

OPTIMIZING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING INTEREST IN THE DIGITAL ERA (CASE STUDY OF SMPN 15 MATARAM)

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Abstract

In today's information era, digital transformation of school libraries is a major strategy in increasing students' interest in reading. This study analyzes the implementation of an automation system based on SLiMS (Senayan Library Management System) and a physical literacy program in optimizing the role of the library at SMPN 15 Mataram. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with a case study method, and data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model which includes reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that by April 2025, 1,000 out of 2,000 book collections have been successfully inputted into SLiMS, which contributes to increasing the efficiency of collection management and readiness of digital services. The reading garden and reading corner programs in the classroom increase student interaction with informal reading materials by 40%. The novelty of this study lies in the simultaneous integration of digital transformation and physical space-based literacy, which produces a contextual digital literacy ecosystem model. The practical contribution of this study is in the form of recommendations for tiered implementation strategies that combine digitalization and participatory literacy to create adaptive and sustainable school libraries.

Keywords: School library, SLiMS, literacy, reading interest, digital era

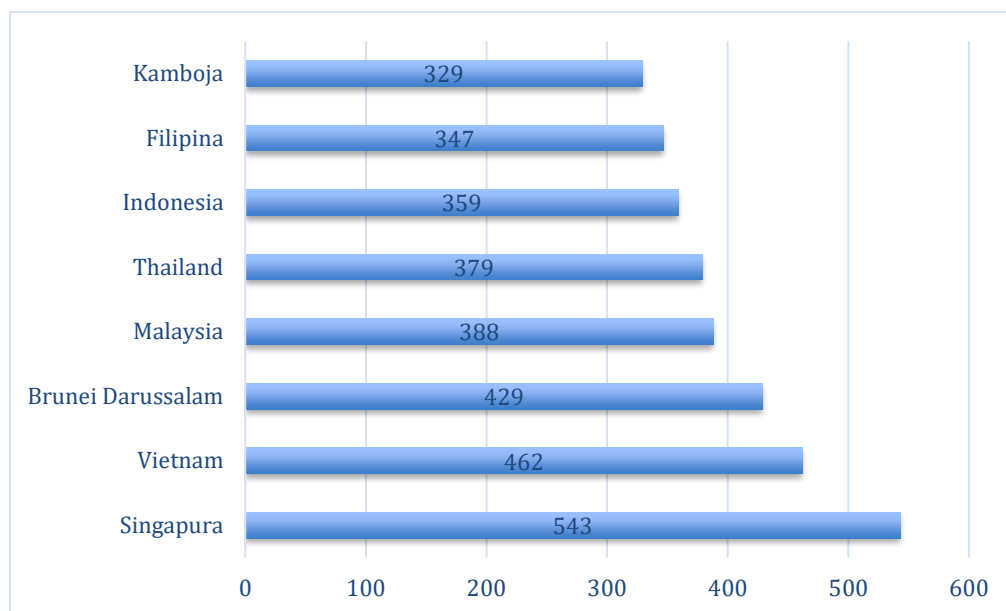
INTRODUCTION

Reading interest is a crucial indicator in forming a generation that thinks critically and has broad insights. In the digital era marked by the rapid flow of information, the challenges in increasing students' reading interest are becoming increasingly complex. School libraries have a strategic role as literacy centers and learning resources that can answer these challenges.

However, there are still many school libraries that have not been able to carry out their functions optimally due to various obstacles, such as limited facilities and infrastructure, lack of competent management staff, and minimal use of information technology in an integrated manner.

School libraries are essentially not only a place to store collections of library materials, but also as literacy agents that can develop students' reading and critical thinking skills. This situation emphasizes the importance of optimizing the role of school libraries as literacy-based learning centers that are adaptive to the challenges of the times and responsive to the dynamics of educational needs. In this context, digitalization is a strategic step to improve the quality of library services (Rokhmat et al., 2024).

In order to strengthen the culture of literacy in Indonesia, the government issued Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2015 concerning the Development of Character in the school environment through habituation activities, one of which is the obligation for students to read non-textbooks for 15 minutes before the learning process begins every day. This policy positions schools as the main institution in instilling literacy habits from an early age. This daily reading practice is expected not to just become a routine, but to develop into a reading culture that is embedded in everyday life (Wahyuningrum et al., 2023). Reading interest is an important indicator in improving the quality of education in a country. The literacy rate of the Indonesian people is still relatively low compared to a number of countries in the Southeast Asia region. Referring to the results of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Indonesia is ranked sixth in terms of reading ability of 15-year-old students in the region (Nasrullah, 2024)



