LIBRARIANS' STRATEGIES IN INCREASING PUBLIC INTEREST IN VISITING THE NORTH SUMATRA PROVINCIAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and describe librarians' strategies for increasing public interest in visiting the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service (Dispusip Provsu) and to analyze the various factors hindering its implementation. This study employed a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis techniques followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which encompasses data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that the strategy to increase visitor interest at the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service focuses on optimizing digital promotion, outreach services, and adaptive community-based literacy activities. Librarians play a crucial role as agents of change through excellent service and information technology integration to build an inclusive literacy ecosystem. However, the effectiveness of this strategy is still hampered by infrastructure constraints, low public digital literacy, and limited budget and human resource competencies. Successfully transforming libraries into modern learning centers requires a systemic commitment from local governments to mitigate these obstacles to ensure the program's sustainability amidst information disruption.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have a strategic role in educating the nation's life as a center of information, education, and culture. As an institution that aims to improve the quality of human resources, libraries are expected to be able to become a place of lifelong learning (Bahriah, et al. 2024). However, in reality, the interest of public visits to libraries is still relatively low. This is a big challenge for librarians, who not only serve as curators of collections but also as innovators and facilitators to attract public participation.

In the current era of digitalization, easy access to information through the internet is the main cause of the decline in visits to physical libraries. Information that is available quickly and easily accessible makes people prefer online sources rather than having to come directly to the library (Maisya, et al. 2024). This change creates a major challenge for libraries around the world, including in Indonesia, in maintaining their relevance as a hub for literacy and learning.

According to data from the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia (Perpusnas), the reading preference index of the Indonesian people in 2023 is 59.52% (Perpusnas, 2023). Although it shows an increase from previous years, this figure is still relatively low when compared to developed countries. This condition is exacerbated by changes in people's information consumption patterns that rely more on digital technology compared to traditional information sources such as libraries (Sari, et al. 2022). As a result, libraries need to make major innovations to remain relevant in the eyes of the public, especially the younger generation.

Another challenge faced is the lack of effective promotional strategies from the library. Research by Rahman and Suryani (2021) revealed that one of the causes of low visits to libraries is the lack of innovation in services, the lack of interactive activities, and the lack of optimal use of information technology in the management of library services. This shows that librarians' strategies in building library attractiveness are still not optimal. In fact, librarians have an important role as agents of social change that can affect public perception of libraries (Widodo, et al. 2020).

This phenomenon also occurs at the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service (Dispusip Provsu), one of the largest regional libraries in the North Sumatra region. Based on the 2023 Library Statistics Report published by the Provincial Library, it is recorded that the average daily visits of users only reaches 50–100 people, which are dominated by students and students (Provincial Library, 2023). This figure is very low when compared to the population of Medan City, which reaches more than 2.5 million people (Central Statistics Agency, 2023). In other words, only a small part of the community uses library services as a source of information and learning. In fact, this library has various excellent facilities, such as a diverse collection of books, digital services, and community literacy programs.

A survey conducted by the Provincial Library and Archives Office in 2024 also shows that the majority of people still view libraries as less attractive and rigid places, especially for the younger generation. Factors such as limited facilities, collections that are not relevant to the needs of the times, and the lack of technology-based promotion are the main obstacles (Dispusip Provsu, 2024). This condition requires librarians to have adaptive and innovative strategies, so that libraries can compete with other sources of information that are more modern and accessible.

This problem is increasingly complex with the internal and external challenges faced by libraries. Internally, limited facilities, lack of innovation in service promotion, and lack of competent librarians are the main obstacles. Externally, the low public awareness of the importance of reading and using libraries as a source of information has also worsened the situation. As revealed by Maisya, Sayekti, and Fathurrahman (2024), the low interest in public visits to libraries is often due to a lack of effective promotion and inadequate facilities. This shows that libraries need to innovate in marketing and service strategies to attract public interest.

Maisya, et al. (2024) in their research at the Tanjung Balai City Library and Archives Office found that strategies such as mobile libraries, literacy competitions, and book exhibitions can help attract public attention. However, the success of such strategies is highly dependent on adequate facility support and effective promotion. Another study by Risawati, et al. (2022) highlights the importance of excellent service in increasing library user satisfaction. They state that librarians must be able to provide services that are friendly, professional, and responsive to the needs of users.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to design strategies that are innovative and relevant to the times. Based on Law Number 43 of 2007 concerning Libraries, local governments have the responsibility to ensure public access to library services. However, if libraries are not able to attract public interest to visit, then the function of libraries as a center for lifelong learning will be threatened.

