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Digital Innovation for Inclusive Academic Libraries: Developing an Accessible Disability Corner Service through Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

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Abstract

Academic libraries are increasingly expected to provide accessible and inclusive services for students with disabilities amid the digital transformation of higher education. However, accessibility challenges may involve not only digital technologies but also institutional arrangements, assistance, stakeholder involvement, and student well-being. This study aimed to identify stakeholder perspectives and develop an integrated framework for accessible Disability Corner services at the Universitas Sebelas Maret Library, Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach was employed using Focus Group Discussion (FGD), direct observation, and document analysis involving 23 participants from librarians, students with disabilities, disability studies experts, special education practitioners, healthcare professionals, university representatives, and student organizations. Data were analyzed thematically through familiarization, coding, category development, theme generation, refinement, and interpretation, supported by methodological triangulation and member checking. The findings identified five interconnected dimensions: digital accessibility, institutional governance, assistance services, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and mental health support. Participants recommended accessible digital platforms, clear service procedures, dedicated assistance, collaborative support networks, and well-being-oriented facilities as key requirements for strengthening Disability Corner services. Based on these findings, the study proposes an integrated framework that connects technological accessibility with organizational arrangements and human-centered support. The framework provides a conceptual basis for developing more accessible and inclusive Disability Corner services in academic libraries.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, Digital Accessibility, Digital Innovation, Disability Corner, Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid digital transformation of higher education has changed how academic libraries deliver information services and support learning communities [1]. Beyond their traditional roles as providers of information resources, academic libraries are increasingly expected to function as inclusive learning environments that ensure equitable access for all users, including students with disabilities [2]. Digital technologies have expanded opportunities for independent learning through online catalogs, institutional repositories, electronic databases, and virtual reference services [3]. However, these opportunities cannot be fully realized when library services remain inaccessible to users with diverse physical, sensory, or cognitive needs.

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Inclusive education has become an important priority following the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education. In Indonesia, higher education institutions are also expected to provide learning environments that reduce barriers to participation for students with disabilities. Within this context, academic libraries have an important role because access to information is a fundamental condition for learning, research, and academic participation.

Despite growing institutional commitments to inclusion, academic libraries continue to face challenges in providing accessible digital services. Existing platforms may have limited compatibility with assistive technologies, while accessibility initiatives can remain fragmented across institutional units [4]. Digital accessibility should therefore be understood not only as a technical concern but also as a service and organizational issue requiring appropriate support and coordination [5]. At the same time, digital innovation in academic libraries involves more than adopting new technologies; it may also involve redesigning service processes and user interactions to improve accessibility and service delivery [6].

Collaborative approaches provide an additional perspective for addressing complex accessibility challenges. Collaborative governance emphasizes interaction and shared decision-making among public institutions and relevant stakeholders in addressing complex problems [7]. In disability services, collaboration can bring together librarians, disability specialists, educators, healthcare professionals, university representatives, student organizations, and students with disabilities. Such participation can help ensure that service development reflects users' experiences and needs rather than relying solely on institutional assumptions.

Previous studies have examined accessibility in academic libraries from technological, architectural, and service perspectives, including website accessibility, assistive technologies, accessible information resources, and inclusive library services [8], [9], [10]. However, relatively limited attention has been given to how these elements can be connected within an integrated Disability Corner service framework. In particular, there is a need to understand how digital accessibility, institutional arrangements, assistance services, stakeholder participation, and student well-being can function as complementary dimensions of an inclusive library service. This gap is especially relevant in the context of academic libraries in developing countries, where accessibility practices and institutional resources may vary.

This study therefore explores stakeholder perspectives on the development of accessible Disability Corner services at the Universitas Sebelas Maret Library, Indonesia. The study focuses on five dimensions identified through the research process: digital accessibility, institutional governance, assistance services, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and mental health support. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of implemented interventions, the study examines stakeholder experiences, identified needs, and recommendations as the basis for developing an integrated conceptual framework.

The study aims to develop a Digital Innovation Framework for Accessible Disability Corner Services through a multi-stakeholder perspective. The research contributes to discussions of inclusive academic libraries by connecting digital accessibility with organizational arrangements, human assistance, stakeholder participation, and student

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well-being. Practically, the proposed framework provides a conceptual basis for higher education institutions seeking to develop more accessible and inclusive library services.

METHOD

This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative case study approach to understand stakeholder perspectives on the development of accessible Disability Corner services at the Universitas Sebelas Maret Library, Indonesia. The case study focused on Disability Corner as an institutional service for students with disabilities, with particular attention to digital accessibility, institutional governance, assistance services, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and mental health support.

