

## The Trail of Knowledge Seekers: A Qualitative Study of User Barriers and Habits in Pontianak City Libraries

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose Reseaech:** This study aims to analyze factors influencing user behavior in searching for information at the Pontianak City Library, identify user habits in using services, and uncover obstacles encountered during the information-seeking process.

**Research Method:** The study employed qualitative methods using in-depth interviews with librarians and four users, non-participatory observation, and documentation.

**Analysis Data:** Analysis data techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was tested using source triangulation, extended observation, and member checking.

**Result:** The results indicate that user behavior is influenced by age, educational background, and information literacy skills. Students primarily utilize the Open Access Plaque (OPAC) and scientific collections to support assignments, while the general public tends to choose popular reading materials such as novels, magazines, and motivational books. The main obstacles encountered include limited information literacy, difficulties in using the OPAC, limited computer and internet facilities, and undisciplined user behavior in returning books.

**Conclusions:** This study provides important insights for libraries to improve facilities, implement information literacy programs, and strengthen the role of librarians as information search facilitators.

**Keywords:** Library User Behavior; Information Search; Pontianak City Library.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Pontianak City Library plays a vital role as a center for literacy and education in West Kalimantan, providing access to information and supporting lifelong learning for all levels of society (Ridlwan, 2025). The library aspires to become a cultural agent in disseminating knowledge and information to the community through its collection of books, information media, and adequate facilities.

The Pontianak City Library provides various facilities to meet the community's needs, such as a comfortable reading room, free internet access, computers for information searches, and seminar and workshop rooms for educational activities (Yuliananingsih, 2015). Its diverse collection of reading materials, ranging from textbooks and reference books to novels and children's books, supports learning and fosters reading interest among the younger generation. Thus, the library is a source of information and a venue for social and cultural activities (Suharti, 2017).

The Pontianak City Library's users comprise a diverse group, reflecting the diverse information needs of the community. Primary visitor groups include

students, the largest and most active segment. They come to seek reference sources and learning materials to support their teaching and learning processes, exam preparation, and research. Statistics on the frequency of visits to the Pontianak City Library show satisfactory figures, with thousands of monthly visitors. Data from the Pontianak City Government records show increased users in recent years, with average daily visitors in 2022 ranging from 200 to 400 people, depending on the activities being held. Further analysis of visitor demographics, such as age group, educational status, and purpose of visit, is helpful for management in tailoring services.

The Pontianak City Library experienced a 50.57% increase in visits, from 23,984 visitors in 2022 to 49,396 in 2023 (Syahrani Siregar, 2024). The average daily visit in the third quarter of 2023 was 98, with the highest peak in September (3,407 visitors) (DPK Kalbarprov, 2023). Modernization of facilities, including digital catalogs and e-books accessed by 978 users in 2023, supports this trend (Library Service, 2023). Data on visits to the Pontianak City Library in 2024 shows a relatively stable pattern with a slight increase compared to the previous year, especially during the active school months such as February, March, and September. The visitor surge occurred during the library's literacy programs and educational activities.

Meanwhile, visits tended to decline during long holidays like June and December. This indicates that most visitors were students seeking assignment references or participating in educational programs. Overall, the visitation trend in 2023/2024 reflects an increased interest in library services as a learning center. While the Pontianak City Library offers various services and facilities, users face challenges searching for information. A key challenge is limited information literacy, making using the library catalog and databases difficult. Many users, particularly students and the general public, are unfamiliar with efficient information retrieval techniques, hindering their ability to access information effectively. Furthermore, difficulties arise in identifying credible information sources amidst the multitude of options available, both in physical and digital libraries.

Another obstacle faced by users at the Pontianak City Library is the quality of service and facilities. Although the reading room is very comfortable and has fast internet access, users complain about a lack of computers, which leads to long queues during peak hours. This limitation reduces the efficiency of information searches. Furthermore, the less user-friendly catalog system makes it difficult for visitors, especially those unfamiliar with technology, to find physical books, leading to frustration (Rijaluddin, 2020).

