

Librarian's Perspective on Library Usage of Teachers: Comparative Study among Rural and Urban Schools

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Abstract

This study explores the perspectives of school librarians on the usage of libraries by teachers in both rural and urban schools. The study aims to shed light on the crucial relationship between school librarians and teachers, investigating the experiences and opportunities faced by librarians in engaging and supporting teachers in utilizing the library effectively. Data was collected through a survey conducted in the Kandy district, focusing on schools with dedicated libraries. A total of 186 completed responses were obtained. The study found that books, periodicals, and newspapers are the most widely available resources in all areas of libraries, with higher percentages in semi-urban areas. Maps, on the other hand, have a higher percentage of availability in urban areas compared to semi-urban and rural areas. The findings indicate that teachers actively use the library for finding information related to teaching, engaging in activities and projects related to teaching, and preparing teaching notes. However, there are differences between rural and urban schools in library use for specific purposes, such as finding information related to classroom teaching, leisure time, activities related to teaching, teachers' entertainment, and preparing teaching notes. Based on the findings, recommendations were made at the end of the study.

Keywords: Library use, Perspectives, Rural schools, School librarians, Teachers, Urban schools

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Introduction

School libraries are vital resources for fostering positive learning outcomes in any community. (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), 2004; Crossley & Murby, 1994) They are imperative associates to education as well as a base for generating innovative thinking, a stimulus to culture, and an aid to individual self-development (Önal, 2009). As a result, one of the most significant informational resources for both teachers and students to accomplish their educational goals is the school library.

Moreover, school libraries are of great significance to both parties and the entire educational institution as a whole, considering the major role they play in providing high-quality information to their users. The library also has the full potential to improve the quality of educational processes in the school (De la Vega & Puente, 2010). This highlights the importance of libraries in schools, as they provide knowledge and education of good quality to learners and teachers. The function of the school library and the school librarian is growing in prominence in today's rapidly changing educational setting. Since teachers' effective use of school libraries is vital to fostering student learning and academic achievement, school librarians are essential in helping teachers engage with library resources and services.

On the other hand, it is believed that school teachers are the key players in successful education and that their teaching and learning can be enhanced by the establishment of a functional library (Wessels & Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2012). Therefore, it is of prime necessity to conduct studies to examine school teachers' library usage, as some researchers found that the school library was seriously under-utilized by teachers due to various reasons (Martell, 2008; McLelland and Crawford, 2004; Shandu et.al, 2016).

However no empirical research has particularly explored school librarians' viewpoints on how teachers use the library in Sri Lanka. It is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation of the nature of library usage, including how teachers make use of the resources and services offered by the library and to identify any regional variations. This study is designed to investigate the perspectives of school librarians regarding the use of the library by teachers. This study intends to clarify the important relationship that exists among teachers and the school library in the context of education by examining the experiences that school librarians have encountered when

dealing with teachers. The outcomes of such type of research will certainly prove helpful when customizing library services in order to better meet the specific needs of teachers in different regional settings.

Study Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine school librarians' views about how teachers use the resources and services provided by the library, and identify any disparities between locations
2. To analyze the extent of school library usage by teachers, based on the perceptions of school librarians and identify regional variations
3. To propose recommendations and best practices for enhancing teacher library services in light of the information received from school librarians

Literature Review

It has been apparent that one of the most important factors in fostering student academic achievement and learning is teacher involvement with the school library. When it relates to assisting teachers use library resources and services effectively, school librarians are essential. Previous investigations examined the librarian's viewpoint regarding teachers' library usage, providing insight into a number of variables influencing this association.

According to Montiel-Overall (2008), school librarians have identified several key benefits associated with teachers' library use. These benefits include enhanced instructional practices, increased access to diverse learning materials, and improved student outcomes. According to Mokhtar and Majid's (2006) research, there are two elements that can improve the curriculum as a whole and give students access to a more comprehensive education: active school library programs and strong collaborative relationships between teachers and school librarians. It is important to understand that school librarians can help teachers become more competent in their subject areas. While these two professionals work together, they may develop lessons that are more engaging and productive, providing students an enriching and educational experience.

Students are able to become more involved in acquiring new abilities and knowledge as a result of becoming more dynamic and independent learners.