Thus, this study aims to identify librarians' strategies in increasing public interest in visiting the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Office, taking into account the existing social, cultural, and technological contexts. The results of this research are expected to provide concrete solutions for the Provincial Dispusip in increasing the number of community visits. In addition, the findings of this study can also be a reference for other regional libraries in Indonesia that face similar challenges, so that libraries remain relevant and able to answer the literacy needs of the community in the digital era.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive type to examine complex and dynamic social realities, especially in understanding librarians' strategies in increasing public interest in visiting regional libraries. In accordance with the view of Creswell (2021), this approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore meaning in depth based on the perspective of participants without attempting to test hypotheses, but rather provides a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of strategies, challenges, and innovations carried out based on empirical evidence in the field. The data sources in this study are divided into primary data obtained directly through in-depth interviews and participatory observation with key resource persons such as librarians, heads of agencies, service staff, and users, as well as secondary data that includes documents, statistical reports, digital archives, and relevant scientific literature that function to strengthen the validity of primary findings.

In the implementation of this qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument (*human instrument*) as emphasized by Moleong (2020) which has a high sensitivity to the social context, supported by auxiliary instruments in the form of semistructured interview guidelines, service indicator observation formats, and digital documentation tools. Data collection techniques were carried out comprehensively through in-depth interviews to understand the motivations of key informants, participatory observation to observe direct interactions and service activities, and documentation studies of policies and work program reports to identify alignment between planning and realization.

The data that has been collected is then analyzed using an interactive model from Miles and Huberman (2020) which includes three main stages, namely data reduction through the process of selection and simplification of raw data, presentation of data in the form of descriptive narratives or thematic matrices, and drawing conclusions and verification that are carried out iteratively until a valid relationship pattern is obtained. To ensure the reliability of the data, the researcher applies the Lincoln and Guba (2020) standards which include aspects of credibility through triangulation and *member checking*, transferability with detailed context descriptions, dependability through transparent process documentation, and confirmability to maintain the objectivity of research results through *systematic trail* audits.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strategies carried out by librarians in increasing public interest in visiting the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service

The results of the study show that the strategy carried out by librarians at the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service (Dispusip Provsu) in increasing public interest in visits focuses on three main pillars, namely service innovation, physical revitalization, and expansion of promotional networks. Librarians implement active promotional strategies by utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp to communicate the latest collections and literacy activity agendas in a more modern and relevant visual style for the younger generation. In addition to strengthening the digital aspect, the physical strategy is carried out through rearranging the reading room to create a more aesthetic and comfortable atmosphere, in order to change the public perception from a rigid library to an inclusive public space. Librarians also act as facilitators through the organization of various interactive activities such as book reviews, creative classes, and literacy exhibitions that directly involve the local community. This strategy is strengthened by the "pick up the ball" service through the optimization of the mobile library fleet that reaches crowded points and schools in the North Sumatra region.

In its implementation, librarians also prioritize excellent *service* standards by providing personal guidance to users in navigating information, both physically and through digital catalogs (OPAC). This is in line with efforts to build a positive user *experience* so that visitors feel helped and interested in returning to visit regularly. Librarians also establish strategic collaborations with various educational institutions and literacy activists to make libraries a center for dynamic cultural and educational activities. Through a communicative and responsive approach to the development of information trends, librarians try to place Dispusip Provsu not just as a place to store books, but as a lifelong learning center that is able to compete with other online information sources.

In order for public interest in visiting regional libraries to increase significantly, a comprehensive, adaptive, and collaborative strategy is needed between librarians, local governments, and the community as users. Strategies that can be applied by librarians include:

First, significantly increasing public interest in visiting regional libraries requires a comprehensive, adaptive, and collaborative strategy between librarians, local governments, and the community as users. One of the fundamental steps that must be taken is through the transformation and rearrangement of the service space or *library re-design*. This strategy is focused on creating an aesthetic, comfortable, and functional physical environment to remove the stigma that libraries are rigid and boring places. Librarians need to design a more dynamic reading room by providing modern facilities such as *coworking spaces*, creativity spaces, and child-friendly reading corners to attract various age segments.