**Library User Behavior Theory** Library user behavior refers to how individuals navigate, search for, and use library information resources. Library user behavior encompasses the various processes involved in interacting with library resources, from identifying needed information to using and evaluating that information. According to Wilson (2000), information behavior is the totality of actions related to information sources and channels, including active and passive information search and use. Various factors can influence user information-seeking behavior.

Tanjung's (2020) study, "Information Search Behavior in Libraries: A Case Study of a City Public Library," examined user information-seeking behavior and found that information literacy significantly impacted search effectiveness. The study used a survey method with a questionnaire to collect data and conducted in-depth interviews to gain further insight. While providing helpful information, it did not address technological factors that might influence user behavior. 2) Research by Widodo (2019), entitled "Librarian Strategies in Searching for Information in Libraries," explores the information-seeking strategies adopted by users in physical and digital libraries. The results show that users use keywords and search filters to speed up searches. The method used is mixed, namely a survey and analysis of library system usage data. However, this study does not fully explore the influence of digital platforms on user behavior in the context of public libraries.

Although the Pontianak City Library has shown a significant increase in visits, indicating its vital role, there is still a gap between service provision and user effectiveness—primarily due to low user information literacy, limited computer equipment, and an unfriendly catalog system. Therefore, an in-depth description is needed to measure the extent to which these factors collectively influence user information-seeking behavior and satisfaction, which can then be used to formulate more targeted and impactful library service improvements. This study aims to describe certain aspects, such as the quality of facilities, accessibility of information, and user satisfaction. By understanding the factors that influence user information-seeking behavior, libraries can make continuous improvements that suit the specific needs of their visitors.

## B. METHODS

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach to present a complete picture of librarian behavior in seeking information in Pontianak city libraries. Five sources were used: a librarian from the Pontianak City Service Coordinator and five users. These five sources were selected to provide the necessary information to understand service satisfaction, information needs, and user behavior: 1) Senior librarians with technical experience, interactions with users, service constraints, and user needs. 2) Four active users, providing perspectives as users on service satisfaction and information needs. By understanding readers' context, motivation, and experiences when utilizing resources such as e-books and digital journals.

The data sources in this study are parties in the Pontianak city library. The research was conducted at the Pontianak city library at Jalan Sultan Abdurrahman number 15, Pontianak City, West Kalimantan. The time of this research was carried out from July to October 2025. The methods applied in data collection were interviews, observation, and documentation. The techniques applied in data analysis efforts were grouping and categorizing efforts of data obtained from data collection efforts. This process includes efforts to identify patterns of behavior, attitudes, and interactions of library users while in the library. Then the data is interpreted to understand the reasons, motivations, and contexts that influence library behavior. Efforts to check the validity of the data were carried out through cross-checking, triangulation, and member checking. The following table presents informant data.

Table 1. Informan list

Number	Name of Informan	Gender	Date of Interview
1.	Rahmi Maulidhia, S.Hum.	Female	July 31, 2025
2.	Hestia	Female	July 31, 2025
2.	Ika Putri Fadilasari	Female	July 31, 2025
3.	Dunan Laube Ramadhan	Male	July 31, 2025
4.	Ziya	Female	August 03, 2025

Source: primary sata processing 2025

### C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of research conducted at the Pontianak City Library, Pontianak City Library and Archives Service, West Kalimantan. Data were obtained through interviews, observation, participant observation, and documentation. In the first problem formulation, the researcher used observation techniques and in-depth interviews with the service librarian staff resource person, namely Mrs. Rahmi Maulidhia, S.Hum. In the second problem formulation, the researcher used interview techniques, documentation, and observation with the service library staff resource person, namely Rahmi Maulidhia.

