

# Smart Society Development through the Initiation of New Library Infrastructure Development in Gowa Regency

Muhammad Nurfajar Syafar<sup>1</sup>, Kianto<sup>2</sup>, Aswar Annas<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> Universitas Pepabri Makassar & Jl. Letjend Hertasning No. 106 Kota Makassar *Corresponding Author: aswarannas@unpepabri.ac.id* 

## **Keyword:**

Smart Society; Digital Library; Digital Literacy; Government Support. **Abstract:** This research discusses the Gowa Regency Government's initiative to build a new library infrastructure as a step towards developing a smart society. In this ever-evolving information age, libraries are places to read books and knowledge centers that support digital literacy and intellectual growth. Data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The analytical tool that is maximized is Nvivo 12 Plus. The research results show that constructing a new library infrastructure has increased people's access to digital knowledge and literacy. Inclusive design has enabled the participation of all walks of life, while digital library services have expanded the range of educational resources. Government coordination has also supported efficiency in project implementation. However, low digital literacy and data privacy protection require further attention. This research provides an in-depth look at how library infrastructure development can contribute to developing a smart society, with particular attention to the still-needed improvements.

#### Kata Kunci:

Smart Society; Perpustakaan Digital; Literasi Digital; Dukungan Pemerintah Abstrak: Penelitian ini membahas inisiatif Pemerintah Kabupaten Gowa dalam membangun infrastruktur perpustakaan baru sebagai langkah menuju pengembangan smart society. Dalam era informasi yang terus berkembang, perpustakaan bukan hanya tempat untuk membaca buku, tetapi juga pusat pengetahuan yang mendukung literasi digital dan pertumbuhan intelektual. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Alat analisis yang dimaksimalkan yaitu dengan Nvivo 12 Plus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembangunan infrastruktur perpustakaan baru telah meningkatkan akses masyarakat terhadap pengetahuan dan literasi digital. Desain yang inklusif telah memungkinkan partisipasi semua lapisan masyarakat, sementara layanan perpustakaan digital telah memperluas cakupan sumber daya pendidikan. Koordinasi pemerintah juga telah mendukung efisiensi dalam pelaksanaan proyek. Namun, tantangan seperti literasi digital yang rendah dan perlindungan privasi data perlu diperhatikan lebih lanjut. Penelitian ini memberikan pandangan mendalam tentang bagaimana pembangunan infrastruktur perpustakaan dapat berkontribusi pada pengembangan smart society, dengan perhatian khusus pada upaya perbaikan yang masih dibutuhkan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Libraries have a critical urgency in the development of society and the development of a country (Bangani & Dube, 2023). Libraries can become information centres that provide easy and fast access to various information sources (S. Gul & Bano, 2019), be it books, journals, articles or other digital publications (Mehta & Wang, 2020). With the presence of a library, people can easily access information and develop the skills needed (Li et al., 2019). Libraries can be a means to increase literacy and community knowledge (Aabø, 2005; Lynch et al., 2022). Libraries also have an essential role in preserving the culture and history of a country or region (De Paor & Heravi, 2020). In libraries, many books and documents can provide an overview of the history and culture of a place, as well as help maintain and preserve this cultural and historical heritage (Hartman-Caverly & Chisholm, 2020). In addition, the library also plays a role in the development of an smart society, namely, a society that is intelligent and highly competitive (Bi et al., 2022; Ozeer et al., 2019).

This shows that a smart society can also be associated with an intelligent society. A smart society is identified as a society that can utilize information and communication technology to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity (Thakur et al., 2022), and positively contribute to the social and environmental environment (Verma, 2022). In a smart society, people have easy and broad access to information and knowledge and can use information and communication technology effectively and creatively. Another study shows that a library can be essential in building a smart society. As a centre for information and knowledge, libraries can help people access information and knowledge resources that can improve people's quality of life (Leorke et al., 2018). Therefore, building a library is essential in building a smart society.

