



THE TRANSFORMATION OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN BACOLOD CITY DURING COVID-19

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Abstract

Academic libraries functioned as dynamic centers for research, learning, and community involvement before the COVID-19 pandemic. Once perceived solely as repositories of print resources, libraries are now grappling with challenges posed by the digital revolution, shifting user behavior, and the imperative to redefine their role in the contemporary educational landscape. Through the lens of the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) Framework, the study described how libraries addressed their challenges characterized by various strategies for innovation. The pandemic has transformed academic libraries in Bacolod City, leading to hybrid models that integrate physical and digital services. This qualitative study examined the transformation of academic libraries in Bacolod City amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically to investigate the impact of this transformation on information delivery service, library resources, library management, librarians' competence, and the effect of the transformation in academic libraries. The study revealed a significant transformation marked by technological integration, innovative management strategies, and the redefinition of library spaces and services. Despite enrollment challenges and institutional shifts, libraries showcased resilience by adopting digital platforms to sustain educational support. It involved updating online collections, using social media to drive engagement, and extensively incorporating e-books and online databases. Librarians are skilled in navigating these changes, becoming digital curators and facilitators in virtual learning environments.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, COVID-19 impact, Digital shift, Digital media, Bacolod City, Library transformation, Hybrid services, Online resources, E-books, and Open Access*



Introduction

The rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to academic institutions, including libraries, which serve as vital hubs for knowledge dissemination. Academic libraries had to undergo a significant transformation to remain relevant and effective in supporting higher education. This transition aligns with the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) framework, which characterizes the ever-changing and unpredictable nature of contemporary challenges (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). In response, academic libraries had to embrace digital platforms, integrate innovative technologies, and enhance their services to meet the evolving needs of students and faculty.

Recognizing these challenges, this study explores how academic libraries in Bacolod City adapted during the pandemic and identifies the essential competencies librarians need in this new landscape. Specifically, it investigates the transformation of academic libraries in terms of information service delivery, resource management, library administration, and librarians' competencies. As libraries become increasingly digital, librarians must develop critical skills, including strong digital literacy, expertise with library management systems, proficiency in information literacy education, adaptability to change, and effective communication skills (Tseke & Chigwada, 2020). These competencies are crucial for librarians to navigate the complexities of a VUCA world and to continue supporting research and education effectively.

This study gathered data from licensed academic librarians in twelve (12) academic libraries attached to institutions accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Bacolod City. To ensure the relevance and accuracy of findings, the study focused only on licensed librarians, regardless of whether they held a master's degree. However, a limitation was that some targeted libraries were non-functional or closed during the data collection period due to ongoing pandemic-related transitions.

Through this study, prospective and current librarians will gain insights into libraries' evolving roles and the professional skills needed to thrive in an ever-changing educational landscape. By understanding these transformations, academic institutions, administrators, and policymakers can better equip their libraries to enhance learning experiences and remain resilient in future disruptions.

II. Methodology

This study employed a case study design and qualitative methodology to explore the transformation of academic libraries in Bacolod City during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through in-depth interviews and content analysis, the study examined information services, library resources, and librarians' competencies. Twelve licensed academic librarians from CHED-accredited institutions were selected to ensure direct involvement in library management. The study period ran from November 20 to December 6, 2023, focusing on the adaptive strategies of private and public academic libraries in a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) environment.

Interviews were conducted in person, recorded, and transcribed, with confidentiality strictly maintained. Observations and online data from library websites supplemented the findings. Ethical standards were upheld through Research Ethics Review Board (RERB) approval, voluntary participation, and secure data handling. Creswell's six-step qualitative analysis guided the study, ensuring validity and reliability. The VUCA framework provided insight into how libraries navigated rapid changes, uncertainty, and digital transitions during the pandemic.

III. Results and Discussion

This table presents qualitative data collected from key informants, which were analyzed by grouping similar feedback. Themes were then developed based on participants' reflective insights. The findings, corroborated by feedback from librarians, resonate with core themes identified as crucial. The researcher observed and synthesized the gathered data, highlighting commonalities and variations in participants' ideas.

