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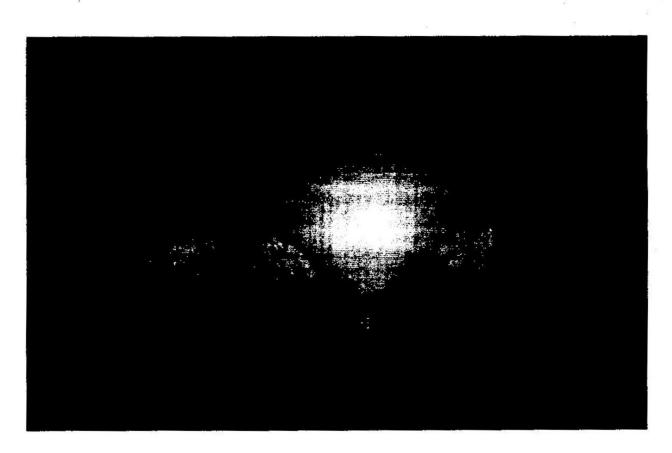
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# DAVID FOLORUNSO ELATUROTI

CLN, FNLA, MNAE

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# ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LIBRARIANSHIP

# Entrepreneurship In Librarianship

<sup>1</sup>Inemesit U. Udoh, <sup>2</sup>Nse E. Akwang, PhD, and <sup>3</sup>Eneobong E. Umoren 1,2,3

Akwa Ibom State University (AKSU) Library, Ikot Akpaden, Mkpat Enin Akwa Ibom State - Nigeria

#### Abstract

This study examined the implications of entrepreneurship in librarianship. Entrepreneurship in librarianship fosters creativity, innovativeness and pragmatic initiatives toward taking advantage of budding business opportunities for profitability and self-sustainability in library settings. It is a paradigm shift, which embraces the adoption of social, cognitive, business, marketing, and management skills in libraries for improved services provision to library users. In this paper, the conceptual research approach was adopted to analyse existing literature. The study revealed that entrepreneurship in librarianship enhances the process of packaging, repackaging and selling of information to users for a profit. It enables librarians to provide need-based information services to individuals and organizations who are relying on information and knowledge for their survival and growth. The study further showed that entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria is hampered by lack of entrepreneurial spirit, vision and creativity among librarians, lack of adequate relevant skills by librarians, inadequate financial resources, civil service mentality of librarians, etc. Based on the findings, the study recommended that libraries should provide adequate facilities to supporting practical training and skills acquisition of librarians while librarians should develop entrepreneurial culture and mindset in order to fit into the changing information market space.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Librarianship, Librarians, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial Opportunities

#### Introduction

It is quite apt to contemplate librarianship as the mother of other professions requiring deliberate and urgent transformation even in an era of information explosion. Librarianship deals with the gathering, processing, evaluation, preservation and transmission of information which is the lifeblood of successful engagements across professional leanings. Without mincing words, librarianship has evolved and necessarily requires a complete paradigm shift by embracing entrepreneurship as the creative and innovative process of developing and providing more satisfying library services to users while generating income for libraries and librarians. Entrepreneurship refers to the inventive ability of combining vision and passion towards creating and implementing new ideas and creative solutions to enhance personal growth and societal benefits.

Based on the above standpoint, entrepreneurship in librarianship is seen as a transformational approach based on the need to take full advantage of inherent opportunities for creative ways of providing library services. It is a practical response to the realities of the information age with its attendant advancement in information and communication technology (ICT), which has tremendously opened the gateways of information with alternative frontiers. Entrepreneurship in librarianship facilitates the adoption of social, cognitive, business, marketing, and management skills in libraries for improved service delivery to library users. It defines the need for conscious development and application of business strategies by librarians toward providing effective, competitive, goal-oriented, personalized and value-added library services.

As a matter of fact, entrepreneurship and librarianship are two fundamental concepts with deeper implications due to the roles that both concepts play in the present information market space. Entrepreneurship helps to incorporate business consciousness into librarianship. It provides the motivation for librarians to think

innovatively and creatively in order to meet the needs of library users as well as achieve the goals and objectives of the libraries. It accelerates effective management of library resources for improved productivity and efficiency. Entrepreneurship helps in the overall process of rethinking librarianship as business and service-oriented tasks by librarians in a system bedeviled with dwindling budgetary allocation.

