

Differentiated Service Models in Holistic Education Libraries: A Case Study of Run Run Shaw Library, City University of Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the collections, spaces, and services of the Run Run Shaw Library at City University of Hong Kong from a whole-person education perspective, proposing a differentiated service model for developing whole-person education-oriented libraries. This includes: identifying differentiated disciplinary resource needs, allocating diverse resources based on demand differences, developing various research, teaching, and learning services according to differentiated resources, and integrating these differentiated services to develop whole-person education-oriented libraries.

Full Text

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the collections, spaces, and services of the Run Run Shaw Library at City University of Hong Kong from the perspective of holistic education, and proposes a differentiated service model for developing holistic education-oriented libraries. This includes: identifying differentiated disciplinary resource demands, allocating different resources according to these varying needs, developing various research, teaching, and learning services based on differentiated resources, and integrating these differentiated services to develop a holistic education-oriented library.

Keywords: electronic resources, print resources, collection development, reader services, reference services

Abstract: According to the holistic education view, the paper analyzes the collections, spaces and services of Run Run Shaw Library of City University of Hong Kong, and proposes a differentiated service model based on holistic education, which includes: finding different demand for academic resources; allocating different resources based on the different demands; carrying out research, teaching and learning services based on different resources and integrating services to develop a holistic education library.

Keywords: electronic resource printed materials collection development reader service reference service

In the 1970s, influenced by humanistic education theories, North American educational theorists developed a theory centered on “whole-person development,” adopting “holistic education” as its theoretical banner [1]. Holistic education is not a specific curriculum or methodology, but a comprehensive educational philosophy [2]. It emphasizes that education should be holistic and comprehensive, taking into account learners’ developmental needs and sequences, thereby cultivating individuals with balanced development in both mental and physical aspects. In essence, holistic education involves understanding students’ psychological needs, abilities, experiences, personalities, and aspirations, and tailoring educational activities accordingly to stimulate their intellectual curiosity and motivation, enabling joyful learning. By reconsidering and repositioning the library’s role from the broader perspective of holistic education, university libraries can enhance their status in the educational enterprise and transform their mechanisms and functions in collections, spaces, and services.

Currently, the explosive growth of electronic information resources presents libraries with more severe challenges, such as the expansion and acquisition of electronic resources, the promotion of print resources in the context of electronic resource growth, and how both can complement each other to meet readers’ information needs. On one hand, libraries must appropriately manage the unpredictable and rapidly changing aspects of book quantities, types, carriers, prices, and cooperative procurement models. On the other hand, what may be more important to readers is what benefits they can obtain from the library. Therefore, this paper examines the practices of the Run Run Shaw Library at City University of Hong Kong in terms of collections, space, and services from a holistic education perspective, and proposes a differentiated service model for developing holistic education-oriented libraries.

Research Progress and Framework

A review of domestic and international literature reveals numerous discussions on promoting reader services to optimize library collection utilization. Early research by Ronte, H. examined technological impacts on publishing models, including direct-to-reader publishing, electronic market distribution, electronic retailing, and e-book reading patterns [3]. Jantz, R. argued that libraries must develop new service models leveraging e-books [4]. Ashcroft, L. & Watts, C.

surveyed e-book adoption across 127 UK universities, identifying management challenges in collection development, marketing and evaluation, user education, technical skills, and communication [5]. Rao, S.S. studied the integration of e-books into library and information center operations [6]. Appleton, L. proposed embedding e-books in virtual learning environments [7]. Barker, P. suggested using e-books for knowledge management [8]. Anuradha, K.T. & Usha, H.S. compared different e-book acquisition models [9]. Dinkelman, A. & Stacy-Bates, K. investigated how readers utilize e-books [10]. Hernon, P. et al. discussed reader services for e-books [11].

Chen Yuling argued that libraries should employ humanistic concepts, architectural design, and library functions to exert subtle cultural influence on readers [12]. Huang Min advocated creating relaxed environments for autonomous learning, providing adequate learning resources, and guiding students to develop self-learning abilities and habits to compensate for classroom education deficiencies and prevent personality crises, cultural fragmentation, and disciplinary limitations caused by specialized education [13]. Gao Hongyan believed libraries should create tranquil, elegant, relaxed, and comfortable borrowing environments while engaging in regular two-way dialogue with readers [14].