Theoretically, this space revitalization effort is in line with *Social Learning Theory* which emphasizes that a positive physical and social environment has a great influence on changes in individual behavior. A well-designed environment will encourage social interaction and a more enjoyable learning process, so that people feel motivated to come back sustainably. This is crucial in the current era, where libraries must be transformed into lifelong learning centers that remain relevant to the needs of the times (Bahriah et.al., 2024). A positive user experience through spatial planning has proven to be a determining factor in building the attractiveness of institutions in the eyes of the public.

Furthermore, the success of this transformation cannot be separated from the role of librarians as agents of social change that are able to influence public perception (Widodo et.al., 2020). Librarians are required to not only manage collections, but also create an inclusive literacy ecosystem through the provision of facilities that are able to compete with digital information sources. With the support of local government policies and the right budget

allocation, this physical arrangement is expected to be able to increase the reading interest index while ensuring that libraries remain the main destination for education in the midst of technological disruption (Perpusnas, 2023).

Second, in the current information era, librarians at the North Sumatra Provincial Library Service are required to actively promote through social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation. Information about the latest collections, superior facilities, and activity agendas is packaged in the form of attractive visual content to attract the attention of the public in the midst of a very fast flow of digital information. This strategy is crucial due to changes in people's information consumption patterns who now tend to rely on digital devices instead of traditional information sources (Sari et.al, 2022). With the use of digital media, libraries can build more personalized and responsive interactions to the needs of users.

Theoretically, this strategy is very much in line with *the Diffusion of Innovations Theory* put forward by Rogers (2003), which states that the adoption of an innovation in this case library services will occur faster if information is conveyed through communication channels that are familiar and relevant to the audience. Librarians play an important role in changing the image of libraries through these creative content so that institutions are no longer seen as rigid. This is in line with recent research that emphasizes that the right digital communication strategy can effectively enhance the positive image and attractiveness of libraries in the eyes of the public (Siregar et.al., 2024). In addition, the success of this digital promotion also depends heavily on the ability of librarians to adapt to the latest technological trends. The increase in interest in visits is not only triggered by the availability of books, but also by how librarians are able to "pick up the ball" through educational and persuasive promotions on social media. Collaboration between interesting content and ease of access to services is the main key in creating a dynamic literacy ecosystem in the North Sumatra region (Wijayanti et.al., 2023).

Third, efforts to make libraries a center of culture and education are carried out by librarians through the implementation of various interactive activities that directly involve the community. Activities such as book reviews, writing classes, digital literacy seminars, and regional archive exhibitions are important instruments to change the role of the community from just borrowing books to active participants in the science ecosystem. Through this involvement, libraries are able to create emotional and intellectual closeness with their visitors, so that libraries are no longer considered passive places, but rather as a forum for dynamic community empowerment (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Theoretically, this strategy is supported by *Collaborative Learning Theory* which emphasizes the importance of interaction and cooperation between individuals in building mutual understanding in the social environment. This collaborative approach allows for the exchange of ideas that enrich the collective insights of users. The implementation of this community-based activity is also part of the library's efforts to improve the institution's image to be more relevant to the times and the increasingly diverse information needs of the community (Siregar et.al, 2024). Thus, the library functions as a third place that supports an inclusive informal learning process. In addition, synergy between librarians and local communities has proven effective in expanding the reach of literacy programs in the North Sumatra region. Librarians play the role of facilitators who bridge access to information with the real needs of the community in the field. Through consistency in organizing educational and persuasive programs, libraries can increase the reading interest index while strengthening the library's position as an agent of social change in the midst of the challenges of information disruption (Wijayanti et.al., 2023). This strategy ensures that every service provided has a direct impact on improving the quality of community literacy in a sustainable manner.

Fourth, the strategy of developing "pick up the ball" service through the optimization of the mobile library fleet becomes a concrete solution in overcoming the limited physical access of the community to the central building. Librarians at the Provincial Dispusip proactively target public areas, schools, and densely populated settlements to ensure an even distribution of information. This service is a tangible form of the implementation of inclusive

information accessibility, where the library no longer waits for visitors to come, but comes to the community to facilitate their literacy needs in the field.

