

Library Management in Improving Literacy Students' Reading in Digital Era

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Abstract: In the ever-evolving digital era, library management plays a crucial role in improving students' reading literacy. This study aims to explore how library management can contribute to students' reading literacy within the context of minimum competency assessments, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors. This study employed a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach at Pahlawan Nasional Private Junior High School in Medan to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying phenomenon, which remains largely unknown. Library management must ensure that the available book and reading material collections meet students' interests and needs. The results of this study demonstrate the role of school libraries in supporting students' reading interest learning activities. This supports the development of student literacy and creativity. The quality of library services also includes the provision of dedicated book rooms and reading rooms, providing students with a comfortable reading environment. Librarian services to visitors are also good and informative. Another challenge in managing school libraries in the digital era is that students prefer e-books over printed books. Therefore, library management requires innovative strategies to remain a preferred learning resource for students. Therefore, library management must be able to keep pace with technological advances and developments to maintain students' interest in reading. This fosters interest in reading literacy in the digital era.

Keywords: Library Management; Digital Ag; Students

The increasingly advanced world of education has brought rapid changes in various fields, one of which is the library sector (Firdausi & Mudjito, 2021). American charities have sponsored research documenting major trends and changes in social life caused by digitalization, and Sikh American millennials are also at the forefront of artistic expression and representation in both online and in-person contexts (Luthra, 2018). Paulette Rothbauer's study of adolescents in rural Canada who have transformed the ways and places of professionalism, for example, shows how isolation and mobility barriers encourage solitary and digital practices, while local library services are neglected (Rutherford et al., 2017). She mobilizes the theory of "choreographies of place" originally developed by David Seamon to demonstrate the heterogeneity of reading and literacy experiences as they exist (Trehub, 2009).

Research in the US and Australia reports that children in both countries who entered the Reading Recovery Program in Year 1 had lower literacy scores than their New Zealand counterparts,

and that students' overall reading literacy levels, as measured by the Clay Book-Level Test, were lower among regular Australian children at the beginning of Year 1 than in New Zealand (Yola et al., 2001); (Stainthorp, 2021). It may be overly optimistic to believe that individual programs, no matter how effective they are for the students they access in their home countries, can address the problem of large groups of low-achieving students found in many Australian schools, without examining the diverse classroom contexts that accompany them (Jaeger, 2019); (Wolf et al., 2016).

In the evolving digital age, library management plays a crucial role in improving students' reading literacy (Wardhana et al., 2023). The concept of digital libraries is closely tied to the evolution of the World Wide Web and its public accessibility since 1990–91 (Meyer & Schroeder, 2009). The Internet era ushered in new forms of economic and cultural experiences (Hansen et al., 2002). In keeping with the spirit of this era, digital libraries have gained prominence (Huang, 2018). Libraries have responded to dramatic changes in users' preferences and expectations for information and services. Like it or not, libraries have been confronted with the reality that the Internet has significantly reduced the opportunity cost of information acquisition, and in the name of convenience, users are increasingly forgoing library resources in favor of the results they can achieve (Calhoun, 2002). This is in line with the view of Davenport and Harris (2019), who assert that the success of digital transformation lies in an organization's ability to strategically adopt technology to achieve broader goals, such as improving the quality of education and empowering students (Aisyah, 2022).

According to UNESCO data, Indonesians' reading interest is relatively low, with an average reading rate of only 0.001, equivalent to one person reading one book per year. This fact encourages educational institutions, particularly schools, to innovate in managing libraries to make them more engaging, relevant, and accessible to students (Andita, 2023).

Digital library management is crucial; with this management process, schools can achieve their digital library goals. One of the primary functions of libraries as sources or providers of information is to stimulate reader interest and enthusiasm (Sani & Al Qadri, 2024). This need will encourage students' interest in reading, leading to broader insights, as a strong interest in reading leads to greater intelligence (Nadia Firdausi & Mudjito, 2021). Library management plays a crucial role in improving student reading literacy, especially in today's digital age. With advances in information and communication technology, libraries must adapt to meet the increasingly complex needs of users (Barowi, 2021).

