

The Role of Librarian and the Transformation of Students' Information Literacy Education: A Case Study at IAIN Curup

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Abstract. The development of information technology and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) have changed the way students' access, assess, and utilize information in academic activities. In the Islamic Religious College (PTKI) environment such as IAIN Curup, this condition encourages the transformation of the role of librarians from technical implementers to academic partners and information literacy facilitators. This study aims to explore in depth how librarians carry out their educational role in improving student information literacy in the digital era. The method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model with validity maintained through triangulation and member checking. The theoretical framework used includes: The librarian's guide to learning theory (Medaille, 2024), The research information's theory (Walter & Wilder, 2022), and dynamic social interaction theory (Turner, 2023). The results of the study show that IAIN Curup librarians have functioned as digital information educators, academic partners, and institutional knowledge managers. However, this role has not been fully structured in institutional policies. Integration of information literacy into the curriculum, pedagogical training, and cross-role collaboration are needed. This study recommends strengthening librarian professionals through networks and Islamic scientific approaches such as *tahqiq* to form a reflective and ethical academic culture.

Keywords: *information literacy, students, librarians, artificial intelligence, academic reference sources, Islamic higher education institutions.*

Introduction

The rapid development of information technology in recent decades has changed the way students access, assess, and use information in academic activities. In the digital era, students are not only required to have the ability to access information, but also to be able to evaluate the validity and relevance of the information (Apriani et.al 2019; Apriani et.al 2021; Apriani et.al 2022; Apriani et.al 2025). This ability is known as information literacy, namely the ability to recognize information needs, search for it effectively, evaluate it, and use it ethically in a particular context (Ningsih & Sayekti, 2023).

Information literacy is an integral part of students' academic competence in higher education, especially in producing quality scientific work. However, many students still have difficulty identifying credible sources of information and using appropriate search strategies. This shows the need for systematic and sustainable information literacy development.

In the context of Islamic religious colleges such as IAIN Curup, the role of libraries and librarians is becoming increasingly important. Librarians no longer only function as collection managers, but have transformed into *information educators* and *research support facilitators* for students. Several studies have shown that the active role of librarians in providing information literacy services can improve students' ability to access and utilize information sources appropriately (Harahap & Zaindikra, 2022) (Zulfitri, 2023). On the other hand, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the world of education has brought significant changes,

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including in the environment of Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKI). AI allows students to get instant answers to academic questions, including religious issues, without going through an in-depth research process. So that the information obtained cannot be accounted for. This raises new challenges: how students can distinguish between authoritative and speculative information, and how they continue to uphold Islamic academic values and scientific methodology in their learning process. In this context, information literacy is a key competency that IAIN Curup students must have so as not to get caught up in instant information that is not necessarily valid academically or religiously. Therefore, the role of librarians in equipping students with evaluative skills regarding AI-based sources is becoming increasingly strategic.

This transformation of the role of librarians can be observed through various initiatives, such as information literacy training, academic guidance in information searches, and the development of relevant educational modules. At UIN Walisongo, for example, librarians have initiated information literacy training based on user needs, which significantly improves students' ability to navigate digital sources (Fitriyani et al., 2023). However, amidst technological advances, especially with the presence of artificial intelligence (AI), this role needs to be continuously upgraded to remain relevant. AI not only makes it easier to access information, but also gives rise to new complexities, such as algorithmic bias, unverified information, and students' tendency to skip the critical process of evaluating sources. Therefore, librarians need to develop advanced digital competencies, including an understanding of how AI works, skills in assessing the credibility of AI-generated content, and the ability to design information literacy training that is responsive to the challenges of the digital era. Librarians are not just facilitators of information searches, but must also be intellectual partners who are able to guide students in understanding the ethics of using technology, the validity of sources, and academic integrity. In (Qomariyah, 2023), specifically shown that students who are equipped with information literacy using the Big6 approach are better able to complete academic tasks well.

