

FREELANCE LIBRARIANSHIP IN NIGERIA: AN IMPERATIVE IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC RECESSION**By****Ogbo, Ifeanyi Edwin (CLN)****Okorie, Josephine N.****Orji, Chinyere Chris (CLN)****Abstract**

The main objective of the study is to determine the possibility of a self-employed librarian (freelance librarian) surviving in the Nigerian economy bedeviled by recession. A survey method was adopted for the study, involving purposive sample size of 60 accessible librarians working in 17 libraries in Enugu East and West senatorial Zones of Enugu State. Five research objectives guided the study, covering the reasons for people becoming self-employed; the attributes of a freelance librarian; the business opportunities open to a freelance librarian; the appropriate academic qualifications and skills required to be a successful freelance librarian, and the sources of fund available to a freelance librarian. The findings from the study indicated that there are seven major reasons that propel individuals to establish businesses. There are six major attributes of a freelance librarian. Three business opportunities (e.g. information production, organisation, and retrieval) are open to a freelance librarian. To enable him succeed, he needs to obtain to degree or Higher National Diploma (HND) in librarianship, plus some knowledge of Accounting and Marketing and some skills in printing and use of the computer. The study also found out five major sources of fund available for freelance librarianship.

Key Words: Freelance, Librarianship, imperative, and recession

Introduction

Necessity, it is said, is the mother of invention. People, irrespective of gender, race and religious affiliation, tend to be ingenuous when challenged. Aeroplane, for instance, was invented in order to overcome the challenges posed by difficult land terrains and the storm-infested waterways. When malaria became a killer disease, quinine was discovered to deal a decisive blow to it. One day, the human race would be greatly thrilled to know that a drug for the cure of HIV/AIDS has been discovered. It is just a matter of time as time is the greatest healer of all imaginable wounds.

From the analogy above, businesses have been established as a result of harsh economic conditions. Morrison (1998) argued in favour of the above assertion, saying that frequently, the truth is that in a situation of high unemployment, and/or deprivations of social and economic nature, persons are frequently forced to choose entrepreneurship. In this scenario, individuals may be pushed into

entrepreneurship. Apart from creating a job for self-employment, the job creator ends up providing jobs for others, thereby, helping in raising man's standard of living. Consequently, the job creator is involved in contributing his own quota to the development of the society in which he lives (Ogbo, 2003). The import of this paper is, therefore, to x-ray the need for freelance librarianship in the Nigerian economy bedeviled by depression.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of the study is to determine strategies for enhancing the survival of self-employed librarianship (freelance librarianship) in the Nigerian economy bedeviled by recession. The specific objectives include to:

1. ascertain the reasons for people becoming self-employed.
2. ascertain the attributes or characteristics of a freelance librarian.
3. identify the business opportunities open to a freelance librarian.
4. determine appropriate academic qualifications and skills required to be a successful freelance librarian.
5. identify the sources of fund available to a freelance librarian.

Conceptual Framework

The major concepts in the work are - freelance, librarianship, imperative, and recession.

Librarianship, according to **Chambers 21st century dictionary** is "the work of a librarian". Librarianship is a British- oriented concept while the American version is Library Science. Richardson (2010) defined library science as the scientific study of the intersection of books and people, saying that the term is still used interchangeably with librarianship, library and information science and perhaps even information science. Edoaka (2000) stated that the discipline centres on systematic study of the principles

and skills pertinent to all aspects of library operations, resources and administration. According to him, any matter that touches on the establishment called library or its services forms part of library science.

