

Semiotic Analysis of Roland Barthes in the Novel *the Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library*

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Abstract

Background: Libraries and books are not merely physical repositories of information but cultural constructs that reflect how societies perceive, organize, and transmit knowledge. Literary works such as *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* offer a meaningful lens through which these cultural meanings can be examined, particularly in understanding libraries as symbolic spaces of knowledge and literacy.

Objective: This study aimed to analyze how meanings related to books, libraries, and knowledge are constructed through systems of signs in a literary text using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth.

Methods: This study uses qualitative interpretative approach using Roland Barthes' textual semiotic analysis method. The research demonstrates that the novel produces a myth in which knowledge gains meaning only through organization and accessibility.

Results: The study found *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* constructs meaning through librarianship-related symbols that represent knowledge, information order, and cultural continuity. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, the analysis shows that the library is portrayed not merely as a physical repository of books, but as a living epistemological space that emphasizes the importance of information organization, accessibility, and the sustained development of human knowledge within cultural and ideological contexts.

Conclusion: These results indicate that *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* portrays the library as more than a fantasy setting, presenting it as a symbol of knowledge, memory, and civilization. Through Barthes' semiotic framework, the novel emphasizes the importance of systematic information management and the enduring role of libraries as living spaces that connect past, present, and future knowledge.

Keywords: Semiotic; roland barthes; the magic library

INTRODUCTION

Libraries and books do not function as physical objects where information is stored but are also products of cultural and social processes. The ways in which books are created, organized, selected, and used reflect how societies perceive knowledge and intelligence, as well as how they understand themselves as knowledgeable, cultured, and sustainable communities through practices of knowledge management and literacy. In the field of Library and Information Science, the meaning of the library has evolved from being viewed solely as a technical institution responsible for storing collections, cataloguing, classifying, and providing information services to a space that reflects how a society constructs, values, and transmits knowledge. Therefore, the portrayal of libraries in literary works (such as novels, short stories,

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and poetry) is important to examine, as these representations allow us to understand how societies shape, disseminate, and normalize concepts of knowledge within popular culture.

The novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* by Jostein Gaarder and Klaus Hagerup clearly places books and libraries at the centre of its narrative. Through the fantasy journey of its characters, the novel not only presents a history of writing and books but also constructs an imaginative vision of the library as a vast, dynamic, and symbolically rich space of knowledge. This portrayal invites readers to perceive books, systems of organization, and reading practices as carrying meanings that extend beyond their basic functional roles.

Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study analyses how signs related to books and libraries are interpreted through three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. By applying this framework, the analysis goes beyond thematic interpretation of the narrative and examines how the novel constructs cultural myths about knowledge and the role of libraries in fostering a society that values reading and critical thinking.

This study contributes to the field of Library and Information Science by demonstrating that literature plays an important role in shaping perspectives on knowledge and libraries. Through this role, literature can be understood as a medium that reproduces and disseminates ideologies related to knowledge organization, literacy, and the function of libraries in knowledge formation. Therefore, this semiotic analysis positions literature as a means through which fundamental concepts in Library and Information Science can be critically examined and rethought.

In the article "Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis in the Film *Bintang Ketjil* by Wim Umboh and Misbach Yusa Bira" by Panji Wibisono and Yunita Sari (Wibisono & Sari, 2021), the findings indicate that the denotative meanings presented in the film convey a message of informal education that helps children develop in terms of knowledge, intellect, reasoning, and ethics. Several key findings of the study include the representation of maternal affection in *Bintang Ketjil*, which is clearly expressed through both dialogue and non-verbal language throughout the film. The myths constructed in *Bintang Ketjil* are depicted through symbols associated with learning and educational values that appear in various scenes. The study also suggests that society, particularly parents, can draw positive educational messages from films and improve their attitudes toward children to prevent a crisis of trust toward adults.

In a study conducted by Selvi Yani Nur Fahida (Nur et al., 2021) entitled "Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis of the Film *Nanti Kita Cerita Hari Ini* (NKCTHI) by Angga Dwimas Sasongko," a qualitative research method was employed using content analysis. The findings reveal that audiences generally perceive the overall meaning of the film, yet a deeper analysis uncovers numerous layers of denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings. For example, from the five scenes selected as research samples, denotative meanings emerge as the direct meanings of each scene, while connotative meanings represent the indirect interpretations. Additionally, myths are identified within all five scenes analysed, demonstrating how the film constructs deeper cultural and ideological meanings beyond its surface narrative.

