

From Village Square to Digital Space: The Reality of Digital Transformation in The Library and Archives Department of Siak Regency

Fitri Hardianti¹; Wahyudi Kumorotomo²; Widodo Agus Setianto³
Mahasiswa Program Doktor Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Gadjah Mada¹
Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Islam Riau¹
Departemen Manajemen dan Kebijakan Publik, Universitas Gadjah Mada²
Departemen Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Gadjah Mada³

Correspondence author's email: fitrihardianti1994@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

Digital transformation has become a mandate for all agencies, including the Library and Archives Office (Dispusip) of Siak Regency. This transformation faces significant resource constraints, inconsistent infrastructure, and fundamental questions about institutional relevance. This study aims to explore how the Library and Archives Office of Siak Regency navigate digital transformation. Using an exploratory qualitative method, which combines observation, interviews, and documentation as forms of data collection to analyze the reality of digital transformation occurring at the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office. Data analysis techniques use Miles and Huberman, and data validity checks use triangulation. The reality of digital transformation implementation at the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office is viewed from the theory of structuration, seen from three (3) dimensions of structure, including significance (system of meaning), where this dimension looks at how meaning is constructed and shared within the institution. Dominance (power relations), which examines how power is distributed, exercised, and maintained. Finally, the dimension of legitimacy (normative framework) is examined, where the introduction of digital transformation has led the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office to selectively integrate traditional norms into digital norms. In addition, structuration theory distinguishes three levels of actor awareness, namely practical awareness, discursive awareness, and motivation.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Structuring, Library and Archives Office, Siak Regency

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 10 years, the Indonesian government has been implementing a plan called the Indonesian Broadband Plan, which aims to connect the Indonesian people to a reliable internet network. The plan, which was realized through the construction of a backbone network known as the

Palapa Ring project, also collaborated with the private sector, which provided middle mile and last mile networks, thereby increasing penetration in urban and rural areas of Indonesia. There has been a proven increase in the percentage of internet penetration in urban areas from 25.84% in 2014 to 76.30% in 2023. Similarly, in rural areas, the percentage increased from 8.37% in 2014 to 59.33% in 2023. These collaborative efforts have not only improved internet connectivity but also created a number of innovations that make people's lives easier. Both the private sector and the government are working to develop various applications to improve public services (Think Policy, 2024).

This noble goal is supported by a central government policies on digital transformation, which are reinforced by legal frameworks such as Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2025 and the 2025-2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), in line with the vision of “Indonesia Emas 2045” (Golden Indonesia 2045) and “Pemerintah Digital” (Digital Government) (Indonesia.GO.ID, 2025).

The dominant narrative regarding digital transformation in the development of Indonesian public institutions has led all institutions in Indonesia to rush to develop various programs and innovations. One of them is the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office, which initially functioned as a “Village Square,” a gathering place for the community, in carrying out its role as an agent of social inclusion that is open to all levels of society (Kurniasih & Saefullah, 2021), exchanging information, or as a means of education (Al-Ghiffary & Dewi, 2025), preserving collective memory (Susana, 2025), and reproducing local knowledge (Purna Putra, 2017). In summary, it can be said that the Library and Archives Office had a socio-cultural function. However, with the advent of digital transformation, there will be a shift from the conventional to the digital realm, and the functions carried out by the Library and Archives Office will certainly also transform towards digitalization. They are encouraged to digitize their collections, develop online services, and embrace the digital ecosystem. However, behind the narrative of transformation lies a much more complex and paradoxical reality on the ground.

Planning and collaborative efforts undertaken by the government, coupled with strong support from a regulations, will certainly be futile if implementation in the field is not well integrated or if there are gaps in the implementation process. Among the identified gaps, the first relates to structural agency understanding, where most literature on digital transformation in Indonesian public institutions uses a deterministic framework that assumes technology inevitably changes institutions, or assumes that institutions resist change. However, understanding of how these actors or agencies negotiate or mediate digital transformation through daily practices is still limited. Second, the second gap relates to institutional legitimacy. Although research recognizes the sociocultural function of

libraries as agents of cultural preservation, understanding of how this institutional legitimacy is maintained or reconstructed during digital transformation is still limited. Finally, the third gap is evident in the context of understanding in the field, where most research related to digital transformation focuses on urban areas or is viewed from the perspective of policymakers. This research is expected to provide in-depth knowledge about the conditions of digital transformation in areas such as Siak Regency, where there is a gap between the intent and objectives of policies and the reality in the field.