Recession, according to International encyclopedia of the social sciences (2008) is the declining phase of the business cycle, where seasonally adjusted output falls significantly and unemployment increases, though by no means in every industry. Thingan (2010) asserted that recession starts when there is downward descend from the "peak" which is of a short duration. The period marks the turning point during which the forces that make for contraction finally win over the forces of expansion. The outward signs, according to the author, are liquidation in the stock market, strain in the banking system and some liquidation of bank loans and the beginning of the decline of prices. During recession, profit margin shrinks as cost start overtaking prices, employment, income and demand decline. During recession, there is movement of people outside the country in search of greener pastures, and greater percentage of people living below the poverty line.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria had been in a period of recession since 1981 when austerity measures were introduced in the country by the erstwhile Shagari administration. Since then, recession had dwelt among us. For instance, in a country of 150m people (2006 census) or 170,123,740 (July, 2012 estimate), the rate of unemployment is 30% (Doreo Partners, 2013). This means that about 51,037,122 Nigerian people are without jobs. The Nigeria's unemployment rate is spiraling upwards, growing at 16% per year. The youth of the nation, according to Doreo Partners (2013), are the most impacted, with a youth unemployment rate over 50%. The rate of inflation is unbearably high. In view of the above- mentioned distortions in the economy, there is the need for freelancing in librarianship. Morrison (1998) adduced three major reasons that compel entrepreneurs to choose entrepreneurship. They are:

- Buying personal independence through the process of new venture creation;
- Situation of economic imbalance;
- Altruistic motive.

Buying Personal Independence: Buying personal independence, or simply put, being one's own boss is one of the major factors that motivate and sustain entrepreneurial efforts. In this respect, according to Morrison (1998), entrepreneurship may be seen as an aspect of the theory of choice. For instance, some people prefer less pay to losing their freedom.

Situation of Economic Imbalance: Morrison (1998) is of the view that in a situation of high unemployment and/or other deprivations of a social and economic nature, people are frequently forced to choose entrepreneurship as the only alternative to no job and no income. Business literature is replete with instances of people who were able to create businesses because they had no jobs or they were displaced from their jobs. As nature hates vacuum, entrepreneurs create jobs to fill any existing vacuum.

Altruistic Motive: Most often, businesses are established to solve the problems of the society. The rate of crimes in the society is usually reasonably reduced if jobs are readily available. Bateman and Shell (2002) also identified three major reasons entrepreneurs start their own businesses. They are:

- Seeking independence and a feeling of being part of the action (i.e. being their own boss).
- When they feel that their progress is being blocked at big companies or when they feel frustrated by bureaucracy.
- When they see profit potential lying ahead.

Finally, Templeman (2018) identified twenty (20) reasons for starting one's businesses. They are: Freedom; Having a story to tell (being in control); Tax benefits; Pride; Being able to pass the skills to your posterity; Job security; Networking with other entrepreneurs; Doing good; Novelty; Mentorship (having

been trained and willing to train others); Becoming an expert; Acquiring skills; Determination; Recognition; Financial independence; Reinvention; Change the world (e.g. Elton Musk, Bill Gates, Sergey Brin, etc); Create jobs; Building brand name; and, the entrepreneur's personal reason

A freelance librarian is just like every other businessman who seeks an opportunity and exploits it. More importantly, he must have to earn profit for which they are known. Entrepreneurs have qualities or attributes for which they are known. Stoner and Freeman (1995) listed five of these qualities. They are:

- Entrepreneurs are found to be high in need achievements;
- They believe that individuals "pull their strings" not by fate or luck;
- Tolerance for risk;
- Tolerance for ambiguity;
- They have type "A" behavior - the need to get more done in less time.

Morrison (1998) asserted that entrepreneurs must possess the following attributes:

- They are role models worthy of emulation and associated with positive connotation such as "positive" spirit, zeal and creativity;
- They have the commitment to turn that vision into reality;
- They see an opportunity and commercialise it;
- They, in the process, create wealth and jobs that, hopefully benefit the rest of the society.

Bateman and Snell (2002) listed the following attributes of a good entrepreneur. They are:

- Commitment and determination;
- Opportunity obsession (i.e. intimate knowledge of customer's needs);
- Tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty;
- Motivation to excel (i.e. they set high but realistic goals and strong desire to achieve)

Numerous business opportunities abound for a freelance librarian who is regarded as an information expert. Noting that information creates wealth, Ekere (2005) posited that knowledge is a business and information is a commodity. That we are living in an information age where there is much to know in a short space of time makes it imperative for a freelance librarian to establish an information-based business. Ekere (2005) maintained that the services which the librarian working in academic libraries could offer to earn fee for their organisations could be categorised into three - production of information, organisation of information, and information retrieval. Incidentally, these services could be performed by a freelance librarian to earn a comfortable living.

