

**INFORMATION ENTREPRENEURSHIP FREELANCING IN LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT CAREER
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIBRARIANS.**

By

OFODU, PATRICIA NGOZI *PH.D. CLN*
and
WHONG, FIDELIA MBOWHEING *PH.D. CLN*

Abstract

This research paper investigates how information entrepreneurship freelancing in library and information science for enhanced employment as it career opportunities for librarians. The study discussed librarianship and unemployment, how unemployment has devastated the young graduates; how technology enhances the work of the librarians in libraries and information centres, and how technology enhances employment and increase productivity among individuals. The study emphasizes some employable skills needed by library professionals in order to function well, and the career opportunities (pathways) in librarianship, which will enable librarians to explore. It also, discussed freelancing and entrepreneurship (business opportunities) in library and information science like research writing indexing and abstracting, publishing and consultancy services among others. Some challenges that freelancers encounter were also discussed, such as time management, overdue payment, unrealistic client request etc. Conclusions were included and suggestions were drawn that there should be an integration of an entrepreneur-friendly curriculum in library schools, library professionals should develop the entrepreneurial culture and mindset, and the potential graduates are to embark on continuous professional development for competence and skill acquisition for different entrepreneurship ventures and services.

Keywords: Librarians Career opportunities, Enhancing employment, Freelancing, Information Entrepreneurship, Library and information science,

Introduction

The alarming nature of unemployment everywhere, particularly in Nigeria, has brought changes on the nature, notion and attitude of graduates and would-be graduates. Students can graduate and after one-year youth service (NYSC), can stay without jobs, no source of income for more than five years. It has drastically affected youths of the present generation. It is a welcome idea that most of young graduates are really up and doing, not relenting, but looking forward on how to

earn a living. Graduates of library and Information Science are not an exception, they involve themselves on so many jobs for a pay, through which they can survive this hard time. According to the opinion of John, Nwosu, and Simisaye, (2017) that it is of important for library and information science graduates to become entrepreneurs through their service delivery, creating various ways of sourcing finance for a living, and not staying without a job.

Good enough, there are expanded areas of freelancing which professionals could fix privately to earn money. This has put graduates in a serious commitment to being active and to be productive in their areas of specialization to make money as long as they person lives without an office job. Library and information science (LIS) professionals have traditionally worked in libraries, but the field has involved to encompass a wide range of career opportunities beyond the traditional library setting such as the digital revolution and the rise of information technology have significantly impacted the LIS field, information entrepreneurship involves utilizing information-related skills and knowledge to create innovative services or products, freelancing in LIS allows professionals to work independently and offer their services to a diverse range of clients among others. From the foregoing, the focus of the study is to examine Information Entrepreneurship freelancing in Library and Information Science for Enhancing Employment Career Opportunities for librarians.

Librarianship and Unemployment

Librarianship has been defined as the systematic body of knowledge related to the book and the library, including diverse aspects dealing with books. At the same time, Information Science is concerned with the principles and practices of production, organization and dissemination of the

same information to the various users of same information to solve an information need of individuals. Information Science/ Librarianship is that known discipline that tries to investigate the properties and behavior of information, all forces governing the flow of information, and the possible means of processing information for optimum accessibility and usability (Filiberto Felipe, 2013). Librarianship is generally necessitating how information and library resources can be processed and organized, using a stipulated formats and scheme and made available for users, with the intention to serve for their information needs. It is imperative to note that any information resources that are not organize properly, cannot be accessed and retrieved with ease, for it is said that information is out of place if it is not accessible or retrieved.

Unemployment is more like an illness that remained a major problem rampaging both individuals and society at large, vastly spreading all over the countries of the World. It is highly felt that no nation will prove of not negatively affected by it. The findings of Adeboye, O. *et al.* (2018) stated that unemployment is highly challenging the young adults by affecting their activeness and fruitfulness in most communities by reducing their value to life and respect in their various homes and society. Youth unemployment has remained a major problem across the world which continues to spread across nations.