From the above background, entrepreneurship in librarianship is not a push-away phenomenon but such that requires serious consideration by librarians. Therefore, this chapter examines the concept and meaning of entrepreneurship in librarianship, the importance of entrepreneurship in librarianship, librarians as entrepreneurs, characteristics of librarians as entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial opportunities in librarianship, challenges facing entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria, and measures for enhancing entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria.

# Methodology

This study adopts the conceptual research approach. This involves literature analysis and review of publications on the subject matter. It typically relies on critical examination of secondary sources of information from print and non-print media such as books, journals, Internet sources and other relevant information materials. This method is considered more suitable because the construct and scope of the study fundamentally fit into the conceptual research design method.

# Concept and Meaning of Entrepreneurship in Librarianship

Entrepreneurship in librarianship is an emerging philosophy geared toward providing better, improved and more satisfactory library services to library information users as well as maximizing the revenue generation opportunities for libraries and librarians. Entrepreneurship in librarianship entails fostering entrepreneurial thinking to develop the social, cognitive, career and management skills in libraries. It is aimed at providing the means of integrating business skills, especially financial marketing and fundraising skills into librarianship as well as ensuring that such skills are effectively applied to achieve the goals of the library enterprise, social innovations and non-profit initiatives.

Entrepreneurship in librarianship as a concept is derived from the broad idea of entrepreneurship. It is a paradigm shift, which embraces innovation and initiatives into librarianship. Entrepreneurship refers to the creative process of identifying investment opportunities within a given environment and bringing resources together for the formation of an enterprise, taking the risks involved and maximizing the monetary and social gains from the business (Akidi & Udoh, 2021). It is the act of recognizing and pursuing profitable opportunities with confidence and self-assurance of success, and with the flexibility to change and willingness for resilience. Entrepreneurship is as considered as an individual's ability to manipulate ideas and turn them into reality by harnessing personal creativity, innovation, initiative, and risk-bearing ability for profit maximization. It involves a creative and self-motivated ability of combining vision and passion toward creating and implementing new ideas and creative solutions for personal growth and societal benefits.

On the other hand, librarianship is the profession involved in the acquisition, organization, dissemination, preservation and conservation of information and knowledge resources in both digital and traditional library environment (Dictionary.com, 2022). Librarianship as a profession is as old as the existence of information and the propagation of knowledge. It predates both documentation and any advancement in information and communication technology. Librarianship facilitates the interaction between information sources and services and information users within the traditional and digital library settings. Although the procedures and materials of librarianship have been found and lost and found again, invented and reinvented, named and re-named over and over again, the usefulness and efficacies of librarianship remain unchanged. Hence, to fit into the

prevailing information environment, librarianship needs to embrace entrepreneurship to leverage on innovation and creativity in the provision of library information services.

From the above perspectives, entrepreneurship in librarianship is rooted on the need for librarians to fine-tune ways and manners of performing library services and functions better through innovation. It implies a change in attitude and interest of librarians by transforming library information services to create additional values and benefits for library information users, the libraries as institutions and the librarians. The Syracuse University School of Information Studies (2021) asserts that entrepreneurship in librarianship requires librarians to use their energy, ideas and intellectuality to reinvent and enhance their works to improve services to users and preserve the collections, as well as accumulate data and knowledgeable staff to improve services, physical spaces, and the digital environment. It enforces the spirit of converting ideas (information and knowledge) into money through creative, innovative, proactive and critical thinking.

Entrepreneurship in librarianship involves a variety of activities, actions and practices that involve generation of business ideas, identification of investment opportunities, and decision making towards the exploitation of investment opportunities in librarianship. It also involves the formulation of business objectives, conducting market research, integrating human, financial and physical resources, promotion of organizational products and services, as well as managing human and materials resources to ensure that set objectives are attained in the librarianship. It embraces strategic business ideology, which revolves around risks taking and management of uncertainties with continuous innovation and diversification of ideas, products or services and opportunities in librarianship.

