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GLOLIB

**GLOBAL JOURNAL OF LIBRARIES,
INFORMATION, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC SCIENCES**

**A Quarterly Peer-Reviewed
International Research Journal**



LIBRARIES



INFORMATION



BIBLIOGRAPHIC
SCIENCES



GLOBAL
PERSPECTIVES



RESEARCH &
INNOVATION



ETHICS &
LEADERSHIP

PUBLISHED BY

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RESEARCH CONSULTANCY SERVICES



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Sta. Lucia, Sta. Ana, Pampanga
Philippines



Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)

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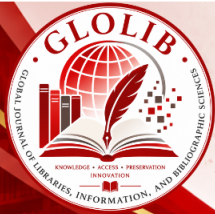
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About the Journal

The **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)** is a scholarly, open-access, quarterly, peer-reviewed, international print and online research journal dedicated to advancing knowledge, innovation, and professional practice in the fields of libraries, information science, bibliographic sciences, knowledge organization, and related interdisciplinary domains. Published by **ETCOR Educational Research Center Research Consultancy Services**, GLOLIB serves as an international platform for librarians, information professionals, archivists, records managers, faculty members, researchers, policymakers, publishers, and students to disseminate high-quality empirical, theoretical, methodological, and practice-based research that contributes to the continuous development of library and information services in the digital and knowledge-driven era.

Recognizing libraries as dynamic centers of learning, research, innovation, cultural preservation, and community engagement, GLOLIB embraces scholarly works that explore the evolving roles of libraries and information institutions in supporting education, research, governance, healthcare, business, culture, and lifelong learning. The journal acknowledges that the modern information landscape extends beyond traditional librarianship to encompass digital libraries, artificial intelligence, knowledge management, scholarly communication, bibliometrics, open science, research data management, digital preservation, and emerging information technologies that shape the future of global information access.

GLOLIB welcomes contributions from researchers and practitioners working in academic, school, public, special, government, medical, law, corporate, and community libraries, as well as archives, museums, documentation centers, and information organizations worldwide. The journal encourages interdisciplinary collaboration by recognizing that information systems, knowledge infrastructures, and bibliographic organization intersect with education, computer science, artificial intelligence, digital humanities, communication, public administration, health sciences, engineering, business, and the social sciences.



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The journal particularly values studies that provide practical solutions to contemporary challenges faced by libraries and information centers, including digital transformation, information literacy, artificial intelligence integration, equitable access to information, metadata innovation, preservation of documentary heritage, research visibility, scholarly publishing, user experience, and evidence-based library management. Through rigorous peer review and adherence to the highest standards of research integrity, GLOLIB seeks to bridge theory and professional practice while promoting innovation and international collaboration.

As an international scholarly publication, GLOLIB is committed to maintaining excellence in academic publishing through double-blind peer review, responsible research ethics, editorial independence, transparency, and continuous quality improvement. Every accepted article is assigned a Crossref Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and published in both print and electronic formats to ensure long-term accessibility, discoverability, citation, and global scholarly visibility. The journal likewise pursues inclusion in reputable international indexing and abstracting databases while continuously strengthening its editorial standards in accordance with international best practices.

Ultimately, GLOLIB aspires to become one of the world's leading international journals in Library and Information Science by fostering intellectual exchange, advancing professional excellence, supporting evidence-based decision-making, and promoting equitable access to knowledge for the benefit of individuals, institutions, and societies across the globe.

GLOLIB Data

ETCOR Website: [https://etcor.org/storage/Journals/GLOLIB%20V1\(1\).pdf](https://etcor.org/storage/Journals/GLOLIB%20V1(1).pdf)

Submit Research Article:
<https://tinyurl.com/GLOLIB>

Journal Template:
<https://tinyurl.com/TemplatesGLOLIB>



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Aims and Scope

Aims

The Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB) aims to:

1. **Advance scholarly research and professional practice** in libraries, information science, bibliographic sciences, archives, and knowledge management through the publication of high-quality, peer-reviewed international research.
2. **Promote innovation in library and information services** by encouraging evidence-based studies that improve information access, organization, preservation, retrieval, dissemination, and user engagement across diverse library and information environments.
3. **Serve as a global platform for interdisciplinary collaboration** among librarians, information professionals, educators, researchers, archivists, publishers, data specialists, policymakers, and technology developers addressing contemporary information challenges.
4. **Support the digital transformation of libraries and information institutions** through research involving artificial intelligence, digital repositories, metadata standards, information technologies, data analytics, and emerging innovations that improve library operations and knowledge services.
5. **Encourage ethical, inclusive, and sustainable information ecosystems** by publishing research that strengthens information literacy, intellectual freedom, open science, scholarly communication, research integrity, cultural heritage preservation, and equitable access to information worldwide.
6. **Develop future leaders in Library and Information Science** by providing an international venue for undergraduate students, graduate students, doctoral researchers, faculty members, and library practitioners to disseminate original scholarly work that contributes to global knowledge and professional advancement.

Scope

The journal welcomes original research articles, systematic reviews, scoping reviews, bibliometric analyses, meta-analyses, conceptual papers, methodological studies, technical papers, policy analyses, case studies, best practices, action research, and practice-based scholarly works in, but not limited to, the following fields:

Core Library and Information Science

- Library and Information Science
- Librarianship

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- Academic Libraries
- School Libraries
- Public Libraries
- Special Libraries
- Government Libraries
- Medical and Health Sciences Libraries
- Law Libraries
- Corporate Libraries
- Community Libraries
- Children's and Youth Library Services
- Library Instruction and User Education

Information Science and Knowledge Management

- Information Science
- Information Behavior
- Information Retrieval
- Knowledge Management
- Knowledge Organization
- Knowledge Discovery
- Information Architecture
- Knowledge Graphs
- Organizational Knowledge Systems

Bibliographic and Scholarly Communication

- Bibliographic Sciences
- Bibliographic Control
- Cataloging
- Classification
- Metadata Standards
- Authority Control
- Indexing and Abstracting
- Controlled Vocabularies
- Ontologies
- Linked Open Data
- Bibliometrics
- Scientometrics
- Informetrics
- Altmetrics
- Citation Analysis
- Research Impact Assessment
- Scholarly Publishing



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- Open Access Publishing
- Open Science
- Research Visibility

Digital Libraries and Information Technologies

- Digital Libraries
- Institutional Repositories
- Digital Archives
- Library Automation
- Integrated Library Systems
- Discovery Services
- Information Systems
- Library Analytics
- Artificial Intelligence in Libraries
- Machine Learning Applications
- Data Mining
- Big Data in Libraries
- Blockchain Applications
- Internet of Things in Information Services
- Cloud Computing
- Digital Transformation
- Smart Libraries
- Virtual Libraries

Archives, Records, and Preservation

- Archives and Archival Science
- Records Management
- Documentary Heritage
- Digital Preservation
- Conservation
- Cultural Heritage Documentation
- Memory Institutions
- Museum Documentation
- Indigenous Knowledge Preservation

Information Literacy and Society

- Information Literacy
- Digital Literacy
- Media and Information Literacy
- AI Literacy

V



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- Health Information Literacy
- Financial Information Literacy
- Research Literacy
- Lifelong Learning
- Reading Promotion
- Community Information Services

Library Leadership and Management

- Library Administration
- Strategic Management
- Human Resource Management
- Leadership Development
- Organizational Behavior
- Quality Assurance
- Performance Assessment
- Service Quality
- User Experience
- Marketing of Library Services
- Library Advocacy
- Policy Development
- Library Economics
- Project Management

Education and Professional Development

- Library and Information Science Education
- Curriculum Development
- Professional Competencies
- Continuing Professional Development
- Instructional Design for Library Education
- Experiential Learning
- Internship Programs
- Accreditation
- Professional Certification

Ethics, Law, and Governance

- Information Ethics
- Intellectual Freedom
- Privacy and Data Protection
- Copyright
- Intellectual Property



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- Cybersecurity
- Information Policy
- Freedom of Information
- Artificial Intelligence Governance
- Responsible Research Practices

Emerging and Interdisciplinary Studies

- Digital Humanities
- Data Science
- Human-Computer Interaction
- Citizen Science
- Information for Sustainable Development
- Library Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Disaster Information Management
- Crisis Information Services
- Environmental Information Systems
- Health Informatics
- Educational Technology
- Community Development through Libraries
- Global Information Cooperation
- International Librarianship

Publication Frequency and Format

- **Frequency:** Quarterly (Four Issues Per Year)
- **Formats:** Print and Online
- **Review Type:** Double-Blind Peer Review
- **Language:** English (Filipino manuscripts may be considered when appropriate to the subject and readership)
- **Identifiers:**
 - Print ISSN
 - Electronic ISSN
 - Crossref DOI assigned to every published article
- **Access Model:** Open Access
- **Article Processing:** Editorial screening, plagiarism detection, double-blind peer review, language editing, technical editing, layout and production, DOI registration, online publication, and print publication.
- **Publication Ethics:** The journal adheres to internationally accepted standards on publication ethics, research integrity, transparency, editorial independence, and responsible scholarly communication.



Submission Guidelines

Author Guidelines / Instructions to Authors

The **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)** welcomes original scholarly works that contribute significantly to the advancement of Library and Information Science (LIS), bibliographic sciences, archives, records management, information science, knowledge organization, digital librarianship, and related interdisciplinary fields. Manuscripts submitted to GLOLIB are received with the understanding that they represent original scholarly work that has not been previously published, is not currently under review elsewhere, and has been approved by all listed authors.

Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts that present theoretical, empirical, methodological, technological, policy-oriented, bibliometric, historical, or practice-based contributions that advance professional knowledge and evidence-based library and information services worldwide.

Submission of Manuscripts

Authors must submit manuscripts through:

Submit Research Article:

<https://tinyurl.com/GLOLIB>

For manuscripts with two or more authors, the **corresponding author** shall submit the manuscript on behalf of all co-authors and assumes responsibility for all communications with the Editorial Office throughout the review and publication process.

For inquiries regarding manuscript submission, editorial policies, or publication matters, authors may contact:

ETCOR Mobile:

0939-202-9035

Email:

embracingthecultureofresearch@gmail.com



Types of Articles Accepted

GLOLIB accepts the following scholarly works:

- Original Research Articles
- Review Articles
- Systematic Reviews
- Scoping Reviews
- Bibliometric Studies
- Scientometric Analyses
- Informetric Studies
- Meta-analyses
- Conceptual Papers
- Policy Analyses
- Technical Papers
- Case Studies
- Best Practices Reports
- Action Research
- Innovation Reports
- Short Communications
- Professional Practice Papers
- Educational Research in Library and Information Science
- Digital Library Development Studies
- Information Technology Applications in Libraries

Funding Disclosure

All authors must disclose every source of financial support, grants, institutional funding, sponsorship, or other forms of assistance received during the conduct of the study.

If no funding was received, the manuscript should explicitly state:

The authors received no external funding for this research.

Transparency regarding funding sources strengthens research integrity and allows readers to appropriately interpret potential influences on the research.



Manuscript Preparation Requirements

Authors are required to strictly follow the official **GLOLIB Manuscript Template**.

Template:

<https://tinyurl.com/TemplatesGLOLIB>

The manuscript should generally be limited to **10–12 pages**, including tables, figures, appendices, acknowledgments, and references. Authors should present only the most essential components of the completed research while maintaining sufficient scholarly depth and methodological rigor.

Failure to follow the prescribed journal format may result in the manuscript being returned prior to editorial evaluation.

Authors Must Ensure Compliance with the Following

1. Academic Significance, Originality, and Contribution

The manuscript must clearly demonstrate its scholarly significance to Library and Information Science or related disciplines.

The study should:

- address an important professional or scholarly issue;
- identify an existing research gap;
- contribute new knowledge;
- improve professional practice;
- introduce innovative methodologies, systems, technologies, or policies;
- provide practical implications for libraries, information organizations, archives, or knowledge institutions.

Authors should clearly explain:

- Why the study was conducted;
- What gap exists in current literature;
- How the study differs from previous research;
- How the findings contribute to global scholarship and professional practice.

X



2. Language Quality

The manuscript must demonstrate professional academic writing.

Authors should observe the following:

- Use grammatically correct English.
- Maintain consistency in tense (past tense for completed research).
- Avoid first-person writing ("I," "we," "our") unless justified by methodology.
- Avoid contractions.
- Maintain an objective scientific tone.
- Define specialized terms when necessary.
- Translate local terms unfamiliar to international readers.
- Maintain consistency in terminology throughout the manuscript.

For manuscripts written in Filipino or another language approved by the Editorial Board, an English title, abstract, and keywords must be provided.

3. Abstract

The abstract should accurately summarize the study.

It should include:

- Background
- Objective
- Research Design
- Participants or Data Sources
- Methods
- Major Findings
- Conclusions
- Practical Implications

The abstract should normally contain **200–250 words**.

Immediately after the abstract, provide **five to seven keywords** arranged alphabetically.

4. Introduction

The introduction should establish the scholarly foundation of the study.

It must:

- present global trends;
- discuss regional and local contexts;
- explain the importance of the problem;
- identify existing literature;
- establish research gaps;
- justify the necessity of the present investigation.

Whenever appropriate, authors should prioritize references published within the previous five years while still recognizing seminal works that remain foundational to the discipline.

5. Statement of the Problem, Research Objectives, and Research Questions

These sections should be logically connected.

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem should clearly describe the issue or challenge that the study seeks to address.

Example:

Many academic libraries continue to invest in digital repository systems; however, limited evidence exists regarding how repository usability influences faculty participation in institutional scholarly communication initiatives.

Research Objectives

Objectives should be written in infinitive form.

Examples:

- To determine...
- To examine...



- To evaluate...
- To assess...
- To compare...
- To develop...
- To validate...
- To explore...

Research Questions

Research questions should directly correspond to each objective.

Examples:

- What factors influence...
- How effective is...
- What relationships exist...
- What challenges are experienced...

6. Review of Related Literature and Studies

The Review of Related Literature should provide comprehensive scholarly support for the study.

Authors should:

- include current international literature;
- synthesize rather than merely summarize previous studies;
- identify agreements and disagreements among authors;
- explain the relevance of previous studies;
- conclude with a synthesis highlighting the research gap addressed by the present investigation.

Outdated references should be used only when they represent foundational theories or historically significant contributions.



7. Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework

Every empirical study should be anchored on an appropriate theoretical and/or conceptual framework.

The framework should:

- explain relationships among variables;
- justify research assumptions;
- support methodological decisions;
- guide interpretation of findings.

For applied studies, conceptual frameworks or systems models may likewise be appropriate.

8. Research Methodology

The methodology should be comprehensive, transparent, and replicable.

Subsections should include only relevant information.

Research Design

Clearly identify the research design and explain why it is appropriate.

Examples include:

- Descriptive
- Correlational
- Experimental
- Quasi-experimental
- Mixed Methods
- Phenomenological
- Grounded Theory
- Case Study
- Ethnography
- Bibliometric Analysis
- Scientometric Analysis
- Design Science Research
- Action Research



Participants, Population, Sampling, and Data Sources

Clearly describe:

- study population;
- sample size;
- sampling procedures;
- inclusion and exclusion criteria;
- databases;
- institutional repositories;
- digital collections;
- bibliographic datasets;
- documentary sources;
- archival collections;
- datasets used in bibliometric analyses.

Research Instruments

Indicate whether the instrument was:

- adopted;
- adapted;
- researcher-developed.

Discuss:

- validation procedures;
- pilot testing;
- reliability measures;
- software tools;
- bibliometric software (e.g., VOSviewer, Bibliometrix, CiteSpace) when applicable.

Data Collection

Describe:

- where the data came from;
- collection procedures;
- permissions obtained;



- timelines;
- software platforms utilized.

Data Analysis

Clearly explain:

- statistical procedures;
- qualitative analysis methods;
- bibliometric techniques;
- visualization methods;
- software packages used.

Authors should explain **how** each analysis was applied rather than merely defining statistical techniques.

Ethical Considerations

Discuss:

- ethics approval;
- informed consent;
- confidentiality;
- data privacy;
- copyright compliance;
- institutional permissions;
- responsible use of archival materials;
- compliance with AI-assisted research policies where applicable.

Important Reminders

Authors should avoid:

- mixing unrelated methodological discussions;
- unsupported interpretations;
- excessive quotations;
- poorly labeled tables and figures;



- inconsistent terminology.

For mixed-methods research, quantitative and qualitative components should be discussed separately before explaining how both datasets were integrated.

Authors should consistently use **"researchers"** instead of singular pronouns when multiple authors are involved.

9. Results and Discussion

Results should directly answer the research questions.

Authors should:

- organize findings logically;
- present tables and figures clearly;
- integrate discussion immediately after each result;
- compare findings with previous literature;
- explain theoretical and practical implications.

Merely describing tables without interpretation is discouraged.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions should:

- directly arise from findings;
- answer the objectives;
- avoid introducing new information.

Recommendations should:

- be feasible;
- evidence-based;
- relevant to libraries, information institutions, researchers, educators, policymakers, or future investigations.

Avoid vague recommendations such as "more studies should be conducted."

Instead, identify specific research directions or practical actions.

Part III

References (APA 7th Edition)

GLOLIB strictly adheres to the **Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seventh Edition**. Authors are responsible for ensuring that all references are complete, accurate, current, and formatted according to APA 7th edition guidelines.

References should reflect scholarly rigor by including the most recent and relevant literature available. Authors are encouraged to prioritize peer-reviewed journal articles, books from reputable academic publishers, government publications, international organization reports, conference proceedings, dissertations, and credible institutional documents.

Authors must carefully review the entire manuscript to ensure consistency between in-text citations and the reference list.

The following requirements shall be strictly observed:

- Every in-text citation must appear in the References section.
- Every reference listed must have been cited within the manuscript.
- No unmatched citations or references shall be permitted.
- References should be arranged alphabetically regardless of publication type.
- Do not separate books, journal articles, reports, websites, and other materials into different categories.
- Use hanging indentation throughout the References section.
- Journal titles and volume numbers must be italicized.
- Article titles should be written in sentence case.
- Journal titles should be written in title case.
- Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) must be presented in URL format (<https://doi.org/...>).
- Where no DOI exists, provide a stable URL whenever available.
- Retrieval dates should only be included when the source content is designed to change over time.
- Avoid citing "No Date (n.d.)" references unless absolutely unavoidable.
- Authors should prioritize literature published within the last five years, while recognizing seminal works that remain foundational to the discipline.

Authors Must Also Ensure the Following:

- Every research article, policy document, report, thesis, dissertation, conference paper, and online resource cited in the manuscript should include either its DOI or accessible URL whenever available.



- References should accurately reflect the original publication information.
- Authors should verify all hyperlinks before manuscript submission.
- Artificial Intelligence tools used during manuscript preparation should not be cited as primary scholarly references unless the study itself investigates artificial intelligence applications or generated outputs.

Failure to comply with APA 7th edition requirements may delay editorial processing and publication.

11. Acronyms and Abbreviations

All acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms must be defined upon their first appearance in both the abstract and the main text.

Examples include:

- Library and Information Science (LIS)
- Open Access (OA)
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Integrated Library System (ILS)
- Digital Object Identifier (DOI)
- Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH)
- Machine Learning (ML)

Authors should avoid excessive use of abbreviations, particularly when terms appear only once or twice in the manuscript.

12. Tables, Figures, and Illustrations

Tables and figures should supplement—not duplicate—the discussion in the manuscript.

Authors should ensure that:

- Tables are editable and not submitted as images.
- Figures are of publication-quality resolution.
- Every table and figure is cited within the text.
- Titles are concise and descriptive.
- Sources are acknowledged where applicable.
- Permissions are secured for copyrighted materials.



Graphs, photographs, screenshots, conceptual models, workflows, and system diagrams should be relevant to the study and contribute to readers' understanding.

13. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure

Authors who utilized Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted technologies during manuscript preparation must disclose such use in an appropriate section of the manuscript.

Acceptable uses include:

- language refinement;
- grammar checking;
- translation assistance;
- coding assistance;
- data visualization support.

AI tools must **not** be listed as authors.

Authors remain fully responsible for:

- the originality;
- accuracy;
- integrity;
- interpretation;
- conclusions; and
- ethical compliance

of the submitted manuscript.

Undisclosed or inappropriate AI-generated content may constitute grounds for rejection.

14. Authorship and Contribution Declaration

All listed authors must have made substantial scholarly contributions to the work.

Each author should have participated in one or more of the following:

- Conceptualization
- Literature Review

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- Methodology
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Writing – Original Draft
- Writing – Review and Editing
- Supervision
- Funding Acquisition
- Project Administration

Authors are required to submit a duly accomplished and signed **Authorship and Contribution Declaration Form** together with the manuscript.

Template:

<https://tinyurl.com/TemplatesGLOLIB>

Review Process

Upon successful submission, the corresponding author shall receive an acknowledgment email confirming receipt of the manuscript.

The editorial evaluation consists of several stages designed to ensure scholarly quality, originality, methodological rigor, ethical compliance, and relevance to the aims and scope of GLOLIB.

Stage 1: Initial Editorial Screening

The Associate Editor evaluates whether the manuscript:

- falls within the journal's aims and scope;
- follows the prescribed manuscript template;
- complies with ethical requirements;
- demonstrates acceptable academic quality;
- satisfies submission requirements.

Manuscripts failing to satisfy these preliminary requirements may be returned to the authors for technical revision before peer review.



Stage 2: Similarity Detection

All manuscripts undergo plagiarism screening using appropriate similarity detection software.

The Editorial Office evaluates similarity reports to determine whether overlapping text constitutes acceptable scholarly citation or potential academic misconduct.

Manuscripts exhibiting plagiarism, duplicate publication, or unethical text recycling shall be rejected.

Stage 3: Double-Blind Peer Review

Eligible manuscripts undergo **double-blind peer review** by at least **two independent subject experts**.

Reviewer identities remain confidential throughout the evaluation process.

Likewise, reviewer information is withheld from authors.

Reviewers evaluate manuscripts based on:

- originality;
- scholarly significance;
- methodological rigor;
- technical accuracy;
- organization;
- literature integration;
- clarity of writing;
- ethical compliance;
- practical implications;
- overall contribution to Library and Information Science.

Editorial Decisions

Following peer review, one of the following editorial decisions shall be issued:

- Publish without Revision
- Accept after Minor Revisions
- Accept after Major Revisions



- Resubmit for New Review
- Reject

Split Decisions

If reviewers substantially disagree, the Editor-in-Chief may assign the manuscript to a **third independent reviewer**.

The third review serves as an additional scholarly evaluation to facilitate a fair editorial decision.

Revision Period

Authors are generally given **two weeks** to complete revisions.

Failure to submit revisions within the prescribed period without prior communication may result in withdrawal of the manuscript from editorial processing.

Final Acceptance

The Editor-in-Chief makes the final publication decision after considering:

- reviewer recommendations;
- authors' responses;
- revised manuscript quality;
- editorial standards.

Accepted manuscripts proceed to copyediting, language editing, technical editing, layout, proofreading, DOI registration, and publication.

Publication Policies and Ethics

The **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)** is committed to the highest standards of scholarly publishing and publication ethics.

The journal follows internationally recognized principles of:

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- research integrity;
- editorial independence;
- fairness;
- transparency;
- accountability;
- responsible scholarly communication.

Authors, reviewers, editors, and editorial staff share responsibility for maintaining these standards.

Research Integrity

Submitted manuscripts must represent original scholarly work.

Authors must ensure that the manuscript:

- has not been previously published;
- is not simultaneously under review elsewhere;
- contains accurate data;
- appropriately cites all sources;
- complies with institutional and national ethical requirements.

Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, duplicate publication, and image manipulation constitute serious violations of publication ethics.

Changes to Authorship

Requests for authorship modification after manuscript submission shall only be considered under exceptional circumstances.

All authors must provide written consent before any change involving:

- addition of authors;
- removal of authors;
- change in author order.

The Editorial Office reserves the right to reject inappropriate authorship changes.



Copyright Policy

Authors retain copyright to their published articles while granting GLOLIB the non-exclusive right to publish, archive, index, and disseminate the work.

Authors may archive:

- Pre-print versions;
- Accepted manuscripts;
- Publisher's PDF,

subject to the journal's licensing agreement and proper acknowledgment of first publication in GLOLIB.

Conflict of Interest

All authors, reviewers, and editors must disclose any financial, institutional, personal, or professional relationships that could influence the research or editorial process.

Potential conflicts include:

- research funding;
- employment;
- consultancy;
- honoraria;
- stock ownership;
- institutional affiliations.

Transparency promotes public trust in scholarly publishing.

Data Availability

Authors are encouraged to make research data available whenever ethically and legally permissible.

Where restrictions apply, authors should explain the reasons within a Data Availability Statement.



Article Retraction

Articles may be retracted when substantial evidence demonstrates:

- plagiarism;
- duplicate publication;
- fabricated data;
- falsified results;
- unethical research conduct;
- serious methodological errors that invalidate findings.

Retraction notices remain permanently linked to the published article.

Retraction Fee

PHP 6,000

USD 120

Article Withdrawal

Withdrawal requests submitted after completion of peer review, editing, and production processes incur administrative costs.

Withdrawal Fee

PHP 6,000

USD 120

Article Removal

Published articles may only be removed under extraordinary legal, ethical, or public safety circumstances.

Where removal becomes necessary, bibliographic information shall remain permanently accessible as part of the scholarly record whenever legally permissible.



Complaints and Appeals

Authors may appeal editorial decisions by submitting a formal written explanation supported by scholarly justification.

Appeals are reviewed independently by the Editor-in-Chief and, when necessary, by members of the Editorial Board.

The Editor-in-Chief's decision on appeals shall be final.

Additional Information

- **Call for Research Articles:** Open throughout the year (Rolling Submission)
- **Applications for Peer Reviewers:** Open
- **Applications for Editorial Board Membership:** Open
- **Applications for Language Editors:** Open
- **Special Issues:** May be published upon approval of the Editorial Board
- **Publication Charges:** Available upon request
- **Discounts:** Available for ETCOR Research Consultants, accredited reviewers, institutional partners, and approved collaborators
- **Indexing and Abstracting:** The journal actively pursues inclusion in reputable international indexing and abstracting databases and institutional repositories.
- **Digital Preservation:** Published articles are archived through the journal's digital repository to ensure long-term accessibility and preservation.



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Editor's Note (Maiden Issue)

Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)

It is with profound honor and great enthusiasm that we present the inaugural issue of the **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)**. This maiden publication marks another significant milestone in the continuing commitment of **ETCOR Educational Research Center Research Consultancy Services** to promote scholarly excellence, ethical publishing, and international research collaboration. As our organization expands its portfolio of peer-reviewed international journals, GLOLIB stands as a dedicated platform that recognizes the indispensable role of libraries, information institutions, archives, and bibliographic systems in advancing education, research, innovation, cultural preservation, and sustainable societal development.

Throughout history, libraries have served as gateways to knowledge and civilization. They have preserved humanity's intellectual heritage, safeguarded cultural memory, and empowered generations through equitable access to information. In today's increasingly interconnected digital society, however, the role of libraries has expanded far beyond the traditional stewardship of books and printed collections. Modern libraries have become dynamic knowledge centers that support scientific discovery, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, community engagement, open scholarship, and evidence-based decision-making across virtually every discipline.

The rapid advancement of information technologies has fundamentally transformed the ways knowledge is created, organized, disseminated, accessed, and preserved. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, digital repositories, cloud computing, linked data, research analytics, and open science initiatives are reshaping library services and redefining the competencies expected of library and information professionals. These developments present both remarkable opportunities and significant challenges, requiring continuous scholarly inquiry to ensure that information institutions remain relevant, innovative, ethical, and responsive to the evolving needs of society.

The **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)** was established in response to these transformations. The journal recognizes that Library and Information Science is no longer confined to conventional librarianship but has become an interdisciplinary field that intersects with information science, knowledge management, data analytics, archives, digital humanities, education, computer science, communication, public administration, health sciences, business, and numerous other disciplines. By embracing this multidisciplinary perspective, GLOLIB seeks to become a venue where innovative ideas converge and where scholarly evidence informs professional practice, institutional development, and public policy.

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One of the defining strengths of GLOLIB is its commitment to bridging research and professional practice. While theoretical contributions remain essential to disciplinary advancement, the journal equally values studies that provide practical solutions to real-world challenges encountered by libraries and information organizations. Whether addressing user-centered service design, digital preservation strategies, metadata innovation, information literacy programs, artificial intelligence applications, bibliometric evaluation, research visibility, knowledge organization, or scholarly communication, the journal encourages research that contributes tangible benefits to practitioners, institutions, and communities.

GLOLIB likewise recognizes that libraries are fundamental partners in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Libraries contribute significantly to quality education, reduced inequalities, gender equality, innovation, strong institutions, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and informed citizenship. Through access to reliable information, libraries empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions, participate meaningfully in democratic processes, preserve local heritage, and promote lifelong learning. The journal therefore welcomes research that demonstrates how library and information services contribute to sustainable development at local, national, regional, and global levels.

The Editorial Board also acknowledges the increasing importance of bibliographic sciences in the contemporary research ecosystem. Bibliographic organization, metadata standards, indexing, citation analysis, scientometrics, informetrics, and research analytics have become indispensable tools for measuring scholarly productivity, improving research discoverability, and supporting evidence-based policy formulation. As scholarly publishing continues to evolve through digital technologies and open-access initiatives, bibliographic sciences provide the foundation for ensuring that research outputs remain accessible, interoperable, discoverable, and preserved for future generations.