Data were collected between May and July 2026 through three complementary techniques: Focus Group Discussion (FGD), direct observation, and document analysis. The FGD involved 23 participants representing librarians, students with disabilities, disability studies experts, special education practitioners, healthcare professionals, university representatives, and student organization representatives. Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement, experience, or knowledge related to disability services and the development of the Disability Corner. The participant composition is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Presents the profile of research participants

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants
Librarians	6
Students with Disabilities	8
Disability Studies Experts	2
Special Education Practitioners	1
Healthcare Professionals	1
University Representatives	3
Student Organization Representatives	2
Total	23

(Source: Research data (2026))

The FGD explored participants' experiences, perceived accessibility barriers, service needs, and recommendations for improving Disability Corner services. Direct observation examined the physical facilities, digital service environment, and operational practices related to accessibility. Document analysis reviewed relevant institutional policies, service guidelines, and other documents supporting the development of Disability Corner. These sources were used to complement and contextualize the FGD findings.

The qualitative data were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's procedures. The analysis involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, development of categories, generation of themes, refinement of themes, and interpretation. The five dimensions reported in the findings were therefore derived from recurring patterns in the empirical data rather than predetermined as a fixed analytical framework. Data from the FGD, observations, and documents were compared through methodological triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Member

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checking was also conducted with selected participants to confirm the interpretation of the findings.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their participation, and confidentiality of participant information was maintained in reporting the findings. Data collection was conducted with consideration of the accessibility needs of participants with disabilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

The thematic analysis identified five interconnected dimensions relevant to the development of accessible Disability Corner services: digital accessibility, institutional governance, assistance services, stakeholder collaboration, and mental health and academic well-being. Rather than treating these dimensions as separate service components, the findings indicate that they form an integrated system in which digital accessibility provides the infrastructure for access to information, institutional governance provides organizational support and continuity, assistance services facilitate individual access, stakeholder collaboration connects relevant institutional and professional resources, and mental health support strengthens users' ability to engage in academic activities.

The five dimensions were developed through a combined deductive–inductive thematic analysis. The initial analytical framework was informed by the study objectives and relevant literature concerning inclusive library services, digital accessibility, and collaborative governance. During the analysis, the framework was refined through repeated examination of FGD transcripts, observation notes, and relevant institutional documents. Issues that repeatedly appeared across stakeholder accounts were grouped into thematic categories, while overlapping codes were compared and consolidated. The resulting five themes therefore represent both theoretically informed analytical dimensions and patterns grounded in participants' experiences and recommendations.

Table 2 summarizes the themes, representative empirical evidence, identified barriers, and corresponding service or spatial requirements.

Table 2. Themes, Empirical Evidence, and Design Implications

Theme	Empirical Evidence	Identified Barrier	Service/Spatial Requirement
Digital Accessibility	Participants described difficulties accessing digital resources and navigating platforms using assistive technologies	Inaccessible navigation and digital content	Accessible digital platforms, screen-reader compatibility, simplified navigation
Institutional Governance	Participants emphasized the need for clear responsibilities and standardized procedures	Dependence on individual staff commitment	Policies, service standards, SOPs, and monitoring mechanisms

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Assistance Services	Participants identified continuing needs for personalized assistance	Difficulty obtaining immediate and individualized support	Online assistance requests, facilitators, and volunteer support
Stakeholder Collaboration	Participants emphasized cooperation among library, disability, health, administrative, and student stakeholders	Fragmented responsibilities across units	Cross-unit coordination and shared service responsibilities
Mental Health and Academic Well-being	Participants proposed quiet, supportive, and low-stimulation environments	Sensory overload, stress, lack of privacy	Inclusive Quiet Room, relaxation space, peer support, and referral mechanisms

(Source: Author's analysis (2026))

1. Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility emerged as a central concern in the FGD discussions. Participants described accessibility challenges not only in relation to entering and using physical library spaces but also in finding and accessing information through digital services. Students with disabilities highlighted the importance of being able to navigate library websites, electronic resources, and repositories using assistive technologies. One participant emphasized the importance of being able to access library information independently: “The digital service should be easy to access independently, especially when using assistive technology.”.

The observation of the library environment further indicated that physical access points and digital information services need to operate as connected rather than separate service channels. The document analysis also identified the importance of providing information about available services and assistance through the library's digital platforms. These findings indicate that digital accessibility is a foundational component of an inclusive Disability Corner service. The requirement extends beyond providing electronic resources to ensuring that users can independently discover, navigate, and use them. Accordingly, accessible website navigation, screen-reader compatibility, accessible digital documents, and clear information about available assistance were identified as key requirements.