The objective of Bouazza and Al-Mufaraji's study was to discover out the extent what form of use Oman's primary and secondary school teachers employed in their school libraries. The study's findings showed that teachers rarely used school libraries and that there were insufficient resources available, particularly in terms of periodicals, audiovisual materials, computers, and Internet access. Teachers emphasized their displeasure with library services, stressing their perceived lack of development and conventional nature (Bouazza and Al-Mufaraji, 2005).

Kavitha and Chandrashekara (2021) investigated how teachers use the school library and other information sources to engage and inspire pupils. The study's findings showed that secondary school teachers generally made little use of school libraries. Teachers and students can access and apply relevant material for effective learning with the assistance of library orientation or an introductory library instruction course. According to the survey, majority said their libraries had not offered any information or introductory library training sessions regarding the efficient use of libraries.

According to Montiel-Overall and Grimes (2013), administrators should place a special focus on possibilities for cooperation between teachers and librarians if they would like to get maximum benefit from of their library programs, including comprehensive print, digital, and educational technology resources. Principals who recognized the benefit of the library on student learning did, however, also acknowledge that while they greatly value collaboration, it does not happen automatically. It might be necessary to prove to teachers how librarians can serve as educational partners. Additionally, collaborative instruction training is essential for both teachers and librarians.

In the Sri Lankan context very few studies found from the literature. According to Rathnayake's (2013) study, the majority of teachers went to the library to find materials related to the subjects they taught in the classroom. Furthermore, school libraries were utilized by them for reading newspapers (32%) and consulting curriculum-related resources (28%) such teacher's guides and syllabi. The study also showed that by offering additional reading resources that were pertinent to instruction, school libraries supported teachers. When it came to how frequently teachers used the library, the majority (72%) visited only when necessary, and 20% only visited once a week. This reveals how

rarely teachers used the resources. The study also made it clear that the teachers' main library-related challenges were limited time and a heavy workload.

In an investigation into Sri Lankan school teachers' information-seeking behaviors, Gunasekera and Balasubramani (2020) found that the teachers lack confidence in their ability to use libraries effectively and did not regularly visit libraries. It was also found that the respondents expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the inadequate library resources and inappropriate library services and arrangements provided by school libraries. The absence of updated electronic resources and appropriate guidance impeded schoolteachers' use of libraries.

Research Methodology

In order to gather information on school teachers' library use from the viewpoint of school librarians, this study used a survey method. The Kandy area was the setting of the study, which focused on educational institutions with concentrated school libraries. A questionnaire was developed as the main data collection technique for the purpose of obtaining the necessary details. The Kandy district's 267 schools that were reported to have formal school libraries submitted the questionnaire. The information was obtained from the National Library and Documentation Services Board of Sri Lanka's 2018 Statistical Handbook on Libraries in Sri Lanka and the Kandy Zonal Office of the Education Department. (Statistical Handbook of Sri Lankan Libraries, 2018)

All of the schools which were identified were provided with questionnaires, and the survey was conducted in January 2023. The purpose of the study and the importance of participating in the research were emphasized in the accompanying communication to encourage school librarians' cooperation in completing the questionnaires. After the data collecting phase, the participating schools submitted 186 completed replies, representing 64.8% of the total response rate. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used for analyzing the data.

Results and Discussion of the Study

Background information of the respondents

First, Table 1 provides background data on the librarians who completed the survey, particularly their gender, job title, work experience, and location of the school. In terms of the respondents'

demographics, females constituted 92.5% of the sample, while males comprised up only 7.5%. The survey reveals a notable disparity in gender in the field of school the profession of librarianship.

Fifty percent of the sample possessed the post of "Teacher librarian," which was the most prominent among respondents in terms of their current positions. "Librarian in charge" (10.8%), "Teacher" (18.3%), "Librarian" (11.8%), and "Library Assistant" (9.1%) were among the other roles. These different positions demonstrate the broad range of duties available within the school library sector.

The respondents' service periods differed when it came to the number of years in the profession; the largest group (48.4%) had served for more than ten years. A substantial number (25.3%) served for between one and five years, while 15.1% served for between six and ten years. Eleven percent of the group had served for less than a year. Considering the location of the schools, a large percentage of respondents (43%) claimed the schools were located in a suburban area, followed by an urban area (which is almost 35%) and a rural area (21%). Thus, the schools where the respondents were employed a good representation of both rural and urban locations.

