Proposing adoption of entrepreneurial skills for enhanced library practice in Nigeria

Helen Nneka Okpala (nee Eke), Mrs Kingsley Tochukwu Ihejirika, Mr.
Proposing adoption of entrepreneurial skills for enhanced library practice in Nigeria

CONFERENCE PAPER · JANUARY 2012

READS
5

2 AUTHORS:

Helen Nneka Eke-Okpala
University of Nigeria
25 PUBLICATIONS  7 CITATIONS

Kingsley Ihejirika
University of Nigeria
1 PUBLICATION  0 CITATIONS

Available from: Helen Nneka Eke-Okpala
Retrieved on: 27 October 2015
Proposing adoption of entrepreneurial skills for enhanced library practice in Nigeria

Helen Nneka Eke  
Nnamdi Azikiwe Library  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
http://helenekehelen.wordpress.com  
helen.oke@unn.edu.ng

Kingsley T. Ihejirika  
Dept. of Library & Information Science  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.  
kingstochy2k@yahoo.com

Abstract  
The paper arises from the need to adopt entrepreneurial skills in library practice so as to enhance the traditional library practice in Nigeria. It has been observed that previous studies emphasize librarians becoming entrepreneurs with the knowledge of information skills thereby becoming infopreneurs or knowledge entrepreneurs as the case may be, but the current paper addresses library practice and how skills that make entrepreneurs thrive could be adopted in order to lift the image of the library and for librarians to see their work as their own business. The concept of entrepreneurship is discussed and issues regarding the matching of such skills with librarianship skills and spotting the basic entrepreneurial skills that are deemed necessary for the thriving of library services are raised. There are perceived threats to the adoption of entrepreneurial skills by librarians and such are highlighted. Resolution and proposal concerning the need to adopt entrepreneurial skills to enhance library practice in Nigeria are introduced as the originality of the paper.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurship, library practice, librarianship, librarians

Introduction  
Library and Information Science has come a long way and the synergy with the tools of information and communication technology has brought great opportunity and prominence to the discipline. The services of librarians are increasingly demanded across disciplines and institutions. On the other hand, librarians face a challenging and at the same time an exciting future. Their work environment is becoming increasingly complex- with constant change in the organizational, technological and information environment. In their professional work, they have to keep up with new technologies and systems, new forms of information, information media and information sources, and new tasks and roles. They also have to constantly justify themselves and their services, and demonstrate their value to the parent institution. Entrepreneurial skills are no doubt imperative for achieving this feat.

What usually comes to mind whenever entrepreneurship is mentioned is creation of wealth. Although nothing different is obtainable when an interview is conducted on individuals from different walks of life, regarding the concept of entrepreneurship because what virtually everybody views as entrepreneurship is business which is all about wealth creation. To an economist, an entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labor, materials and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before, and also one who introduces changes, innovations, and a new order. Entrepreneurship involves certain factors such as risk taking, competition, wealth creation, time and others. According to Hisrich and
Peters (2002), ‘entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence’. Entrepreneurial skills have been identified by Torren (2010) as very crucial for people that want to thrive in the business world to become successful. Five points identified were a) decision making, b) peoples skill c) planning, d) sales, and e) communication. In the words of Torren:

“In today’s world, if you want to be a successful entrepreneur, there is certainly an “evolutionary” process that we must all undertake. In other words, there are skills that we must each learn and hone in order to thrive in today’s business world, and we need to be able to adapt those skills to our surroundings, or be left behind with the “entrepreneurial Neanderthals.”( http://www.blogtrepreneur.com/2010/09/17/5-essential-skills-for-entrepreneurial-survival/).