Table 1. Academic Profile of the Academic Institution as a Whole

Research Questions	Themes	Discussion
Academic Profile of the Institutions where Academic Libraries are Affiliated as a Whole	- Pandemic-Induced Fluctuations in Enrolment - Post-Pandemic Enrolment Recovery	- The COVID-19 pandemic caused a decline in student enrollment, forcing academic libraries to adjust their resources, staffing, and services to accommodate fewer students. - After the initial decline, many institutions saw a gradual increase in enrollment.
Academic Profile of the Institutions where Academic Libraries are Affiliated in Terms of Accreditation Status	- Higher Accreditation Levels and Their Influence on Libraries - Role of Accreditation in Institutional Assessment and Continuous Improvement	Accredited institutions invest in libraries, which support compliance, research, and quality standards while influencing funding and policies.
Academic Profile of the Institutions where Academic	Diverse Usage of Communication Platforms	Libraries use multiple platforms (Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams,

Research Questions	Themes	Discussion
Libraries are Affiliated in Terms of Communication Platforms	Strategic Adoption of Multiple Platforms	Facebook, Edmodo, etc.) to ensure accessibility and connectivity for students and faculty. Rapid technological changes require libraries to be flexible and adaptable to evolving communication tools and user needs.

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the academic profiles of various institutions, as reported by librarians in response to researchers' inquiries. It encompasses enrollment rates, accreditation levels and types, communication platforms, and learning delivery modes.

The second problem statement focused on investigating the transformation in library operations, including information delivery services, library resources, the management of services and resources, and librarian competence.

Table 2. Academic Library Transformation in Terms of Delivery Service

Research Question	Themes	Discussion
Academic Library Transformation in Terms of Information Services Delivery	- Education and Safety - Challenges and Limitations - Adaptation & Innovation	Libraries adapt to technological changes by supporting evolving tools, enabling flexible learning, and enhancing services with virtual references, online document delivery, and digital literacy support.

Table 2 illustrates the coherent flow of themes, corresponding to the librarians' responses when asked about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way academic libraries in Bacolod City deliver information services to students and faculty, and what changes or innovations were implemented to adapt to this situation.

Table 3. Academic Library Transformation in Terms of Library Resources

Research Question	Themes	Discussion
Library Transformation in Terms of Library Resources	- Digital Transformation and Access Enhancement - Adaptation to Remote Access and Communication Channels - Investment in Innovation and Hybrid Services	Libraries expanded digital resources, used online platforms for communication, and integrated digital and physical services for remote access and support.

Table 3 examines changes in library resources in academic libraries, drawing on librarians' insights into notable shifts or advancements in the availability and accessibility of physical and digital resources during the pandemic. It explores how these changes effectively catered to the changing needs of library users.

Table 4. Academic Library Transformation in Terms of Library Management

Research Question	Themes	Discussion
Library Transformation in Terms of Library Management	- Digital Adaptation - Challenges & Innovation - Enhanced Accessibility & User Experience - Resilience & Flexibility	Libraries integrated technology, expanded digital services, and adapted to challenges with creative solutions while maintaining the importance of physical spaces.

Table 4 illustrates librarians' responses regarding the transformation in library management, the changes and adaptations in library services and operations, and how these changes impacted the overall user experience and satisfaction of students, faculty, and researchers.

Table 5. Academic Library Transformation in Terms of Librarians' Competence

Research Question	Themes	Discussion
Library Transformation in Terms of Librarians' Competence	- Continuous Learning - Growth and Exploration - Skill Enhancement through Collaboration	Librarians enhance their skills through training, collaboration, and innovation, embracing new technologies to improve services and adapt to academic challenges.

Table 5 presents librarian feedback regarding the evolution of librarian proficiency, focusing on inquiries regarding how academic librarians in Bacolod City are improving their skills and competencies, particularly in digital literacy. The aim is to better support students and faculty in a remote learning setting amid the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Table 6. Effect of Transformation on Academic Libraries During COVID-19

Research Question	Themes	Discussion
Effect of Transformation on Academic Libraries During COVID-19	- Digital Transition & Continuous Learning - Growth and Exploration - Resilient Adaptation & Technological Integration	Libraries expanded digital services, adopted hybrid models, and innovated to ensure continuous learning and user engagement.

Table 6 presents insights sourced from librarians concerning the impact of transformation in academic libraries amid COVID-19. It focuses on researchers' investigations into the evident impacts on students' academic performance and research productivity resulting from changes in academic libraries, coupled with observations in the library setting. It encompasses the increased reliance on digital resources and remote services during the pandemic. It explores the lasting implications of these changes and anticipates their influence on the future direction of academic library services and resources.