Production of Information: The services under this category include: research, indexing and abstracting, compilation of bibliographies, current awareness services, directory compilation, publishing and translation services.

Information Organisation: Services under this category include: consultancy, collection organisation, records management, cataloguing of materials, and database management.

Information Retrieval: The two services under this category are document delivery and literature searching in different areas of study.

Other Related Services to the other categories are organising of seminars/conferences, training of staff of libraries or clients in information work, printing and binding services, subject expertise, designing (not structural) of library building, supply of library materials, including books. Contributing to what librarians can do to earn a living, Ogbo (1998) mentioned the following - publishing, indexing and abstracting services, library consultancy services, establishment of information centres, printing and binding services. Rodriguez (2018) stated that freelancing information professionals can consult, teach, research, edit, index, run workshops, adjunct at universities, write content, design for web, opt mix suites for search engines, analyse data, tell stories at children's programmes, staff reference desks on weekends

and evenings, etc. According to him, all these could be done in addition to the freelancer's working hours (if employed elsewhere).

The minimum educational **Educational Qualification** required **to be a Successful Freelance Librarian** should be an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in librarianship. The better option is a Higher National Diploma (HND)/Bachelor of library and Information Science. The best, however, would a Master or Ph.D degree. Adequate formal education would enable the freelancer to be abreast of the concepts in the field of study to be able to know what to market, when, where and how. He needs not hold a degree in marketing and accounting but he should have some knowledge of the two subject areas. Contributing to educational qualifications of a freelance librarian, Careelance (2018) stated that educational requirements for a librarian differ from country to another. While some are okay with bachelor's degree, others may require master's degree as a prerequisite. According to the organisation, in America, you are required to have a master's degree in the area of library and information studies from a university accredited by American Library Association (ALA).

Skills required include word processing and printing skills. Although printing is a skilled trade, the freelancer can acquire printing skills through formal or informal training. Careelance (2018) argued that people are willing to hire librarians who possess the following skills.

- Information curation: This is the primary task of any librarian. This is the ability to evaluate and categorise content under appropriate titles;
- Good research skills: while curating information, librarians should make themselves aware of the content, the relevance of the book, and other essential information. To be a good researcher, a librarian should naturally have a knack for reading. He must read stuff from all genres to improve his knowledge.

- Digital preservation: the world has gone digital. The modern day librarian must be good with technology. Computer skills are imperative to carry out modern day library functions such as maintenance of records on old journals, number of books issued, etc.
- Leadership: though this may sound strange, a librarian must possess good leadership skills. He must, in fact, lead well.
- Enforcing discipline: Although a librarian must be friendly, he should, however, possess robust and stern personality to be able to enforce discipline.

Sources of Fund Available to a Freelance Librarian include:

Borrowing from Friends and Relatives: If friends and relatives are sure of the viability, genuineness of the business venture and the managerial ability of the borrower of fund, they could part with their money for the establishment of such a business.

Borrowing from Banks: With the implementation of the Central Bank of Nigeria policy that banks should capitalise to a sum above N25b minimum asset base, the banks that serviced this policy are now financially well positioned to extend credits to private entrepreneurs. Using salary account as a security, many workers can borrow any amount, depending on their income, at an interest rate not more than 18%. In an effort to promote business enterprise, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004), under her NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy) programme promises measures that would make entrepreneurs have increased access to credit.

Research Method

Survey method was used for the study as, according to Aina and Ajiferuke (2002), it is a systematic and comprehensive collection of data about opinions, feelings, beliefs and behaviours of people. The data collected is achieved through observation, interview or questionnaire to a relatively

large and representative sample of the population of interest. The area of study comprised the Enugu East and West Senatorial Zones of Enugu State.