One of the district governments in South Sulawesi Province, namely Gowa Regency, also initiated the idea of a smart society by constructing a new library (Pemerintah Gowa, 2022). In its construction, the Gowa Regency Government received a fairly large budget, namely 10 billion from national library assistance. The Gowa Regency government has also allocated the 2022 Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) amounting to more than IDR 2 billion to complete the required facilities. Since opening to the public on November 16 2022, this library service is claimed to be busy with various literacy activities and filled with students. The newly built library consists of four floors with representative rooms and is equipped with a rooftop for relaxing. The new Gowa library also has a mobile library car facility, which the Director of the National Library handed over. The library is also integrated into the e-library system in the form of the I-Gowa application. The number of book collections available is 11,271 copies, totalling 4,601 titles (Redaksi Radsel, 2022).

The concept of a "smart society" has been the focus of several global studies that are driving a fundamental transformation in how we design, manage, and interact with our cities and communities. This involves leveraging advanced information and communications technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), data analytics, and artificial intelligence, to improve citizens' efficiency, absorption, and quality of life (Chen et al., 2023; M. J. Gul et al., 2021). In a smart society, infrastructure and public services are well integrated, including transportation, energy, education, and health services, to create an environmental society that is safer, environmentally friendly, and responsive to needs, bringing the potential to change the way we live our daily lives significantly (Chen et al., 2023; M. J. Gul et al., 2021; Muhammed et al., 2020). In the smart society concept, libraries can also be an important part of the supporting infrastructure supporting community growth and learning (Zhou & Kondo, 2021). Modern libraries have adopted information and communications technology to provide broad access to digital resources, such as e-books, online journals, and research databases (Moyo, 2004). This helps improve access to education and information for the community. Additionally, libraries can serve as community development centers by holding various programs, such as technology workshops, digital training, and discussion group meetings, that support technology understanding and skills for city residents.

There still needs to be more to find in studies or research results that are more specific and simultaneous in linking the topic of smart society with the government's efforts in developing regional libraries, especially taking case studies in the Gowa Regency. This argument is, at the same time, a form of novelty in this research, especially in linking studies on local government efforts in developing smart societies through the initiation of the construction of a new library infrastructure in Gowa Regency. However, some literature or previous research results are still considered relevant. First, libraries can be important in building a smart society (Cox et al., 2019). Second, the government is responsible for building and maintaining libraries as information and knowledge centres for the community (Jaeger & Bertot, 2011). Third, the government can allocate a budget for library development as part of a national development program that benefits the community (Okyere-Kwakye & Md Nor, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to fill the research gap left by previous researchers, especially in analyzing studies on local government efforts in developing smart societies through the initiation of new library infrastructure development in the Gowa Regency. This research

question is described in several sections. (a) What are the efforts of the Gowa Regency government to create a smart society through regional libraries? (b) Does the regional library infrastructure reach the public digitally? (c) What are the challenges for local governments in realizing a smart society with the currently available local library infrastructure? These three questions can provide answers about the efforts and challenges of the Gowa Regency government in developing a smart society through the initiation of building a new library infrastructure. The answers to these three questions can also be used as material for evaluating the local government of Gowa Regency in the future in improving the service and quality of regional libraries that are more adaptive to support the development of a smart society.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research method uses a qualitative approach. The data collection stage involves interviews, observation, and document review. Interviews were conducted by considering informants who were considered relevant and related to the formulation of research questions. Interviews were conducted at the Gowa Regency Library and Archives Service. Research observations were made by directly observing the infrastructure and facilities of regional libraries in Gowa Regency. Document review is done by conducting an in-depth study and examining the literature on the website or library building. In addition, document review is also carried out by collecting other relevant documents. The stages of processing and analyzing the data are carried out by presenting, reducing, and drawing conclusions. The research data that has been processed is then validated by triangulating the research data. The data is then coded on the data using Nvivo 12 Plus. Nvivo 12 Plus is used to support qualitative data analysis and help researchers map the results of their analysis (Baharuddin, Jubba, et al., 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2023). The research results that have been processed are then analyzed to answer research questions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## The government's efforts to realize a smart society through regional libraries