Song Yan proposed that library services should emphasize humanistic thinking, such as providing drinking water for readers, offering library staff good Chinese and English training opportunities, and assisting readers in observing social norms [15]. Zhou Liying advocated strengthening information literacy education for readers, optimizing basic resources, and providing specialized services to innovate library services [16].

Zhang Danmei suggested that library reader services should embody patience, elegance, affinity, stability, communication, and exchange [17]. Hu Yonghong and Fu Yongfang recommended enhancing electronic reading room promotion, accelerating resource procurement, strengthening librarian training, guiding readers in resource utilization, and exploring potential service models [18]. Chen Weili proposed five “reader-centered” combinations: traditional services combined with Web services, electronic reading combined with wireless networks, resource sharing combined with self-developed databases, static combined with interactive reference services, and quality education combined with research consultation services [19]. Carloock, D.M. & Perry, A.M. argued for studying academic library impact, including better promotion and training for e-book platforms and improved course support, while recommending that e-book vendors develop products aligned with faculty teaching and research needs [20]. Shelburne, W.A. provided cases on using e-books to serve different reader types [21].

In summary, current research systematically guides libraries in addressing electronic resource development challenges, with extensive discussion on library services and promotion. However, studies integrating both aspects—developing collection construction based on different needs, evolving from collection construction to user services, and forming overall library strategic goals—remain scarce and require further exploration.

Case Analysis and Discussion

In recent years, the Run Run Shaw Library at City University of Hong Kong has experienced a significant shift in collection development: whereas electronic books previously outnumbered print books, the opposite is now true [22]. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1: Comparison of Print and Electronic Book Collections | Date | Jan 1999 | Jul 2005 | Dec 2009 | |—|—|—|—|—|—| | Print Books | E-books | Print Books | E-books | Print Books | E-books | | Quantity (Titles) | | | | | *Note:* indicates unverifiable data.*

The challenges facing the library include enabling readers to effectively utilize both print and electronic academic resources, making them aware of their extensive electronic resource options, and helping them systematically explore needed resources. To address these challenges, the library has implemented differentiated service measures to enhance its service and educational functions.

3.1 Differentiated Resource Allocation by Disciplinary Needs

The differentiated services implemented by the Run Run Shaw Library do not exclusively favor either print or electronic resources. Instead, the library adopts a strategy of combining print and electronic resources according to the specific needs of different disciplines (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Print and Electronic Academic Book Collections [Table appears incomplete in original, showing only headers and “Business and Social Sciences” without data]

The combination patterns are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Differentiated Resource Allocation by Disciplinary Needs | Discipline | Resource Allocation Model | |—|—|—|—|—|—| | Science and Engineering | Electronic resources include print resources | | Law and Administration | Large overlap between electronic and print resources | | Economics and Management | Electronic resources overlap with print resources |

This strategy effectively saves procurement funds while maximizing resource utilization and reader satisfaction. Since the same book is priced differently across regions and languages, and reader demands vary by discipline, bulk purchasing is one cost-saving approach, but “on-demand allocation” better combines cost reduction with effective resource utilization. Moreover, libraries must not only procure resources but, more importantly, assist readers in using them, which requires developing differentiated services based on resource allocation.

3.2 Developing Differentiated Services Based on Resource Allocation

During the transition from exclusively print-based services to differentiated services, the library’s functions and roles have continuously evolved. This evolution

has resulted in the development of a series of reader services to meet the needs of each period and each type of reader.

3.2.1 Cataloging and Subject Recommendation Services The Information Space (constructed around 2005-2006) was the library's first computer space, equipped with 100 computers providing internet access and computing opportunities. It offered software operation guidance, tutorials, and assistance in utilizing computing resources, alongside access to electronic content. After meeting readers' basic computing equipment needs, the library faced higher service demands. Consequently, the library provided cataloging information and subject recommendations near the Information Space, enabling readers to conveniently understand library collection resources.