The population of study comprised the sixty professional librarians working in the seventeen (17) library establishments in the area of study. The library establishments, with the number of librarians used for the study are listed in alphabetical order below:

1. Department for International Development (DFID), Enugu (2)
2. Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu. (6)
3. Enugu State Library Board (6)
4. Enugu State Public Service Reform Department (1)
5. Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (1)
6. Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu (6)
7. Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu (7)
8. Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu (5)
9. Ministry of Justice Library, Enugu (2)
10. National Library, Enugu (7)
11. National Orthopedic Hospital, Enugu (3)
12. Nigerian Law School, Agbani (3)
13. Office of the Head of Service, Enugu State (1)
14. Project Development Institute (PRODA), Enugu (2)
15. Renaissance University, Ugbawka (1)
16. Federal School of Dental Technology and Therapy (2)
17. University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (7)

All the accessible professional librarians in the seventeen libraries were selected. All librarians used for the study returned their questionnaire, ensuring 100% rate of return.

The data collected from the research instrument was analysed using the mean scores after being treated to Likert scale on four points. Comparing the criteria mean of 2.50 with the computed 2 mean, an item in the questionnaire is said to be favourable if equal or more than the criteria mean. Conversely, if the computed mean is less than the criteria mean, it is regarded as unfavourable.

Results

Table 1: Responses of librarians on the reasons people establish businesses

Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
i. To be one's own boss	33	25	2	0	3.52	Accept
ii. When they are laid off	14	40	4	2	3.10	Accept
iii. When they feel challenged e.g. if they feel that their progress is being blocked	13	38	7	2	3.03	Accept
iv. To provide employment to others	20	30	6	4	3.10	Accept
v. To earn greater profit	35	25	0	0	3.58	Accept
vi. In order to compete with existing businesses.	3	16	36	5	2.28	Reject
vii. To ensure job security	30	20	10	0	3.33	Accept
viii. For the purpose of doing good	20	30	0	10	3.00	Accept

From the table above, it is known that people establish businesses for all the reasons listed above except the establishment of businesses to compete with existing ones (2.28). Of all the reasons, to earn profit has the highest level of acceptance (3.58), while the lowest is to provide employment to others with 2.82 acceptance level. In a response to an open-ended questionnaire, a respondent suggested that people establish businesses to be self-reliant and exhibit creativity and sometimes to survive and feed the family.

Table 2: The attributes required of a freelance librarian include:

Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
i. He should have commitment and determination	40	20	0	0	3.67	Accept
ii. He should have leadership qualities	32	25	3	0	3.48	Accept
iii. He should be able to see an opportunity and commercialise it	20	34	3	3	3.18	Accept

iv.	He should possess high degree of creativity	35	25	0	0	3.58	Accept
v.	He should be a calculated risk taker and risk minimize	34	15	11	0	3.38	Accept
vi.	He should be a good motivator	30	28	2	0	3.47	Accept

It is noted, from the table, that the best attribute a freelance librarian should possess is commitment and determination with acceptance level of 3.67. The lowest attribute is that he should be able to see an opportunity and commercialise it (3.18). All the six attributes listed in the questionnaire are, however, accepted. In addition to the six, some respondents suggested that a freelancer should be versatile in most subjects and travel extra miles in order to satisfy the needs of his patrons.

Table 3: Business opportunities open to a freelance librarian include:

Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
(a) Production of Information						
i. Research	42	15	3	0	3.65	Accept
ii. Indexing and abstracting	36	23	1	0	3.58	Accept
iii. Compilation of bibliographies	28	30	2	0	3.43	Accept
iv. Compilation of directories	31	24	3	2	3.40	Accept
v. Current awareness services (CAS)	31	21	8	0	3.38	Accept
vi. Publishing	20	27	10	3	3.06	Accept
vii. Translation	15	26	14	5	2.85	Accept
(b) Organisation of information						
viii. Consultancy	41	18	1	0	3.67	Accept
ix. Collection organisation	29	29	2	0	3.45	Accept
x. Cataloguing of materials	33	25	2	0	3.52	Accept
xi. Database design	17	35	8	0	3.15	Accept
(c) Information retrieval						
xii. Document delivery	30	20	10	0	3.33	Accept
xiii. Literature searching	30	25	5	0	3.42	Accept

With high level of acceptance, it is noted from the table that all the thirteen business opportunities are open to a freelance librarian. However, while consultancy has the highest level of acceptance (3.67), translation has the lowest level of acceptance (2.85).