Digital library management requires careful planning, from infrastructure provision and human resource development to outreach to all stakeholders in the education ecosystem (Latief, 2020). Furthermore, digital libraries also enable collaboration between schools, teachers, and parents in building a conducive and supportive learning environment (Sobirin et al., 2023).

Although school libraries have great potential to support increased reading literacy, many libraries still face challenges in managing books and facilities that are relevant to the needs of today's students. For example, at Pahlawan Nasional Private Junior High School in Medan, library management is still suboptimal, with insufficient use of technology to attract students' interest in reading, and a lack

of innovative reading literacy programs. Previous research has shown that the use of technology in library management can expand the scope of library services, making it easier for students to access relevant reading materials that meet their literacy needs in the digital age. However, this study found that schools are still not optimal in keeping up with technology in reading literacy in the digital age. Based on these problems, researchers are interested in examining library literacy management in schools so that the library management system can keep pace with technological advances and developments and so that students' interest in reading literacy is not lost.

METHOD

This research design uses qualitative research with an ethnographic approach to gain a deeper understanding of what lies behind a phenomenon that is not widely known. The ethnographic approach is an empirical and theoretical approach that aims to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of culture based on intensive field research (Windiani & Farida, 2016). Through this ethnographic approach, the researcher will explore information on library management at Pahlawan Nasional Private Junior High School on Jalan Durung No. 205, Sidorejo Hilir, Medan Tembung District, Medan City, North Sumatra Province using various strategies such as the researcher carefully observing people, their daily lives, and their cultural activities in a natural environment. To obtain research participants, the researcher builds good relationships with school officials, such as the principal, teachers, and librarians. This is important to obtain support and permission to conduct the research. Data collection will be collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, to gain a better understanding of how library management improves students' reading interest in the digital era. Analyzing data from interviews with participants, as well as the results of observations and documentation, the researcher uses a thematic coding approach that is carried out repeatedly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The Role of School Libraries in Supporting Learning Activities and Students' Reading Interests in the Digital Era

School librarians are expected to play a crucial role as literacy educators and positively impact youth literacy learning. Library management must ensure that the available book and reading material collections align with students' interests and needs. The following is an example from an interview with a librarian:

“...I implement library software to facilitate book borrowing and returns. I also create an organized and easily accessible collection list, both in physical and digital formats. I also collaborate with teachers through collaborative reading activities, training, and discussions on literacy strategies. I also ensure that these programs run according to the established plan. I also make the library an attractive place, and I promote the library through social media.”

School libraries play a strategic role in supporting learning activities. By providing a variety of relevant reading resources that support the curriculum, libraries serve as important information centers for students and teachers. Comfortable and efficient facilities, such as separate reading rooms from the book collection, create a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, libraries also serve as a place to enhance student literacy and creativity through various programs and activities that support the development of reading interests and critical thinking skills. One teacher commented:

“I see the role of the school library in supporting my learning activities, as the library provides a variety of reading resources or books that are relevant and support the curriculum. The school library is also quite comfortable and efficient because it has separate reading rooms and a book collection. Furthermore, its role can be seen as a place to enhance student literacy and creativity. The library is the primary resource to support the subject matter I teach to students.”

Furthermore, libraries contribute to the development of student literacy and creativity through access to information and supportive activities. Libraries can also be used as a place to nurture students' interests and talents towards lifelong learning. As quoted by several students:

"The library plays a vital role in my classroom learning because it helps me access comprehensive and reliable learning resources. Furthermore, the library supports the development of my reading interest, which motivates me to read and study diligently. The librarians are always friendly and helpful when I'm looking for books or needing information. The library itself can broaden my horizons because it provides supplementary books beyond textbooks that can help deepen my understanding of the material."

Thus, the school library is not only a place to store books, but also a primary resource supporting the subject matter taught to students.

