

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AS LIAISONS AND OUTREACH FACILITATORS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of librarians in fostering collaboration and outreach efforts at the State Elementary School Library No. 101931 Perbaungan, Serdang Bedagai Regency. Librarians function as intermediaries, bridging the library with various stakeholders, including students, teachers, and parents, to enhance their understanding and utilization of information resources. Additionally, outreach librarians play a crucial role in introducing and educating the school community about library services, thereby encouraging greater engagement and utilization of library facilities. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The findings indicate that librarians at SD Negeri No. 101931 Perbaungan actively contribute to strengthening relationships between the library and the school community. Moreover, they implement various initiatives to increase library usage and promote its services to the broader community. The dual roles of librarians as liaisons and outreach facilitators significantly support the educational process in schools and enhance library services.

Keywords: *librarian, liaison, outreach, school library, education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

School libraries provide a wide range of collections and services to students, educators, and school staff. The role of school librarians extends beyond circulation services; they also implement strategic initiatives to promote library collections and services to the public. Librarians can maximize their impact by engaging in liaison and outreach activities. As liaisons, they are responsible for identifying user needs, evaluating collection services, and assessing user satisfaction. Meanwhile, in their outreach role, librarians advocate for library programs and policies to gain support from decision-makers.

One form of library promotion involves liaison and outreach activities, which aim to enhance public awareness of library resources, foster collaboration, improve services, and elevate the professional image of librarians. Libraries, including academic libraries, actively engage in outreach initiatives to support education. According to Hillman (2023),

various outreach strategies include in-person visits, workshops, electronic communication, branding, personalized services, and campus partnerships through interlibrary loan programs.

Both school and academic libraries play a crucial role in education and require up-to-date literature to support learning and research. The advancement of digitalization presents both opportunities and challenges for school librarians in optimizing their responsibilities (Silver, n.d.). Consequently, the role of librarians as liaisons and outreach facilitators is essential to ensuring the effective utilization of library resources. Further research is needed to explore the role of school librarians in liaison and outreach activities.

The Perbaungan School Library actively supports its collections and services by positioning librarians as both intermediaries and educators. Beyond managing circulation processes, the library participates in various initiatives that establish it as an essential hub for information and learning. This study examines how elementary school librarians function as both liaisons and outreach facilitators in their professional roles.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach aims to investigate the research subject within its natural setting, with the researcher responsible for data collection through triangulation (a combination of multiple data sources). The data analysis follows an inductive process, focusing more on understanding meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2008). This method allows researchers to explore data comprehensively and in-depth (Idrus, 2009).

The study was conducted at the Perbaungan Elementary School Library, located at Jl. Kabupaten No. 11, Simpang Tiga Pekan, Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra, 20986. The research took place in November 2024..

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Benefits of Liaison and Outreach

Liaison and outreach serve as promotional strategies aimed at fostering collaboration, increasing awareness of library resources, and enhancing the services provided to both librarians and users (Johnson, 2014). School librarians can collaborate with teachers on classroom projects and contribute to improving student achievement. Their access to information enables them to emphasize the importance of necessary resources in meeting students' academic needs. Moreover, continuous liaison and outreach activities help librarians build credibility and trust within the school community (Johnson et al., 2003). Frequent interactions allow them to showcase their expertise in specific subjects and demonstrate their capabilities in managing library activities effectively.

One of the key benefits of liaison and outreach activities is their role in supporting academic success. These initiatives reinforce librarians' positions as reliable and trusted sources of information. By actively participating in various projects, librarians can cultivate a more engaging learning environment and contribute to the achievement of academic goals. Additionally, through expanded networks and collaborations, librarians gain access to a broader range of resources and opportunities that enhance library

services (Education et al., 2022). Such activities also help librarians and users better understand and utilize available library resources.

Liaison and Outreach Activities

According to Latta (1992), as cited by Johnson (2014), the term "liaison" is now widely used to describe the expanded role of subject librarians in outreach efforts. Over time, the responsibilities associated with this role have evolved significantly. The contemporary liaison model involves activities that empower students, support academic productivity, and engage librarians in teaching, research, and the learning process. Outreach is an integral part of a school librarian's responsibilities.

Librarians are positioned at the center of the community because liaison and outreach activities not only contribute to the effective development and management of library collections but also enhance user satisfaction and engagement (Johnson, 2014). Through these efforts, school libraries can strengthen their relationships with the academic community and encourage more active participation from students and educators.