2. Institutional Governance

Institutional governance emerged from repeated discussions concerning the sustainability and consistency of inclusive services. Participants indicated that accessibility initiatives could become dependent on the commitment and availability of individual staff members when responsibilities and procedures were not formally established. A participant described the need for institutional arrangements rather than relying solely on individual initiative: “It should not depend on one person; there needs to be a clear procedure so that anyone who provides the service knows what to do.”.

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The findings from the discussion were consistent with observations concerning the need for clearly identified service procedures and with institutional documents related to library service management. Participants proposed the development of policies, service standards, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering assistance requests, staff responsibilities, communication, referral procedures, and service evaluation. The findings therefore position governance as the organizational foundation supporting the continuity of the other dimensions. Without clear responsibilities and procedures, improvements in technology, assistance, or physical facilities may remain dependent on individual practices rather than becoming sustainable institutional services.

3. Assistance Services

The third theme concerned the continuing importance of personalized assistance. Participants did not perceive digital technology as a replacement for human interaction. Instead, digital services were viewed as mechanisms that could make human assistance more accessible and responsive. Participants explained that some students with disabilities may require assistance when searching for information, using library technologies, accessing specialized resources, or navigating unfamiliar services. One participant noted: “Sometimes the technology is available, but users still need someone to help them use it.”.

The findings suggest that assistance should be available through both physical and digital channels. Participants proposed online assistance requests, appointment-based consultations, facilitators, and trained volunteers. Such mechanisms would allow users to communicate their needs before arriving at the library and receive appropriate support when using the service. The assistance dimension therefore connects digital accessibility with direct human support. It also reinforces the principle that inclusive services should promote user independence while ensuring that assistance remains available when independent access is not sufficient.

4. Stakeholder Collaboration

Stakeholder collaboration emerged from participants' recognition that disability-related service needs extend beyond the library's organizational boundaries. Participants identified librarians, disability specialists, healthcare professionals, university administrators, student organizations, and students with disabilities as relevant actors in the development and delivery of inclusive services.

The discussions emphasized that collaboration should involve shared responsibilities rather than occasional consultation. A participant explained: “The library cannot work alone because some needs require other units and professionals.”. Observation of the library environment and examination of relevant institutional information reinforced the need to connect library-based services with other university support mechanisms. Participants consequently proposed stronger coordination with disability support structures, healthcare and counseling services, academic units, and student organizations.

This finding provides the organizational link between the other dimensions. Collaboration enables the library to connect digital resources, professional assistance, physical facilities, and well-being support through a coordinated service system. Students with disabilities were also identified as important participants in evaluating and improving the service, reflecting the user-centered orientation of the proposed development.

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5. Mental Health and Academic Well-being

Mental health and academic well-being emerged as an additional dimension of accessibility. Participants explained that inclusive library environments should provide not only physical access and information access but also conditions that support concentration, privacy, sensory regulation, and academic participation. Participants proposed an Inclusive Quiet Room or sensory-friendly space for users who require a lower-stimulation environment. Other recommendations included relaxation areas, peer support, access to information concerning mental health and self-development, and referral mechanisms connecting library users with appropriate university counseling or healthcare services. One participant summarized the need for a supportive environment: "A quiet space is important because sometimes students need a place to calm down before continuing their activities.".

These findings indicate that spatial accessibility should include environmental conditions that support different patterns of learning and participation. The proposed quiet or sensory-friendly space is therefore not presented as an intervention whose effectiveness has already been demonstrated, but as a design requirement derived from participants expressed needs and recommendations.

6. Integration of the Five Dimensions

The five themes demonstrate that the development of accessible Disability Corner services requires an interconnected rather than fragmented approach. The findings suggest a functional relationship among the dimensions. Digital accessibility enables users to discover and access information and services. Institutional governance establishes the policies, responsibilities, and procedures necessary to sustain those services. Assistance services provide individualized support when independent access is insufficient. Stakeholder collaboration connects the library with relevant institutional and professional resources. Mental health and academic well-being ensure that the service environment also supports concentration, comfort, privacy, and meaningful academic participation.

Based on these relationships, the findings were synthesized into a proposed User-Centered Digital Innovation Framework for Accessible Disability Corner Services. The framework is derived from the empirical themes rather than representing an implemented or experimentally validated intervention. Its purpose is to organize the identified requirements into an integrated model that can guide future service and spatial development.