The study of Library and information science from inception has gone a long way in equipping would-be librarians/professionals, to be vibrant in their work, after been exposed to various aspects of library trainings. The opinion of Butt and Ahmad (2022) pointed that the library curriculum should be designed and implemented in such a manner that it should not only prepare the students for the job market but also as successful entrepreneurs that can start anything on his/her own

to earn money. Therefore, both entrepreneurial and LIS skills should be inculcated side by side through facilities with more focus on practical and hands-on training more than theory. This enables a person to work as a librarian and be proactive in his/her professional duties in different areas and to fit-in and work in different libraries be it public, academic, school or specialized libraries. This study aims to: Identify the technological skills for enhanced employment; determine the career opportunities available for Librarians; identify some entrepreneurs in Librarianship and challenges hindering freelancers' work.

Technology and Libraries for Enhanced Employment

The emergence and fast developments of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have changed the way information is generated, stored and disseminated. It no longer seems difficult for librarians to accomplish their professional duties. The works in the library are being supported by various technologies and its facilities for the benefit of the users, libraries now disseminate information through a wide variety of technology that provide unlimited access. The opinion of Lorver and Terungwa (2019) stated that both technologies and libraries provide new roles, new activities, and skills from the profession to various service delivery. These services expose and assist professionals to get involved in activities as a freelancing to individuals. Such exposure enables students to acquire personal knowledge and professional skills to encourage the attitudes that will support their future development and employment.

The technological facilities will help the graduates of library profession to acquire some employability skills, which is an essential qualification for both many job positions and self-determined services that have become necessary for an individual's success just within an

environment. Some employable skills needed by a library professional according to Anyanwu *et al.* (2013) are as follows: Effective communication skills, Professional ethical standards and social responsibility, Ability to fulfil client needs/customer service, Project management skills, critical, reflective and creative thinking, Problem-solving skills, Marketing skills, Accounting, Human resource skills, Ability to build partnerships and alliances, Effective team relationship skills, Self-management skills, A commitment to lifelong learning, Information and communications technology and technology application skills, information literacy skills, and Supervisory skills. All these skills are normally acquired through various programmes in the field of librarianship, which in turn tend to assist the professionals in discharging duties pertaining to their profession, for either service in the library and their personal services as a freelancer.

ICT has really energized the work of the librarians to be faster, effective and efficient. It has introduced a new service environment in libraries for the library professionals. In the opinion of Felix, Bello, and Saidu (2020), which expressed that the introduction of internet and possibly technologies have changed the ways of accessing and locating information and thus changed the functions of the library professionals in the modern information age. Technologies have really assisted to provide opportunities that helps librarians in achieving their mission of providing information to meet various needs of the digital age users, and eliminates series of stress for both librarians and users of the library for optimum and desired goal (Anyaku, Osuigwe & Oguaka, 2015).

The conventional responsibility of informational experts is to provide unrestricted access to information to users in various formats in this digital library working environment, which has been an

advantage to information seekers. Okiki, and Durodolu (2018) is of the opinion that new technologies are being deployed and these change the services that libraries provide, for example, online reference, instruction, document delivery, user-initiated library loan. In gaining momentum, information technology brought new various forms of libraries that has different mode of disseminating information, such libraries as Automated Library, Media Libraries, Electronic Libraries, Virtual Libraries and Digital Libraries, which has a technology induced Library System that has specific features, requirements and service mode to function better (Omekwu 2004) in Onuoha & Obialor 2015).

Career Opportunities for Librarians

Choosing a career opportunity by individuals is one of the most vital ventures, though difficult to arrive at a conclusive decisions for it to work-out in lifetime, hence everyone deserves that right to make the choice. A good career helps one to set a professional goals and device means of developing a strategy of ascending where you want to be in life. Good career development paves positive ways for freelance. The findings of Ukamaka et al (2020) have that librarianship has evolved over the years to the extent that the concept of the profession and the practitioners is changing for the better and would be able to direct would-be graduates on the career opportunities that would be better for them in life.

