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## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN DELIVERING INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION LITERACY IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM KNOWLEDGE PROFESSIONALS

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**Abstract:** Teaching librarians are academic librarians who serve academic libraries and are required to teach and deliver instructional information literacy sessions. However, teaching librarians face challenges and barriers in delivering instructional information literacy. This study implemented qualitative research consisting of two rounds of the modified Delphi method, involving ten knowledge professionals spread from teaching librarians, researchers, and academics. A thematic analysis was used in the data analysis, and the findings identified five themes in the challenges and barriers: teaching, technology issues, information, sessions, and modules. Eight themes were generated for recommendations to overcome the challenges and barriers. To address these challenges, institutions can better support teaching librarians in their critical role in fostering information literacy skills.

**Keywords:** Academic Library, Academic Librarian, Information Literacy, Teaching Librarian

### 1. Introduction

Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, librarianship setting has been growing, involving technology, scholarly communication and publications, models in instructional delivery, and students' learning preferences which affected academic librarians, who must cope with setting reformation (McGuinness, 2021). Librarians are in a dilemma due to ICT invading the environment, and they face several challenges (Ubogu, 2021). These changes contributed to new challenges, the lack of online teaching and technology competencies, and being forced to deliver information literacy instruction through online platforms (Ramos Eclevia, 2022). Besides traditional roles as library administrators and gatekeepers of information (Nakitare et al., 2020), academic librarians are required to support teaching in information literacy and research support (Otike et al., 2021; Shoham & Klain-Gabbay, 2019) and to deliver instructional information literacy (Dzulkipli et al., 2024). Teaching librarians are responsible for teaching instructional information literacy (Rath, 2022).

#### 1.1. Research problem

The dynamic change in the higher education environment and the uncertainty in knowledge ecosystems require new attention to focus on basic ideas (Väljataga et al., 2020). Unprepared situations in teaching information literacy at the beginning of their careers led to issues, responsibilities in

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handling classes, and the need to develop skills of pedagogy in information literacy courses (Moser & Abramovich, 2023). Information overload occurs when someone is not literate and is said to be able to utilise information effectively and ethically (Bernard, 2023). The skill of handling an online environment – the need to seek various ways to complete the sessions by using various online platforms – has been considered a competency (Paliwal & Singh, 2021) since the pandemic.

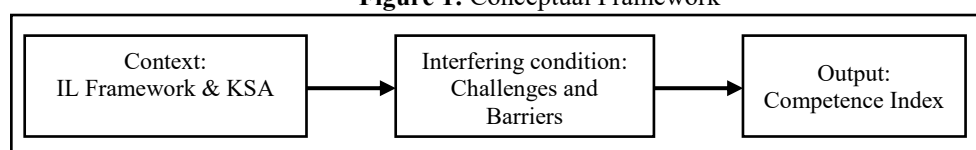
## 1.2. Research objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify key challenges and barriers in practicing teaching librarianship in academic libraries, to analyse the impact on the quality of library instruction and student learning outcomes, and to develop strategies and recommendations to overcome the challenges and barriers.

## 2. Literature Review

Teaching librarians are academic librarians who focus on teaching in higher education, particularly working with disciplinary faculty members in a classroom to advance and nourish the librarian profession (McCartin & Wright-Mair, 2022). Teaching is part of the main task of their daily work (Houtman, 2021), and the roles have grown tremendously in the academic environment and with the integration of technology (McGuinness, 2021). The focus is not only on instructional information literacy sessions but also on teacher development and identities (Baer, 2021) and teaching activities related to information literacy, with the use of technology (Ramos Eclevia, 2022), which include several courses in teaching and learning, such as course designers, content creators, teachers, and library instructional leaders, whether face-to-face or online (Mctavish & Robertson, 2020; Ramos Eclevia, 2022). Collaborations with faculty members to design and deliver subjects embedded in information literacy sessions that are placed within the programs offered by the faculty (Glimstedt et al., 2021) will achieve more fruitful results than libraries alone (Bowles-Terry & Sobel, 2022) to benefit students' learning outcomes. These changes will not put information literacy aside; students still need information literacy where they have the assurance to perform basic information searches and evaluate information (Svensson et al., 2022). Thus, the study identifies and explores interfering conditions in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



## 3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured interview questions. The population and sampling of 10 panels were selected based on these three characteristics: members of university faculty or research institute, researchers in the study area, and practitioners or teaching librarians (Batool et al., 2021; Khavidaki et al., 2022; Lund, 2020; Rajhans et al., 2020). A modified Delphi method was used in the data collection consisting of two rounds. Round one, a focus group interview to elicit expert viewpoints, followed by an open discussion among panels, was split into two sessions: practitioners and researchers/academics. Round 2 panels were required to rank and assess the main obstacles and hurdles faced by teaching librarians to achieve expert consensus. Thematic analysis was used to analyse findings and emerges through themes processed using NVivo software.