In the third problem formulation, the researcher used the same technique with five student informants or active members in the Pontianak city library from the Pontianak PGRI University, namely two people named Hestia and Ika, and two general active members, namely Ziya and Dunan. This research is based on the theory of information-seeking behavior developed by Azzopardi & Zuccon (2015): Starting, Differentiating, Verifying. The data obtained are used to answer the problem formulation and objectives in accordance with those stated in chapter I, namely, knowing the information seeking process, knowing the role of librarians in library utilization and knowing the views of librarians on existing information that shapes librarian behavior in the library, with the title of librarian behavior in the library describes the process of interaction between librarians and various sources of information systematically.

#### a) Factors that influence the behavior of library users in searching for information in city libraries

Some of the main factors influencing information-seeking behavior in the Pontianak city library depend on the age and background of the users. Many children come who are not yet fluent in reading and do not know how to use a computer to operate the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog). Are constrained more often to carry out verbal/physical services like that often for example when parents come we often direct them to the OPAC because if they come a lot of them immediately ask for example directly ask for comics where we direct them, Kindergarten children tend to prefer picture books we give them only that, if elementary school junior high school who can already use a computer we direct

them to type on the OPAC the rest for high school students mothers and fathers they are already literate in using the OPAC sometimes we also direct them and ask what information is needed and directing them is easy to direct them is still safe.

Based on interviews with Ms. Rahmi, information-seeking behavior at the Pontianak City Library is influenced by the age and background of the users. Children who are not yet fluent in reading or computer skills tend to ask more questions directly to the librarian, for example, asking where comics are located. Kindergarten and early childhood education children tend to choose picture books, while elementary and junior high school students are starting to be directed to use the OPAC. Meanwhile, users from high school, university, and adult levels are already accustomed to using the OPAC, making it easier for librarians to direct and guide them. (July 31, 2025).

Research findings indicate that library users' age and cognitive developmental background strongly influence information-seeking behavior. As stated by Al Ayyubi (2024), children in kindergarten and early childhood education are in the pre-operational stage of development, characterized by intuitive and concrete thinking. This explains why library users in this group tend to choose picture books immediately and rely heavily on librarian assistance, as they cannot yet operate abstract systems such as the OPAC. The role of librarians in this context aligns with Margolis' (2020) concept of scaffolding in the Zone of Proximal Development, where guidance helps children achieve abilities they cannot yet achieve independently. Thus, reliance on verbal services is not merely a habit, but a reflection of their stage of cognitive development.

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Besides being influenced by age and background, information-seeking behavior at the Pontianak City Library is also determined by each user's information literacy skills. Not all visitors are accustomed to technology, so some still require guidance in searching for information. Another factor that plays a role is the availability of facilities and infrastructure, such as computers, internet access, and the completeness of the book collection. Motivation and purpose of the visit also influence, for example, students who come to complete assignments will be more serious about using the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) and scientific collections. At the same time, the general public is more likely to seek light reading. The role of librarians is important, especially for children or users who are not yet independent, because direct guidance can expedite the search process. In addition,

the social environment and parental support also contribute, especially for children who still need guidance. Technical obstacles, such as limited computers or disruptions to the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) system, can also affect the smoothness of information searches.

The motivation to search for information is also important and most of the users here are elementary, middle, and high school students, sometimes their parents go on dates or go on dates alone, so librarians must be sensitive and take the initiative in observing the conditions and also in the library, they use self-service, so if the students are ordinary people, they can still be directed. At the same time, the children are helped with typing in the library.

In an interview with Ika, an active PGRI student at the second city library, Ika explained why she preferred the city library to the library at PGRI Pontianak University. Her reasoning was:

This finding aligns with the "Access vs. Ownership" concept in library service theory (Baden et al., 2020). Users seek ownership of information (such as department-specific textbooks) and access to a wide variety of information to enrich their knowledge and gain inspiration. The City Library, with its multidisciplinary general collection, successfully meets this need for broad access. This also relates to the "Information Use Environment" theory (Kim et al., 2020), which states that the information environment (in this case, the library's collection) must align with the needs and expectations of users. For students like Hestia and Ika, a "broad and general" information environment is more engaging and meets their academic needs, which may require more diverse perspectives.

