many earnest and hardworking librarians who think excelling in librarianship is inconceivable. In this information age, the roles of information as a veritable economic resource cannot be overemphasized as information is a marketable commodity and a social wealth. Technological innovations and new ideas are borne out of information sourcing, processing and dissemination thereby empowering and creating wealth for the library and information professionals (Ugwu and Ezeani, 2012). Pearson, cited in Ugwu and Ezeani (2012), maintained that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has dramatically altered the structure of markets in many industries and corporate organisations. Onaade (2012) asserted that with the recent revolutions in ICT, knowledge societies has been expanded, modified and exemplified. Thus, ICT have changed and enhanced the LIS profession around the world. The revolution in ICT has led to an expansion in the roles of information professionals in diverse ways with a shift from a document management perspective to an information management perspective. As a result, there is also a corresponding expansion in the employment market for library and information professionals (Ugwu and Ezeani, 2012). Hence, LIS professionals should equip themselves with the skills, attitudes and values that are necessary for improved library services to cope with increasing entrepreneurship opportunities created by ICT. This is the only pathway for library and information science professionals to excel as entrepreneurs. According to The Gale Encyclopedia of Small Business (2013), an entrepreneur is one who organizes a new business venture in the hope of making a profit. Entrepreneurs create, nurture and grow enterprises using a reasonable degree of initiative, skills and competencies necessary to transform change into opportunities thereby stemming personal



satisfaction, monetary rewards and independence. According to The Occupational Outlook Handbook (1996), entrepreneurial librarians may start their own consulting practices. They act as freelance librarians or information brokers and provide services to other libraries, businesses or government agencies. Igbeka (2008) stated that librarians do not have to work only in established institutions, they can set up their own libraries or information centres and become information brokers or business librarians, searching and finding information for users.

The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources, to do work with power. The term empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981). However, the roots of empowerment theory extend further into history and are linked to Marxist sociological theory. These sociological ideas have continued to be developed and refined through Neo-Marxist Theory (also known as Critical Theory). While there is no "official" definition of economic empowerment, we can generally say that it consists of giving a group of people the means to be in control of their own economic destiny. It consists of helping people improve their economic status while, at the same time, gaining more control over that status. In general, when we talk about economic empowerment, we are referring to the economic empowerment of groups that are powerless. These are people who have had very little control of their economic destinies and have been largely controlled by others. For example, women in many developing nations fall into this category. As another example, blacks in South Africa can be placed in this category as they struggle with the legacy of apartheid. Economic empowerment efforts typically include efforts to make such people self-sufficient. For example, it can involve efforts to provide "microcredit" to people so that they can open their own businesses or can improve their farms. It can also involve providing training for people so that they will be more aware of how to improve their economic status. In short, then, we can contrast economic empowerment with simple economic aid. Economic empowerment is meant to give people the means to improve themselves economically, not just food or money to fulfill their immediate needs.

### **Skills Necessary for Entrepreneurship for LIS Professionals**

Skills are abilities or proficiencies required of a person in a position to plan and execute an action geared towards accomplishing some tasks or achieving some goals. Skills are the learned capacity to carry out predetermined tasks with the minimum outlay of time and energy ([www.online.dictionay.com](http://www.online.dictionay.com)). Entrepreneurs must endeavour to possess the applicable skills in order to succeed in any business venture. It is important to note that traditional roles are becoming less frequent in the array of entrepreneurial careers now open to information professionals. As a result, different competencies, skills and graduate qualities are required for entrepreneurship. Omekwu (2009) states that if library and information professionals do not acquire skills, other professionals from computer science and engineering will step into their core areas of work specialisation and usurp their opportunities. This is because skills have become both generic and multidisciplinary in the digital age. Cross disciplinary qualifications imply that some people without a basic background in librarianship may acquire basic



information management skills either by further training or lessons from work experiences and invariably go into information management. In the light of the above, Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) posit that LIS professionals should strive to improve on their overall skills through the acquisition of various forms of ICT skills and develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset in order to render quality services in the library, achieve self-employment and remain relevant. Thus, some professional and managerial skills required for successful entrepreneurship as highlighted in Ugwu and Ezeani (2012) are:

1. **Information technology skills:** These have to do with networking, library automation and digitization, web based services, reprography, micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation, library management software including CDS ISIS, LIBSYS, content development, desktop publishing, intranet, presentation, hardware/software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitates the indexing and retrieval of information and thesaurus development. Farkas (2006) emphasizes on some specific technical skills like HMTL, Network administration, PHP and MYSQL, efficient use of search engines, use of blogs to provide services, web cast and search skills.
2. **Information literacy skills:** These have to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently, and use information accurately and creatively. Also included here is the economics and marketing of information product and services, information resource management, information processing and organising, e-mail, multi-media and video conferencing.
3. **Managerial skills:** These entail marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal getting, decision making, human relations and managing growth. They are essential in launching and growing a new venture. Included here is also the knowledge of records management principles and electronic book keeping.
4. **Personal entrepreneurial skills:** which has to do with inner control/discipline; risk taking, innovativeness, change orientation and ability to manage change, persistence and visionary leadership. The combination of many of these skills with the right support ensures ideas do not just remain as dreams but become real viable businesses.

### **Characteristics of Entrepreneurship**

There is no such thing as a typical entrepreneur. Some entrepreneurs are quiet and hardworking, while others are more outgoing and flamboyant. The key to being a successful entrepreneur lies in the ability to take an idea and then through the process of innovation, develop it in such a way that it becomes a marketable product or service. Kimmons (2013) highlighted characteristics of entrepreneurship to include:

1. **Interest and Vision:** The first factor for entrepreneurial success is interest. Since entrepreneurship pays off according to performance rather than time spent on a particular effort, an entrepreneur must work in an area that interest him, otherwise he will not be able to maintain a high level of work ethics, and he will most likely fail. This interest must also translate into a vision for the company's growth. Even if the day to day activities of a business are interesting to an entrepreneur, this is not enough for success unless he can turn this interest into a vision of growth and expansion. This vision must be strong enough that he can communicate it to investors and employees.
2. **Skill:** All the interest and vision cannot make up for a total lack of applicable skill. For instance, if he wants to start a business that creates



- mobile games, he should have specialized knowledge in mobile technology, the gaming industry, game design, mobile app marketing or programming.
3. **Investment:** An entrepreneur must invest in his company. This investment may be something less tangible, such as the time he spends or the skills or reputation he brings with him, but it also tends to involve a significant investment of assets with a clear value whether they are cash, real estate or intellectual property. An entrepreneur who will not or cannot invest in his company cannot expect others to do so and cannot expect it to succeed.
  4. **Organization and Delegation:** While many new businesses start as one-man business, successful entrepreneurship is characterized by quick and stable growth. This means hiring other people to do specialized jobs. For this reason, entrepreneurship requires extensive organisation and delegation of tasks. It is important for entrepreneurs to pay close attention to everything that goes on in their companies, but if they want their companies to succeed, they must learn to hire the right people for the right jobs and let them do their jobs with minimal interference from management.
  5. **Risk and Rewards:** Entrepreneurship requires risk. The measurement of this risk equates to the amount of time and money one invest into a business. However, this risk also tends to relate directly to the rewards involved. An entrepreneur who invests in a franchise pays for someone else's business plan and receives a respectable income, while an entrepreneur who undertakes ground breaking innovations, risks everything on an assumption that something revolutionary will work in the market. If such a assumption fails, he can lose everything. However, if he is right he can suddenly become extremely wealthy.

### **Entrepreneurial Opportunities for LIS Professionals**

While Isimoya (2012) states that an entrepreneur emerges when an individual notices a profitable business opportunity unexploited and exploits it, innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit changes as an opportunity for a different business or different service. Ekuoye (2007) points out that LIS professional should decide on the business venture to embark upon in order to exploit the business opportunities of such enterprise. He states further that there are opportunities such as business services, consultancy, book repair, information brokerage, packaging information, etc. that LIS professionals can delve into as an entrepreneur. He advises that when a business appeals to one, that person must find out some basic information. It is important to determine what your vision and mission will be. It is necessary to know whether the product is in high demand by everyone, group or locality that is targeted. It is also important to find out the occasions when it is consumed. Is it around the year need? It is also important to find out who and who are already in the business. Do a research on this and the next stage will be to draw a business plan and begin to utilize the opportunities in the industry. Ekuoye (2007) and Igbeka (2008) identify some businesses LIS professionals can do to include:

- 1 **Information Brokerage:** Information brokers provide information for their clients for a fee. According to Onaade (2012) the nature of information brokerage as a profession probably had its roots in the 1960s, when a few individuals and library organizations realised that the computer and the photocopier are harbingers of the significant role technology plays in the information revolution, which would have an impact on information retrieval. The ability to deliver documents, copies of unpublished articles and similar materials to the academic, business and professional communities on demand presents an opportunity for those with enough foresight and entrepreneurial spirit to turn these varied needs into



business. As a result, information brokers provide their clients with information for a fee. Information brokers use various resources including the internet, online services that specialise in databases, public libraries, books and CD-ROMs. They also set up telephone call centres. They provide research and other information services. According to Igbeka (2008), the job of an information broker cannot be specifically defined since they perform different functions. Rugge and Glossbrenner (1997) assert that because information is such a nebulous commodity those seeking it will have a wide variety of information needs. It will therefore not be possible for information brokers to do the same thing or perform the same type of jobs. Consequently, no two information brokers' jobs are exactly alike. The following, according to the submission Ocholla (2009), fall into information brokering: gathering competitive intelligence in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial, telecommunication and energy; searching patents and trademarks; creating databases for organisations; preparing research reports in response to staff requests for specific information; verifying facts for external and internal reports and duplication; identifying research done at other organisations to avoid unnecessary duplication; evaluating and comparing information software and sources of data prior to purchase; training other staff to efficiently and cost effectively use databases; research analysis, information services, information management and consulting services. From another perspective, Onaade (2012) identifies the skills needed to successfully operate this business to include: expertise in researching and accessing public, and in some cases, private information over the internet through traditional sources such as libraries, microfiche archives and so on. Meanwhile, to update a website, an individual requires basic web publishing skills. Communication skills should be concise and descriptive. He further stated that the cost of starting the business will require the design, development and hosting of a website as well as having a computer, appropriate software and a printer. The appropriate start-up cost ranges between N510,000.00 (about \$3,000) to N1,000,000.00 (about \$5,800) in the Nigerian context. In addition, the number of employees needed to run the business depends on the resources available to the information broker. An experienced and competent individual with superior online searching skills and resources can start this business single-handedly. According to Onaade (2012), the international potential of this business is unlimited. There is no telling where a client may reside. If you have access to the information they seek, you can e-mail it to them and this makes the borders of your business purely virtual and governed solely by language. He further emphasized that there are some business issues that should be addressed in information brokerage. The information brokerage business sometimes infringes on the privacy of others and whenever this happens there are legal implications. Hence, before undertaking the business, one should research the liability and risk factors. Sometimes there are tight deadlines to be met. Moreover, pricing should be clearly outlined on the company's site. The costs should be competitive and reflective of the amount it takes to conduct each search. In terms of availability of market for information brokerage, clients for the information practitioner can be found among information-hungry professionals such as speech writers, competitive intelligence professionals, marketing directors and product managers. Others may include: organisations that do not have in house library but need professional research support; librarians who need to outsource some of their research; people that have more money than time and do have a



specific research need, etc. Furthermore, Onaade (2012) emphasized some qualities expected of an information broker to include a good educational background, experience and training. Ocholla (2009) suggests that in addition to research skills, one must know how to run a business, that is marketing one-self, developing and implementing a business and marketing plans, handling the day-to-day operations of a small business, invoicing, accounting, cash flow monitoring, continuous upgrading of information skills through professional development and managing clients. Yet, there is need to have good communication skills since one will be talking face-to-face with clients over the telephone, by e-mail and writing analyses and seminar reports. Summarily, some of the works information brokers are doing in Nigeria include: indexing; abstracting; retrospective conversion; cataloging and classification (contract cataloguing); literature reviews; online literature search; print searches for users; owning a library or bookshop with the cooperation of nearby libraries in the area of interlibrary loan; packaging and repackaging of information; editing and publishing; developing hypermedia products; text translating and translation; marketing management of library; organizing of seminars, conferences, and workshops; undertaking electronic presentation services (e.g. Microsoft PowerPoint; creating data bases and website design.