Theoretically, the success of information literacy is highly dependent on easy access to available information resources. By bringing services closer to crowded points, geographical barriers and distances that have been the main obstacles to visits can be significantly minimized. This is in line with efforts to increase reading interest in the North Sumatra region which emphasizes the importance of the availability of services that are able to reach all levels of society without exception (Wijayanti et.al., 2023). This strategy strengthens the role of libraries in providing equitable and sustainable public services.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of this mobile library service also plays a role in improving the image of the institution in the eyes of the public through direct interaction outside the building. Librarians who serve in mobile fleets function as agents of change who are able to educate the public about the importance of utilizing trusted information sources (Widodo et.al., 2020). Through an adaptive and responsive approach to field conditions, this service not only provides books, but also builds stronger collective literacy awareness amid the challenges of current information disruption (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Fifth, improving the quality of *excellent service* by librarians is a crucial factor in building long-term relationships with users in the Provincial Dispusip. Librarians are required to have effective communication skills, a friendly attitude, and be responsive to every information needs of visitors. The positive experience that visitors feel when interacting directly with library staff will build a deep impression that is able to trigger visitor loyalty to come back. This is very important in an effort to change the public's perception of the role of librarians, which is now more of a communicative and professional learning partner (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Theoretically, this service strategy reflects the *reinforcement* aspect in *the Motivational Design Model* which emphasizes that appreciation and good service from staff provide motivational reinforcement for individuals. High-quality services are a stimulant for the community to continue to utilize library services in a sustainable manner as the main source of information. In the context of regional libraries in North Sumatra, the implementation of friendly and solutive service standards has proven to be a particular attraction that is able to significantly improve the image of the institution in the eyes of the public (Siregar et.al., 2024).

In addition, librarians also play a role in providing personal guidance to users, both in navigating physical collections and through the use of digital catalogs. The ability of librarians to provide quick and accurate solutions to users' problems is a tangible form of professional dedication in increasing reading interest. The synergy between staff friendliness and ease of access to information will later create an inclusive service ecosystem that is able to adapt to the dynamics of people's information needs in the digital era (Wijayanti et.al., 2023).

Sixth, an equally important strategy in increasing interest in visits is to build strategic collaborations with various educational institutions, ranging from elementary school to university levels, as well as embracing local literacy activists. Librarians at the Provsu Dispusip can design a mandatory school visit program or community activities as part of a structured extracurricular activity. Through this collaboration, libraries no longer stand alone, but become strategic partners for educational institutions in strengthening the literacy foundations of the younger generation (Wijayanti et.al., 2023).

This collaborative approach creates a *Collaborative Learning Ecosystem*, where libraries act as agents of change that collaborate with local influences, such as teachers or community leaders, to accelerate the growth of reading culture. This is in line with the theory of innovation diffusion which emphasizes the importance of the role of communication channels and social influence in disseminating new ideas to the wider community. By actively involving the education sector, libraries are able to reach a larger mass base and ensure that the programs run have a real and measurable impact (Widodo et.al., 2020).

In addition, synergy with the literacy community allows libraries to remain relevant to evolving trends and needs of society. Librarians act as facilitators who provide a space for the community to create, which will indirectly enhance the positive image of the institution in the eyes of the public. Through the integration of the role of librarians as information managers and literacy activists as mass mobilizers, the Provincial Dispusip can build an inclusive and dynamic literacy ecosystem, which will ultimately boost the number of visits in a sustainable manner (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Seventh, librarians in the modern era are required to be able to integrate digital technology in every aspect of service management, such as the provision of an online catalog (*Online Public Access Catalog or OPAC*) that is easily accessible and the development of digital library applications. Providing relevant and up-to-date digital access is the main key in improving the digital literacy of the community at large. With a digitally integrated system, people can easily browse collections without having to be hampered by physical limitations, so that convenience in obtaining information is an added value for institutions (Siregar et.al., 2024).

This is in line with the *Digital Literacy Framework* which states that people's technical ability to access digital information must be supported by the availability of adequate and easily accessible learning resources. Information technology integration is not just a trend, but a strategic need for librarians as agents of change to provide more efficient and effective services. The optimal use of digital platforms also helps libraries in dealing with changes in people's information consumption patterns, which are now more dominant in using digital devices (Sari et.al., 2022).