This study uses Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory as an analytical tool to “unpack” the reality of this transformation. It is not to produce a narrative of success or failure, but to reveal how local actors (library professionals, users, agency leaders) actively navigate, negotiate, and debate digital transformation. Structuration theory allows us to see how traditional practices persist, how technology is selectively adopted, and how contradictions between traditional and digital logics are mediated in everyday practice.

In other words, this research does not ask whether the library and archives department “succeeded” or “failed” in its transformation, but rather a more subtle question: How do institutional structures, digital technology, and the actions of local actors reciprocally shape each other? What practices have been lost, retained, or transformed? How does the duality of structures manifest itself in the daily life of these institutions?

This study aims to examine how digital transformation is negotiated and adopted in the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office (Dispusip) from the perspective of structuration theory. More specifically, this study will describe the hybrid and operational practices in the Siak Regency Dispusip that combine conventional and digital services. Second, it analyzes how librarians (library professionals) or heads of library development adapt to or even reject digitization, thereby demonstrating what Giddens refers to as “knowledgeable actors.” This will ultimately reveal which practices are adopted and which conventional practices are retained. Third, it explains the institutional legitimacy that is maintained or reconstructed during digital transformation.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to both theoretical and empirical aspects. In terms of theory, there are different perspectives on the process of digital transformation adoption in government agencies or institutions, which generally view it from a deterministic point of view. Giddens' structuration theory provides new insights that digital transformation emerges through a process of negotiation between institutional structures and agencies/actors. Then, from an empirical perspective, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding at the field level or the lowest sector at the district level, where most studies only take the urban side or the policy maker's perspective. This study will reveal

how digital transformation actually occurs outside the official narrative that transformation is highly contextual, negotiated, dependent on resources, knowledge, and local actors.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach, with an exploratory study method. A qualitative approach is an analytical process that explores social and human issues. Qualitative research aims to explain phenomena in depth through data collection (Cresswell, 2013). Meanwhile, the method used in this study is an exploratory study. Suharsimi Arikunto states that exploratory research is exploratory in nature, where this study seeks to explore new knowledge to find out about a problem that is currently occurring or may occur. This research seeks to explore information, describe, illustrate, or understand the reality of digital transformation carried out by the Siak District Library Office when examined based on structuration theory.

The selection of informants in this study used purposive sampling. The purpose of purposive sampling here is that the informants selected are based on several relevant criteria, the first of which is based on positional authority, whereby informants must hold a leadership or professional position at the Siak Regency Dispusip in terms of digital transformation or provide services that are affected by transformation. The second criterion is based on experience in implementing digital transformation, whereby informants must have worked at the Siak Regency Library for at least two years and been directly involved in digital transformation initiatives, whether in policy implementation, technology adoption, or service development. Finally, the third criterion is based on diverse professional roles, both at the leadership level (division heads) and the implementation level (librarians).

The data collection techniques used are in-depth interviews and documentation. According to Moleong, an interview is described as a conversation with a specific purpose (Moleong, 2018). The conversation will be conducted by two parties, namely the interviewer, in this case the researcher, who asks questions, and the interviewee, in this case the informant, who provides answers to the questions. In this study, the researcher will ask a number of questions about the implementation of the digital transformation policy that has been carried out by the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office as a government institution that is required to transform. The informants interviewed by the researcher are as follows:

Table 1. Research Informants

No	Informant (s)	Location	Occupation
1	AN	Siak Regency Library and Archives Office	Head of Reading Culture and Social Inclusion

2	ST	Siak Regency Library and Archives Office	Librarian
3	AM	Siak Regency Library and Archives Office	Librarian

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2025.

