

(Research/Review) Article

Analysis of The Availability of Braille Collections at The Public Library of Deli Serdang Regency Based on The Needs of The Visually Impaired

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Abstract: Libraries have an important role in finding information for all groups without exception, including the visually impaired. The availability and utilization of braille collections in public libraries still faces various challenges due to the lack of braille collections and lack of facilities for the visually impaired. The availability of braille collections in public libraries in Deli Serdang Regency is not professional with the number and needs of the visually impaired community. This condition causes the phenomenon of unequal access to information for the visually impaired. This study aims to analyze the availability of braille collections at the Deli Serdang Public Library and their relevance to the needs of visually impaired users. Library and their relevance to the needs of visually impaired users. A descriptive qualitative method was used through interviews, observations, and literature review. The results show that only 76 braille items are available, with limited variety to meet users' interests. There is no specific acquisition policy, and librarians lack inclusive service training. However, librarians play an active role in assisting and identifying user needs through a personal approach.

Keywords: Braille Collection, Visually Impaired, Inclusive Library, Librarian

1. Introduction

Libraries have an important role in finding information for all groups without exception, including the visually impaired. According to Law Number 43 of 2007 concerning libraries, every citizen has the same right in meeting information needs, including the visually impaired. Similarly, Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning persons with disabilities emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities, including access to information and literacy. However, in reality, the availability and utilization of braille collections in public libraries still faces various challenges due to the lack of braille collection and lack of facilities for the visually impaired. However, its use is still minimally used by the visually impaired due to the lack of information about the service and limitations in the promotion of services to the visually impaired community (Wahyuni 2021).

The availability of braille collections in public libraries in Deli Serdang Regency is a concrete form of realizing inclusive information services. The results of an interview with the general librarian of Deli Serdang Regency which became the object of discussion were that the library has 76 braille collections provided specifically for visually impaired users, which consist of several collections, namely, textbooks, magazines and children's stories. This collection reflects the library's awareness of the importance of providing reading materials that can be accessed by all people, including the visually impaired.

The public library of Deli Serdang Regency as a research location because the phenomenon of inclusivity of library services in this area still shows that there is a gap between the availability of collections for the visually impaired and their actual needs. Deli Serdang Regency has diverse social characteristics and a fairly large number of people including visually impaired people, according to BPS that the population of Deli Serdang Regency is around 2 million people, and the number of visually impaired people in Deli

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Serdang Regency is around 0.3% or 6,000 people. The availability of braille collections in public libraries in Deli Serdang Regency is not professional with the number and needs of the existing blind community. This condition gives rise to a phenomenon of unequal access to information for the visually impaired.

Various studies have shown the weak provision of Braille collections in public libraries. Septiani (2018), in his research at the Regional Library of West Java Province, revealed that the available Braille collection is not in accordance with the actual needs of blind users, because there is no involvement of the blind community in the procurement of collections. A similar thing was also found by Widodo (2020) at the Yogyakarta City Library, who stated that the library does not have a regular Braille collection update program, as well as a lack of training for librarians to serve groups with disabilities. Putri and Haris (2019) in Palembang show that Braille collections only cover 0.5% of the total library collections, and libraries have not established active cooperation with the visually impaired community. Rizky (2021), in a study on the perception of visually impaired users in Medan, stated that most visually impaired people feel unserved because libraries do not provide collections, assistive technology, and librarians who understand their needs.

Previous research has not specifically analyzed the usefulness of collections with real needs for the visually impaired. In addition, most of the previous research was conducted in an extraordinary school environment, a social rehabilitation home, not in the public library of Deli Serdang Regency. Therefore, this study presents a new perspective by looking at how the public library of Deli Serdang Regency responds to the literacy needs of the blind and how the available braille collection can support information inclusion for the visually impaired.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the availability of Braille collections at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library, as well as to identify the extent to which the collection is in accordance with the information needs of blind users. This research is expected to provide a real picture of the condition of inclusive services at the regional level and become a basis for consideration in the development of disability-friendly library collections and services.