GLOLIB embraces technological innovation while remaining steadfast in its commitment to research integrity and publication ethics. Every manuscript undergoes rigorous editorial screening, plagiarism detection, and double-blind peer review to ensure originality, methodological rigor, scholarly significance, and ethical compliance. The journal is equally committed to transparency, fairness, editorial independence, and continuous quality improvement. These principles reflect our unwavering belief that credible scholarly communication depends upon trust, accountability, and responsible stewardship of knowledge.

As an international journal, GLOLIB welcomes submissions from scholars, librarians, archivists, information scientists, educators, policymakers, publishers, students, and practitioners across all regions of the world. We believe that diversity of perspectives enriches scholarly dialogue and strengthens the collective advancement of the profession. Comparative studies, international collaborations, cross-cultural investigations, and interdisciplinary research are particularly encouraged, as they contribute to a broader understanding of how information institutions respond to shared global challenges while addressing unique local contexts.

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The journal also seeks to nurture emerging researchers alongside established scholars. Many librarians and information professionals engage in innovative projects, service improvements, technological implementations, and community-based initiatives that deserve scholarly recognition. GLOLIB provides a rigorous yet supportive venue where such contributions can be documented, evaluated, disseminated, and shared with the international research community. By encouraging practitioner-led research, the journal hopes to strengthen the culture of evidence-based librarianship and continuous professional learning.

As scholarly publishing itself continues to evolve, GLOLIB remains committed to adopting internationally recognized standards in editorial management, digital publishing, indexing, and research dissemination. Every published article is assigned a Crossref Digital Object Identifier (DOI), ensuring persistent identification, citation, and discoverability. The journal likewise pursues inclusion in reputable indexing and abstracting databases to maximize the visibility, accessibility, and global impact of the scholarly works entrusted to its pages.

The success of this maiden issue would not have been possible without the dedication of our authors, peer reviewers, associate editors, language editors, technical editors, and members of the Editorial Board. Their expertise, professionalism, and commitment to academic excellence have laid a strong foundation for what we envision as a respected international journal serving the Library and Information Science community for many years to come. We also express our sincere appreciation to the institutions, organizations, and professional associations that continue to support research, innovation, and scholarly publishing within the discipline.

As Editor-in-Chief, I warmly invite researchers, practitioners, educators, students, and information professionals from around the world to make GLOLIB their preferred venue for disseminating high-quality scholarly work. Together, we can cultivate a vibrant international community committed to advancing libraries, information systems, bibliographic sciences, and knowledge management for the benefit of present and future generations.

On behalf of the entire Editorial Board, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to this inaugural issue. May the **Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)** continue to inspire intellectual curiosity, foster scholarly collaboration, uphold the highest standards of research integrity, and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge, information accessibility, and lifelong learning across the world.

Richard D. Sanchez, LPT, PhD

Editor-in-Chief

Global Journal of Libraries, Information, and Bibliographic Sciences (GLOLIB)

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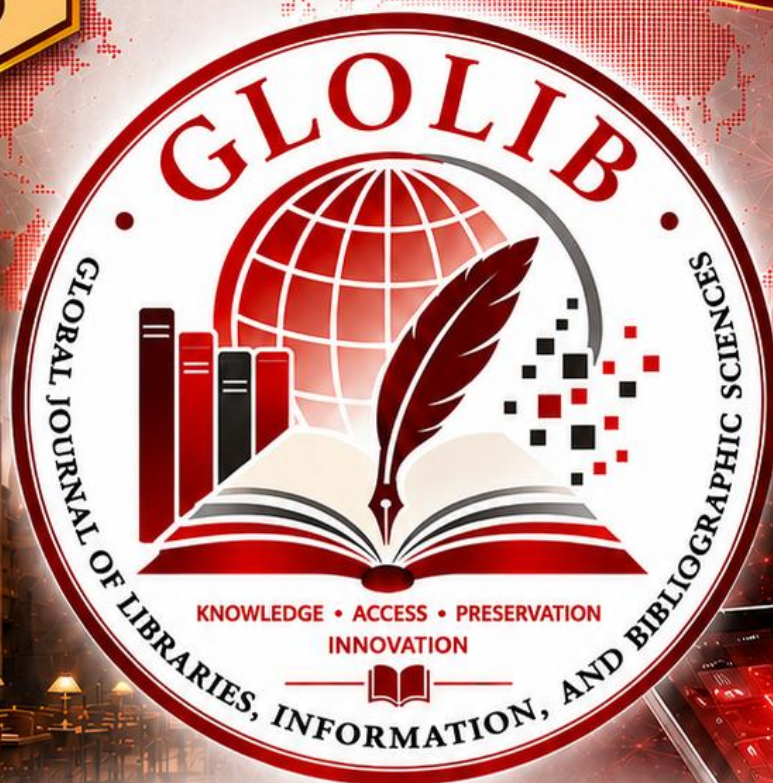
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From libraries to community learning hubs: The lived experiences of librarians

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored the lived experiences of librarians who have actively participated in transforming their libraries into community learning hubs.

Methods: The study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design. Using purposive sampling, twelve licensed librarians from public, academic, and community libraries with at least ten years of professional experience participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed following Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach.

Results: Six interconnected themes emerged: (1) redefining the purpose of libraries; (2) listening before leading; (3) creating spaces where everyone belongs; (4) embracing innovation while preserving identity; (5) partnerships as catalysts for transformation; and (6) sustaining community-centered libraries through visionary leadership. The findings indicate that successful library transformation extends beyond technological modernization and represents a fundamental shift toward responsive, inclusive, and collaborative institutions. Librarians emerged as educators, facilitators, advocates, innovators, and community builders who significantly contribute to lifelong learning and community development.

Conclusion: Successful library transformation requires adaptive leadership, continuous professional learning, meaningful community engagement, and sustained institutional support. The proposed Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF) offers a practical guide for librarians, administrators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen community-centered library services and promote sustainable library transformation in the digital era.

Keywords: *community engagement, community learning hubs, librarianship, library transformation, lifelong learning, phenomenology, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have long been recognized as essential institutions that preserve knowledge, promote literacy, support education, and provide equitable access to information (Onunka et al., 2023). Throughout history, they have served as repositories of cultural heritage, centers of scholarship, and spaces where individuals pursue intellectual growth regardless of socioeconomic background. Traditionally, libraries were largely associated with printed collections, quiet reading spaces, reference services, and the organization and preservation of information resources. Although these functions remain fundamental to librarianship, the role of libraries has expanded substantially as societies experience rapid technological, educational, and social change.

The twenty-first century has transformed the ways information is created, accessed, evaluated, shared, and consumed. Digital technologies, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, mobile devices, and online learning platforms have altered information-seeking behaviors and increased expectations for immediate, personalized, interactive, and technology-enabled services. These developments have challenged libraries to reconsider how they create value for their communities and how they remain relevant in environments where information is increasingly available beyond physical library spaces (Meesad & Mingkhwan, 2024). Rather than rendering libraries obsolete, however, technological change has created opportunities for libraries to extend their educational, social, and cultural functions.



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Across different library environments, institutions are increasingly evolving into community-centered learning spaces that provide services beyond conventional book lending. Digital literacy programs, technology training, makerspaces, entrepreneurship activities, career development programs, children's learning activities, cultural initiatives, research support, and collaborative community programs illustrate how libraries can respond to diverse learning and information needs. Such developments reflect a broader understanding of the library as an institution that facilitates lifelong learning, digital inclusion, civic participation, creativity, social interaction, and community development.

This transformation is particularly significant within the broader Asian and Southeast Asian context, where libraries operate amid rapid technological change and diverse social, educational, and economic conditions. The transformation of libraries is not simply a matter of acquiring new technologies; it also involves developing institutional capacities, adapting professional roles, and creating services that respond meaningfully to the communities being served. Harisanty et al. (2026), for example, provide regional insights into the readiness of Southeast Asian librarians for digital transformation and emphasize the importance of institutional capacity-building in addressing knowledge and competency gaps. Their findings highlight the need to strengthen librarians' emerging roles as digital curators, educators, and technology facilitators.

Within the Philippine context, the transformation of libraries is likewise influenced by changing information behaviors, technological development, and increasing expectations for accessible and responsive services. Philippine librarians contend with the continuing incorporation of digital tools and systems into library services, requiring professional adaptation and continuous enhancement of competencies (Wagas et al., 2024). The Philippine setting is particularly relevant to the present inquiry because libraries operate across diverse institutional and community environments, including public libraries, academic libraries, and community-based learning spaces. These settings require librarians to balance traditional responsibilities with emerging demands for digital literacy, community engagement, educational programming, and collaborative service delivery.

At the local level, Central Luzon provides a meaningful context for examining this transformation because libraries in the region serve communities with diverse educational, technological, cultural, and socioeconomic circumstances. The transformation of libraries within such environments requires librarians to interpret community needs, mobilize available resources, develop partnerships, introduce innovative programs, and sustain services despite institutional constraints. Thus, the movement toward community learning hubs is not merely a technological transition but a process of organizational and professional transformation.

Central to this transformation are librarians themselves. Contemporary librarians increasingly function as educators, technology facilitators, research consultants, digital literacy advocates, project managers, community organizers, cultural heritage stewards, and institutional leaders. Rameshwari (2025) observes that librarians in the twenty-first century have moved beyond their traditional role as custodians of books and increasingly serve as digital educators and technology specialists. Libraries now provide internet access, career development opportunities, research support, and other services intended to empower communities. At the same time, librarians must contend with limited budgets, unequal access to technology, and the continuous emergence of new digital tools. These conditions make professional adaptability, collaboration, and institutional support essential to successful transformation.

The broader transformation of libraries can also be understood as a shift in how institutions define their relationship with knowledge and their communities. Modern libraries are increasingly becoming dynamic, multifunctional institutions that contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and social development of communities. They provide platforms for knowledge sharing, research advancement, creative expression, digital literacy, and civic participation. Consequently, library transformation involves not only technological modernization but also a redefinition of institutional purpose, professional identity, leadership, and community relationships.

Transforming a traditional library into a community learning hub is therefore a complex organizational process involving strategic leadership, innovation, technological integration, stakeholder collaboration, resource mobilization, community engagement, and continuous professional development. Existing literature has documented developments in library usage, digital resource adoption, service innovation, and organizational transformation. However, comparatively less attention has been given to how librarians themselves experience these transformations, how they interpret the changes in their professional roles, and how they negotiate the challenges and opportunities associated with becoming community-centered institutions.

This gap is important because institutional transformation is experienced not only through policies, technologies, programs, and organizational structures but also through the everyday experiences of the professionals responsible for implementing and sustaining change. Librarians' lived experiences can reveal the motivations that initiate transformation, the challenges that emerge during implementation, the leadership practices that facilitate



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change, the partnerships that sustain initiatives, and the meanings librarians attach to their evolving professional identities. Understanding these experiences can therefore provide a more human-centered explanation of library transformation than institutional performance indicators alone.

The present study differs from studies that primarily examine library usage, technology adoption, service effectiveness, or organizational outcomes because it focuses specifically on the lived experiences of librarians who have participated in the transformation of traditional libraries into community learning hubs. Using a transcendental phenomenological perspective, the study seeks to understand the meanings participants attribute to their experiences rather than quantify the effectiveness of particular programs or technologies. The study also integrates leadership, innovation, community engagement, professional identity, and collaborative learning in explaining the transformation process and culminates in the development of the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF).

The study has significance beyond the immediate Philippine setting. Although the investigation is situated in selected libraries in Central Luzon, the experiences of librarians may offer transferable insights for library professionals and administrators working in other environments undergoing similar technological, educational, and organizational changes. The findings may contribute to international discussions on community-centered librarianship by demonstrating how professional judgment, participatory leadership, community partnerships, and institutional learning interact in the transformation of libraries. They may likewise inform evidence-based library leadership, professional development, institutional planning, and policy formulation in contexts where libraries are expected to function increasingly as inclusive learning and community development spaces.

Accordingly, this phenomenological study explores how librarians experience the transition from traditional library services toward community-centered learning environments. It examines their experiences of transformation, motivations, challenges, leadership practices, community partnerships, professional identity, and aspirations for the future of libraries. By giving central attention to librarians' lived experiences, the study contributes to transformational librarianship, community engagement, lifelong learning, professional development, and sustainable library transformation.

Ultimately, the study views libraries not merely in terms of the collections they maintain but in terms of the communities they empower. As learning increasingly occurs across physical and digital environments, libraries can serve as accessible spaces where information, education, technology, culture, collaboration, and community participation converge. Librarians remain central to this process because they translate institutional resources and professional knowledge into responsive services that address the changing needs of their communities.

Review of Related Literature

Libraries in Transition

Libraries have undergone significant transformation as advances in information and communication technologies have reshaped the production, dissemination, and consumption of knowledge (Lee, 2021). Traditional libraries primarily emphasized acquiring, organizing, preserving, and providing access to printed collections. Contemporary libraries, however, increasingly function as multifaceted institutions that combine physical collections with digital resources, technology-enabled services, collaborative learning environments, community programs, and innovative educational initiatives.

Hassans (2025) explains that libraries have evolved from institutions primarily concerned with storing books into environments that provide access to diverse physical and digital information resources. Librarians increasingly guide users through expanding information environments and serve as intermediaries between users and both online and offline resources. Although technology has reduced libraries' exclusive role as information gatekeepers, it has simultaneously increased the demand for specialized information services that can be accessed across different locations and platforms.

Similarly, Jadhav and Ghodke (2025) emphasize that libraries have transitioned from conventional book repositories into hybrid spaces that combine physical collections and digital services. These institutions increasingly function as community hubs and digital learning centers by providing internet access, training, innovative resources, and technology-supported learning opportunities. This transformation has consequently expanded the professional role of librarians from traditional custodians of collections toward educators, technology facilitators, and community-oriented information professionals.

The transition from collection-centered to community-centered librarianship represents a significant conceptual change. Library relevance is increasingly associated not only with the size or use of collections but also with the institution's capacity to contribute to education, social inclusion, digital literacy, community development, and



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lifelong learning. This shift provides an important foundation for understanding why librarians must continually reassess the purpose and functions of their institutions.

Community Learning Hubs

The concept of community learning hubs reflects the expanding educational and social role of contemporary libraries. Community learning hubs provide accessible environments where individuals of different ages and backgrounds can participate in formal, non-formal, and informal learning. These environments may include technology training, literacy programs, collaborative projects, makerspaces, cultural activities, research support, entrepreneurship initiatives, and community partnerships.

The transformation toward community learning hubs also reflects the increasing recognition that learning is not confined to formal educational institutions. Libraries can provide accessible environments in which community members acquire information and skills, interact with others, participate in cultural activities, and respond collectively to local concerns. In this sense, the library becomes both a physical and social infrastructure for lifelong learning.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2026) illustrates this broader societal role through developments in which libraries engage communities in documenting local stories, memories, knowledge, and cultural resources. The Valmiera Region initiative in Latvia, for example, demonstrates how public libraries can support citizen participation in activities that connect information, cultural identity, local knowledge, and community-generated knowledge. Such initiatives illustrate the capacity of libraries to move beyond passive information provision toward active community participation.

In the Philippine context, Balan (2026) describes Barangay Learning Hubs as long-term investments in resilient education systems that mobilize community participation and resources to reduce inequities and provide continuous learning support. Such initiatives highlight the shared responsibility of schools, families, local governments, and organizations in expanding meaningful learning opportunities. They also demonstrate how community-based learning environments can enhance accessibility, engagement, and educational continuity.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that community learning hubs are characterized not merely by the presence of technology or additional services but by their capacity to connect people, knowledge, learning opportunities, and community resources. For libraries, becoming a community learning hub therefore requires a shift from service provision based primarily on institutional assumptions toward services designed around the needs and participation of communities.

Transformational Leadership in Libraries

Organizational transformation requires leadership capable of establishing direction, mobilizing people, supporting innovation, and sustaining institutional change. Within libraries, transformational leadership is particularly relevant because librarians and library administrators must respond to technological developments while preserving the professional values of equitable information access, learning, service, and community engagement.

Tsafe et al. (2022) explain that organizations operating in rapidly changing environments require leaders who can inspire and guide personnel toward adaptability. Transformational leadership is characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions can support library personnel by encouraging innovation, empowering staff, strengthening commitment to institutional goals, and fostering problem-solving.

The relevance of transformational leadership becomes more pronounced when libraries attempt to redesign services and institutional functions. Introducing digital services, community programs, collaborative spaces, or new learning initiatives may require changes in organizational culture and staff responsibilities. Leaders must therefore communicate a clear purpose, encourage participation, support professional development, and establish conditions in which innovation can be sustained.

Within community learning hubs, leadership is not limited to formal administrative positions. Librarians who initiate programs, consult communities, coordinate partnerships, advocate for resources, and encourage colleagues to adopt new practices may also exercise transformational leadership. This broader understanding of leadership is particularly relevant to a phenomenological study because participants' experiences can reveal how leadership is actually practiced during transformation.

Community Engagement

Effective community engagement enables libraries to understand local needs and develop services that are responsive to the people they serve. Participatory approaches encourage collaboration with schools, government



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agencies, civil society organizations, businesses, cultural institutions, and community groups. Such relationships can expand available resources, strengthen institutional relevance, and support the sustainability of library programs.

Ashikuzzaman (2024) emphasizes that libraries increasingly place community engagement at the center of their mission by creating spaces for collaboration, inclusion, and shared learning. Through cultural programs, educational workshops, partnerships, and responsive services, libraries can address diverse community needs while strengthening social relationships. Listening to community feedback allows libraries to adjust their services and position communities as active participants rather than passive recipients.

Community engagement is therefore closely connected to the transformation of libraries into learning hubs. The shift requires librarians to identify what communities actually need rather than simply expanding services based on institutional assumptions. Community consultation, dialogue, collaborative planning, and partnership development become important mechanisms through which librarians can understand local priorities and translate them into meaningful services.

Lifelong Learning

Libraries play a significant role in supporting lifelong learning by providing accessible spaces, information resources, programs, and services for people at different stages of life. Subramanya and Manjunath (2023) emphasize that libraries strengthen community engagement by providing inclusive environments in which individuals can learn, connect, and collaborate. Through diverse programs and services, libraries encourage curiosity, promote lifelong learning, and empower individuals to participate actively in their communities.

Lifelong learning has consequently become an important principle of contemporary librarianship. Libraries can support literacy development, digital competency, workforce preparation, health information literacy, financial literacy, cultural enrichment, and continuing education. These functions are especially relevant to community learning hubs because such institutions provide learning opportunities outside conventional classroom settings.

The lifelong-learning orientation also broadens the understanding of library users. Instead of serving primarily students or individuals seeking books, libraries can support children, adults, senior citizens, job seekers, entrepreneurs, researchers, families, and other community groups. This diversity reinforces the need for librarians to understand community needs and design inclusive learning opportunities.

Professional Identity of Librarians

The transformation of library services is accompanied by a transformation of librarians' professional identities. The librarian's role is evolving from that of a neutral keeper of resources toward that of an active catalyst for social change. This development represents more than an expansion of routine responsibilities; it reflects a fundamental transformation in how the profession understands its social and institutional purpose.

Technological and societal developments have likewise broadened librarianship. Michalak et al. (2026) note that although traditional responsibilities such as cataloging, reference, and collection management remain important, librarians increasingly engage in digital scholarship, research support, and user experience. These emerging responsibilities require competencies that extend beyond conventional technical library work.

Zhaylaubaev (2026) further emphasizes that modern libraries are becoming dynamic, multifunctional institutions that contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and social fabric of communities. They serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, research advancement, creative expression, digital literacy, and civic participation. This development consequently places librarians in positions that require them to coordinate multiple institutional and community functions.

The regional dimension is also important. Harisanty et al. (2026) highlight the readiness of Southeast Asian librarians for digital transformation and underscore the importance of institutional capacity-building. Strengthening professional competencies is essential for enabling librarians to assume emerging roles as digital curators, educators, and technology facilitators.

In the Philippines, technological change has similarly reshaped professional practice. Wagas et al. (2024) emphasize the continuing need for librarians to adapt to digital tools and systems and to enhance their professional competencies. Philippine librarians therefore operate at the intersection of traditional professional responsibilities and emerging expectations involving technology, community outreach, education, research support, and innovation.

The changing professional identity of librarians is consequently central to library transformation. Contemporary librarians increasingly balance collection management and information services with digital scholarship, instructional design, research consultation, community outreach, advocacy, project management, partnership development, and



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innovation leadership. This evolution requires continuous professional learning while maintaining the profession's enduring commitment to equitable access to information, intellectual freedom, and public service.

Synthesis of the Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates a broad transition from collection-centered librarianship toward community-centered and learning-oriented library services. Libraries are increasingly expected to function as spaces for digital inclusion, lifelong learning, community engagement, collaboration, creativity, cultural participation, and knowledge sharing. This transformation is driven by technological change but also requires changes in leadership, organizational culture, professional competencies, and relationships with communities.

The literature further indicates that library transformation involves interconnected dimensions. Technological developments create new possibilities for service delivery; community engagement helps libraries identify relevant needs; transformational leadership provides direction and institutional support; lifelong learning defines an expanded social purpose; and changing professional identities enable librarians to perform emerging roles. These dimensions suggest that transforming a library into a community learning hub is a multidimensional organizational and professional process.

Despite these developments, the literature provides comparatively limited insight into how librarians themselves experience this transformation. Existing discussions tend to emphasize institutional change, technology, services, community programs, or professional competencies. Less attention is directed toward the meanings librarians attach to their experiences, the challenges they encounter, the ways they respond to change, and the ways transformation reshapes their understanding of professional identity and purpose.

The present study addresses this gap by examining librarians' lived experiences through transcendental phenomenology. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of individual programs or comparing library systems, the study seeks to understand the essence of the experience of transforming traditional libraries into community learning hubs. It consequently contributes a human-centered perspective to the literature and provides a basis for developing the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Etienne Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) Theory and John P. Kotter's (1996) Theory of Organizational Change. The two theories were selected because the transformation of traditional libraries into community learning hubs involves both a social learning process and an organizational change process. Communities of Practice Theory explains how librarians and community members learn, exchange knowledge, collaborate, and develop shared practices, while Kotter's Theory of Organizational Change explains how libraries can initiate, implement, sustain, and institutionalize transformational change.

Communities of Practice Theory

Wenger's Communities of Practice Theory views learning as fundamentally social and emphasizes participation in communities where individuals share interests, goals, activities, and practices. Communities of practice are characterized by mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Through participation, members exchange knowledge, solve problems, develop competencies, and construct shared meanings.

The theory is particularly relevant to community learning hubs because these environments bring together individuals and groups who learn through interaction rather than merely receiving information from the library. Libraries may facilitate literacy programs, makerspaces, research consultations, digital skills workshops, cultural activities, collaborative projects, and civic initiatives in which knowledge is exchanged among participants.

Erickson et al. (2024) emphasize the social nature of learning within communities of practice. Applied to the present study, the theory suggests that the transformation of a library is not solely a process in which librarians introduce services to users. Instead, transformation involves the development of relationships and shared practices among librarians, learners, educators, researchers, entrepreneurs, government agencies, organizations, and community members.

The theory also provides a useful lens for understanding the changing role of librarians. In traditional settings, librarians may primarily be viewed as providers or intermediaries of information. Within community learning hubs, however, librarians increasingly act as facilitators who create conditions for knowledge sharing and collaborative learning. They connect people with information, technologies, learning opportunities, and one another.



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Thus, Communities of Practice Theory helps explain the community and learning dimension of library transformation. It directs attention to how librarians create environments where knowledge is co-constructed, relationships are developed, participation is encouraged, and learning extends beyond formal educational institutions.

Kotter's Theory of Organizational Change

Kotter's (1996) Eight-Step Theory of Organizational Change provides a complementary perspective by explaining how institutions navigate significant organizational transformation. The theory emphasizes establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the change vision, empowering stakeholders, generating short-term wins, sustaining acceleration, and institutionalizing new approaches. Davitkovic and Mihaylov (2024) explain that successful organizational change requires deliberate processes for establishing urgency, developing shared vision, mobilizing stakeholders, communicating change, empowering participants, sustaining momentum, and embedding new practices within organizational culture.

These principles are applicable to library transformation because converting a traditional library into a community learning hub requires more than introducing isolated programs. Libraries may need to redefine their institutional purpose, redesign services, develop new competencies, establish partnerships, modify physical or digital environments, mobilize resources, and develop organizational support for innovation.

Kotter's framework therefore helps explain the organizational dimension of the phenomenon. Librarians may recognize the need for transformation in response to changing information behavior and community expectations. They may then work with colleagues and stakeholders to establish shared goals, implement innovative services, evaluate early successes, address challenges, and sustain practices that contribute to community-centered librarianship.

Within the present study, Kotter's theory provides a lens through which participants' accounts of initiating, implementing, sustaining, and institutionalizing library transformation can be interpreted. It is particularly useful for examining leadership, organizational readiness, stakeholder participation, resistance or challenges, and the sustainability of innovations.

Integration of the Theories

The two theories complement rather than duplicate one another. Communities of Practice Theory explains how people learn and collaborate within the transformed library environment, whereas Kotter's Theory of Organizational Change explains how the institution moves from an existing state toward a new organizational model.

Communities of Practice places emphasis on participation, knowledge sharing, relationships, and collective learning. Kotter's framework places emphasis on urgency, leadership, vision, stakeholder mobilization, implementation, sustainability, and institutionalization. When integrated, these perspectives recognize that successful transformation requires both organizational structures that support change and social environments that enable learning and participation.

Within the present study, the integration of the theories suggests that librarians operate simultaneously as change agents and community learning facilitators. They help their institutions navigate organizational transformation while also creating spaces in which community members learn, collaborate, share knowledge, and participate in the development of library services.

The integrated theoretical perspective therefore supports the central premise of the study: transforming a library into a community learning hub is not simply a technological modernization project. It is an organizational, professional, and social transformation in which leadership, innovation, community engagement, knowledge sharing, and lifelong learning interact.

The theories also provide a foundation for interpreting the participants' lived experiences. Experiences involving changing institutional purposes, community consultation, leadership, partnerships, innovation, professional identity, and sustainability can be understood through the complementary lenses of organizational change and collaborative learning. The integration consequently provides a theoretically grounded basis for developing the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF).

In this study, these theoretical perspectives served as interpretive lenses rather than deductive coding frameworks. The phenomenological analysis first allowed themes to emerge from participants' lived experiences, after which the theoretical perspectives were used to contextualize and deepen the interpretation of the emergent findings.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study views the transformation of traditional libraries into community learning hubs as a dynamic, iterative, and community-centered process. It recognizes that transformation does not



result from a single intervention but develops through the interaction of contextual conditions, librarians' professional experiences, organizational change processes, community participation, and collaborative learning.

The framework integrates the central concepts derived from the literature and the two theoretical foundations. Kotter's Theory of Organizational Change provides the organizational transformation perspective, while Communities of Practice Theory provides the social learning and collaborative participation perspective. Together, these theories inform the interpretation of librarians' experiences and the development of the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF).

The conceptual framework integrates the study's theoretical foundations, the lived experiences of the participants, and the emergent findings that informed the development of the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF). Rather than presenting the CLHTF as a separate four-component model, the study conceptualizes it as a five-dimensional framework derived from the participants' experiences: Understanding Community Needs, Transformational Library Leadership, Community-Centered Library Innovations, Collaborative Partnerships, and Sustainable Community Impact. These dimensions are represented visually through a seven-stage process that begins with changing community needs and community needs assessment and culminates in libraries functioning as dynamic community learning hubs.

Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF)

A Five-Dimensional Framework with Seven-Stage Process

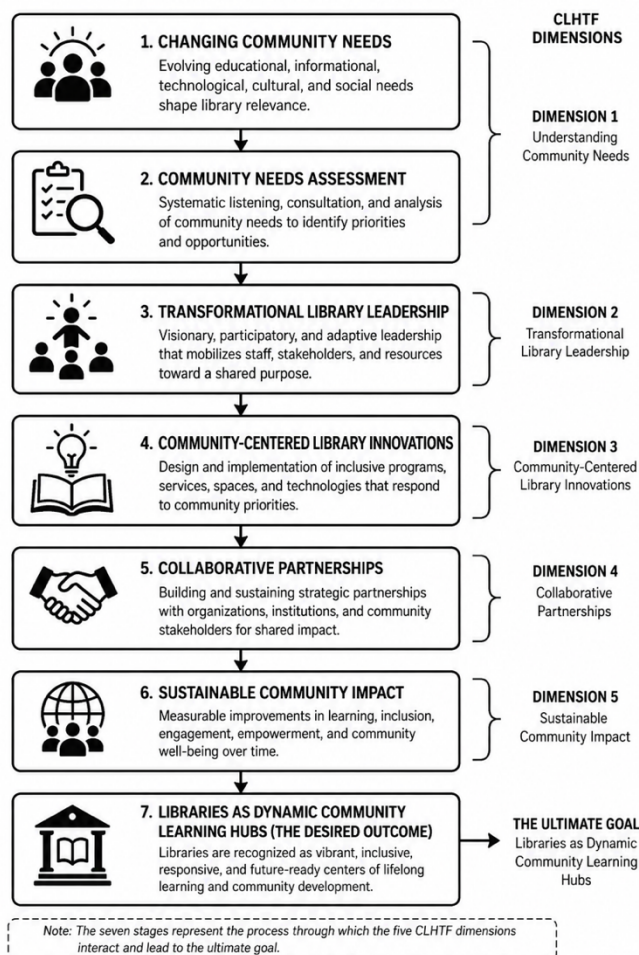


Figure 1. Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF): A Five-Dimensional Framework with Seven-Stage Process



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The conceptual framework illustrates how the changing needs of communities, librarians' lived experiences, organizational transformation, community engagement, innovation, and collaborative learning informed the development of the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF). The CLHTF is organized into five interconnected dimensions: Understanding Community Needs, Transformational Library Leadership, Community-Centered Library Innovations, Collaborative Partnerships, and Sustainable Community Impact. These dimensions are visually represented through a seven-stage process that progresses from changing community needs and community needs assessment toward libraries functioning as dynamic community learning hubs.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries worldwide continue to evolve from traditional information repositories into dynamic community learning hubs that promote lifelong learning, digital inclusion, innovation, collaboration, and civic engagement. Although numerous libraries have successfully implemented community-centered programs and services, relatively little is known about how librarians themselves experience and navigate this institutional transformation. Understanding these lived experiences is essential because librarians serve as the primary agents responsible for planning, implementing, sustaining, and evaluating transformational initiatives within their communities.