Table 1: Biographical Characteristics Distribution

Gender Distribution • Male: 7.5% (14 individuals) • Female: 92.5% (172 individuals)	Work Experience • Less than 1 year: 11.3% (21 individuals) • 1-5 years: 25.3% (47 individuals) • 6-10 years: 15.1% (28 individuals) • More than 10 years: 48.4% (90 individuals)
Current Position at School • Librarian: 11.8% (22 individuals) • Teacher Librarian: 50.0% (93 individuals) • Library In Charge: 10.8% (20 individuals) • Teacher: 18.3% (34 individuals) • Library Assistant: 9.1% (17 individuals)	Location of School • Central City: 34.9% (65 individuals) • Suburb: 43.0% (80 individuals) • Rural: 21.0% (39 individuals) • No Response: 1.1% (2 individuals)

Source: Survey Data

Library Services Available in Schools

Sources of Information

In order to cater to the diverse needs of their users, school libraries should provide a broad array of services. This study examined the information resources available to users and explored whether access to these resources varied depending on the school's location—urban, suburban, or rural.

Figure 1 present the various materials that are available in school libraries in urban, semi-urban, and rural regions. For example, it demonstrates that, across all library locations, books, magazines, and newspapers are the most generally accessible resources, with higher proportions in semi-urban areas. In contrast, a higher percentage of maps were underutilized in urban areas than in semi-urban and rural locations. It's interesting to note that whereas 32.5 percent of schools in suburbs had access to audio-visual resources, just 17 percent of urban schools and 10 percent of rural schools had, respectively.

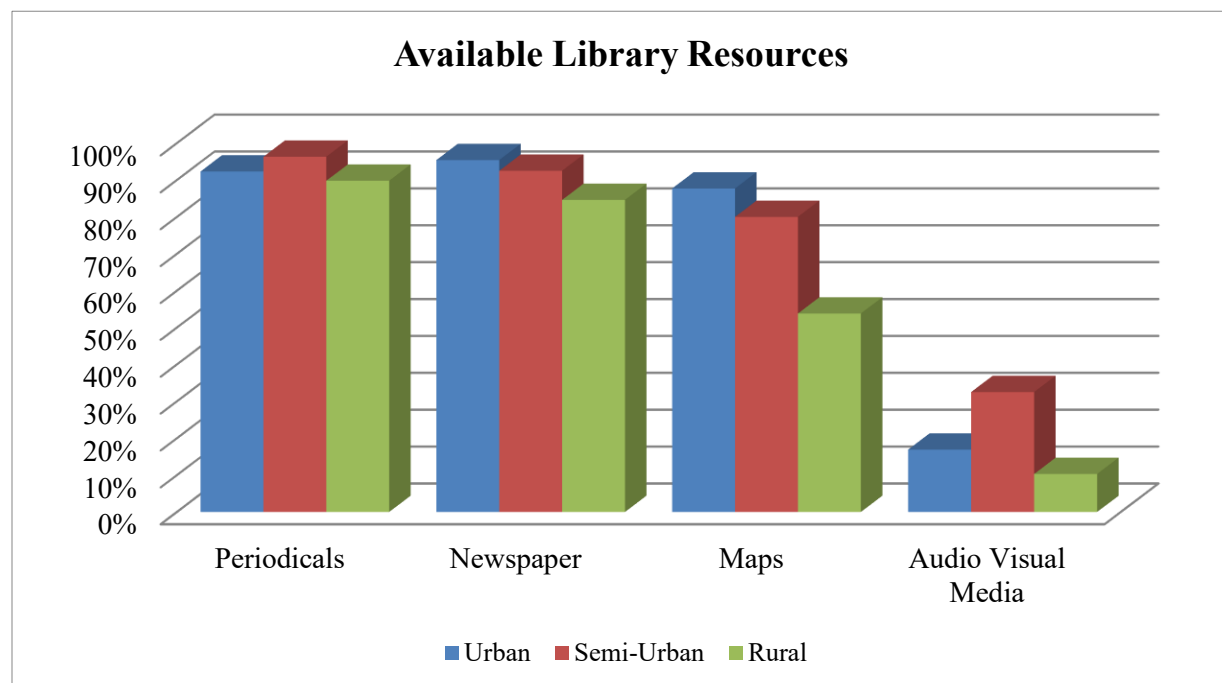


Figure 1: Available Resources for Library Users

It's interesting to note that, while audiovisual materials are available in 32.5% of suburban schools, they are not in 83% of urban schools or 90% of rural schools. The outcomes make it possible for researchers and decision-makers to comprehend how library resources are distributed among various kinds of settings and to discover any possible deficiencies or areas where library services could be upgraded. It can help guide resource allocation decisions to ensure equitable access to information and knowledge for library users in various geographical settings.

