

## Postprint: Implications from Foreign University Libraries Supporting Think Tank Development

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To provide reference for domestic university libraries in developing think tank support services, and to propose corresponding development recommendations in conjunction with the characteristics of domestic think tank development. [Method/Process] Through investigation, this paper selects some foreign university libraries that excel in providing support services for think tank construction, and identifies the characteristics of the surveyed subjects in terms of professional resource support, network platform construction, and think tank librarian staffing. [Results/Conclusions] The following implications are obtained: conduct in-depth research on university libraries centered on think tank services; make full use of university libraries' disciplinary think tank resources; continue to improve network platform construction; implement embedded librarian services in think tanks; and other recommendations.

### Full Text

## Enlightenment from the Think Tanks Support Services in Foreign Academic Libraries

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study provides reference for domestic university libraries to develop think tank support services and proposes corresponding development suggestions based on the characteristics of domestic think tank development. [Method/Process] Through investigation, this paper selected several foreign university libraries that provide excellent support services for think tank

construction. The study objects were analyzed in terms of three aspects: professional resource support, network platform construction, and think tank librarian deployment. **[Result/Conclusion]** The following enlightenments are obtained: conduct in-depth research on university libraries centered on think tank services; make full use of university libraries' disciplinary think tank resources; continue to improve network platform construction; and develop librarian-embedded think tank services.

**Keywords:** academic library; think tank; think tank construction; think tank service

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Following the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the State Council issued the “Guiding Opinions on Deepening the Development of ‘Internet Plus Advanced Manufacturing’ to Develop Industrial Internet” in November 2017 [1], which proposed establishing an industrial internet think tank to form a high-end consulting talent team capable of researching policies and providing decision-making support for industrial internet development. In April 2018, the State Council released the “Opinions on Implementing the Division of Responsibilities for Key Work in the Government Work Report” [2], which explicitly stated in Article 47, “Providing Abundant Spiritual Nourishment for People to Live a Better Life,” that new-type think tanks should be well-established. The “2013 China Think Tank Report” released by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Think Tank Research Center defines think tanks in the specific context of socialism with Chinese characteristics as “professional research institutions that take public policy as the research object, influencing government decision-making as the research goal, public interest as the research orientation, and social responsibility as the research criterion. They are important components of national ‘soft power’ and ‘discourse power’ ” [3].

With high-level attention from the Party and the state, think tank construction has entered a period of rapid development. According to the “2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report” released in January 2018, the number of think tanks in China has reached 570 (including 58 in Taiwan), ranking second globally and accounting for 11.22% of the world’ s total, just after the United States [4]. Although China has a large number of think tanks, their construction started relatively late compared to foreign countries, and the quality of think tanks still faces urgent problems. The key to solving these problems lies in fully understanding the work processes of think tanks, addressing practical challenges from parts to the whole, thereby improving the quality of think tank construction. The work processes of think tank construction mainly include several aspects: data mining in disciplinary fields, information collection, knowledge organization, intelligence analysis, and decision-making. University libraries possess abundant resource conditions, professional disciplinary services, and strong intelligence research and analysis capabilities, enabling them to provide support for both theoretical research and practical operation of think tank construction.

In terms of practical work, foreign institutions such as Harvard University Library, Stanford University Library, and King' s College London Library all provide corresponding support services for think tank construction. Domestically, Peking University Library, Tsinghua University Library, and Renmin University of China Library have also provided certain services for think tanks, but the depth and breadth of these services still need strengthening compared to their foreign counterparts. In theoretical research, the theme of “university libraries and think tanks” has attracted attention from some scholars. Chu Jingli and Tang Guoyuan conducted an in-depth analysis of the relationship between libraries and think tanks, proposing pathways for libraries to support think tank construction [5]. Liu Fang, Chen Fang, and others identified the role positioning and development strategies of university library think tank services based on current think tank development needs [6]. Wu Yuliang analyzed the information resource construction of well-known foreign think tanks and provided substantive suggestions for Chinese libraries to develop think tank information services [7]. Liang Xiaomeng investigated four top American university think tank libraries and summarized enlightenments for Chinese university think tanks to develop library services [8]. Wei Lai and Wu Yawei examined the current development status of national think tanks at home and abroad, analyzing the important role libraries play in them [9]. However, research on how university libraries can provide services for think tank construction remains insufficient. This paper aims to analyze foreign university libraries that provide excellent services for think tank construction and, combined with the actual situation of Chinese university libraries' current think tank services, propose recommendations for relevant personnel.

## 2. Overview of Foreign Academic Libraries Supporting Think Tank Construction

This study focuses on university library support for think tank construction. Based primarily on the ranking results of the “2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report” [4] and using web investigation and literature research methods, we collected relevant data on foreign university libraries providing support services for think tank construction. After screening, six university libraries were selected as specific research objects: Stanford University Library, Princeton University Library, Harvard University Library, London School of Economics and Political Science Library, King' s College London Library, and University of Sussex Library. Seven associated think tanks were investigated: the Hoover Institution, Center for Science and Global Security, Belfer Center, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, LSE IDEAS, Defence Studies Department, and Institute of Development Studies. The investigation focused on three aspects: professional resource support, network platform construction, and think tank librarian deployment.