The Quality of Library Services in Improving Student Reading Literacy in the Digital Era

Library service quality refers to the extent to which the services provided by the library meet or exceed user expectations, as well as how effectively the library meets their information and learning needs. This service quality encompasses various aspects, including physical facilities, librarian competence, collection management, and information accessibility. As revealed in the following interview:

“The book management process is a mix of reading books and study books. The library utilizes technology by implementing a digital library, e-books, and e-learning platforms to support students' learning and digital literacy. The library hosts reading competitions to motivate students to read more, and we also have book discussion programs to create a community of young readers. Many people visit the library, especially during class hours.”

From a social perspective, the book collection area serves as a place for storing and borrowing books, while the reading room provides a comfortable environment for reading and studying. The library is also a source of up-to-date and reliable information. One participant stated the following:

"The school library has two rooms. The first is a dedicated library for books, so all books, book exchanges, and book pick-ups are all there. The second room is the reading room. The library at this

school is also a comfortable place to find the latest and most reliable information. In the reading room, there are English exercises, as English tends to be studied using patterns or formulas."

The existence of libraries in schools is crucial in supporting learning in the digital age. Libraries serve not only as storage for books but also as learning resource centers that provide the latest and most reliable information. This is reflected in the following participant's explanation:

"I consider the existence of libraries in schools to be very important in supporting learning in this digital age. Libraries also help me obtain the latest information and enrich my learning methods."

By utilizing technology, libraries can enrich learning methods through access to a variety of relevant digital resources. This enables students to develop information literacy skills and adapt to the rapid development of information technology. As one student expressed in the following interview:

"The reading materials and book collections in the library are quite varied and cover various fields of study. The library at school is good because it serves as a place for literacy. The provision of technology in the school library is very adequate for students."

Thus, based on all interview data, libraries can meet user expectations and contribute significantly to the learning process and the development of information literacy.

Challenges in School Library Management in the Digital Era

School library management in the digital era faces various challenges that require serious attention. One of these is the limited human resources with adequate digital skills. Most librarians are not fully prepared for technological changes, which impacts the effectiveness of library services. As the following librarian responded:

"...The challenges include the increasing amount of information to be managed, budget constraints, and then it's more about organizing books and writing down the book numbers, right? That's a bit complicated. Usually, here, the system for borrowing books has to be based on the number, right?"

Many students now prefer e-books over printed books. This is due to the ease of access and convenience offered by digital devices. This can be seen in the following student interview:

"...I'm more interested in reading digital books than printed books because they're more practical and easy to carry around.

However, research shows that even though students have good digital literacy skills, they still prefer printed books as their primary reading source. This is as expressed by the following student:

"But there are times when I prefer reading printed books because they're easier on the eyes and I can focus better when reading."

In today's digital learning era, library utilization faces several major obstacles. As the following teacher stated:

"...The obstacle is probably facilities. It's like this, because once the books are used by the children, they tend to put them away carelessly, so they don't fit on the shelves or shelves. I've encountered several obstacles in utilizing the library during the digital learning process, such as a shift in student interest toward printed books and a lack of integration between physical and digital libraries.

DISCUSSION

The Role of School Libraries in Supporting Learning Activities and Students' Reading Interests in the Digital Era

The school librarian at Pahlawan Nasional Private Junior High School in Medan plays a central role as a literacy facilitator and active educator in creating a conducive reading environment. This finding aligns with research by Merga (2020), which emphasizes that library professionals provide resources and support to foster students' interest in reading. Furthermore, Wine (2023) states that librarians are also part of the school leadership team, collaborating directly with teachers and providing literacy instruction. Therefore, the presence of a trained librarian is essential to fostering effective literacy learning, as without such a role, literacy initiatives risk becoming mediocre and lacking a meaningful impact on students.

Optimizing school libraries is not only about book collections, but also through innovative spaces and literacy programs that engage students. A study by Mahendra et al (2024) found that book clubs, storytelling performances, and creative activities in the library can significantly increase elementary school students' interest in reading. This finding is reinforced by Wegmann et al (2021) finding that collection management responsive to the needs of young readers can expand the reach of school literacy.