Skills and Competencies of Librarians in Liaison and Outreach

Rodwell and Fairbairn (Dewi et al., n.d.) identify several essential skills and qualities required for librarians engaged in liaison and outreach activities. These include confidence, exceptional communication and presentation skills, networking abilities, risk-taking capabilities, and adaptability in handling ambiguous situations. Additionally, librarians must possess coalition-building skills, maintain strong relationships with clients and stakeholders, and demonstrate proficiency in negotiation, persuasion, and public relations. Furthermore, practical work experience and expertise in project management, promotion, and marketing are essential for librarians involved in outreach activities. A deep understanding of technical aspects related to content production and publishing is also valuable, as librarians often mediate between various parties to achieve shared objectives.

According to the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), the necessary skills for liaison and outreach librarians include the ability to identify user needs, evaluate and update collections, and acquire resources to enhance library services (Carter, 2011). Librarians must effectively communicate library services, establish strong client relationships, and develop collection management policies. Moreover, they should assist users in articulating their information needs to library staff and administrators.

Librarians engaged in liaison and outreach activities play a vital role in fostering positive relationships with the library community. They act as intermediaries, enabling users to access library services and collections based on their specific needs. To excel in this role, librarians must possess excellent communication skills, active listening abilities, and the capacity to tailor services to diverse user requirements.

Additionally, librarians should develop programs and initiatives to enhance information literacy and promote the use of library collections. Marketing skills, collaboration with various organizations and institutions, creativity, adaptability, and proficiency in information technology and digital media are also crucial for expanding library outreach efforts.

The Role of School Libraries

According to Bafadal (2008: 4-5), a school library is a collection of library materials, including books and non-book resources, systematically organized within a classroom setting to support teaching and learning processes for students and teachers. Since libraries are often associated with books, their definition frequently revolves around book collections. Libraries are structured spaces designed for reading, learning, and entertainment, providing access to carefully curated collections that facilitate knowledge acquisition.

There are numerous strategies that school librarians can employ to promote the library as a central educational resource. Burkman highlights key target audiences for school library advocacy, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the broader community. Each group requires a distinct approach.

School librarians can enhance their visibility by participating in faculty meetings, hosting open houses, and engaging in parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, they can collaborate with parent-teacher associations, school boards, and other organizations to raise awareness of library services. Organizing annual book fairs, such as National Book Week or Library Week, is another effective way to encourage reading and library use. Other initiatives include developing reading programs, facilitating library tours, providing easy access to book and journal request forms, inviting key stakeholders to visit the library, and implementing a "Friends of the School Library" program (Johnson, 2014).

The Role of Librarians as Liaisons and Outreach Facilitators

At State Elementary School No. 101931 in Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, school librarians actively perform liaison and outreach functions. Through these roles, librarians contribute to research, teaching, and learning processes, ultimately enhancing academic productivity and empowering students.

Librarians at this institution provide instruction on library science, collections, and services. Their outreach activities aim to curate collections and services that align with user needs while also improving the professional competencies of librarians, positioning the library as an essential information hub.

The role of school librarians as liaisons and outreach facilitators is implemented through various programs, including library instruction classes and guided library tours. These initiatives are designed to educate students about library collections, services, and functions. Librarians collaborate with school administrators to develop surveys assessing library engagement and service effectiveness. Additionally, outreach programs such as book travel initiatives serve to connect the library with communities beyond the school environment.

The book travel program, developed by school librarians, aims to promote the library at State Elementary School No. 101931 in Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. Both the library instruction and book travel programs require librarians to possess a diverse skill set, including effective communication, instructional abilities, and program management expertise.

4. CONCLUSION

The role of teacher-librarians as liaisons and outreach facilitators at the Perbaungan Elementary School Library is essential for the effective development and management of collections, as well as for fostering engagement within the school community. Librarians act as the heart of the institution by providing instructional support and organizing guided library tours. An effective teacher-librarian collaborates with students, teachers, and administrators to evaluate and adapt the library's collection to align with the school's IB-based curriculum. Additionally, their ability to provide relevant information and engaging programs enhances the library's role as a central hub for learning. Through library tour programs, teacher-librarians also promote the library to external stakeholders, including schools across Serdang Bedagai Regency.

Beyond internal engagement, teacher-librarians at State Elementary School No. 101931 in Perbaungan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, can leverage social media and other promotional strategies to showcase collections, services, and programs. This outreach effort enables collaboration beyond the local district and strengthens partnerships with external stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the quality and visibility of the school library. By effectively fulfilling their roles as liaisons and outreach facilitators, librarians contribute to a more dynamic and resourceful learning environment, ensuring that the library remains an integral part of the academic community.

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