Facilities and Services for Libraries

During an analysis of the services and facilities available through the school library, it was explored if these differences existed based on the school's location. Figure 2 demonstrates that while 95 percent of all schools offer reference services, all schools, regardless of location, offer lending services.

It is evident that the majority of urban schools (90%) offer library study spaces, whilst 82% of rural and 81% of suburban schools do the same. The majority of suburban schools (95%) allow students to read periodicals and newspapers, whereas 90% of rural and 88% of urban schools offer similar resources for library patrons. It's interesting to note that a smaller percentage of urban and semi-urban schools (52%) and a bigger percentage of rural schools (69%) have library catalogs for finding books in the library. While 34% of suburban schools offer user education programs to inform patrons about the resources and services available at their libraries, only 23% of urban schools and 10% of rural schools offer the same service.

Photocopying services are offered by more than 56% of semi-urban schools, compared to roughly 37% of urban and 31% of rural schools. It is noteworthy that a mere 3% and 4% of suburban and urban schools, respectively, offer internet searching abilities through their libraries, whereas no rural school provides this service.

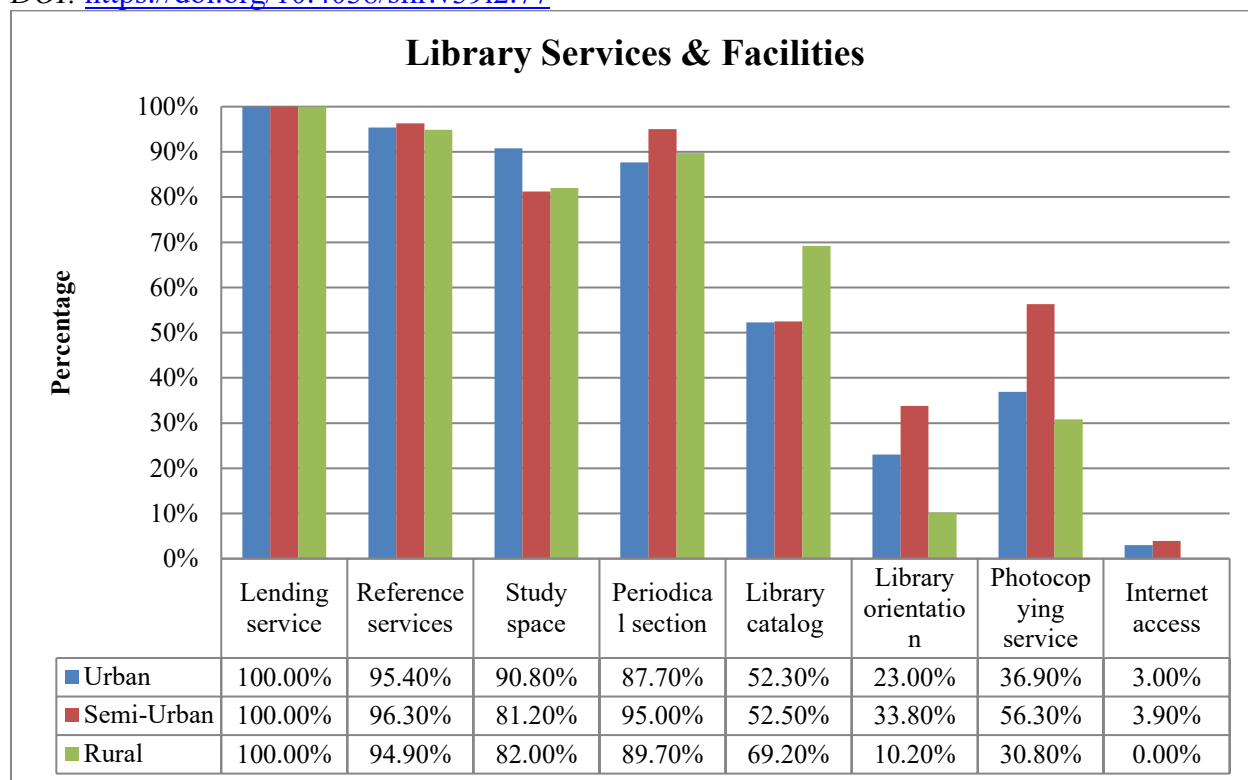


Figure 2: Library Services and Facilities for Library Users according School Location

Library Usage

The results of a study that focused on how teachers used the school library are shown in Table 2. School librarians who were asked to respond to a survey were asked on whether they agreed or disagreed with some factors pertaining to teachers' usage of libraries. A six-point Likert scale was employed for recording the responses; the potential responses comprised 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with 3 (no opinion) standing as the neutral response.