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of librarians in transforming libraries into community learning hubs.

Research Questions

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

Central Research Question: What are the lived experiences of librarians in transforming traditional libraries into community learning hubs?

Sub-questions

1. How do librarians describe their experiences in leading or participating in the transformation of libraries into community learning hubs?
2. What factors motivated or influenced these transformational initiatives?
3. What challenges have librarians encountered during the transformation process?
4. How have librarians addressed the challenges associated with organizational and community change?
5. How do librarians describe the role of community partnerships in sustaining library transformation?
6. What meanings do librarians attach to their evolving professional roles within community learning hubs?
7. What hopes and aspirations do librarians hold regarding the future of community-centered libraries?
8. What is the essence of librarians' lived experiences in transforming libraries into community learning hubs?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using transcendental phenomenology as its research design. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate when the purpose is to understand how individuals interpret, describe, and make meaning of their lived experiences rather than measure variables or test statistical relationships. Transcendental phenomenology, as advanced by Moustakas (1994), was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore the lived experiences of librarians who had participated in transforming traditional libraries into community learning hubs. The design emphasizes understanding the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals and allows participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

Phenomenology enables researchers to move beyond descriptions of events and examine how participants perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to their experiences. In this study, particular attention was given to how librarians experienced organizational transformation, community engagement, innovation, leadership, and professional growth while redefining the role of libraries within their respective communities. Consistent with Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological procedures, the researcher practiced *epoché* or bracketing by consciously setting aside personal assumptions and prior experiences concerning library transformation during data collection and analysis. This helped create an open analytic stance in which participants' accounts could emerge without being prematurely shaped by researcher expectations. Ultimately, the design enabled the study to identify the shared essence of librarians' experiences while recognizing the uniqueness of individual professional journeys.



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Research Locale

The study was conducted among selected public, academic, and community libraries located in Central Luzon, Philippines. The region was selected because of the diversity of its library systems and their engagement in community-based programs, digital literacy initiatives, cultural preservation activities, lifelong learning programs, educational outreach, technology-enabled services, and collaborative community activities. The participating libraries represented different institutional contexts, including local government-operated public libraries, libraries of higher education institutions, and community-managed learning centers.

These libraries had demonstrated efforts to extend their services beyond conventional library functions through educational outreach, literacy campaigns, technology-supported services, community programs, and partnerships with different stakeholders. The research locale therefore provided an appropriate setting for examining varied experiences of librarians involved in organizational and community transformation while retaining sufficient contextual similarities for phenomenological analysis. To protect confidentiality, the names of participating libraries, municipalities, cities, and institutions were withheld and replaced with pseudonyms throughout the study.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of twelve (12) licensed librarians who had actively participated in transforming their libraries into community learning hubs. They were selected because they possessed substantial professional experience and firsthand knowledge of organizational transformation, community engagement, innovative library services, and the changing roles of librarians. Their professional backgrounds enabled them to provide detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Participants were currently employed or recently retired licensed librarians with at least ten (10) years of professional library experience. They had been actively involved in the planning, implementation, management, or evaluation of community-centered library programs and had experience working in public, academic, or community libraries. Participants were also required to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent for audio-recorded interviews. They represented diverse professional positions, including library directors, chief librarians, public librarians, academic librarians, community librarians, and library program coordinators. This diversity provided multiple professional perspectives while maintaining the shared experience necessary for phenomenological inquiry.

Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique appropriate for identifying participants who possess substantial knowledge and firsthand experience of the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher intentionally selected librarians who had directly participated in transforming their libraries into community learning hubs and who could provide rich descriptions of organizational transformation, community engagement, leadership, innovation, and professional development. The purpose of sampling was therefore not statistical representation but the selection of information-rich participants capable of articulating meaningful lived experiences.

Participant recruitment continued until sufficient informational depth and richness of description had been achieved and successive interviews provided adequate information to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation. This point of informational sufficiency provided a basis for concluding that the twelve participants had generated sufficient depth and breadth of descriptions for the phenomenological analysis.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide sufficient consistency across participants while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on experiences that were personally significant. The interview guide consisted primarily of open-ended questions designed to encourage detailed narratives, reflections, interpretations, and personal meanings associated with library transformation.

The first section of the interview guide focused on the participants' professional backgrounds and gathered information concerning their age range, gender, highest educational attainment, years of professional experience, present position, and type of library in which they were employed. The second section focused on experiences of library transformation and included questions asking participants to describe how their library began transforming into a community learning hub, the significant changes they had personally experienced during the transformation, and the factors that motivated the implementation of transformational initiatives.



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The third section addressed challenges and leadership experiences. Participants were asked to describe the challenges they encountered during the transformation process, explain how these challenges were addressed, and identify leadership practices that contributed to the implementation of transformation initiatives. The fourth section focused on reflections and aspirations concerning community learning hubs. Participants were invited to explain what being a community learning hub meant to them, describe how transformation influenced their professional identity, share advice for librarians undertaking similar initiatives, and discuss their vision for libraries during the following ten years. Probing questions were used when necessary to encourage participants to elaborate on significant experiences, clarify statements, and provide deeper descriptions of their meanings and reflections.

Validation of the Research Instrument

Before data collection, the semi-structured interview guide underwent expert validation to establish its content validity and suitability for phenomenological inquiry. The instrument was evaluated by three experts consisting of a professor specializing in qualitative research methodology, a senior Library and Information Science educator, and an experienced library administrator actively involved in community engagement programs. The validators examined the interview questions in terms of their alignment with the research objectives, clarity of language, appropriateness of sequencing, comprehensiveness, relevance to phenomenological inquiry, and potential to elicit rich and meaningful descriptions.

Based on the experts' recommendations, selected questions were simplified, transitions between sections were improved, potentially leading statements were reduced, and additional prompts concerning community partnerships and leadership experiences were incorporated. Following these revisions, the interview guide was considered appropriate for implementation. Because the instrument was qualitative and intended to elicit lived experiences rather than generate numerical measurements, methodological rigor was established through expert review, open-ended questioning, probing, member checking, and systematic qualitative analysis rather than through traditional statistical reliability measures such as Cronbach's alpha.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted systematically over approximately eight weeks following institutional approval and the informed consent of participants. Formal letters requesting permission to conduct the study were submitted to the administrators of the participating libraries. After permission was obtained, potential participants were identified with the assistance of library administrators, while ensuring that participation remained voluntary and that administrative assistance did not constitute pressure to participate.

Qualified librarians received invitation letters explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, interview procedures, estimated interview duration, and their rights as participants. Those who agreed to participate signed informed consent forms before the interviews were conducted. Individual in-depth interviews were subsequently conducted either face-to-face or through secure online video conferencing platforms, depending on participant preference and accessibility.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription. Field notes were also maintained throughout data collection to document relevant contextual information, nonverbal observations, and emerging methodological reflections. The recordings were transcribed verbatim immediately after each interview. Participants were then provided an opportunity to review their transcripts through a member-checking process to verify the accuracy of the recorded information and clarify or correct statements where necessary. Only transcripts that had undergone this verification process were included in the final analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological method, which emphasizes the systematic examination of lived experiences toward the identification of their essential meaning. The researcher initially practiced *epoché* or bracketing by consciously suspending personal assumptions and prior knowledge concerning library transformation. The interview transcripts were then examined through horizontalization, whereby significant statements were initially treated with equal value rather than being assigned importance solely on the basis of researcher expectations.

The significant statements were subsequently clustered into meaning units representing common experiences and were synthesized into broader thematic clusters. These themes were examined across participants to identify shared patterns while preserving the contextual meanings of individual accounts. Textural descriptions were then



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developed to describe what the participants experienced, drawing on narrative summaries and representative verbatim quotations. Structural descriptions were developed to explain how participants experienced the phenomenon by considering the contexts and conditions that shaped their experiences.

Finally, the textural and structural descriptions were synthesized to articulate the fundamental essence of librarians' lived experiences in transforming traditional libraries into community learning hubs. The analysis was iterative, requiring repeated examination of transcripts, significant statements, meaning units, and emerging themes to ensure that the final interpretations remained grounded in participants' narratives. The theoretical frameworks were not used as deductive coding categories or predetermined themes. Rather, they were applied only after the phenomenological themes had emerged from the participants' narratives to support the interpretation and contextualization of the findings while preserving the phenomenological focus on the participants' lived experiences.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The study adopted the trustworthiness criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were applied throughout the research process to strengthen the authenticity, consistency, transparency, and integrity of the findings.

Credibility was strengthened through sustained engagement with participants during the 60- to 90-minute interviews, the use of probing and follow-up questions when clarification was necessary, and member checking after transcription. Participants were given opportunities to review their transcripts for accuracy, completeness, and faithful representation of their intended meanings. Peer debriefing was also undertaken with experienced qualitative researchers and Library and Information Science scholars who reviewed portions of the coding process and thematic interpretations. Their feedback helped refine interpretations and identify possible researcher bias.

Transferability was addressed through rich and sufficiently detailed descriptions of the participants, research setting, data collection procedures, contextual conditions, and emergent themes. Because phenomenological research does not seek statistical generalization, these descriptions enable readers and future researchers to assess whether the findings may be meaningful or applicable in comparable institutional and professional contexts. Although the study was conducted among selected public, academic, and community libraries in Central Luzon, the experiences described may offer insights for librarians, administrators, educators, and policymakers working in similar environments undergoing organizational transformation.

Dependability was supported through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting the major stages of the research process, including research planning, participant recruitment, interview schedules, field notes, transcription procedures, coding decisions, theme development, and methodological reflections. The same semi-structured interview guide was used across participants while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on unique experiences. Any modifications to interview prompts were documented together with their rationale. Qualitative research experts also reviewed the methodological procedures to assess consistency among the research questions, data collection methods, analytical procedures, and resulting interpretations.

Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling and continued bracketing throughout data collection and analysis. The researcher documented personal reflections, methodological decisions, emerging interpretations, and potential biases to facilitate critical self-awareness. The use of participants' verbatim quotations provided direct evidence for thematic interpretations and allowed readers to assess the relationship between the participants' accounts and the researcher's conclusions. Collectively, these strategies strengthened the transparency, neutrality, and integrity of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing qualitative research involving human participants, particularly respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation. Before participation, each participant received written information describing the purpose of the study, research procedures, anticipated interview duration, potential benefits and minimal risks, confidentiality measures, and participant rights. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could decline participation or withdraw at any time without penalty or adverse consequences. Only participants who voluntarily signed the informed consent form were included in the study.

No participant received compensation, incentives, or other inducements that could compromise voluntary participation. Participants retained full autonomy regarding the information they wished to disclose and could decline to answer any question that caused discomfort or concern. To safeguard identities, pseudonyms such as Participant 1 through Participant 12 were used throughout the study. The names of participating libraries, institutions, municipalities,



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and cities were likewise withheld from research documents and publications unless explicit permission was granted. Only the researchers had access to the master list connecting participants' identities with their assigned pseudonyms.

Interviews were conducted in locations or secure virtual environments selected to provide privacy and comfort. Only the participant and researchers were present during each interview unless the participant requested otherwise. Digital audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, and consent forms were stored using password-protected devices and encrypted digital storage, while printed documents were kept in locked storage accessible only to the researchers. Research data will be retained for the period required by applicable institutional research policies and will thereafter be permanently destroyed through secure deletion of electronic files and shredding of printed materials.

The study involved minimal foreseeable risk because participants were asked primarily to reflect on professional experiences rather than sensitive personal matters. Nevertheless, participants were informed that they could pause or terminate an interview whenever they experienced discomfort. The researchers also committed to maintaining honesty, transparency, and academic integrity throughout the investigation. No data were fabricated, altered, omitted, or selectively reported, and findings were presented faithfully according to participants' narratives while acknowledging the limitations inherent in qualitative inquiry. Scholarly works consulted in preparing the manuscript were acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th edition.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity was incorporated throughout the study because phenomenological inquiry recognizes that researchers bring professional knowledge, prior experiences, and assumptions to the research process. The researcher acknowledged a professional interest in the continuing transformation of libraries and an appreciation of community-centered librarianship as an emerging direction within Library and Information Science. Such perspectives could potentially influence data collection, interpretation, and thematic development if they remained unexamined.

To minimize this influence, the researcher practiced *epoché* or bracketing before and throughout the investigation by consciously setting aside personal beliefs and assumptions regarding successful library transformation. Reflexive journals were maintained to document evolving assumptions, methodological decisions, emotional responses, and interpretive reflections encountered throughout the research process. The researcher also remained attentive to participants' own meanings rather than imposing predetermined interpretations.

Throughout analysis, transcripts were revisited repeatedly to ensure that emerging themes remained grounded in participants' actual narratives rather than researcher expectations. Regular peer consultations with qualitative research scholars provided opportunities to critically examine coding decisions, thematic interpretations, and methodological consistency. Through continuous self-reflection, bracketing, peer consultation, and methodological transparency, the researcher sought to represent the lived experiences of librarians faithfully while preserving the authenticity, credibility, and integrity of the phenomenological inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological method, the analysis of the twelve interview transcripts yielded six interrelated themes that collectively describe the lived experiences of librarians in transforming traditional libraries into community learning hubs. These themes capture participants' motivations, challenges, leadership practices, collaborative efforts, and aspirations as they redefined the role of libraries in response to evolving community needs.

Prior to presenting the thematic findings, a brief profile of the participants is provided to contextualize their experiences. The subsequent sections present each emergent theme, supported by representative verbatim quotations and interpretive discussions, culminating in a composite description and the essence of the phenomenon.

Profile of the Participants

The study involved twelve (12) licensed librarians purposively selected from public, academic, and community libraries in Central Luzon, Philippines. Participants possessed between 10 and 35 years of professional experience, enabling them to provide rich narratives regarding organizational transformation, community engagement, and innovative library practices.

The participants represented diverse leadership and professional positions, including library directors, chief librarians, university librarians, public librarians, community librarians, and library program coordinators. Several had supervised digital transformation initiatives, while others had spearheaded literacy programs, community outreach



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projects, makerspaces, digital inclusion campaigns, and partnerships with schools, local government units, and non-government organizations.

To ensure confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms (Participant 1 through Participant 12) throughout the presentation of findings.

Although participants worked in different institutional settings, they shared a common experience of leading or actively participating in transforming their libraries from traditional information centers into dynamic community learning hubs.

The six emergent themes collectively addressed the eight research questions. Theme 1 captured participants' experiences of redefining library purpose, while Theme 2 addressed motivations and community needs. Themes 3 and 4 reflected responses to changing community expectations, inclusive practices, innovation, and evolving professional roles. Theme 5 addressed the role of community partnerships, while Theme 6 captured sustainability, leadership, and future aspirations. The composite descriptions and essence subsequently synthesized these findings to address the overarching meaning of the librarians' lived experiences.

Theme 1

Redefining the Purpose of Libraries

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the interviews was librarians' evolving understanding of the purpose of libraries. Participants consistently described a shift from viewing libraries primarily as repositories of books toward recognizing them as vibrant learning environments that respond to the changing educational, technological, and social needs of their communities.

Participants explained that declining circulation of printed books did not signify the diminishing importance of libraries. Rather, it challenged librarians to rethink how libraries could remain relevant in people's everyday lives.

Participant 4 reflected:

"There was a time when we measured success by how many books we acquired. Today, we ask ourselves how many lives we have touched."

Participant 8 similarly shared:

"The library is no longer simply a place where people borrow books. It has become a place where people learn new skills, meet others, exchange ideas, and grow together."

Several participants emphasized that the transformation required changing long-held assumptions about library services. Instead of waiting for patrons to visit, librarians began designing programs that actively engaged different sectors of the community.

Participant 2 explained:

"Our mindset changed. Instead of asking how people could use the library, we started asking how the library could serve people where they are."

Many participants described this realization as the turning point that fundamentally reshaped their professional practice.

The findings suggest that librarians perceive organizational transformation as beginning with a transformation in professional philosophy rather than physical infrastructure. Participants no longer defined libraries by collections, shelving systems, or circulation statistics. Instead, they viewed libraries as institutions that facilitate learning, collaboration, creativity, inclusion, and community empowerment.

This evolving perspective demonstrates that successful transformation requires librarians to redefine institutional purpose before implementing new services or technologies.

This finding is consistent with the literature describing the evolving role of libraries from traditional repositories of information toward more dynamic, community-centered learning environments. Onunka et al. (2023) emphasized that contemporary libraries increasingly extend their functions beyond collection management by supporting learning, collaboration, community engagement, and social development. The present finding reinforces this perspective by showing that, from the participants' lived experiences, transformation begins with a fundamental redefinition of what the library is for before changes in services, technologies, and facilities can become meaningful.

Theme 2

Listening Before Leading

Participants consistently emphasized that successful transformation did not begin with ambitious projects or expensive technologies but with understanding the genuine needs of their communities.



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Rather than assuming what patrons wanted, librarians intentionally sought community input through consultations, surveys, informal conversations, focus group discussions, and collaborative planning sessions.

Participant 6 shared:

"We realized that we could not transform the library without first listening to the people we wanted to serve."

Participant 11 recalled:

"When we asked residents what they needed, many did not ask for more books. They asked for computer classes, internet access, job-seeking assistance, and spaces where children could study safely after school."

Participants described community engagement as an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-time activity. Programs evolved continuously based on changing community needs.

One participant explained:

"Every program we introduced came from listening. The community became our greatest teacher." (Participant 5)

These narratives reveal that librarians increasingly embrace participatory leadership approaches characterized by collaboration, responsiveness, and shared decision-making. Community needs assessments became essential foundations for innovation, enabling libraries to develop relevant and sustainable services.

The findings further demonstrate that librarians increasingly regard communities not merely as library users but as active partners in shaping library services.

The emphasis on listening to communities before designing or implementing programs is consistent with scholarship that positions community engagement and participatory approaches as important foundations of responsive library services. Hernández-Pérez et al. (2022) argued that understanding users' needs and involving community stakeholders can help libraries develop services that are more relevant, inclusive, and sustainable. The present findings extend this perspective by showing that participants regarded listening not simply as a service-development technique but as an ongoing leadership practice through which communities become active partners in shaping library programs and priorities.

Theme 3

Creating Spaces Where Everyone Belongs

Participants repeatedly described libraries as inclusive environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds could access learning opportunities without discrimination.

Several participants emphasized that community learning hubs intentionally welcomed children, students, senior citizens, unemployed adults, persons with disabilities, entrepreneurs, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized sectors.

Participant 1 explained:

"Our goal was not simply to invite people into the building. Our goal was to make everyone feel that they truly belonged."

Participant 9 reflected:

"Some visitors came to borrow books. Others came because they needed internet access. Some simply wanted a quiet and safe place where someone cared enough to help them."

Participants highlighted a wide range of inclusive programs implemented by their libraries, including digital literacy workshops, storytelling sessions, financial literacy seminars, livelihood training, research consultations, makerspaces, assistive technology services, senior citizen learning circles, and youth leadership activities.

These initiatives significantly expanded the role of libraries within their communities.

The findings demonstrate that inclusivity has become a defining characteristic of community learning hubs. Libraries increasingly function as social institutions that reduce educational inequities, strengthen social cohesion, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for diverse populations.

Participants consistently viewed accessibility not merely as physical access but also as ensuring that every individual feels respected, supported, and empowered to learn.

The finding is aligned with literature emphasizing the role of libraries in promoting equitable access, social inclusion, lifelong learning, and community participation. Gupta et al. (2024) noted that contemporary libraries increasingly function as inclusive learning and social spaces that respond to the needs of diverse and underserved populations. The participants' experiences support this perspective by demonstrating that inclusion involves more than providing physical access to library facilities; it also involves creating environments in which individuals feel welcomed, respected, supported, and empowered to participate in learning and community life.



Theme 4

Embracing Innovation While Preserving Identity

Participants acknowledged that digital technologies have transformed nearly every aspect of library operations. Nevertheless, they consistently emphasized that innovation should strengthen—not replace—the fundamental values of librarianship.

Many participants described introducing online catalogs, institutional repositories, digital collections, virtual reference services, artificial intelligence applications, makerspaces, and online learning platforms.

Participant 7 observed:

"Technology changed our tools, but it never changed our purpose."

Participant 3 added:

"People sometimes believe technology will replace librarians. We see technology as helping us reach more learners while continuing to provide human guidance."

Several participants discussed initial uncertainty when implementing technological innovations. However, they explained that continuous professional development and organizational support gradually increased their confidence.

Participant 10 reflected:

"Learning never stopped. Every new technology became another opportunity to serve our community better."

Participants perceived innovation as a means of expanding educational access rather than replacing traditional library values. Their narratives illustrate that successful transformation requires balancing technological advancement with ethical service, professional expertise, and meaningful human interaction.

Innovation, therefore, was viewed as a process of enhancing—not abandoning—the profession's enduring commitment to equitable access to knowledge.

This finding supports literature suggesting that technological innovation in libraries should be understood as a means of extending access and improving services rather than as a replacement for the professional and human dimensions of librarianship. Diseiye et al. (2024) reported that digital technologies can expand the reach and capabilities of libraries while requiring librarians to develop new competencies and adapt their professional roles. Consistent with this perspective, the participants viewed technology as an enabling resource while maintaining the importance of professional expertise, ethical service, equitable access, and meaningful human interaction.

Theme 5

Partnerships as Catalysts for Transformation

Participants unanimously described partnerships as indispensable to the successful transformation of libraries into community learning hubs. They emphasized that limited budgets, staffing constraints, and increasing community demands encouraged librarians to establish collaborative relationships with various organizations. These partnerships included local government units, public and private schools, colleges and universities, non-government organizations, cultural institutions, literacy advocates, local businesses, volunteer organizations, and community associations.

Participant 12 shared:

"Our biggest innovation was realizing that we did not have to work alone."

Participant 8 explained:

"Every partnership expanded what the library could offer. Together, we created opportunities that would have been impossible if we worked independently."

Collaborative initiatives included mobile libraries, reading festivals, digital literacy campaigns, environmental education programs, research workshops, entrepreneurship seminars, health information sessions, and heritage preservation projects.

These findings indicate that organizational transformation is strengthened through collaborative leadership and shared responsibility. Libraries increasingly function as community conveners that bring together diverse stakeholders to address educational and social needs.

Participants regarded partnerships not simply as resource-sharing arrangements but as long-term relationships built upon mutual trust, shared vision, and collective commitment to community development.

The importance of partnerships identified in this study is consistent with literature emphasizing collaboration as a mechanism through which libraries can expand resources, expertise, services, and community reach. Tikkinen and Korkeamäki (2023) found that partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders can strengthen the capacity of libraries to respond to complex community needs. The present findings add a lived-experience perspective by showing that participants understood partnerships not



merely as arrangements for sharing resources but as sustained relationships built on mutual trust, shared vision, and collective responsibility for community development.

Theme 6

Sustaining Community-Centered Libraries Through Visionary Leadership

The final theme captures participants' reflections on sustaining transformation over time. While launching innovative programs was important, participants emphasized that maintaining momentum required visionary leadership, continuous learning, institutional commitment, and adaptability.

Participant 6 reflected:

"Transformation is not a project with an ending date. It becomes part of the library's identity."

Participant 5 explained:

"Every year our community changes. If libraries stop learning, they stop serving."

Participants emphasized several qualities as essential for sustaining community-centered libraries. These included visionary leadership, lifelong professional learning, adaptability, evidence-based planning, staff empowerment, continuous community engagement, and organizational resilience. Collectively, these qualities were viewed as critical in enabling libraries to respond effectively to changing community needs while maintaining the long-term success of their programs and services.

Many participants likewise stressed the importance of mentoring younger librarians who would continue leading future innovations.

Participant 2 concluded:

"Our greatest achievement is not the programs we created but the future librarians who will continue improving them."

The findings demonstrate that sustainable transformation depends upon institutional culture rather than isolated projects. Participants consistently viewed leadership as a continuous process of inspiring innovation, nurturing collaboration, and maintaining responsiveness to changing community needs.

Rather than viewing transformation as complete, librarians perceived community learning hubs as continuously evolving institutions committed to lifelong learning, inclusivity, and public service.

The finding is consistent with literature emphasizing adaptive and transformational leadership as important to sustaining organizational change. Aslam (2022) explained that successful transformation requires leadership that can maintain momentum, support professional learning, empower personnel, and embed new practices within organizational culture. The participants' experiences reinforce this perspective by showing that sustainable library transformation depends not on isolated projects but on a continuing institutional culture of learning, innovation, collaboration, mentoring, and responsiveness to changing community needs.

These six themes collectively illustrate that transforming libraries into community learning hubs is a multidimensional process involving shifts in professional identity, participatory leadership, inclusive programming, technological innovation, collaborative partnerships, and sustainable leadership practices.

Composite Textural Description (What the Participants Experienced)

The participants described their experiences as a continuous journey of transformation in which libraries gradually evolved from traditional repositories of books into vibrant centers of learning, collaboration, and community engagement. Throughout this journey, they experienced changing community expectations, technological advancements, organizational restructuring, resource limitations, and shifting professional responsibilities.

Many participants recalled that the earliest stages of transformation began with a realization that traditional library services were no longer sufficient to address the increasingly diverse needs of their communities. Declining visits for conventional library services prompted them to rethink their roles and actively seek new ways of engaging learners of all ages. Rather than remaining passive providers of information, participants became planners, educators, facilitators, advocates, and collaborators.

Participants recounted organizing literacy campaigns, digital skills workshops, makerspaces, research consultations, storytelling sessions, financial literacy seminars, cultural heritage programs, entrepreneurship training, and outreach services that extended library resources beyond the physical building. They described the satisfaction of witnessing children discover the joy of reading, adults acquire new digital competencies, students receive academic support, and marginalized community members gain access to educational opportunities previously unavailable to them.



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Although participants acknowledged numerous challenges—including limited funding, inadequate staffing, resistance to organizational change, rapidly evolving technologies, and increasing community expectations—they consistently viewed these obstacles as opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and professional growth. Partnerships with schools, government agencies, universities, non-government organizations, businesses, and volunteers became essential in expanding services and sustaining innovative programs.

Across all interviews, participants expressed deep pride in witnessing their libraries become welcoming, inclusive spaces where individuals from different ages, backgrounds, and abilities could learn, interact, and grow together. For many participants, the most rewarding aspect of their work was not managing collections but observing the positive impact that library programs had on people's lives and communities.

Composite Structural Description (How the Participants Experienced the Phenomenon)

Participants experienced the transformation of libraries through an ongoing process of adaptation, reflection, collaboration, and leadership. This transformation did not occur through isolated projects or technological upgrades alone but emerged gradually as librarians responded to changing societal needs and embraced broader conceptions of their professional roles.

The process typically began with careful observation of declining traditional library usage and increasing community demands for more diverse educational and technological services. Rather than interpreting these developments as threats, participants viewed them as invitations to reimagine the library's purpose.

Transformation was facilitated through continuous dialogue with community members, strategic planning, collaborative partnerships, and ongoing professional development. Participants emphasized that meaningful innovation required understanding local needs before introducing new programs or technologies. Listening became an essential leadership practice that guided decision-making throughout the transformation process.

Technological innovations—including integrated library systems, digital repositories, virtual reference services, online learning platforms, and makerspaces—were experienced not as replacements for librarians but as tools that enhanced access to knowledge and expanded educational opportunities. Participants consistently balanced innovation with the enduring professional values of librarianship, including equitable access to information, intellectual freedom, lifelong learning, and public service.

Participants also described organizational transformation as a collective endeavor requiring trust, shared leadership, institutional support, and sustained collaboration among staff members and external partners. Through these experiences, librarians gradually developed stronger professional identities characterized by adaptability, resilience, innovation, and community leadership.

Ultimately, participants experienced transformation as a continuing journey rather than a destination. Each successful initiative generated new opportunities for learning, partnership, and community engagement, reinforcing their commitment to responsive and sustainable library services.

Essence of the Phenomenon

The essence of the lived experiences of librarians in transforming libraries into community learning hubs is characterized by purposeful transformation grounded in service, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

For the participants, transforming libraries was never merely about modernizing facilities, acquiring digital technologies, or introducing new programs. Rather, it represented a profound redefinition of librarianship itself—from managing collections to empowering communities. They came to understand that the true strength of libraries lies not in the resources they possess but in the meaningful opportunities they create for individuals to learn, connect, innovate, and thrive.