Furthermore, the success of the use of this technology is highly dependent on the digital competence of librarians in managing electronic information resources. Through the provision of unlimited access, regional libraries in North Sumatra can strengthen their role as trusted information centers while increasing public interest in utilizing the services provided. The synergy between qualified technological infrastructure and professional librarian services is the main foundation in building a dynamic literacy ecosystem in the future (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Overall, the various strategies that have been presented reinforce each other in an effort to build a comprehensive and sustainable literacy ecosystem in North Sumatra Province. The increase in public interest in visits is proven not only to depend on the completeness of the collection alone, but is significantly influenced by the ability of librarians to create a meaningful and relevant user experience. This success requires a synergy between service innovation, staff friendliness, and the use of information technology that is able to adapt to the dynamics of the needs of modern society (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Librarians play a role as the main driving force in transforming libraries from just a place to a place to an inclusive and dynamic public space. Through a communicative and collaborative approach, librarians are able to position the Provsu Dispusip as a competitive lifelong learning center in the midst of the rise of instant information sources in cyberspace. This is in line with the view that the active involvement of librarians as agents of social change is the main key in building user loyalty and strengthening literacy culture in the digital era (Widodo et.al., 2020).

The integration of all these strategies is expected to have a positive impact on the reading interest index and the frequency of community visits consistently. Adaptive library management based on the needs of the local community is an important foundation in ensuring that information services can be accessed fairly and equitably by all levels of society in North Sumatra (Wijayanti et.al., 2023). Thus, the sustainability of regional libraries is highly determined by the consistency of librarians in presenting innovations that are oriented towards user satisfaction and intelligence.

Inhibiting factors in the implementation of the strategy

Based on the results of the research, the effectiveness of librarians' strategies at the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Office in increasing public visits faces various complex obstacles. The main inhibiting factors identified are the limitations of supporting infrastructure and the lack of budget for sustainable service innovation. Internally, the number of librarians who have information technology competencies is still limited, so digital promotion has not run optimally. Externally, the low information literacy of the community and the strong influence of instant culture in the digital era cause physical libraries to often be considered as the last option in finding information. This condition is exacerbated by the stereotypical views of the community who still consider libraries as rigid and formal institutions, thus hindering the public's intention to visit without urgent academic needs.

Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Librarian Strategies in the Provincial Dispusip Although various strategies have been designed, in their implementation several significant obstacles were found that affected the success of increasing interest in visits, including:

First, the main obstacle faced is the limitation of supporting facilities and infrastructure, where the available physical facilities are not fully able to keep up with the development trend of modern libraries. The availability of comfortable space, uneven internet access in all corners of the building, and limited multimedia devices cause the space revitalization strategy to not run optimally. The gap between users' needs for cutting-edge technological facilities and the realities of infrastructure in the field is a major challenge for librarians in maintaining the attractiveness of institutions (Siregar et.al, 2024).

Theoretically, this condition can be explained through *the Information Seeking Behavior Theory* put forward by Wilson, in which individuals have a tendency to avoid sources of information that are considered difficult to access or have significant physical barriers. If library facilities are inadequate or considered less conducive to comfort, people tend to choose the easiest and most efficient way to search for information, namely through personal devices or digital sources independently. This is reinforced by the fact that changes in people's information consumption patterns in the digital era are highly dependent on the ease of access to technology provided by service providers (Sari et.al., 2022).

Therefore, this limited infrastructure not only hinders physical comfort, but also has an impact on reducing the effectiveness of planned literacy programs. Librarians often have to work with limited resources, which ultimately affects the quality of excellent service provided to users. Serious attention is needed from policy makers regarding budget allocation for facility modernization so that libraries can transform into competitive information centers and be able to respond to community needs in the midst of technological disruption (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Second, the next very crucial inhibiting factor is low digital literacy and lack of public awareness of the importance of libraries as a center for lifelong learning. Many members of the community are not aware that regional libraries have now been transformed into public spaces that provide various valuable resources, both in physical and digital form. The lack of understanding on how to navigate and utilize digital library services reflects a significant gap in the digital literacy aspect of society. As a result, even though promotional strategies have been intensively carried out by librarians, the public does not feel any urgency or direct benefit to visit the library (Sari et.al., 2022).