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Relevant research on semiotic analysis of novels has also been conducted by Hikma Tansilo (Tansilo, 2023), in a study entitled “Roland Barthes’ Semiotic Analysis in the Novel *Dilan 1990* by Pidi Baiq.” This study employed a descriptive research method with a semiotic approach. The data collection technique used was library research. The findings indicate that, after analysis, the novel *Dilan: 1990* contains five icons representing images or photographs, eight indexes reflecting behaviours and character traits, and nine symbols related to human actions that also function as indicators of character traits.

This study is motivated by a research gap identified in previous studies. Based on the research conducted by Panji Wibisono and Yunita Sari, semiotic analysis was used to interpret denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings, particularly in symbols of maternal affection and educational values conveyed through myth. Their study places greater emphasis on film as an educational medium, with messages that are closely related to parenting patterns and moral values. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Nur focuses more on analyzing the diversity of meanings within film and how these meanings develop from direct denotative interpretations to deeper mythological constructions. The emphasis on film scenes as units of analysis allows for a more detailed discussion of symbolism within the narrative context. Tansilo’s research, on the other hand, applies semiotic analysis to identify icons, indexes, and symbols within a literary text. This study focuses on iconography in the novel and explores how symbolism is conveyed through images, photographs, and character behaviours that represent traits. This approach analyzes signs within literary texts rather than visual media or film, linking visual elements to written narrative forms.

Differences in media and narrative Form: The three previous studies focus on different media, namely film and novels, each of which employs distinct modes of representing symbols and meanings. The primary distinction between this study and earlier research lies in the choice of medium: this study uses a novel as its object of analysis, which differs significantly from film as an audio-visual medium that dominates the first two studies. In addition, there are limitations related to the types of signs examined in previous research. Earlier studies tend to be descriptive in nature, identifying icons, indexes, and symbols within specific film scenes or literary texts. In contrast, this study adopts a more complex analytical perspective by positioning the library as a system of signs that reflects core values of librarianship. Consequently, this research not only extends the application of Barthes’ semiotics within literary studies but also contributes a conceptual framework to the field of Library and Information Science by demonstrating how principles of knowledge organization and management are represented and articulated through literary narrative.

This study also demonstrates that denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings in fantasy literary texts do not emerge separately or by coincidence but are interconnected and form a coherent and continuous pattern of meaning. These interrelated meanings are structured around knowledge: books function as units of information; organization serves as a fundamental condition for knowledge to be understood—in this case through information retrieval systems that require classification in order for books to be easily located; and the library represents a space of knowledge encompassing multiple layers of meaning and function.

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The novelty of this study lies in positioning the library as a system of signs that reflects core values of librarianship. Accordingly, this research offers new insights for semiotic studies, particularly in the application of Roland Barthes' theory to literary texts that focus on knowledge and literacy. For the field of Library and Information Science, this study provides insights that go beyond merely acknowledging the importance of books and libraries. Instead, it conceptualizes the library as a space that enables humans to engage with both the limitations and the vastness of knowledge.

The research question of this study is: "How are meanings related to books, libraries, and knowledge constructed through systems of signs in literary texts?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Roland Barthes' Semiotics and Literary Text Analysis

Based on the work of Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1967; Barthes & Lavers, 1972), semiotics views meaning as a process that does not end with the relationship between the signifier and the signified but continues to develop within broader cultural contexts. In his theoretical framework (Barthes, 1967; Chandler, 2007), Barthes divides meaning into three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal or direct meaning of a sign, while connotation relates to cultural values shaped through shared social experiences and cultural conventions in interpreting signs. At the level of myth, signs function to naturalize particular cultural values, making them appear normal, universal, and unquestioned (Barthes & Lavers, 1972; Pezzini, 2017).