In addition to conducting in-depth interviews, researchers also documented information both directly in the field and from a number of media owned by the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office. In today's digital age, the Library and Archives Office certainly cannot be separated from the use of digital technology as a medium of information for the public or a form of documentation of the agency's activities that can be accessed and viewed by the wider community.

In addition, this study used Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis model. According to Miles and Huberman, the procedure for analyzing qualitative data is described as follows.

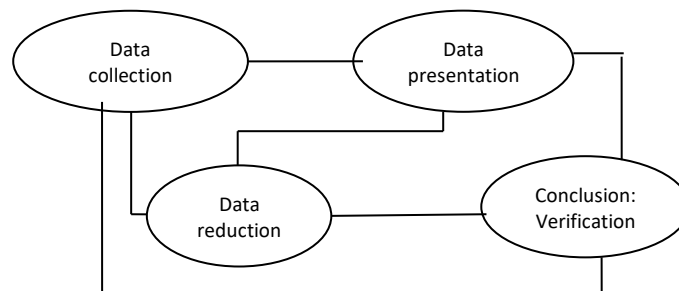


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process (Rijali, 2018)

The implementation of the analysis techniques used in this study began with the data collection stage. During the data collection process, the author focused only on data related to the implementation of digital transformation or answers that corresponded to the questions the author asked the informants. If there was information that was not related to the research objectives or research questions, the author immediately reduced that data. After the data is reduced, it will then be processed, compiled, and finally form a public communication model in the era of the communication and information technology revolution.

The data validity technique used is triangulation. Triangulation is a technique for examining the validity of data that utilizes something other than the data itself for the purpose of checking or comparing the data. The

triangulation technique used by the researcher is source triangulation (Kriyantono, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unpacking the reality of digital transformation through structuration theory

Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory offers crucial analytical advantages for understanding digital transformation at the local level. Unlike deterministic perspectives on technology (technology changes everything) or naive perspectives on resistance (institutions simply reject change), structuration theory positions actors as active agents; they do not passively accept technology, but creatively interpret, adapt to, and even reject technology according to their existing institutional logics.

A key concept in structuration theory is the duality of structure: structure does not exist beforehand as something that constrains actors from the outside. Instead, structure is the result of the actors' own practices, and the actors' practices are shaped by structure. This is a reciprocal and continuous relationship. In the context of the digital transformation of the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office (Dispupip), this means: a. Digital technology does not determine transformation, but provides new possibilities and constraints, b. Actors cannot act according to their will, because they are bound by existing institutional structures, c. The outcome of transformation is the result of negotiations between technological logic, institutional logic, and the creativity of actors.

Three Dimensions of Structure: Significance, Domination, Legitimacy

Giddens identifies three dimensions of structure that can be used to deconstruct digital transformation:

Signification (Meaning System): How meaning is constructed and shared within institutions. In the context of traditional libraries, signification is built through Dewey classification, subject headings, archival narratives, and reference interviews. Digital transformation introduces new meaning systems: search algorithms, standardized metadata, digital interfaces, and so on.

In reality, at the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office, the digital transformation that has taken place includes the availability of internet services where library users who come to the library can access the internet both to search for information and to use it for other purposes. In addition, there is also an e-Library (iSiak) service, which is an application-based library service that can be downloaded by library users and the general public who want to access a number of e-books subscribed to or owned by the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office. Another service is the Digital Reading Corner (Pocadi), which is located in a different place from the Siak Regency

Library, namely near the Siak Palace or in Kutab. Kutab is located near the Siak Palace because the items displayed there are historical archives of the Siak kingdom. In addition to traditional archives, digital archives called Pocadi are also provided. Pocadi, or the digital reading corner, is where the community and children can learn about the history of the Siak kingdom directly from literature available in the Netherlands. This Kutab provides a smartboard and several computers that can be used to access the history of the Siak Kingdom in the National Archives owned by the Netherlands. Below, the researcher has attached several documentary images taken during field observations:



Figure 2. Kutab
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

Meanwhile, image 3 below shows a small selection of traditional archives displayed at Kutab. So, in addition to the Digital Reading Corner (Pocadi) at Kutab, traditional archives are also still on display, usually in the form of photos or images of the kingdom, kings, and important letters from the past.