## 2.1 Professional Resource Support

Resources constitute one of the important foundations of think tank construction and a key factor directly affecting the quality of think tank outputs. They are the primary guarantee for the smooth operation of think tanks. Since most think tanks target specific research fields, their required resources are also discipline-specific. University libraries possess relatively large and systematic disciplinary resources that can provide professional resource support for think tank construction. Here, we elaborate on two exemplary cases.

The Hoover Institution Library & Archives within Stanford University Library [10] is a library specifically established to provide resource support and other services for the Hoover Institution. Founded in 1919, it collects and preserves important materials on global political, social, and economic changes according to the Hoover Institution's research fields, such as military and diplomatic history of major world conflicts, history of world wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, U.S. foreign policy, and international diplomacy. Currently, it holds over 1 million volumes from 171 countries and more than 6,000 archival collections documenting war, revolution, and peace. The resource retrieval portal includes: (1) Library materials, most of which can be searched on the Stanford University Library homepage or by limiting the search to "Hoover Library"; (2) Archival collections, containing the most complete descriptions of the Hoover Institution's archival holdings; and (3) Digital collections, including digitized posters, photographs, texts, audio recordings, and moving images.

The University of Sussex Library [11] has established a dedicated Development Studies subject guide for the Institute of Development Studies, allowing direct searching of all resources from the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) within the guide. It possesses a large collection of materials related to development studies. Additionally, it provides databases aligned with the think tank's fields for researchers to retrieve professional resources, with relatively comprehensive database types. These databases include: Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO), Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Country Reports, and Practical Action (providing professional peer-reviewed and evidence-based online book and journal collections for international development policy, practice, and research professionals), among 14 databases.

## 2.2 Network Platform Construction

In the multimedia era, network platforms are one of the primary means for users to learn about library services. Building comprehensive network platforms is an important work component for university libraries to provide related services to think tanks, serving to publicize think tanks to users and guide them in using resources and research outputs in think tank research fields. By investigating the network platforms of the selected libraries, we organized the content provided for think tank construction support, with results shown in Table 1. Based on the construction forms between think tanks and libraries, they can be mainly

classified into the following two types.

**2.2.1 Direct “Alliance” Form** Stanford University, Princeton University, and Harvard University represent this model. The libraries of these three universities have established affiliated libraries providing corresponding support services for the Hoover Institution, Center for Science and Global Security, Belfer Center, and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. These specialized libraries include: Hoover Library [10], Science and Global Security Center Library [12], Belfer Center Library [13], and Davis Center Library [14]. The network platforms of these libraries contain links to the think tank network platforms they serve. Correspondingly, the think tank network platforms also feature prominent library navigation sections, facilitating users in retrieving resource content related to the think tanks, including relevant materials and research outputs in the think tanks’ fields. This enables users to understand the think tanks’ development history, resource borrowing policies, and related research guidance, greatly serving the function of publicizing think tanks. It can be said that the two parties have formed a direct “alliance” relationship.

**2.2.2 Indirect “Alliance” Form** The London School of Economics and Political Science Library [15], King’ s College London Library [16], and University of Sussex Library [11] have not established proprietary libraries for the think tanks they serve, nor do they set obvious links to think tanks on their network platforms. However, since their library network platforms are attached to their respective university network platforms, think tank links can be retrieved indirectly. Meanwhile, the network platforms of LSE IDEAS, Defence Studies Department, and Institute of Development Studies can also access the library network platforms through other non-primary navigation sections or other links. It can be said that these three university libraries and their corresponding think tanks have formed an indirect “alliance” relationship—although the two parties do not have direct connections, there exists indirect mutual connectivity that also serves a navigational linking function for library users and think tank users, thereby achieving indirect integration of library resources and think tank resources.

### 2.3 Think Tank Librarian Deployment

Our investigation found that only the Center for Science and Global Security and the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies have dedicated think tank librarians assigned by Stanford University’ s Science and Global Security Center Library and Harvard University’ s Fung Library, respectively. Currently, only these two university libraries have deployed exclusive think tank librarians for think tanks.

Ahnde Lin [12] is the think tank librarian at Stanford University’ s Science and Global Security Center Library, primarily responsible for consultation services. The library website lists contact information, and users with any questions about

journals, government documents, or grey literature in fields related to the think tank's research areas—such as nuclear weapons control and nuclear energy—can contact the think tank librarian for assistance.

Svetlana Rukhelman [17] is the think tank librarian assigned by Harvard University's Fung Library. The website provides an introduction to her disciplinary background and experience. Her main function is to assist students and scholars in reference consultation and research needs, helping them use electronic resources and more traditional research methods. Additionally, the think tank librarian helps users solve practical problems in areas such as the library's overall direction, personal consultation, and research services focused on electronic resources workshops.