In general, governments in many countries, including Indonesia, have also initiated the idea of a smart society (Foresti et al., 2020; Holroyd, 2022; Rifaid et al., 2023). The Gowa Regency Government has also taken progressive steps to realize the vision of a "smart society" through regional libraries. These steps reflect the government's efforts to bring digital transformation and increased access to information to the public. Information is currently crucial (Baharuddin, 2020; Baharuddin, Qodir, et al., 2022). In this context, the Gowa Regency government has made several important efforts, including the following:

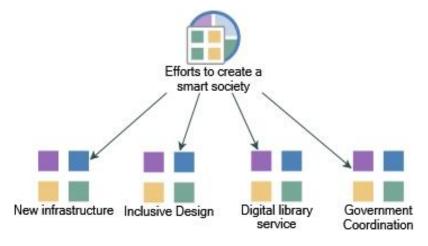


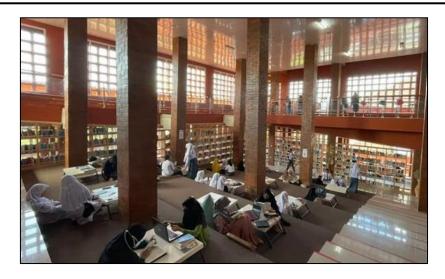
Figure. 1
Efforts to realize a smart society through the development of regional libraries
Source: Maintained by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2023

The government is making ambitious efforts to create a smart society through local libraries. These steps include building new infrastructure, inclusive design, improving digital library services, and government coordination. Through this combination of efforts, they hope to create a more technologically connected, informed, and inclusive society, which will greatly benefit the Gowa Regency's and its citizens' development. The construction of new infrastructure is crucial in realizing a smart society through regional libraries. It creates physical facilities that support access to information and knowledge.



Figure. 2
Library with new infrastructure
Source: Researcher documentation, 2023

Library development with new infrastructure brings several significant advantages. Modern and well-maintained infrastructure creates a comfortable and attractive environment for visitors, encouraging them to use the library facilities actively. Modern research rooms, computer equipment, and fast internet access facilitate learning and research. In addition, new infrastructure can create traction for local communities, inviting a wider variety of community meetings, cultural events and educational activities. Thus, the new infrastructure in the library supports increased literacy, education, and intellectual growth in society. However, criticism may arise if proper maintenance does not match infrastructure development. New library buildings may seem grand initially, but if they are not properly maintained, they will quickly suffer wear and tear. In addition, the location of the infrastructure is also very important. If libraries are not easily accessible to the public, then investment in infrastructure may not deliver the expected benefits. In addition, new infrastructure development is also balanced with inclusive building designs.

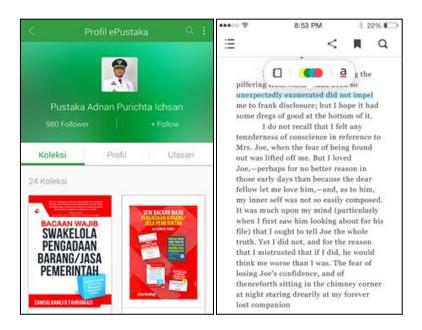


Figures. 3
Inclusive library design
Source: Researcher documentation, 2023

The construction of new infrastructure balanced with inclusive building design is important in realizing a library that supports a smart society. Inclusive design means considering the needs of all members of society, including those with physical or sensory disabilities (Bianchin & Heylighen, 2017; Patrick & Hollenbeck, 2021). In the context of libraries, this has a significant positive impact. One of the main aspects is accessibility. With an inclusive design, the library is accessible to everyone, including those using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. This is an ethical obligation and provides broader access to educational and information resources. The inclusive design also includes amenities such as disability-friendly restrooms, hearing aid devices, and braille signs to assist visitors with various needs. This creates a more positive and accessible experience for everyone.

Inclusive building design in libraries is very important because it supports inclusivity and equal access to knowledge. Not only that, but this also reflects the spirit of a progressive government that cares about its people's welfare. Additionally, it creates a friendly and comfortable environment for all visitors. This means the library is a place to study and read and meet, interact and share experiences. This creates an inclusive society and encourages a wider exchange of ideas and knowledge. Overall, constructing new infrastructure that prioritizes inclusive design in libraries is a positive step towards realizing a smart, inclusive, connected society with modern technology. It is an investment in a better future, where everyone has equal opportunities to access knowledge and participate in the development of society.

