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# The Role of Librarian Interpersonal Communication in Supporting Library Users' Information Literacy: A Systematic Literature Study

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## ABSTRACT

*Information literacy is a crucial key competency for library users in this era of abundant information, and its success is greatly influenced by the role of librarian communication. This study aims to analyze the transformative role of librarians' interpersonal communication in supporting users' information literacy thru a systematic literature review approach of ten articles published between 2015 and 2025. The research findings indicate that interpersonal communication plays a central role, reflected thru direct verbal interaction, nonverbal communication, digital media, an empathetic approach, and educational communication. Effective communication encourages users to access, evaluate, and utilize information independently and ethically. The effectiveness of this communication is supported by positive attitudes, empathy, the librarian's relational skills, as well as the use of technology and professional training. On the other hand, the challenges faced include limitations in basic skills, limitations in facilities such as cramped spaces and slow internet connections, and a lack of understanding of users' information needs. In conclusion, strengthening librarians' relational skills needs to be a priority for libraries to function optimally as information empowerment-oriented learning spaces.*

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal Communication; Librarians; Information Literacy; Systematic Literature Review; Library.*



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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has affected the way individual access, evaluate and use information in various aspects of life. In this era of information flooding, the ability to sort out relevant, valid and reliable information is becoming increasingly crucial. This places information literacy as a key competency that must be possessed by every individual, especially library user in the library environment. The American Library Association (American Library Association, 2000), defines information literacy as the ability to recognize information needs and the skills to find, evaluate and use information effectively and ethically. Users who have good information literacy will be able to participate actively in academic activities, decision making, and daily problem solving. Research (Suharto, 2014) shows that the library users have a fairly good level of information literacy in several aspects, but there are still gaps in the ability to evaluate the reliability of sources and the correct use of information.

The successful development of information literacy in libraries depends not only on the availability of information resources, but also on how librarians communicate and help users find and use information. While information literacy is fundamentally a set of skills that a user must possess, the librarian's role is to facilitate the acquisition of these skills (Inawati dkk., 2023). They serve as a critical bridge, transforming a mere collection of resources into a supportive learning environment. Good communication skills help librarians' tasks and increase positive perceptions of the library (Dapo-Asaju dkk., 2024). More specifically, open, empathetic, and responsive interactions are believed to help librarians explore the information needs of users more deeply and provide appropriate assistance. This is where interpersonal communication plays an important role. Because this communication is transactional, each person acts as a sender and receiver of messages at once, with feedback that can affect the quality of the interaction. According to (Adler dkk., 2023), interpersonal communication is a symbolic process that individuals use to create shared meaning in personal relationships.

To achieve effective interpersonal communication, it requires active listening skills, clear message delivery, empathy, and understanding of the social context of the interlocutor. Interpersonal communication is divided into two main forms, namely verbal communication (oral or written) and nonverbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Purba & Siahaan, 2022). In the library environment, interpersonal communication between librarians and users is an important means of building productive professional relationships and supporting the information literacy process in a sustainable manner. Through

effective communication such as active listening, asking the right questions, and providing constructive feedback librarians can gain a deeper understanding of users' information needs. This interaction allows librarians to not only show where information is but also to teach how to evaluate the reliability of sources and use information ethically, which is the core of information literacy itself. Thus, interpersonal communication becomes a bridge that transforms passive access to information into an active and continuous learning process.

In the digital era, where information is abundant, the ability to sort through relevant, valid, and reliable information is increasingly crucial. While the successful development of information literacy depends on the availability of resources, it is also heavily influenced by how librarians communicate and assist users (Deriana dkk., 2025). The ability to be information literate is important for library services in order to optimize library resources and services (Pattah, 2014). This is where interpersonal communication plays a vital and interesting role. Good communication skills help librarians in their tasks and increase positive perceptions of the library. More specifically, open, empathetic, and responsive interactions are believed to help librarians explore the information needs of users more deeply and provide appropriate assistance (Iskandar, 2016). Ultimately, interpersonal communication is a key element in transforming a library from a mere collection of books into an inclusive learning center that is oriented toward the needs of its users.