Source: OECD (2023), processed by the author

Figure 1. Reading Ability Level of 15-Year-Old Students in ASEAN Countries Based on PISA 2022

From these data, it can be concluded that the level of reading literacy activity in Indonesia at the national level is still relatively low. This is reflected in the National Cultural

Development Index score in the Literacy Culture aspect, which in 2022 only reached 57.40 (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This condition is reinforced by the achievement of the Community Literacy Development Index (IPLM) in 2023 of 64.68, and the level of reading enthusiasm (TGM) of the Indonesian people which was at 66.77 in the same year. Data from the Alibaca index also shows that the average national literacy index is still in the low category, with an overall score of 37.32. This value includes four dimensions, namely: Skill Dimension (75.92), Access Dimension (23.09), Alternative Dimension (40.49), and Cultural Dimension (28.50). The low score is generally influenced by limited access to reading materials and the weak reading culture in society. In addition, the results of the 2022 National Assessment show that the literacy skills of students in Indonesia are still below the minimum competency, where less than 50% of students managed to reach the minimum competency limit in the aspect of reading literacy (Nasrullah, 2024).

One concrete form of library digitalization is the implementation of an automation-based library management system, such as the Senayan Library Management System (SLiMS). SLiMS is an open-source system designed to facilitate the management of bibliographic data, circulation, online catalogs, and reporting of library activities efficiently and transparently (Istiqomah, 2024). Digital transformation through this system not only supports systematic collection management, but also expands access to information and provides a more interesting literacy experience for students. The SMPN 15 Mataram Library is currently in the process of digital transformation through the implementation of SLiMS, as part of a strategy to optimize its role in supporting a culture of literacy in the school environment. However, optimizing the role of the library is not only limited to the technological aspect, but is also strengthened through various contextual literacy programs designed to foster students' interest in reading in a participatory manner. These programs include the provision of open literacy parks and reading corners in each classroom, which are presented to reach students in various learning situations and settings. This approach shows that school libraries function not only as information centers, but also as literacy spaces that are inclusive, fun, and adaptive to the needs of the digital-native generation.

Various studies have reviewed the transformation of school libraries in response to low student reading interest in the digital era. Handayani (2022) emphasized that the implementation of SLiMS as a library automation system has been proven to increase service efficiency and accelerate the process of searching and circulating collections. Rokhmat et al. (2024) also emphasized that library digitization is an important revitalization strategy to support a culture of literacy, especially by providing faster and more organized access to information. In the context of space-based literacy, Wahyuningrum et al. (2023) showed that the provision of reading parks and literacy corners in schools can encourage student involvement in reading through a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. However, most previous studies tend to discuss digital transformation and literacy programs as two stand-alone approaches. For example, Susanto (2021) focuses more on the influence of SLiMS on reading interest without explaining its integration with physical space-based literacy strategies. On the other hand, the study by Ahyar & Zumrotun (2023) discusses the success of a literacy program based on daily habits, but does not mention the role of technology in supporting the sustainability of the program. In addition, most of the research contexts are still limited to elementary school level and have not reached many junior high schools in urban environments that are undergoing digital transition.

Based on this study, a research gap was identified in the form of a lack of empirical studies that comprehensively examine the integration between SLiMS-based automation systems and physical space-based literacy programs in forming an adaptive digital literacy ecosystem in secondary schools. In addition, there are not many studies that provide an overview of the challenges and practical strategies in the early stages of SLiMS implementation in school environments that are not fully ready in terms of infrastructure and human resources.

Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap, by raising a case study at SMPN 15 Mataram which is undergoing a transition process from a manual library to a digital one. This study not only observes the effectiveness of SLiMS implementation, but also evaluates its impact when integrated with the open reading garden program and class reading corner as a contextual and participatory literacy approach

Reading Interest

Reading interest is a person's tendency to engage in reading activities driven by a sense of interest, need, or curiosity about reading. This interest is not just a technical ability to read, but an emotional interest and personal interest in reading materials (Latifah & Sa'diyah, 2024). Several factors that play a role in shaping students' reading interests include the role of the family, especially the example of parents as active readers, the availability of interesting and varied reading collections, support from the school environment in building a culture of literacy, and the influence of digital media, which is often a distraction. In addition, students' own internal motivation also determines the extent to which they have an interest in reading voluntarily.

Role of School Libraries

In the context of education, school libraries have an important role as a center for developing student literacy. Libraries have three main functions: educational, recreational, and informative. The educational function is reflected in the provision of learning resources that support the formal learning process. The recreational function is reflected through a collection of reading materials that are entertaining but still have educational value, while the informative function is seen in the library's efforts to provide access to the latest information that can broaden students' horizons (Lestari, 2024). In order for these functions to run optimally, the library needs to be managed adaptively in accordance with the times.

