

Skills and Ethics for the Library and Information Service Businesses

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Abstract

This paper is a focus on skills and ethics for the library and information service businesses. It discussed the philosophy of librarianship and the laws that are prevalent in library and information science. The essence of these laws is to ensure that the right services are provided for users while a good philosophy is expected to facilitate the development of the library profession. It highlighted the objectives of library and information profession. It also revealed the self-employed businesses available to library and information science professionals and the competencies, ethics and skills required for the successful operation of these self-employed businesses. The paper equally discussed the foundation for a successful business and challenges to undertaking entrepreneurial opportunities by library and information science 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 endeavors. This is why Ekuoye (2007) opines that it is sad that there are so many earnest and hard working librarians who think excelling in librarianship is inconceivable.

In this information age, the roles of information as a veritable economic resource cannot be over emphasized. 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). Information and communication technology (ICT) has dramatically altered the structure of markets in many industries and corporate organizations. Onaade (2012) asserts that with the recent revolutions in ICT, knowledge societies have been expanded, modified and exemplified. Thus, ICT have changed and enhanced the LIS profession around the world.

The revolution of ICT had 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 entrepreneurial 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 an enterprise using a reasonable degree of initiative, skills and competencies necessary to transform change into opportunities thereby stemming personal satisfaction, monetary rewards and independence.

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Philosophy of Librarianship

Philosophy is the investigation to the truth concerning a specific phenomenon. It is an inquiry into knowledge. It seeks to identify the aims and objectives of events or occurrences. It aims at finding out the reason why certain incidents take place. The philosophy of library science or librarianship is aimed at identifying the origin, essence or basis of librarianship. The principle of librarianship shows the "fundamental principles upon which all the practice, techniques and activities of librarianship are based" (Anyanwu, 2008). The philosophies of librarianship are those issues that will facilitate the growth and successful development of librarianship. They are all those facts that will help in identifying solutions to the problems of librarianship. Philosophy of librarianship is essential for effective decision making. It should be based on the needs of the community being served. A philosophy "may be changed, modified and replaced to meet the changing needs of the community being served" (Anyanwu, 2008).

There is no agreement on accepted philosophy of librarianship, however the following kinds of philosophy can be identified:

1. Practical philosophy
2. Deductive philosophy
3. Inductive philosophy
4. Social philosophy

Many libraries believe that philosophy of librarianship should be practical in orientation, as search into nature will not yield any result. It is believed that since librarianship is practical, it should be based on practical philosophy. The deductive philosophy which is opposed to practical philosophy believes that there should be theoretical study of librarianship which will help in achieving proper practical results. Inductive philosophy advocates the drawing of conclusions from real experiences. The inductive philosophy supports the application of scientific methods in solving problems relating to librarianship. The proponents of social philosophy believe that in view of the fact that the essence of the library is to serve the needs of a community, it is therefore expected to reflect the interest and needs of such community as there will be no library without the community. In other words, social philosophy of librarianship advocates that since librarianship does not function in a vacuum, the users of the library should always be considered in the scheme of things.

A good philosophy should reflect aspects of the four philosophies stated above to achieve the desired result and to ensure that the right kinds of services are made available to the clientele. The appropriate kind of philosophy of librarianship should be in line with five laws of library science as identified by S. R. Ranganathan. These laws are:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his or her book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. The library is a growing organism.

In a nutshell, these laws are saying that library materials should be made accessible to users, the needs of all the clientele should be reflected in the collection, every book in the library has a user who will find it useful and the needs of the user should be made available on record time.

In 1998, Michael Gorman also recommended some laws that should be added to the five laws of Ranganathan. These laws are as follows:

1. Libraries serve humanity
2. Respect all forms in which knowledge is communicated
3. Use technology intelligently to enhance service
4. Protect free access to knowledge
5. Honour the past and create the future

The essence of these laws is to ensure that the right services are provided for users. A good philosophy of librarianship is expected to facilitate the development of the library profession.

Objectives of Library and Information Profession

The objectives of library and information profession are highlighted as follows:

- √ To unite all persons working in or interested in library work, by convening conferences and meetings for the discussions of matters affecting libraries - their regulations, management or otherwise
- √ To encourage the promotion, establishment and improvement of libraries and library services
- √ To promote and encourage bibliographic study and research
- √ To improve the standard of librarianship and the status of the library profession
- √ To collect, collate and publish information of benefit to members
- √ To do all such lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the fulfillment of the above objectives.

