Original Article

Emergence and Relevance of Entrepreneurship in Libraries: Glimpses into Current Practices

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Abstract

The paper discusses the concept of entrepreneurship and the relation with libraries. Though such concepts are not new in libraries yet time requires a new angle to look into the library services are being provided. There has been thrown light on librarianship and the social context. Currently the role of information professionals has been in the main circle of any organization. This has been explained through the further extension of their activities in the entrepreneur education, technology education and else. The paper gives examples of ongoing practices in few foreign libraries.

Keywords: Librarianship; Entrepreneurship; Information professional; Social context of libraries.

Introduction

We are witnessing the inevitable transformation of the global cultural sector with the emergence of new technologies, consumer trends and business models. We devote our precious time in understanding the opportunities and estimating challenges ahead of us? Any profit making and result oriented organization or an enthusiastic library professional will think of doing something to achieve the goals and curbing the challenges. And here comes the entrepreneurship! What is entrepreneurship? Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks-in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004, p. 30).[1]

What is Entrepreneurial Librarianship?

There's no committee that says, 'This is the type of person who can change the world – and you can't.' Realizing that anyone can do it is the first step. The next step is figuring out how you're going to do it. ~ Adora Svitak.[2]

The present revolution of technology-driven society has mandated the use of technology in all walks of life for a sustainable development. It is believed that organizations can create new commercial income streams on the strength of what they already possess - great content, great experiences and great brands. From new partnership and business models for the industry, to new consumer journeys into culture (the digital experience and the virtual visitor, audience profiling systems and digital hotspots for the new cultural communities), few models are pivotal to the success of every cultural organization. It is necessary to understand as given on http://doug-johnson.squarespace.com/:

- *Entrepreneur*: one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise

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- *Intrapreneur:* a corporate executive who develops new enterprises within the corporation

- *Libarypreneur:* a librarian who actively searches for unfilled needs in his/her organization and assumes responsibility for meeting them, adding value to his/her position.

To be *entrepreneurial* means that Library staff members use their energy and intellect to reinvent and enhance their work to heighten services to faculty and students and to preserve the collections. They assemble data and knowledgeable staff teams to analyze and improve services, physical spaces, and the digital environment.[3] The entrepreneurial approach–questioning, creative, and resourceful–seeks better answers to make the Library a learning organization, one that constantly changes as it strives to be an integral component of teaching, learning, and research. It is well said that the real development involves the capacity and creative capacity of a people to transform effectively natural resources of environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talents and productive labour force.

How the Librarians are Taking up Entrepreneurship!

While business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profit, social entrepreneurs and librarians, also take into account a positive return to society. The recently literature reflects how entrepreneurial librarians are flourishing in the digital age, advocating social change, responding to patron demands, designing new services, and developing exciting fundraising programs. Applying new business models to traditional services, they eagerly embrace entrepreneurship in response to patrons' demands, funding declines, changing resource formats, and other challenges." Some current examples of innovation and entrepreneurship in the library include:

- Lauren Britton of the Fayetteville Free Library[4], an iSchool alumna, conceived the idea of a library Makerspace, and the FFL became the first library in the country to provide public access to 3D printing technologies. Since 2010 the library's maker programs have grown to include the Creation Club, STEAMpunk Club, the First Lego League, Pinterest Craft Club, and more.[5] The library's new Fab Lab is now open to the public, and moving into expanded space.

- Eric Miller, President of Zepheira[6], and Dr. R. David Lankes, iSchool professor, created a project called Reference Extract [7] that would use reference transactions as the basis for a credibility search engine. The goal of the project was to "demonstrate how librarians can be fundamental to making good decisions on the Internet.[8]"

Librarians as Resources to Startups

Librarians can also be essential resources to entrepreneurs and start-ups, which have led some libraries, like the San Francisco Public Library, to develop small business centers. These librarians understand that knowing how to conduct effective research, including topics like trademark/copyright laws and market research, in addition to the specific domain areas of the product or service being produced is essential to a successful business venture.[9]

- Andrew Farah, an iSchool Information Management alumni, is co-founder of Rounded, an agency that operates out of the Tech Garden [10].

- Syracuse University's Library [11] highlights the importance of entrepreneurship. Its vision statement says:

While some librarians may not actively think about entrepreneurship, we are linked to the concept by common characteristics and missions.