Digital and Information Era

The transformation of technology in the digital era presents new challenges in the world of literacy. Various digital entertainment platforms, such as social media and game applications, often divert students' attention from conventional reading, which results in decreased student concentration on long reading texts. However, on the other hand, the digital era also provides great opportunities, such as easy access to digital books, online libraries, and online learning platforms that can be used to improve student literacy (Yusrizal & Syuhada, 2024). Therefore, adaptation to these digital opportunities is very important so that the reading culture continues to develop amidst technological changes.

One of the technologies that is increasingly commonly used in school libraries is the Library Management System (SLiMS), which helps in managing book collections, borrowing, and automatically recording visitor data. The use of technology in library services allows for increased efficiency and convenience, as well as expanding student access to learning materials.

Shodiq and Ilmi (2022) emphasize that the use of information technology in libraries can simplify the borrowing process and increase convenience for students. In this digital age, students can access the information they need at any time, either in the form of physical books or digital resources, which contributes to increasing their interest in reading.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The object of the study is focused on the activities and transformation of the library services of SMP Negeri 15 Mataram which is undergoing a transition from a manual system to a digital system based on SLiMS (Senayan Library Management System). Data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. The author directly observed various library activities, starting from the book lending service process, user interaction, utilization of the reading room, to the initial implementation of the automation system. Observations were carried out continuously supported by field notes, activity documentation, and reflections on findings that occurred in the field. In addition, data was also obtained through interviews with library officers, teachers, and students who are library users, as well as documentation related to library activities and reports. The data obtained were analyzed by data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, in accordance with the qualitative data analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2018). The main focus of the analysis is directed at how the library service transformation process affects the pattern of library use by students and the potential for increasing reading interest in the digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that efforts to optimize the role of school libraries in increasing students' reading interest at SMPN 15 Mataram are carried out through two main approaches, namely the implementation of a digital-based automation system (SLiMS) and the development of a literacy program based on physical space and student activities. Each approach has a complementary contribution in forming a school literacy ecosystem that is adaptive to the challenges of the digital era.

In order to provide a visual illustration of the optimization efforts made, the following is a diagram of the main programs run by the SMPN 15 Mataram Library in increasing students' reading interest:

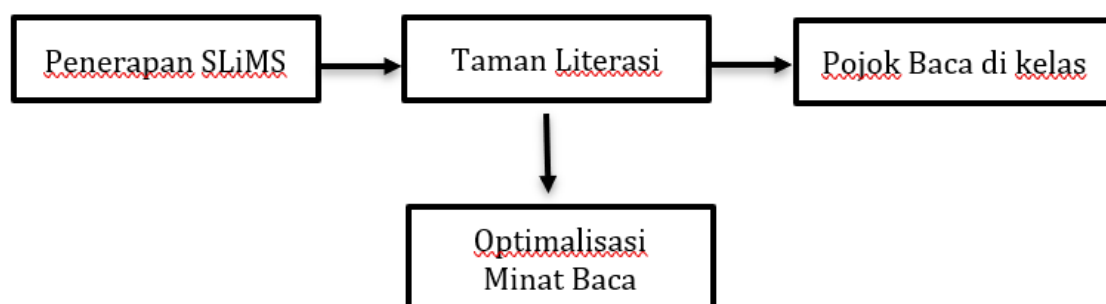


Figure 2. Program for optimizing the role of the SMPN 15 Mataram library

Implementation of SLiMS-Based Automation System in SMPN 15 Mataram Library

The transformation of SMPN 15 Mataram library services through the implementation of the SLiMS automation system is the first step towards digitizing collection management. This system was chosen because it is open-source and has complete features for cataloging, searching collections, and managing circulation. As of April 2025, 1,000 of the total of more than 2,000 book collections have been successfully inputted. This stage is carried out in stages and involves collaboration between librarians and student interns from the Library Science department. Although data input shows significant progress, the implementation of SLiMS is still in its early stages and does not yet cover full circulation services. This finding shows a gap between the technical readiness of the system and the readiness of human resources to run the system independently and sustainably.

Although the borrowing and returning services are not yet fully operational through SLiMS, this process has had a positive impact on collection management. The librarian stated:

"We are still in the learning stage, but with SLiMS we can start to organize books more neatly and are not afraid of losing data. Although we have not yet reached the borrowing stage, at least the data input has started to be organized" (Interview, March 20, 2025).