Entrepreneurship in librarianship facilitates the provision of satisfactory library services and generation of revenue to support operations and running of the libraries without reliance on governments' funding. It is motivated by the need to create librarians and students who are conscious job creators instead of job-seekers. It is also aimed at producing successful information innovators and creators who are able to use their brains and business acumen to creatively and analytically work things out to meet the prevailing information needs of users as well as the information environment with profit motives. Entrepreneurship in librarianship facilitates the training of people who can take initiatives and bear the risks of advancing new ideas of offering improved library information services. It enables librarians to make use of figures in their decision making while planning analytically and innovatively what new information products and services have to be provided to satisfy changing users' information needs.

In a nutshell, entrepreneurship in librarianship ensures that information needs, expectations and values are consistently planned, developed and brought together with their users, without sacrificing the economic, social and intellectual objectives of the libraries and librarians.

#### Importance of Entrepreneurship in Librarianship

The importance of entrepreneurship in librarianship, especially in this information age where information is considered as an essential asset and factor of production, cannot be underestimated. This is because entrepreneurship activities are indispensable in promoting effective provision of library information services in a creative, innovative, personalized and business conscious sense. However, the importance of entrepreneurship in librarianship are summarized into the following:

- It enhances the process of packaging, repackaging and selling of information to consumers for their individuals' and groups' success for a profit.
- 2. It creates expanded opportunities for librarians to provide need-based information to individuals,

- organizations and countries who are relying on information and knowledge for their survival and growth, thereby investing a great fortune in information as a commodity.
- It emboldens librarians' vision, perception and attitude about the best way to create value for users and enhance the attainment of the mission and objectives of the libraries.
- 4. It facilitates income generation opportunities for libraries and librarians. This helps to offset some costs of running the libraries and support librarians in their self-sustaining drive. Income can be generated for libraries through such activities as; reprographic services, literature search services, indexing and abstracting services, among others.
- 5. It enhances the creation of employment opportunities for LIS graduates. This is because entrepreneurship in librarianship provide the opportunities through which LIS students are trained to become self-employed by taking up webdevelopers, database designers and managers, library equipment vendors, among others.
- It helps to re-orientate librarians towards developing innovation and creativity as the panacea to foreseeing the future needs of information users and embracing changes in the information environment.
- 7. It reawakens the consciousness and awareness of librarians on the need to effectively integrate man, material, money and machines into their activities as mutually beneficiary resources, viii. It emphasizes the need to develop human abilities, confidence and aptitude, as well as modify their values and attitudes toward accelerating the process of development in librarianship.

#### Librarians as Entrepreneurs

Given the evolving trends in the library and information profession, necessitated by the advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) and information explosion, librarians practically have no better option than to become entrepreneurs. In other words, librarians are expected to work innovatively and creatively towards satisfying the continuously emerging information needs and preferences of users. This must be done with the consciousness of generating income for their libraries and for themselves.

Librarians are professionally trained and qualified personnel in the provision of library information resources and services to users in the various types of libraries. They are known for their core responsibilities of acquiring, organizing, disseminating, preserving and conserving information for various categories of users. Ibegwam et al. (2019) posit that librarians are experts in the 21st-century scholarship, facilitating students' and lecturers' skills as well as save their time to enhance their research productivity with innovative ideas, techniques and processes. They are the professional staff of libraries with sound academic background, professional knowledge, required skills, and service attitude; playing leadership roles, directing the various divisions and departments of the library organizations (Akidi & Agbese, 2019). Librarians promote the empowerment of people, propagation of intellectual freedom, assistance in equitable access to information, democratic conversation, and in the creation of networks of knowledge (Ghosh, 2019). They are critical mediators in the flow of information and knowledge.

However, librarians as social entrepreneurs ensure that information sources and services are creatively and innovatively developed and provided to information users. They create and manage organizations with strong ethical or community approach with the interest of generating profits. Librarians as entrepreneurs are willing and ready to convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. This is why Ghosh (2019) asserts that librarians and business entrepreneurs share common characteristics of creativity, persistence, and passion. They act as managers who oversee, supervise or midwife the launch and growth of an enterprise, as well as engage in the creation of something new or something different by changing or transmuting values. As social entrepreneurs, librarians are interested in positive contributions to their society through the provision of

information and knowledge from the services of the libraries. They help their community of users to achieve their dreams and aspirations. As a matter of fact, librarians as social entrepreneurs promote the —gale of creative destruction!, a process of replacing wholly or partly inferior innovations across markets and industries, and simultaneously creating new products or services, including new business models or ways of doing things. This manifests in the provision of information services in the libraries such as current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI), information literacy training, e-learning programmes, literature search services, internet services, etc. They easily foresee potentially profitable opportunities and exploiting them for their monetary and social gains. They are innovators; introducing new combinations by making new things or making things in a new way.