In literary studies, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory proposes that literary texts should not be understood solely in terms of linguistic aesthetics, writing style, or narrative structure. Instead, literary texts can be viewed as media that convey, reinforce, or conceal ideological values, such as those related to gender, power, social class, morality, or culture. Barthes conceptualizes literary texts as signs that operate within social and cultural contexts, in which language does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes how people understand the world (Barthes & Howard, 1988). Therefore, semiotic analysis goes beyond identifying what is told in a narrative and focuses on how meaning is socially constructed and produced through storytelling.

In previous studies, Barthes' semiotic analysis of films and novels has primarily been applied to examine symbols, moral messages, and cultural myths embedded in narratives or written texts (Barus et al., 2025). However, such studies tend to offer limited depth, as they often stop at describing denotative and connotative meanings without relating them to broader contextual or ideological frameworks. Consequently, these analyses mainly explain visible themes or surface content, rather than engaging in deeper interpretation or employing a more rigorous theoretical perspective.

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Representation of Libraries, Books, and Knowledge in Literature

In literary works, libraries and books are often positioned as symbols of knowledge, education, and learning processes. Within narratives, books are frequently depicted as instruments that transform or shape a character's development, while libraries function as spaces where individuals encounter, interact with, and connect to vast bodies of knowledge (Crawford & Crawford, 2022; Tancheva, 2005). However, these representations are not neutral, as they carry cultural assumptions about how knowledge should be accessed, organized, and valued.

In literary studies, books and reading activities are often analysed as forces that shape characters' ways of thinking, moral values, and intellectual identities within literary works (Crawford & Crawford, 2022). Although books and reading receive considerable attention, libraries as institutions are rarely examined in depth particularly about how knowledge is organized, how access to information is regulated, and how classification systems and knowledge governance operate, which are core concerns in Library and Information Science (Tancheva, 2005). In other words, libraries are still frequently positioned merely as physical settings rather than as institutions that shape how knowledge is stored, accessed, and interpreted through systems of signs such as catalogs, classification schemes, symbols, and rules.

Based on these considerations, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach becomes particularly relevant. The library can be read as a cultural sign that carries ideological meanings related to knowledge, order, and symbolic power (Barthes & Lavers, 1972; Pezzini, 2017). Semiotic analysis allows researchers to examine how literary texts construct myths about knowledge—for example, knowledge as something vast and limitless, yet requiring systems of organization to become meaningful (Hermansson, 2023; Tancheva, 2005).

The Relationship between Semiotics and Library and Information Science

In the field of Library and Information Science, libraries have traditionally been understood from functional and technical perspectives, such as classification, cataloguing, and information services (Miles & Huberman, 1984). However, this understanding has evolved to view libraries as institutions that shape how societies understand knowledge and determine which information is considered credible and trustworthy (Ashikuzzaman, 2024; Tancheva, 2005).

The semiotic approach makes an important contribution to Library and Information Science, as it enables analysis of the symbolic and ideological meanings embedded within librarianship. Classification and knowledge organization, for example, do not function merely as technical tools, but also reflect particular ways of viewing the world and structuring reality (Ashikuzzaman, 2024; Tancheva, 2005).

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that there is a research gap in studies that systematically connect Barthes' semiotics, representations of libraries in literature, and

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perspectives from Library and Information Science (Hermansson, 2023). This study addresses that gap by analyzing *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* as a literary text that constructs meanings and myths about knowledge and information organization (Crawford & Crawford, 2022).

Different from previous studies that are primarily descriptive or thematic in nature, this study positions the library as a system of signs that reflects core values of librarianship. Consequently, this research not only extends the application of Barthes' semiotics within literary studies (Barthes & Lavers, 1972; Pezzini, 2017), but also makes a conceptual contribution to Library and Information Science by demonstrating how principles of knowledge organization and management are represented and naturalized through literary narratives (Ashikuzzaman, 2024; Tancheva, 2005).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative interpretative approach using Roland Barthes' textual semiotic analysis method. Qualitative research aims to understand how individuals or groups interpret social phenomena based on their experiences and contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is selected to examine how meanings related to books, libraries, and knowledge are constructed through systems of signs in literary texts.