In Nigeria today, Youth Corp Members are being trained on gaining entrepreneurial skills to equip them for life after youth service. This is done during the three weeks orientation. On March 16 2012, Nwogu Success wrote: “NYSC trains corps members on entrepreneurial skill”. This refers to Kwara State NYSC training of Corp members on entrepreneurial skills which was geared towards reducing graduate unemployment and boosting self reliance. Entrepreneurial skills amongst Nigerian youths cannot be overemphasized, not only among youth corp members, but to graduates that are probably working who may wish to gain other skills either for a better life or to serve humanity. In the library profession, entrepreneurship has not been quite topical except for tutorials in classes of which students neglect to put in practice. Librarianship is a profession that as lasted in Nigeria for some decades, especially with the advent of public libraries. Apart from Alan Burns’ subscription library in 1932, the first library that was available to the public in Nigeria was the Lagos Public Library, opened in 1946 by K.D. Ferguson of the British Council (Apeji, 1986). Public libraries offer librarians opportunity to meet more with the public; people from different walks of life, finding out what they need aside coming to the library to read. This is in contrast to what is obtainable in other libraries, especially academic libraries where the users all have almost the same characteristics in terms of purpose of library patronage. Whatever kind of library, the entrepreneurial skills required by the workers (librarians) ought to be the same and some of these skills and other issues are raised in the subsequent part of the paper. In the library profession, entrepreneurship is gaining grounds especially in the curriculum whereby University students are being taught entrepreneurial skills and the library profession. However, the reality of life makes for a wake-up call for librarians in a bid to embrace these skills and apply them not only in their private business ventures, but also in their routine job as service providers in the library environment. Therefore, beyond discussing entrepreneurial skills adoption by librarians for their personal practice, the paper brings in the idea of librarians applying such skills in corporate librarianship whereby they are expected to think and act like entrepreneurs; applying the same skills that entrepreneurs use in their business, in library business in a bid to meet the need of the clients in the contemporary age of business-mindedness and corporate branding.

**Thesis Statement**

In a traditional library setting, there are behind-the-scene services and public services which are aimed at direct contact with users. Users are offered services in a traditional setting of a library where they utilize library catalogues to search for resources available in the library after they must have probably approached a librarian who showed them the way to the
catalogue cabinet. Then, the librarian guides them through locating the material on the shelf. User services establishes librarian one-on-one contact with users. Such services as Reference services, Circulation services. These services are charged with the service delivery of information needs of the users in the library (Omekwu & Ugwuanyi, 2009). The traditional library practice has been that of provision of information to library users within the library terrain and this service is void of the employ of certain skills that could boost the service. The advent of such skills are meant to move the service to a different shift. This paradigm shift is what has brought library profession to limelight. In attempting to adapt to the trend in technology, librarians tend to gain necessary skills to meet up with the trend to be able to meet the need of the contemporary library users. That is to say, the traditional library practice has some shortcomings in the contemporary information technology-drive era. One major shortcoming is that Ranganathan’s fourth law of library science (save the time of the user) is not fully actualized unlike when information technology drives the service which is well known to be time-saving. With the introduction of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), library users can access same book and sieve the bibliographical details at the same time unlike when one person takes hold of a catalogue tray and all cards are in his custody for about 30 minutes. Secondly, when a user wants to borrow a book, waiting for a librarian to attend to him during break period eats deep into the time of the user who might keep waiting until the staff appears. But with the advent of library application software with the module of circulation services whereby a user can borrow a book just with a click, these things are a lot easier and hence, obeys the above-stated law.

Another shortcoming is the attitude of librarians which has always been known to be that of ‘shushing’ library users. Then librarians hardly wore smiles on their faces so as not to distract users nor create an environment for chats and noise. Everybody got busy, both librarians and users – reading until everyone got tired. But these days workshops are held, exposing librarians to certain managerial, communication and entrepreneurial skills. The aspect of communication handles issues like teaching library personnel how to attend users and see them as customers which they are. Managerial skills are also needed to know what is lacking and what needs to be done to marry theory and practice to achieve better goal. Issues like ‘smiling’ to users and creating library jingles and slogans is borrowed from entrepreneurial skills and many more. Entrepreneurial skills as have been observed by the writers of this paper, encompasses so many other skills like managerial and communication.

Librarians these days want to be pushed to do carry out their duties; they do not see the need to render services as if it is their own business. Once they collect their salary for the month, they are good and going instead of attempting to build on their skills and take the responsibility of the success or failure of their organisation. It is on this note that this paper attempts to address the state of affairs in Nigerian library system which is about the way librarians run the library as if it is not their business.