### Characteristics of Librarians as Entrepreneurs

Librarians are social entrepreneurs possessing unique set of entrepreneurial attributes. They possess critical ingenuities and interest for risk-taking, innovation, initiative, creativity, motivation, decisiveness, confidence, sense of ownership, communication effectiveness, team spirit, optimism, dedication, commitment, passion for learning, curiosity, hard-work, collaboration, sociability, leadership, result-oriented, profitoriented, and foresight. They have unfettered desire for achievement, high locus of control, and desire for autonomy. These inherent or acquired characteristics support their ability to introduce new information products or services, introduce new methods and techniques of providing information products and services to users in order to make the library a more appealing, captivating and welcoming place to users. By possessing the numerous entrepreneurial characteristics, librarians are able to function effectively as change agents in a dynamic environment where library and information science profession operates. The characteristics also facilitate librarians' ability to search and exploit opportunities to satisfy the information needs of users while generating income for their libraries and for themselves. This also equip them with the zeal to explore new technologies and novel ideas in pursuit of excellence while showcasing undying desire for creativity, persistence, commitment, dedication, resourcefulness and passion for satisfactory library services delivery.

# **Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Librarianship**

Over the years, efforts have been made by several scholars towards investigating possible entrepreneurship opportunities in librarianship. According to Akidi and Udoh (2021); Jude-Iwuoha and Udoh (2021); Nwabueze and Umeji (2019); Stanley and Oghenetega (2021), there are many entrepreneurship opportunities in librarianship. These includes library equipment services, book trade and publishing services, information brokerage services, etc. These opportunities are briefly discussed for better understanding as follows.

Library Equipment Services: This type of entrepreneurship opportunity in librarianship involves the production, sales and repairs of library equipment, such as; shelves, desks, tables, chairs, trolleys, air conditioners, cabinets, racks, carrels, circulation counters, issuing trays, book cards and book pockets, stamp pads, computers, etc. Library equipment are used in all types of libraries for displaying, processing and keeping library information materials to facilitate access and use of the library resources and services. Librarians can engage in the production, sales or repairs of library equipment as a mean of creating business opportunities for revenue generation and better service delivery in libraries.

Book Trade and Publishing Services: This entrepreneurship opportunity entails the activities of producing and selling of books, journals, newspapers, magazines, bulletins, artworks, photographs, and other forms of literature for the publics. As a matter of fact, the advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) has created a bigger opportunity for librarians to leverage on book trade and publishing via the internet by selling electronic resources (such as; e-books, e-journals, e-magazines, etc.); micropublishing, web blogs, video games, online distribution of resources like musical works, software, literary works, among others. Book trade and publishing is a very lucrative entrepreneurial opportunity which librarians can take advantage of and generate revenue for themselves and their library organizations. Librarians can also make effective use of the

information technology to engage in online marketing, online electronic content distribution and online scouting to publish and distribute resources to libraries, private firms, business organizations and government agencies. Book trade and publishing may also involve email publishing, web publishing and desktop publishing.

Information Brokerage Services: This refers to the business of searching for information as a commodity and assisting information users to gain easy and seamless access to their unique information needs for a fee. It is a vital and easy to operate entrepreneurship opportunity in librarianship. It involves the provision of a wide range of specialized information services, including information consultancy services to users. As information purveyors, librarians can create special innovations and creative ways of meeting the information needs of users in a specialized way. Nwosu and Unagha, as cited in Akidi and Udoh (2021) observed that information entrepreneurs (infopreneurs) can specialize as business librarians, data miners, database administrators, government archivists, information architects, knowledge engineers, or develop a niche in a particular information sector such as healthcare information, technology information, patent research, agriculture information, finance information, copyright information, market research, international policy information, etc. Information brokerage services may also include indexing and abstracting services, contract cataloguing and classification services, information packaging services, translation services, retrospective conversation services, current awareness services and selective dissemination of information services. This entrepreneurship opportunity is very viable in today's digital and information economy. Thus, librarians and libraries can boost their financial fortunes as individuals and organizations through information brokerage services. They can achieve this through a special or needbased information unit where information can be specially generated and provided to clients for a fee.