This condition is in line with the *Digital Literacy Framework* which emphasizes that digital literacy is not just a matter of technical ability to operate devices, but also involves a critical understanding of the benefits and validity of the information obtained. Without this critical awareness, people tend to prefer instant sources of information on the internet that are not necessarily verified for truth rather than utilizing professional services in libraries. This phenomenon shows that the challenges faced by librarians are not only in the aspect of providing facilities, but also in efforts to change the mindset of the community to be smarter in sorting and choosing trusted sources of information (Widodo et.al., 2020). Therefore, more intensive and sustainable educational efforts are needed to increase the digital literacy index in the North Sumatra region. Librarians must be able to design programs

that not only promote collections, but also provide technical training and critical education on the importance of literacy for improving the quality of life. Through the synergy between educational communication strategies and the provision of relevant services, it is hoped that public perception of libraries can change positively. This is the main key for libraries to remain an educational destination in demand in the midst of a very fast flow of information (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Third, another significant obstacle in the implementation of the strategy at the Provincial Dispusip is the lack of quantity and competence of librarians. The number of librarians available today is still very limited when compared to the area of service and the size of the community population that must be served. This gap results in a very high workload for existing staff, so many of the program innovations that have been designed often stall at the planning stage and cannot be executed optimally in the field. This limited personnel is the main obstacle in maintaining the consistency of services and the development of new literacy programs (Widodo et.al., 2020).

In addition to the problem of quantity, the competency aspect in mastering digital technology is also a challenge in itself. Not all librarians have adequate proficiency in social media management, graphic design for promotion, and the operation of modern library information systems. In fact, in this digital era, the ability to package information visually and attractively is an absolute prerequisite for reaching a young audience. This competency gap causes service promotion and digitization efforts to be less competitive compared to the instant flow of information from other digital platforms (Sari et.al., 2022).

Theoretically, this problem is closely related to *Social Learning Theory* which emphasizes the importance of the role of models in influencing individual behavior. In the library ecosystem, librarians are the main actors or models who are supposed to consistently demonstrate professionalism and innovation to attract public interest. If librarians as a central figure are unable to show innovative performance due to competency and workload constraints, then the community will not get enough stimulation to change their visiting behavior. Therefore, increasing the capacity of human resources through continuous training is urgent so that libraries remain relevant as educational centers in North Sumatra (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Fourth, another technical obstacle that visitors often face is the high cognitive load in accessing library digital services. The complexity of navigation systems in online catalog services (*OPACs*) or digital library applications often makes visitors feel difficult and confused. This creates a gap between the availability of technology and the user's ability to operate it. People who are used to the ease of the interface of search engines such as Google tend to quickly feel frustrated and give up when faced with a library system that is considered too technical and procedural (Sari et.al., 2022).

Theoretically, this phenomenon is in line with *the Cognitive Load Theory* put forward by Sweller (1988), which states that too high a cognitive load due to instructions or complex system design can hinder the process of information processing and effective use of services. When a digital system requires a great deal of mental effort just to understand how it works, the motivation of users to explore the library collection decreases dramatically. Therefore, simplifying digital interfaces and providing intuitive guidance are key so that digital services do not backfire on people from libraries (Widodo et.al., 2020).

The gap between public expectations of information speed and the complexity of the library system requires librarians to be more adaptive in managing digital platforms. Librarians must be able to act as a bridge that minimizes these technical obstacles through personal guidance and more user-friendly service design. If this cognitive barrier is not overcome immediately, it is feared that the digitization strategy carried out by the Provincial Dispusip will not achieve the maximum goal of increasing interest in visits because people will still choose simpler instant information sources on the internet (Siregar et.al., 2024).

Fifth, the ease of internet access has now become a tough competitor for the sustainability of physical libraries as the main information provider. Changing people's behavior who prefer to seek information instantly

through smartphone devices rather than having to spend time coming to the library building is a big challenge. This phenomenon created a shift where libraries were no longer considered the only science centers due to the availability of digital resources that could be accessed anytime and anywhere. If libraries are not able to offer unique added value, people tend to continue to rely on more practical online search engines (Sari et.al., 2022).