In the third interview with an active member of the city library, Ziya explained why she prefers visiting the library over reading or searching for information online. The reasons are. The fourth interview with an active member of the city library, Dunan, explained why she prefers visiting the library over reading or searching for information online.

Although library services are functioning well, users face several challenges. The main challenges stem from a lack of information literacy skills, the inability of some users to access the OPAC, and the limited availability of specific collections, particularly scientific journals. Technical issues also arise from the limited number of computers and sometimes unstable internet connections. Furthermore, users tend to stop searching after finding sufficient information, thus subtracting from their search results. In this situation, the librarian's role as a helpful and information liaison is crucial. Direct assistance, responsiveness, and guidance in using the OPAC have proven to make it easier for users, especially children and those unfamiliar with technology, to find information more efficiently.

#### **b) Library user habits in using library services**

Library user habits in utilizing services at the Pontianak City Library show differences in usage patterns between university students, pupils, and the general public. Students more frequently use the catalog, reading room, and scientific collections, while the general public utilizes the popular and casual reading rooms.



These habits are formed due to the driving needs and prevailing social norms, as reinforced by Ms. Rahmi.

The study revealed variations in information search behavior based on user type at the Pontianak City Library. Student users tended to utilize more systematic search services, such as online catalogs and scholarly collections, and utilized the reading room as a study space. Conversely, users from the general public more frequently utilized popular reading loan services and used the reading room for leisure activities. Findings from an interview with Ms. Rahmi (July 31, 2025) reinforced this, suggesting that these differences stem not only from differing needs but also from the influence of social norms within their environments.

Based on interviews and observations, user behavior in library services shows varying patterns influenced by individual backgrounds and needs. Students typically use the catalog, reading room, and research collections to assist with learning and academic assignments. The variation in user behavior at the Pontianak City Library proves Case & Given's (2016) theory that information-seeking behavior is strongly influenced by the context of the user's role and environment. Differences in background (students, schoolchildren, community members, children) create different information needs, ultimately giving rise to different search strategies and channels. These findings highlight the importance of libraries not adopting a uniform service approach, but instead developing differentiated and specific services that address the unique needs of each user group, such as OPAC training for students, recreational collection development for the community, and storytelling services involving librarians for children.

The paradigm of the idea used by libraries is the idea that makes users the primary focus of all library activities. Users should indeed be a priority for library managers, because the core of any effort in the service industry lies in how the institution (in this case, the library) treats its customers. (Buwana, 2020).

Library users certainly have different purposes. Some want to sit while waiting for class hours to change, some just to meet friends, but many also come to the library because they want to study, do assignments, and get the information they need. Every library service to users must have an interaction, whether directly or indirectly, and there will be communication between the librarian and the user. Meanwhile, the users served come from various groups with different social, cultural, educational, character, and nature backgrounds. As librarians and library staff, we are required to be able to serve users as well as possible so that users feel satisfied with the services provided. (Hidayati & Suciati, 2020).

### **c) Obstacles faced by users when searching for information in the library**

In addition to factors and habits, this study found several obstacles users face when searching for information. Technical obstacles include limited collections, limited access to scientific journals, and sometimes unstable internet connections. Non-technical obstacles stem more from low information literacy skills, making it difficult for many users to utilize digital services fully. This aligns with the Behavioral Economics in Information Seeking (2023) approach, which states that users often fall into the trap of "initial satisfaction bias," meaning they stop searching after

finding limited information, even if it does not fully meet their needs. In this context, librarians are crucial as information facilitators and mediators. Librarian guidance can help users overcome both technical and non-technical obstacles. Furthermore, social support from friends, lecturers, and learning communities can also mitigate existing obstacles. The concept of Collaborative Information Seeking (2020) supports this by emphasizing the importance of collaboration in information seeking, where individual obstacles can be overcome through cooperation and social interaction.