However, until now, there are still few studies that examine in depth the role of librarians in a local context such as IAIN Curup. In fact, the dynamics of religious higher education in the region have their own characteristics, both in terms of resources, access to information, and technological readiness. Therefore, this study is expected to fill this gap and provide a contextual empirical picture of the contribution of librarians in improving student information literacy. Moreover, in the era of artificial intelligence (AI), the role of librarians is experiencing new pressures and demands to adapt quickly. Librarians are not only required to be able to manage collections and assist in information searches, but also to understand how AI technology works, and its impact on students' information search and consumption behavior. This study is relevant to reveal the extent to which this transformation has occurred in a local environment such as IAIN Curup, and how librarians can build new capacities that are in accordance with the needs of the times, without neglecting Islamic academic and scientific values. In addition, studies on the role of librarians and the transformation of student information literacy offer several significant contributions. It responds directly to the contextual needs of developing student information literacy within Islamic universities, ensuring that educational strategies are tailored to their unique environment. This transformation also highlights the role of librarians as key actors in higher education, recognizing their importance beyond traditional duties. Additionally, it addresses gaps in information literacy research by focusing on local case studies, thereby enriching the academic discourse with context-specific insights. Moreover, it contributes tangibly to academic policies and the development of library services, aligning institutional frameworks with evolving literacy demands. Lastly, these efforts indirectly enhance students' overall capacity for information literacy, equipping them with critical skills for academic success and lifelong learning. The transformation of student information literacy will provide contributions, including: This research responds to the contextual needs of developing student information literacy in Islamic universities, where the integration of modern information skills and Islamic values is essential for academic success and ethical scholarship. By highlighting the evolving educational role of librarians at IAIN Curup, the study encourages the recognition of librarians as important actors in higher education, not merely as technical support staff, but as facilitators of

learning and partners in academic development. Additionally, this research fills a critical gap in the field of information literacy studies by providing empirical insights based on a local case study, which has been relatively underrepresented in existing literature. The findings aim to make real contributions to academic policy formulation and the strategic development of library services, especially by advocating for the institutionalization of librarians' educational roles. Ultimately, the study provides an indirect but meaningful contribution to improving students' information literacy capacity by promoting systemic changes that support sustainable and integrated literacy programs within the academic ecosystem of Islamic higher education institutions.

Materials and Methods

This research employs three main theoretical approaches to understand the evolving role of librarians. According to Medaille (2024) in *The Librarian's Guide to Learning Theory*, librarians function as both facilitators and educators within the library environment, guiding learners through acquiring and applying information. Their role extends beyond managing collections to designing instructional programs aligned with various learning theories, thus supporting diverse learning styles and promoting lifelong learning. Walters and Wilder (2022), in *Exploring New Roles for Librarians*, describe the librarian's evolving role as research informationists who become integral members of research teams. They offer specialized expertise in information retrieval, management, and evaluation, acting as knowledge brokers that bridge gaps between researchers and complex information systems, thereby enhancing the research process. Complementing these perspectives, Turner (2023) in *Role Theory and the Dynamics of Social Interaction* provides a significant update to classical role theory by emphasizing how social roles are formed, negotiated, and maintained within dynamic social interactions. Turner highlights that roles are not fixed structures but are dynamic and contextual, heavily influenced by cultural norms, social positions, and power dynamics among individuals and groups. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted and evolving roles of librarians today. By using this framework, the role of librarians at IAIN Curup in transforming student information literacy is not only seen from the administrative aspect, but also from the social, educational, and professional dynamics carried out in the context of higher education institutions.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely an approach that aims to describe and understand in depth the role of librarians in the process of transforming student information literacy at IAIN Curup. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring the meaning, experience, and practice of librarians in real and specific contexts.

The research was conducted at the IAIN Curup Library, as a unit that has a central role in supporting students' academic processes.

The research subjects consist of:

1. Librarians who actively provide information literacy services
2. Students from various study programs at IAIN Curup
3. Academic supervisor (as triangulation informant)

Data is collected using the following techniques:

1. In-depth interviews: Conducted with librarians and students to explore their experiences and perceptions of information literacy practices.
2. Participatory observation: Directly observing information literacy service activities in the library, including training, reference consultations, or final assignment guidance activities.
3. Documentation study: Includes training documents, information literacy modules, library activity reports, and other relevant archives.