The object of this study is the novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library*. The unit of analysis was determined purposively and consists of narrative excerpts, dialogues, and linguistic metaphors that explicitly represent books, libraries, reading practices, as well as the management and transmission of knowledge. The selection of excerpts was based on their relevance to themes of literacy and knowledge organization. Data analysis was conducted by following the stages outlined below:

1. Identification of Signs
This stage aims to identify the signifier and the signified within selected excerpts that represent librarianship related practices and objects such as books, collections, systems, reading, and libraries within the literary text (Barthes, 1967; Chandler, 2007).
2. First-Level Signification Analysis (Denotation)
This stage interprets the literal meaning of signs based on the narrative context of the novel, without introducing cultural or ideological assumptions (Barthes & Lavers, 1972).
3. Second-Level Signification Analysis (Connotation)
This stage interprets the symbolic meanings of signs by considering cultural, social, and literacy-related discourses that inform how the signs are understood (Barthes & Lavers, 1972).
4. Myth Analysis
This stage examines how recurring connotative meanings construct cultural myths or ideologies about knowledge and libraries, as well as their relationship to principles within Library and Information Science (Barthes & Lavers, 1972; Shera, 1972).

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To ensure the accuracy of the analytical, each connotative and mythological interpretation is consistently grounded in the textual structure and narrative context, thereby avoiding speculative or purely subjective interpretations.

FINDINGS

Synopsis of the novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library*

Novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* (2019) is a translated edition of *Bibbi Bokkens Magische Bibliothek* by Jostein Gaarder and Klaus Hagerup. The book tells a highly engaging imaginative journey into the history of writing and books, narrated through the perspective of a curious young boy.

Story concept, characterization, and theme

The Magic Library by Jostein Gaarder tells the story of Nils, a young boy who discovers a magical library in the house of his late grandfather. Unlike an ordinary library, the books there possess the power to take Nils and his friend, Berit, on journeys through time.

Through these adventures, they explore the history of writing and books. They witness the earliest forms of writing through cave paintings, the development of cuneiform in Mesopotamia, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the invention of the alphabet that revolutionized the way humans write. They visit the magnificent Library of Alexandria, observe monks copying manuscripts during the Middle Ages, and, most importantly, witness the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, which dramatically transformed the dissemination of knowledge.

Throughout their journey, Nils and Berit not only learn historical facts but also reflect on the power of words, the importance of reading, and how books have shaped civilization and preserved wisdom across generations.

In the end, Nils and Berit return to their grandfather's library with a deeper understanding. They realize that books are not merely stacks of paper, but magical windows that connect them to the entire heritage of human knowledge. The novel stands as a beautiful ode to books, libraries, and the wonder of learning.

Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis

The Roland Barthes semiotic analysis applied in this study draws on selected sections of the novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken's Magic Library* to identify signifiers, signified, and the meanings they produce. Symbols and signs present in the novel are examined through an analysis of narrative scenes.

In examining signs, they are analysed through three levels of signification (Barthes, 1967; Chandler, 2007). At the first level, a sign is understood through its (1) signifier and (2) signified. This stage focuses on denotative meaning, in which the sign is interpreted at the level of language and its literal meaning. From this linguistic understanding, the analysis proceeds to the second level, namely connotation, where cultural context begins to play a role in shaping

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meaning. At the level of myth, signs function to naturalize cultural values, making them appear normal, self-evident, and unquestionable (Barthes & Lavers, 1972; Pezzini, 2017).

This understanding is reflected in a passage on page 180, which states: “Inside me, it felt as though bells were ringing except for one, far back in my head when I heard her add: this hotel has many interesting books. Unfortunately, they are not arranged systematically and are very disorganized”.

TABLE 1
Denotative, Connotative, and Mythical Meanings in the Passage on page 180

Stage of Analysis	Element of Analysis	Explanation in the Context of the Novel
Stage I (Denotation)	Signifier	The bells ringing within the character and the statement about the large number of interesting books in the hotel that are not arranged systematically and are highly disorganized.
	Signified	The character’s inner reaction to the presence of a large collection of books that is poorly organized in terms of its arrangement.
	Denotative Sign	The hotel has many books, but the collection is not organized systematically.
Stage II (Connotative)	Connotative Signifier	Bells ringing in an irregular and chaotic manner.
	Connotative Signified	Mental unease toward existing knowledge represented here by books which is difficult to access because it is not properly managed or organized.
	Connotative Sign	An abundance of books without proper organizational structure, symbolizing knowledge with latent potential that cannot function effectively.
Stage III (Myth)	Myth / Ideology	Without organizational systems, knowledge cannot function optimally, and the richness of a collection alone does not define a library’s significance.