#### Other entrepreneurship opportunities in librarianship include:

reprographic/photocopying services, library software dealership, telecommunication services, computer operation and data processing services, database design management services, website design and management services, online literature search services, production and distribution of video, radio and television adverts, web blogging, internet blogging, cyber/internet café services, library automation services, hardware and software installation services, computer system repair services, freelance information services, document delivery (e.g. courier services), and book binding/repair services.

# Challenges facing Entrepreneurship in Librarianship in Nigeria

From the foregoing, it has been established that entrepreneurship in librarianship is a viable vehicle for creative and improved ways of providing information services to users and maximizing the revenue generation potentials of libraries and librarians. However, irrespective of the enormous usefulness of entrepreneurship in librarianship, numerous challenges are inhibiting the growth of entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria. These factors include:

Fear of competition and failure: Entrepreneurship generally, hinges on risktaking and confidence in one's idea. But it is quite obvious that most librarians do not have enough confidence and determination to go into entrepreneurship due to the fear of failure. Thus, the fear of failure, which begins from the point of idea generation to marketing of the idea for management acceptance and of course, translating the idea into an understandable business objective, creates a serious challenge for entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria.

Lack of entrepreneurial spirit, vision and creativity: Entrepreneurship is an idea that is motivated by personal zeal, vision, creativity and urge for innovation and desire to add value to existing products and services, or creating new products and services, or launching into a new market. This requires strong personal motivation for doing something different by thinking critically and analytically. It is, however, common knowledge that most librarians, including the heads of most libraries, do not have any iota of entrepreneurial

spirit or passion. Thus, lack of entrepreneurial spirit or passion among most librarians hampers the creative ability and zeal to launch out any entrepreneurial activity in the librarianship profession.

Lack of required skills: Successful entrepreneurship in librarianship is a product of bringing the necessary skills and competencies to action. These skills and competencies may include communication skills, interpersonal relationship skills, managerial skills, leadership skills, financial management skill, marketing skills and emerging technology skills. These skills and competencies are very vital as they relate to the use of human, materials, finance and machines. In fact, without effectively balancing all these skills, no business can succeed. But, unfortunately, most librarians in developing countries like Nigeria do not possess these invaluable skills and therefore cannot marshal any successful entrepreneurship engagement in librarianship.

Lack of knowledge of collaboration and networking with entitles that support business success: Collaboration and networking are essential elements in a successful business venture. It is through collaboration and networking that business ideas, information and knowledge are shared among partners and affiliates. But it is indisputable that librarians do not know how to interface or mutually collaborate with other necessary business entities like banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors, government and advertising agencies. Effective collaboration and networking with these entities can assist marketing and promotion of information services and resources. Therefore, lack of knowledge of collaboration and networking with relevant entities that support business success is a serious impediment to entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria.

**Problem of generating compelling business ideas:** A good business idea generation is the foundation of entrepreneurship success. It is the driving force upon which every other stage of entrepreneurship development and management relies. Hence, the inability of librarians to formulate good, acceptable and saleable business ideas that can be supported by management and patronized by information users is a strong inhibition to entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria.

Difficulty in understanding the market of information services: Another factor confronting entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria is the inability of librarians to understand the market of information services. Usually, information service in the library setting is not only difficult to price but also highly considered as a public service activity. This is generally, because the library is considered as a not-for-profit organization and their services offered free for all. This scenario, therefore, makes entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria a difficult business opportunity.

**Inadequate financial resources:** Libraries in Nigeria are generally inadequately financed. Meanwhile, funding is usually is the life-wire of every business venture through which the needed resources and equipment are acquired and actions taken as they are pertinent. Consequently, inadequate financial resources facing libraries in Nigeria is a serious impediment to entrepreneurship in librarianship.