### 3. Recommendations

#### 3.1 Conduct In-Depth Research on Academic Libraries Centered on Think Tank Services

Think tank research serves as an important foundation for think tank practice and constitutes an indispensable link and theoretical support in the think tank construction process. In recent years, many Chinese scholars have focused on issues related to think tank construction. We searched CNKI with keywords “think tank” OR “think tank construction” AND “university library” (search date: May 17, 2018), obtaining 72 results. An annual publication trend analysis is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]. The figure indicates that research discussing “think tank,” “think tank construction,” and “university library” as key issues has shown an overall upward trend in recent years, demonstrating that an increasing number of domestic scholars are contributing their knowledge and efforts in this area. Additionally, the academic journal *Think Tank: Theory & Practice*, co-sponsored by Nanjing University, was officially launched in February 2016, representing a new stage and critical node for domestic research on think tank theory and related scholarship [5]. However, among current research, the overall number of studies on how university libraries can support think tank construction remains limited. University libraries possess unique advantages in collection resources and professional environments, giving them the capacity to provide excellent support services for think tank construction. Relevant personnel should reasonably utilize these favorable conditions and enhance the emphasis on university libraries' think tank construction services, conducting in-depth research on academic libraries centered on think tank services.

#### 3.2 Make Full Use of Academic Library Disciplinary Think Tank Resources

Each think tank generally has specific research fields, meaning that think tanks have distinct disciplinary characteristics. Consequently, disciplinary resources are essential foundations that must be available during think tank construction. University library resources feature clear disciplinary divisions and high quality.

Moreover, as university libraries are affiliated with their respective universities, library departments can establish good connections with expert groups and research scholars in various disciplines to obtain important suggestions for collection development. Second, university library user groups are primarily students who possess new ideas of the new era, and their resource usage behaviors are also major factors influencing university libraries' collection decisions. Therefore, if university library resources can be fully utilized in think tank construction, enabling organic integration between the two, university libraries can provide corresponding resource guarantees for think tanks based on their research fields. This can, to some extent, reduce the difficulty of resource searching, improve resource retrieval efficiency, and decrease human and material expenditures, providing more time for other think tank work processes, promoting a virtuous cycle in overall workflow, and perfecting think tank resource reserves.

### **3.3 Continue to Improve Network Platform Construction**

Network platform construction is one of the crucial components for university libraries to better support think tank research, especially in the multimedia era when more users choose to conduct related activities through network platforms. The quality of network platform construction and the completeness of content will directly affect users' understanding of the services provided by libraries. Domestic university libraries can form an "alliance" with the think tanks they support, setting up mutual website links on both parties' network platforms. University libraries can also form "alliances" among themselves to jointly support think tank construction, achieving co-construction and sharing while promoting mutual development. Furthermore, regarding network platform content, it should include as much as possible resources provision, retrieval pathways, research fields, and consultation services, with detailed explanations of listed items to facilitate users' better understanding of relevant information. In terms of website design, the principle of simplicity and elegance should be adopted to provide users with good visual experiences, enabling them to clearly see available items at a glance and leaving more time for other work processes.

### **3.4 Develop Librarian-Embedded Think Tank Services**

Librarians are the main bridge connecting libraries and users. If university libraries wish to provide higher-quality and more precise support services for think tanks, establishing think tank librarian positions is essential. Think tank librarians should 原则上 belong to the category of subject librarians, possessing profound disciplinary backgrounds that match the research fields of think tanks. This disciplinary knowledge enables them to be well-embedded in think tank construction. Therefore, this also requires think tank librarians to have keen sensitivity to knowledge, grasp the overall workflow of think tank construction, and possess high levels of data literacy, information literacy, and knowledge literacy. They should be able to reasonably select, clean, and organize data from massive datasets, forming useful information and ultimately structuring

it into knowledge systems to provide decision-making services for think tank construction. The deployment of think tank librarians will also improve the overall efficiency of think tank work, save time for relevant users in collecting resources, solve practical problems encountered in library operations, and provide reasonable guidance for users to efficiently utilize library resources and actively participate in relevant workshops and other activities.

Think tanks are institutions that provide decision-making services for the nation, possessing both knowledge and service characteristics. Building high-level think tanks will enhance national “soft power.” University libraries have unique advantages in knowledge organization and talent reserves, enabling them to provide services in resource supply, knowledge system construction, and talent deployment for think tank construction. These services are indispensable and important components in the think tank construction process, the foundation for think tank support, and important guarantees for building high-level think tanks. Moreover, in the digital era, libraries are in a critical period of transformation. Providing new-era services based on new-era user needs is the key point for libraries’ continued survival and development and an important foundation for successful library transformation. During this investigation, we only organized relevant literature and content presented on foreign university library network platforms. However, we did not conduct actual librarian and user interviews regarding service quality, which should be noted and supplemented in future research.

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## Author Contributions

Liu Jingyi: Topic selection, framework conception, and writing of most of the text; Liao Yu: Partial text writing; Jiang Hong: Revision and improvement.

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

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