Analysis:

In the literary representation of *The Magic Library* on page 180, books do not consistently appear as symbols of progress. Instead, the scattered and disorganized books are portrayed as incomplete knowledge and hindered intellectual potential.

Literature here functions critically by revealing that an abundance of books without an organizing system produces a chaos of meaning rather than enlightenment. Thus, the hotel in this passage is depicted not merely as a physical space, but as a reflection of how humans treat and manage knowledge.

The bells that fail to ring fully signify an unfulfilled state of awareness: knowledge exists, yet it cannot resonate completely because it has not been properly organized and managed.

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On page 180, the passage clearly reveals a core ideology of Library and Information Science, namely that access is more important than ownership of information. At the level of Barthes' myth, the disordered collection is understood as a symbol of the failure of knowledge management (books).

The character's inner response to the presence of a large collection of books arranged in a disordered manner demonstrates an awareness of information literacy, emphasizing that books which are not classified, catalogued, or properly organized lose their practical function. Within the context of Library and Information Science, this condition directly relates to the importance of classification systems, cataloguing as tools for information retrieval, and collection layout as part of user services. Implicitly, the novel affirms that a library is not defined solely by the quantity of books it holds but must also be supported by a clear and orderly organizational structure.

The passage indicates the physical condition of a book collection in a hotel that contains many books but lacks clear organization or a classification system. At the denotative level, the text presents only two elements: the presence of "many interesting books" and the condition of the collection as "not arranged systematically and very disorganized." The image of "bells ringing" functions as the character's emotional response to this situation. Thus, at the first level of signification, the sign remains within the literal domain, describing an abundant yet unorganized collection.

However, at the connotative level, the meaning of the sign moves beyond the books' physical condition. The expression "bells ringing" can be interpreted as a symbol of the character's intellectual unease. The ringing does not merely represent a spontaneous reaction, but rather an internal "alarm" triggered by the sight of knowledge in a state of disorder. In this context, the lack of organization becomes a metaphor for knowledge that has lost its accessibility. Although the books exist materially, they do not fully function as sources of knowledge because there is no structure that enables effective discovery and use.

The absence of structure that enables effective discovery and use of knowledge highlights that the central issue lies not in the quantity of the collection, but in the lack of a knowledge organization system. In other words, the text implicitly emphasizes the importance of classification, cataloging, and information governance as prerequisites for making knowledge usable. The abundance of books presents a paradox: an excess of information does not automatically result in ease of access to knowledge. Without an organizing system, a collection becomes merely a pile of objects rather than a living intellectual medium.

From the convergence of denotative and connotative meanings emerges an ideological myth. Within Barthes' framework, myth operates by naturalizing cultural values so that they appear normal and unquestioned. In this passage, the constructed myth is the belief that valuable knowledge must be managed systematically. Libraries or knowledge spaces are not adequately measured by the sheer quantity of their collections, but by the capacity of their systems to create order, accessibility, and efficient information retrieval. Thus, the text does not merely depict

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disordered bookshelves but reproduces a modern librarianship ideology that positions classification and knowledge organization as the fundamental basis of a meaningful library.

Through this reading, the passage can be understood as a symbolic critique of knowledge management practices that focus solely on collection accumulation without attention to information organization. Disorganized books represent silent and inaccessible knowledge, whereas order is positioned as a prerequisite for knowledge to truly become alive, usable, and transmissible across generations.

This perspective is further supported by S. R. Ranganathan through his laws of library science, which emphasize the principles ‘every book its reader’ and ‘save the time of the reader.’ These principles indicate that the existence of a collection must be accompanied by an effective system of organization so that information can be found efficiently by users (Hidaya, 2020).

Furthermore, in the passage on page 155, which states, “Here you will find all the books ever written throughout the history of humankind. At present, we are filling the shelves with books that are still being written,” the characters begin to grasp the essence of *the Magic Library* not as an ordinary library, but as a symbolic space that transcends temporal boundaries.