The crux of this paper therefore, is an attempt to unleash the entrepreneurial skills to be adopted by librarians in the traditional library setting; taking the business mentality to the library service sector in a bid to achieve greater goals set to be achieved by the library, as this would take the library profession to greater height and place the library on the competitive as a service-rendering organisation. In such a setting, the librarian vividly does not need to be called an ‘info-preneur’, ‘knowledge entrepreneur’, nor ‘entrepreneurial librarian’ but the name ‘librarian’ which has to be retained. Probably, when a librarian adopts entrepreneurial skills for a fee-based service, the name ‘librarian’ gets branded as afore-mentioned. It is only the quality of service that needs to be raised by adopting entrepreneurial skills; looking at what makes entrepreneurs thrive in their circle and bringing such secrets into the library circle.
What is Entrepreneurship and who is an Entrepreneur?

One cannot talk about who an ‘entrepreneur’ is without consideration of entrepreneurship and its history. What is then entrepreneurship? The word “Entrepreneur” was derived from a 17th century French word “Enstreprendre” meaning “Undertaking”. Initially, the word entrepreneur was used to describe people who undertook military expeditions. In 1755, an Irish man living in France, Richard Cantillon, used the word “Entrepreneur” to describe people that undertook the risk of setting up business enterprises (Gana, 2001). Overtime, this notion has dominated the conceptualization of entrepreneurship by different scholars.

In a Harvard Business School colloquium in 1983, participants agreed on the following definition: Entrepreneurship is the attempt to create value by an individual or individuals through (a) the recognition of significant (generally innovative) business opportunity, (b) the drive to manage risk-taking appropriate to that project and (c) the exercise of communication and management skills necessary to mobilize rapidly the human, material and financial resources that will bring the project to fruition (Kao and Stevenson, 1984). Two key words can be deduced from the definition offered above: opportunity and innovation. We can say that entrepreneurship is the articulate and innovative use of opportunities for problem solving and/or wealth creation either in an organization or the larger society. While many think of innovation and entrepreneurship as only related to business or artistic creation, librarians have a history of innovating in order to both provide needed resource and programme for their patrons and to incorporate technology into their professional duties. In other words, an entrepreneur is one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risk of a business or enterprise.

Basic Economics unleashes the three factors of production which are: land, capital and labor. These factors cannot work well without a proposed fourth factor by Glaser (2001) which is entrepreneurship. Glaser sees entrepreneurship as ‘the ability to see what others who came before missed, to make connections between things that others had not, to get all three other factors to work together to create that which had not existed before. It is this insight, this creativity, that makes the other three factors productive’. A post made by Brooks (2012) on Business Daily, highlights the basic concept of entrepreneurship and skills required. To Brooks, at its core, entrepreneurship is starting a business from scratch, which includes everything from idea conception to managing the company for the long term. Hisrich and Peters (2002) wrote that ‘entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth which is created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and/or career commitment or provide value for some product or service’. Basically, entrepreneurship has everything to do with business and making money but this could be viewed from either managerial or personal perspective. Eke, Igwesi and Orji (2011) noted that Entrepreneurship is a programme that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance and national development. Entrepreneurship as a force for innovation is reflected in policies to support the growth of the knowledge economy and opportunities offered by new technologies, through improving access to and support for developing new technology. One set of policies has been to encourage the commercialising and disseminating research carried out in universities and government research establishment McQuaid (nd).

The view of entrepreneurs as organisers of businesses with opportunistic and risk bearing roles can be contrasted with entrepreneurs as innovators (Baumol, 1993). This boils down to the various entrepreneurial ventures carried out by entrepreneurs in a society. An
entrepreneur is that individual that applies the principles of entrepreneurship in a bid to achieve a desired goal which could be to serve the public, to gain a name, or both. The critical factor is ‘risk-taking’, which is a major characteristic of an entrepreneur. Emphasizing this 'risk-bearing' factor in entrepreneurship, McQuaid(nd) wrote that "one of the earliest uses of the term ‘entrepreneur’ was by the French writer Richard Cantillon, in 1755, who argued that they were those who carried out ‘risky’ ventures”. In United States, the entrepreneur is often defined as one who starts his own, new and small business. (Drucker 1985). Developing countries look up to developed countries in gaining entrepreneurial skills and Nigeria is one of such developing countries that have tried to raise entrepreneurs from different walks of life. Such skills are not only necessary but almost mandatory if one should emerge a successful entrepreneur.