2. **Book Publishing and Trading:** Librarians and information professionals can venture into the publishing industry business where there are a lot of things to do. One can become a publisher, an editor, a reference book critic, children's books reviewer, do promotion-marketing books in libraries or own a bookshop. One can decide to carry out all the activities or you can take one or two categories and specialise in them. For example, one can decide to own a bookshop as well as review reference and children's books. One can also own a bookshop and seize the opportunity to promote one's own type of stock. Some booksellers also specialise in acquiring a lot of CD-Rom databases like ERIC, AGRIS, etc. which they sell to libraries. Ekuoye (2007) opines that to be in the publishing business, you will have to source for authors and manuscripts. But with diskettes, you do not go about again with manuscript and typescripts. You can receive manuscripts by electronic mail. More so, one can venture into journal publishing. Journal publishing is interesting but more demanding. The reason for this is simple: you need plenty articles and by implication involves various authors, collating, reviewing, peer reviewing, etc. The need for acknowledged professionals in the editorial board to do the (peer) reviewing is therefore essential. Hence, to get them, one can write proposals and send to the potentials editors. It is true that to start and remain in the market will not be an easy thing. More than being aggressive in persuading and collecting manuscripts (in diskettes, CDs or via e-mails) for editing and subsequent reviews, one will have to be more aggressive in marketing the finished product. Thus, for the business to run smoothly a personal computer and a secretary/typist is needed. There are markets for such products and the market include libraries, library schools, librarians, information scientists, student librarians and stakeholders in the library and information world.
3. **Email Publishing, Web Publishing and Desktop Publishing:** As entrepreneurs, LIS professionals can venture into e-mail publishing, web publishing, and desktop publishing.

\* **Email publishing:** E-mail publishing, also known as newsletter publishing, is used mainly by readers who receive news items, articles and short newsletters in their e-mail box. Some businesses have now resorted to providing services that mainly deliver



newsletters to consumers. As such LIS professionals can undertake such services.

- \* **Web publishing:** Most companies and businesses have their own websites and most media companies provide large amount of web-based content. Web publishing is very popular especially as new web programming languages are being introduced. It is important that one goes for training in the different types of publishing discussed above especially if one is going to embark on this type of information business.

- \* **Desktop publishing:** Wilson-Davis (1991) defines desktop publishing as a generic term for systems which can: accept keyed input and or scanned graphics to a microcomputer, make-up pages with varying degrees of flexibility and graphical facility and output, be compatible with laser printers or other high quality output device, and use industry standard type fonts, among others. Publishing is a special and precise job and one has to be skilled and knowledgeable and up to date if one is to succeed in this entrepreneurial venture.

4. **Establishing and Maintaining Libraries for Organizations:** Library and information professionals can delve into establishing and maintaining libraries for organisations. It could be a traditional print library or electronic library. Electronic library, synonymously referred to as digital library, is a collection of full text or bibliographic information sources which incorporate human services such as electronic publishing, personal information management, distant education and information technology tools such as those that support browsing, authoring and communication (Ojedokun, 2000). Before setting up an electronic library, one has to consider the issue of sourcing proprietary rights. Every document or data hosted and intended to be distributed through the e-library must have the approval of the original owner of the data or the publisher. In addition, a prospective e-library owner has to consider the provision of the necessary infrastructure. Since access will be open to public patronage there should be a place that is preferably and strategically located to house the equipment (Igbeka, 2008). Apart from the infrastructure and equipment, a good and fast internet connection is absolutely necessary for providing access to electronic/digital libraries. Most of the e-library activities involve downloading than uploading.
5. **Organisation of a Private Library:** This is another job an information scientist can do to earn some money. Many scholars have a lot of books, documents and journals especially after their retirement which they can organize into a library.
6. **Compilation of Directories:** Compilation of directories is another entrepreneurial opportunity that library and information professionals can delve into as entrepreneurs. There is so much that needs to be compiled. There can be "Who is Who" in virtually anything, profession, village, organisation, etc. The telephone directory is a 'wonderful' tool.
7. **Compilation of Bibliographies:** This involves the compilation of bibliographic details of a given discipline, subject or topic for a given target audience. LIS professionals, as entrepreneurs can earn sustainable income through publishing of subject and trade bibliographies.
8. **Information Services to the Visually impaired:** The library and information professionals can propose to some authors whose books are making good sale or whose materials are a must for some courses to have it