Table 4: Education qualifications and other skills required to be a successful freelance Librarian include:

Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
i. Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in librarianship	3	21	28	3	2.22	Reject
ii. Higher National Diploma (HND) in librarianship	13	38	2	2	2.87	Reject
iii. Bachelor of Arts or Science (B.A./B.Sc.) in librarianship.	35	20	5	0	3.53	Accept
iv. Master degree in librarianship	30	20	10	0	3.33	Accept
v. Inclusion of adequate dose of entrepreneurship education in the library and information science curriculum	28	24	3	0	3.17	Accept
vi. Knowledge in marketing	16	32	6	1	2.88	Accept
vii. Knowledge in accounting	5	35	15	0	2.58	Accept
viii. Skills in printing and use of computer	28	26	5	1	3.35	Accept

With the highest level of acceptance of 3.53, it is noted in the table that a degree in librarianship is enough educational qualification to be a successful freelance librarian. Higher National Diploma (HND) is also accepted (2.87). However, Ordinary National Diploma (OND) is rejected as a qualification required to be a successful freelance librarian (2.22). Some respondents suggested higher qualification such as Ph.D. It has to be noted that Ph.D. is more suitable for academic work than practical entrepreneurship. The freelancer should have some knowledge of Accountancy and Marketing and some skills in printing and use of computer.

Table 5: Sources of fund available to a freelance librarian include

Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
i. Private savings	37	16	7	0	3.50	Accept
ii. Borrowing from friends and relations	10	43	7	0	3.05	Accept
iii. Borrowing from banks	17	35	7	1	3.13	Accept
iv. Entering into partnership	20	37	3	0	3.28	Accept
v. Borrowing from Co-operative societies	28	25	7	0	3.35	Accept

From the table, it is seen that of all the sources of fund available to a freelance librarian, private savings has the highest level of acceptance (3.50). Borrowing from friends and relations has the lowest

acceptance level (3.05). This is not surprising as people find it difficult to borrow from private individuals due to high level of poverty in the country. Also, potential lenders sometimes doubt the ability of the borrower and the viability of the business to be established. Respondents suggested that fund could be sourced through donation, government poverty reduction schemes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

- 1) Every field of study at the tertiary level should have an articulated body of entrepreneurial education that will enable beneficiaries set up small businesses after graduation.
- 2) Adequate dose of computer education should be given to students of Library and Information Science to enable them performs well in this information age.
- 3) Government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities (good roads, uninterrupted power supply, water, telecommunications, and security of lives and property) to enable businesses thrive.

Government should also create more business-friendly environment (e.g. tax friendly policy) capable of promoting private enterprises.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the need for freelance librarianship in Nigeria in this period of economic recession. It has also empirically established that many factors are responsible for the establishment of new business - being one's own boss, distortions in the economy (as the world finds herself now), and the need to help humanity etc. From the paper, three broad business opportunities are open to a freelance librarian. They are - information production, organisation, and retrieval.

In order to succeed, the freelance librarian should have attributes or characteristics that would enable him succeed in his business. These include commitment and determination; leadership qualities; opportunity seeking; creativity; risk taking; and the ability to motivate others. Apart from that, he must

have acquired a well-articulated body of formal education in library and Information Science and some skills in Word Processing, printing, accounting and marketing. Fund, which is a sine qua non for the survival of any business, could be saved, borrowed from friends and relations, borrowed from banks, co-operation societies or raised through donation.

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