Civil service mentality: It is irrefutable that most librarians are operating like typical civil servants with no clear initiative, innovation, creativity, decisiveness, or personal drive for improved service delivery. They are very comfortable with their routine custodial mentality of securing books and other information resources. Thus, with this kind of ideology or philosophy, they do not think entrepreneurially or promote entrepreneurship in librarianship.

Poor motivation from library management and parent institutions: It is apparent that libraries are the appendage of parent institutions who take decisions on basically every area that concerns the functions and services of the libraries. Consequently, the decisions made for the libraries most often do not encourage individual staff's initiatives, innovations, creativity, or ingenuity to flourish. This is because, where such initiatives require funding, training, or other man and material support, library management or even the parent institution may not always be willing and ready to render much-needed support. This, therefore, acts as killers to the entrepreneurial spirit in librarianship.

In addition to the above, other challenges facing entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria include lack of entrepreneurship culture and training, high inflation rate, high interest rates, the poor state of infrastructural facilities such as power supply and ICT facilities, political and economic uncertainty, and anti-business government policies such as double and high taxation rate.

# Measures for enhancing Entrepreneurship in Librarianship in Nigeria

Solving the problems militating against entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria requires conscious, well-thought-out, and concerted efforts from all stakeholders in the library and information services supply chain. Fundamentally, it requires a total mindset readjustment, service reorientation and attitudinal change from all librarians. In addition to the general attitudinal reorientation about librarianship and information services provision, scholars have considered some measures for enhancing entrepreneurship in librarianship. Accordingly, Akidi and Udoh (2021); Awojoola and Ikegune (2018); Nwabueze and Umeji (2019) observe that one of the principal ways to enhancing entrepreneurship in librarianship is through conscious effort in institutionalizing or integrating practical entrepreneurship education into LIS course/programme and providing adequate facilities to supporting practical training and skills acquisition of LIS students. This will enable them to become effective and entrepreneurially conscious and skilled librarians in practice, who can knowledgeably start-up and manage library and information-based entrepreneurship businesses. Enhancing practical entrepreneurship training of LIS students should be balanced with theoretical teaching of the rudiments of entrepreneurship.

Equally, librarians should develop an entrepreneurial culture and mindset within their operations and make it their service philosophy. They should develop innovative and creative thinking, and consistently improve upon their success skills and competencies such as financial management skills, marketing skills, communication skills, interpersonal relationship skills and digital technology and ICT skills. Possessing these relevant skills will automatically propel them to launch into and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities in librarianship. This will enable them to leverage on available un-tapped resources in other business entities that rely on information as an invaluable raw commodity. Also, librarians should skillfully tap from the advancement in information and communication technology to rethink creative and innovative ways of providing more satisfying information services and revenue generation initiatives.

Furthermore, library organizations, academic institutions, and governments should support librarians by providing necessary infrastructural facilities like adequate power supply, functional ICT tools, internet services and enabling environment to enable librarians acquire requisite training to launch out and sustain successful entrepreneurship activities.

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

Entrepreneurship in librarianship is a paradigm for creative and satisfactory provision of information services to users and enhancing the revenue generation potentials of libraries and librarians. It is a systematic approach towards closing some gaps created by inadequate funding of libraries by governments and creating employment opportunities for librarians and LIS graduates. Through entrepreneurship in librarianship, libraries and librarians can innovate, initiate, recreate, or rethink ways of augmenting funding gaps by engaging in entrepreneurship opportunities in librarianship. This can be achieved by engaging in some entrepreneurship opportunities in librarianship such as information brokerage services, websites and web blog development services, contractual cataloguing and classification services, etc. Entrepreneurship in librarianship has the potential of facilitating the training of library staff and LIS students to become more proactive, creative, productive, and skillful in various entrepreneurial activities in the LIS profession.

However, amidst the benefits of entrepreneurship in librarianship, factors such as lack of entrepreneurship spirit and culture, lack of adequate requisite skills, poor business idea generation and civil service mentality of among librarians are inhibiting the practicability of entrepreneurship in librarianship in Nigeria. Therefore, in conclusion, the study suggested a conscious, well-thoughtout, and concerted effort from librarians and other stakeholders in the LIS profession to institutionalize practical entrepreneurship education and practical training into the librarianship in order to engender the much-needed foundation for acquisition of relevant entrepreneurship skills among librarians and LIS graduates.

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