3.2.2 Reference Services Between 2006 and 2008, the library established The Oval (Oval Computer Space), its second computer space, equipped with 106 computers and application software for electronic content access. Recognizing that readers often struggled to retrieve needed information, obtain full-text access, or filter overwhelming amounts of information despite having computers, librarians transformed from "managers" to "facilitators," supporting research, teaching, and learning in an improved equipment environment.

Additionally, this area included 23 computers with multimedia resources, providing graphic, text, video, and audio content services, focusing on limited video and music services to support university educational activities through multimedia.

3.2.3 User Education Services As the information environment evolves, information technology develops, and information equipment changes, user education remains one of the library's primary service tasks. What differs is the increasing complexity of the "atmosphere"—on one hand, readers encounter more information sources, while on the other hand, the quality of these sources varies significantly. This requires librarians to guide and cultivate an environment for reading and learning exchange. In this regard, the Run Run Shaw Library supports courses and lectures within the library to foster students' character and temperament development. For example, students from different majors learn to appreciate others, encourage others, and collaborate in problem-solving through interaction.

3.2.4 Integrated Resource, Search, and Consultation Services As library information resource types increase and information service complexity grows, libraries require more comprehensive planning for resources and services. Beyond providing equipment, print resources, and electronic resources, they must offer convenient integrated resource, search, and consultation services. As Noorhidawati, A & Gibb, F's investigation of three different academic environments for e-book use—physical surveys, content searching, and reading promotion—demonstrated [23], "searching for relevant content" is the most common

reason for using e-books. The Run Run Shaw Library has established an IT assistance counter near the Reference Desk, with print and electronic collections placed within sight of both counters, and a reference bookshelf at the intersection point containing frequently used materials. Computer spaces flank the collections, allowing readers to use computers and reading areas simultaneously without frequently changing locations or credentials. Furthermore, the library provides each user with a laptop in the User Education Room for practice exercises and regularly hosts free services for specific groups on databases, collections, library spaces, multimedia, research methods, and exam preparation.

3.3 Developing Holistic Education Libraries through Differentiated Services

Bennett, L & Landoni, M argue that despite academic libraries' extensive e-book collections, users remain unaware, and librarians should improve usability and classification methods [24]. This requires consideration of regional reader characteristics. For instance, due to the complexity of Chinese character recognition among Hong Kong' s Chinese population, the library must integrate academic books across different disciplines, carriers, and languages, making reader promotion of print and e-books particularly complex.

Building on differentiated resource allocation, the Run Run Shaw Library has developed differentiated service promotion, transforming from a resource-collection library to an education-service library. This shifts readers from extensive reading to intensive reading, and from intensive reading to joyful reading; from resisting reading to enjoying reading, and from enjoying reading to habitual reading. The ongoing service strategy focuses on "differentiated services by discipline to support the core university educational philosophy of research, education, and lifelong reading," thereby strengthening researchers' capabilities, enhancing learners' interdisciplinary knowledge, and ultimately cultivating reading habits through enjoyable reading.

3.3.1 Supporting Research The library employs SFX cross-database searching to improve information retrieval efficiency, enabling dual searching of bibliographic and full-text retrieval. By systematically compiling bibliographic authors, editors, keywords, subject terms, abstracts, tables of contents, chapters, and first paragraphs, the system enables both cross-database and cross-text searching. For example, a single keyword can locate relevant articles by different editors and different sections within articles. Beyond SFX' s efficiency improvements, librarians systematically compile authors, editors, keywords, subject terms, abstracts, tables of contents, chapters, and first paragraphs to provide knowledge maps after bibliometric analysis. Based on this, the library offers dual bibliographic and full-text retrieval systems and reference services.

3.3.2 Supporting Teaching (1) Developing reading lists for program planning, course planning, and course selection systems.

For program planning, each university department submits an annual reference list for library procurement and cataloging, representing an information organization system for foundational disciplinary knowledge. As Parkes, D' s research on providing course materials and electronic reading formats suggests [25], the Run Run Shaw Library' s practical experience involves three aspects: program planning, course planning, and course selection systems.

For course planning, each professor submits a reference list each semester for library procurement and cataloging, representing an information organization system for advanced specialized knowledge.