**Entreprenurial Skills and the library professional**

The ability to do something well and with sufficient expertise could be represented as skill. Ideally, an individual consciously obtains skill or skills as the case may be, in a bid to have a leading edge over another. In every field, there is need for skills acquisition. The difference between the educated and non-educated is ‘skills’, among other things. According to business dictionary dot com, ‘skill’ is an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills). There is need for entrepreneurial skills by the entrepreneur who intends to thrive in any entrepreneurial venture. As stated in a blog post of March 10, 2011 on Conference for Entrepreneurial Librarians Day 1, Entrepreneurship is more of a mindset and not as easy to learn, but characteristics are:

- tolerance for risk and ambiguity
- 100% client focused; have to constantly learn what clients want now; figuring how services can be geared for your client’s needs (and not what you want to offer)
- move out of employee mindset – or you are doing this because someone else told you to or a force is compelling you to
- strategic perspective
- self-confidence and self-discipline

Driving home some of the afore-mentioned characteristics, risk taking is one of the major strengths of entrepreneurs. This is a way of going out of one’s way to invest in a business both financially and materially. A risk taker entrepreneur is the ideal entrepreneur who closes eyes to the economic status of any given society, especially when negative, a situation. Strategic perspective has to do with a way of branding services and products or advertising just like in information marketing in library and information centres. This has a lot to do with positioning services and products in a strategic mode where attention of clients are drawn. It is all about marketing a brand in the right place and at the right time and with self-confidence. In the absence of self-confidence and discipline, an entrepreneur indirectly wishes a business to practically go down the drain. A good and skilled entrepreneur puts everything possible in place to satisfy clients. Clients are referred to as customers in the business world. Clients are usually placed before any other factor in business. A skilled entrepreneur understands that the client is always right so therefore, all efforts are put in place to maximize this singular aim by the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial skills are one of the skills associated with
entrepreneurship. These are skills that complement the ideal entrepreneur. As identified by Dr. T. J. Kalamanabhan, there are also technical skills and business management skills. See Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Skills Associated with Entrepreneurship**

**Technical Skills**
- Specific Operation Technology
- Communication
- Interpersonal relations
- Organizational ability
- Coordinating Team members
- Environmental Observation

**Management Skills**
- Planning
- Formulating Goals
- Decision-making
- Motivating
- Marketing
- Accounting
- Negotiation

**Entrepreneurial Skills**
- Inner Discipline
- Risk-seeking
- Innovation
- Change-orientation
- Persistency
- Visionary

The idea of entrepreneurship is not new in the field of librarianship, but recently a heightened emphasis is laid on the adoption of entrepreneurial skills aimed at coping with change and bringing about improvement in the traditional library practice. Traditionally, libraries were collections of books, manuscripts, journals and other sources of recorded information (Ogunsola, 2011). In this light, the library processes such as acquisition, processing, storage; retrieval and dissemination of information resources are facilitated through manual arrangement such as bookkeeping and card system. In the typical traditional library practice, the librarian orders for material from the vendor and waits for delivery; the cataloguer brainstorms the whole day and sometime a week or more to catalogue a single material; the catalogue is used to find library materials; users search out materials on the shelves and presents them for borrowing, to mention a few.

From the foregoing, observation and practice shows that traditional library practice is fraught with inadequacies that hinder smooth information handling, retrieval and dissemination in the contemporary library setting. Suffice it to say that the traditional library practice does not support a speedy and seamless access to information; it hardly provides a platform for round-the-clock and remote access to information materials; due to the time lag required to procure information materials, traditional library practice does not guarantee up-to-date information material. On the hand, staff efficiency and effective is usually compromised and so many functions are repetitive, leading to drudgery and low productive among staff- this is one of the reasons other profession undermine the professionalism in Library and Information Science. Hence, there is a need to adopt certain skills which promotes the professional ethos of the profession such as ICT skill, communication skills, management skills, entrepreneurial skills, to mention a few. The skills and competencies question is important to the profession because of the increasingly difficult and challenging environment faced by information professionals. Ashcroft (2004) and Osa (2003) characterized the work environment of information professionals in the 21st century as one of fast-paced and constant change. They noted that the rapid introduction of new technologies
imply that information professionals have to be flexible in adapting and adopting new skills and strategies for handling them.