This research is important because the availability of Braille collections is the main indicator in realizing an inclusive and disability-friendly library. In the midst of the push for equal access to information, blind groups still experience obstacles in accessing reading materials that suit their needs. Libraries, as public institutions, have a responsibility to ensure that all groups of society, including the visually impaired, have equal rights in literacy and education. Therefore, this research plays an important role in revealing the actual conditions in the field, especially in the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library, as well as providing a data base for service and policy improvement.

The benefit of this research is to provide a clear picture to the library and the actual condition of the availability of braille collections, so that it can be the basis for the development of more disability-friendly collections and services. In addition, the results of this study are also useful for academics as a reference in the study of inclusive literacy, as well as for the visually impaired community to voice their needs in a more structured and data-based manner. That way, libraries can realize their role as a means of social inclusion that upholds the principle of equal access to information for all groups.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method according to Moleong (2017), with the aim of explaining in detail the existence of the Braille collection at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library and how the collection meets the information needs of the visually impaired. The place to carry out this research is at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library, which will be held from April to May 2025.

The research subjects consist of librarians who are responsible for the management of Braille collections, while the object studied is the Braille collection itself, covering various aspects such as type, number, ease of access, and relevance for blind users.

Data is obtained through three main methods:

1. Semi-structured interviews to dig deeper into information from librarians.
2. Direct observation of the physical condition of the collection and supporting facilities.
3. Collection of documentation such as collection lists and procurement reports.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The validity of the data is tested through triangulation of techniques and sources, as well as validity checks to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the interview results.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the author needs to explain the hardware and software used, dataset sources, initial data analysis, results, and results analysis/discussion. Presenting the results with pictures, graphs and tables is highly recommended. Formulas or evaluation measuring tools also need to be included here. There must be discussion/analysis, and you can't just rewrite the results in sentence form, but you need to provide an explanation of their relationship to the initial hypothesis. In addition, this section needs to discuss and elaborate on important findings.

3.1. Availability of braille collections at the Deli Serdang district public library

Based on the results of interviews with the librarian in charge of braille collection services, it is known that the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library currently has 76 braille collections. The 76 collections when compared to the estimated number of visually impaired people in Deli Serdang Regency which reaches around 6,000 people (0.3% of the total 2 million people), are certainly not ideal. This ratio shows that there is still limited access to braille reading materials in the area. This is in line with the findings of Dzunurain & Wasisto (2022), who stated that many public libraries have not optimally provided braille collections according to the actual needs of blind users.

Possible Collection Additions in the future, librarians state that the addition of braille collections depends heavily on two main factors, namely:

1. The availability of the library's annual budget, which determines the ability to procure new collections.
2. Requests from users, especially the visually impaired community who express a need for certain types of reading materials.

The flexibility of this on-demand collection development is relevant to the theory of information needs analysis put forward by Wilson (1981), where information needs are strongly influenced by the user's context and socio-environmental conditions. However, the absence of certainty or a specific annual procurement program for braille collections suggests that the development of these collections has not yet become a fixed priority in library policy. This was also found in a study by Widodo (2020), which showed that the braille collection at the Yogyakarta City Library is not updated regularly due to the absence of a clear planning scheme.

According to the theory of information accessibility by Burgstahler (2002), the availability of braille collections alone is not enough. It is necessary to ensure that the material is easily accessible physically and that the content of the reading is in accordance with the real needs of the user. In this context, the braille collection at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library is available, but the number is limited, and it has not been based on a systematic study of user information needs.

As shown by Bela (2024) research, many libraries in Indonesia do not yet have a consultative mechanism with the visually impaired in the collection procurement process, so the potential mismatch (mismatch) between collections and user needs is very high, the principle of inclusive libraries affirmed by IFLA (2005) not only emphasizes the provision of disability-friendly collections, but also the need for user involvement in the service development process. In this case, the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library has the opportunity to strengthen the inclusion program by:

Conducting surveys or discussions with the visually impaired community on a regular basis, namely:

1. Develop a strategic plan for the development of the braille collection
2. Establish cooperation with exceptional schools, social foundations, and national braille publishers.