In the same vein, students should be made to freely discuss their intended dreams regarding career with various course advisers, course mates, friends and counselors. Some of the academic pathways in librarianship that is highly directive, which will enable individuals to explore are as

follows: Academic librarianship, Record management/ Special collection/ Archiving, Database administration/ Development, Digital Librarianship, Children's Librarianship, Information Architecture, Knowledge organization, Law Librarianship, Public Librarianship, and Special/ Corporate Librarianship.

These pathways depend on individuals' passion and areas of specialization to explore. It is always a welcoming idea, as individuals really explore and have entrepreneurial attitude towards areas of interest to function well. Kikon *et al.* (2022) in their study on choosing librarianship as a choice of career outline public librarian, digital asset, data librarian and data manager, metadata specialist, information consultants and information literacy instructor as diverse career opportunities available for librarians.

In librarianship, graduates have some entrepreneurial ventures to engage in for a pay. Information has created ways for the benefit of librarians, information scientist and disseminators. The findings of Ntogo-Saghanen and Eson (2021) inferred that information entrepreneurship is the bedrock for library and information professionals and would-be graduates who would prefer to set up their private businesses and wealth creation, self-reliance and employers of labour for getting money. This is possibly vital because the main responsibilities of modern librarians is provision and maintenance of information in many formats such as physical books, electronic resources, databases and web based and digital resources, which assists them for their immediate services to their clientele. These create opportunities for librarians for freelancing, which will help them to exercise their professional duties and services as a venture for earning money.

Freelancing and Entrepreneurship in Library and Information Science

Freelancing is the act of engaging in a work or services for a pay. It is not limited to local labours as we know, but it is now mechanized in such a way that most graduates in different fields of study have their services to offer or sell out to individuals for fee. The findings of Pehkonen (2013) stated that nowadays, freelancers are self-employed professionals often working in creative, managerial or technical fields, like knowledge workers, they are often associated with certain professions, such as translation, journalism and graphic design. Unemployment that is everywhere create awareness on freelancers to actually know of different services they can render to individuals in order to get some coins. According to Akande and Otulugbu (2021), it is not a hidden fact that the level of unemployment keeps on rising all over the world, to the extent that graduates need to think out on how to survive and a need for skill acquisition and professional development among university graduates to have a competitive advantage in the global market.

Library professionals are not exception on that, they have different areas they can render services in order to have cash at hand. Freelance librarian in other words is a self-employed librarian, who can engage in any aspect of his/her profession and make money for a living. In the opinion of Ogbo, Okorie and Orji, (2022), which stated that we are living in an information age where there are numerous things to know and engage-in, makes it imperative for a freelance librarian to establish an information-based business because there are opportunities abound for a freelance librarian who is regarded as an information expert. Similarly, With the opinion of John, Nwosu, and Simisaiye (2017) who see a freelance librarian as a trained library and information scientist who is self - employed,

acting independently and markets, sells, and provides information services using available resources for profit.

This freelancing does a lot for individuals to be engaged with tangible services to make some money. Freelance content writers can get a huge amount of money from publishers if they create unique and interesting content for publishing in the media like newspapers and magazines, also encourages and introduces new services and market strategies to the students to become exceptional entrepreneurs (Akande and Otulugbu, (2021). This entrepreneurial spirit in students will help them to go a long way in providing finance-attracting services when they graduate, even when they have a managerial job, can be combined for more profitable outcome financially. The following business opportunities are available to freelance librarians: Surfing of information, Research writing, Indexing and abstracting, Compilation of bibliographies, Compilation of directories, Current awareness services, Publishing, Translation, Organisation of information, Consultancy services, Collection organization, Cataloguing of information resources/materials, Records management, Database design, Information retrieval, Document delivery, and Literature searching.