When compared to Handayani's study (2022), which showed that the implementation of SLiMS in elementary schools was able to run optimally thanks to the support of intensive training and institutional commitment, the conditions at SMPN 15 Mataram actually showed structural and competency challenges. The library manager at this school is still in the process of learning to operate SLiMS and does not fully understand the advanced features, such as the circulation system, borrowing statistics, and membership management. This finding is also reinforced by Lestari (2020), who stated that one of the inhibiting factors in the implementation of library automation is the limited ongoing technical training and the absence of standardized operational SOPs. As a result, even though the software is available, the adoption of the system has not been able to change manual work patterns to digital as a whole.

In the context of Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, SLiMS at SMPN 15 Mataram is still in the implementation phase, which is when innovations begin to be adopted but are not yet stable or integrated into the routine work system. Efforts to digitize library services still need to be strengthened through internal policy support so that their implementation can run more systematically and sustainably.

Furthermore, based on the literature presented by Chan (2007), library automation not only improves the efficiency of librarians' work, but is also a foundation for expanding access to digital literacy for users. Therefore, although the implementation of SLiMS at this school is still partial, it has shown significant potential in accelerating the transformation of school library services towards the digital era.

Thus, the implementation of SLiMS at SMPN 15 Mataram is a strategic step in optimizing the role of the school library as a center for information services and digital literacy. Although it has currently only reached the data input stage and is not yet fully operational in the circulation function, this transformation reflects the school's commitment to providing modern, efficient, and adaptive library services to the development of information technology. If integrated sustainably with other literacy programs, SLiMS will not only improve the efficiency of collection management, but also facilitate student access to reading resources, strengthen independence

in seeking information, and ultimately encourage increased interest in reading in a digital school environment. Therefore, the success of SLiMS implementation is not enough to rely only on the availability of technology, but is highly dependent on the readiness of human resources, internal policy support, and the continuity of consistent training and technical assistance.

Open Literacy Park and Student Emotional Engagement

Open reading parks located in school areas are one of the literacy innovations that have succeeded in reaching students in an informal setting. A relaxed and open atmosphere that is not tied to class structures makes students feel more comfortable and free to choose and read books. Based on the results of interviews and observations, this reading park is a place that is quite popular with students, especially during breaks or free time. Students seem more enthusiastic in exploring the available reading collections without academic pressure.

This condition strengthens the theory of Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) which states that comfort and freedom in a reading environment are important factors in forming sustainable reading interests. In addition, the study of Wahyuningrum et al. (2023) also shows that the existence of a literacy park can increase student interaction with books, especially if it is managed consistently.

A literacy park that is designed to be open and student-friendly creates a positive reading atmosphere, which ultimately increases students' intrinsic motivation in accessing reading materials. In this context, a reading park is not only a complement to school facilities, but a real manifestation of the optimization of the physical space of the library that is inclusive and adaptive to the learning needs of students in the digital era.

However, the results of field observations indicate that there are several things that need to be strengthened, especially in terms of collection management. The books available in the literacy park have not been updated routinely, and there is no rotation mechanism that ensures diversity of reading materials over time. This condition can affect students' interest in reading materials, especially in the long term. With more dynamic and planned management, the reading park has great potential to become a literacy space that is not only fun, but also sustainable. Thus, the open literacy park at SMPN 15 Mataram shows a strategic role as an alternative reading space that supports students' reading interests through a more personal, emotional, and contextual approach. This innovation is an important part of efforts to create an inclusive and adaptive learning environment in the digital era.

Reading Corners in the Classroom and Everyday Literacy Accessibility

Each class is equipped with a simple reading corner containing 20–30 thematic and popular reading books. The class teacher stated:

"This reading corner really helps students to get closer to books, especially when they are waiting for lessons or during free time. We also often use books in the reading corner to enrich lesson materials, so its role is very important in learning" (Interview, March 17, 2025).

The existence of a reading corner brings literacy closer to students directly and continuously, so they do not have to come to the library to get reading materials. This approach also supports Rogers' (2003) theory on the diffusion of innovation, where innovations that are easily accessible and integrated into routine activities tend to be adopted more quickly by the

user community. With the existence of a reading corner, the library effectively decentralizes access to reading, increasing students' opportunities to explore literacy independently and continuously.

However, the effectiveness of the reading corner needs to be seen in the context of existing constraints, such as the relatively small number of book collections and limited variety of themes. This can hinder the diversity of literacy received by students, as highlighted in the study by Shidik et al. (2025) who emphasized that the limited number and variety of reading materials in the reading corner can significantly reduce students' interest in reading. Therefore, although the reading corner provides closer access, the quality and quantity of reading materials need to be continuously updated and developed in order to optimally meet students' literacy needs.