Data Analysis Techniques

1. Data analysis was carried out interactively using a model (Miles and Huberman, 2014) that includes three main stages:

2. Data reduction: Simplifying and organizing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents.
3. Data presentation: Data is arranged in narrative form and thematic descriptions.
4. Conclusion drawing/verification: Analyzing librarian role patterns, constraints, and information literacy strategies used.

To maintain the validity of the data, researchers used source and method triangulation techniques: Source triangulation was done by comparing data from librarians, students, and lecturers. Method triangulation was done by combining the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checks were carried out on key informants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

Overview of IAIN Curup Library

IAIN Curup Library is a technical implementing unit directly under the auspices of the Vice Rector I for Academic Affairs. Library services have been using an automation system based on SLiMS (Senayan Library Management System) since 2009 and have a collection of more than 15,000 library material titles. In recent years, this library has also begun to develop digital services and information literacy training.

The library staff consists of seven librarians, six of whom have a background in Library Science, and one librarian is an incoming librarian through education and training. One of the leading programs implemented is basic information literacy training for new students, as well as guidance on searching for reference sources for final-year students.

The results of this study indicate that the role of the library at IAIN Curup is currently undergoing a significant transition, shifting from a traditional function as a collection manager to a more strategic role in supporting student learning and the development of information literacy. This transformation is occurring gradually and remains limited in scope and institutional support, yet it reflects an emerging awareness within the library of its educational importance in the digital information era. Until recently, librarians at IAIN Curup primarily performed conventional roles, such as managing library collections, handling circulation services, and providing basic reference assistance. However, with the growing academic demands of students, particularly in finding, evaluating, and ethically using scholarly information, there has been an internal push among librarians to expand their services toward more educational functions. This is evident in the librarians' initiative to offer individual and small group guidance sessions, particularly for students writing final papers or theses.

These sessions include assistance in searching for scientific literature through online platforms, using the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), accessing national and international journal databases, and managing references with tools such as Mendeley. Although this guidance remains limited in both content and reach, it signifies a shift in the library's role—from merely a storage and access point for information to a learning space and academic consultancy. Librarians are beginning to be seen not only as technical service providers but as knowledgeable professionals with academic and technological competence.

Moreover, the IAIN Curup library has begun organizing small-scale information literacy programs, although these initiatives are still sporadic and informal. Typically initiated by librarians or occasionally requested by faculty members, these sessions focus on basic technical aspects such as accessing e-journals, citing sources properly, and avoiding plagiarism. However, there is currently no structured curriculum or institutionalized module for information literacy that is integrated into the formal academic programs. One of the main challenges in reinforcing the librarian's role as an educational facilitator is the absence of a formal institutional policy that explicitly supports or acknowledges this role. To date, there are no official documents from university leadership affirming information literacy as part of IAIN Curup's educational mission involving the library. As a result, librarians' efforts often rely on individual initiative and lack structural support in terms of funding, professional development, or designated time within their

work schedules. Many of these educational activities are carried out in addition to their routine administrative duties.

Additionally, collaboration between the library and academic faculties remains informal and has yet to be institutionalized in policy. While some faculty members invite librarians to speak in class or mentor students on an ad hoc basis, these collaborations are not yet supported by formal, ongoing mechanisms. The absence of such policies results in inconsistent and non-systematic cooperation, which heavily depends on personal relationships rather than institutional commitment. In fact, the effective promotion of information literacy requires strong partnerships between librarians and teaching staff.

These findings suggest that while the role of the library at IAIN Curup in promoting information literacy has made some progress, it has not yet been fully developed or institutionalized. The library and its staff have demonstrated initiative and the capacity to play a broader role in the academic environment, but this potential remains underutilized due to the lack of formal recognition and structural support. This creates a gap between what librarians are capable of contributing and what they are formally authorized or enabled to do within the university framework.

From a theoretical perspective, this situation illustrates an ongoing process of role negotiation, where librarians are attempting to establish a new professional identity amid evolving academic expectations and institutional structures that are not yet fully responsive. The lack of formal mandates and weak interdepartmental coordination contribute to the ambiguity of the librarian's role, expected to support learning, yet not institutionally empowered to do so.