The majority of librarians either strongly agree or agree that teachers use the library to prepare teaching notes, read newspapers & magazines, find information related to teaching, access reference services and for activities or projects related to teaching with having more than 5.0 mean score. These results indicate that teachers actively utilize the library's resources for their professional needs and it suggests that the library plays a role in supporting teachers' instructional and creative endeavors.

Table 2: Library Usage of Teachers

s/ n	Factors/ Attributes	1=SDA No (%)	2=DG No (%)	3= No Opinion No (%)	4=Aver. No (%)	5=AG No (%)	6=SAG No(%)	Total/ Mean Score	SD*
1	Uses the library to prepare teaching notes	3(1.6)	12(11.8)	27(14.5)	41(22)	62(33.3)	15(8.1)	171/ 5.84	1.477
2	Goes to the library to read newspapers and magazines	3(1.6)	9(4.8)	12(6.5)	25(13.4)	87(46.8)	42(22.6)	178/ 5.67	1.33
3	Uses the library to find information related to teaching	3(1.6)	00	18(9.7)	56(27)	76(40.9)	31(16.7)	178/ 5.64	0.942
4	Uses the library to access reference services	00	5(2.7)	36(19.4)	47(25.3)	67(36)	18(9.7)	173/ 5.3	1.090
5	Uses the library for activities/projects related to teaching	6(3.2)	3(1.6)	6(3.2)	27(14.5)	110(59.2)	25(13.4)	177/ 5.28	1.372
6	Gets the support of library staff for book search activities	16(8.6)	21(11.3)	15(8.1)	40(21.5)	54(29)	24(12.9)	170/ 4.78	1.86
7	The library is used for teachers' entertainment	48(25.8)	26(14)	12(6.5)	41(22)	35(18.8)	19(10.2)	181/ 3.88	2.195
8	Active contribute to the work of library by making proposals for library develop.	27(14.5)	39(21)	27(14.5)	25(13.4)	36(19.4)	5(2.7)	159/ 3.8	1.885
9	Searching for books is done through library catalogue	45(24.2)	34(18.3)	9(4.8)	29(15.6)	41(22)	6(3.2)	164/ 3.59	2.133
10	Teachers use the library to spend their leisure time	55(29.6)	36(19.4)	21(11.3)	33(17.7)	13(7)	8(4.3)	166/ 3.14	1.967
Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= No Opinion; 4= Average; Agree 5 = Agree; 6=Strongly Agree, SD*= Standard Deviation									

The table further explicit that a considerable proportion of librarians agree that teachers get the support of library staff for book search activities with having nearly 5.0 mean score ($M=4.78$) which highlights the collaborative nature of the librarian-teacher relationship in assisting with resource discovery.

As presented in Table 2, a substantial number of librarians agree that teachers use the library for their entertainment and actively contribute to the work of library by making proposals for library develop with having average mean scores of 3.88 and 3.8 respectively. Regarding the library catalogue, the majority of librarians disagrees or strongly disagree that teachers search for books through the library catalogue with having 3.59 mean score that suggests that more effort could be made to encourage using catalog for book searching. Interestingly, a considerable proportion of librarians either strongly disagrees or disagree that teachers use the library for leisure purposes or for entertainment with having lowest mean score of 3.14.