This research aims to fill this gap by conducting a systematic literature review of studies that discuss the role of librarians' interpersonal communication in supporting library users' information literacy. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on the relational and dialogic dimensions of library services, which is a departure from previous studies that have focused more on instructional approaches and the use of information technology. Specifically, this study seeks to identify and analyze the forms of interpersonal communication applied by librarians, understand their impact on users' information literacy, and reveal the factors that influence the effectiveness of such communication, thereby providing a foundation for future studies in the field of library and information science.

## METHODS

The method used in this research is Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a method that aims to identify, evaluate, and interpret all research literature relevant to the research questions that have been formulated previously. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of librarian interpersonal communication, and the improvement of library literacy.

According to (Kitchenham, 2004), the main objectives of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) are to provide a fair summary of empirical evidence regarding a particular technology or method, identify existing research gaps and provide directions for future research and to confirm or challenge existing findings, so as to enrich our understanding of the topic under study.

In order to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the topic under review, this research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. This approach allows researchers to identify, evaluate, and synthesize various relevant previous studies in a systematic and structured manner. In order for the literature review process to be directed and focused, it is necessary to formulate clear research questions.

### Research Question Formulation (RQ)

Table 1. Research Question (RQ)

NO	Research question
RQ1	What is the form of interpersonal communication carried out by librarians towards visitors in information services?
RQ2	How do library users perceive the communication role of librarians in improving their information literacy?
RQ3	What are the factors that support or hinder the effectiveness of interpersonal communication between librarians and library users?
RQ4	How does the context of the library environment affect the quality of librarians' interpersonal communication?
RQ5	How does the library environment affect the effectiveness of librarians' interpersonal communication in guiding users?

Source: Author's data (2025)

### Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Data for this systematic literature review were obtained from a single scientific database, Google Scholar. This database was chosen for its broad literature coverage and high accessibility to various types of academic publications. To facilitate systematic searching and citation data management, the Publish or Perish software, which is integrated with Google Scholar, was used. This search focuses on publications in the form of articles and reviews, with a publication year range from 2015 to 2025.

The initial search process yielded a total of 30 publications from Google Scholar. All these articles then underwent a rigorous screening process using inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure their relevance to the research focus. After going thru the selection stage, a total of 10 final articles were chosen for analysis because they had a direct connection to the research question. All selected articles were then extracted for further analysis. According to

(Arianti & Juandi, 2022), in the analysis stage, only relevant articles that meet the inclusion criteria will be included.

Table 2. Inclusion &amp; Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles in Indonesian and English	Articles that only discuss mass communication
Empirical, qualitative or quantitative studies	Not relevant in substance
Relevant to the focus of librarian communication and information literacy	Not available full-text

Source: Arianti & Juandi (2022)

### Selection and Analysis Process

The selection and analysis of articles were conducted through a systematic, multi-step process to ensure the relevance and quality of the literature included in this review. This process involved three main stages: searching and extraction, screening, and data analysis.

1. Searching and Extraction: A comprehensive search was performed on a predetermined scientific database, namely Google Scholar, using systematically designed keywords and query syntax. The initial search results yielded 20 articles, which were then compiled for subsequent screening and analysis.
2. Screening: The screening process was conducted to identify the most relevant articles from the initial pool, guided by the strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. This stage involved two key steps:
  - a. Initial Screening: Articles were first screened based on their titles and abstracts to remove those that were clearly irrelevant to the research topic.
  - b. Full-Text Review: The remaining articles were then subjected to a full-text review, where the full content of each article was read to confirm its substantive relevance to the research questions.
3. Data Analysis: The final selection of 10 articles was analyzed using a thematic approach. This involved a thorough reading and coding of the articles to identify main patterns, key contributions, and recurring themes related to librarian interpersonal communication and information literacy. This process also allowed for the identification of research gaps that have not been widely discussed in the literature. The results of this analysis are synthesized in the following section.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research results analyzed in this study are a synthesis and summary of a number of articles that discuss the role of librarians' interpersonal communication in supporting library users' information literacy.

