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School library service challenges to support distance learning in the pandemic: Experiences from high school libraries in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the challenges and strategies of school libraries during pandemic to support distance learning. This research used qualitative methods with a case study approach conducted in three high school libraries in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The data collection techniques consist of in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies. The informant involved in the study was five people consisting of the head of

the school and the librarian of the school. Data analysis techniques use stages of reduction, display, and verification. The study found that school libraries found three major challenges to services during pandemics. The challenges are the school librarian's unpreparedness for change, lack of library facilities and digital collection, and lack of service innovation development. The strategy carried out by the school library is benchmarking and developing new and innovative services.

Keywords: School libraries, library service, distance learning, innovative library services

Introduction

The school library serves as a support for the learning process in the school. A school library helps students or teachers meet information needs in various ways, especially education. Today's school libraries provide information resources and play an essential role in students' information literacy. In addition, the school library also encourages and develops students' reading interests (Mahwasane, 2017a). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2015) explained that one of the goals of school libraries is to develop students' information literacy skills. Mahwasane (2017b) explains that libraries that provide the right services will contribute to quality education. Therefore, library services have become essential in school libraries.

Rizal & Rodin (2021) stated that the library's primary purpose is to utilize the collections owned effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, library services support educational activities by managing and providing information services. Based on the Guidelines for The Implementation of School Libraries in Indonesia, there are minimal services that must be organized by school libraries, namely circulation services, reference services, and reading services (Nurcahyono et al., 2015). However, libraries can develop other services according to the needs of the library. In principle, the school library service was developed based on the characteristics and needs of the library users (Fadhli et al., 2021).

Murphy et al. (2021) explained that the covid-19 pandemic is driving the increasing need for digital transformation for libraries. Digital service innovation in some information organizations (GLAM) is a challenge that must be accepted today (Mahey et al., 2019). Research conducted by Bakti et al. (2020) reveals that librarians feel the need for changes in the role of libraries and librarians and the importance of innovation to meet the needs of libraries in responding to pandemics. Thus, the role of school librarians will also occur shifted as well. Kapanka (2021) mentioned that the role of school librarians in the pandemic era is more a facilitator that collaborates with teachers, students,

staff, and parents to support distance learning. Libraries can package information to be more interesting and innovative in order to help the learning process. In addition, also by using social media and library websites to reach learners (Angelina et al., 2021). Libraries must uniquely respond to pandemics by creating or replacing their services (Morley, 2021).

Innovative library services are currently a challenge for libraries. Innovations in library services can develop libraries, especially for teaching and learning purposes (Tiwari, 2016). The changing digital environment is driving service and practical transformation in libraries (Emezie, 2018). Information technology plays a vital role in the library services process (Zhou, 2021) and can increase user expectations regarding new services (Ogar & Dushu, 2018). Wójcik (2019) explains that libraries' innovations are tricky because of cost factors and the latest technology. However, the idea of innovation can grow from the creativity and enthusiasm of library staff. In line with the research results Malekani & Mubofu (2019), school library funding is often inadequate so that libraries cannot run optimally. Responding to the pandemic, libraries in Indonesia also need to develop innovation and creativity in maintaining engagement and optimizing the role of libraries in distance learning. One form is to change the library program or service to be online-based (Winata et al., 2021). However, distance learning has various challenges and impacts on library services such as administration, acquisitions, cataloging, collection access, references, and instructions and systems (Swaine, 2000).

This study explores school libraries' challenges in creating innovation and providing distance learning services, especially during pandemics. It is interesting because libraries develop innovations quickly because of unexpected situations that encourage libraries and schools to transition into online education (Zhou, 2021). The purpose of this study is to 1) know the challenges faced by the school library management process and school library staff, 2) identify the strategies faced to overcome existing challenges.

Methods

This research is conducted by qualitative methods with a case study approach. The research subject is three high school libraries in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia. All three school libraries in this area were selected considering that all three schools have an excellent record in library management. All three school libraries have been awarded the nation's best school library

award in the past five years. Data collection techniques are conducted with in-depth interviews, field observations, and document studies. The sources of this study were five persons consisting of librarians and the heads of libraries from all three schools.

Table. 1 Informant in this research

No	Informant code	Job Position	Gender	School
1	Informant 1	Circulation staff	Female	School A
2	Informant 2	Librarian	Female	School B
3	Informant 3	Librarian	Male	School B
4	Informant 4	Head of Library	Female	School C
5	Informant 5	Librarian	Female	School C

Data analysis techniques using Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña (2014) models consist of data reduction, display, and verification. The data validity technique in this study uses the triangulation of source, technique, and time.