Table 3: Results of Chi-square test between School Location and Library Use

	Attributes on Library Use	Chi-square value
		P value*
1	Uses to find information related to classroom teaching	$\chi^2(12) = 35.248$ $p < .001$ Significant
2	Uses for activities related to teaching	$\chi^2(18) = 35.127$ $p < .005$ Significant
3	Uses to spend their leisure time	$\chi^2(12) = 28.431$ $p < .005$ Significant
4	Uses for teachers' entertainment	$\chi^2(18) = 36.356$ $p < .005$ Significant
5	Uses to access reference services	$\chi^2(12) = 12.127$ $P = 0.436$
6	Uses to prepare teaching notes	$\chi^2(21) = 42.473$ $P < .004$ Significant
7	Gets support from library staff for book searching	$\chi^2(18) = 29.089$ $p < .005$ Significant
8	Give proposals for library development	$\chi^2(12) = 18.639$ $P = 0.098$
9	Searching for books is done through library catalogue	$\chi^2(18) = 23.270$ $P = 0.180$
10	Goes to the library to read newspapers and magazines	$\chi^2(15) = 43.497$ $p < .001$ Significant

Comparisons Made in Relation to School Location and Teachers' Library Use

The study conducted chi-square tests of independence to investigate variations in library use among teachers from urban, semi-urban, and rural schools. The results indicated a strong correlation between school location and different factors related to library use. (See Table 3)

Teachers' use of the library to find information for the classroom varied considerably across locations ($p < 0.001$), implying that libraries support instruction significantly depending on the location. For teaching-related activities, a significant association also emerged ($p < 0.005$), indicating that the resources available in urban and rural locations influence various demands and practices. There were strong location-based disparities in teachers' entertainment ($p < 0.005$) and leisure activities ($p < 0.005$), that may be attributed to differences in availability of recreational resources. There were substantial variations in the preparation of teaching notes ($p < 0.004$), indicating that different teachers use libraries for different purposes. The extent of assistance provided by library staff for book searching ($p < 0.005$) showed a significant difference as well, suggesting differences in support depending on the location of the school. There was a significant correlation between location and reading newspapers and magazines ($p < 0.001$), which could be attributed to variations in access to periodicals.

On the other hand, there was no significant difference in the use of the library catalogue for book searching ($p = 0.180$), making suggestions for library improvement ($p = 0.098$), or obtaining reference services ($p = 0.436$) depending on the school. These results highlight the necessity of customized library services to address the specific needs of teachers across different contexts. Through being aware of these variations, school libraries can better allocate resources and provide better services.

Conclusion

With an emphasis on the perspectives of school librarians in the Kandy district, this study highlights the important part which school libraries serve in satisfying the educational needs of

teachers. The outcomes indicate that basic resources like books, magazines, and newspapers are usually available at all school locations. However, there are notable disparities, especially among urban, semi-urban, and rural areas in regards to the availability of resources like maps and audio-visual materials. The differences emphasize the significance of dispersing resources equitably in order to offer all teachers with the resources necessary to carry out their duties.

Teachers regularly used libraries for a range of job- related duties, such as preparing lesson plans, searching teaching-related information, and engaging in teaching-related activities. Even with this active usage, there are still significant disparities in the way urban and rural school teachers use these resources. Geographical variations are significant when it comes to factors like staff support, availability of recreational resources, and leisure time spent in libraries.

The study highlights how important it is for teachers and librarians to cooperate effectively to optimize the advantages of library services. It is essential that library services be tailored to the particular needs of teachers in different settings in order to further improve their efficacy and facilitate their continuing development as teachers.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that, for fair distribution of materials among urban, rural, and semi-urban regions, libraries should have internet access, audio-visual materials, and maps.
2. Specialized support services for teachers should be improved, such as instruction on how to use digital resources and the library catalog efficiently. This will help address the need for using catalogues for book searching.
3. It is recommended to provide school librarians with continuous professional development opportunities so that they can acquire the skills required to assist teachers more effectively. Training should address customer service, resource management, and digital literacy. This recommendation is affirmed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA, 2015) guidelines for school libraries, which suggest that professional development for teachers is one of the core pedagogical activities school librarians should focus on.

4. Collaboration and engagement should be fostered by creating an environment where teachers and librarians interact more closely. Offering them the chance to provide input and suggestions for library development encourages a sense of purpose and practical engagement with the library's growth.
5. Library services should be tailored to each user's specific needs. While rural libraries might prioritize developing access to digital resources and reference services, urban libraries could focus more on offering study areas and recreational opportunities.
6. It is recommended to promote services for teachers' use of the library's resources by emphasizing how these resources help their professional development and teaching ability. Regular orientations, workshops, and educational programs can increase awareness and promote the use of resources available at libraries.

By implementing these suggestions, school librarians in both rural and urban schools can improve their role in providing assistance to teachers and students, optimize library services, and promote a culture of lifelong learning. In conclusion, this will result in better learning opportunities and enhanced professional growth.

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