Table 3. Results of the Findings Article

No	Title	Author and Year	Research Results
1	Librarian's Interpersonal Communication Toward User Satisfaction.	(Yunawati dkk., 2023)	This research aims to examine the influence of librarians' interpersonal communication (X) on user satisfaction (Y) at the Untirta Library UPT. The results of the quantitative analysis show that the relational relationship of librarians has a very significant influence on user satisfaction. Both variables are categorized as good, with the librarian's interpersonal communication having a grand mean value of 3.802 and a mean of 49.423, while user satisfaction has a grand mean value of 3.506 and a mean of 49.078. Although generally good, library users' satisfaction is still weak in terms of responsiveness, quality, affirmation, and empathy, with values trending toward the lower end of the range. Therefore, researchers suggest that librarians further develop their relational skills, particularly in the areas of acceptance and fairness.
2	The urgency of interpersonal communication for librarians in serving library users.	(Bella dkk., 2024)	Interpersonal communication is very urgent and must be applied by librarians in serving library users. This research shows that strong communication skills enable librarians to recognize and understand the needs and characteristics of library users. Attitudes necessary for good communication include empathy, a supportive attitude, a positive attitude, equality, self-confidence, immediacy, and interaction management. To perform their duties professionally, librarians must enhance three key interpersonal communication skills: listening ability, service delivery skills, and the ability to convey information in an easily understandable manner.
3	Maximizing the potential of librarians: The urgency of interpersonal communication skills in the workplace	(Inda dkk., 2023)	A librarian's interpersonal communication skills are crucial for optimizing library functions. Librarians with good communication skills have proven to be more effective in increasing students' reading interest and visits, facilitating collaboration with teachers in supporting the curriculum, improving service efficiency, and creating a conducive learning environment. The main findings revealed that communicative librarians are better able to understand the information needs of students and teachers, and are active in school literacy programs. The research concludes that developing interpersonal communication needs to be a priority to support the school's vision and mission.
4	The Urgency of Good Interpersonal Communication Skills Between Stakeholders and Librarians in Public Libraries	(Bidayasari, 2019)	Interpersonal communication skills between stakeholders (library heads) and librarians in public libraries are extremely important. With good and effective interpersonal communication, relationships will be built, a sense of mutual need will grow, and solid cooperation will be established. This eliminates awkwardness, fear, and the divide, allowing the library head and librarians to unite and work together to further

	5 Challenges of information communication and opportunities for librarians in maintaining the existence of college library information literacy activities during the pandemic	(Arifah, 2020)	develop the library. Effective interpersonal communication is one of the keys to success for library heads in boosting morale and the progress of public libraries.
6	The role of librarians in information literacy for library users	(Ismanto, 2017)	The biggest challenges for librarians in college libraries during the pandemic are: students' information literacy skills are not yet optimal, there is an abundance of information produced daily, and communication space for information has narrowed due to library closures. To overcome these challenges and maintain the existence of information literacy activities, librarians are required to be adaptable and responsive by utilizing creativity and innovation in optimizing information and communication technologies such as library websites and social media. This is important to support the role of librarians as information literacy agents and supporters of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education activities.
7	The Role of Librarians in Enhancing Students' Information Literacy Skills at the Bung Hatta University Library in Padang	(Ratnawita, 2023)	Despite the abundance of information available, users often struggle to find the resources they need in the library. This is a challenge for libraries and librarians, who must provide guidance on the most appropriate sources of information, helping users to find, search and utilize information and facilities more easily.
8	The Role of the Reference Librarian at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang Library in Improving Students' Information Literacy	(Ibnu Shiva & Amini, 2022)	The role of librarians is essential for improving students' information literacy at the Bung Hatta University Library. The main role of librarians is to organize library materials to meet user needs and to guide users on how to use library materials optimally, including thru user education programs. Although this role is important and supports critical thinking skills, librarians face major constraints in the form of inadequate space and buildings, as well as slow internet speeds when searching for information.
9	Librarian Communication Strategies in the Implementation of Information Literacy (Case Study at Higher Education Institutions Using and Utilizing E-Resources)	(Setiawan, 2017)	Reference librarians at the UIN Imam Bonjol Padang Library have fulfilled their role in improving students' information literacy. The roles performed include three main functions: as a Facilitator (providing means and services), as a Mediator (intermediating between library users and information thru training and guidance), and as a Motivator (offering psychological encouragement to increase reading interest and information literacy). The methods and services provided include information literacy training and packages (such as introductions to e-resources, Zotero, and similarity checking with Turnitin), online search guidance, multimedia services, and online services thru Telegram groups. These various activities have proven to have a positive impact, helping students with better completion of coursework and scientific writing.