Nevertheless, the librarians at IAIN Curup demonstrate strong potential. Their ability to use digital tools, understand students' academic needs, and willingness to adopt an educational role are valuable assets in fostering a strong culture of information literacy. To support this transformation, strategic actions are needed, such as developing institutional policies that formally recognize librarians as academic partners, establishing sustainable information literacy training programs, and creating collaborative forums that bring together libraries, faculties, and lecturers.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the library at IAIN Curup is in the midst of a critical role transformation that requires clear institutional policies and cross-functional collaboration. Strengthening the position of librarians as professional information educators and aligning their work with the curriculum will enhance the quality of Islamic higher education in the digital era. This transformation is also in line with IAIN Curup's broader mission to integrate modern knowledge with Islamic values, positioning the library not only as a center of information but as a strategic hub for academic excellence and ethical scholarship.

The Role of IAIN Curup Librarians in the Perspective of The Librarian's Guide to Learning Theory (Medaille, 2024).

In order for the role of librarians at IAIN Curup to be more effective in the context of learning and developing information literacy, it is important to refer to the perspective offered by Medaille (2024) in *The Librarian's Guide to Learning Theory*. Medaille emphasizes that librarians are not merely technical facilitators, but educators who are actively involved in the theory-based learning process. In this framework, the role of librarians needs to be structured based on the principles of andragogy and constructivism, where librarians act as learning partners who support students in actively constructing knowledge through direct experience, reflection, and dialogue. Librarians should facilitate a learning environment that encourages critical engagement with information, rather than simply conveying knowledge in a one-way manner. Therefore, strengthening the role of librarians requires their integration in learning design, collaboration with lecturers, and continuous development of pedagogical and instructional competencies. Thus, librarians not only answer institutional expectations but also actively create meaningful learning experiences for students.

Research Informationist Concept (Walter & Wilder, 2022)

From the perspective of Walters and Wilder (2022), the role of librarians has undergone significant expansion along with the emergence of the concept of research informationists, namely information professionals who are actively involved in the academic research process. Librarians not only provide access to information sources, but also act as research consultants who accompany researchers and students throughout the research cycle—from formulating research questions, selecting and evaluating sources, managing data, to disseminating research results. In this context, librarians are required to have a deep understanding of research methodology, information analysis skills, and the ability to establish multidisciplinary collaboration. Walters and Wilder emphasize that the role of librarians must be integrated into the university research ecosystem, not as an administrative complement, but as a strategic partner in the production of scientific knowledge. Therefore, in institutions such as IAIN Curup, it is important to empower librarians in this role through ongoing training, involvement in faculty research projects, and strengthening professional identity as research informationists.

The Role of IAIN Curup Librarians from the Perspective of Jonathan H. Turner (2023)

Based on Jonathan H. Turner's idea in *Role Theory and the Dynamics of Social Interaction* (2023), social roles are dynamic constructions formed through interactions, expectations, and cultural contexts, including technology. In the context of IAIN Curup, librarians are no longer merely technical implementers, but have transformed into social and academic actors who respond to change through interactions with students, lecturers, and the information technology systems used by the campus.

With the advancement of information technology, IAIN Curup librarians carry out new roles as:

1. Digital Information Educator

In the past, librarians focused on managing print collections and circulation services. Interactions with users were transactional: borrowing, returning, or bibliographic recording. Information literacy education was not yet part of the functional responsibilities of librarians. In contrast, in the current digital era, this role has shifted significantly. Librarians now act as educators of digital skills, ranging from introductions to scientific databases, Boolean search techniques, the use of reference management applications such as Mendeley and Zotero, to the ethics of using information sources from generative AI.

Information literacy training conducted by librarians at IAIN Curup is no longer an additional activity, but rather a primary need. Students are faced with a sea of information, so assistance in sorting credible sources is an important task for librarians. This shows that librarians have taken on the role of strategic digital literacy facilitators in the academic ecosystem.

2. Academic Partners

Another change is how librarians no longer stand apart from the learning process. In the past, libraries functioned merely as a support for lecture activities. However, currently, librarians at IAIN Curup are involved in supporting the teaching and learning process, especially those related to the preparation of scientific assignments and theses. They help students formulate keywords, choose relevant journals, and avoid plagiarism. By interacting directly with students and lecturers, librarians become equal academic partners in developing the academic quality of the institution. This role is not structurally determined, but is the result of interaction, trust, and response to increasingly complex academic needs, as explained in Turner's role theory.