For course selection systems, reference librarians, through understanding and assimilating both systems, organize reference book information for all university programs and courses on the course selection system, from foundational to advanced knowledge and from holistic to specialized perspectives.

(2) Serving three information systems with e-books to provide users direct access to relevant content.

Based on program planning, course planning, and course selection systems, books and documents for program planning are placed in the Educational Reference Materials area for 4,000 programs as essential print resources. Due to copyright restrictions, required books, presentations, photos, and physical models in the Educational Reference Materials area serve as primary display items, with supplementary teaching materials stored in computer systems. This enables relevant e-books and journal articles to coexist with print books on thematic web-pages through links. These program-planned e-books, course-planned electronic documents, and supplementary materials are linked to the course selection system, allowing teachers to organize relevant program and course information and enabling students to directly click and read to help determine course selection.

3.3.3 Supporting Learning (1) Presenting interdisciplinary, spatiotemporal, multimedia, and cross-carrier collections.

For interdisciplinary integration, the Bridge Exhibition combined humanities from the Chinese Culture Academy with engineering from the School of Architecture and Engineering, providing a space for mutual appreciation and exchange between faculty and students. Using the “Discovery of the Architectural and Cultural Values of Chinese Bridges” (hereafter: Bridge Exhibition) held on November 24, 2009, jointly organized by the City University of Hong Kong Chinese Cultural Center and School of Architecture and Engineering as an example:

For spatiotemporal integration, the Bridge Exhibition' s thematic book recommendations combined ancient Chinese bridge architecture and art with modern Western bridge architecture and technology. For multimedia integration, the exhibition allowed students to display posters and models while screening two films— “Tracing the Rainbow Bridge” and “Secrets of Lost Empires II: Easter Island-Chuan Bridge” (Secrets of Lost Empires II: Chinese Bridges)—integrating

images, models, books, and films. For cross-carrier integration, beyond displaying print books and reading recommendations, the exhibition provided links to online books on pre-event webpages and recommended readings on post-event quiz pages, integrating print and electronic resources through library activities.

(2) Goal-oriented reading selection to support specialized and general education.

For specialized education, teachers select important reference books as starting points for thematic reading. Through book reviews, bibliographic organization, and relevant resource links, a basic reference area is formed, providing convenient services for systematic literature collection, information organization, and access for faculty and students in the field.

Subsequently, students from specialized programs engage in online exchanges and discussions with non-specialist students, achieving co-creation, sharing, and collaborative learning in general education. Using librarian blogs as a platform, combined with student reflections posted after learning, other students are attracted to participate in online discussions. From the perspective of developing an exchange atmosphere, the library creates a reading-sharing service mechanism through post-reading reflection publications. Each week, one English book, one traditional Chinese book, and one simplified Chinese book on life philosophy, history, or culture are discussed, adding 156 classic books for reading and discussion within one academic year, along with other related books and journal articles, creating a snowball effect.

Finally, through 4-6 exhibitions per semester providing “face-to-face” exchanges in the Multi-purpose Lobby (library exhibition hall), students have opportunities to publicly present their reflections and learn social communication skills and attitudes of mutual appreciation, learning, encouragement, and cooperation.

3.4 Creating an Environment Supporting the “Whole Person Development” Educational Philosophy

In new book display services, the focus extends beyond book placement to combining various exhibitions and lectures, regularly hosting reading clubs to stimulate students’ intellectual curiosity and provide alternative teaching spaces for faculty, thereby cultivating a reading atmosphere. Creating and maintaining this atmosphere aims to establish an environment supporting the “whole person development” educational philosophy. Guided by librarians and tailored to various college programs, faculty courses, and student group needs, the library develops general education and interdisciplinary training at different professional levels. For example, through exhibitions, lectures, library work-study programs, and field trips, the library assists students in transcending specialized training limitations for interdisciplinary development and cultivates interest in fine arts and music through various art appreciation courses.

As a hub of human knowledge, libraries must not only purchase extensive print

and electronic resources but also diversify, refine, and differentiate their services. University libraries, in particular, must transform through differentiated services toward a holistic education-oriented library model—gradually becoming “a place providing information technology and content, a place for coordinated collaboration and collaborative learning, and a place for knowledge production.”

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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