## 4. Findings

Demographic characteristics captured ten panels composition and background profiling distributed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Profiling**

Demographic Variable	Numbers	Valid %	Demographic Variable	Numbers	Valid %
<b>1. Gender:</b>			<b>3. Experiences:</b>		
Male	3	30	5-10 years	4	40
Female	7	70	11-22 years	6	60
<b>2. Education:</b>			<b>4. Categories:</b>		
Phd	4	40	Teaching Librarian	6	60
Master	3	30	Academic / Researchers	4	40
Bachelor	3	30			

69 responses were gathered in Round 1; five themes were generated for challenges and barriers, and eight themes were generated for overcoming recommendations. Findings in Round 2: an individual interview identified eight themes, spread to three themes as very important, nine themes as moderately important, and one theme as slightly important. These details are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Themes, Coded References and Mean**

Themes	Challenges and Barriers		Recommendation		
	Mean	References	Themes	Mean	References
Information	3.8	Information literacy	Subject area	3.7	Aware subject area
		Information share			Different area
Issues	3.3	Network issue	Different background	2.8	Different background
		Technical issue	Faculty collaboration		3.9
Module	4.3	Advanced module	Information	4.1	Proactively approach faculty
		Simple (basic) module			Information literacy
Session	3.4	Conducting session	Teaching librarian	3.4	Information needs
		Teaching session			Teaching librarian
Teaching	4.0	Proper teaching training	Upgrade knowledge	3.8	Assistant librarian
		Teaching librarian			Library
		Teaching session	Skills	3.5	Library equipment
					Library science
					Skill enhancement program
					Skills gaps
					Special skills

## 5. Discussion & Recommendations

Panels expressed that information literacy sessions lack a comprehensive module or structure in Malaysian academic libraries, and it has been debated to what extent content should be taught in information literacy sessions among researchers and teaching librarians (Rieh et al., 2022). Since they are still struggling with proper training and teaching techniques to deliver instructional information literacy, the need for teaching proficiency through effective methods should be the main concern (Hammons, 2020). The root cause is that teaching librarians have never been sent to proper training as teaching librarians or in pedagogy skill training, and this has caused teaching to always be a grey area

in librarianship. Affirming the academic librarian's foundation in instruction led to the question of whether they are prepared to teach (Saib et al., 2022), whether they possess the training competencies needed in teaching information literacy. Information sharing is one of the concerns among panels in information literacy sessions. In the interviews, teaching librarians responded that they are overwhelmed with the information they share in information literacy sessions.

A study in Malaysia found that most students in the faculties use search engines such as Google as their primary sources since it is easier than academic journals (Maidin et al., 2022). This is where teaching librarians need clear, basic guidance on how to strengthen the teaching of subject library research modules in a wider range when collaborating with related faculty members (Gupta et al., 2024). Teaching librarians need to make the session and teaching activities more fun, simple, and enjoyable based on their users' needs and level of knowledge. Skills in handling technology among teaching librarians have been one of the concerns since the COVID-19 pandemic, where classes were conducted online and using online platforms such as video conferencing applications, and this caused panic among teaching librarians in coping with this technology. Issues related to technology in their daily tasks as teaching librarians mean teaching librarians need the ability to handle hardware and software technology (Ubogu, 2021), but they often lack the skills in handling technology infrastructure (Mashiyane et al., 2020).

The panels recommended several suggestions or strategies to overcome the challenges and barriers; this includes using information and having connections with faculty members in collaborating on faculty subject matter in the information literacy session. Library management is not being left out in this recommendation since they can allocate the budget by sending the teaching librarians training related to teaching skills and knowledge. Library facilities should be upgraded so that the process of delivering information literacy through online platforms is not affected. Information is crucial, where information literacy enables valuable and efficient teaching and learning (Khan, 2020) and will experience integrative teaching of information literacy to teach subject-specific content to the crowd of information literacy (Baird & Soares, 2020). A collaboration between teaching librarians and faculty for academic purposes is a crucial success point in teaching librarians' skills to enable valuable and efficient teaching and well-off learning (Khan, 2020). With great skills and knowledge in instructional information literacy, a proper module or syllabus of the information literacy curriculum is crucial for an efficient method of delivering instructional sessions (Harrison & Deans, 2021).

## 6. Conclusion

Teaching librarians face quite a challenge and barrier in delivering instructional information literacy. By understanding and addressing these challenges, institutions can better support librarians in their critical role of fostering information literacy skills. Strategies for overcoming these challenges include increasing resource allocation, enhancing faculty collaboration, providing targeted training for librarians, and developing innovative approaches to student engagement. By tackling these barriers, we can ensure that students are equipped with the essential skills needed to navigate the complex information landscape of the modern world.

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