IV. Conclusion

When viewed through the lens of the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) theory, the transformation of academic libraries in Bacolod City during the COVID-19 pandemic offers several implications for both theory and practice. The VUCA framework emphasizes the need for organizations to be agile and adaptable in the face of volatility and uncertainty. The rapid adaptation of academic libraries in Bacolod City to online platforms, virtual events, and innovative engagement approaches during the pandemic exemplifies this agility.

1. The study highlights how academic libraries navigated volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) during the pandemic. This aligns with the VUCA framework's focus on adaptive strategies in dynamic environments, emphasizing the need for libraries to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.
2. The findings demonstrate academic libraries' resilience and innovation, showcasing their ability to adapt swiftly to challenges and innovate in service delivery, resource management, and digital transformation. This resilience underscores the importance of organizational agility and creative problem-solving in overcoming disruptions.
3. Effective communication and collaboration emerge as critical factors for success during disruptive periods, as seen in librarians' collaborative efforts to meet evolving user needs. This highlights the role of teamwork, coordination, and stakeholder engagement in enhancing library services and support.
4. The study underscores the need for adaptive strategies in resource allocation, technology integration, and service delivery to address fluctuating enrollment patterns and changing user demands. Libraries must continuously assess and adjust their strategies to remain relevant and effective in dynamic environments.
5. Librarians' responses indicate that institutions with higher accreditation levels prioritize investment in library resources, highlighting the link between accreditation standards and library development. This underscores the importance of strategic investment planning aligned with institutional goals and priorities.
6. The transformation in library management and services reflects the increasing reliance on technology, emphasizing the importance of technology literacy, digital access, and online resource management. Libraries must embrace technological advancements to enhance user experiences and meet evolving needs.
7. Librarians' engagement in continuous learning and skill enhancement illustrates the ongoing need for professional development to meet evolving challenges and user expectations. Lifelong learning and professional growth are essential for librarians to stay up to date with industry trends and best practices.

The study contributes to understanding how academic libraries can effectively navigate and thrive in VUCA environments by emphasizing the roles of resilience, innovation, collaboration, adaptive strategies, investment priorities, technology integration, and continuous learning in enhancing library services and supporting academic communities during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The transformation of academic libraries in Bacolod City during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the challenges, adaptations, and profound impacts these institutions experienced. Despite the resource constraints,



academic libraries exhibited remarkable resilience and agility, rapidly transitioning to online platforms, expanding virtual services, revising policies, and enriching digital resources. These swift adaptations underscored the critical role of innovation and collaboration in addressing evolving user needs and sustaining the relevance of library services.

The study revealed fluctuating enrolment patterns throughout the pandemic, prompting academic libraries to adopt flexible strategies. The gradual post-pandemic enrolment recovery reflects academic communities' resilience and signals a potential resurgence in demand for library resources. Moreover, accreditation status informs resource allocation, investment priorities, and institutional assessment, thereby influencing libraries' development and strategic direction.

Diverse communication platforms and multimodal learning approaches have redefined academic libraries, demonstrating adaptability in meeting users' communication needs and learning preferences. These transformations significantly enhanced information services and access to resources, leading to innovative solutions that showcased librarians' ingenuity in meeting patrons' evolving demands.

Librarians proactively addressed management challenges by investing in technology literacy and engaging in continuous professional development to strengthen their competencies. These efforts ensured they could effectively support diverse user needs in an increasingly digital landscape. The study provided valuable insights into the pandemic's impact on academic libraries, including its effects on students' academic performance and research productivity, as well as the growing reliance on digital resources and remote services.

Despite these obstacles, academic libraries have shown resilience, adaptability, and creativity. The changes ushered in by the pandemic have accelerated essential enhancements to library services, ensuring they remain vital for learning and research. Looking ahead, these transformations provide a basis for more responsive, accessible, and future-oriented academic libraries.

Acknowledgment

The author wishes to acknowledge the adviser and panelists, Reyza Alenzuela, RL, MLIS, PhD, Reynaldo N. Dusan, DRdEV, Christian George F. Acevedo, RL, MLIS, Ana Mae Cantel, RL, MLIS, and Joyce P. Deloso, RL, DPA, for their constructive feedback and evaluation during the thesis defense. While their comments contributed to the refinement of the original thesis, they had no role in the modifications made to this paper.

This paper is derived from the author's thesis, with revisions and adaptations solely undertaken by the author to align with the requirements of this presentation.



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