Self-Employed Businesses Available to Library and Information Science Professionals

There are many self-employment options available to library and information science professionals as an entrepreneur. Among them are as follows:

1. Publishing: The publishing sector is a viable option available to graduates of library and information science. With proper entrepreneurship education, the graduates of LIS will be better disposed to undertake ventures in publishing
2. Development of Computer Software: Graduates of LIS can take the option of developing computer software that will be used specifically for specific tasks in libraries and information centres.
3. Production and sale of library equipment: Production of library equipment is another option available to graduates of LIS. They can be involved in the production of audio visual equipment, catalogue cards, metal shelf, book stands, etc used in library and information centres.
4. Information brokerage and consultancy services: Graduates in library and information science can be involved in information brokerage and consultancy services whereby they will be repackaging information for clients for a fee.
5. Book selling Business: Graduates in LIS can also be involved in book selling business. With the knowledge of librarianship, they are better disposed to serve the various libraries by supplying books to them and as well liaise with management of tertiary institutions to sell books to their students.
6. Operation of business centres and cyber café business: Library and information science professionals can take the option of running a business centre where computer related activities such as typesetting, computer training, graphic designs and photocopying services amongst others can be carried out. The option of running a cyber café business is also available to him.
7. Computer maintenance: This is another option available to graduates of LIS. Knowledge of computer maintenance puts the graduate in a position to be self employed.

Competencies and Ethics for Library and Information Professionals

Personal competencies represent a set of skills, attitudes and values that enable librarians to work efficiently; be good communicators focus on continuing learning throughout their careers, demonstrate the values- added nature of their contributions and survive in the new world of work.

The following, according to Hasham and Mokhtar (2012), highlight the major professional and personal competencies of new era librarians:

Professional competencies

- Has expert knowledge of the content of information resources including the ability to critically evaluate and filter them
- Has specialized subject knowledge appropriate to the business of the organization
- Develops and manages convenient, accessible and cost-effective information services that are aligned with the strategic directions of the organization
- Provides excellent instruction and support for library and information service users
- Access information needs and designs and markets value-added information services and products to meet identified needs
- Uses appropriate business and management approaches to communicate the importance of information services to senior management
- Evaluates the outcomes of information use and conducts research related to the solution of information management problems

- Continually improve information services in response to the changing needs

Personal competencies

- Committed to service excellence
- Seeks out challenges and sees new opportunity both inside and outside the library
- Sees the big picture
- Creates an environment of mutual respect and trust
- Has effective communication skills
- Works well with others in a team
- Provides leadership
- Plans, prioritizes and focuses on what is critical
- Committed to lifelong learning and personal career planning
- Have personal business skills and creates new opportunities
- Recognizes the value of professional networking and solidarity
- Is flexible and positive in a time of continuing change

Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals

The conduct of members should be characterized by the following general principles and values:

1. Concern for the public good in all professional matters, including respect for diversity within society and the promotion of equal opportunities and human rights
2. Concern for the good reputation of the information profession
3. Commitment to the defence and the advancement of access to information, ideas and works of the organization
4. Provision of the best possible service within available resources
5. Concern for balancing the needs of actual and potential users and the reasonable demands of employers
6. Equitable treatment of all information users
7. Impartiality and avoidance of inappropriate bias in acquiring and evaluating information and in mediating it to other information users
8. Respect for confidentiality and privacy in dealing with information users
9. Concern for the conservation and preservation of our information heritage in all formats
10. Respect for, and understanding of the integrity of information items and for the intellectual effort of those who created them
11. Commitment to maintaining and improving personal professional knowledge, skills and competencies
12. Respect for the skills and competencies of all others, whether information professionals or information users, employers or colleagues (CILIP, 2004).

Skills Necessary for Entrepreneurship for Library and Information Science 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.dictionaty.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 specialization 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:

> Information technology skills: These has to do with networking, library automation and digitization, web based services, reprography, micrography, 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.

> 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 products and services, information resource management, information processing and organizing, e-mail, multi-media and video conferencing.

> 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.

> 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.

Business Ethics for Entrepreneurial Success

All successful entrepreneurs employ sound business ethics to bring the organization to an enviable position. The essence of entrepreneurial ethics is to build entrepreneurs whose activities grow wealth in any society. Entrepreneurial ethics would lead to positive attitudes toward raising successful entrepreneurs who would in turn build entrepreneurial institutions for societal growth and advancement.

Ethics is seen as moral principles that controls or influences a person's behaviour, a system of moral principles or rules of behaviour. Ethics on its own is "a belief of what is right or wrong; what is morally correct or acceptable" (Ordu and Okoroafor, 2014). Ethics, whether applied to business, law, medicine, or any other professional practice, is derived from a set of universal values. Some 3,000 years ago, Zarathustra summed up ethics pretty well when he called it "purity of intention, wisdom in utterance, and goodly deeds". Most writers on the subject agree on several universal values which underlie ethics. Among these virtues or values, we find: honesty and truthfulness; trustworthiness; fairness; respect for others; service; justice; moderation; wisdom and prudence.

Business ethics therefore, is a broad term that defines 'good' or 'bad' behaviour in business. Most specifically, the phrase encompasses policies and practices regarding controversial issues such as corporate governance, insider trading, bribery, discrimination, corporate social responsibility and fiduciary responsibilities. One author defines business ethics as " the study of how personal moral norms apply to the activities and goals of commercial enterprise. It is not a separate moral standard, but the study of how the business context poses its own unique problems for the moral person who acts as an agent of this system ". Since there is often no right or wrong decisions, business ethics reflects a state of consciousness about moral and human values and business obligations which permits sound reasoning on major decisions. Ethical behaviour is a must in entrepreneurship for the following reasons:

- (1) To enhance competitiveness
- (2) To preserve legitimacy
- (3) To deter white collar crime
- (4) To promote trust and prevent debilitating conflict

Does Good Business Ethics Pay?