Apart from that, the development of new infrastructure is also balanced with a digital library service system.



Figures. 4
Digital library services
Source: Researcher documentation, 2023

The digital library in Gowa is an example of a modern library model that allows people to access knowledge resources without visiting the library physically. This system is designed to provide easy and extensive access to various collections of books, journals, papers, and other educational materials through an integrated platform. The public can access it remotely via the library website or mobile applications available for various devices. Users can search, borrow, and read digital materials through websites and applications. This makes it efficient to obtain information and educational resources without coming directly to the library building. This approach also helps increase inclusivity, accommodate different types of learners, and promote digital literacy in the community. With reliable and integrated access to library collections, the people of Gowa can continue developing their knowledge, following the latest developments in various fields, and supporting their intellectual growth without geographical barriers. This is an example of how digital libraries connected to technology can play an important role in creating a smart society responsive to educational and information needs.

Digital library services provide several significant advantages, including easy and fast access to various educational and information resources without being limited by geographic or time boundaries (Alzahrani et al., 2019; Barfi et al., 2023). People can easily access a collection of e-books, scientific journals, educational materials, and various other digital resources from the comfort of their homes. This not only increases the accessibility of information but also supports lifelong learning, facilitates research, and helps reduce printing and distribution costs. With more people able to tap into this information and knowledge, digital library services play a key role in building a smarter, technology-connected and innovation-enabled society.

Providing access to digital library services is a positive step towards a smart society. This allows people to access resources online (Nahak & Padhi, 2019). However, it is important to address issues of accessibility and digital literacy. Only some have access to devices and the internet; some may need the necessary technology skills (Baharuddin et al., 2021; Baharuddin, Sairin, et al., 2022). Therefore, providing adequate training and support to the public to utilize these digital services is important. In addition, data protection and user privacy must also be a focus to avoid potential risks related to information security. This problem is a general challenge that can arise in adopting a digitalization approach (Alharbi et al., 2021; Alrubaiq, 2021).

This trend is also based on the efforts made by the government through coordination. Government coordination in efforts to realize a smart society through regional libraries is a key step to ensure that all relevant resources and initiatives run efficiently and are integrated. This allows different government departments and agencies to collaborate, avoid overlap, and allocate resources wisely. Coordination also promotes the exchange of ideas and best practices between the entities involved, creating the cooperation necessary to achieve the larger goals of a smart society. The steps taken by the Gowa Regency Government to build a modern public library building with the assistance of Special Allocation Funds (DAK) from the central government is a very positive initiative. This shows the government's commitment to developing the world of literacy and providing the public with easier access to knowledge. The construction of a library building located on Jalan Masjid Raya, which has plans to be not only a place to read books but also a children's play space, a gathering place for the younger generation, and access to digital information, reflects an inclusive and comprehensive vision to utilize the library as a centre for education and culture.

However, it is important to emphasize that the physical construction of libraries is only one aspect of a larger effort to create a smart, technologically connected society. Government coordination is needed to integrate libraries with other initiatives supporting learning and literacy, such as digital education and skills training. As mentioned by the Regent of Gowa, the development of digital library services will also require appropriate coordination and investment. The synergy between these various programs and initiatives will help create a broader and more effective education ecosystem in the Gowa Regency. With the construction of library buildings aimed at increasing interest in reading and educating the public, government coordination can ensure that resources and efforts are well coordinated to achieve this goal. Apart from that, the commitment to continue monitoring development progress and providing digital library services illustrates the government's seriousness in ensuring the library becomes a comprehensive modern literacy centre in the Gowa Regency.

The government is taking ambitious steps to transform regional libraries into the main catalyst in realizing a smart society. First, constructing new infrastructure provides a modern and comfortable physical foundation for people to seek knowledge and information. However, it is important to note that inclusive design is an integral part of this process, ensuring that libraries are accessible to all members of society, including those with disabilities. Furthermore, improvements in digital library services open the door to wider access to educational resources and knowledge, enabling people to learn and innovate in an ever-evolving digital world. All this will only be achieved with good coordination between the government departments involved, aiming to unite efforts to create a smart, inclusive and connected society with modern technology. Through these steps, regional libraries in Gowa Regency function as crucial transformation centres in providing the entire community equal access to education, digital literacy and knowledge. With modern infrastructure, inclusive design, innovative digital services, and effective government coordination, the Gowa Regency Government strives to create a smart and connected society, bringing sustainable benefits to the region's development and its citizens.