- on tape. Once the agreement is made, the LIS professional can begin to sell the tapes to the visually impaired or sell to visually Libraries and clients.
9. **Indexing and Abstracting Services:** Indexing and abstracting services is an entrepreneurial opportunity that LIS professionals can venture into as a business enterprise. It is common knowledge that the final stage in the production of many documents such as books, technical manuals and other learning resources, whether print or non-print is the compilation of the index. The job of the indexer is to analyse the text so that users can find information on a particular topic, return to passage initially read scan the index to see what the document is about and find out how particular themes or ideas are developed. The shelves of many bookshops and publishing companies reveal that a lot of non-fiction books are being published. New textbooks are being published every day and most of these need professionally produced indexes, in order to work as an indexer one needs to have access to a computer and be computer literate. Most indexers use computers to automate routine indexing processes and to run their business. Most indexers combine indexing with other jobs especially as information brokers. They combine it with related activities like cataloguing, copy editing and proof-reading. Indexing fees are open to negotiation. One may charge by the hour or by the page, or negotiate a fixed fee for a particular job. The more experienced one gets, the higher the fees charged especially for more complex and highly specialized works. On the other hand, abstracting services require skills in order to excel as an abstractor. As information tool, abstracts help to organise the literature of published information so that specialists can locate documents of interest easily. The ideal abstractor should be a person with subject expertise, foreign language abilities and abstracting and information skills.
10. **Freelancing:** LIS professionals can also engage in freelancing. A freelancer is a self-employed person offering his/her service where needed and not contracted to any single employer. Freelancing can be in many fields like outdoor writing, copy editing, publishing, proof reading, real estate editors, etc. The internet has helped to enhance this discipline as freelancers can always find substantial information from the internet. Many retired professionals can undertake freelancing jobs in their free time and earn money after retirement.

### **Challenges to Undertaking Entrepreneurial Opportunities by LIS Professionals**

There are some factors that hinder LIS professionals from engaging in entrepreneurship. Ugwu and Ezeani (2012), Molaro (2013) and Farkas (2006) identify them distinctly as follows:

1. **Lack of entrepreneurial spirit:** Many LIS professionals lack the entrepreneurial spirit to generate viable businesses that would make them relevant in the knowledge age. Yet, a good number of non-librarians are going magnificently enterprising. A typical example can be drawn from the President and Chief Executive of OCLC, Mr. Skip Prichard who is actually a Lawyer by training. Yet, OCLC is a non-profit corporation that relies solely on member libraries and is here founded and managed by a non-librarian. Many of the newest and often most used technologies that deal with information and library science have been created by people who are outsiders to the profession.
2. **Fear of competition and failure:** Fear of competition and failures hinder LIS professionals from venturing into entrepreneurship. These fears may arise out of lack of basic entrepreneurship training which would enable



- them to identify and harness the abundant opportunities available in their environment.
3. **Lack of knowledge on how to interact with entities that make businesses succeed:** Many LIS professionals do not know how to interact with necessary entities such as banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors and advertising agencies. They are indispensable players in every successful business
  4. **Lack of specific skills:** It should be noted that the clients' population are rapidly changing as the technologies for servicing them is changing too. Many LIS professionals lack various forms of ICT skills relevant for entrepreneurship.
  5. **Problem of generating compelling business ideas:** Many LIS professionals have all it takes to become successful entrepreneurs. However, those aspiring to be entrepreneurs are faced with the problem of how to generate compelling business ideas for new entrepreneurial businesses. Not knowing how to generate ideas would breed frustration, make the aspiring entrepreneur to start a business similar to the one he has seen around him. Besides, the entrepreneur not having the initial ingredient of success - the entrepreneurial mindset of bringing about a change, creating an invention or beating competition-soon goes under when faced with endless competition from existing businesses.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Entrepreneurship revolves around passion, innovation/creativity, competencies, risk-taking and rewards, self-reliance and self-motivation. Entrepreneurial activity creates new entrepreneurial opportunities. Information and communication technology (ICT) has revolutionised the contemporary society. LIS professionals become relevant when they key into the dynamism of change to improve their overall skills through acquisition of various forms of ICT competencies and develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset in order to exploit various opportunities in the profession and achieve self-employment. Yet, the way out to these are:

1. LIS professionals should acquire specific skills in ICT in order to exploit the entrepreneurial opportunities in the profession so that other professionals from computer science and engineering do not step into their core areas of specialisation which is information management and usurp their opportunities in the digital age.
2. LIS professionals should develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset. Entrepreneurship is all about innovation, creativity, competency, risk taking and rewards. LIS professionals should have the entrepreneurial mindset to embark on any business enterprise in order to achieve self-employment and become relevant in the society.
3. LIS professionals should attend workshops and seminars on entrepreneurship to acquire the skills and business acumen required to engage in any entrepreneurial venture.

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