As freelancing is situated somewhere between employment and entrepreneurship, but freelancers form a fairly heterogeneous group, they freelancers are in most cases considered to be knowledge workers; they are then basically offering knowledge intensive services for their clients. The concept of knowledge intensive services is used to refer to businesses, in which knowledge is the main production factor and the product offered. They face some challenges that draw them back from their businesses.

Challenges encountered by Freelancers

Despite this aspect of free agency and self-reliance, the freelancer still faces some constraints and remains dependent on others; the context is merely different to regular employment. Freelancers may then perform independently and have more freedom than regular employees, but they also have to face many challenges, in order to retain that freedom. Furthermore, it can be challenging to enter these networks and to establish a reputation that is acknowledged by clients. On the other hand, the market might also be too open, since there are generally many freelancers offering the same service. Some freelancers are also willing to work for minimal pay, which deteriorates bargaining power of freelancers. With the opinion of Rahman and Rahman (2017), they emphasized that some problems faced by the freelancers who have just started their journey in freelancing market are mainly lack of working skills, lack of communication skills, and absence of better payment method, difficult to get work and Internet speed for the new freelancers. Some outstanding challenges of the freelancers as was opined by Campana, (2023) includes:

1. **Time management:** This is an every-day challenge for freelancers. In freelancing, you can seriously get busy at times, especially if you have many projects with hectic deadlines that are fast approaching, to manage it becomes a challenge.
2. **Limited Job Opportunities:** It can be difficult to freelance in the library field because many traditional library employment are full-time, on-site roles. Compared to other freelancing professions, the number of prospects for librarians may be scarcer.
3. **Unrealistic Client Requests:** Dealing with clients can cause headaches for many freelancers.

4. **Getting Clients:** As a freelance librarian, getting clients can be challenging, especially when you're up against other established library institutions and organizations. It may be necessary to network, promote, and showcase the distinctive value and experience that a freelance librarian brings to the table in order to develop a clientele and land regular contracts.
5. **Access to Resources:** Accessing specialized library resources may be difficult for freelance librarians. They might not have the same access to substantial library collections, databases, or subscriptions as librarians working in library institutions, which can affect their capacity to provide thorough research or information services.
6. **Professional Development:** To stay abreast of current developments and innovations in the library industry, freelancers must invest in continual professional development. Accessing training opportunities and keeping up with technological changes in the workplace, however, accessing training opportunities and staying current with industry advancements may require more effort and investment as a freelancer compared to librarians employed in organizations with professional development resources

In all of these challenges, freelancers are still struggling to get contracts and services in order to cope with life upkeep. It is advisable that organizations and establishments to make fundamental ways to change the hardships of freelancing, if they can or rather a significant improvement towards freelancers' working conditions and work experiences for them for have a big smile on their face while they work.

Suggestions for Way Forward

Despite these obstacles, freelance librarians can succeed by making the most of their specialization, adjusting to shifting market demands, and focusing on specialized sections of the library industry. The information needs of clients and organizations can be met while freelance librarians build rewarding careers through strategic marketing, ongoing professional development, and efficient client management. The followings are the positive suggestions:

1. The would-be graduates are to embark on continuous professional development for competence and skill acquisition for different entrepreneurship ventures and services.
2. There should be an integration of an entrepreneur-friendly curriculum in library schools that will prepare the graduates for self-employment.
3. The library professionals should develop the entrepreneurial culture and mindset for necessity's sake.
4. Librarians and information professionals must cultivate the habit of attending workshops and seminars on entrepreneurship for the spirit to be imbibed.

Conclusion

Freelancing is often a foot note in entrepreneurship studies, as it is considered to be merely one form of self-employment, Freelancers are often categorised as a subset of owner-managers that work in knowledge-intensive fields providing knowledge services for their clients. They can operate under various legal business forms. It is of importance for any freelancer to examine the areas of services he/she will do better and be proactive to serve the public in order to make money. With such

services and hard work, they can always keep themselves going without government job to work with.

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