In addition, another challenge that arises is the utilization of the reading corner which is highly dependent on teacher initiative and student readiness. A study by Rahmawati and Juvitasari (2022) shows that the success of the reading corner is greatly influenced by the active role of teachers as literacy facilitators and motivators. Teachers help provide appropriate reading materials and encourage students to actively read, thereby increasing interest and literacy culture in schools.

In terms of implementation, there needs to be ongoing evaluation to measure how often and effectively the reading corner is used in students' daily activities. In addition, technology integration, for example by providing digital reading materials that can be accessed via mobile devices, can be a solution to enrich content and increase students' interest in reading in today's digital era.

Thus, the reading corner as a literacy decentralization strategy is an innovative step that has the potential to improve students' reading culture. However, its success is highly dependent on the availability of diverse reading materials, the active role of teachers, and the adaptation of technology to meet the challenges of the digital era.

Table 1. Library Literacy Program and Its Impact on Students' Reading Interest

Literacy Program	Short Description	Impact on Reading Interest
Implementation of SLiMS & OPAC	Library automation for collection management, barcodes, and digital book searches.	Introducing digital literacy, facilitating access to collections, and fostering student independence in searching for books.
Open Literacy Park	Open-air reading areas that are freely accessible to students during break times.	Creating an informal and comfortable reading experience, and increasing the frequency of student interaction with books.
Reading Corner in Class	Mini bookshelves in each classroom with thematic and popular reading materials.	Providing access to everyday literacy, integrating reading into learning routines.

Source: Results of observations and interviews, processed by researchers (2025)

The three programs that have been implemented, namely the implementation of SLiMS & OPAC, open literacy parks, and reading corners in the classroom are not stand-alone initiatives, but rather complement each other in forming a digital literacy ecosystem in the school environment. SLiMS and OPAC provide a technological foundation that enables the digitization of information access, while literacy parks and reading corners provide a comfortable and familiar physical space to internalize reading habits.

By combining a technological approach and a cultural context of reading simultaneously, the SMPN 15 Mataram library is able to reach students from various sides, both in terms of digital skills, emotions, and daily habits. This is a form of optimizing the role of school libraries in the digital era: not just digitizing collections, but also building meaningful, adaptive, and sustainable literacy experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that optimizing the role of school libraries in increasing students' reading interest in the digital era can be achieved through the integration of SLiMS-based automation systems with space-based and activity-based literacy programs. Although the implementation of SLiMS at SMPN 15 Mataram is still in its early stages, this system has had a positive impact on collection management and paved the way for digital literacy. On the other hand, the existence of open literacy parks and reading corners in the classroom has succeeded in creating a fun and affordable reading experience for students. The three programs support each other in forming an adaptive, inclusive, and contextual digital literacy ecosystem. With an approach that combines information technology and participatory literacy strategies, school libraries can play a more strategic role in building a relevant and sustainable reading culture amidst the challenges of the digital era.

SUGGESTION

Based on the research results, optimizing the role of school libraries in increasing students' interest in reading in the digital era requires a structured and tiered implementation strategy. Therefore, practical suggestions are arranged based on a priority scale so that they can be implemented systematically. (1) In the initial stage (short term), schools need to prioritize completing the process of inputting collection data and barcode labeling in the SLiMS system until complete, while also holding basic technical training for librarians and teachers related to the use of SLiMS and digital literacy management. At the same time, strengthening collections in open reading gardens and class reading corners must be done by providing reading materials that suit students' interests and needs. (2) The next stage (medium term) includes the full operation of digital circulation services, introducing online catalogs (OPAC) to students, and implementing collaborative literacy programs involving teachers, librarians, and students such as book reviews, reading competitions, or light book discussions. Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of reading gardens and reading corners is also important to determine student responses. (3) In the long term, school libraries need to be integrated with a broader digital learning system (for example through the school LMS), equipped with a data-based reporting and analytics system to monitor student reading interest trends. To support the sustainability of the program, the involvement of school principals, education policy makers, and institutional budget support are essential. With this roadmap, it is hoped that library development will not

only be a technical project, but also an integral part of building a digital literacy culture in the school environment.

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This article is the result of field research conducted at SMPN 15 Mataram as part of an effort to develop and revitalize digital-based school library services. This research is also the author's contribution in supporting the strengthening of literacy culture and digital transformation in the junior high school education environment. It is hoped that the findings and good practices revealed in this article can be an inspiration and reference for other schools that are or will develop technology-based library services and contextual literacy

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