The work environment of information professionals as noted by Khoo (2012) often has the following characteristics:

• **Competition**: information professionals face competition from several quarters that threatens their jobs. Competition comes from other types of professionals, e.g. IT professionals and business graduates, who compete for the same jobs. Competition also comes from outside vendors to which the information service may be outsourced. Information professionals also face competition from new technologies and Information products that may displace them.

• **Changing and turbulent environment** of the parent organization, which may be under severe competitive pressures and be in a state of continuous restructuring.

• **Uncertain status** of the information service, which is viewed as a cost centre whose value to the parent organization is constantly questioned and has to be continually defended.

• **Rapidly changing technology** and continuous introduction of **new products**, which make it necessary for information professionals keep abreast of these developments and assess how the technologies and products can be incorporated and exploited in their service.

A typical librarian in an information society where most individual thrive in the utilization of information for survival, exhibits certain traits which projects the librarian’s image as a professional. Veronica (2012) answered a question in wikispaces: ‘what skills are required to be a librarian?’ thus: (see figure 2)

a. **Education**: Education is a key factor in the skills needed to be a librarian. The training of a librarian begins from the first degree level where rudiments of librarianship are handled. Further studies could be embarked upon by librarians to build upon existing knowledge. In some libraries, one cannot be referred to a ‘librarian’ until the person obtains an MLS degree. This is what makes for professionalism in Librarianship in most universities of the world. In University of Nigeria, a first degree holder in Library and Information Science is referred to as an ‘Assistant Librarian’, that is, person giving assistance to a bona fide librarian who is an MLS holder.

b. **Technical Knowledge and Training**: Learning on the job is a basic expectation of a librarian so as to get equipped for future competition. "While librarians do not have to become technicians, do they need computer skills? Penny Beile and Megan Adams's content analysis of library position announcements found that 'as information sources in academic libraries are delivered increasingly via an electronic medium, the degree to which computer skills are sought by libraries becomes an important concern" (Mathews, 2009).

c. **Organizational and Evaluating Skills**: In this respect, librarians should sieve information which they serve patrons. The librarians should be able to recognize useful information and differentiate between relevant and irrelevant pieces of information. In the words of Veronica (2012), “Librarians must be able to separate good and bad information from a database or online search in order to give library users the best answer possible. This can often be difficult today in a world where sites
that pop-up on search engines like Google and Yahoo! may not provide the necessary or correct information that the patron needs”.

d. **Business management:** In this context, the library is seen as a business terrain where clients serve as customers in business and therefore the same way business is managed should be reflected in the library circumstance. The library seen as a business can be managed in a business way with the intent of raising traffic into the library terrain. Therefore, the librarian is expected to possess business management skills to run the library business. As rightly stated by Veronica (2012):

> Though libraries are not businesses in the popular sense of the word, they face the same difficulties and concerns when it comes to managing a business. Often, librarians are under scrutiny from boards or employers to make sure that the library, while helping to assist patrons, also stays fiscally solvent. In order for a library to be successful, a librarian has to be able to market accordingly. “Thinking like an entrepreneur regardless of what kind of library or information service we work in, we have to market our services continually. As one librarian put it, ‘The best ideas don’t win; the best promoted ideas win’” (Bates, 1998). Providing business leadership allows for the library to stay fiscally secure and enables usership to remain at a high level.