The framework consists of five interconnected dimensions: Digital Accessibility as the access-enabling layer; Institutional Governance as the organizational foundation; Assistance Services as the human-support mechanism; Stakeholder Collaboration as the coordination mechanism; and Mental Health and Academic Well-being as the user-outcome orientation. Students with disabilities remain at the center of the framework because their experiences, needs, and participation provide the basis for identifying service and spatial requirements.

Accordingly, the proposed framework should be understood as an empirically informed design framework rather than an evaluated service model. The study identifies what stakeholders considered necessary for strengthening inclusive library services; it

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does not claim that the proposed initiatives have already been implemented or that their effectiveness has been empirically measured.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that accessible Disability Corner services require more than physical facilities or individual digital technologies. The five dimensions identified in the study indicate that accessibility is produced through the interaction of digital access, institutional arrangements, human assistance, stakeholder coordination, and academic well-being. This finding suggests that digital innovation in academic libraries is fundamentally a service and organizational process in which technology must be supported by appropriate institutional and human capacities.

The proposed framework provides a structured interpretation of these relationships. Digital accessibility enables users to reach information and services, while institutional governance provides the policies, procedures, and responsibilities needed to sustain them. Assistance services address situations in which independent digital access is insufficient. Stakeholder collaboration connects the library with relevant expertise and institutional resources, while mental health and academic well-being ensure that accessibility also considers the conditions in which students study and participate. The framework therefore places students with disabilities at the center and connects technological, organizational, social, and environmental requirements within one service system.

This finding strengthens the application of collaborative governance to inclusive academic library services. Accessibility needs often extend beyond the authority and expertise of the library, particularly when they involve disability support, health services, academic units, and student organizations. The participation of these stakeholders can facilitate shared responsibility in identifying needs, developing services, and reviewing their implementation [11], [12]. In this study, collaboration is therefore not treated as an additional activity but as a mechanism that connects the different components of the proposed framework.

The findings also extend previous discussions of digital accessibility by demonstrating the importance of combining digital and human support. Accessible platforms may facilitate independent information access, but users may still require personalized assistance or alternative environments depending on their needs. This supports the view that inclusive digital transformation should be designed around users rather than technology alone [13]. The inclusion of quiet and supportive spaces further indicates that accessibility should be considered in relation to academic participation and well-being, not solely access to information.

The practical contribution of the study is the formulation of an empirically informed framework that can guide future development of Disability Corner services. The framework does not represent an intervention that has already been implemented or evaluated. Instead, it translates stakeholder experiences, observations, and recommendations into interconnected service requirements. Future implementation should therefore evaluate the framework with students with disabilities to examine its usability, accessibility, and contribution to independent learning and academic participation.

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CONCLUSION

This study identified five interconnected dimensions that are important for the development of accessible Disability Corner services in academic libraries: digital accessibility, institutional governance, assistance services, stakeholder collaboration, and mental health and academic well-being. The findings indicate that accessibility is not limited to physical facilities or assistive technologies. Instead, inclusive library services require the integration of accessible digital resources, clear institutional arrangements, responsive human assistance, coordinated stakeholder involvement, and supportive learning environments. These dimensions provide a broader understanding of how academic libraries can respond to the diverse needs of students with disabilities in an increasingly digital learning environment.

The main contribution of this study is the formulation of a User-Centered Digital Innovation Framework for Accessible Disability Corner Services. The framework was derived from stakeholder experiences, observations, and institutional information and integrates the five dimensions into a coordinated service approach. Digital accessibility facilitates access to information and services, governance provides institutional support and continuity, assistance services respond to individual needs, stakeholder collaboration connects relevant expertise and resources, and mental health and academic well-being address the conditions required for meaningful academic participation. The framework consequently provides a conceptual and practical basis for planning inclusive library services while placing students with disabilities at the center of service development.

The findings also highlight the importance of collaborative governance in supporting sustainable inclusive library services. The involvement of librarians, disability specialists, healthcare professionals, university administrators, student organizations, and students with disabilities can provide different forms of knowledge and support that cannot be addressed by the library alone. However, the proposed framework remains exploratory because the study focused on stakeholder experiences, perceptions, and recommendations and did not implement or evaluate the proposed service innovations. Therefore, the framework should not be interpreted as evidence of demonstrated service effectiveness. Future research should implement and evaluate the framework in different higher education contexts, involving students with disabilities in the evaluation process and examining outcomes such as accessibility, usability, user independence, academic participation, and service sustainability.

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