TABLE 2
The meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth in the poem "Questions" on page 155

Stage of Analysis	Element of Analysis	Explanation in the Context of the Novel
Stage I	Signifier	A library that contains all the books of humankind, including books that are still in the process of being written.
	Signified	A physical and conceptual depiction of a library with an exceptionally comprehensive and continuously expanding collection.
	Denotative Sign	The Magic Library is a place that houses all the books that have ever been written and are still being written.
Stage II	Connotative Signifier	Bookshelves that are continually being filled, unfinished books, and a library that is never final.
	Connotative Signified	Knowledge is understood as a dynamic, living process that is continuously renewed by human activity.
	Connotative Sign	The library is not merely an archive, but a living space where knowledge is produced and passed down across generations.
Stage III	Myth / Ideology	Human knowledge is an ongoing process of memory, and the library is a symbol of civilizational continuity—a space where human knowledge and memory persist beyond the limits of time.

Analysis:

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The quotation appears when the characters begin to realize that the Magical Library is not merely a building for storing books, but a symbolic space that transcends the boundaries of space and time. At the denotative level, the text describes a library that “contains all the books ever written throughout the history of humankind” and whose shelves “are still being filled with books that are in the process of being written.” Literally, this sign indicates the existence of an unlimited, complete, and ever-expanding collection. The library is represented as a place that brings together the entirety of human intellectual output, both works that have been completed and those still in the process of creation.

However, at the connotative level, the meaning of the quotation moves beyond a physical description of the library. The expression “books that are still being written” signifies that knowledge is not something static or final but is always in the process of becoming. Shelves that continue to be filled serve as a symbol of the unceasing dynamics of human intellectual activity, which never stops generating new ideas. In this context, the library is no longer understood merely as a passive archive that preserves the past, but as a living space where knowledge is continuously produced, renewed, and passed on from one generation to another.

These connotations reveal a paradigm shift in the understanding of the nature of the library. While libraries have traditionally been associated with places for storing collections, this novel presents the library as an evolving organism of knowledge. The existence of “books that are still being written” emphasizes that the library does not merely serve to preserve memories of the past but also anticipates the future of human knowledge. In this way, the library is positioned as a space that connects the past, the present, and the future within a single intellectual continuum.

This view aligns with Kusnandar’s perspective, which sees the library as the “collective memory” of human civilization a place where knowledge is never complete, as it remains open to interpretation and the continuous production of meaning (Cms & Evi Nursanti Rukmana, n.d.).

At the mythic level, the text constructs an ideology that views human knowledge as an unfinished civilizational process. From the perspective of Barthes’ semiotics, myth operates by naturalizing certain cultural ideas so that they appear universal and self-evident. In this quotation, the myth that is constructed is the belief that the library is the heart of the continuity of human civilization. The library is understood not only as a place for storing books, but as a symbol of the collective memory of humanity that remains alive and continues to grow beyond the limits of time. Knowledge is not seen as a final product, but as a process that is constantly renewed through the activities of reading, writing, and documenting human experience.

This myth also represents the fundamental principles of modern library and information science. The novel implicitly suggests that the significance of a library lies not merely in the quantity of its collections, but in its ability to manage the ongoing development of knowledge in a sustainable way. The idea of “shelves that continue to be filled” can be interpreted as a

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representation of collection development processes that never cease to follow the growth of information and the needs of society. Moreover, the presence of “books that are still being written” underscores the importance of the roles played by librarians, bibliographers, and knowledge organization systems in ensuring that new knowledge can be collected, documented, and made accessible to future generations.

This idea is reinforced by Spyridon Orestis Palermos, who argues that human knowledge is dynamic and collective, continually evolving through the processes of storing, distributing, and reproducing information within cultural spaces (Palermos, 2022).

Thus, this quotation does not only present an imagination of a magical library but also produces an ideological view of the library as a civilizational space. The novel positions the library as a symbol of the continuity of human memory, a place where knowledge of the past is preserved, knowledge of the present is managed, and knowledge of the future is prepared. Therefore, the library in this text emerges as a metaphor for the unceasing movement of humanity’s intellectual continuity.