Comparison with Previous Study Findings This finding strengthens Rizky (2021), who shows that the visually impaired in Medan feel that they have not been optimally served due

to the lack of appropriate reading materials and librarians who understand their needs. In addition, Adiba (2020) study suggests that libraries conduct training for librarians on disabilities and access to information in order to support more adaptive services.

Public libraries as public institutions have the responsibility to provide equal literacy for all levels of society. The limited number of braille collections at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library currently indicates that access to information for the visually impaired still needs to be improved, both in terms of quantity, variety, and sustainability of procurement.

By drawing on internationally echoed principles of inclusivity, such as in the UNESCO (1994) and IFLA (2005) documents, as well as taking into account the local context and the specific needs of the blind community, local libraries need to begin to develop long-term policies for the development of disability-based collections and services. This is very important so that libraries are truly a means of social inclusion and not just a symbol of accessibility.

3.2. Collection availability with the needs of blind users

The actual needs of visually impaired users, the number and variety of the collection are still very limited. Librarians openly admit that the available collections cannot yet cover the full spectrum of users' reading needs. For example, motivational books, teen novels, skills, religious, self-development, or introductory audiobooks of the profession are not yet available in braille.

This limitation is also reflected in user statements in field observations, where it was found that some blind people have an interest in more diverse reading, not just limited to teaching materials or children's stories. This indicates that the information needs of the visually impaired are heterogeneous, depending on age, education level, personal interests, and the purpose of using the information, as explained by Wilson (1981), that information needs are highly subjective and are influenced by the social and personal context of the user.

The limitations in the number and type of braille collection also have an impact on the psychosocial aspects of blind users. Monotonous collections that do not reflect the diversity of reading interests can create a sense of marginalization and reinforce the assumption that the information needs of people with disabilities are not considered important. As explained by Ahmad et al. (2021), inclusive literacy is not only about providing accessible reading materials, but also about empowering users to feel recognized as part of the literacy community.

Research by Pratiwi and Rofiah (2022) shows that when library collections are tailored to the special interests and needs of users with disabilities, the rate of visits and user satisfaction increases significantly. This proves that the role of diverse braille collections is not only important from the technical side of the service, but also as a means of social empowerment.

To strengthen the analysis, it is important to compare with good practices from other libraries, both in Indonesia and internationally. For example, the Yogyakarta Regional Library in 2023 has developed inclusive services through collaboration with the Braille Publishing Center and the local blind community. They provide more than 300 braille collections in diverse categories, including novels, motivational books, and entrepreneurial skills (Puspita & Nugroho, 2023). Meanwhile, the British Library for the Blind (UK) regularly updates their braille and audio collections through user needs surveys, and provides online access through a digital lending system (Sharma 2021). These two examples show that collaboration, needs mapping, and technology adaptation are key to the success of inclusive services.

In the digital era, libraries have the opportunity to combine physical braille collections with technology-based digital access. For example, screen reader apps such as JAWS or NVDA allow blind users to access e-books available in open digital formats (PDF/A, EPUB, or DAISY). A study by Tang & Zhang (2020) emphasizes the importance of integrating digital collections in library services so that visually impaired users can obtain information faster and more flexibly, especially if physical collections are limited.

However, until now, the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library has not provided special digital access for visually impaired users. This is a strategic development space in the future, as hybrid models (braille + digital) have proven to be able to reach more users and reduce geographical barriers (Nasution & Manurung, 2024).

From the results of observations and interviews, there has not been a special policy that sets targets for the development of services for people with disabilities. In fact, according to Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, libraries are obliged to guarantee equal access for all groups of users. The implementation of this policy should not only be an administrative obligation, but also part of a human rights-based inclusive literacy strategy. Research by Lestari and Saputra (2020) shows that the preparation of Strategic Plans for Inclusive Services in regional libraries is very helpful in program formulation, budgeting, and evaluation based on disability service indicators. Therefore, it is important for the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library to develop specific policies and roadmaps that are directed in order to support visually impaired users in a sustainable manner.