3. Knowledge Data Manager

IAIN Curup Library is now involved in institutional knowledge management. Not only do librarians store collections, but they also play a role in managing thesis repositories and metadata management. They also participate in information literacy training and manage access to electronic journals through the campus digital portal. In this context, librarians not

only manage "information" but also "knowledge," which includes context, structure, and appropriate use of information. This is a form of adaptation to the demands of the times that require librarians to have high levels of technological literacy and knowledge management.

According to Turner, this role is not only a structural responsibility but also the result of a role negotiation process influenced by institutional needs, technological developments, and social expectations of users. Therefore, librarians must continue to adapt so that the role they play remains under the demands of the times and supports students' academic success.

Table 2
Comparative Conclusion

Aspect	Medaille (2024)	Walters & Wilder (2022)	Turner (2023)
Focus	Librarians as facilitators and educators in learning environments	Librarians as research informationists and knowledge brokers	Roles as adaptive social actors are shaped by dynamic social contexts
Librarian Position	Designers of instructional programs supporting diverse learning	Integral members of research teams with specialized expertise	Reflective actors adapting to evolving social roles
Challenges at IAIN Curup	Balancing instructional design with user needs and institutional goals	Navigating new responsibilities within traditional librarian roles	Adapting roles without fully developed institutional support
Direction of Transformation	Enhancing learning through theory-based instruction and facilitation	Expanding roles toward research collaboration and knowledge mediation	Strengthening social relations and role flexibility

The advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has radically changed the information landscape. In this era, students not only search for information through books or journals, but also through virtual assistants, intelligent search engines, to generative platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and others. This condition places librarians at a crucial point to review their role in assisting students to manage information critically, ethically, and scientifically. According to Role Theory, developed by Jonathan H. Turner (2023), social roles are not fixed structures, but rather the result of dynamic interactions between individuals and societies that are constantly changing. Librarians in this case play a socially negotiated role; they not only carry out administrative tasks, but also adapt to evolving academic needs and expectations. Turner emphasizes that a role becomes valid if it is carried out in a social context that is appropriate and relevant to the challenges of the times (Turner, 2023).

The interview results showed that the information literacy program implemented by librarians received positive responses from various parties in the academic environment of IAIN Curup. A lecturer emphasized that information literacy has a strong correlation with the quality of student writing. He stated, "If this information literacy program is implemented regularly, I am sure the quality of student writing will improve" (Lecturer 1, interview, April 10, 2025). This statement reflects the importance of the continuity of the literacy program as part of the academic process. Another lecturer highlighted the need for synergy between the library and the academic community, especially lecturers who teach courses. He emphasized that "Collaboration between the library and lecturers needs to be improved" (Lecturer 2, personal communication, April 10, 2025). This shows that the information literacy program is not enough to be implemented

separately by librarians, but must be integrated with the curriculum and lecturers' learning strategies.

From the librarian's perspective, there is an awareness of the low level of information literacy of students, especially in terms of source validity. "There are still many students who are unable to distinguish between valid sources and unreliable ones," said a librarian (Librarian 1, personal communication, April 9, 2025). This indicates an urgent need to provide information literacy guidance that is not only technical but also critical and evaluative. Furthermore, another librarian stated the importance of improving the competence of librarians themselves, especially in dealing with technological developments. "Librarians should be given additional skills in the field of information technology," he said (Librarian 2, personal communication, April 9, 2025). This indicates that the transformation of the role of librarians requires mastery of technology, so that they are not left behind by the dynamics of rapidly developing digital information searches, especially in the AI era.

Meanwhile, from the students' side, the information literacy program was directly beneficial. One student said that the training helped him in various aspects of academic assignments. He said, "We feel helped by the information literacy training, it is easier for us to find references, create scientific papers, do citations, and even write faster" (Student 1, personal communication, April 8, 2025). This strengthens the assumption that systematic information literacy assistance can improve the efficiency and quality of student learning at the tertiary level.