DISCUSSION

This study employs Barthes’ semiotic theory, which divides the process of meaning-making into three stages: denotation, connotation, and myth. This approach is in line with the study by (Jadou & Ghabra, 2021), which suggests that by passing through these three levels, research can explain how signs within a novel function not only as narrative elements but also as a medium for constructing cultural and ideological meanings. In Barthes’ perspective, literary texts never stand as a neutral sequence of words, as every sign always carries values, assumptions, and particular viewpoints produced by culture. Therefore, the novel *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken’s Magic Library* can be understood not merely as a fantasy work about books and libraries, but also as a cultural reflection on the relationship between humans and knowledge, memory, and the management of information.

The results of the analysis show that meaning in the novel is constructed through symbols related to librarianship, such as bookshelves, the organization of collections, the process of writing books, and the library as a space of knowledge. In the quotation on page 180, for instance, the description of numerous books that are “not arranged systematically” does not merely depict the physical condition of a collection but also represents a symbolic critique of disorganized knowledge. At the denotative level, the text simply indicates the presence of books in disarray. However, at the connotative level, this disorder signifies anxiety about knowledge that is difficult to access because it is not properly managed. At the mythic level, the text constructs an ideology that knowledge only becomes meaningful when accompanied by a clear system of organization. Thus, the novel implicitly emphasizes the importance of classification, information management, and accessibility of knowledge as the main foundations of a library’s significance.

These findings indicate that the novel represents values that align with the principles of modern library and information science. The abundance of collections is not regarded as a

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goal but must be accompanied by organizational processes so that information can be discovered and utilized. In this context, the literary text functions as a medium of cultural criticism of modern information society, which often emphasizes the quantity of knowledge while neglecting aspects of information management and order. Therefore, the library in the novel is not positioned merely as a narrative setting, but as an epistemological symbol of how humans understand, store, and manage knowledge.

In addition, in the quotation on page 155, the novel presents the library as a symbolic space that transcends temporal boundaries. The statement that the library contains “all the books written throughout the history of humankind” as well as “books that are still being written” demonstrates that knowledge is understood as an ever-evolving process. At the connotative level, bookshelves that continue to be filled signify that knowledge is never final but is constantly renewed through human intellectual activity. Meanwhile, at the mythic level, the novel constructs the view that the library is a symbol of the continuity of civilization and humanity’s collective memory. In this sense, the library is no longer understood merely as a place for storing collections, but as a living space where knowledge is produced, transmitted, and preserved across generations.

Through this semiotic reading, the study demonstrates that *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken’s Magic Library* constructs a mythological narrative about the power of knowledge. Books and libraries are represented as symbols of humanity’s hope in education and in the search for meaning in life. The novel positions the library as a space that enables human beings to transcend their limitations, whether of space, time, or experience. Thus, the literary text in this novel functions not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a medium for philosophical reflection on the importance of knowledge in human life.

Methodologically, the use of Barthes’ semiotics in this study has proven effective in revealing layers of meaning hidden behind the symbols in the novel. This approach allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the literary text and the cultural context that underlies it, so that meaning does not remain at the literal level but also encompasses ideological dimensions. Therefore, this research shows that literary works can serve as relevant sources of inquiry for understanding concepts of librarianship, knowledge organization, and information culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis, this study concludes that *The Magic Library: Bibbi Bokken’s Magic Library* does not merely present a fantasy story but also represents cultural and ideological perspectives on knowledge and libraries. Through the stages of denotation, connotation, and myth, the novel presents symbols of librarianship as media for constructing meaning about the importance of information management, order, and accessibility. The library is depicted not only as a physical space for storing books, but as an epistemological symbol that reflects the continuity of knowledge, collective memory, and human civilization.

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Moreover, the novel constructs the myth that knowledge becomes meaningful when it is managed systematically, while simultaneously affirming the library as a living space that transcends the boundaries of space and time. Thus, this literary work functions both as a form of cultural criticism of modern information society and as a philosophical reflection on the role of knowledge in human life. The application of Barthes' semiotics proves effective in uncovering the ideological layers of meaning within the literary text and demonstrates the relevance of literature as a source of study in the fields of librarianship and information culture.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

[Noor Arief]: Conceptualization, methodology, writing the original draft, review and editing, manuscript revision. [Bella Septi Maulidya]: Conceptualization, methodology, writing the original draft, review and editing, manuscript revision.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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