Business ethics has a lot to do with business profit and survival. As borders break down, as competition increases, as the ability to compete and survive depend increasingly upon quality, faster and more reliable delivery and customer service, values such as honesty and integrity take on a new significant.

Far from accepting the commonly held theory that a period of unscrupulous and irresponsible personal wealth creation is essential to jump-start falling economies, I maintain that there is an immediate need for entrepreneurs to apply the values described above to the relationship with each of the stakeholders in their enterprise. Let's discuss a few examples of how good ethics can make good business sense.

- √ By developing a reputation for honesty, entrepreneurs can obtain financing from commercial banks and micro-credit facilities more easily and more quickly, and probably on more favourable terms.
- √ Trustworthiness is a key consideration in decision of foreign partners whether licensing, importing or exporting, or franchise. A local entrepreneur is unlikely to find reliable partners abroad unless he can convince them that he is worth of their trust and confidence.
- √ Fairness with employees and suppliers can make a real difference in their loyalty, motivation and productivity, as well as in the quality of product and services to customers.
- √ Respect for others is quickly sensed by customers and will make a difference once customers have a choice of alternative suppliers. It is also very important to demonstrate respect for employees in order to establish an internal climate favourable for good quality services.
- √ Justice also has its place in business. For example, suppliers can be real partners for the entrepreneur if they feel they are being treated fairly, and with justice, that is, being given a fair price and being paid on time rather than simply being exploited.

Ethical Business Tit-Bits

A successful business is like a well built house. Good ethics represent a solid foundation. To build a strong successful business, lay the following behaviour over an ethical foundation:

1. Punctuality: Be on time at business appointments. If you are late for meeting, you will lose customers and clients, and perhaps eventually even your business. If you are late or miss an appointment for some reasons beyond your control, beg apologies immediately and graciously.
2. Reliability: Just as your customers must be able to count on you to arrive on time, they will need to count on your product or service to perform properly. A successful business is built on customers who keep coming back because the product or service is reliable.
3. Courtesy: If you are not courteous and polite, you will turn off customers and business contacts. Advice and support from other business people are extremely important to new business owners, but you will not get them if you are rude.
4. Respect: Show respect for your customers and other business people by being punctual, reliable and courteous.
5. Communication: The best entrepreneurs are good listeners.
6. Clothing: Entrepreneurs should choose clothes that project the image they want their customers to associate with their business. Before your product or service can prove itself, you are already being judged by what you are wearing.
7. Neatness: Entrepreneurs should always make sure they look clean and neat
8. Honesty: Always tell the truth. You will develop a solid reputation that will draw customers to you. Make your word your bond and always stand by your word.
9. Empathy: Get in the habit of putting yourself in other people's shoes. This will help you in both selling and negotiating.
10. Competence: Be efficient and capable in all your dealing with customers and employees.
11. Honour: Good people are a fundamental part of good ethics. Give special attention on strong performers and people who exemplify the spirit of your organization. These are people who have helped you be successful, and you need to acknowledge and honour their contributions publicly, as well as privately.
12. Customers focus: A company is nothing if it does not have customers. A focus on your customers reinforces the responsibility you have to the market. Selling your customers short not only risks compromising your ethics, it also risks the long-term health of your company.
13. Being result-oriented: You wouldn't be an entrepreneur if you weren't focused on results already, but ethics factor into results too. Don't aim for results at any cost. Work on achieving your results within your company values. In a good business, results are more than just numbers, they are benchmarks and lessons for the future as well as for the present.

14. Risk-taking: Organizations that thrive, prosper and grow do so by taking risks. They do not stick to the sage path. As long as you stick to your philosophical guns, risk-taking poses no threat to your ethics.
15. Passion: Great organizations are comprised of people who have a passion for what they are doing. These people who are working for you for the thrill and challenge, not merely putting in time to collect a pay-check. They are excited, driven and believe that their work and effort can make a difference.
16. Persistence: People in awesome businesses have the will to persist. They will keep working even when results are not what they hoped or when customers refuse to buy. They behave with honour and integrity. They keep their focus on the customer's needs and wants. And, they are not satisfied until they achieve the goals and results that are expected.

Challenges to Undertaking Entrepreneurial Opportunities by Library and Information Science Professionals

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

- * Lack of entrepreneurial spirit: Many Library and Information Science 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. 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.
- * Fear of competition and failure: Fear of competition and failures hinder Library and Information Science 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.
- * Lack of knowledge on how to interact with entities that make businesses succeed: Many Library and Information Science 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.
- * Problems of generating compelling business ideas: Many Library and Information Science 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 ingredients 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

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 revolutionized the contemporary society. Library and Information Science 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.

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