# Library infrastructure: Reaching the public digitally and its challenges

Regional library infrastructure that allows reaching the public digitally is one of the key components in the government's efforts to create a society that is smarter and connected to technology. In the modern information age, where digital access is becoming increasingly important, regional libraries function as physical places to read books and virtual portals allowing people to access educational resources, literature and knowledge online (Leorke et al., 2018). In this context, let us explore a deeper critical analysis. Library infrastructure that can reach the public digitally is an important evolution in the role of libraries in modern society (Jaeger et al., 2012). This allows libraries to remain relevant in the digital age, where much information and resources are available online. The main advantage is increasing the accessibility of knowledge. With digital resources, people can access thousands of books, scientific journals, online courses

and other educational materials without having to be in a physical library. This is a positive step in overcoming geographic and financial barriers that may hinder access to educational resources.

However, several challenges must be overcome. Consistent internet access is key. Not all people have fast and stable internet access. Therefore, the government must invest in internet infrastructure to ensure equitable accessibility (Cahyadi et al., 2022). Apart from that, digital literacy is key. Communities need the skills to use digital libraries effectively, including the ability to search, evaluate and process digital information. Governments and libraries need to provide adequate training to address this. Furthermore, data protection and user privacy are important issues (Rahmanti et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019). When using digital library services, users often have to provide personal information. Governments and libraries must ensure that this data is protected and not misused. Additionally, libraries need to consider copyright and access permissions for their digital materials.

To overcome challenges in library infrastructure that make it possible to reach the public digitally, the Gowa Regency Government must consider a series of comprehensive and sustainable steps. *First,* they must prioritize investing in strong internet infrastructure. This includes ensuring quality internet access throughout the district, including rural areas. Partnerships with local or national internet service providers help ensure that this infrastructure develops equitably. *Second,* digital education efforts must be strengthened. The government can collaborate with educational institutions and libraries to provide digital literacy training for citizens. This may include training in online information retrieval, software use, and understanding online privacy. By increasing digital literacy, people will be better prepared to utilize digital library resources (Baro et al., 2019; Rafi et al., 2019).

Third, data protection and user privacy must be a priority (Rahmanti et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019). The Gowa Regency Government must adopt strong policies to protect digital library user data. They must also coordinate with third parties providing digital services to ensure user data is not misused. Law enforcement regarding data privacy must also be strengthened. Fourth, partnerships with the private sector can help access richer and more diverse digital libraries. Technology companies and digital book publishers can collaborate with governments to provide free or paid access to valuable digital resources. Lastly, effective communication with the public is also very important. The government must actively educate the public about the existence and benefits of digital libraries and how to access and use them. This can be done through public campaigns, workshops and active promotions. Overall, overcoming digital library infrastructure challenges requires a holistic approach. By investing in infrastructure, digital literacy, data protection, strategic partnerships, and effective communication, the Gowa District Government can make its digital library a valuable resource for the community, helping achieve its vision of a smart society.

## **CONCLUSION**

To realize a smart society through regional libraries, the Gowa Regency Government has taken ambitious steps involving building new infrastructure, inclusive design, improving digital library services, and government coordination. These are important steps in bringing digital knowledge and literacy to society more evenly. However, challenges such as strong internet access, digital literacy, and data and privacy protection must be managed wisely to maximize the benefits of these digital libraries. The Gowa Regency Government needs to invest in strong internet infrastructure, organize digital literacy training, prioritize a strong data privacy policy, establish strategic partnerships, and improve communication with the community. With this holistic approach, they can achieve their vision of creating a society that is intelligent, inclusive, and connected to modern technology through libraries that become comprehensive educational and cultural resources. With a strong commitment and the right steps, regional libraries in the Gowa

Regency have the potential to become an important pillar in developing an intelligent and informed society in today's digital era.

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