3.3. The Role of Librarians in Meeting the Needs of Blind Reading

In the context of inclusive library services, librarians have a central role in bridging access to information for users with disabilities, including the visually impaired. The results of interviews with librarians at the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library show that librarians actively assist visually impaired users in the process of searching for information and reading materials. The assistance is carried out in various ways, such as reading the book synopsis, explaining the contents of the book orally, and directing users to the available braille collection.

These findings are in line with the theory of social inclusion in libraries (Bualat, 2020; Harding et al., 2021), who emphasized that the role of librarians is not only limited to collection management, but also as a facilitator of social inclusion through a humanist and empathetic approach. In the inclusive service paradigm, librarians serve as a bridge between collections and users' specific needs (IFLA, 2022; Patra & Mohanty, 2023).

The role of librarians is also reflected in their ability to adapt services to the individual needs of the visually impaired, including helping to read label information on braille books that are not always complete or facilitating the use of assistive technology, such as screen readers. This confirms that the role of librarians has now shifted from information managers to inclusive literacy companions (Widodo, 2021; Nugroho, 2022).

On the other hand, librarians also carry out educational functions, namely helping users understand reading material with a narrative and verbal approach, especially if users have limitations in understanding the content of braille books independently (Fatmawati, 2021). This mentoring process is very important, considering that not all blind users are used to reading in braille (Nasution & Wibowo, 2023).

In terms of identifying needs, librarians take a direct approach that is informal and personal. As revealed in the interviews, librarians often have casual conversations with visually impaired users to explore their reading interests. This strategy is known in user-centered service theory (Khoir & Du, 2022), where librarians seek to understand user needs contextually through interpersonal communication, rather than just through statistical data or written requests.

This informal method has proven to be effective in the context of a community of users with special needs, as a personal approach can create a sense of comfort and trust (Susanto, 2023; Rahayu, 2024). Librarians also receive input and suggestions from users directly during regular visits, which is an important source of information in the development of collections and services (Jalaluddin & Ningsih, 2021).

This is in line with the principles in the participatory library services model (Smith & Cambron, 2021), which emphasizes the active participation of users in the planning and evaluation of services. In the context of public libraries, this participation creates an opportunity to present collections that are truly relevant to the needs of local communities, including the visually impaired.

In addition, this approach is also supported by Nicholas Belkin's Information Need theory which states that information need is a cognitive condition that arises from ignorance or the desire to know something, and the role of librarians is to help users recognize and fulfill these conditions (Belkin, 1980, quoted in Wulandari et al., 2021).

The findings of this study indicate that librarians are not only responsible for the technical aspects of services, but also become the main catalyst in the fulfillment of the literacy rights of the visually impaired. However, the limited number of braille collections in the Deli

Serdang Regency Public Library (76 items) shows that the role of librarians has not been fully supported by the availability of adequate information resources.

With limited collections, librarians are required to be more creative and responsive in providing alternative services, such as reading the contents of books directly, or suggesting accessible digital reading resources. This reflects the importance of librarian training in the field of inclusive services and assistive technologies (Yusuf & Pratama, 2022; Lee & Rawson, 2020).

The role of librarians also needs to be supported by library policies that are responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, as affirmed in the Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs No. 21 of 2017 and Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. In international practice, libraries such as the Toronto Public Library and the National Library Service for the Blind (USA) have developed disability-service-specific librarian training modules (Library of Congress, 2023; Carnegie UK Trust, 2020).

4. Conclusions

The results of the study show that the braille collection in the Deli Serdang Regency Public Library has 76 collections. This number is not comparable to the population of the visually impaired in the area which is estimated to be around 6. 000 people. In addition to the minimal quantity, the existing braille collection also does not reflect the diverse information needs of users, such as motivational books, novels for teenagers, skills materials, or religious readings. This identifies that the procurement of collections is not based on a planned and systematic analysis of needs. However, librarians have an important role in supporting visually impaired users through a personalized approach, such as reading the contents of books and assisting users in understanding the material orally. This strategy reflects the role of librarians as facilitators for social inclusion, but their efforts still lack the support of adequate policies, training, and resources. These findings emphasize the importance of strategic planning and innovation in services that put people with disabilities first, including the use of digital technology and collaboration with various parties.

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