Results and Discussion

Library Management Challenges on Distance Learning during a Pandemic

Pandemics encourage libraries to respond quickly and initiate innovative strategies. This aims to provide quality sources of information for users of literature (Howes et al., 2021). Pandemics encourage libraries to respond quickly and initiate innovative strategies. It aims to ensure that it can continue to provide quality sources of information for library users. Libraries and librarians will face a massive gap in library management and services between before and during a pandemic. Some libraries, especially school libraries that do not have a technological infrastructure, will undoubtedly be challenging to transform in a short time. Funding and adapting technology will be the main factors. However, school libraries with adequate infrastructure are encouraged to develop innovative services to function properly.

Based on the results of this study, three main challenges were found faced by school librarians—first, the librarian's unpreparedness for change. School librarians were quite surprised

at the service and management of libraries during the pandemic, primarily to support distance learning.

"Library visitors are physically reduced drastically even with almost no visitors. Including loans and collection returns. Including the use of library rooms, no user utilizes either teachers, students or other users" (Informant 3)

Medawar & Tabet (2020) explained that pandemic encourages libraries to impose a reduction in physical interaction with users based on the results of his study. It was also revealed by Nurfadillah & Ardiansah's (2021) research which mentioned a decrease in visits to the library by students and the use of printed or conventional information sources. Interestingly, school librarians feel drastic differences in low visits and library utilization. Mitra (2020) identified information seeker behavior in pandemics that are not physically dependent on libraries, are more online, and search for information quickly through technological devices. Following the opinion, De et al. (2020) states dramatic shifts in digital-based use in all aspects of work and life.

Second, facilities and library collection. This factor refers to the readiness of library infrastructure in digital-based services. The school library facilities in this study do not support optimally online services suddenly. School libraries cannot optimize services and promotions due to device or system limitations for new services. The observations showed that all three school libraries already use social media, especially Instagram, as a tool used to reach the library. Friday & Ngozi (2020) stated that various social media technologies could be adopted by libraries for service delivery and improve efficiency and techniques to improve services in pandemic covid-19. Social media is used as a platform for school libraries to disseminate and share information and knowledge. Although further, it was found that the utilization of social media has not been optimal for the service or media dissemination of library information. Chewe et al. (2020) explain the importance of management support to mobilize librarians more proactively and participatory in creating a social media presence, improving literacy skills for librarians, and designing strategies for the use of social media to be effective.

As well as facilities, the library collection is also a challenge faced by libraries in pandemics. The decrease in the use of printed collections has an impact on the increasing need for electronic collections. França (2021) explains that pandemics accelerate digital adoption in libraries, including e-textbooks. Based on the results of this study, the library has difficulty developing and

procuring collections in a relatively short time. Thus, the collection service process only optimizes digital collections that have been previously owned. The challenges facing school libraries are indeed quite challenging to provide digital-based collection services. At the same time, content services and digital services in libraries give a good reaction from library users (Obeidat, 2020).

Third, innovation in library services. This aspect becomes a very reliable thing in developing libraries to face the challenges of remote services. Bakti et al. (2020) mentioned that 88% of librarians stated that innovation is vital in post-covid-19 libraries. The same thing was revealed to the informant of this study. Based on the interview results, informants find it challenging to develop innovative services quickly to provide services to library users immediately.

"The difficult thing to develop is the innovation of new services to foster students' reading interest during pandemics" (Informant 4)

Jantz (2017) explains that the challenges to library innovation come from management culture. Primarily, the primary sources in innovation management are leaders and managers. The decrease in the intensity of communication between librarians also makes it challenging to create innovations, as told by informants in this study.

Furthermore, the observations found a lack of innovative library services to support distance learning. Library services only focus on lending collections such as drive-thru-based, podcasts, or optimizing information sources using social media and websites. Ideally, the library can develop innovative services to function to support distance learning more optimally. The study by Wójcik (2019) identified five steps to designing innovative information services in libraries. The five stages begin with diagnosing current conditions, designing the general direction of change and choosing the type of innovation to be applied, choosing the source of innovation, determining innovation, and designing according to user behavior.

School Library Strategies during a Pandemic

Although various factors make schools constrained in providing optimal services during the pandemic, library services must still be provided to users. Librarians are expected to find practical steps to manage library services to apply the adaptation process in the library easily. A strategy is needed so that the library can function correctly.

Based on the results of this study, two main strategies were found by school librarians to deal with the challenges and obstacles needed during the pandemic. The first challenge is benchmarking. Some informants say there was a large gap during the pandemic, especially during the initial transition period. This makes school librarians unable to adapt to service development. Therefore, school librarians have benchmarking strategies with similar organizations.