Libraries designed for digital literacy support broader literacy access and strengthen reading engagement. A study by Sa'adiyah et al., (2025) concluded that the integration of an automation system (SLiMS) and a literacy space creates an interactive and relevant reading experience in the digital age. Rasyidnita et al (2024) showed that students' digital literacy is positively related to reading interest because they are better able to explore online reading materials. This digital library technology provides flexibility, accessibility, and motivation relevant to the characteristics of the digital generation.

Libraries also support student well-being through enjoyable and reflective reading interventions. Bladek (2021) links reading engagement to student psychosocial well-being, a crucial factor facilitated by school libraries in creating a supportive emotional and intellectual environment. Initiatives such as moderated discussions, comfortable reading spaces, and reflective activities promote a sense of inclusion and relaxation that support students' holistic development.

Libraries serve as centers for research and stimulate students' critical thinking. Swamy Rao (2024) case study at Westberry School found that creative workshops and literacy programs expanded students' critical thinking while supporting socio-emotional growth, while Marzoli & Papa (2017) research confirmed a positive correlation between library collection size and student academic achievement, including in reading comprehension and mathematics.

Thus, school libraries are multifunctional centers of literacy education: educators, facilitators, and promoters of student well-being. Merga (2025) emphasized the importance of institutional support to strengthen the role of librarians in encouraging student reading engagement, and the implementation of innovative, digital-friendly, inclusive, and collaborative programs is highly recommended based on international evidence. Investment in the physical foundation, technology, and human resources is key to libraries becoming dynamic and sustainable centers of literacy.

The Quality of Library Services in Improving Student Reading Literacy in the Digital Era

Modern school libraries must deliver superior service quality through a combination of physical and digital services, such as reading room design, automated lending systems, e-resource access, and creative literacy activities that stimulate students' interest in reading. Appropriate and adaptive services have been shown to impact user comfort and deeper engagement in the literacy process. Relevant research indicates that the implementation of technology-based services accelerates access and increases the frequency of student visits to the library (Al-Musawi & Al-Hashmi, 2023). Furthermore, libraries with proactive services, such as digital library services and the provision of multimedia content, demonstrate improvements in reading comprehension and information retention. This demonstrates that quality services combined with technology are a key foundation for improving reading literacy in the digital age.

Adapting services through the use of e-learning platforms and digital collections opens new pathways to information literacy, especially for students with physical or time constraints. According to Zhang & Lu (2022) and Teague (2019), school libraries that implement single sign-on services and online catalogs have seen significant increases in the use of online library materials. Digital guidance services, such as search tutorials and chat support with librarians, have been shown to enhance students' information methodology skills. Research in Southeast Asia even notes that young users are more comfortable exploring online resources than physical ones, as long as access and navigation are easy. Therefore, digital transformation of library services is not an optional option, but a strategic necessity to support modern literacy.

Libraries, as centers of literacy, must also ensure librarians' competency in user-based services, including developing skills in facilitating digital literacy and communication. Garcia & Smith (2021) noted that librarian training in digital service management improves the effectiveness of interactions with students and the quality of reading material recommendations. Trained librarians recommend reading materials tailored to students' abilities and interests and moderate literacy discussions that encourage critical thinking. Collaboration between librarians and teachers in designing cross-curricular literacy programs has also been shown to strengthen the impact of library services (Choy & Lee, 2021). This suggests that service quality is directly influenced by the librarian's professional capacity.

Inclusive library facilities, such as group discussion areas, casual reading zones, and access to digital devices, create a conducive learning environment and strengthen students' emotional engagement with reading. Blakemore (2020) notes that user-friendly library space design optimizes visit duration and interaction with literacy materials. Research by Jones et al. (2022) shows that students who spend time in their reading comfort zone tend to acquire more books and express a greater interest in reading. A good library environment, combined with warm service from librarians, creates a comprehensive and long-term literacy ecosystem.