Theoretically, this condition is in line with *the Diffusion of Innovations Theory* put forward by Rogers (2003), which states that an innovation or service will be difficult to adopt if it does not have a *relative advantage* that is directly felt by its users compared to established technology. In this context, the internet is seen as having advantages in terms of speed and ease of access. Therefore, if the Provincial Dispusip does not offer something "more" than just digital information such as the comfort of social space, personalized literacy guidance, or access to rare collections, then the interest in public visits will remain low (Siregar et.al., 2024). To deal with this dominance of online information, librarians need to strengthen their position as agents of change who are able to curate information credibly. Librarians must highlight the role of libraries as a place to verify trusted information amid the rise of hoaxes and disinformation on the internet. Through strategies that highlight aspects of direct experience and social interaction that cannot be obtained through digital screens, libraries can again attract the public's attention as an educational destination that has more value than just a search engine (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Sixth, another obstacle that is no less crucial in the implementation of the strategy to increase visitor interest is the lack of budget support and strategic policies from local governments. The implementation of innovative programs, such as the optimization of mobile libraries and the implementation of large-scale literacy exhibitions, requires high operational costs for fleet maintenance, logistics, and the procurement of the latest library materials. The limited allocation of the regional budget for the library sector has caused many programs that have been designed to be only momentum or temporary, making it difficult to guarantee their long-term sustainability (Wijayanti et.al., 2023).

This financial constraint directly hinders the formation of a well-established *Collaborative Learning Ecosystem* in the North Sumatra region. Inter-agency collaborations, such as mandatory visits with schools or partnerships with literacy communities, require formal policy support and funding support to ensure programs run consistently. Without a strategic policy that places libraries as a priority for regional development, librarians will continue to have difficulties in executing innovations that require large resources (Siregar et.al., 2024).

In addition, the absence of binding policies causes literacy improvement efforts to often run independently without strong synergy between related institutions. This is in line with the view that the role of librarians as agents of social change must be supported by an adequate policy structure so that the resulting impact can be widely felt by the wider community. If these budget and policy constraints are not immediately overcome through strong advocacy, the transformation of libraries into modern learning centers will be hampered and difficult to compete with the dynamics of information change in the digital era (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Based on all the descriptions of these obstacles, it can be understood that the low interest in visits to the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Service is not solely caused by a single factor, but is the result of a complex interaction between internal limitations and external challenges. Technical constraints such as inadequate infrastructure and cognitive burden in accessing digital systems, if left unchecked, will strengthen people's preference for more practical instant information sources on the internet. This shows that the current library challenges are not only related to physical availability, but also how information systems are able to adapt to the very dynamic digital information consumption patterns of society.

In addition, the lack of budget support and strategic policies causes various innovations carried out by librarians to often be limited and unable to reach all levels of society massively. This condition requires a collective commitment from library management and local governments to carry out systemic improvements, ranging from improving the competence of human resources to providing facilities that are able to compete in the midst of digital

disruption. Librarians as the main actors need strong structural support so that their role as agents of social change in building a literacy culture can run effectively and sustainably (Widodo et.al., 2020).

Without serious efforts to mitigate these obstacles, the strategic function of libraries as literacy centers and agents of social change will be difficult to achieve optimally in the future. Adaptive solutions are needed to improve the image of libraries so that they remain relevant in the eyes of the public as a trusted educational destination. With the synergy between improving excellent services, the availability of technology, and consistent policy support, the Provincial Dispusip is expected to be able to overcome these obstacles to increase the reading interest index of people in North Sumatra (Siregar et.al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions that have been explained earlier, it can be concluded that comprehensively, efforts to increase interest in visits at the North Sumatra Provincial Library and Archives Office are highly dependent on the success of librarians in integrating creative promotion strategies, "pick up the ball" services, and the implementation of community-based literacy activities. Inclusive and adaptive strategies for digital technology, such as the use of social media and the provision of online catalogues, have proven crucial in transforming the image of libraries into dynamic and relevant cultural centres for the younger generation. The synergy between librarians' competence as agents of change and excellent service quality is the main foundation in building user loyalty and strengthening the literacy ecosystem in the region.

However, the effectiveness of the strategy is still hampered by the complex interaction between internal and external constraints, ranging from limited physical infrastructure, cognitive burden in digital systems, to lack of regional budget support. The dominance of instant information sources on the internet requires libraries to offer added value that goes beyond just data access, namely through personalized learning experiences and convenient facilities. Without strategic policies that support the sustainability of programs and regular human resource capacity building, the potential of libraries as community empowerment institutions will be difficult to achieve optimally. Therefore, a long-term commitment is needed between managers and policy makers to mitigate these obstacles in order to create a strong literacy culture in North Sumatra.

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