Several practitioners in the library and information world in several countries also have the same view regarding the transformation of the role of libraries, especially in the era of artificial intelligence (AI), among others stating that librarians are required to play the role of:

1. Digital information evaluator who can teach critical skills in assessing AI-generated content.
2. Information literacy educator who develops training curriculum based on real problems in the digital world.
3. Academic collaborators, who work with lecturers to develop research-based learning and ethical use of technology.
4. Curator of trusted sources of information, who guides students in distinguishing between valid sources and biased information generated by automated systems.

Moin Ud Din et al. (2022) emphasized that librarians who are equipped with digital pedagogical training can play a more active role in providing information literacy in a technology-based university environment (Moin Ud Din et al., 2022). In fact, according to Hossain & Sormunen (2025), the involvement of librarians in an AI-based inquiry approach improves students' ability to develop metacognitive skills, something that technology cannot provide instantly (Hossain & Sormunen, 2025).

However, this shift in roles also poses challenges, including:

1. The uncertainty of librarians' professional identity in the digital ecosystem.
2. Lack of training in understanding the ethics of AI use.
3. Lack of institutional support for the integration of information literacy into the curriculum.

Responding to this, Saib et al. (2023) proposed strengthening digital pedagogy as a new role framework for librarians. They emphasized the importance of understanding 21st-century learning principles based on collaboration, creativity, and problem solving, including in the context of using AI (Saib et al., 2023).

Referring to Turner's role theory, the transition of librarian roles in the AI era is not only a structural obligation but part of a social process that relies on the ability to reflect, adapt, and actively interact with the academic community. Therefore, librarians must be empowered as agents of change who facilitate meaningful information literacy transformation, not just as technical implementers of information.

According to Thorn (2021), a librarian at University West, Sweden, showed that the involvement of librarians in information literacy training has a direct impact on improving students' academic writing skills. This study shows that students who receive direct guidance on how to find valid sources of information and integrate them well into their scientific work can produce stronger and more structured academic writing (Thorn, 2022). This is in line with Medaille (2024), *The Librarian's Guide to learning theory*, which emphasizes that librarians are not merely technical facilitators, but educators who are actively involved in the theory-based learning process. The involvement of librarians in Sweden, who assist students in compiling academic assignments, shows that librarian assistance in academic writing is very important to reduce students' dependence on non-credible information. At IAIN Curup, librarians can apply this model by providing academic writing training based on valid scientific references and guiding students to access scientific databases and e-resources more effectively.

In addition, Din et al. (2022) in their study conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan, emphasized the importance of pedagogical training for librarians. This study showed that librarians who were trained in pedagogical skills tended to be more effective in guiding students in information literacy. Librarians who were trained to teach and educate were better able to explain the process of information retrieval, source evaluation, and integration of information into scientific work. By having pedagogical skills, librarians can more easily understand how to deal with students with different levels of ability and adjust their approach in providing services.

At IAIN Curup, the implementation of pedagogical training for librarians is very relevant, considering that students come from various backgrounds with different levels of understanding of information and literacy. This training not only improves the ability of librarians to provide instructions on how to use digital and physical information sources, but also strengthens their competence in designing learning activities that are in accordance with student characteristics.

Hossain and Sormunen (2025) in their research in Bangladesh also emphasized the importance of inquiry-based pedagogical approaches in information literacy learning. This approach emphasizes the process of active discovery and investigation by students in searching and evaluating information. This inquiry approach, which focuses on problem solving and developing critical thinking skills, is very relevant to the *tahqiq* tradition in Islamic studies. *Tahqiq*, which is the process of verifying and clarifying information sources in Islamic studies, requires students to not only rely on available information but also to carefully ensure the validity of the sources. In this context, IAIN Curup librarians can play a key role by teaching students to use inquiry methods in searching for sources, as well as guiding them to evaluate the credibility and validity of the Islamic sources they access.

By using an inquiry approach in information literacy, librarians not only teach students how to find information, but also develop students' critical skills to filter and assess relevant and authoritative information. This is especially important in the digital information era, where information is widely distributed and not all sources are reliable. In this case, IAIN Curup librarians can function as knowledge facilitators, helping students to integrate Islamic values in the use of information ethically and scientifically.