Based on an interview with Ms. Rahmi, the most common obstacles include the lack of reading materials needed by users, such as incomplete reading materials or reading materials in the OPAC but not on the shelves. Users will ask the librarian. In such cases, we will offer alternatives, such as online PDFs and other journals, and computer searches are available. For example, if a book on the shelf is missing or incomplete, or if the number is damaged or missing from numbers one to seven, or eight, we will collect it and propose it to the Head of Division, and discuss it with the Head of Division. If there is an incomplete collection, we will propose procurement to ensure a complete collection and a tiered system. The librarian will then convey this information to the Head of Division, who will then escalate it to the Head of Department regarding the procurement of reading materials. According to Ms. Rahmi, the most common obstacle is incomplete reading materials; there are even books with skipped pages (for example, from 1-2 directly to 7-8). The solution is for librarians to offer alternative online collections and propose new hierarchical procurement to superiors.

Based on an interview with Ms. Rahmi, one of the main obstacles faced by users at the Pontianak City Library is incomplete reading materials, which manifests in two forms: unavailable collections and collections that are unusable, such as reading materials in the OPAC but not on the shelves or books with skipped pages. This condition hinders users from obtaining complete information and reduces the quality of their experience searching for information. This finding aligns with Azzopardi & Zuccon's (2015) theory of information-seeking behavior, which states that the starting stage involves identifying relevant information sources. When identified sources are unavailable or damaged, disruption occurs, causing failure in the search process and hindering subsequent stages such as chaining (tracing references) or extracting (retrieving information). Such disruptions have the potential to cause frustration and become a barrier to meeting information needs, as stated by Ruthven (2022) in the information behavior model.

In line with this, research (Hidayah & Rohmiyati, 2019) found that disorganized and damaged collection placement reduces library utilization, as users have difficulty finding the needed materials. Furthermore, cases of late book returns and hidden items by users are also recorded as violations that impact the availability of library services. According to Ms. Rahmi, obstacles frequently encountered in libraries stem from user behavior, such as failing to return books to their proper places, hiding items to be reused without borrowing them, and delays in returning books, which result in sanctions. These behaviors impact the orderliness of the collection and hinder other users' access to reading materials—Ms Rahmi's statement (July 31, 2025).



The obstacles faced by the Pontianak City Library, as expressed by Ms. Rahmi, are technical and behavioral. Behaviors such as hiding collections and not returning books to the correct shelves pose significant challenges in circulation management and collection preservation. According to library service theory, user compliance with regulations is strongly influenced by clarity of rules and perceived fairness (Francois et al., 2015). The above findings indicate that there may be gaps in the socialization and enforcement of rules in the library. Similar research by Hidayah & Rohmiyati (2020) also showed that irregular collection placement contributes to low compliance. Therefore, in addition to imposing sanctions, efforts are needed to improve user library literacy and clear signage, as well as create systems that make it easier for users to comply with regulations (such as strategic drop box placement). Without intervention from service management, this behavior will continue and directly impact library performance indicators, namely the availability rate of collections and user satisfaction.

According to Ika, a common obstacle encountered when using the OPAC is when the desired collection or reading material does not appear in the system, even though, after manual checking, the book is available on the shelves with the help of a librarian. This situation indicates that the OPAC data collection is inaccurate, making it difficult for users to find information. The OPAC should facilitate searches and shorten the time users spend finding reading materials. According to Ika, the obstacle experienced is that the desired collection does not appear in the OPAC, even though the book is on the shelf, making it difficult for users to find information.

This finding directly relates to the concept of information system effectiveness explained by DeLone & McLean (2016) or the Information System Success Model theory by Al-Kofahi (2020). According to this theory, data accuracy and completeness (system quality) are fundamental prerequisites for user satisfaction and net benefits. Catalog data inaccuracies, such as those experienced by Ika, lead to low OPAC system quality. Consequently, the primary goal of OPAC as a tool to simplify and expedite information retrieval (net benefit) is not achieved; instead, it creates frustration and hinders the information search process.