**Figure 2:** Skills Associated with Librarianship (Veronica)

- Education
- Technical Knowledge and Training
  - Planning
  - Organizational & Evaluating skills
- Business management
- Interpersonal skills


e. **Interpersonal skills:** This interprets the relationship between librarians and clients. Although most library schools do not offer this as part of their curriculum courses, it is expected of librarians to exhibit interpersonal skills especially towards clients. “Information professionals are not order-takers in a fast food restaurant ("Do you want fries with that bibliography, sir?"). Rather, we are consultants working with our clients, analyzing their information needs, evaluating the resources available as well as the budget and time that we can spend on this request, and determining how we can most appropriately meet their needs. A negotiation takes place, and this requires specialized skills that even some experienced librarians don't have” (Bates, 1998).
Adopting entrepreneurial skills to library practice

Librarians, most at times referred to as information professional, are highly engrossed with finding better jobs and updating their profile and resume simply because there is need for more bread on the table, especially in the Nigerian scenario. As such, they do not pay much attention to the job on hand and practice how to serve the clients better. These days, employers require librarians that are registered with the Librarians Registration Council before they employ them. This is owing to the fact that a registered librarian is assumed to have grabbed certain skills of expertise in the profession. Such skills mostly required are Information technology skills which has raised the rate of competition among librarians/information professionals. Adding to this, Khoo (2012) stated that ‘employers are also emphasizing appropriate attitudes personal traits that are needed by information professionals to be effective in the new era. Information professionals have to be user-oriented, service, oriented, adaptable and flexible, quick to pick new skills, and have an entrepreneurial or enterprising spirit’.

Creating a hypothetical scenario where a librarian and a patron are exchanging pleasantries could go a long way in bringing to limelight, the urgent need to adopt certain skills for library services. About three years back in an academic library system in a developing country, a patron approached a librarian working in the reference section and asked: ‘excuse me ma’am, I would want to find out the largest river in the whole world’. The librarian replied: ‘C’omon little boy, can’t you see I am eating my lunch? Moreover, the shelf where the book containing the information you seek is very dusty and I cannot risk going there to dirty my newly bought clothe. Could you come back another time, maybe on Friday when I will wear a less official clothe to help you find it? Our cleaners are on strike and so, did not dust the shelves and I have been denied promotion for three years, so nobody can ask me to go dust that shelf. Moreover, the sad news is the shelves area is out of bounds to undergraduate students. Assuming you were a post graduate, I would have allowed you to enter’. The above scenario is typical of what happens in some libraries where librarians have serious low self esteem and are nonchalant in learning new ways to serve patrons (innovation and risk-taking, etc). Many librarians do not deem it fit to expand their horizon and consciously invest in attending workshops and trainings whether sponsored or not. Eke (2011) listed ‘lack of sponsorship’ as one of the problems associated with conference attendance. They have all got ‘Education’ (See Figure 2), but lack basic skills which ought to be applied in a bid to boost their services. The fifth content of IFLA code of ethics emphasizes Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills. In an attempt to match basic skills of a traditional librarian and the entrepreneurial skills they ought to adopt, figure 3 x-rays vividly the basic entrepreneurial skills librarians need to adopt to do justice to their profession otherwise, they will be relegated to the background, especially with the emergence of the Internet. Consider Figure 1 and Figure 2 as Entrepreneurial versus Librarianship skills as figure 3 thus represents:
Matching the skills above, a librarian has education by default but beyond the education lies on-the-job skills that are required for a librarian to take the job as a business; establishing facts that ought to change the mentality of librarians to start seeing their job as serious business and so, adopt entrepreneurial skills which actual entrepreneurs use to thrive in their business. The following three out of the six outlined entrepreneurial skills have been highlighted as the ‘three proposed entrepreneurial skills’ to be adopted by librarians in the enhancement of library practice:

a. **[Inner Discipline]**: Knowing your clients and their needs is a requirement as a professional. But beyond this lies the zeal to satisfy them and this culminates in certain development such as discipline. In this context, a librarian should cultivate the taste of satisfying a client within and beyond work periods.