Collection development strategies are also integral to service quality; collections must be

continually updated and relevant to students' interests and needs. According to Patel & Kumar (2023) and Silva & Rodriguez (2021), curating library materials that include print books, e-books, and multimedia resources facilitates students' diverse learning styles. Multilingual collections and contextualized content support inclusive literacy and broaden students' cultural horizons. Rahayuningsih et al (2018) added that acquiring collections through donation schemes and inter-library collaboration allows access to richer materials without a large budget burden. Essentially, relevant and diverse collections strengthen the library's service capabilities in meeting students' learning needs.

Thus, school libraries that integrate convenient physical services, cutting-edge technology, professional librarians, and relevant and inclusive collections can effectively improve students' reading and information literacy. Morrison (2019) also demonstrated that such integrated services positively impact reading interest, academic achievement, and 21st-century literacy readiness. Strategic investments in library services, human resources, and infrastructure are educational investments that support the future literate generation. Therefore, school policies and educational stakeholders must support library modernization to remain relevant and effective in the digital learning era.

Challenges in Managing School Libraries in the Digital Era

Library management at Pahlawan Nasional Private Junior High School in Medan faces significant challenges related to the limited competence of librarians in information technology. Although librarians are attempting to implement a digital and number-based lending system, the workload increases without adequate skills support. Meanwhile, student interactions with e-books and print books demonstrate varying preferences: digital books are practical, but print remains convenient for focusing. Teachers also noted obstacles such as suboptimal facilities and the lack of seamless physical-digital integration. Global literature emphasizes that challenges with library human resources and infrastructure are key barriers to providing effective digital services (Utami et al., 2024).

The problem of information overload is also a challenge for digital library users, causing confusion and reducing the effectiveness of information searches. Therefore, technologies such as curation systems and adaptive user interfaces need to be implemented to help students navigate extensive digital collections (Shim & Jhaver, 2023); (Das & Islam, 2021). Efforts to strengthen information literacy and e-resource management skills for librarians have proven to be a strategic solution (Utami et al., 2024). Synergy between competent human resources and advanced service technology is a crucial foundation for facing these digital challenges.

Organizational and managerial challenges also pose significant obstacles. Structural changes, including staff reductions or unprepared management strategies, weaken the flexibility to adapt to service transformations in the digital age (Frederick, 2024). Oversight of digital collections and the ever-expanding flow of information requires librarians to become agents of change (Johnson, 2009). Practical guidebooks such as *The Indispensable Librarian* highlight the importance of strengthening managerial capabilities to respond to the pressures of the digital age. Without a strategic approach and

adaptive leadership, libraries' potential as centers of literacy will be difficult to realize.

Information literacy and digital content management training can significantly improve service effectiveness (Craver, 1994). Automation systems, online catalogs, and fair content curation help students find reading materials efficiently. Furthermore, collection policies that emphasize literacy freedom and thematic enrichment strengthen the library's role as a place to foster critical thinking. This combination keeps libraries relevant, adaptive, and essential in the digital learning era (Cristo & Santoso, 2020). Holistic investment in training, technology, and governance is needed to ensure libraries remain the heart of literacy in an increasingly digital education ecosystem. Therefore, it is hoped that libraries will become more than just book warehouses but centers of 21st-century literacy transformation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that school libraries in the digital era have a strategic role in improving student reading literacy, but are faced with complex challenges that include service quality, technological adaptation, and limited human resources. Optimizing the library's role as a learning center requires collection management that is relevant to the curriculum, responsive services, and balanced integration of physical and digital resources. The success of libraries in supporting student reading interests depends heavily on the competence of librarians, the availability of modern facilities, and inclusive collection policies. Meanwhile, obstacles such as the lack of digital skills of librarians, budget constraints, shifts in student preferences for reading media, and lack of system integration are issues that must be addressed through continuous training, service innovation, and cross-stakeholder collaboration. With the right strategy, school libraries will not only be providers of information resources, but also driving forces for literacy and lifelong learning amidst rapid technological developments.

SUGGESTION

This research is expected to serve as a benchmark for future researchers and contribute to newer research findings. Suggestions for National Hero Private Junior High School in improving its services include involving librarians in outreach activities, seminars, or workshops to develop and enhance library management skills at the school.

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