		databases is not wasted, and it also equips students to become lifelong learners.
10	Exploring Internal Communication in Public Libraries: Challenges and Opportunities for Library Leaders	(Wakimoto, 2021)  Exploration of internal communication in public libraries in the United States shows that although all respondents use email to communicate, the most preferred communication channel is email (68.2%), followed by meetings (18.2%) and face-to-face conversations (9.1%). Effective internal communication is defined by respondents as information that is clear, timely, respectful, accurate, and concise. The main challenges faced are that employees don't read emails, it's difficult to reach staff with different schedules, and managers don't share information (information hoarding), which often leads to gossip. The research concludes that library leaders play a crucial role in creating an effective, sustainable, and transparent communication culture, which in turn will boost staff morale and empowerment.

Table 3 shows that librarians' interpersonal communication has a very important role in the information literacy of library users. Various studies have shown that effective interpersonal communication between librarians and users can build better relationships, strengthen trust, and create a supportive learning environment. Through open and empathic interactions, librarians are able to deeply understand the information needs of users and provide appropriate guidance in searching, evaluating and utilizing information.

In this study, I will analyze how aspects that influence interpersonal communication between librarians and users and its impact on information literacy. A more detailed discussion of this analysis will be explained as follows:

### Forms of Librarian Interpersonal Communication

Librarian interpersonal communication plays an important role in improving the effectiveness of information services and increasing the literacy of library users. This communication not only reflects the librarian's personal skills in interacting but also serves as an indicator of the quality of the relationship between librarians and users in the library environment. The following forms of interpersonal communication illustrate how librarians engage with users to support information literacy:

- Direct verbal communication is the most common form of interaction between librarians and users, typically occurring in face-to-face settings such as reference consultations, information services, and circulation desks. Indicators of effective verbal communication include clear articulation, the use of polite and approachable language, and the librarian's ability to provide accurate, relevant, and persuasive responses that foster user trust and satisfaction.
- Nonverbal communication serves as an important complement to verbal interaction, significantly shaping the quality of librarians' engagement with users. Elements such as facial expressions, eye contact, body language, and tone of voice contribute to creating a warm, approachable, and supportive atmosphere in a library environment.

- c. Digital or electronic media-based communication is increasingly popular. Librarians can communicate with users through various platforms such as email, chat services, social media, and instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. This communication is for self-uploading services, online consultation, and virtual literacy guidance.
- d. Empathetic and persuasive communication, a form of communication that focuses on providing emotional support to users. This communication becomes important when librarians face users who feel hesitant, confused, or lack confidence in accessing and utilizing information.
- e. Collaborative and educational communication emerges in the context of training or information literacy activities organized by libraries. This approach positions librarians as facilitators who encourage active learning. Through discussion, feedback, and guided instruction, librarians empower users to engage critically with information and participate meaningfully in educational activities.

Ultimately, the success of library services depends not only on resources and infrastructure, but also on the ability of librarians to build meaningful interpersonal relationships. According to (Amin dkk., 2025) through open, empathetic, and educative communication, librarians can improve the quality of services and support the achievement of the library's main goal, which is to educate and empower users through information literacy.

### **Impact on Library Users' Information Literacy**

Librarians' interpersonal communication skills play a pivotal role in enhancing library users' information literacy. Multiple studies have demonstrated that effective, empathetic, and educative interactions between librarians and users significantly influence users' ability to identify, evaluate, and utilize information appropriately. Librarians who communicate with clarity, warmth, and responsiveness are more successful in helping users articulate their information needs and navigate relevant resources. Such communication fosters user confidence, encouraging independent information-seeking behavior and deeper engagement with library services.