b. **[Risk-Seeking]**: Taking risk in business ventures is a major trait of entrepreneurs and so, being a trait to be adopted by library practitioners, it becomes paramount for a them to become not only risk-takers, but seekers of risk. Responsible risk-taking implies taking carefully calculated chances and being willing to get out of the comfort zone to accomplish worthwhile goals (Lorenzen, 2010). In his blog post on ‘why libraries are not creative organisations’, Matthew (2012) noted that ‘....it becomes very hard to library organizations to truly reward risk-takers, so therefore we don’t cultivate them in our libraries’. Many librarians in Nigeria are afraid of taking risk which they think might threaten their career. Trying out a new idea in professional practice is risk-taking. Taking steps to adopt new technology is a risk-taking venture. For instance, if a client visits a library, the librarian tries as much as possible to attend to his needs by claiming to be computer literate, especially when the client needs to consult the OPAC and database of the library. This posing challenge therefore, sends the librarian to go and gain more technical skills. Librarians are facing a lot of trials in this contemporary world where Google, Amazon and Starbucks are directly confronting library clients even inside the library where computers that are connected to the Internet are displayed. A client can easily log onto the system and pay for more current books via amazon, barnes and nobles and google books. Ledden (2011) noted that librarians are facing a 21st century identity crises. Such is interpreted to mean a situation whereby librarians struggle to be relevant amidst the latest technological development. A conference tagged *R-squared: The Risk and Reward Conference* was organised and held in Telluride, Colorado September 9-11, 2012 and the conference was designed for library professionals at all levels who are curious about creative thinking in libraries. The goal was for attendees to recognise their own creativity, analyse risk and reap its rewards, and become confident in creative
problem solving to help establish libraries as leaders inspiring creative thinking in their communities. The conference was brought to a close with a parting speech by Pam Sandlian Smith, Library Director of Anythink (http://www.anythinklibraries.org/). An excerpt of Pam’s speech:

“......Now we all know that libraries are in a similar situation with the transition to digital media. And we know that we have to adapt, to make changes to get ahead of this curve. We have to take some big risks to combat that sense of becoming irrelevant or redundant. Libraries are too important to a democratic society to let them go the way of dinosaurs, to fail like so many newspapers. It is up to us to lead this charge. ......You have faced the tasks and challenges, some of you have faced alone and you have been assisted by others as you faced some of the challenges. You have survived this challenge and discovered a piece of important self-discovery. Now we must return to the ordinary world, facing even greater challenges. You have earned a gift that can be used to improve our world, our libraries as you return to your work. It is our responsibility to take the risks to insure the success of our libraries.... (http://rsquaredconference.org/)”

c. **[Innovation]:** Libraries need to be seen as innovators and vital assets to their communities. They need to assert their relevance (Ledden, 2011). In February 2011, a group of Colorado library professionals began brainstorming how libraries can avoid extinction, reinvent themselves and strengthen their role as vital parts of their communities. With that, R-Squared – The Risk & Reward Conference was born. Members of the Colorado State Library, Colorado Library Consortium (a 501(c)3), Anythink, Wilkinson Public Library and others have partnered with Denver-based marketing agency Ricochet Ideas to develop a way to share the philosophies that have inspired some of the most inventive libraries in the nation with others who are interested in creative thinking in libraries (http://rsquaredconference.org/about/vision). As earlier stated, the conference took place September 9 -11, 2012 and participants were challenged to come up with marketing ideas that would earn their libraries recognition and attract more users. As stated in the blog (http://rsquaredconference.org/blog), Gale-Cengage Learning partnered with the R2 Team to bring participants an exciting opportunity to reap the rewards of their most innovative, risky thinking. Participants were asked to think of an innovative, risky, inspiring way to tell the world about their library. There was a brainstorm activity during the conference which comprised nine (9) groups. Group one was asked to create their own library card (each member of the group designed their own library cards) and so were other groups asked for innovative ideas. The conference is designed to encourage fun, creativity and risk in an unexpected format. Time was built into the programme to include bungee jumping, rock climbing and fly fishing!. Speakers included creative experts and risk-takers from industries like hospitality, retail, marketing and technology provided a fresh perspective and inspired innovation (Ledden, 2011). Bailey, Blunt, & Magner (2011) cited in Leeder (2011) describe how librarians can leverage technology skills, in this case video and multimedia creation, to support faculty goals, instruction, and conference presentations. Innovation is one of the skills noted by Alonge (2012) who stated that in the networked information environment, Information professionals need Generic Skills; Managerial Skills and Professional Skills and Innovation was one of the various generic skills outlined.
Threats to entrepreneurial skills adoption by librarians