Technology Education and Information Professionals

As already stated, one of the aims of technology education is to develop skills of information processing and computing. The role of information professionals in this context is very crucial in the sense that they are the key factors in enabling entrepreneurs gain access to the relevant information needed for enlightenment in their various fields of interest. There is need therefore, to define the personality of information professional and what roles they play in enhancing technology education. An information professional can work in organizations like information centres, libraries, competitive- intelligent units, knowledge resource centers, content management organizations, and others.[12]

Information professionals have the responsibility of educating and bringing information at the door step of researchers, students, readers, as well as entrepreneurs who are in search of information that will aid them in their pursuit. It is the duty of information professionals to appropriately teach the entrepreneurs how these materials are utilized for information retrieval. According to Nwoji (2002)[13],

These come as new generation audio-visual technologies such as live broadcast satellite video conferencing, narrowcast television, hypermedia, interactive television instruction, videotaped instruction, video discs, computer discs, interaction radio digital technology, wind-up radio technology, portable FM radio, web television and non-linear desktop video and audio-editing system.. (p.85).

Library Entrepreneurship and Social Context

Social entrepreneurship refers to the practice of identifying a societal problem and using entrepreneurial principles, such as innovation, to create and implement ventures that achieve change. And when we talk about librarianship, librarianship is about social engagement, innovation, and knowledge creation. The librarians empower community voices and also champion intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, and democratic conversation. They provide access to credible sources of information, and create networks of knowledge in their communities. Most librarians don't think of themselves as entrepreneurs, but there is a growing interest in entrepreneurial librarianship, the abstract idea connecting social entrepreneurship with the services librarians provide every day. In fact, social entrepreneurship provides an excellent model for libraries that are invested in the future. In this age of digital access, libraries are increasingly asked to justify their budgets, their services, and their very existence. Even in the age of Internet, libraries are so much more than books and static repositories of knowledge. Today's librarians are innovators who explore new technologies and novel ideas in the relentless pursuit of excellence; these librarians are embracing the entrepreneurial spirit. Indeed, librarians and entrepreneurs share certain characteristics, including creativity, persistence, and passion.

Entrepreneurship Education and Information Professionals

In the current times, the Entrepreneurship education augments the knowledge and skills and to students. It helps to encourage entrepreneurial success in a constantly changing environment. The information professionals provide in entrepreneurship education. They take the role of as information suppliers to entrepreneurs. The role of information professionals in aiding entrepreneurship education cannot be over-emphasized, especially now that researchers are continually striving to learn more about the entire entrepreneurial process to better understand the driving forces within entrepreneurs (Bull & Willard, 1993;; Gartner, 2001).[14,15] As the name sounds, an information professional is someone who specializes in:

• information collection,

• organization,

• storage and

• dissemination of such information.

Kuratko (2005) stated that three major sources of information supply the data related to the entrepreneurial process or perspective, namely [16]:

i.   research- based source,

ii. direct observation of practicing entrepreneurs, and

iii. speeches and presentations (including seminars) by practicing entrepreneurs.

In order to provide research related information, the information professionals concentrate on the research-based sources both in print and non-print format to potential and prospective entrepreneurs. There are various information resources such as:

- Academic journals,
- textbooks on entrepreneurship,
- Books about entrepreneurship,
- biographies or autobiographies or entrepreneurs,
- compendiums about entrepreneurs,
- news periodicals,
- venture periodicals,
- newsletters,
- proceedings of conferences,
- government publications.

The stated tasks can be done free of charge or by fee, depending on the situation surrounding the information pursuit. For instance in public, special or academic library, information professional provides information to users free of charge, but is paid indirectly for his services by the government or the employer in charge. In another case, an information professional is paid directly by the person receiving the services. In this case, the information professional becomes an *information broker*. Their functions are stated that:

- They operate enterprises that charge fees for information-related services and products; develop specialized libraries from scratch; clip newspapers; compile directories; consult on everything from computers to construction.

- They create archives and software, develop vocabularies, do chores (moving, bar coding, shelf reading), and help libraries write RFPS.

- They index manuals and books and documents, they organize conferences and prepare alerting services, publish books and newsletters, retrieve documents, search online, substitute for libraries who have babies.

- They write abstracts, they write computer instruction manuals

We find the educator-entrepreneur as[17]:

- Self-directed
- Taking control of their time
- Modeling their entrepreneurship for their students
- Not making excuses
- Taking responsibility

Examples

Providing General Library Information

- *Library Homepage:* The Library's homepage[18] is the portal to the library catalogue, where user finds the extensive collection of print and electronic materials (Books and eBooks, journals and eJournals, databases, videos, maps, etc.), as well as to information about the libraries, research issues such as citation and finding the materials user needs, and practical tasks like booking study rooms, or renewing library books.

- *Undergraduate Library Guide:* It includes basic libraries'[19] information including getting a library card, hours, locations, borrowing/renewing materials, library eResources links and information, connecting to eResources from home and more.

- *Help with Research:* For example, Bronfman Business Library's Help[20] with Research page includes contact information for research help at the library, and access to a variety of research guides that are helpful for

conducting business research.