Figure 3. Siak Royal Archives Displayed in Kutab
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

Meanwhile, image 4 below is a picture of Pocadi, which is assistance provided by the National Library to the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office. At Pocadi, the public can view the history of the Siak kingdom archived at the National Archives in Leiden. Children can also watch the history of the Siak kingdom in animated form.



Figure 4. Digital Reading Corner (Pocadi)
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

Figure 5 below shows the results of a search conducted using the Pocadi smartboard at the National Archives. It displays several archives in the form of important images from the former Siak Kingdom.

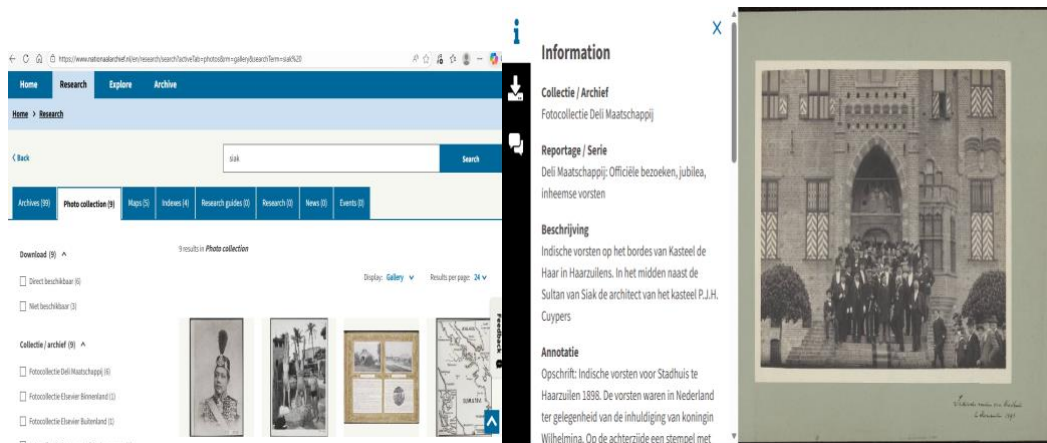


Figure 5. Search results at the National Archives in Leiden
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2025

Other facilities that support digital transformation at the Siak Regency Library include an OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog), a number of computers that library users can use to access e-books and other services, and Wi-Fi. Based on observations and interviews with librarians, the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office has implemented a hybrid approach to library services. This is explained in the following interview excerpt:

“To date, we continue to provide good service. We built this magnificent library so that the community and children would enjoy coming here. We designed the children's room like this so that they would enjoy coming here. We still hold other activities at the library, such as English lessons, knitting lessons, and others every Tuesday and Thursday. However, we are also developing our services digitally by providing computers and Wi-Fi so that children can access the internet. Then there is Pocadi, where children can learn about the history of Siak Regency during the colonial period through our archives available in the Netherlands. We also collaborate with the Siak Regency Communication and Information Agency to help us manage the iSiak application, so we run both of them...” (Based on an interview with AN on October 20, 2025).

Dominance (Power Relations): How power is distributed, exercised, and maintained. In traditional libraries, librarians have authority; they determine what is worth keeping, how information is organized, and how users are guided. Meanwhile, in the era of digital transformation, the authority of librarians has not disappeared but has been transformed into a more complex form of authority. For example, librarians, who were previously

information gatekeepers, have now transformed into information curators and guides. Librarians provide references for library users to search for information not only from catalogs but also from other alternative databases, such as e-books that can be accessed on iSiak, or other databases related to local information in the Siak district.

In addition, in terms of proximity and contextual authority, even though Google is said to know everything, the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office is closer and has a deeper understanding of the local context than Google. The Siak Regency Library and Archives Office is considered to have a better understanding of the historical context and archives of Siak Regency, the Malay culture of Siak Regency, and other needs that cannot be met by Google.