Participants consistently viewed themselves as catalysts for positive community change. Through adaptive leadership, collaborative partnerships, inclusive programming, and continuous professional learning, they transformed libraries into welcoming environments where knowledge, creativity, and social engagement flourish. Their experiences reveal that successful transformation depends less on technological sophistication than on a steadfast commitment to understanding and responding to the evolving needs of the people they serve.

Ultimately, the phenomenon is best understood as a journey of professional and institutional renewal. Libraries become community learning hubs when librarians embrace change with vision, compassion, and innovation while remaining faithful to the enduring values of librarianship. In doing so, they ensure that libraries continue to serve as accessible, inclusive, and empowering spaces that enrich lives and strengthen communities across generations.



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Conclusions

The findings of this phenomenological study demonstrate that the transformation of libraries into community learning hubs is a multidimensional process that extends beyond physical renovation or technological modernization. At its core, the transformation reflects a shift in philosophy—from viewing libraries primarily as repositories of information to recognizing them as dynamic institutions that foster lifelong learning, social inclusion, collaboration, and community empowerment.

The participants' lived experiences revealed that meaningful transformation begins with a redefinition of the library's purpose. Librarians recognized that changing community needs, advances in technology, and evolving patterns of information use required innovative and responsive services. By actively listening to their communities, they developed programs and initiatives that addressed local educational, cultural, technological, and social needs.

The study further highlights that successful transformation is sustained through participatory leadership, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to continuous professional learning. Participants consistently emphasized that collaboration with schools, government agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders enabled libraries to extend their reach and maximize their impact despite limited resources.

Another significant finding is that technological innovation was viewed as an enabler rather than a replacement for librarianship. Participants embraced digital tools and emerging technologies while preserving the profession's enduring values of equitable access to information, intellectual freedom, ethical stewardship, and personalized service. Moreover, the participants' narratives illustrate the evolving professional identity of librarians. They increasingly perceived themselves as educators, facilitators, innovators, advocates, mentors, and community leaders who contribute directly to individual and societal development. This expanded role reinforces the importance of adaptive leadership and lifelong learning in ensuring the continued relevance of libraries.

Overall, the study concludes that libraries successfully become community learning hubs when they cultivate inclusive environments, prioritize community engagement, foster collaborative partnerships, embrace innovation responsibly, and remain firmly grounded in the human-centered values that have long defined the profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, librarians may strengthen competencies in community engagement, digital literacy, program development, partnership building, and transformational leadership through continuous professional development. Library administrators may prioritize community-responsive planning, inclusive programming, staff development, collaborative initiatives, and evidence-based service improvement, while LIS programs may integrate community-centered librarianship, participatory leadership, partnership development, digital innovation, and experiential learning into their curricula. Government agencies and community organizations may strengthen support for library modernization, digital infrastructure, outreach, professional capacity-building, and collaborative educational, cultural, technological, and social programs. Future researchers may examine the perspectives of library users, community partners, and other stakeholders and employ comparative or longitudinal approaches to further understand sustainable library transformation.

Implications of the Study

The findings have implications for Library and Information Science, particularly in strengthening libraries as community learning hubs. Libraries may increasingly assess their effectiveness through responsiveness to community needs, inclusive educational services, meaningful partnerships, and innovative learning opportunities rather than through collections and circulation alone. This requires continuous community needs assessment, participatory planning, program evaluation, and the development of librarians as educators, facilitators, innovators, and community leaders. Library administrators may foster participatory and visionary leadership, while LIS programs may strengthen preparation in community engagement, digital literacy, program and project management, partnership development, leadership, advocacy, emerging technologies, and artificial intelligence. Government agencies may likewise strengthen policies and investments in library infrastructure, connectivity, professional development, outreach, and collaborative programs to support lifelong learning, digital inclusion, literacy, cultural preservation, and community development.

The study further suggests that libraries can function as important community assets by providing accessible spaces for lifelong learning, digital inclusion, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, cultural activities, and collaborative problem-solving. Future research may examine the experiences of library users and community partners, compare transformation across different library settings, investigate organizational cultures and digital inclusion initiatives, and explore the implications of artificial intelligence for community library services. Quantitative and longitudinal studies



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may also validate, refine, and examine the applicability and sustainability of the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF) across diverse library contexts.

Proposed Framework

Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF)

Based on the lived experiences of the participants, this study proposes the Community Learning Hub Transformation Framework (CLHTF). The framework synthesizes the essential elements that enable libraries to evolve into responsive, inclusive, and sustainable community learning hubs.

The framework is composed of five interconnected dimensions, each representing a critical component of successful transformation.

Dimension 1. Understanding Community Needs

Transformation begins with developing a deep understanding of the community being served. This dimension emphasizes the importance of community consultations, stakeholder engagement, needs assessment, environmental scanning, and evidence-based planning. Rather than assuming community needs, librarians actively listen, observe, and collaborate with community members to gain meaningful insights before designing and implementing appropriate services and programs.

Guiding Principle:

"Communities should shape libraries—not the other way around."

Dimension 2. Transformational Library Leadership

Effective transformation requires visionary leadership that is capable of inspiring innovation while preserving the enduring values of the library profession. Key leadership competencies include strategic planning, participatory leadership, innovation management, adaptive decision-making, staff empowerment, and continuous improvement. In this context, the librarian serves not only as an information professional but also as a community leader and change agent who guides organizational transformation and fosters meaningful engagement with the communities served.

Dimension 3. Community-Centered Library Innovations

Guided by community needs and effective leadership, libraries implement diverse learning opportunities designed to address the evolving requirements of their communities. These initiatives include digital literacy programs, makerspaces, reading promotion initiatives, research support services, entrepreneurship training, financial literacy education, cultural heritage programs, lifelong learning workshops, technology access services, and programs for youth and senior citizens. Innovation in libraries remains responsive to local priorities and community contexts rather than being driven solely by emerging technological trends.

Dimension 4. Collaborative Partnerships

Transformation becomes sustainable through the establishment of strong partnerships among various stakeholders, including schools, higher education institutions, local government units, cultural organizations, non-government organizations, businesses, volunteers, community leaders, and professional associations. These partnerships facilitate resource sharing, broaden access to expertise, expand community reach, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of library initiatives and services.

Dimension 5. Sustainable Community Impact

Successful library transformation ultimately produces a range of positive outcomes, including increased participation in lifelong learning, improved digital literacy, stronger community engagement, equitable access to information, inclusive educational opportunities, strengthened social cohesion, and the development of resilient and future-ready libraries. These outcomes reinforce the continuing relevance and importance of libraries as essential community institutions within rapidly changing societies.

Theoretical Proposition

Libraries become sustainable community learning hubs when librarians intentionally understand and respond to changing community needs through transformational leadership, community-centered innovation, collaborative partnerships, and sustained commitment to lifelong learning and community impact. Organizational transformation is



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sustained not by technology alone but by meaningful relationships, adaptive leadership, and an enduring commitment to community empowerment.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to twelve purposively selected librarians from selected public, academic, and community libraries in Central Luzon. Consequently, the findings are not intended for statistical generalization to all librarians or library systems. The study also relied primarily on participants' retrospective self-reports, which may be influenced by memory and personal interpretation. As a phenomenological inquiry, the analysis necessarily involved researcher interpretation despite the use of bracketing, reflexive journaling, peer consultation, and member checking. The proposed CLHTF should therefore be considered a contextually grounded framework that requires further examination across other library settings.

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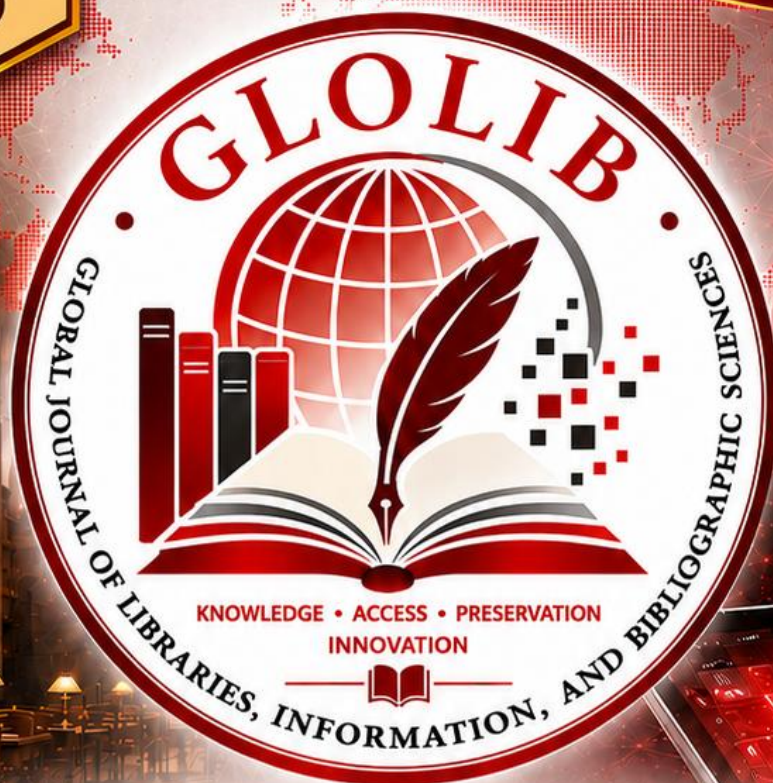
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The future of librarianship: Library and Information Science students' perspectives on career opportunities, professional challenges, and global possibilities

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Abstract

Aim: This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding career opportunities, professional challenges, global possibilities, and the support needed to prepare for the future of the profession.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design. Using purposive sampling, fifteen undergraduate LIS students from selected higher education institutions in the Philippines participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach.

Results: Six major themes emerged: (1) discovering librarianship beyond traditional stereotypes; (2) embracing a profession shaped by technology and innovation; (3) envisioning diverse local and global career pathways; (4) confronting misconceptions and professional challenges; (5) recognizing the competencies required for future-ready librarianship; and (6) aspiring to become globally competitive information professionals. The findings indicate that students increasingly perceive librarianship as a dynamic profession with expanding opportunities across education, government, healthcare, business, archives, museums, information technology, research, and international organizations, while recognizing the need for stronger institutional support and continuous professional development.

Conclusion: The study proposes the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF) as a practical guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, and library leaders in preparing globally competent and future-ready library and information professionals.

Keywords: *career aspirations; future librarians; global careers; librarianship; Library and Information Science; phenomenology; professional development.*

INTRODUCTION

The profession of librarianship has undergone remarkable transformation during the past several decades. Traditionally associated with organizing books, maintaining library collections, and assisting patrons in locating printed materials, librarians today perform significantly broader responsibilities within increasingly complex information environments. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, digital scholarship, Open Science, knowledge management, and data-driven information ecosystems has fundamentally redefined the nature of library and information services worldwide. Contemporary libraries increasingly utilize AI, Machine Learning (ML), integrated digital platforms, and advanced information systems to improve information discovery, research support, digital preservation, user engagement, and organizational decision-making. Likewise, global initiatives promoting Open Access (OA), Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs), Integrated Library Systems (ILS), and the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) continue to transform scholarly communication, digital repositories, metadata interoperability, and research visibility across countries. These developments align with Ahmed et al. (2025), who reported that AI research in academic libraries has become increasingly interdisciplinary and is exerting growing influence on library operations, resource discovery, and user experiences. Collectively, these international developments demonstrate that librarianship has evolved into a highly dynamic, technology-driven profession that extends well beyond traditional library services.



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Libraries themselves have likewise evolved. Modern libraries function as centers for digital learning, research support, innovation, community engagement, cultural preservation, data management, scholarly communication, and collaborative knowledge creation (Onunka et al., 2023). Consequently, librarians have assumed expanded professional roles extending beyond conventional library settings into education, healthcare, government, corporate organizations, museums, archives, legal institutions, media organizations, international agencies, research centers, and technology companies. Recent international developments likewise demonstrate increasing demand for information professionals with expertise in digital preservation, metadata management, research data services, artificial intelligence applications, open scholarship, information governance, and digital transformation, reinforcing the expanding global significance of Library and Information Science (LIS).

Within the Philippines, the Library and Information Science profession continues to play an increasingly important role in supporting educational quality, research productivity, digital transformation, cultural heritage preservation, lifelong learning, and equitable access to information. The enactment of the Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003 (Republic Act No. 9246) strengthened professional standards by requiring licensure for librarians and recognizing librarianship as a regulated profession. Philippine universities continue producing licensed librarians who serve in public libraries, academic institutions, school libraries, government agencies, private organizations, archives, museums, and specialized information centers while responding to the country's continuing digital transformation agenda.

Beyond national boundaries, globalization has created new opportunities for Filipino librarians. Their competencies in information organization, digital resource management, research support, records management, metadata creation, knowledge organization, instructional services, information literacy, and digital scholarship have become increasingly valuable within international organizations, multinational corporations, global universities, digital repositories, and remote information services. These developments are consistent with the findings of Tano (2024), who reported that librarians are assuming expanding responsibilities in digital resource management, research data services, technical innovation, and user-centered online information services. The study further emphasized the importance of continuous professional development and international collaboration in responding to rapidly evolving global information environments. Advances in virtual work environments, cloud-based information services, and international research collaboration likewise enable information professionals to contribute beyond geographical boundaries.

Despite these expanding opportunities, misconceptions regarding librarianship remain widespread. Many students continue associating the profession exclusively with shelving books, maintaining silence in libraries, or performing routine clerical tasks. Such perceptions frequently overshadow the intellectually demanding, technology-driven, interdisciplinary, and globally connected nature of contemporary librarianship. Consequently, Library and Information Science programs continue experiencing challenges in attracting prospective students despite increasing workforce demands and expanding employment opportunities across diverse sectors.

The future sustainability of the profession depends largely upon understanding how current Library and Information Science students perceive their chosen career. Their perspectives regarding professional identity, career opportunities, technological preparedness, anticipated challenges, and global possibilities provide valuable insights for educators, higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, employers, and industry leaders seeking to strengthen the profession and prepare graduates for rapidly evolving information ecosystems.

Although previous studies have examined job satisfaction, employability, technological competencies, leadership, and professional development among practicing librarians, relatively few qualitative investigations have explored how Library and Information Science students themselves envision the future of librarianship. Existing studies have largely concentrated on professional practice, institutional performance, workforce competencies, or technological adoption while giving comparatively limited attention to the lived experiences, aspirations, perceptions, and expectations of future information professionals. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how students interpret emerging career opportunities, global employment prospects, technological transformation, professional challenges, competency requirements, and career readiness within contemporary librarianship. Addressing this gap is particularly important because today's students represent the next generation of information professionals who will shape digital libraries, archives, research support services, scholarly communication, knowledge organizations, digital repositories, and artificial intelligence-enabled information environments.

In response to this gap, the primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the perspectives of undergraduate Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship. Specifically, the study sought to understand students' career aspirations, perceptions of professional opportunities within the Philippines and abroad, anticipated professional challenges, desired competencies, and support needs as



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they prepare to enter an increasingly dynamic, technology-driven, and globally interconnected profession. Employing a transcendental phenomenological research design, the study involved fifteen purposively selected undergraduate Library and Information Science students enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the Philippines. The participants represented various year levels and possessed diverse academic and internship experiences, providing rich descriptions of how future information professionals perceive their evolving profession. As a qualitative phenomenological inquiry, the study focused exclusively on students' lived perspectives and did not include practicing librarians, employers, faculty members, or policymakers, nor did it quantitatively measure employability, career outcomes, or competency levels. Instead, it sought to generate in-depth and transferable insights into how future librarians construct their professional identities, perceive emerging opportunities and challenges, and envision their future roles within contemporary information environments.

Beyond addressing an important gap in Library and Information Science literature, the study contributes to the growing international discourse on future-ready librarianship, Library and Information Science education, workforce development, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence in libraries. By examining students' lived experiences, the study advances understanding of how future information professionals prepare for rapidly changing professional environments and culminates in the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The proposed framework offers an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, library leaders, and curriculum developers in strengthening educational programs, career guidance, professional development initiatives, workforce planning, and policy formulation aimed at preparing globally competitive library and information professionals.

The findings likewise have practical significance for multiple stakeholders. For Library and Information Science students and prospective students, the study provides a broader understanding of the profession's expanding career opportunities while encouraging proactive career planning, continuous professional development, and lifelong learning. Higher education institutions and faculty members may utilize the findings to enhance curriculum design, strengthen industry partnerships, improve student support services, and develop learning experiences that respond to emerging professional competencies. Professional organizations, including the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI), may use the results to reinforce advocacy programs, mentoring initiatives, continuing professional development activities, and student engagement. Government agencies responsible for education, labor, culture, and information services may likewise benefit from the findings in developing policies that support library development, workforce sustainability, and professional advancement. Employers across libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, corporations, and other information organizations may gain a clearer understanding of the competencies, expectations, and career aspirations of future Library and Information Science professionals. Furthermore, the study provides a valuable foundation for future qualitative and quantitative investigations concerning professional identity, employability, leadership, workforce sustainability, and career development within the Library and Information Science discipline.

Ultimately, this study recognizes that the future of librarianship will not be determined solely by technological innovation but by the preparedness, adaptability, resilience, leadership, and global competencies of the students who choose to pursue the profession. By providing rich descriptions of students' lived perspectives and proposing the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), the study contributes to international Library and Information Science scholarship while supporting curriculum enhancement, professional practice, workforce development, and policy initiatives that prepare globally competent information professionals for the evolving knowledge society.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Career Opportunities for Library and Information Science Graduates

Graduates of Library and Information Science (LIS) programs now pursue careers across a wide range of sectors that extend far beyond traditional library settings. As information becomes an increasingly valuable organizational asset, information professionals are needed in academic, public, school, medical, and legal libraries, as well as in government agencies, museums, archives, digital repositories, publishing, corporate organizations, and information technology firms. Their expertise in organizing, preserving, retrieving, and disseminating information supports teaching, research, evidence-based decision-making, cultural preservation, and lifelong learning. Digital transformation has further expanded career opportunities in records and archives management, corporate knowledge management, research support services, metadata and digital asset management, data stewardship, and information consulting, where professionals contribute to information governance, data quality, and organizational innovation. Hands (2024) emphasized that LIS graduates now have access to diverse career pathways reflecting the profession's evolution beyond conventional librarianship. Collectively, these developments demonstrate that contemporary



librarianship has become an interdisciplinary profession whose competencies are increasingly valued across knowledge-intensive industries.

Emerging Competencies for Future Librarians

The competencies expected of future librarians continue to evolve alongside rapid technological advancement and the increasing complexity of information environments. Contemporary information professionals are expected to integrate traditional librarianship with competencies in artificial intelligence, digital literacy, research data management, cybersecurity awareness, information ethics, digital preservation, scholarly communication, data analytics, instructional design, project management, leadership, and user experience design. These competencies enable librarians to manage digital resources effectively, support evidence-based decision-making, facilitate research dissemination, and deliver innovative user-centered information services. At the same time, librarians increasingly collaborate with educators, researchers, policymakers, and information technologists in addressing interdisciplinary information challenges, highlighting the profession's expanding strategic role in digital transformation and knowledge creation. Diseiye et al. (2024) similarly emphasized that emerging information technologies require librarians to continuously develop advanced digital competencies, while the *IFLA Trend Report* (2024) underscored the profession's growing responsibility in promoting equitable access to information, sustainable development, and innovation within rapidly changing information ecosystems. Consequently, future-ready librarians must combine technological proficiency with critical thinking, ethical judgment, adaptability, effective communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, and lifelong learning to remain responsive to evolving societal and organizational needs.

Challenges Facing the Profession

Despite expanding career opportunities and increasing professional relevance, librarianship continues to face significant challenges that influence its long-term sustainability and public recognition. Persistent misconceptions continue to portray librarians primarily as custodians of printed collections rather than as information professionals engaged in digital services, research support, knowledge organization, and technological innovation. Such misconceptions contribute to declining awareness of Library and Information Science programs and may adversely affect student recruitment and workforce development. At the same time, rapid technological change requires continuous professional development as librarians adapt to emerging digital tools, artificial intelligence, data-driven services, and evolving user expectations. Financial constraints, staffing shortages, and limited institutional resources further challenge many libraries in delivering high-quality and innovative services. According to the Public Library Association (2025), many libraries continue to experience recruitment and retention difficulties, workforce shortages, and budgetary pressures that affect service delivery and organizational capacity. Addressing these issues requires sustained investment in professional development, curriculum innovation, institutional support, technological infrastructure, and advocacy initiatives that strengthen the visibility, relevance, and global competitiveness of the profession while maintaining a balance between technological innovation and human-centered library services.

Conceptual Framework

The present study conceptualizes the future of librarianship as a dynamic process through which various educational, professional, technological, and environmental conditions shape the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding their future careers. Guided by Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of Career Development and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the framework assumes that students' professional aspirations and career readiness develop through the interaction of personal experiences, educational preparation, social influences, and emerging opportunities within the rapidly evolving information landscape.

The conceptual paradigm consists of four interconnected components. The first component represents the conditions influencing students' perspectives regarding librarianship. These include Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, technological advancements, globalization, labor market opportunities, faculty mentoring, professional organizations, and family and peer influence. These contextual conditions serve as the foundational inputs that shape students' understanding of the profession and influence how they perceive librarianship as a future career.

The second component represents the major variables examined in the study, namely students' career aspirations, professional identity, perceptions of librarianship, perceived global employment opportunities, anticipated professional challenges, professional readiness, and future expectations. These variables capture how students interpret and respond to the educational and professional conditions that influence their career development and future outlook.

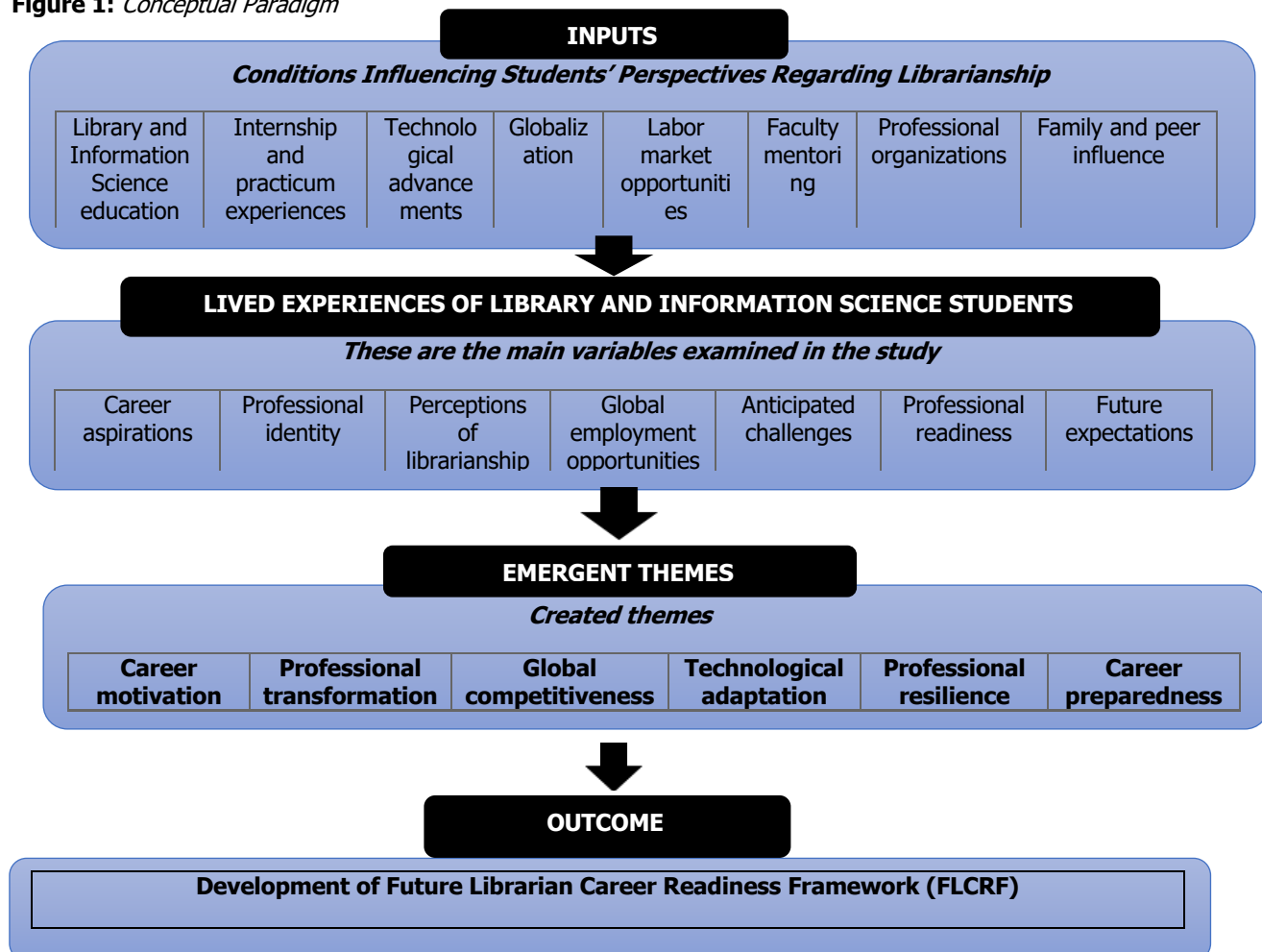


The third component focuses on the lived experiences of Library and Information Science students, which constitute the central phenomenon explored through the transcendental phenomenological approach. Analysis of participants' narratives generates the emergent themes that describe how students experience and make sense of their future profession. These themes include career motivation, professional transformation, global competitiveness, technological adaptation, professional resilience, and career preparedness. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship and explain how they construct their professional identities within rapidly changing information environments.

The fourth component represents the outcome of the study, which is the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework is derived from the synthesized lived experiences and emergent themes identified during the phenomenological analysis. It serves as an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, library leaders, and policymakers in designing educational strategies, professional development initiatives, and workforce policies that prepare globally competitive, technologically competent, and future-ready library and information professionals.

Figure 1 illustrates the sequential relationship among these four components. The conditions influencing students' perspectives shape the variables examined in the study, which are subsequently explored through the lived experiences of Library and Information Science students. The phenomenological analysis generates the emergent themes that ultimately inform the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework provides practical recommendations for strengthening Library and Information Science education and preparing graduates capable of succeeding in increasingly digital, technology-driven, and globally interconnected information environments.

Figure 1: *Conceptual Paradigm*





Statement of the Problem

The Library and Information Science profession continues to evolve rapidly in response to technological innovation, globalization, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and changing societal information needs. While these developments have expanded career opportunities for librarians locally and internationally, misconceptions regarding the profession continue to influence students' career decisions and public understanding of librarianship. Moreover, limited research has explored how Library and Information Science students themselves perceive the future of their profession, including the opportunities, challenges, and support needed to prepare for successful careers. Understanding these perspectives is essential for strengthening Library and Information Science education, informing workforce development initiatives, improving professional advocacy, and preparing globally competitive information professionals capable of responding to rapidly evolving information environments.

General Objective

To explore the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship.

Specific Objectives

The study specifically sought:

1. To describe the reasons students choose Library and Information Science as their academic program.
2. To examine students' perceptions of the evolving roles of librarians in contemporary society.
3. To identify students' perceived career opportunities within the Philippines.
4. To determine students' perceptions of global employment opportunities for future librarians.
5. To explore the professional challenges students anticipate encountering after graduation.
6. To identify the competencies students believe future librarians should develop to remain globally competitive.
7. To determine the institutional, professional, and governmental support students believe is necessary for future librarians.
8. To describe the essence of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study sought to explore the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

Central Research Question: How do Library and Information Science students perceive the future of librarianship in terms of career opportunities, professional challenges, and global possibilities?

Sub-questions

1. How do students describe their reasons for choosing Library and Information Science as their academic program?
2. How do students perceive the evolving roles of librarians in contemporary society?
3. What career opportunities do students believe are available within the Philippines?
4. What global employment opportunities do students envision for future librarians?
5. What professional challenges do students anticipate encountering after graduation?
6. What competencies do students believe future librarians should develop to remain globally competitive?
7. What forms of institutional, professional, and governmental support do students believe are necessary for future librarians?
8. What is the essence of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design to explore and describe the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship. A transcendental phenomenological approach is appropriate when the objective is to understand how individuals experience and interpret a particular phenomenon from their own lived perspectives rather than to measure variables or test hypotheses (Moustakas, 1994). In the present study, the phenomenon centered on students' perceptions of



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career opportunities, professional challenges, global employment possibilities, evolving competencies, and the support systems needed to become future-ready library and information professionals. Consistent with Moustakas' (1994) approach, the researchers practiced *epoche* (bracketing) by consciously setting aside personal assumptions throughout the investigation to ensure that the findings authentically reflected the participants' lived experiences. The transcendental phenomenological design therefore provided a rigorous framework for describing the shared meanings and essential structure of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among selected higher education institutions in the Philippines offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program. To obtain diverse and information-rich perspectives, participants were purposively selected from public universities, private higher education institutions, state universities and colleges, and institutions with established library internship programs. These institutions maintain active Library and Information Science programs recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and prepare students for the Philippine Librarians Licensure Examination. The diversity of institutional settings enabled the study to capture a broad range of educational experiences, professional aspirations, and perspectives regarding the future of librarianship while strengthening the richness and transferability of the findings.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of fifteen (15) purposively selected undergraduate Bachelor of Library and Information Science students who possessed rich experiences and informed perspectives regarding their chosen profession. The study included second-year, third-year, fourth-year, and graduating students undergoing internship or practicum experiences. To ensure that participants could provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation, they were required to be officially enrolled in a BLIS program, have completed at least one major professional librarianship course, voluntarily agree to participate, and demonstrate the ability to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding the profession. Students with internship experiences were particularly valuable because of their direct exposure to professional library environments. Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicating that subsequent interviews no longer generated substantially new insights.

Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling, to obtain rich and diverse descriptions of the phenomenon. This non-probability sampling strategy enabled the researchers to intentionally select participants representing different academic year levels, institutional affiliations, internship experiences, career aspirations, leadership involvement, and academic performance. Such diversity enhanced the breadth of perspectives while preserving the depth of inquiry required in transcendental phenomenological research, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of Library and Information Science students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participants' lived experiences and perspectives regarding the future of librarianship. The interview protocol consisted of four interrelated sections. The first gathered participants' demographic and academic profiles, including their year level, institution, internship experiences, leadership involvement, and career interests. The second explored the motivations that influenced their decision to pursue Library and Information Science, together with their experiences of public perceptions and misconceptions about the profession. The third examined participants' perspectives on the future of librarianship, including emerging career opportunities, technological developments, global employment prospects, artificial intelligence, and the competencies required of future librarians. The final section explored anticipated professional challenges, institutional and governmental support, recommendations for improving Library and Information Science education, and advice for future students. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely narrate their experiences while ensuring consistency across all interviews.

Validation of the Research Instrument

To establish content validity, the interview guide underwent expert evaluation by a qualitative research specialist, a senior professor in Library and Information Science, and a licensed librarian with expertise in library administration. The validators assessed the instrument for clarity, appropriateness, alignment with the research



questions, comprehensiveness, and logical sequencing of interview questions. Their recommendations resulted in the refinement of interview questions, simplification of wording, inclusion of additional probing questions, and removal of redundant items. A pilot interview involving two Bachelor of Library and Information Science students who were not included in the final sample further confirmed the clarity, organization, and flow of the interview protocol before the actual data collection commenced.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic and ethically guided process. Institutional approval and ethical clearance were obtained prior to participant recruitment. Eligible participants were invited to participate and were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality measures, expected interview duration, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Written informed consent was secured before conducting individual interviews, which were held either face-to-face or through secure online platforms and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Participants were assigned pseudonyms (P1–P15) to ensure anonymity and protect confidentiality. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review the interview summaries for accuracy, completeness, and intended meaning before the commencement of data analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological method. The analysis began with *epoche* (bracketing), during which the researcher consciously identified and suspended personal assumptions regarding librarianship to minimize interpretive bias. This was followed by horizontalization, wherein every significant statement related to the phenomenon was treated with equal importance before being clustered into meaningful units through phenomenological reduction. These meaning units were synthesized into broader themes representing the shared experiences of the participants. Subsequently, textural descriptions were developed to explain what participants experienced, while structural descriptions examined how they experienced the phenomenon within their educational, technological, and social contexts. Finally, the integration of these textural and structural descriptions produced the essential structure of Library and Information Science students' lived perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of the study was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for qualitative rigor. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and the inclusion of participants from diverse educational backgrounds. Transferability was supported by providing rich contextual descriptions that enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Dependability was strengthened through a comprehensive audit trail documenting interview procedures, coding decisions, analytical memos, and theme development, while confirmability was reinforced through reflexive journaling, audit documentation, and peer examination to ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' lived experiences rather than researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Institutional approval was obtained prior to data collection, and all participants received complete information regarding the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and anonymity measures, their right to withdraw at any time, and the procedures implemented to protect their personal information. Written informed consent was obtained before the interviews commenced. Participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms, while all digital recordings and interview transcripts were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researchers. Throughout the investigation, every effort was made to ensure that participation posed no psychological, social, academic, or professional harm. In addition, the researchers practiced reflexivity throughout the study by maintaining reflective journals and applying the process of *epoche* to minimize personal assumptions and allow participants' perspectives to emerge authentically. Regular consultation with qualitative research experts and peer reviewers further strengthened the credibility and objectivity of the interpretive process.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

Fifteen undergraduate Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) students participated in this transcendental phenomenological study. The participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, academic year levels, internship experiences, leadership involvement, and career interests, providing a broad range of perspectives regarding the future of librarianship. They were between 19 and 24 years old and had completed internships in academic, public, school, and special libraries. Their career aspirations extended beyond traditional library settings to include digital librarianship, archives, museums, research support services, corporate knowledge management, and international organizations. Despite differences in educational experiences and professional interests, the participants consistently expressed optimism regarding the expanding opportunities within librarianship while recognizing the importance of continuous professional development, technological adaptability, and lifelong learning in preparing for the evolving information landscape.

Following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach, analysis of the interview transcripts generated six interrelated themes that collectively describe how Library and Information Science students envision the future of librarianship. These themes reveal participants' evolving professional identities, perceptions of career opportunities, technological preparedness, anticipated challenges, desired competencies, and long-term aspirations as future information professionals.

Theme 1. Rediscovering Librarianship Beyond Traditional Stereotypes

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the transformation of their understanding of librarianship from a traditionally perceived occupation centered on books and libraries into a dynamic, multidisciplinary profession that supports education, research, technology, and community development. Most participants admitted that before entering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program, their understanding of librarianship was largely influenced by common societal stereotypes portraying librarians as individuals who merely organize books, maintain silence in libraries, or perform routine clerical work. However, their perspectives gradually evolved through formal coursework, interactions with faculty members and practicing librarians, and authentic internship experiences that exposed them to the diverse responsibilities of contemporary information professionals.

Participants consistently described librarians as educators, technology facilitators, digital information managers, researchers, knowledge stewards, advocates of information literacy, and leaders who contribute to lifelong learning and community development. One participant reflected:

"When I entered the program, I thought librarians simply arranged books and helped people find references. After studying Library and Information Science, I realized that librarians manage knowledge, teach information literacy, preserve history, support research, and even contribute to digital innovation. The profession is much bigger than what many people imagine." (P3)

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Many people still joke that librarians only stamp books or tell people to keep quiet. They do not realize how much planning, technology, research, and management are involved. I now feel proud explaining what librarians really do." (P7)

Internship experiences played a particularly important role in reshaping participants' professional identities by allowing them to experience librarianship beyond classroom instruction. As one graduating student explained:

"During my internship, I assisted in managing institutional repositories, digitizing collections, helping faculty with research databases, and teaching students how to search scholarly resources. Those experiences completely changed my view of librarianship." (P12)

Despite these positive experiences, participants acknowledged that persistent public misconceptions continue to discourage many prospective students from pursuing Library and Information Science. As one participant observed:

"Many students simply do not know what librarians actually do. If they understood the profession better, I believe more students would choose Library and Information Science." (P5)

Collectively, these narratives suggest that professional identity develops through sustained educational experiences, authentic workplace exposure, and mentorship. Rather than reinforcing traditional stereotypes, these experiences enabled participants to reconstruct their understanding of librarianship as an intellectually demanding, socially significant, and technology-driven profession. The findings highlight the importance of experiential learning in



cultivating positive professional identities while reinforcing the profession's evolving role in promoting equitable access to information, digital innovation, lifelong learning, and knowledge creation.

Theme 2. Seeing Unlimited Career Opportunities in the Philippines and Beyond

Participants consistently perceived librarianship as a profession offering diverse and expanding career opportunities both within the Philippines and internationally. Contrary to the common perception that librarians are confined to traditional library environments, the participants envisioned a profession that extends across multiple educational, cultural, governmental, technological, healthcare, legal, and corporate sectors. Their narratives reflected an increasingly sophisticated understanding of librarianship as an interdisciplinary profession whose expertise in information organization, digital resource management, research support, and knowledge management is applicable across a wide range of organizations. These findings support the observations of White et al. (2023), who emphasized that contemporary librarians require competencies in database development, digital communication, information and communication technologies, digital content management, and online library services to meet the evolving demands of modern information environments.

Participants identified career opportunities in academic, public, school, and special libraries while also recognizing employment possibilities in government agencies, museums, archives, records management, publishing, corporate knowledge management, digital repositories, healthcare institutions, law firms, research organizations, technology companies, and international organizations. Several participants were particularly enthusiastic about careers beyond traditional libraries. One participant remarked:

"I was surprised that librarians can work in multinational companies managing knowledge systems. We are not limited to libraries anymore." (P10)

Another participant expressed aspirations for international employment by stating:

"I dream of working for an international university or research institute someday. Filipino librarians are respected because we are hardworking and adaptable." (P8)

The participants also recognized the increasing availability of remote work opportunities made possible by digital technologies. One participant explained:

"With digital technologies, librarians can now work remotely as metadata specialists, information consultants, digital archivists, or research assistants for international clients." (P14)

Others envisioned contributing to international organizations involved in education, cultural preservation, and digital knowledge management. As one participant shared:

"I hope someday Filipino librarians can work for UNESCO, the United Nations, or international digital preservation projects because our profession contributes to education and cultural heritage." (P6)

Participants' descriptions of local career opportunities likewise extended beyond conventional librarianship to include positions such as digital librarian, institutional repository manager, research support librarian, records manager, archivist, museum curator, government information officer, knowledge management specialist, digital preservation specialist, information literacy educator, academic publishing specialist, and data management officer. These perspectives demonstrate students' growing awareness that librarianship has become an interdisciplinary profession supporting digital transformation, research productivity, information governance, and organizational knowledge management across numerous sectors.

Their perspectives became even more expansive when discussing global employment opportunities. Participants envisioned careers as digital archivists, metadata librarians, data curators, research data managers, scholarly communication librarians, Open Science specialists, information architects, knowledge consultants, corporate knowledge managers, artificial intelligence information trainers, international university librarians, and remote information consultants. These aspirations reflect students' recognition of the increasing international demand for professionals capable of managing digital information, supporting research, facilitating knowledge exchange, and navigating rapidly evolving information ecosystems. These findings are consistent with Dezuanni and Osman (2024), who argued that librarians and information professionals are increasingly positioned as key contributors within global information ecosystems shaped by artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and emerging knowledge practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that Library and Information Science students no longer perceive librarianship as a profession confined to physical libraries. Instead, they envision a globally connected, technology-enabled, and multidisciplinary profession that offers meaningful opportunities across education, research, government, business, healthcare, culture, and international development. Their narratives reflect an evolving professional identity grounded in adaptability, innovation, and lifelong learning while demonstrating confidence that the competencies developed



through Library and Information Science education remain relevant within both local and global information environments.

Theme 3. Preparing for a Technology-Driven and Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Profession

Participants unanimously acknowledged that technological innovation will continue to shape the future of librarianship. Rather than viewing artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and digital transformation as threats to the profession, they consistently perceived these developments as opportunities to redefine and expand librarians' professional roles. Their narratives demonstrated a clear understanding that future librarians must embrace technological change while preserving the profession's human-centered values, ethical responsibilities, and commitment to information literacy and lifelong learning.

Several participants emphasized that artificial intelligence should complement rather than replace librarians' expertise. One participant observed:

"Artificial intelligence can organize information faster than humans, but it cannot replace librarians' judgment, ethics, empathy, and ability to teach people how to evaluate reliable information." (P2)

Similarly, another participant highlighted the importance of adapting to technological change rather than resisting it:

"Instead of competing with AI, librarians should learn how to use AI responsibly. It will become another tool that helps us serve people better." (P11)

Participants consistently identified technological competence as a fundamental requirement for future librarianship. They emphasized the importance of developing expertise in artificial intelligence literacy, digital repository management, metadata standards, information systems, research data management, digital preservation, cybersecurity awareness, cloud-based information systems, information visualization, data analytics, digital scholarship, and user experience design. Rather than viewing these competencies as isolated technical skills, participants regarded them as essential capabilities that would enable librarians to manage digital resources effectively, support research, improve access to information, and deliver innovative user-centered services within increasingly technology-driven information environments.

The integration of technological competence with human-centered service emerged as a defining characteristic of participants' vision of future librarianship. As one participant explained:

"The future librarian should know both technology and people. Technology helps organize information, but librarians help people understand and use that information wisely." (P9)

Collectively, these findings suggest that Library and Information Science students perceive technological advancement as complementary to, rather than a replacement for, professional librarianship. Their perspectives reflect an emerging understanding that the future librarian must balance technological expertise with ethical decision-making, critical evaluation of information, instructional leadership, and meaningful engagement with diverse communities. This balance demonstrates students' recognition that successful librarianship in the digital era depends not only on technological proficiency but also on preserving the profession's enduring commitment to equitable access to information, education, and human-centered service.

Theme 4. Overcoming Misconceptions and Professional Challenges

Although participants expressed considerable optimism regarding the future of librarianship, they likewise recognized numerous challenges that may influence their professional development and long-term career success. Persistent misconceptions regarding the profession, limited public awareness of Library and Information Science, rapid technological change, increasing interdisciplinary competition, unequal employment opportunities, and limited institutional resources emerged as the most frequently discussed concerns. Despite these challenges, participants consistently interpreted them as opportunities for professional growth, innovation, advocacy, and lifelong learning rather than as barriers to career development.

Many participants recalled experiencing discouraging reactions from family members, friends, and acquaintances after choosing the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program. These experiences reflected persistent misconceptions that librarianship offers limited career opportunities or has become obsolete because of technological advancement. One participant recounted:

"Some people asked me, 'Why study librarianship when everything is already on Google?' At first, it made me question my decision, but now I understand that information professionals are needed more than ever because people need guidance in finding credible information." (P4)

Another participant similarly described the need to continually explain the true nature of the profession:



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"Whenever someone asks about my course, they usually say, 'So you'll just arrange books?' I always explain that librarians manage information, support researchers, teach digital literacy, preserve cultural heritage, and even work in technology-related fields." (P13)

Participants further recognized that rapid technological advancement creates both opportunities and professional pressures. They emphasized that future librarians must continuously update their knowledge and skills to remain relevant within increasingly digital and interdisciplinary information environments. As one participant remarked:

"Technology changes so fast that we need to keep learning throughout our careers. Graduation is only the beginning of our education." (P6)

Others highlighted the growing competition among professionals working within information-intensive sectors. One participant observed:

"Future librarians will compete not only with other librarians but also with professionals from information technology, computer science, and business. We need to continuously improve ourselves." (P1)

Participants also discussed institutional challenges affecting the continuing development of libraries in the Philippines, including inadequate funding for library modernization, limited digital infrastructure, restricted access to emerging technologies, insufficient specialized training opportunities, varying levels of technological readiness across institutions, and limited public promotion of librarianship as a profession. Nevertheless, they remained optimistic that sustained technological innovation, professional development initiatives, and stronger public advocacy would continue expanding opportunities for librarians within both local and international information environments. These perspectives are consistent with Dezuanni and Osman (2024), who emphasized that artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and increasingly complex information ecosystems are creating greater demand for professionals possessing advanced competencies in digital literacy, information management, knowledge organization, data stewardship, and technology-mediated information services.

This sense of optimism was summarized by one participant who stated:

"Every profession has challenges. What matters is whether we continue learning and show society why librarians are still important." (P8)

Overall, the findings demonstrate that participants view librarianship as a profession undergoing continuous transformation. Rather than allowing misconceptions, technological disruption, or institutional constraints to discourage them, students regarded these realities as catalysts for professional innovation, advocacy, resilience, and lifelong learning. Their narratives reveal an emerging professional identity characterized by adaptability, perseverance, and a commitment to strengthening the relevance of librarianship within an increasingly complex global information society.

Theme 5. Developing Competencies for Future-Ready Librarianship

Participants consistently emphasized that the future of librarianship depends on continuous professional growth and the acquisition of competencies that extend beyond traditional library practices. They recognized that technological expertise alone would be insufficient for future success and that librarians must likewise develop leadership, communication, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, adaptability, collaboration, research capabilities, and lifelong learning habits. These competencies were viewed as essential for responding effectively to rapidly evolving information environments and the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the profession.

Digital competence emerged as one of the most frequently discussed areas of professional development. Participants stressed the importance of mastering artificial intelligence applications, digital repositories, metadata management, research data services, information systems, cybersecurity awareness, digital preservation, information literacy instruction, and scholarly communication. At the same time, they believed that future librarians must retain the profession's human-centered values by demonstrating empathy, ethical responsibility, sound professional judgment, and effective communication when assisting diverse information users.

One participant explained:

"Technology will continue changing, but librarians must continue learning. If we stop learning, we cannot serve our users effectively." (P5)

Another participant highlighted the importance of balancing technical and interpersonal competencies:

"A future librarian should be technologically skilled but also approachable, ethical, and able to communicate with different kinds of people." (P10)

Participants likewise recognized leadership as an increasingly important competency. They viewed librarians as educators, advocates, collaborators, project managers, and institutional leaders who facilitate access to information and promote evidence-based decision-making. These perspectives are consistent with Brodsky and Chapman Tripp (2025), who emphasized that librarians' expanding responsibilities require continuous professional learning, leadership



development, and interdisciplinary collaboration to respond effectively to technological and organizational change. Collectively, the findings suggest that participants perceive professional competence as an integration of technological expertise, ethical practice, leadership, adaptability, and lifelong learning that enables librarians to remain relevant in rapidly changing information environments.

Theme 6. Strengthening Institutional and Professional Support for Future Librarians

Participants consistently acknowledged that individual commitment alone is insufficient to prepare future librarians for the profession's evolving demands. They emphasized that meaningful professional development requires sustained support from higher education institutions, faculty members, professional organizations, government agencies, and employers. Such collaborative support was viewed as essential for strengthening students' competencies, professional confidence, and readiness for increasingly competitive local and international employment opportunities.

Many participants recommended continuous curriculum enhancement to ensure that Library and Information Science programs remain responsive to technological advancements and emerging professional roles. They advocated for stronger integration of artificial intelligence, digital librarianship, research data management, digital preservation, information technologies, leadership development, and international librarianship into undergraduate education. Internship experiences were likewise identified as indispensable opportunities for bridging classroom learning with authentic professional practice.

Participants also emphasized the importance of mentoring and professional engagement. One participant remarked:

"Faculty members and practicing librarians should continue mentoring students because they help us understand what the profession is really like." (P15)

Another participant highlighted the role of professional organizations:

"Professional organizations should involve students more in conferences, seminars, and networking because these experiences help us prepare for our future careers." (P7)

Participants likewise recognized the important role of government agencies in strengthening library development through increased investment in technological infrastructure, professional training, scholarship opportunities, and public advocacy for librarianship. They believed that stronger collaboration among educational institutions, professional organizations, government agencies, and employers would significantly improve workforce preparation and elevate the visibility of the profession. Mentoring, professional networking, international collaboration, and continuing professional development contribute substantially to career advancement and professional sustainability.

Overall, participants viewed institutional and professional support as a shared responsibility that extends beyond formal education. Their narratives suggest that preparing globally competitive librarians requires coordinated efforts among academic institutions, professional associations, employers, and policymakers to create supportive learning environments that foster continuous growth, innovation, and professional excellence.

Textural Description

The participants described librarianship as a dynamic profession that has expanded far beyond its traditional association with managing printed collections. Their experiences reflected increasing awareness of the profession's contributions to education, research, digital transformation, information management, and community development. They expressed optimism regarding expanding career opportunities while recognizing the need to continuously develop technological competencies, leadership abilities, ethical decision-making, and adaptability to remain effective in rapidly evolving information environments. At the same time, they acknowledged persistent misconceptions about librarianship and emphasized the importance of stronger institutional support, public advocacy, and professional collaboration in preparing future librarians for local and global practice.

Structural Description

Participants' perspectives were shaped by the interaction of formal Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, faculty mentoring, technological developments, professional organizations, family support, and exposure to evolving workplace expectations. These contextual influences enabled students to move beyond traditional stereotypes and develop a broader understanding of librarianship as an interdisciplinary profession requiring continuous learning, technological adaptability, and professional resilience. Their experiences demonstrated that career aspirations and professional identity develop through sustained educational preparation and authentic engagement with contemporary information environments.



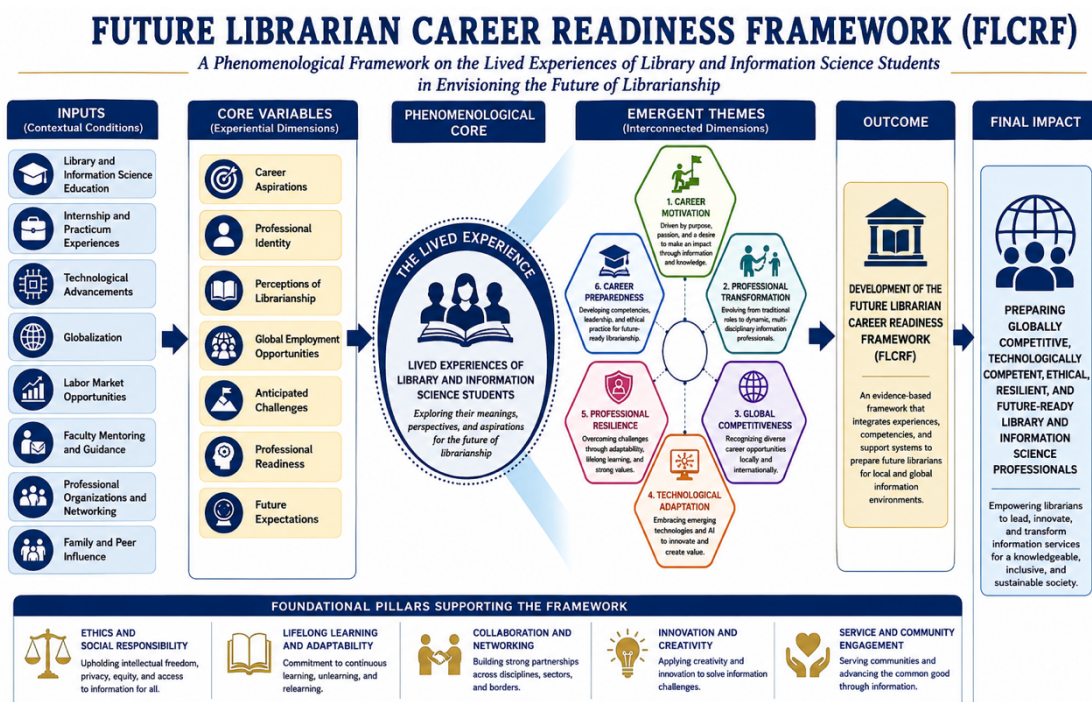
Composite Description of the Phenomenon

The integration of participants' textual and structural descriptions reveals that the future of librarianship is understood as a profession characterized by continuous transformation, expanding opportunities, technological innovation, and lifelong professional growth. Participants viewed librarians not only as custodians of information but also as educators, technology facilitators, researchers, digital information specialists, knowledge managers, and advocates for equitable access to information. Although they anticipated challenges associated with rapid technological change, public misconceptions, and increasing professional demands, they consistently expressed confidence that continuous learning, institutional support, ethical leadership, and technological competence would enable future librarians to thrive within increasingly interconnected global information environments.

Essence of the Phenomenon

The essence of Library and Information Science students' lived perspectives regarding the future of librarianship lies in their recognition that the profession is no longer defined by traditional library functions but by its expanding role in managing knowledge, facilitating learning, supporting research, preserving cultural heritage, promoting digital transformation, and advancing equitable access to information. Participants perceived themselves as future professionals who must continuously adapt to technological innovation while preserving the ethical, educational, and service-oriented foundations of librarianship. Their lived experiences reveal that future-ready librarianship is grounded in technological competence, professional resilience, global competitiveness, lifelong learning, collaborative leadership, and meaningful institutional support. Collectively, these perspectives formed the empirical foundation for the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), which serves as an evidence-based guide for preparing globally competent library and information professionals capable of responding to the evolving demands of contemporary information societies.

Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF)



The FLCRF envisions librarians as transformation leaders in the global information society—empowered by competence, guided by ethics, and committed to lifelong learning and meaningful service.

Figure 2. Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF)



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The Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), as shown in Figure 2, illustrates how the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship are shaped through the interaction of contextual conditions, personal and professional variables, and their lived educational experiences. The framework posits that factors such as Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, technological advancements, globalization, labor market opportunities, faculty mentoring, professional organizations, and family and peer influence collectively shape students' career aspirations, professional identity, perceptions of librarianship, global employment outlook, anticipated challenges, professional readiness, and future expectations. Through transcendental phenomenological analysis, these experiences converge into six interconnected themes—career motivation, professional transformation, global competitiveness, technological adaptation, professional resilience, and career preparedness—which collectively form the empirical foundation for the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework proposes that preparing globally competitive Library and Information Science professionals requires a holistic approach that integrates technological competence, ethical practice, lifelong learning, leadership, collaboration, adaptability, and institutional support. Consequently, the FLCRF serves as an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, library leaders, employers, and policymakers in strengthening curriculum development, professional preparation, workforce planning, and continuing professional development to ensure that future librarians are equipped to thrive in increasingly digital, interdisciplinary, and globally interconnected information environments.

Conclusions

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship. The findings demonstrate that participants perceive librarianship as a dynamic, technology-driven, and globally relevant profession whose responsibilities now extend far beyond the traditional management of library collections. Through their educational experiences, internship exposures, and interactions with practicing professionals, participants developed a broader understanding of librarianship as a profession that supports education, research, knowledge management, digital transformation, scholarly communication, and equitable access to information. Their narratives reveal that professional identity is continuously shaped by formal education, experiential learning, technological developments, and meaningful engagement with contemporary information environments.

The participants recognized the expanding career opportunities available to future librarians across academic institutions, public libraries, government agencies, archives, museums, research organizations, corporate knowledge management, digital repositories, healthcare institutions, technology companies, and international organizations. They likewise viewed globalization and technological advancement as creating new opportunities for Filipino librarians to contribute within increasingly interconnected information ecosystems. Rather than perceiving artificial intelligence and digital transformation as threats, participants regarded these developments as catalysts for innovation that require librarians to continuously strengthen their technological competence while preserving the profession's ethical, educational, and human-centered foundations.

The study further revealed that future-ready librarianship requires an integration of technological expertise, critical thinking, communication, leadership, adaptability, ethical decision-making, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Participants emphasized that professional success depends not only on individual commitment but also on sustained institutional support through responsive curricula, meaningful internship experiences, faculty mentoring, professional networking, continuing professional development, and supportive government policies. Their lived experiences likewise underscored the continuing need to address persistent misconceptions regarding librarianship through stronger public advocacy and professional visibility.

The integration of participants' lived experiences culminated in the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), which provides an evidence-based framework for preparing globally competitive Library and Information Science graduates. The framework emphasizes that the future of librarianship will be shaped not only by technological innovation but also by the preparedness, resilience, adaptability, leadership, and global competencies of future information professionals. By providing deeper insights into students' aspirations, challenges, competency needs, and support systems, the study contributes to the growing international discourse on future-ready librarianship, Library and Information Science education, workforce development, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence-enabled information services.



Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications for strengthening Library and Information Science education and preparing future-ready information professionals. Higher education institutions offering Library and Information Science programs are encouraged to regularly review and enhance their curricula to ensure alignment with emerging developments in artificial intelligence, digital librarianship, research data management, digital preservation, information technologies, scholarly communication, and global information services. Experiential learning opportunities, particularly internships and practicum programs, should likewise be strengthened to provide students with meaningful exposure to diverse professional environments and emerging career pathways.

Faculty members are encouraged to continue serving as mentors who foster students' professional identity, leadership potential, ethical responsibility, technological competence, and lifelong commitment to learning. Likewise, professional organizations, particularly the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI), may strengthen mentoring programs, student engagement initiatives, continuing professional development activities, international collaborations, and advocacy campaigns that increase public awareness of the evolving roles and societal contributions of librarians and information professionals.

Government agencies responsible for education, labor, culture, science, technology, and information services may consider strengthening policies and investments that support library modernization, digital infrastructure, workforce development, research initiatives, scholarship opportunities, and continuing professional education. Increased institutional support for technological innovation and professional advancement may further enhance the global competitiveness of Filipino librarians and expand employment opportunities within local and international information environments.

Employers across libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, government agencies, corporations, and information organizations are likewise encouraged to establish collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions to facilitate internship opportunities, competency development, professional mentoring, and workforce preparation. Such partnerships may help ensure that graduates possess the competencies required by rapidly evolving information environments while supporting a smoother transition from academic preparation to professional practice.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to extend the present investigation by exploring the perspectives of practicing librarians, employers, faculty members, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in Library and Information Science education and professional practice. Comparative studies involving multiple countries, longitudinal investigations of career development, and mixed-methods research examining professional competencies, employability, leadership, workforce sustainability, and artificial intelligence integration would further enrich the growing body of knowledge on future-ready librarianship. The Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF) proposed in this study may likewise be validated, refined, and applied across diverse educational and professional contexts to assess its effectiveness in guiding curriculum enhancement, professional development, and workforce planning for Library and Information Science education.