Sticking to the existing curriculum and traditional library practice is a mentality that librarians carry and such affects the rate at which they advance. Collaboration does not only imply writing of books and journal articles, rather it goes beyond that, cutting across joining ideas with the faculty/library school responsible for curriculum development so as to ensure library and information science students are raised in the knowledge of entrepreneurial skills not only as an elective course, but a major course. This brings a level of consciousness of the basic entrepreneurial behavior into future librarians that would take up the library profession as a business that ought to grow and make waves. Some of the perceived threats affecting certain entrepreneurial skills adoption would be:

i. **Distinction between entrepreneurship and librarianship:** There is a thin line between entrepreneurship and librarianship. Entrepreneurship is profit-oriented while librarianship is not-for-profit-oriented. Matthew (2012) wrote:

> The major distinction between the library organization and a business is the “bottom line.” Businesses are in business for profit. Since a service business is most closely analogous to a library, a service business either delivers better service than their competition, or they earn no profit. Without profit they won’t stay in business. Libraries also provide a service and should be able to measure the “profit” of their service. The problem is that libraries as a governmental agency operate like all government agencies – as a cost center – where the bottom line profitability is virtually never measured. Considering that not all businesses are highly profitable, there is a continuum of profitability. If your business is highly profitable then you are thriving. If your business is unprofitable, you are dying. That’s an undeniable business principle – if you’re not thriving, you’re dying. To keep from dying a business must thrive.

This boils down to lack of sufficient funds to help the library business thrive. This singular factor (lack of funds) has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian library system. Nevertheless, this is no excuse in raising the image of the library from mediocre to competitive edge and then to leading edge whereby the basic skills applied by entrepreneurs are domicile among librarians with the support of the management – whether library or government in sponsoring the requirements of the library towards achieving this goal.

ii. **Misplacement of priority:** It is quite appalling, the manner in which priority is being misplaced in the library environment. Instead of some librarians to attend workshops to build on existing knowledge and skills, they register for programme to further their education to earn them promotions. But promotion without contribution is commotion.

iii. **Fear of the unknown:** Probably librarians are scared of trying new skills and utilizing them to aid their services.

iv.

v. **Low competitive spirit:** mostly, librarians do not think they are as professional as other professionals like medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects, nurses,
and others. Librarians see themselves as servants to other professionals by acquiring, organizing and circulating information resources to them.

*Discouragement factor:* Probably certain times, some librarians may be willing to take the library where they are working as a business venture, but the management poses as a threat – discouraging them from manifesting business-like traits due to stereotyped *modus operandi* which is almost transcending to rigidity. Management can discourage adoption of entrepreneurial skills by lack of funds provision to necessitate action to that effect. Leonard and Clementson (2012) wrote on ‘Business Librarians and Entrepreneurship: Innovation Trends and Characteristics’ and concluded that ‘while innovation is essential to these librarians and their managers, it must be clearly defined and openly supported by library administration.’

**Resolution and Proposal**
Following the perceived challenges that could threaten librarians’ adoption of the afore stated skills which are always related to technophobia; insufficient skilled manpower; lack of available technical equipments, lack of exposure to varied media like social media platform; smart phones and ipads and other gadgets; workshop opportunities; etc, librarians are encouraged to brace up and surmount such personal and management-induced challenges. The numerous challenges facing librarians and the rendering of services to clients cannot pose a major hindrance to achieving greater heights by librarians. Hence, the need to adopt skills that would make the profession to move forward is timely. The secrets of successful people should be adopted into the library so that the success function would rub off on the library and as such, the skills of entrepreneurs are brought into scene as factors that could help improve library services. The writers thus propose three major entrepreneurial skills to be adopted by librarians in the journey of rendering quality service to clients and making the library profession a relevant one. The proposed skills are *Inner development, Risk-taking and Innovation (IRI)* which would make the library become more business-like which falls in line with the advocation of Matthew (2012) that 21st Century libraries need to operate more business-like, and that 21st Century librarians need to develop business acumen.

**References**


Veronica, C. (2012). What skills are required to be a librarian? Retrieved from http://lis510-libraries.wikispaces.com/What+skills+are+required+to+be+a+librarian