Additionally, open and inclusive communication contributes to a supportive learning environment, encouraging users to actively participate in literacy initiatives such as training sessions, workshops, and mentoring programs. In this context, interpersonal communication serves not only as a channel for exchanging information but also as a pedagogical tool that facilitates user empowerment and continuous learning.

Other additional evidence suggests that good interpersonal communication can increase user satisfaction and strengthen the library's image as a reliable and user-oriented information center. Librarians with strong interpersonal skills are better equipped to build constructive relationships, increase user motivation, and support both formal and informal literacy development. As emphasized by Krismayani (2017), the long-term success and relevance of libraries heavily depend on the quality of interpersonal communication, especially when emphasizing emotional support, mutual respect, and user-oriented service.

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

The success of librarians in establishing productive relationships with library patrons depends largely on the various conditions that influence the communication process. In practice, individual skills are not the only factors that influence effective interpersonal communication; there are also enabling factors that strengthen interactions and inhibiting factors that can hinder communication goals. It is crucial to understand both of these components to understand how the right communication approach can help improve the quality of information services. Based on the analysis of relevant studies and journals, the following is a description of the supporting and inhibiting components of librarians' interpersonal communication.

### **a. Factors Supporting Interpersonal Communication**

**Studies Supporting Factors** Empirical studies show that the personal attitudes and communication skills of librarians play an important role in building effective interactions with users. Qualities such as empathy, openness, confidence, and a positive attitude facilitate two-way information exchange and help create a comfortable and user-needs-oriented service environment. In this regard, Bella et al. (2024) emphasize that "empathy, supportive attitude, positive attitude, equality, self-confidence, responsiveness, and interaction management" are essential elements in providing quality professional services. Additionally, technological support also plays a crucial role in expanding the reach of librarians' communication. The use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, email, and other online tools allows librarians to provide assistance quickly and flexibly, especially in the context of remote or asynchronous services. These tools help facilitate physical cross-border communication and support library users with diverse access needs.

Additionally, continuous training and professional development in interpersonal communication are equally important supporting factors. In line with this, Bella et al. (2024) note that librarians need to strengthen their "listening skills, service delivery skills, and the ability to convey information in an easily understandable way" in order to effectively and adaptively respond to the needs of library users.

### **b. Factors inhibiting interpersonal communication**

On the other hand, there are several obstacles that can reduce the effectiveness of librarians' interpersonal communication. One of the main challenges is the lack of basic communication skills, such as the ability to listen actively and convey information clearly. According to Yunawati et al. (2023), user satisfaction is still relatively low in terms of responsiveness, service quality, recognition, and empathy, indicating a gap in relational communication. hampered. Resource limitations such as limited time, inadequate facilities, and less-than-optimal access to technology also pose challenges in the implementation of responsive information services. For example, Ratnawita (2023) highlights that limited library space and slow internet speeds hinder librarians from effectively guiding users.

Additionally, a limited understanding of users' backgrounds and information needs can hinder meaningful interaction, especially when users struggle to clearly express their needs. The absence of regular training in soft skills development, combined with a high workload, could potentially lead to interactions that are stiff, overly formal, and less conducive to building emotional closeness. This condition can lower the quality of the relationship between librarians and library users and weaken the impact of communication on the development of information literacy.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this systematic review, it can be concluded that librarians' interpersonal communication plays a very important and transformative role in supporting library users' information literacy. Effective forms of communication such as verbal, nonverbal, digital, empathetic, and educational communication can build strong relationships, increase trust, and create an inclusive learning environment. Open and responsive communication encourages users to be more active in independently accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information. The effectiveness of communication is greatly influenced by positive attitudes, empathy, interpersonal skills, the use of technology, and librarian training. Conversely, limited facilities, high workloads, a lack of communication skills, and a minimal understanding of user needs can hinder the quality of interaction. Therefore, strengthening librarians' relational skills needs to be a priority so that libraries can function optimally as relevant learning spaces oriented toward information empowerment.

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