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Still keeping the light on: A phenomenological study on the hopes and dreams of veteran librarians in the digital era

Carla L. Serrano, Josephine F. Cruz, Richard D. Sanchez, Julie Mae Moreno

Abstract

Aim: Libraries have long served as enduring institutions that preserve knowledge, promote literacy, and strengthen communities. However, the rapid expansion of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, electronic resources, and online information platforms has significantly altered information-seeking behaviors, resulting in declining physical library visits and reduced reliance on printed materials. Amid these transformations, veteran librarians continue to demonstrate resilience and unwavering commitment to the profession. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, hopes, dreams, and aspirations of veteran librarians regarding the future of libraries and librarianship in the digital era.

Methodology: Using purposive sampling, twelve licensed librarians with at least twenty years of professional experience from public, academic, and school libraries participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach through horizontalization, clustering of meanings, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and synthesis of meanings and essences.

Results: Six essential themes emerged: embracing change without abandoning tradition; preserving libraries as spaces of human connection; inspiring lifelong readers despite digital distractions; empowering communities through evolving library services; nurturing the next generation of librarians; and leaving a legacy beyond books. Participants acknowledged the challenges brought about by declining patronage of physical collections but remained optimistic that libraries would continue evolving into dynamic centers of learning, digital inclusion, cultural preservation, and community engagement.

Conclusion: The essence of the phenomenon revealed that veteran librarians perceive their profession not merely as managing collections but as sustaining hope, preserving humanity's collective memory, and empowering future generations through equitable access to knowledge. The study underscores the continuing relevance of librarianship in an increasingly digital society and recommends strategic investments in professional development, technological innovation, and community-centered library programs.

Keywords: *digital transformation, hopes and dreams, libraries, librarianship, lived experiences, phenomenology*

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, libraries have served as trusted institutions that safeguard knowledge, preserve cultural heritage, and promote lifelong learning. Regardless of political, technological, or societal changes, libraries have remained symbols of intellectual freedom, democratic access to information, and educational advancement (Adigun et al., 2024). Librarians, often regarded as custodians of knowledge, have continuously adapted to changing information environments while remaining committed to serving diverse communities.

The twenty-first century has introduced unprecedented transformations in the way information is created, organized, accessed, and shared. Digital technologies, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, electronic books, social media, and mobile devices have fundamentally changed human information behavior. Individuals increasingly rely on online search engines, digital repositories, and artificial intelligence-powered platforms to obtain information that was once primarily available through printed books and physical libraries (Alzahrani et al., 2025). Consequently, many libraries around the world have reported declining circulation of printed materials and reduced in-person library visits.

These developments have generated both opportunities and challenges for library professionals. While digital technologies have expanded access to information and enabled innovative library services, they have likewise raised questions regarding the continuing relevance of traditional libraries and the evolving identity of librarianship. Public discourse occasionally portrays libraries as institutions losing significance in the digital age, despite growing evidence that libraries continue to provide essential educational, technological, cultural, and community services.

Amid these transformations, veteran librarians occupy a unique position. Having witnessed the transition from card catalogs to integrated library systems, from printed indexes to digital databases, and from physical collections to hybrid information environments, they possess rich professional experiences that can illuminate how libraries have evolved over time. More importantly, their hopes and aspirations offer valuable insights into the future direction of librarianship as an evolving profession.

Existing research has extensively examined digital transformation, information technologies, user behavior, library management, and service innovation. Comparatively fewer qualitative studies have explored the deeply personal aspirations, professional dreams, and enduring motivations of experienced librarians who have devoted decades of service despite rapid technological disruption. Understanding these lived experiences contributes not only to the scholarly literature on librarianship but also to leadership development, succession planning, professional identity formation, and policy development within library and information institutions.

As libraries continue redefining their roles in increasingly digital societies, listening to the voices of seasoned librarians becomes both timely and necessary. Their experiences provide important lessons regarding resilience, adaptability, professional purpose, and hope that may guide future generations of library professionals.

Guided by this perspective, the present study explored the lived experiences, hopes, and dreams of veteran librarians regarding the future of libraries and librarianship in the digital era. By capturing their stories, reflections, and aspirations, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the enduring human values that continue to define librarianship despite continuous technological transformation.

Review of Related Literature

Libraries in Transition

Libraries have continuously evolved from repositories of printed knowledge into multifaceted centers that integrate physical collections, digital resources, collaborative learning spaces, and community engagement programs. Contemporary libraries increasingly provide access to electronic databases, institutional repositories, makerspaces, multimedia laboratories, and digital literacy initiatives. This transformation reflects broader societal changes driven by technological innovation and expanding information ecosystems.

Despite declining circulation of printed materials in many institutions, libraries remain significant public spaces that promote equitable access to information, lifelong learning, and civic participation (Ryan et al., 2023). Modern libraries have expanded their missions beyond collection management by emphasizing user-centered services, digital inclusion, and community partnerships.

The Changing Role of Librarians

The responsibilities of librarians have evolved substantially during the past three decades. Contemporary librarians perform diverse roles as educators, technology facilitators, digital curators, research consultants, instructional partners, information literacy advocates, and community leaders. These expanding responsibilities require continuous professional development and adaptability in response to emerging technologies.

Veteran librarians often possess unique institutional knowledge accumulated through decades of professional practice. Their experiences provide valuable perspectives on organizational change, leadership, and professional resilience that may not be fully captured through quantitative investigations.

Professional Identity in Librarianship

Professional identity refers to the values, beliefs, competencies, and sense of purpose that individuals associate with their profession. Studies suggest that librarians generally derive professional fulfillment from facilitating access to information, supporting education, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to community development. For experienced librarians, professional identity frequently extends beyond occupational responsibilities and becomes deeply intertwined with personal values, lifelong service, and commitment to intellectual freedom.

Digital Transformation and Library Sustainability

Digital transformation has introduced numerous innovations including cloud-based integrated library systems, artificial intelligence applications, institutional repositories, digital archives, and virtual reference services. While these developments have expanded service opportunities, they have likewise created concerns regarding technological readiness, workforce competencies, funding sustainability, and the future relevance of physical library spaces.

Rather than replacing traditional libraries, digital transformation increasingly encourages hybrid service models that integrate technological innovation with personalized human services.

Hope, Purpose, and Legacy in Helping Professions

Hope has been described as an individual's positive expectation toward achieving meaningful future goals despite uncertainty or adversity. Within helping professions such as education, healthcare, and librarianship, hope often manifests through commitment to service, professional resilience, mentoring, and aspirations for future generations.

Legacy similarly represents the enduring impact professionals wish to leave within their organizations and communities. Veteran librarians frequently define success not through collections managed or technologies implemented but through the lives influenced, readers inspired, and communities empowered.

Synthesis of Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates that libraries continue undergoing profound technological transformation while maintaining their essential educational and social functions. Existing studies have extensively investigated digital technologies, information behavior, library services, and organizational management. However, there remains limited qualitative research exploring the lived experiences, hopes, dreams, and enduring aspirations of veteran librarians who have personally experienced the evolution of libraries across several decades.

Addressing this gap, the present phenomenological inquiry seeks to illuminate the shared meanings that experienced librarians attach to their profession, thereby contributing a human-centered perspective to contemporary Library and Information Science scholarship.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on **Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy (1963)** and **Snyder's Hope Theory (1994)**, which collectively provide a meaningful lens for understanding how veteran librarians derive purpose from their profession and envision its future despite the challenges brought about by rapid technological transformation.

Frankl's Logotherapy

Viktor Frankl proposed that the primary motivational force in human life is the search for meaning (Nweke, 2022). According to Logotherapy, individuals remain resilient even in the face of adversity when they discover purpose in their experiences, work, relationships, and contributions to others. Rather than being discouraged by external circumstances, individuals who possess a strong sense of purpose continue to find fulfillment through meaningful service.

The theory is particularly relevant to librarianship because many veteran librarians have devoted decades to preserving knowledge, promoting literacy, and serving their communities. Although declining physical library visits and increasing reliance on digital information have transformed traditional library services, experienced librarians continue to perceive their profession as a meaningful vocation rather than merely an occupation. Their commitment extends beyond managing collections toward empowering learners, preserving cultural memory, and fostering informed citizenship.

Through the lens of Logotherapy, the study seeks to understand how veteran librarians sustain their professional purpose and continue finding meaning in their work despite evolving information environments.

Snyder's Hope Theory

Hope Theory, developed by Snyder, explains hope as a cognitive process consisting of three interconnected components: goals, pathways, and agency (Schornick et al., 2023). Goals represent desired future outcomes, pathways refer to perceived strategies for achieving those goals, and agency reflects the motivation to pursue them despite challenges.

The theory suggests that hopeful individuals remain optimistic because they continually identify alternative pathways toward achieving meaningful aspirations even when obstacles arise.

Applied to the present study, Hope Theory provides an appropriate framework for understanding how veteran librarians continue envisioning a positive future for libraries despite technological disruption, changing reading behaviors, and declining utilization of printed resources. Their hopes are reflected in aspirations for stronger community engagement, digitally inclusive services, professional sustainability, and the continued relevance of librarianship.

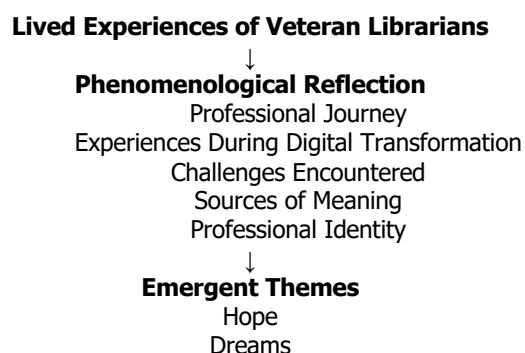
Together, Logotherapy and Hope Theory explain not only why seasoned librarians remain committed to their profession but also how they continue envisioning meaningful futures for libraries amid continuous societal transformation.

Conceptual Framework

The present investigation views the lived experiences of veteran librarians as the central phenomenon from which deeper meanings regarding hope, aspirations, resilience, and professional identity emerge.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Resilience
Commitment
Adaptation
Legacy



Essence of the Phenomenon

The framework illustrates that the participants' lived experiences serve as the foundation for phenomenological reflection. Through thematic analysis, the essential meanings of their experiences emerge, ultimately leading to a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the ways individuals access, utilize, and share information. Electronic books, online databases, artificial intelligence applications, social media, and mobile technologies have significantly altered traditional patterns of library use, resulting in declining physical visits to many libraries and reduced dependence on printed collections.

While considerable research has examined digital transformation, technological innovation, library management, and information-seeking behavior, comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding the lived experiences of veteran librarians who have witnessed these transformations throughout their professional careers.

Despite changing information environments, experienced librarians continue serving their communities with dedication and optimism. Their perspectives regarding the future of libraries, professional identity, personal aspirations, and enduring commitment remain insufficiently explored.

Understanding these lived experiences may provide valuable insights into the evolving role of libraries, the resilience of library professionals, and the future direction of librarianship in an increasingly digital society.

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the hopes, dreams, and lived experiences of veteran librarians regarding the future of libraries and librarianship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe the lived experiences, hopes, dreams, and future aspirations of veteran librarians regarding the continuing relevance of libraries and the library profession in the digital era.

Specifically, the study seeks to understand how experienced librarians make meaning of their professional journeys, perceive ongoing technological transformation, and envision the future of librarianship.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences, hopes, and dreams of veteran librarians regarding the future of libraries and librarianship in the digital era?

Sub-Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do veteran librarians describe their professional journey throughout the years?
2. What significant experiences have shaped their perspectives regarding librarianship?
3. How do they perceive the changing roles of libraries in the digital era?
4. What challenges have they encountered as technology transformed library services?
5. What hopes do they have for the future of libraries?
6. What dreams do they hold for future librarians and future generations of library users?
7. What meanings do they attach to their lifelong service as librarians?
8. What is the essence of their shared lived experiences?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may contribute to various stakeholders.

Veteran Librarians. The study provides an opportunity for experienced librarians to reflect upon their professional journeys, articulate their aspirations, and preserve their experiences for future generations.

Beginning Librarians. The narratives generated from this study may inspire newly licensed librarians by providing valuable insights regarding resilience, professional purpose, ethical service, and lifelong commitment to learning.

Library Administrators. The findings may assist administrators in developing succession planning initiatives, mentorship programs, leadership development strategies, and organizational policies that recognize the contributions of experienced librarians.

Library and Information Science Educators. The study may enrich library education by incorporating authentic professional narratives into teaching, thereby strengthening students' understanding of the evolving nature of librarianship.

Professional Organizations. Library associations may utilize the findings in designing continuing professional development programs that address leadership, professional identity, digital transformation, and workforce sustainability.

Researchers. The study contributes to the growing body of qualitative literature in Library and Information Science by providing an in-depth understanding of the human dimensions of librarianship during periods of technological change.

Society. Ultimately, the study reinforces public appreciation for libraries and librarians as enduring institutions that continue promoting equitable access to information, lifelong learning, cultural preservation, and community development despite rapid technological advancement.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused exclusively on the lived experiences, hopes, dreams, and future aspirations of veteran librarians working in public, academic, and school libraries within selected provinces in the Philippines.

Participants consisted of licensed librarians who possess at least twenty years of professional experience and are either currently employed or recently retired from active library service.

The study is limited to understanding participants' subjective experiences through phenomenological inquiry and does not seek to measure organizational performance, user satisfaction, technological effectiveness, or library utilization using quantitative methods.

The findings represent the shared meanings constructed from participants' narratives and are therefore not intended for statistical generalization. Rather, they provide rich descriptions that may enhance understanding of the phenomenon and inform future research, professional practice, and library policy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design following the philosophical tradition of Edmund Husserl and the methodological procedures articulated by Moustakas (1994). Phenomenology seeks to understand and describe the essence of a phenomenon through the lived experiences of individuals who have directly encountered it.

The transcendental phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to explore how veteran librarians make meaning of their professional journeys, aspirations, hopes, and dreams amid the profound technological changes that have transformed libraries and information services. Rather than examining organizational performance or measuring attitudes quantitatively, the study focused on understanding participants' personal reflections, emotions, meanings, and interpretations of their experiences throughout decades of professional service.

Through careful listening, reflection, and phenomenological reduction, the researchers sought to describe the common essence of being a veteran librarian in an increasingly digital society.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among selected public, academic, and school libraries located in Central Luzon, Philippines. The region was selected because it represents diverse library environments serving various educational institutions, local government units, and communities.

Libraries included in the study were chosen because they have continuously operated for many years and employ experienced librarians who have witnessed the transition from predominantly print-based services to digitally integrated library operations.

To preserve participant anonymity, the identities of participating libraries were withheld.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of twelve (12) veteran licensed librarians who possessed extensive professional experience in library and information services.

Participants represented various library sectors, including:

- Public libraries
- Academic libraries
- School libraries
- Government libraries

The researchers determined that twelve participants were sufficient because data saturation was achieved, meaning no substantially new themes emerged from succeeding interviews.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- Must be a licensed librarian.
- Must have at least twenty (20) years of professional library experience.
- Must have experienced both traditional and digital library environments.
- Must currently be employed or have retired within the last five years.
- Must be willing to participate voluntarily.
- Must provide informed consent.

Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling enabled the researchers to intentionally identify participants who possessed rich professional experiences directly relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Veteran librarians were selected because they had firsthand experience navigating the significant transitions that occurred in librarianship over the past several decades.

As interviews progressed, participants consistently shared similar experiences regarding technological change, professional identity, and aspirations for the future, indicating the achievement of data saturation.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researchers based on the study's objectives, theoretical framework, and review of literature.

The interview guide consisted of three major sections.

Part I. Professional Background

Questions explored participants'

- educational background,
- years of professional service,
- type of library,
- leadership positions held, and
- major professional milestones.

Part II. Lived Experiences

Questions focused on participants' experiences regarding

- changing library services,
- digital transformation,
- declining physical library visits,
- changing information behaviors,
- professional challenges,
- memorable experiences.

Sample questions included:

"Can you describe how libraries have changed throughout your career?"

"What moments made you most proud to be a librarian?"

"How have you experienced the transition from printed collections to digital resources?"

Part III. Hopes and Dreams

Questions explored participants'

- hopes for libraries,
- aspirations for future librarians,
- personal legacy,
- professional advice,
- vision of libraries in the next twenty years.

Examples included:

"What do you hope libraries will become in the future?"

"What legacy would you like to leave to future librarians?"

The interview guide underwent expert review by three senior Library and Information Science professors to establish content validity. Suggestions regarding wording, sequencing, and probing questions were incorporated before data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the concerned library administrators.

Potential participants received invitation letters explaining the study's objectives, procedures, voluntary nature of participation, and ethical safeguards.

Individual interviews were scheduled according to participants' preferred dates and venues.

Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or through secure online video conferencing platforms, depending on participants' preferences and availability.

With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy.

Field notes were simultaneously documented to capture:

- non-verbal behaviors,
- emotional expressions,
- pauses,
- contextual observations,
- researchers' initial reflections.

Following each interview, recordings were transcribed verbatim.

Participants were subsequently provided copies of their transcripts for verification through member checking, allowing them to clarify statements or provide additional information when necessary.

Data Analysis

The collected narratives were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological analysis, consisting of the following procedures:

1. Epoche (Bracketing)

The researchers consciously set aside personal assumptions and prior experiences regarding librarianship to approach participants' narratives with openness.

2. Horizontalization

Every significant statement from each transcript was treated with equal value during the initial stages of analysis.

3. Clustering of Meanings

Significant statements sharing similar meanings were grouped into meaningful units.

4. Textural Description

The researchers described what participants experienced throughout their professional journeys.

5. Structural Description

The researchers interpreted how participants experienced the phenomenon by examining contextual factors, organizational changes, and personal meanings.

6. Essence Synthesis

Finally, textural and structural descriptions were integrated to construct the universal essence of the phenomenon describing the hopes and dreams of veteran librarians in the digital era.

Qualitative coding was performed manually and supported through iterative reading, constant comparison, memo writing, and thematic analysis.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The rigor of the study was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research.

Credibility

Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and triangulation using interview transcripts and field notes.

Transferability

Rich, detailed descriptions of participants and contexts enable readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar settings.

Dependability

A comprehensive audit trail documenting methodological decisions, coding procedures, and theme development was maintained throughout the investigation.

Confirmability

Researcher reflexive journals and peer debriefing minimized researcher bias while ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participants' narratives.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to accepted ethical principles governing qualitative research involving human participants.

Prior to participation, all participants received detailed explanations regarding the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and possible risks.

Written informed consent was secured before conducting interviews.

Participants were informed that:

- participation was entirely voluntary;
- they could refuse to answer any question;
- they could withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) replaced participants' names throughout the study.

Audio recordings, transcripts, and electronic files were stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the researchers.

All interview data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

Throughout the study, the researchers upheld the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, confidentiality, and justice.

Researcher Reflexivity

Recognizing that phenomenological inquiry requires awareness of researcher influence, the researchers continuously practiced reflexivity throughout the investigation. Personal experiences, professional assumptions, and prior beliefs regarding librarianship were documented through reflexive journaling before, during, and after each interview.

By consciously engaging in bracketing, the researchers sought to minimize preconceived interpretations and remain attentive to the meanings expressed by participants themselves. Regular discussions among the research team and peer debriefing further enhanced interpretive transparency and ensured that emerging themes reflected the participants' voices rather than the researchers' expectations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences, hopes, and dreams of veteran librarians regarding the future of libraries and librarianship in the digital era. Analysis of the interview transcripts using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach resulted in six essential themes. These themes collectively describe how veteran librarians continue to find meaning in their profession despite the changing landscape of information access, declining physical library visits, and the increasing dominance of digital technologies.

The participants' narratives revealed not only the challenges they have encountered throughout decades of professional service but also their enduring optimism, resilience, and commitment to preserving the core values of librarianship.

Theme 1

"Libraries May Change, But Their Mission Remains the Same"

One of the strongest themes emerging from the interviews was the participants' belief that although libraries continuously evolve, their fundamental mission remains unchanged. Veteran librarians consistently emphasized that libraries have never been defined solely by books or buildings but by their commitment to connecting people with trustworthy information, fostering learning, and supporting community development.

Several participants reflected on the dramatic transition from manual cataloging systems to automated library management systems, electronic databases, and digital repositories. Despite these technological advancements, they believed that the heart of librarianship continues to revolve around serving people.

One participant shared:

"When I started working, everything was handwritten. We typed catalog cards one by one. Today, everything is online. But one thing has never changed—we are still helping people find knowledge." (Participant 3)

Another participant remarked:

"People think libraries are disappearing because books are becoming digital. I disagree. Libraries are simply changing their form, but not their purpose." (Participant 7)

Participants explained that while technologies evolve rapidly, the societal need for reliable information, critical thinking, and lifelong learning remains constant. Rather than viewing digital transformation as a threat, they regarded it as another chapter in the continuing evolution of libraries.

These narratives demonstrate that veteran librarians distinguish between the physical form of libraries and their enduring educational mission. Their reflections suggest that libraries continue serving as institutions that promote

informed citizenship, cultural preservation, and equitable access to knowledge regardless of technological advancements.

Theme 2

"Technology Is Not Our Enemy; It Is Our New Partner"

Participants acknowledged that digital technologies have fundamentally altered library operations. Nevertheless, instead of expressing fear toward technological innovation, they generally perceived technology as an opportunity to expand library services and reach broader audiences.

Most participants described learning computerized cataloging systems, online databases, institutional repositories, and electronic resources during the latter stages of their careers. While adapting required considerable effort, they viewed continuous learning as an essential professional responsibility.

Participant 5 reflected:

"At first, computers intimidated many of us. But eventually we realized that technology allows us to serve more people than we ever could before."

Participant 10 added:

"Artificial intelligence may answer questions quickly, but it cannot replace the human ability to guide learners toward understanding information responsibly."

Participants consistently emphasized that technological competence should complement—not replace—the ethical, educational, and interpersonal dimensions of librarianship.

Several participants believed that future librarians should become equally proficient in digital technologies while maintaining compassion, professional integrity, and commitment to public service.

These findings suggest that veteran librarians perceive technological innovation as an opportunity for professional growth rather than institutional decline.

Theme 3

"The Greatest Challenge Is Not Technology but Changing Reading Habits"

Although participants accepted technological progress, many expressed concern regarding changing reading behaviors among younger generations.

Several participants observed declining circulation of printed books and fewer students visiting physical libraries except when academic requirements demanded it.

Participant 1 shared:

"Many students now believe that the internet contains everything. Unfortunately, they sometimes forget that not everything online is accurate."

Participant 8 reflected:

"What saddens me is not that books are becoming digital. It is when people stop reading deeply and simply scroll from one piece of information to another."

Participants emphasized that libraries now face a broader challenge of promoting critical thinking, information evaluation, and sustained reading habits rather than merely encouraging physical library visits.

Many believed that librarians must become advocates of information literacy by teaching individuals how to identify credible sources, evaluate misinformation, and responsibly utilize emerging technologies.

Their narratives illustrate that the future role of librarians extends beyond managing collections toward developing informed, reflective, and responsible information users.

Theme 4

"Libraries Are Places Where Communities Continue to Find Hope"

Participants consistently described libraries as much more than repositories of books. Instead, they viewed libraries as welcoming community spaces where individuals discover opportunities for learning, personal growth, social interaction, and empowerment.

Participant 6 explained:

"A child may enter the library because of an assignment but leave with a dream for the future."

Participant 11 reflected:

"Libraries become safe spaces. Some visitors simply need someone willing to guide them patiently."

Participants described numerous experiences assisting children, senior citizens, job seekers, researchers, and community members who relied on library services for education, employment, and lifelong learning.

These experiences reinforced their belief that libraries continue playing indispensable roles in strengthening communities despite declining dependence on printed materials.

Several participants envisioned future libraries incorporating makerspaces, digital laboratories, community learning hubs, and collaborative innovation spaces while preserving their welcoming atmosphere.

The findings indicate that participants perceive libraries as evolving social institutions that continue promoting inclusion, education, and community resilience.

Theme 5

"Our Greatest Legacy Is Not the Books We Organized but the Lives We Influenced"

Perhaps the most emotional narratives emerged when participants discussed the legacy they hoped to leave behind.

Nearly every participant stated that their proudest accomplishments were not technological projects, library buildings, or collection sizes but the individuals whose lives had been positively influenced through library services.

Participant 2 shared:

"Years from now, no one will remember how many books I cataloged. But perhaps someone will remember that I encouraged them to love reading."

Participant 9 reflected emotionally:

"Our shelves will eventually change. Technology will continue evolving. But kindness, patience, and service—those are the things people never forget."

Many participants spoke passionately about mentoring younger librarians, encouraging professional growth, and preserving the ethical foundations of librarianship.

Participants consistently defined success through human impact rather than institutional accomplishments.

This finding highlights the deeply service-oriented identity that continues characterizing experienced library professionals.

Theme 6

"Still Keeping the Light On"

The final and overarching theme captured the participants' collective optimism regarding the future of libraries. Despite acknowledging numerous challenges—including declining physical library visits, reduced circulation of printed collections, technological disruption, limited funding, and changing public expectations—participants consistently expressed hope rather than pessimism.

Participant 4 summarized this perspective beautifully:

"As long as there are people searching for truth, libraries will always have a purpose."

Participant 12 concluded:

"We are still keeping the light on—not simply inside our buildings, but inside every learner who discovers the joy of knowledge."

Participants envisioned libraries becoming more technologically advanced while remaining deeply committed to educational equity, cultural preservation, lifelong learning, and community engagement.

Rather than viewing themselves as guardians of printed books alone, participants increasingly described themselves as guardians of knowledge, wisdom, and hope.

Composite Textural Description (What the Participants Experienced)

The veteran librarians described careers marked by profound transformation. They experienced the evolution from handwritten accession records and card catalogs to integrated library systems, online databases, digital repositories, and artificial intelligence-assisted information services. Alongside these technological shifts, they observed declining physical library visits, changing reading habits, and evolving user expectations. Despite these changes, they continued to derive fulfillment from assisting learners, supporting researchers, promoting literacy, mentoring colleagues, and fostering community engagement. Their experiences reflected adaptability, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to service.

Composite Structural Description (How the Participants Experienced the Phenomenon)

Participants experienced these changes through a process of continuous adaptation anchored in professional purpose. Rather than interpreting technological advancement as a threat, they viewed it as an opportunity to expand access to knowledge while preserving the human-centered values of librarianship. Their hopes were sustained by meaningful interactions with library users, the opportunity to mentor future professionals, and the enduring belief that libraries remain essential institutions for education, culture, and democratic access to information. Their experiences were shaped by resilience, lifelong learning, and a deep sense of vocational calling.

Essence of the Phenomenon

The essence of the lived experiences of veteran librarians is characterized by enduring hope grounded in purpose. Although the physical manifestations of libraries continue to evolve, participants perceived librarianship as an enduring commitment to empowering individuals through knowledge, fostering lifelong learning, preserving cultural memory, and strengthening communities. For these veteran librarians, "keeping the light on" symbolizes far more than

maintaining library buildings; it represents sustaining curiosity, wisdom, compassion, and equitable access to information for present and future generations. Their collective narratives affirm that while technologies may redefine how information is delivered, they cannot diminish the fundamental human mission of librarianship—to illuminate minds, nurture learning, and inspire hope.

Conclusions

The findings of this phenomenological study illuminate the enduring spirit of veteran librarians who have remained steadfast in their commitment to serving communities despite the rapid transformation of the information landscape. While participants acknowledged the declining use of printed materials, reduced physical library visits, and the widespread adoption of digital technologies, these developments were not perceived as signals of the decline of librarianship. Instead, they were viewed as opportunities for professional growth, service innovation, and institutional transformation.

The participants consistently demonstrated that the true essence of librarianship extends beyond the management of books and information resources. Their narratives revealed that librarianship is fundamentally a profession rooted in service, education, mentorship, ethical stewardship of knowledge, and community empowerment. Technological advancements have changed the tools through which librarians deliver services, but they have not diminished the profession's central mission of connecting people with reliable information and fostering lifelong learning.

The study likewise revealed that veteran librarians continue to derive meaning from witnessing the positive impact of their work on learners, educators, researchers, and communities. Their aspirations emphasize the importance of preserving libraries as inclusive spaces where knowledge, culture, innovation, and human connection converge. Rather than longing for a return to the past, participants envisioned libraries that successfully integrate emerging technologies while maintaining the human values that have long defined the profession.

The hopes expressed by the participants extend beyond their individual careers. They aspire for future librarians to become adaptive, technologically competent, compassionate, ethical, and committed to serving increasingly diverse communities. They also envision libraries as dynamic centers for digital literacy, cultural preservation, collaborative learning, innovation, and civic engagement.

Ultimately, the lived experiences of veteran librarians reveal that while the formats through which information is delivered will continue to evolve, the purpose of librarianship remains remarkably constant. Libraries may become increasingly digital, yet their enduring role as institutions that cultivate knowledge, inspire curiosity, preserve collective memory, and empower communities continues to illuminate society. In this sense, veteran librarians truly remain "keepers of the light," sustaining hope, wisdom, and learning for future generations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

For Library Administrators

Library administrators may continue strengthening the digital transformation of libraries while preserving their human-centered mission. Investments in emerging technologies should be accompanied by programs that promote personalized user services, community engagement, and inclusive learning environments where patrons continue to experience meaningful interactions with librarians.

For Veteran Librarians

Experienced librarians may be encouraged to actively participate in mentorship initiatives that allow them to share their professional knowledge, ethical principles, institutional memory, and practical experiences with beginning librarians. Their accumulated wisdom represents an invaluable professional resource that should be preserved and transmitted across generations.