Based on these findings, possible solutions include providing a dedicated area for returning books so librarians can rearrange them according to their classification, regularly updating the OPAC catalog data so that the collections on the shelves match the information in the system, and providing information literacy guidance to users to optimize their use of digital services. These efforts are expected to make information searches more efficient, improve collection organization, and maintain user satisfaction in utilizing library services.

## DISCUSSION

Thus, it can be concluded that librarian experience is not an isolated case, but rather a reflection of the system's failure to meet the quality indicators established in various information systems theories. Improvement efforts are needed not only on the user side (user instruction) but also on the library's digital data management side. Consequently, libraries need to implement stricter and more regular data updating and deletion policies to ensure the alignment of digital

records in the OPAC with the physical condition of the collection on the shelves. This is an absolute requirement to ensure the OPAC can fulfill its function as an effective bridge between users and the collection.

Based on interviews and data analysis, user habits in utilizing Pontianak City Library services in West Kalimantan show varied usage patterns influenced by their backgrounds and needs. Students tend to use the catalog, reading room, and scientific collections to support academic assignments, while the general public more often utilizes popular collections such as novels and magazines. Meanwhile, students are more likely to seek out textbooks or supplementary reading materials, and children are generally drawn to the illustrated story collection with the assistance of librarians or parental advisors. Despite the library's diverse services, challenges frequently arise from user behavior and the existing system. Some common issues include irregularities in restocking reading materials, late returns of collections, and hiding books so they can be reread without borrowing them. Furthermore, the OPAC (Open Access Control Panel) utilization is not optimal because some collections are not tracked in the system even though they are available on the shelves. This situation increases the workload of librarians and reduces the effectiveness of services for other users. (Alimi et al., 2019).

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## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results on user behavior in searching for information at the Pontianak City Library, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1. User behavior is influenced by age, educational background, and information literacy skills. Children tend to require assistance from librarians or parents, while students and adults are more independent in using the OPAC and scientific collections. 2. User habits vary according to needs. Students utilize the academic collections and reading room more to support their coursework, while the general public tends to choose popular reading materials such as novels, magazines, and motivational books. 3. The main obstacles users face include limited information literacy, difficulty using the OPAC, delays in returning collections, and the persistence of collections not correctly recorded in the catalog system. Technical barriers such as limited computers and internet access also impact the effectiveness of information searches. 4. The role of librarians is crucial as information literacy facilitators, especially for children and users who are not yet familiar with technology.

To improve service quality and address existing barriers, here are some practical recommendations that can be implemented: Improving User Education Programs: Segmented Training: Conduct regular guidance sessions or information literacy workshops tailored to target users (e.g., "Library Tour & Storytelling" for

children, “OPAC & Online Database Usage Training” for students, and “Introduction to Digital Facilities” for the general public). Simple Guides: Create easy-to-understand guidance materials (brochures, video tutorials, or infographics) on using the OPAC and finding collections on the shelves. System Optimization and Collection Development: Inventory and Catalog Improvement: Conduct a thorough re-inventory (stock take) to ensure all physical collections are accurately recorded in the OPAC system.

To improve service quality and address existing barriers, Balanced Collection Policy: Strengthen collection development policies that focus not only on academic collections but also on expanding popular and current reading collections to meet the needs of the general public. Automatic Reminder System: Implement an automatic reminder system via SMS or WhatsApp to notify users of book return due dates to reduce late fees. Improving Facilities and Infrastructure: Additional Computer Facilities: Gradually increase the number of accessible computers. Internet Quality Improvement: Increase internet bandwidth capacity to ensure faster and more stable access for users needing digital information resources. Librarian Capacity Building and Role: Continuous Training: Regularly training library staff on the latest information technology, communication skills, and practical information literacy teaching methods. Proactive Librarians: Implement a “Librarian on Duty” program in strategic areas (such as near the OPAC terminal) to proactively assist users experiencing difficulties.

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