Furthermore, the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office has stewardship authority, namely the authority as the guardian of digital heritage for future generations. They strive to preserve the history of Siak Regency so that it can still be read and accessed in the future through a process called digital archiving. That way, future generations will still be able to read and learn about history in the past. This is in line with the following interview results:

“The digital transformation that is taking place at the Siak Library and Archives Office, where the authority of our librarians is undergoing a complex reconfiguration. Librarians maintain their authority (expertise, ethical stance, cultural authority) while actively developing new authorities that are more relational and contextual. This shift can be seen from the initial role of information gatekeeper to information curator and guide, in addition to other authorities such as proximity and contextual authority as well as stewardship authority” (Based on the results of an interview with AN on October 20, 2025).

Legitimacy (Normative Framework): What is considered the “right” or “proper” way to serve the community. Traditionally, the legitimacy of libraries has been built through their mission of cultural preservation, democratic access to information, and their social function as a gathering place for the community (public social space). Following the advent of digital transformation, the Siak Regency Library has selectively integrated traditional norms into digital norms. Some traditional norms are still maintained, such as intellectual autonomy, heritage preservation, free access, trust, professional standards, and literacy mission, which remain institutional legitimations. However, at the same time, the Siak Regency Library has adopted compatible digital norms, such as 24-hour access to the iSiak service, where the community can access digital reading materials around the clock. In addition, the Siak Regency Library also preserves ancient manuscripts, which have been digitized so that anyone can download and access them from anywhere. This digitization also enables the Library and Archives Office to measure the number of people who access, read, or download the materials.

As long as the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office continues to uphold traditional values and norms while adopting compatible digital norms (accessibility, responsiveness, measurement), its institutional legitimacy will remain strong.

Agency and Structure in Everyday Life

Giddens' structuration theory (Priyono, 2002) distinguishes between three levels of actor awareness: **practical awareness** (which is known but not explicitly expressed in conversation), **discursive awareness** (which can be expressed in language), and **motivation** (the reasons that drive action). To “deconstruct” digital transformation, we need to explore these three levels. For example:

Practical consciousness: Library staff continue to conduct reference interviews, but may not explicitly acknowledge that they are doing so. This is an internalized practice, reproduced daily without reflection. An example of this is when librarians ask patrons what they are looking for and what information they need. In addition, at this stage, the discursive level can be seen when patrons enter the digital reading corner (pocadi), where they are kindly shown the history of the Siak kingdom by opening digital archives and the national archives in Leiden. This is a form of practical awareness that is automatic without having to think too much.

Discursive awareness: When asked, professionals can articulate why they continue to carry out certain practices, how they view the role of libraries, and what they plan to do to support digital transformation in the library field. At this level of awareness, the efforts made are when all staff and leaders, namely the Head of the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office, hold meetings to discuss strategic plans and develop programs to support digital transformation. Here, they discuss program plans, provide reasons why these programs can be realized, and are able to explain the concepts or strategies for implementing these programs.

Motivation: Behind these actions are motivations: fear of losing relevance, desire to serve the community better, tension between institutional mandate and resource realities. In this case, the motivation I see in the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office in implementing digital transformation is that, in addition to being required to adapt to the conditions of society in the current digital era so that their existence as an institution remains relevant, they must be ready with new innovations. Additionally, within the government itself, there are always rewards given by the local government to innovative agencies, such as the innovation offered by the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office related to iSiak, which received positive appreciation from the Regent.

CONCLUSION

This study provides three main theoretical insights into digital transformation in its implementation at the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office. First, these findings reinforce Giddens' structuration theory in understanding digital transformation in an institution beyond a deterministic view. This study reveals that transformation emerges through active negotiation between institutional structures and the knowledge of actors. The case in Siak Regency shows that library professionals are not passive recipients of digital transformation, that transformation is not deterministic, and that the duality of structure is operational, meaning that old structures facilitate new practices, while old practices still remain. Second, it re-conceptualizes institutional legitimacy in digital transformation, challenging the assumption that conventional professional authority declines with digitization; rather, it changes and reconfigures itself into new forms. Third, it highlights contextual adaptation as the main mechanism used by the Siak Regency Library and Archives Office in navigating digital transformation. Instead of implementing digital transformation comprehensively, the actors in this case, library professionals, select the application of digitization according to their situational context.

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