For Beginning Librarians

Newly licensed librarians may continuously develop competencies in digital technologies, artificial intelligence, information literacy instruction, research support, and community outreach while maintaining the profession's enduring values of integrity, intellectual freedom, compassion, and public service.

For Library and Information Science Schools

Higher education institutions offering Library and Information Science programs may integrate the lived experiences of veteran librarians into their curricula through case studies, oral history projects, mentorship programs, and experiential learning opportunities that strengthen students' appreciation of the profession's evolving identity.

For Professional Organizations

Professional associations may design continuing professional development programs that balance technological competencies with leadership development, emotional resilience, mentoring, advocacy, ethical decision-making, and community-centered librarianship.

For Government Agencies and Policymakers

Government agencies responsible for library development may continue supporting sustainable investments in library infrastructure, digital technologies, internet connectivity, professional development, and innovative community programs that enhance equitable access to information, particularly in underserved communities.

For Communities

Community members may be encouraged to recognize libraries as dynamic learning institutions that extend far beyond traditional book lending. Active participation in library programs, literacy initiatives, digital learning activities, and cultural events can strengthen the continuing relevance of libraries within society.

For Future Researchers

Future qualitative investigations may explore the lived experiences of early-career librarians, digital librarians, archivists, academic library leaders, and community information professionals across different cultural and institutional contexts. Comparative studies involving multiple countries may likewise provide deeper insights into how librarianship continues to evolve in response to technological innovation, artificial intelligence, and changing information behaviors.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry several important implications for the future of Library and Information Science.

First, the study demonstrates that the continuing relevance of libraries depends not solely on technological advancement but also on their ability to preserve meaningful human relationships. While digital resources have expanded access to information, participants emphasized that empathy, guidance, mentorship, and professional judgment remain uniquely human dimensions that cannot be fully replaced by technology.

Second, the narratives suggest that the identity of librarianship is shifting from collection-centered service toward people-centered knowledge facilitation. This transformation requires librarians to assume expanded roles as educators, digital literacy advocates, technology facilitators, research partners, cultural stewards, and community leaders.

Third, the findings reinforce the importance of preserving the institutional memory embodied by veteran librarians. Their experiences offer practical lessons regarding organizational resilience, professional ethics, leadership, and adaptation that can inform future library development initiatives and succession planning.

Fourth, the study highlights the need for continuous professional learning. As technologies continue evolving, librarians must cultivate lifelong learning mindsets while simultaneously preserving the profession's foundational values of intellectual freedom, equitable access to information, lifelong education, and public service.

Finally, the study suggests that the future success of libraries will depend upon successfully balancing innovation with tradition. Rather than replacing the historical functions of libraries, digital transformation provides opportunities to expand their educational, cultural, and social contributions through hybrid service models that integrate technological advancement with meaningful human engagement.

Proposed Model

The "KEEPING THE LIGHT ON" FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Based on the lived experiences of the participants, this study proposes the **Keeping the Light On Framework**, a conceptual model that illustrates how veteran librarians sustain the relevance of libraries amid technological transformation.

Foundation: Enduring Professional Values

The framework begins with the enduring values that define librarianship:

- Commitment to lifelong learning
- Ethical stewardship of knowledge
- Service to communities
- Intellectual freedom
- Equity of information access
- Cultural preservation

These values remain constant regardless of technological change.

Transformational Processes

Grounded in these values, librarians engage in continuous processes of:

- technological adaptation;
- professional development;
- community engagement;
- mentorship of future librarians;
- promotion of information and digital literacy; and

- innovation in library services.

These processes enable libraries to respond proactively to evolving user needs.

Desired Outcomes

Through these transformational processes, libraries become:

- inclusive community learning hubs;
- trusted centers of reliable information;
- digitally empowered knowledge institutions;
- spaces for lifelong learning and innovation;
- catalysts for community resilience; and
- enduring symbols of hope and democratic access to knowledge.

Ultimate Essence

At the center of the framework lies the study's central insight:

Libraries endure because their true purpose has never been limited to preserving books; rather, they exist to illuminate minds, empower communities, preserve humanity's collective memory, and inspire hope across generations.

This framework underscores that while library collections, technologies, and service models may continue to evolve, the profession's enduring mission remains constant: to keep the light of knowledge, learning, and human connection burning for all.

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Digital competency, artificial intelligence readiness, and professional development needs of academic librarians in private higher education institutions in Central Luzon, Philippines: Basis for a regional library capability enhancement framework

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Abstract

Aim: The rapid integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) into higher education has transformed the roles and responsibilities of academic librarians. Beyond traditional collection management and reference services, librarians are increasingly expected to support digital scholarship, research data management, AI-assisted information retrieval, institutional repositories, and scholarly communication. This study aimed to determine the digital competency, artificial intelligence readiness, and professional development needs of academic librarians employed in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Central Luzon, Philippines. The findings served as the basis for developing a Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework that supports sustainable professional development for academic librarians.

Methodology: The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. Quantitative data were gathered from 148 licensed librarians working in 37 private higher education institutions across Central Luzon using a researcher-developed questionnaire validated by experts in Library and Information Science. Descriptive statistics, weighted mean, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were utilized to analyze quantitative data. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews with 15 library directors and senior librarians were conducted to explain the quantitative findings through thematic analysis.

Results: The study revealed that librarians demonstrated high competency in digital library services, electronic resource management, and information literacy instruction but reported only moderate competency in artificial intelligence applications, research data management, bibliometric analysis, and digital preservation. AI readiness was generally moderate, with organizational support, technological infrastructure, and access to professional development significantly influencing readiness levels. Professional development priorities included generative AI applications in libraries, digital scholarship, research analytics, metadata management, cybersecurity, and institutional repository administration. Significant positive relationships were found between digital competency, organizational support, and AI readiness.

Conclusion: Academic librarians in private higher education institutions have successfully adapted to digital library environments but require continuous upskilling to meet emerging demands associated with artificial intelligence and advanced research support services. Sustainable institutional investment in technology, continuing professional development, and collaborative regional initiatives can strengthen librarians' competencies and improve library service delivery. The proposed Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework offers a practical roadmap for supporting digital transformation among academic libraries in Central Luzon.

Keywords: *academic librarians, artificial intelligence, digital competency, professional development, higher education libraries, digital libraries, library innovation*

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has ushered libraries into an era characterized by unprecedented technological advancement, digital transformation, and rapidly evolving information ecosystems (Meesad & Mingkhan, 2024). Academic libraries are no longer viewed merely as repositories of printed collections but have become dynamic knowledge hubs that facilitate digital learning, research collaboration, scholarly communication, and open access information services. These developments have fundamentally redefined the professional responsibilities of librarians, requiring them to acquire competencies that extend well beyond traditional cataloging, circulation, and reference services.

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, cloud computing, research analytics, digital repositories, and big data technologies has significantly influenced the management and dissemination of information resources. AI-powered discovery systems, intelligent search engines, automated cataloging, virtual reference assistants, plagiarism detection tools, citation analysis platforms, and research data management systems are increasingly becoming integral components of academic library services. Consequently, librarians are expected not only to understand these technologies but also to integrate them ethically and effectively into library operations.

Higher education institutions have simultaneously undergone substantial changes in response to digital education, flexible learning modalities, international research collaboration, and open science initiatives. Academic libraries play a critical role in supporting these institutional transformations by providing access to scholarly resources, promoting information literacy, assisting faculty research, managing institutional repositories, and facilitating digital scholarship. As the expectations placed upon academic libraries continue to expand, librarians must continuously develop new competencies that align with emerging institutional priorities and global trends.

Professional development remains one of the most effective strategies for enabling librarians to respond to these changes. Continuous learning allows library professionals to remain current with technological innovations, international standards, metadata practices, copyright regulations, digital preservation strategies, and research support services (Onunka et al., 2023). Organizations such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the American Library Association (ALA), and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) consistently emphasize lifelong professional learning as an essential component of effective librarianship.

In the Philippine context, academic libraries have likewise experienced accelerated digital transformation following the widespread adoption of flexible learning environments, online information services, and electronic resource management systems. Private higher education institutions have invested significantly in digital library infrastructures, subscription databases, institutional repositories, and virtual library services. Nevertheless, disparities remain in technological resources, institutional support, funding allocation, and opportunities for professional development among academic libraries across different regions.

Central Luzon hosts numerous private higher education institutions serving thousands of students and faculty members from diverse academic disciplines. While these institutions continue to modernize their library services, relatively few empirical studies have comprehensively examined the digital competencies and artificial intelligence readiness of academic librarians working within the region. Existing studies have largely focused on continuing professional development, library management practices, or service quality rather than librarians' preparedness for AI-enabled library environments.

Moreover, recent international literature highlights growing concerns regarding librarians' readiness to utilize artificial intelligence responsibly, manage research data, support digital scholarship, implement bibliometric services, and address ethical issues surrounding AI-assisted information retrieval. Without adequate professional development, librarians may encounter challenges in maximizing the potential benefits of these technologies while ensuring responsible and equitable information services.

Recognizing these developments, the present study investigates the digital competency, artificial intelligence readiness, and professional development needs of academic librarians employed in private higher education institutions in Central Luzon. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined continuing professional development within public universities, this investigation focuses specifically on digital transformation in private higher education institutions and the emerging competencies required in AI-supported academic libraries. The findings are expected to contribute to evidence-based policy formulation, institutional planning, and regional professional development initiatives that strengthen library services and promote sustainable digital transformation across academic libraries in Central Luzon.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Digital Transformation of Academic Libraries

Academic libraries have experienced profound transformation over the last decade due to rapid technological innovations and the increasing digitization of scholarly communication. Modern libraries are no longer confined to housing printed collections but have become integrated learning and research environments that provide access to digital resources, institutional repositories, electronic databases, research analytics, and virtual reference services (Oyedokun, 2025). The emergence of cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and open science has further expanded the scope of library services, requiring librarians to adopt new competencies that support digital scholarship and information management.

Recent studies indicate that digital transformation has altered librarians' professional responsibilities from collection custodianship to knowledge facilitation, research partnership, instructional support, and technology integration. Academic librarians now assist faculty and students in systematic reviews, bibliometric analysis, research data management, scholarly publishing, and information literacy, demonstrating the profession's evolving nature in the digital age.

Digital Competency among Academic Librarians

Digital competency refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethical practices necessary for effectively utilizing digital technologies in professional settings (Sánchez-Canut et al., 2023). Within academic libraries, digital competency encompasses electronic resource management, integrated library systems, metadata creation, digital preservation, database searching, virtual reference services, information literacy instruction, and research support.

Several international studies have reported that librarians generally demonstrate high competence in traditional digital library operations but exhibit varying levels of proficiency in emerging technologies such as AI applications, machine learning, research analytics, and digital scholarship support. Institutional investment in technology, leadership support, and continuing professional development have consistently been identified as important determinants of digital competency.

Artificial Intelligence in Library Services

Artificial intelligence has increasingly influenced library operations by enhancing information retrieval, cataloging, recommendation systems, metadata generation, plagiarism detection, virtual reference services, and predictive analytics. AI-powered discovery tools enable users to retrieve information more efficiently while allowing librarians to automate repetitive technical tasks.

Despite these advantages, AI adoption presents several challenges, including ethical concerns, algorithmic bias, copyright issues, privacy protection, and workforce readiness. Consequently, librarians require specialized training that enables them to evaluate AI-generated information critically and implement AI technologies responsibly within academic environments.

Continuing Professional Development of Librarians

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) remains an essential mechanism for ensuring that librarians maintain current competencies in response to changing technological and professional demands (Moonasar, 2024). Professional organizations worldwide encourage librarians to participate regularly in seminars, workshops, certification programs, online courses, conferences, and collaborative learning activities.

Research consistently demonstrates that librarians who engage actively in CPD exhibit higher confidence in adopting emerging technologies, delivering innovative services, and supporting institutional research initiatives. However, barriers such as limited funding, workload, inadequate institutional support, and unequal access to training opportunities continue to affect CPD participation.

Organizational Support and Digital Readiness

Organizational support significantly influences successful digital transformation within academic libraries. Administrative commitment, strategic planning, technology infrastructure, financial investment, and leadership all contribute to librarians' readiness to implement innovative services.

Libraries that cultivate learning-oriented organizational cultures encourage experimentation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous improvement. Such environments enable librarians to adapt more effectively to technological changes while maintaining high-quality user-centered services.

Synthesis of the Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates that academic librarians worldwide are experiencing substantial changes in professional practice due to digital transformation and artificial intelligence. While previous studies have examined digital competencies, AI applications, and professional development independently, relatively few investigations have integrated these variables within the context of private higher education institutions in Central Luzon.

Moreover, existing Philippine studies have primarily emphasized continuing professional development or service quality, with limited attention given to librarians' readiness for AI-enabled library environments. This gap highlights the need for empirical investigations that examine how digital competency, organizational support, and AI readiness collectively influence professional development priorities. The present study addresses this gap by exploring these interconnected dimensions and proposing a Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework that supports sustainable digital transformation among academic libraries.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), which explains how perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence individuals' acceptance and utilization of emerging technologies (Schorr, 2023). Within the context of academic libraries, librarians' willingness to adopt AI-supported services is influenced by their perceptions regarding the usefulness of these technologies in improving library operations and service delivery.

The study is likewise supported by Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003), which explains how innovations are adopted within organizations over time (Menzli et al., 2022). According to the theory, adoption depends upon innovation characteristics, communication channels, organizational context, and individual readiness. Libraries that provide supportive leadership, technological infrastructure, and continuous professional development are more likely to facilitate successful adoption of AI and digital innovations.

The Competency Theory of Professional Development also serves as a guiding framework. This theory emphasizes that professional competence develops through continuous learning, reflective practice, and institutional support (Phuong & Duong, 2022). Librarians continuously enhance their competencies through education, training, experience, and collaboration, enabling them to respond effectively to evolving professional demands.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives explain how organizational support influences digital competency, which in turn affects librarians' readiness to adopt AI technologies and identify professional development needs.

Conceptual Framework

The study proposes that organizational support contributes to the development of librarians' digital competencies, which subsequently influence their readiness to adopt artificial intelligence technologies. These variables collectively shape librarians' continuing professional development priorities and inform the development of a Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework.



Statement of the Problem

The rapid digital transformation of academic libraries has expanded librarians' responsibilities beyond traditional information services. As artificial intelligence and emerging digital technologies become increasingly integrated into library operations, librarians are expected to develop new competencies that support research, teaching, scholarly communication, digital preservation, and information management. Despite substantial investments in library technologies, differences remain in organizational support, digital competency, and readiness to adopt AI-enabled services among academic libraries.

Within private higher education institutions in Central Luzon, limited empirical evidence exists regarding librarians' preparedness for these technological changes. Understanding librarians' digital competencies, AI readiness, and professional development priorities is therefore necessary to inform evidence-based institutional planning and sustainable capacity-building initiatives.

Research Objective

The study aimed to determine the digital competency, artificial intelligence readiness, and professional development needs of academic librarians in private higher education institutions in Central Luzon as the basis for developing a Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. describe the respondents' professional profile;
2. determine their level of digital competency;
3. assess their readiness to adopt artificial intelligence technologies;
4. examine the level of organizational support for digital transformation;
5. identify their continuing professional development needs;
6. determine the significant relationships among organizational support, digital competency, and AI readiness; and
7. propose a Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework.

Research Questions

1. What is the professional profile of the respondents?
2. What is the level of digital competency of academic librarians?
3. What is the level of artificial intelligence readiness?
4. To what extent do institutions provide organizational support for digital transformation?
5. What are the priority professional development needs of academic librarians?
6. Is there a significant relationship between organizational support and digital competency?
7. Is there a significant relationship between digital competency and AI readiness?
8. What Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework may be proposed based on the findings?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This sample study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, consisting of two complementary phases. The first phase involved the collection and analysis of quantitative data to determine the levels of digital competency, artificial intelligence (AI) readiness, organizational support, and continuing professional development (CPD) needs among academic librarians. The second phase utilized qualitative interviews to provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings, particularly regarding librarians' experiences, perceived challenges, and recommendations for strengthening digital transformation initiatives in academic libraries.

The explanatory sequential design was selected because it enabled the researcher to explain and elaborate on the statistical findings through qualitative evidence. Quantitative results established the overall trends, while qualitative data enriched the interpretation by providing contextual explanations from experienced library professionals.

Locale of the Study

For instructional purposes, this sample study was situated in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) located in Central Luzon, Philippines. Central Luzon was selected because it is home to numerous colleges and universities that have invested in digital library systems, electronic resources, institutional repositories, and technology-enhanced library services.

The participating institutions represented various disciplines, including comprehensive universities, specialized colleges, faith-based institutions, and private higher education institutions offering undergraduate and graduate programs. These institutions have implemented varying degrees of digital transformation, making the region an appropriate context for examining librarians' competencies and readiness for AI-enabled library services.

Participants of the Study

The target participants consisted of licensed academic librarians employed in private higher education institutions in Central Luzon. Eligible participants were those who:

- held permanent or contractual librarian positions;
- possessed at least one year of professional library experience;
- were directly involved in library operations, information services, or digital resource management; and
- voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Library directors, chief librarians, reference librarians, technical services librarians, digital services librarians, and electronic resources librarians were considered eligible respondents because of their active involvement in implementing technology-supported library services.

Sampling Technique

The sample study employed stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation of librarians from various private higher education institutions throughout the region.

Initially, participating institutions were grouped according to province. Thereafter, librarians from each institution were proportionately selected using simple random sampling. This sampling procedure promoted balanced representation while minimizing selection bias.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a **researcher-developed questionnaire** consisting of five major sections.

Part I. Professional Profile

This section obtained demographic and professional information, including:

- age
- sex
- highest educational attainment
- years of professional experience
- present position
- type of institution
- library automation system used
- attendance in professional development activities
- previous AI-related training

Part II. Digital Competency Scale

This section measured respondents' competencies across the following dimensions:

- Digital Information Services
- Electronic Resource Management

- Information Literacy Instruction
- Digital Preservation
- Metadata Management
- Research Support Services
- Digital Scholarship
- Research Data Management

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

Scale Interpretation

5	Very High
4	High
3	Moderate
2	Low
1	Very Low

Part III. Artificial Intelligence Readiness Scale

This section assessed librarians' readiness to adopt AI technologies in terms of:

- Knowledge of AI
- Skills in AI Applications
- Ethical Awareness
- Organizational Preparedness
- Technological Confidence
- Willingness to Adopt AI

Part IV. Organizational Support Scale

This section measured institutional support covering:

- Administrative Commitment
- Budget Allocation
- Technology Infrastructure
- Leadership Support
- Technical Assistance
- Professional Development Opportunities

Part V. Continuing Professional Development Needs

Respondents rated the degree of need for training in the following areas:

- Generative AI Applications
- AI-Assisted Cataloging
- Bibliometric Analysis
- Research Analytics
- Digital Preservation
- Metadata Standards
- Research Data Management
- Cybersecurity
- Digital Scholarship
- Institutional Repository Management
- Open Science
- Copyright and Intellectual Property
- Data Visualization
- Digital Curation

An open-ended question allowed respondents to recommend additional professional development programs.

Instrument Validation

The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by specialists in Library and Information Science, educational technology, research methodology, and measurement and evaluation.

The validators evaluated the instrument according to:

- relevance
 - clarity
 - comprehensiveness
 - organization
 - appropriateness of language
- Suggestions provided by the experts were incorporated before pilot administration.

Pilot Testing

Prior to the actual implementation, the questionnaire was pilot-tested among academic librarians from institutions outside the intended study area.

The pilot study was conducted to determine:

- clarity of instructions;
 - readability of questionnaire items;
 - average completion time;
 - consistency of responses; and
 - appropriateness of the response scale.
- Necessary revisions were incorporated following the pilot administration.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was first obtained from the administrators of participating higher education institutions.

After institutional approval, the researcher coordinated with library directors regarding the administration schedule of the questionnaire.

Participants were informed about:

- the objectives of the study;
- voluntary participation;
- confidentiality of responses;
- anonymity;
- estimated completion time; and
- their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Questionnaires were administered either personally or through secure online survey platforms.

Following the quantitative phase, selected participants were invited for semi-structured interviews to provide additional explanations regarding the survey findings.

Interview sessions were conducted with participants' permission and were audio-recorded solely for transcription and thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were encoded, organized, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software.

The following statistical tools were employed:

Research Objective	Statistical Tool
Respondents' Profile	Frequency and Percentage
Digital Competency	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
AI Readiness	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Organizational Support	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Professional Development Needs	Weighted Mean and Ranking
Relationship among Variables	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
Predictors of AI Readiness	Multiple Linear Regression

Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving:

1. familiarization with the transcripts;
2. initial coding;
3. generation of themes;
4. review of themes;
5. definition of themes; and
6. integration of qualitative findings with quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

The conduct of the study adhered to accepted ethical standards in educational and social science research. The following ethical principles were observed:

- Participation was entirely voluntary.
- Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.
- Respondents' identities remained anonymous.
- Personal information was treated with strict confidentiality.
- Data were used exclusively for academic and research purposes.
- Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences.
- Electronic data were stored securely using password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.
- Interview recordings were permanently deleted after transcription and completion of the study.

Furthermore, the study observed the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Professional Profile

Table 1

Professional Profile of the Respondents

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	36	24.3
	Female	112	75.7
Age	21–30 years	32	21.6
	31–40 years	49	33.1
	41–50 years	39	26.4
	51 years and above	28	18.9
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	29	19.6
	Master's Degree	91	61.5
	Doctorate Degree	28	18.9
Years of Experience	1–5 years	38	25.7
	6–10 years	44	29.7
	11–15 years	35	23.6
	More than 15 years	31	21.0

The data indicate that the majority of academic librarians were female and possessed graduate-level education, with most holding master's degrees in Library and Information Science or related disciplines. Many respondents had accumulated more than five years of professional experience, suggesting that they possessed adequate exposure to contemporary academic library operations. The presence of experienced librarians provides opportunities for mentoring younger professionals and supporting organizational innovation initiatives.

Digital Competency of Academic Librarians

Table 2

Level of Digital Competency

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Electronic Resource Management	4.46	0.48	Very High
Information Literacy Instruction	4.42	0.50	Very High
Digital Library Systems	4.35	0.56	Very High
Online Reference Services	4.28	0.59	High

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Institutional Repository Management	4.12	0.61	High
Metadata Management	3.89	0.68	High
Digital Preservation	3.74	0.71	High
Research Data Management	3.45	0.77	Moderate
Bibliometric Analysis	3.39	0.82	Moderate
Artificial Intelligence Applications	3.18	0.84	Moderate
Overall Mean = 3.93 (High)			

The findings suggest that librarians demonstrated strong competencies in established digital library services such as electronic resource management, information literacy instruction, and digital library administration. These competencies likely reflect the widespread implementation of online databases, integrated library systems, and virtual learning environments across higher education institutions.

Conversely, competencies related to artificial intelligence, bibliometric analysis, and research data management received comparatively lower ratings. These emerging areas require specialized knowledge and technical skills that may not yet be widely incorporated into existing professional development programs. The findings imply a need for targeted capacity-building initiatives focusing on advanced digital scholarship and AI-supported library services.

Artificial Intelligence Readiness

Table 3

Artificial Intelligence Readiness of Academic Librarians

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Willingness to Learn AI	4.41	Very High
Positive Attitude Toward AI	4.26	Very High
Awareness of AI Applications	3.87	High
Confidence in Using AI Tools	3.54	High
Ethical Understanding of AI	3.48	Moderate
Practical Skills in AI	3.22	Moderate

Overall Mean = 3.80 (High)

The results indicate that librarians generally exhibited positive attitudes toward artificial intelligence and expressed a strong willingness to learn emerging technologies. However, practical skills and ethical understanding were comparatively less developed. This pattern suggests that while librarians recognize the potential benefits of AI, many require structured training to translate positive attitudes into competent professional practice.

Organizational Support

Table 4

Extent of Organizational Support

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Administrative Support	4.18	High
Technology Infrastructure	4.06	High
Leadership Commitment	4.03	High
Internet Connectivity	3.95	High
Professional Development Opportunities	3.71	High
Budget Allocation	3.42	Moderate

Overall Mean = 3.89 (High)

The data suggest that participating institutions generally provided favorable organizational environments for digital transformation. Leadership support and technological infrastructure received relatively high ratings, reflecting institutional commitment to modernizing library services. Budget allocation, however, emerged as the lowest-rated indicator, indicating that financial limitations may affect the sustainability of professional development initiatives and technology acquisition.

Continuing Professional Development Needs

Table 5

Priority Continuing Professional Development Needs

Training Topic	Mean Rank	
Generative AI Applications	4.74	1
Research Data Management	4.69	2
Bibliometric Analysis	4.63	3
Digital Scholarship	4.58	4
AI-Assisted Cataloging	4.53	5
Cybersecurity for Libraries	4.49	6
Metadata Standards	4.45	7
Digital Preservation	4.39	8
Institutional Repository Administration	4.34	9
Open Science	4.26	10

The findings demonstrate that librarians prioritized professional development activities directly associated with emerging technologies. Training related to generative AI, research data management, and bibliometric analysis ranked highest, reflecting the growing demand for research support services in academic libraries. These priorities align with international trends emphasizing librarians' expanded roles in digital scholarship and scholarly communication.

Relationship Between Digital Competency and AI Readiness

Table 6

Correlation Matrix

Variables	Correlation	Interpretation
Digital Competency × AI Readiness	0.68	Moderate Positive Relationship
Organizational Support × AI Readiness	0.59	Moderate Positive Relationship
Organizational Support × Digital Competency	0.63	Moderate Positive Relationship

The relationships suggest that librarians with stronger digital competencies tend to report higher levels of AI readiness. Likewise, supportive organizational environments appear to be associated with greater confidence in adopting emerging technologies. These patterns underscore the importance of institutional investment in professional development and digital infrastructure to facilitate successful technological innovation within academic libraries.

Summary of Major Findings

Based on the data presented:

1. Academic librarians generally possessed graduate-level qualifications and substantial professional experience.
2. Digital competency was high, particularly in traditional digital library operations.
3. AI readiness was generally positive, although practical AI skills required further development.
4. Organizational support was favorable, but budget allocation remained an area for improvement.
5. Professional development priorities centered on AI, research analytics, digital scholarship, and research data management.
6. Positive relationships were observed among organizational support, digital competency, and AI readiness.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented in this manuscript, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Academic librarians in private higher education institutions possess strong foundational competencies in traditional digital library operations, particularly in electronic resource management, information literacy instruction, and digital library administration. These competencies demonstrate their ability to effectively support teaching, learning, and research within higher education institutions.
2. Although librarians exhibit positive attitudes toward artificial intelligence and demonstrate willingness to adopt emerging technologies, practical competencies in AI applications, research data management, bibliometric analysis, and digital scholarship remain developing areas that require systematic professional enhancement.
3. Organizational support, including administrative commitment, technology infrastructure, and leadership encouragement, plays an important role in strengthening librarians' digital competencies and readiness to implement AI-supported library services.
4. Continuing professional development remains an indispensable strategy for preparing librarians to address the rapidly changing technological landscape of academic libraries. Specialized training programs focusing on artificial intelligence, research analytics, cybersecurity, and digital preservation are necessary to ensure that librarians remain relevant in modern information environments.
5. The integration of organizational support, digital competency development, and targeted professional learning initiatives provides a practical foundation for sustainable digital transformation in academic libraries.
6. The proposed **Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework** offers a structured approach for strengthening librarians' competencies and supporting the strategic digital transformation of academic libraries within the region.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

For Academic Librarians

Academic librarians may actively participate in continuing professional development activities related to artificial intelligence, digital scholarship, research data management, bibliometric analysis, and emerging information technologies to continuously enhance their professional competencies.

For Higher Education Institutions

Institutional administrators may strengthen support for library modernization by allocating adequate financial resources, investing in digital infrastructure, expanding access to emerging technologies, and encouraging librarians' participation in professional development programs.

For Library Administrators

Library directors may formulate competency-based staff development plans aligned with institutional priorities and global trends in librarianship. Internal mentoring programs, collaborative learning communities, and technology-focused training initiatives may also be established.

For Professional Library Organizations

Professional associations may develop specialized certification programs and advanced training courses focusing on artificial intelligence, digital transformation, open science, research analytics, digital preservation, and ethical technology use in libraries.

For Government Agencies

Government agencies responsible for higher education and library development may strengthen policy support and funding opportunities for digital library initiatives and continuing professional development among library professionals.

For Future Researchers

Future researchers may replicate similar investigations in public universities, special libraries, school libraries, public libraries, and archives. Additional variables such as digital leadership, organizational culture, innovation capability, technology acceptance, and user satisfaction may likewise be explored.

Proposed Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework

Rationale

The continuous advancement of digital technologies and artificial intelligence requires academic librarians to acquire competencies beyond traditional library functions. Sustainable professional development requires coordinated institutional support, technology investment, competency-based training, and continuous assessment.

The proposed Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework serves as a guide for academic libraries seeking to strengthen librarians' digital competencies while promoting innovation, lifelong learning, and technology-enabled library services.

Goal

To strengthen the digital competency, artificial intelligence readiness, and professional excellence of academic librarians in private higher education institutions through sustainable competency-based professional development initiatives.