The benchmarking process is carried out systematically through school librarian forums, professional associations, or fellow school librarians in other schools. School librarians do in various ways, such as by observing the management process of other library services or sharing with school librarians. So that other libraries are used as an example for the development of libraries in the pandemic, especially related to library services. Some services considered applicable and needed by users are then followed up for analysis to be developed and assimilated in the school library. In addition, school librarians also consult with experts or library experts to get information related to library development during the pandemic. In general, benchmarking activities are strategies used to achieve a dynamically oriented organization's success and are part of total quality management.

Benchmarking is a systematic process that compares organizational efficiency in productivity, quality, and practices with other organizations demonstrating their superiority (Karlof, 1997). In addition, Erdil & Erbiyik (2019) explained that benchmarking is also an activity to cool and exchange information for the organization for future progress. The benchmarking process carried out by school libraries is external benchmarking, which means comparing organizations with the same organization elsewhere. It aims to know the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and identify the characteristics of the organization. Benchmarking in the library is a form of dynamic and sustainable library development. In the context of this research, school libraries through school librarians have developed to deal with pandemics as a solution to overcome the obstacles faced. It is primarily benchmarking in the service process to maintain its existence in the digital era, especially in pandemics.

The last strategy is to create a new service or innovation. To ensure the school library can function optimally, school librarians create new services or innovations in the library. Although it requires a long development time, these services and innovations are obtained from benchmarking results that have been done before. Based on the results of research and observation, the service innovation

service developed by the three libraries is the library drive-thru service. This service supports circulation services, mainly so that students can borrow library collections without entering the library building.

The entire preparation process starting from registration and reservation of books to be borrowed, is done with the online system. Furthermore, students with parents borrow by coming to school but without getting out of their respective vehicles. Library drive-thru services generally adopt services in fast food restaurants to overcome the problems libraries face during pandemic times, especially if they are not fully able to provide services online. This service can meet the information needs of the library to make loans and return collections in the library (Suryanto et al., 2020). These results are also supported by research Lim (2021) examining drive-thru services in Korea's public libraries. As a result, this service positively impacts people who want to read in the pandemic. Furthermore, it found barriers to adequate policies, budgets, and human resources to provide drive-thru services.

In addition to the drive-thru service, one of the school libraries developed the learning podcast service as one of the innovations of the school library service. Here is an excerpt of an interview with the informant.

"Podcast services are useful for students, especially students because it makes it easier to access learning resources with another packaging. The response is also outstanding because it can be played repeatedly and is safe in terms of storage."

Podcasts produced by the library in collaboration with teachers are shared on music-sharing apps such as Spotify and can be accessed free by students. Podcasts are digital audio files created and uploaded to online platforms to share with others. Hutabarat (2020) mentioned that podcasts could currently be used as a medium of digital-based learning supplements in education. Podcasts can be an innovative learning resource for teachers and help students learn. Sugatri (2021), through her research, added that students prefer the use of podcasts as a medium of learning. In addition, the use of podcasts can increase students' interest and learning motivation in following the learning process of pandemic times. This podcast is an innovative step of the library to optimize the services and functions of the school library as a learning center for students and teachers.

Conclusion

The existence of school libraries during the pandemic became a big question and problem, especially in Indonesia. Not all libraries are well established with information and communication technology, so it is easy to provide services online. Each school library finds its challenge to optimize its dedicated services to support the distance learning process. These challenges can depend on various factors such as human resources, library facilities, management support, geography, budget, and more.

This study aims to find out the challenges faced by school libraries and the strategies used to overcome these challenges. School libraries face three challenges during the pandemic. The first challenge is the school librarian's unpreparedness for change. This is because service shifts occur so quickly that school librarians do not have the knowledge to adapt quickly. Second, the facilities and collection of the library. Libraries need more the readiness of facilities oriented to digital services during the pandemic, including digital collections such as e-books. The lack of such facilities and collections makes it difficult for the library to adapt quickly. Third, the lack of innovation in library services. Libraries must quickly create innovations in order to respond and provide services to users faster.

Libraries have two strategies. First, it is benchmarking with other libraries or consulting with experts. This process aims to provide understanding and knowledge for school librarians to overcome the constraints of library services during the pandemic. Second, the development of new service innovations. Developing service innovation is quite time-needed for school librarians because it relates to the resources owned by the library. The innovation of school library services in this study is a drive-thru circulation service that facilitates access to loans and collection returns for students and learning podcasts as a form of information repackaging to support the learning process in school.

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