Business Plan Guides/Resources

There are few guidelines on how to prepare a business plan including templates:

- The *Canada Business Network* website offers help on how to write a sound business plan, how to conduct market research and access templates and sample business plans. Check out the section of their web site titled Business Planning.[21]

- The Toronto Public Library's SmallBizXpress has links to a number of valuable business resources related to planning a business.[22]

- Books 24 X 7 –This database has full-text books that provide both practical advice on preparing and creating *business and marketing plans* and also gives examples of both.[23]

- Business Librarians' Bookmarks – Business Plans under Company/ Industries Heading.[24]

Sample Business Plans

- *Business Plans Handbook* . HD 62.7 B865 1995. Bronfman Reference.

- For free sample business plans visit Bplans.com.[25]

How to Initiate and Build

Entrepreneurial Thinking at the Library: It can be useful to incorporate entrepreneurship into library use by promoting gaming as a relevant library service. Gaming, as an interactive activity, increases people's ability to judge and take risks, to improve their decision-making ability and confidence, to accept and learn from failure, and to make them more agile in changing and uncertain life situations. These skills are critical in adapting to the changing face of the workplace. For example, at Syracuse University's iSchool[26] Gaming programs for libraries can increase the effectiveness of library services, as they bring

in new users who can take advantage of already purchased library resources in a safe and non-commercial setting. In their project, the Library Game Lab will help libraries researching a appropriate gaming activities, providing training, selection and program guidelines, and ways to present and market gaming programs that help those that are skeptical to accept these unusual programs.

Facilitating the Innovation Process: It is found that the Innovation Process can be facilitated by Motivational Influences and Information Requirements. There may be factors that contribute to or support inventive thinking and the innovation creation process[27]:

o what role information seeking skills, resources, and technologies play in supporting that process and related activities and

o what human and other influences motivate that process.

Entrepreneurship Knowledge Bridge: Murali Venkatesh is building the Entrepreneurship Knowledge Bridge (EKB).[28] This information system is accessible over the World Wide Web. By providing entrepreneurs, would-be entrepreneurs and residents a comprehensive, convenient, user-friendly one-stop shop to access unique, customized and archival online content, the EKB hopes to catalyze innovation and business activity in these two Syracuse neighborhoods.

Roles and Manifestations of Librarians

Good librarians have always been good at looking for unmet needs and then meeting them, creating positions of value as they go. The entrepreneurial disposition is critical As professions transition to reflect the changes wrought by information technologies,. During the last two decades, the librarians have taken the role of webmasters, network managers, book fair organizers, online teaching materials selectors, volunteer coordinators, and PTO liaisons. None of these are traditionally "library" jobs, yet give added value to their positions. There are several ways how the librarians/information professionals practice

and reflect librarypreneurship[29]:

Literature-related Jobs

i.   Book fair organizer

ii. Building-wide reading contest and promotions organizer

iii. Book swap manager

iv. One book/one community program organizer

v.   Literacy enhancer.

Technology-related

i.   Webmaster

ii. User focus based technology trainer

iii. Online learning support provider

iv. Technology policy committee member

Academic-community-related Jobs

1. Liaison officer

2. User-Community marketing director

3. Newsletter editor

4. Library blogger

Carving Our Libraries?

Libraries with smiling staff and enthusiastic patrons! What else we crave for in this world of epidemic change of information technology and lack of time. Don't we find our libraries loud, dynamic, energetic spaces that are brimming with smart people trying new things? It may seem that the innovative projects can boost the traditional working environment but what about the intricate phenomena of applying entrepreneurship in any kind of library! It is assumed that private sector is supportive of employees finding ways to make the organization more strategically placed, more efficient, and more innovative. The availability of funds and time is more important aspects to look into; they can make or mar the library collection and services.

There are several ways in which entrepreneurial thinking is encouraged. How? We librarians can collaborate in various manners such as:

i.   giving members in a group an opportunity to share their expertise, experience, concerns and challenges; providing the continuing education opportunities; promoting librarians and library technicians skills; and

ii. significantly eliminating the sense of isolation and create a network of "non-traditional" library individuals.

Conclusion

There is a big challenge in creating entrepreneurial culture in the libraries. To address this challenge, the Library Entrepreneurship can be initiated. It entails a unique approach to coupling entrepreneurship activities, interested as well as reluctant staff members from across the library, faculty researchers in the various disciplines, promising technologies, the curriculum, and related university resources. Having E-Teams will move the library technologies toward commercialization. This can be an organization-wide accelerator model, built around the hypothesis that entrepreneurial methods would accelerate the creation of technology-based services of the library. Depending on organization growth objectives, librarians can conduct user oriented research surveys, evaluate new information products, or develop marketing or information technology strategies.

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