Discussion of Research Findings

The transformation of the role of librarians in higher education environments, especially at IAIN Curup, reflects the ever-evolving social, technological, and academic dynamics. Based on the theoretical perspectives of Medaille (2024) and Walters & Wilder (2022), it can be concluded that librarians are no longer limited to administrative or technical functions but have evolved into active partners in the educational and research processes of the academic community. This role is shaped through continuous adaptation to pedagogical needs, the advancement of information

technology, and the institutional mission of promoting student-centered learning and scholarly development.

According to Medaille (2024), librarians play a vital role as educators within the learning ecosystem. Rooted in learning theories such as constructivism and andragogy, librarians are expected to facilitate active, reflective, and self-directed learning experiences. In this framework, the library becomes a dynamic learning space, and librarians function not only as information providers but as learning facilitators who co-design instructional materials, support the development of critical information literacy skills, and foster a deeper engagement with knowledge. At IAIN Curup, these roles are being manifested through literacy workshops, personalized research consultations, and student guidance in evaluating, citing, and ethically using academic sources. However, these efforts remain fragmented and lack formal integration into the institutional academic framework, pointing to the need for policy support and cross-functional collaboration between librarians and academic faculty.

In parallel, Walters and Wilder (2022) introduce the concept of the research informationist, a role that redefines librarians as integral members of the research process. This role goes beyond traditional reference services, positioning librarians as collaborators in formulating research strategies, managing data, navigating scholarly publishing, and supporting open science initiatives. The research informationist is expected to possess strong analytical skills and disciplinary knowledge to assist researchers in navigating complex information landscapes. At IAIN Curup, this role is beginning to emerge through librarian involvement in assisting students and lecturers with electronic journal access, citation tools like Mendeley and Zotero, and basic research methodology support. Nevertheless, the absence of a clearly defined institutional role or collaboration model often limits the full realization of this potential. To optimize the impact of librarians in research and academic development, institutional support is needed in the form of professional development programs, interdepartmental collaboration, and formal recognition of the librarian's scholarly role.

In conclusion, the evolving role of librarians as both learning facilitators and research partners presents both challenges and opportunities. To align with the theoretical insights of Medaille (2024) and Walters & Wilder (2022), IAIN Curup needs to institutionalize librarians' educational and research roles through curriculum integration, structured collaboration with faculty, and the establishment of librarian development policies that support their dual function in academic life. The contribution of role theory, according to Jonathan H. Turner (2023), further clarifies that social roles are the result of the dynamic construction of social interactions that occur continuously. In this case, IAIN Curup librarians not only carry out structurally determined roles, but also build role legitimacy through interactive processes with academics and campus information technology systems. For example, with the development of digital technology and the emergence of new challenges such as information flooding and biased information from AI sources, librarians are increasingly needed as digital information evaluators and digital learning facilitators.

Librarians at IAIN Curup have taken on an important role as digital information educators. They provide training on Boolean logic-based information search techniques, the use of digital reference applications, and teach ethics in using information from generative sources such as ChatGPT. In an era when students are faced with information in very large quantities and varying qualities, the role of librarians as filters and critical companions becomes very crucial.

In addition, librarians have also played a role as academic partners who assist students in compiling scientific papers, formulating keywords, selecting relevant journals, and understanding anti-plagiarism principles. This assistance not only strengthens students' academic capacity but also creates social relations between librarians and students as fellow subjects in the learning process. Although this role has not been formalized in the academic

structure, the existence of librarians as academic partners has become a reality in field practice. Librarians also play a role as institutional knowledge managers, not only storing information but also managing institutional repositories, digital collection metadata, and access to electronic journals. This role shows that IAIN Curup librarians have begun to move towards knowledge management, which includes organizing, preserving, and disseminating information in an appropriate academic context. However, this transformation is not free from a number of significant challenges. Among them are the unclear professional identity of librarians in the digital environment, limited pedagogical training, and minimal institutional support in integrating information literacy into the curriculum. In response to this, a number of studies recommend that librarians need to be equipped with digital pedagogy training, as proposed by Saib et al. (2023) and Din et al. (2022). Librarians who have pedagogical understanding will be better prepared to be effective educators and able to bridge the differences in students' levels of understanding of information.