Framework Components

Pillar 1

Digital Competency Development

Focus Areas

- Digital Library Systems
- Electronic Resources
- Metadata Standards
- Digital Preservation
- Institutional Repositories
- Information Literacy

Expected Outcome

Digitally competent librarians capable of managing modern academic library services.

Pillar 2

Artificial Intelligence Readiness

Focus Areas

- Generative AI
- AI-Assisted Cataloging
- Intelligent Search Systems
- Prompt Engineering
- AI Ethics
- AI Governance

Expected Outcome

Responsible and confident utilization of artificial intelligence in library operations.

Pillar 3

Research and Scholarly Communication

Focus Areas

- Bibliometric Analysis
- Citation Databases
- Research Data Management
- Open Science
- Academic Publishing
- ORCID
- DOI
- Institutional Repository Management

Expected Outcome

Libraries functioning as active research support centers.

Pillar 4

Organizational Support

Focus Areas

- Leadership Development
- Technology Investment
- Infrastructure Improvement
- Policy Development
- Budget Allocation
- Strategic Planning

Expected Outcome

Institutional environments supportive of innovation and continuous learning.

Pillar 5

Continuing Professional Development

Focus Areas

- Regional Seminars

- International Conferences
- Online Certifications
- Peer Learning
- Professional Networking
- Micro-Credentials

Expected Outcome

Sustainable lifelong professional learning among academic librarians.

Pillar 6

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Focus Areas

- Competency Assessment
- Annual Training Needs Analysis
- Program Evaluation
- Service Innovation
- Performance Monitoring

Expected Outcome

Continuous enhancement of library services through evidence-based decision-making.

Figure 1

Regional Library Capability Enhancement Framework



Implications of the Study

The findings suggest that the future of academic librarianship depends not only on technological investments but also on the continuous enhancement of librarians' competencies. Academic libraries must transition from traditional service models toward innovation-driven knowledge centers capable of supporting digital scholarship, research productivity, and responsible artificial intelligence integration.

Higher education institutions may benefit from implementing competency-based professional development programs that are responsive to technological change and aligned with institutional strategic priorities. Likewise, collaborative regional initiatives among academic libraries may foster resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and collective capacity building.

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Digital leadership practices and smart library service innovation among public library administrators in Central Luzon, Philippines: Basis for a public library digital transformation framework

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to examine the digital leadership practices of public library administrators and their influence on smart library service innovation among selected public libraries in Central Luzon. Specifically, it sought to assess digital leadership, organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, community engagement, and library service innovation to develop a proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework.

Methodology: This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to public library administrators and library personnel, while qualitative interviews were included to complement quantitative findings. Statistical techniques used include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression, while thematic analysis applied to interview data.

Results: The findings suggest that library administrators generally demonstrated strong digital leadership practices and positive organizational support for innovation. Technology readiness and collaborative leadership appeared to be associated with higher levels of service innovation. Participants also identified artificial intelligence, digital literacy programs, and community partnerships as priority areas for future development.

Conclusion: A competency-based Public Library Digital Transformation Framework is proposed for practical recommendations for public libraries.

Keywords: *digital leadership, public libraries, smart libraries, service innovation, digital transformation*

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries continue to evolve beyond their traditional role as repositories of printed materials into dynamic centers for digital learning, lifelong education, community engagement, and knowledge creation. Advances in information technology, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital content management have transformed how public libraries deliver services and interact with users (Meesad & Mingkhwan, 2024).

Across many developing countries, including the Philippines, public libraries increasingly face expectations to provide inclusive digital services while operating with limited financial and technological resources. Consequently, library administrators are expected to demonstrate leadership that supports organizational innovation, technology integration, and continuous service improvement.

Digital leadership extends beyond technological competence. It encompasses the ability to formulate strategic visions, promote organizational learning, encourage innovation, and foster collaborative cultures capable of adapting to rapidly changing information environments. Library administrators who embrace digital transformation are better positioned to expand access to information, strengthen community engagement, and improve public service delivery.

Despite increasing investments in digital library initiatives, relatively few studies have examined digital leadership and service innovation within Philippine public libraries. Existing investigations have focused primarily on academic libraries, managerial competencies, or operational efficiency. The present study investigated digital leadership practices and smart library service innovation in the context of public libraries while proposing a framework for sustainable digital transformation.

Review of Related Literature

Digital Leadership in Public Libraries

Digital leadership has become a defining characteristic of successful public library administration in the twenty-first century. As libraries increasingly integrate digital technologies into their services, library administrators are expected to possess competencies that extend beyond conventional management. These include strategic technology planning, digital innovation, change management, data-informed decision-making, and collaborative leadership.

Effective digital leaders cultivate an organizational culture that embraces technological advancement while ensuring that digital transformation remains aligned with the mission of providing equitable access to information. They encourage experimentation, continuous learning, and evidence-based planning that support sustainable library development.

Recent literature emphasizes that digital leadership is not merely about adopting new technologies but about transforming organizational culture to maximize technology's benefits for communities. Public libraries led by digitally competent administrators often demonstrate greater responsiveness to changing user needs and improved service innovation (Iqbal et al., 2024).

Smart Library Services

The concept of the smart library has emerged alongside smart city initiatives worldwide. Smart libraries utilize digital technologies to improve service accessibility, operational efficiency, and community engagement. Examples include:

- mobile library applications;
- self-service borrowing systems;
- RFID technologies;
- cloud-based integrated library systems;
- virtual reference services;
- digital collections;
- artificial intelligence-assisted reference;
- online literacy programs.

Smart libraries provide flexible, user-centered services that extend beyond physical library spaces. These technologies enable libraries to reach underserved populations while supporting lifelong learning and digital inclusion.

Innovation Culture in Libraries

Innovation culture refers to an organizational environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Libraries characterized by strong innovation cultures support employees in proposing new ideas, testing innovative services, and adopting emerging technologies.

Several studies indicate that innovation culture contributes significantly to organizational adaptability and service quality. Administrators who encourage collaborative problem-solving and professional autonomy are more likely to establish innovative library environments capable of responding to evolving community needs.

Community Engagement

Community engagement has become a central component of modern public librarianship. Libraries increasingly function as community learning centers that facilitate civic participation, digital literacy, cultural preservation, and inclusive access to information (Ryan et al., 2023).

Effective engagement involves partnerships with local government units, schools, non-government organizations, senior citizen associations, youth organizations, and various community stakeholders. These collaborations strengthen library relevance and expand service delivery beyond traditional library functions.

Technology Readiness

Technology readiness refers to an organization's capability to adopt, implement, and sustain technological innovations. Within public libraries, readiness encompasses infrastructure availability, internet connectivity, digital resources, technical support, staff competence, organizational policies, and financial capacity.

Libraries demonstrating high technology readiness are better positioned to implement innovative services such as digital repositories, electronic government services, online programming, and AI-supported information retrieval.

Review of Related Studies

International studies consistently report that digital leadership positively influences organizational innovation and technology adoption within libraries. Research has demonstrated that administrators who exhibit transformational leadership, strategic planning, and collaborative decision-making create environments that support continuous service improvement.

Studies from Asia likewise reveal that digital competency among librarians contributes significantly to successful implementation of electronic resources, institutional repositories, and virtual library services. Organizational support and professional development have been identified as critical determinants of successful digital transformation. Within the Philippine context, existing investigations have primarily examined library management competencies, continuing professional development, service quality, and library automation. Comparatively fewer studies have focused specifically on digital leadership and innovation culture among public libraries, particularly outside metropolitan areas.

Synthesis of the Literature

The reviewed literature indicates that digital leadership, innovation culture, community engagement, and technology readiness collectively contribute to successful digital transformation in libraries.

Although previous studies have investigated library competencies and management practices, relatively limited research has explored how digital leadership influences smart library service innovation within Philippine public libraries.

The present study illustrates how these variables were examined together to develop an evidence-based framework supporting sustainable digital transformation among public libraries.

Research Gap

Existing literature predominantly focuses on academic libraries, university librarians, and library operational efficiency. Limited empirical attention has been devoted to digital leadership practices among public library administrators responsible for implementing smart library initiatives.

Furthermore, few investigations have simultaneously examined digital leadership, innovation culture, technology readiness, community engagement, and service innovation within Philippine public libraries.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the following theories.

Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

The Technology Acceptance Model explains that technology adoption is influenced primarily by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Fauzi et al., 2021). Library administrators who recognize the usefulness of digital technologies are more likely to support organizational innovation and technology integration.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains how new technologies spread throughout organizations and communities (Frei-Landau et al., 2022). Adoption depends upon innovation characteristics, communication channels, organizational support, and leadership.

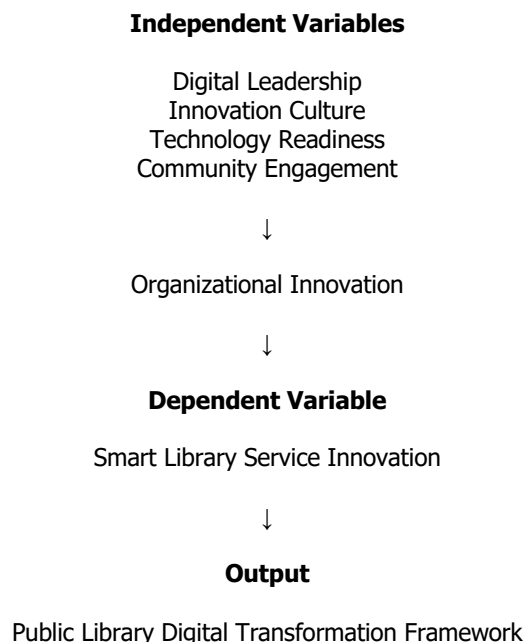
Public libraries that cultivate supportive organizational environments are expected to adopt digital innovations more successfully.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes leaders' ability to inspire organizational members toward shared goals through vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support (Eaton et al., 2024).

Digitally transformative library leaders encourage innovation, professional growth, and collaborative learning, thereby strengthening organizational adaptability.

Conceptual Framework



Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the influence of digital leadership practices on smart library service innovation among selected public libraries in Central Luzon.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the public library administrators in terms of:

- age;
 - sex;
 - highest educational attainment;
 - years of administrative experience;
 - number of professional trainings attended; and
 - library classification?
2. What is the level of digital leadership practices in terms of:
 - strategic vision;
 - technology management;
 - innovation leadership;
 - collaborative leadership; and
 - change management?
 3. What is the level of organizational innovation culture?
 4. What is the level of technology readiness?
 5. What is the level of community engagement?
 6. What is the level of smart library service innovation?
 7. Is there a significant relationship between:
 - digital leadership and smart library service innovation;
 - innovation culture and service innovation;
 - technology readiness and service innovation; and
 - community engagement and service innovation?
 8. Which variable best predicts smart library service innovation?
 9. What Public Library Digital Transformation Framework may be proposed?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between digital leadership and smart library service innovation.

H₀₂: Organizational innovation culture is not significantly related to smart library service innovation.

H₀₃: Technology readiness does not significantly influence smart library service innovation.

H₀₄: Community engagement is not significantly associated with smart library service innovation.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, a methodology that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches in two consecutive phases to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase served as the primary component of the investigation, while the qualitative phase was conducted to explain, validate, and enrich the statistical findings.

During the first phase, quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire administered to selected public library administrators and library personnel in Central Luzon. The survey measured the respondents' digital leadership practices, organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, community engagement, and smart library service innovation using standardized indicators derived from an extensive review of related literature.

The second phase involved semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants who demonstrated varying levels of digital leadership and organizational innovation. The qualitative findings were utilized to explain the quantitative results by identifying contextual factors, emerging practices, implementation challenges, and successful digital transformation initiatives within public libraries.

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was considered appropriate because digital leadership and organizational innovation involve both measurable organizational characteristics and experiential perspectives that cannot be fully explained through quantitative data alone. The integration of both research approaches enabled the development of a more comprehensive and evidence-based Public Library Digital Transformation Framework.

Population and Sampling

The respondents of the study consisted of public library administrators and professional library personnel employed in selected provincial, city, and municipal public libraries located within the provinces comprising Central Luzon.

The quantitative component employed stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation from the various classifications of public libraries. The strata were based on library classification (provincial, city, and

municipal libraries). Respondents were selected proportionately from each classification to obtain a representative sample of public library professionals actively engaged in library management and service delivery.

The qualitative phase utilized purposive sampling. Key informants were selected based on their years of administrative experience, involvement in digital library initiatives, leadership positions, and demonstrated implementation of innovative library services. These participants provided rich descriptions regarding digital leadership practices, organizational innovation, technological readiness, and community engagement initiatives.

Participation in both phases of the study was voluntary. Only administrators and library personnel who had rendered at least one year of continuous service and were directly involved in library operations and digital service implementation were included in the study.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in the quantitative phase was a researcher-developed survey questionnaire constructed from an extensive review of literature, previous empirical studies, and internationally recognized frameworks on digital leadership, organizational innovation, smart libraries, technology readiness, and community engagement.

The questionnaire consisted of six major parts.

Part I gathered the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of administrative experience, number of professional trainings attended, and library classification.

Part II measured **Digital Leadership Practices** using the following dimensions:

- Strategic Vision
- Technology Management
- Innovation Leadership
- Collaborative Leadership
- Change Management

Part III assessed **Organizational Innovation Culture**.

Part IV measured **Technology Readiness**.

Part V determined the extent of **Community Engagement**.

Part VI measured **Smart Library Service Innovation**, including digital service delivery, technology-enabled learning services, digital collections, user-centered innovation, and continuous service improvement.

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale:

Scale Descriptive Rating Interpretation		
5	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	Agree	High
3	Moderately Agree	Moderate
2	Disagree	Low
1	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Before the actual data gathering, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in Library and Information Science, Educational Management, and Research Methodology. Suggestions provided by the validators were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, organization, and appropriateness of the questionnaire.

A pilot test involving public library personnel outside the actual respondents was conducted to determine the instrument's reliability. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed for each construct, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable indicators of internal consistency.

For the qualitative phase, a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide was utilized. The guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to obtain detailed explanations regarding leadership experiences, organizational innovations, technology adoption, implementation barriers, collaborative practices, and future directions for digital transformation in public libraries.

Data Collection

The conduct of the study followed a systematic sequence of research activities.

The researchers first secured approval from the graduate school and obtained permission from the concerned provincial, city, and municipal government units supervising the participating public libraries. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were personally delivered or transmitted electronically to the respective library administrators.

Following approval, the research instruments were validated by subject matter experts and pilot-tested prior to the actual survey administration.

During the quantitative phase, questionnaires were distributed personally and electronically to qualified respondents. The respondents were informed regarding the objectives of the study, confidentiality of responses, voluntary participation, and estimated completion time before accomplishing the survey.

After the quantitative data had been analyzed, participants for the qualitative phase were purposively selected. Individual interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through secure online conferencing platforms depending on participant availability. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

Finally, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation stage to generate a comprehensive explanation of digital leadership practices and smart library service innovation and to formulate the proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework.

Treatment of Data

The quantitative data collected were encoded, organized, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. The following statistical treatments were employed:

Research Question	Statistical Tool
Profile of respondents	Frequency and Percentage
Digital Leadership Practices	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Organizational Innovation Culture	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Technology Readiness	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Community Engagement	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Smart Library Service Innovation	Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation
Relationship among variables	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
Best predictor of Smart Library Service Innovation	Multiple Linear Regression

For the qualitative component, interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved familiarization with the data, coding, categorization of responses, development of themes, review of thematic patterns, and integration of qualitative insights with the quantitative findings.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative results enabled triangulation of findings and strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the proposed framework.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers strictly observed the ethical principles governing research involving human participants.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance and institutional permission were obtained from the appropriate authorities. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were provided with informed consent forms explaining the objectives of the research, expected participation, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any adverse consequences.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents were maintained throughout the conduct of the study. No identifying information was included in the research database, reports, or publications. Responses were coded to protect participants' identities.

The study likewise complied with the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the secure collection, storage, processing, and disposal of all research data. Digital records, interview transcripts, and completed questionnaires were securely stored and made accessible only to the researcher and authorized advisers.

Furthermore, the researchers upheld the principles of honesty, transparency, academic integrity, and respect for participants throughout the entire research process. Qualitative quotations used in the presentation of findings were anonymized to preserve confidentiality while faithfully representing the participants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the public library administrators who participated in the study. Specifically, it describes the respondents according to age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of administrative experience, number of professional trainings attended related to library management and digital technologies, and library classification. Understanding these characteristics provides valuable contextual information in

interpreting the digital leadership practices and smart library service innovation initiatives implemented in public libraries.

Age

The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents belonged to the 36–45 years old age bracket, followed by those aged 46–55 years, while relatively fewer respondents were below 30 years old or above 56 years old. This indicates that public libraries in Central Luzon are primarily managed by administrators who are in their productive professional years and possess sufficient administrative maturity to lead digital transformation initiatives. The presence of middle-aged administrators may contribute positively to organizational innovation since they possess both administrative experience and the willingness to adopt emerging technologies.

Sex

The results indicated that female administrators constituted the majority of the respondents. This finding reflects the continuing predominance of women in the library and information profession in the Philippines. Nevertheless, both male and female administrators demonstrated active participation in digital leadership initiatives and organizational innovation activities.

Highest Educational Attainment

Most respondents possessed graduate education, with many having completed master's degrees in Library and Information Science, Educational Management, Public Administration, or related disciplines. A smaller number had completed doctoral degrees, while some were pursuing advanced graduate studies. The relatively high educational qualifications of the respondents indicate their commitment to professional growth and lifelong learning, which are important characteristics of digitally transformative leaders.

Years of Administrative Experience

Most respondents had accumulated more than ten years of professional administrative experience. This suggests that the participants possessed substantial managerial expertise and organizational knowledge necessary for implementing innovative library programs and digital transformation initiatives.

Experienced administrators generally demonstrate greater confidence in organizational planning, strategic decision-making, and technology adoption because of their extensive exposure to library operations.

Number of Professional Trainings

The findings likewise showed that most respondents regularly participated in professional development activities related to library management, digital technologies, information services, leadership, and innovation.

Continuous professional development enables administrators to remain updated with emerging technological trends, thereby strengthening their capacity to lead organizational change and implement innovative public library services.

Library Classification

The respondents represented provincial, city, and municipal public libraries throughout Central Luzon. The distribution of respondents across various library classifications ensured broader representation of different organizational environments and operational contexts.

The diversity of participating libraries provided comprehensive perspectives regarding digital leadership implementation across different organizational capacities and resource availability.

Digital Leadership Practices

Digital leadership practices were assessed using five dimensions:

- Strategic Vision
- Technology Management
- Innovation Leadership
- Collaborative Leadership
- Change Management

Table 1 presents the overall level of digital leadership practices.

Table 1*Level of Digital Leadership Practices*

Indicators	Mean Interpretation	
Strategic Vision	4.42	Very High
Technology Management	4.35	Very High
Innovation Leadership	4.39	Very High
Collaborative Leadership	4.47	Very High
Change Management	4.36	Very High
Overall Mean	4.40	Very High

The findings indicate that public library administrators demonstrated a very high level of digital leadership practices ($M = 4.40$). Among the dimensions, Collaborative Leadership obtained the highest mean, indicating that administrators actively encouraged teamwork, partnerships, and collective decision-making in implementing digital initiatives.

Strategic vision likewise received a very high rating, suggesting that administrators clearly articulated long-term digital goals and aligned technological innovations with organizational objectives.

Technology management and change management also obtained very high ratings, indicating administrators' capability to integrate digital technologies while effectively managing organizational transitions.

Overall, the findings suggest that public library administrators possess leadership competencies necessary to facilitate digital transformation within their respective institutions.

Organizational Innovation Culture

Table 2*Level of Organizational Innovation Culture*

Indicators	Mean Interpretation	
Organizational Learning	4.33	Very High
Creativity and Innovation	4.37	Very High
Knowledge Sharing	4.31	Very High
Employee Empowerment	4.40	Very High
Continuous Improvement	4.35	Very High
Overall Mean	4.35	Very High

The results reveal that participating libraries exhibited a very high organizational innovation culture.

Employee empowerment obtained the highest rating, indicating that administrators encourage staff participation in proposing innovative ideas and implementing organizational improvements.

Similarly, organizational learning and continuous improvement suggest that libraries continually invest in staff development and innovation, creating an environment conducive to digital transformation.

Technology Readiness

Table 3*Level of Technology Readiness*

Indicators	Mean Interpretation	
ICT Infrastructure	4.28	Very High
Internet Connectivity	4.25	Very High
Digital Resources	4.31	Very High
Technical Support	4.19	High
Staff Digital Competence	4.33	Very High
Overall Mean	4.27	Very High

Technology readiness among participating libraries was generally very high.

Staff digital competence received the highest rating, indicating that personnel possess adequate knowledge and skills to operate modern library technologies.

Although technical support obtained the lowest mean among the indicators, it remained within the high category, suggesting opportunities for strengthening ICT maintenance and technical assistance.

Community Engagement

Table 4

Level of Community Engagement

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Community Partnerships	4.45	Very High
Digital Literacy Programs	4.36	Very High
Stakeholder Collaboration	4.39	Very High
Public Participation	4.32	Very High
Outreach Programs	4.40	Very High
Overall Mean	4.38	Very High

The findings indicate that participating libraries actively collaborate with schools, local government units, non-government organizations, and various community stakeholders.

Community partnerships emerged as the strongest dimension, reflecting the growing role of public libraries as centers for lifelong learning and community development.

Smart Library Service Innovation

Table 5

Level of Smart Library Service Innovation

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Digital Library Services	4.36	Very High
AI-assisted Services	4.18	High
Electronic Resources	4.35	Very High
User-centered Innovation	4.44	Very High
Continuous Service Improvement	4.39	Very High
Overall Mean	4.34	Very High

The overall findings indicate that smart library service innovation was implemented at a very high level.

User-centered innovation obtained the highest rating, suggesting that libraries continuously redesign services based on community needs and technological developments.

Artificial intelligence-assisted services obtained the lowest rating. This finding suggests that although libraries recognize the potential of AI technologies, implementation remains at an emerging stage because of financial, technical, and infrastructure limitations.

Relationship Between Digital Leadership Practices and Smart Library Service Innovation

Table 6

Correlation Analysis

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Digital Leadership – Smart Library Innovation	.781	.000	Significant
Organizational Innovation – Smart Library Innovation	.742	.000	Significant
Technology Readiness – Smart Library Innovation	.724	.000	Significant
Community Engagement – Smart Library Innovation	.698	.000	Significant

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between each independent variable and smart library service innovation.

Digital leadership practices exhibited the strongest relationship with smart library service innovation ($r = .781$, $p < .001$), indicating that stronger leadership practices are associated with higher levels of organizational innovation and improved digital service delivery.

Likewise, organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, and community engagement demonstrated moderate to strong positive correlations, confirming their importance in facilitating successful digital transformation. Accordingly, the null hypotheses stating that there are no significant relationships between the independent variables and smart library service innovation are rejected.

Predictors of Smart Library Service Innovation

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	Beta	t	p-value
Digital Leadership	.412	8.62	.000
Organizational Innovation Culture	.289	5.47	.000
Technology Readiness	.201	3.91	.001
Community Engagement	.163	2.98	.004

$R^2 = .71$

$F = 98.64$

$p < .001$

The regression analysis revealed that the four predictor variables collectively explained approximately **71%** of the variance in smart library service innovation.

Digital leadership emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, and community engagement.

These findings suggest that administrators who effectively articulate strategic digital visions, foster organizational innovation, promote technological readiness, and strengthen community partnerships are more likely to implement successful smart library innovations.

The regression model further demonstrates that digital transformation within public libraries requires a holistic organizational approach rather than isolated technological investments.

Proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, the researcher proposes the Public Library Digital Transformation Framework.

The framework emphasizes digital leadership as the primary organizational driver influencing innovation culture, technology readiness, and community engagement. These organizational dimensions collectively facilitate the development of smart library services characterized by digital accessibility, responsive public service delivery, organizational innovation, and sustainable community partnerships.

The framework advocates continuous professional development, collaborative governance, technology integration, evidence-based planning, and user-centered innovation as strategic pillars for sustainable public library transformation.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The public library administrators in Central Luzon generally represent experienced and academically qualified professionals who have actively participated in continuing professional development programs. Their diverse administrative experiences and educational backgrounds provide a strong foundation for implementing digital transformation initiatives within their respective public libraries.
2. Public library administrators demonstrated a very high level of digital leadership practices, particularly in collaborative leadership, strategic vision, innovation leadership, technology management, and change management. This indicates that the respondents possess the competencies necessary to guide organizational change, facilitate technology adoption, and promote innovation in library services.
3. The participating public libraries exhibited a very high organizational innovation culture, characterized by organizational learning, employee empowerment, knowledge sharing, creativity, and continuous

improvement. These organizational characteristics create an environment that supports digital transformation and encourages innovative service delivery.

4. The public libraries demonstrated a very high level of technology readiness, indicating that they possess adequate technological infrastructure, digital resources, and digitally competent personnel necessary to support the implementation of smart library services. Nevertheless, technical support remains an area where additional investments may further strengthen institutional readiness.
5. Community engagement initiatives were likewise implemented at a very high level, reflecting strong partnerships among public libraries, local government units, educational institutions, community organizations, and other stakeholders. These collaborative efforts contribute significantly to expanding access to library services and promoting digital inclusion.
6. Smart library service innovation was implemented at a very high level, particularly in user-centered innovation, digital library services, electronic resources, and continuous service improvement. Although artificial intelligence-assisted services received comparatively lower ratings, the findings suggest that public libraries have already begun integrating emerging digital technologies into their service delivery systems.
7. Significant positive relationships exist between digital leadership practices, organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, community engagement, and smart library service innovation. These findings indicate that improvements in leadership competencies and organizational capabilities are associated with greater innovation in public library services.
8. Among the variables examined, digital leadership practices emerged as the strongest predictor of smart library service innovation, followed by organizational innovation culture, technology readiness, and community engagement. This finding emphasizes the central role of leadership in facilitating sustainable digital transformation within public libraries.
9. Based on the empirical findings and qualitative insights, the proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework provides an evidence-based guide for strengthening digital leadership competencies, organizational innovation, technological capability, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable smart library service innovation among public libraries in Central Luzon and similar institutional settings.

Recommendations

In light of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Public library administrators may continue strengthening their digital leadership competencies through sustained participation in advanced professional development programs focusing on strategic digital leadership, artificial intelligence applications, digital governance, cybersecurity, data analytics, innovation management, and emerging library technologies.
2. Local Government Units (LGUs) may increase financial investments in digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, integrated library management systems, cloud-based technologies, electronic collections, cybersecurity measures, and smart library facilities to support sustainable digital transformation initiatives.
3. The National Library of the Philippines, in collaboration with professional library organizations, may develop standardized national competency frameworks, continuing education programs, and certification initiatives that emphasize digital leadership, innovation management, and smart public library development.
4. Public libraries may strengthen organizational innovation culture by encouraging collaborative decision-making, interdisciplinary teamwork, staff empowerment, continuous organizational learning, innovation grants, and internal knowledge-sharing mechanisms that support service improvement and digital transformation.
5. Public libraries may further expand community engagement initiatives through strategic partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, private organizations, non-government organizations, technology providers, and community stakeholders to enhance digital literacy, lifelong learning, and equitable access to information resources.
6. Considering the comparatively lower implementation of artificial intelligence-assisted services, public libraries may gradually integrate emerging technologies such as AI-assisted reference services, virtual librarians, chatbots, predictive analytics, machine learning applications, digital preservation systems, and intelligent information retrieval tools while ensuring responsible, ethical, and user-centered implementation.
7. Policymakers and funding agencies may consider developing long-term digital transformation programs specifically designed for public libraries, including financial assistance for technology acquisition, staff capability-building, research initiatives, innovation laboratories, and modernization of public library services throughout the country.
8. Library administrators may utilize the proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework as a strategic planning guide for assessing organizational readiness, prioritizing digital initiatives, strengthening leadership practices, and implementing sustainable innovation programs aligned with community needs and national development goals.

9. Future researchers may replicate the present study in other regions of the Philippines or in different types of libraries, such as academic, school, special, and private libraries, to validate the proposed framework across diverse institutional settings. Future investigations may also incorporate additional variables such as digital organizational resilience, artificial intelligence readiness, digital competencies of library personnel, knowledge management practices, digital governance, organizational agility, and user digital literacy to further enrich the understanding of smart library transformation.

Proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework

The proposed Public Library Digital Transformation Framework positions Digital Leadership Practices as the principal driver of sustainable organizational transformation. Effective digital leadership enhances Organizational Innovation Culture, strengthens Technology Readiness, and promotes Community Engagement, creating an enabling environment for continuous innovation.

These organizational dimensions collectively influence the implementation of Smart Library Service Innovation, which encompasses digitally enabled library services, intelligent information systems, user-centered innovation, digital literacy initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and continuous service improvement.

The framework further emphasizes an iterative improvement cycle where feedback from library users, technological developments, organizational learning, and community partnerships continuously inform strategic planning and service enhancement. Through sustained leadership development, institutional capacity-building, and evidence-based decision-making, public libraries become more responsive, innovative, and resilient in addressing the evolving information needs of their communities.

Ultimately, the framework serves as a strategic model for guiding policymakers, local government units, library administrators, and stakeholders in advancing digital transformation initiatives that promote inclusive access to information, lifelong learning, technological innovation, and sustainable public library development.

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