In the context of Islamic religious colleges such as IAIN Curup, information literacy also needs to be linked to a deep Islamic approach. Hossain and Sormunen's (2025) research highlights the AI-based inquiry approach as an effective learning method in developing students' critical thinking skills. In Islam, this inquiry process can be linked to the concept of *tahqiq*, namely the process of verifying and clarifying information sources. By guiding students in using the *tahqiq* method, librarians can help instill scientific integrity values that are following Islamic scientific traditions. Thus, IAIN Curup librarians have a very strategic position in assisting students to not only find information, but also interpret and verify the information ethically and scientifically. This approach strengthens the function of the library as an intellectual and moral center in religious colleges.

The transformation of the role of librarians cannot run optimally without systemic support from the institution. Therefore, policies are needed that strengthen the position of librarians as educators, as well as encourage formal collaboration between librarians, lecturers, and academic managers. This can be realized through:

1. Integration of information literacy into the academic curriculum, with librarians as instructors or facilitators.
2. Compilation of information literacy modules based on the needs of study programs and Islamic scientific traditions.
3. Continuous pedagogical and information technology training to improve the professional capacity of librarians.
4. Strengthening the academic network of librarians, both at national and international levels, so that they can exchange experiences and professional development strategies.

Ultimately, the main conclusion of this study is that the role of IAIN Curup librarians is in a complex but promising transformation trajectory. Librarians have demonstrated adaptive capacity as reliable digital information educators, academic partners, and knowledge managers. However, for this transformation to be sustainable and have a broad impact, structural recognition and policy support are needed that support the professional development of librarians. In this way, librarians can truly become agents of change in creating a critical, reflective, and scientifically and ethically responsible academic culture in the Islamic higher education environment.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the role of librarians at IAIN Curup is undergoing a dynamic transformation in response to the digitalization of education, the increasing complexity of academic research, and the evolving expectations of students and

faculty. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Medaille (2024), Walters & Wilder (2022), and Turner (2023), this transformation can be understood as a multidimensional shift in professional identity, pedagogical engagement, and social interaction within the academic ecosystem. From Medaille's (2024) perspective, librarians must be seen as learning facilitators who apply constructivist and adult learning theories to support student development. They are no longer passive service providers, but active participants in creating meaningful learning experiences through inquiry-based instruction, reflective dialogue, and skill-building in information literacy.

At IAIN Curup, this role is expressed through workshops, personal guidance, and values-based learning approaches rooted in Islamic traditions. Building on this, Walters and Wilder (2022) frame librarians as research informationists—professionals deeply embedded in the research lifecycle. They provide expert guidance on information sourcing, data management, and citation practices, and serve as collaborative partners in the academic research process. This role is increasingly relevant at IAIN Curup, where librarians assist students and faculty with academic tools such as Mendeley and Zotero, as well as access to electronic journals and repositories. Turner (2023) further enriches this analysis by emphasizing that roles are not fixed but are shaped through continuous interaction, negotiation, and adaptation to the expectations of other social actors. The librarian's role at IAIN Curup is therefore not static, but is actively negotiated within the institution's social environment—between students, faculty, and administrators. This dynamic process involves balancing traditional technical responsibilities with emerging academic and pedagogical expectations, often without formal structural support. Despite these promising developments, the study identifies several structural and cultural barriers that hinder the full realization of the librarians' potential roles. These include the absence of formal integration of information literacy into the curriculum, limited pedagogical training, and a lack of institutional mechanisms for collaboration with academic staff. These challenges result in ambiguity and undervaluation of the librarian's academic role. Nonetheless, the innovative practices demonstrated by IAIN Curup librarians—particularly their ability to blend digital literacy, research support, and Islamic epistemology—highlight their growing capacity as agents of academic change. To institutionalize this evolving role, higher education leaders must provide clearer role recognition, structured academic collaboration, and sustainable professional development. In the unique context of Islamic religious universities, where critical inquiry and moral integrity must coexist, the librarian is uniquely positioned to bridge modern academic demands with religious values, making them indispensable to the future of higher education.

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