

Ten Key Issues in Strategic Planning for Academic Libraries: Postprint

Authors: Wang Yu, Xie Zhaoying, Chu Jingli

Date: 2023-04-01T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Summarize and explore the key issues requiring attention and resolution in the formulation of strategic plans for academic libraries, providing recommendations for the development of strategic plans for academic libraries during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period and beyond. [Method/Process] Based on forecasts of contemporary information technology development, higher education transformation, and trends in academic research development, this paper discusses ten key issues concerning the formulation of strategic plans for China’s academic libraries: significance, principal contradictions, element relationships, user needs, resource development, technology application, space reengineering, user services, capability enhancement, and management effectiveness, scientifically planning the future development path for academic libraries. [Results/Conclusion] In the development of libraries during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period and beyond, the fundamental driving force is user needs; to this end, it is necessary to properly manage the relationships among various elements: resources are the foundation, technology is the means, service is the essence, management is the guarantee, and innovation is the engine.

Full Text

Ten Key Issues in the Strategic Planning of Academic Libraries

Wang Yu¹, Xie Chaoying², Chu Jingli^{3, 4}

¹Shenyang Normal University Library, Shenyang 110034

²Ningbo University of Finance and Economics Library, Ningbo 315100

³National Science Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190

⁴Department of Library, Information and Archives Management, School of Economics and Management, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190

Abstract: *[Purpose/Significance]* This paper discusses the main concerns and key problems related to the strategic planning of academic libraries, offering suggestions for the development of academic libraries during China's "14th Five-Year Plan" period and beyond. *[Method/Process]* Based on predictions about the development trends of contemporary information technology, higher education reform, and academic research, this paper examines ten key issues in the strategic planning of China's academic libraries: significance, principal contradictions, element relationships, user needs, resource development, technology application, space reconstruction, user services, capacity improvement, and management efficiency. *[Result/Conclusion]* In the "14th Five-Year Plan" period and future development, the fundamental driving force for libraries is user demand. To address this, libraries must properly manage the relationships among various elements: resources are the foundation, technology is the means, service is the essence, management is the guarantee, and innovation is the engine.

Keywords: academic library; "14th Five-Year Plan"; key issues; strategic planning

2021 marks the beginning of China's "14th Five-Year Plan" period. This is the five-year and longer-term plan following China's achievement of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and realizing its first centenary goal, representing a new journey toward building a modern socialist country and advancing toward the second centenary goal. The national "14th Five-Year Plan" proposal particularly emphasizes the new development stage, new development philosophy, and new development pattern, which also serve as the fundamental guide for libraries in formulating their own "14th Five-Year Plan" initiatives. Against the backdrop of the nation's vigorous development of cultural soft power, compiling development plans for the next five years and beyond represents an important means to enhance the governance capabilities of Chinese libraries and promote their transformation and reform.

Library strategic planning involves extensive content closely related to serving society, inheriting culture, improving national quality, nourishing public minds, cultivating cultural confidence, and enhancing China's international cultural influence. Therefore, it is essential to carefully summarize experiences, pool collective wisdom, and actively offer suggestions for strategic planning. We must integrate top-level design with user needs and reform and innovation to effectively advance library development to new innovative goals. As the library community undertakes the formulation of the "14th Five-Year Plan" development strategy, this paper begins by deeply understanding the new characteristics, requirements, and objectives of library development. Based on predictions about information technology development, higher education reform, and academic research trends, it discusses ten key issues concerning the significance, principal contradictions, element relationships, user needs, resource development, technology application, space reconstruction, user services, capacity improvement, and

management efficiency in the strategic planning of China's academic libraries. The aim is to grasp the laws of library development, promote pioneering and innovative spirit, seize opportunities, and meet challenges to collaboratively produce a well-conceived "14th Five-Year Plan" that charts a course for future library transformation and reform.

1. The Significance of Strategic Planning: Deliberate Before Acting

Strategic planning for libraries began gaining attention abroad in the 1960s and has since matured and deepened. In China, library strategic planning started later and developed slowly. Since the 1980s, an increasing number of libraries have begun formulating their own strategic plans to effectively respond to environmental pressures. It was not until around 2009 that the topic attracted more scholarly attention, primarily in coordination with national five-year development plans. A search conducted on CNKI on November 22, 2020, using "library" and "strategic planning" as keywords yielded 1,322 articles on the topic. Although discussions on library strategic planning are vigorous, many issues remain unclear, particularly regarding top-level design for strategic planning.

Academic library strategic planning refers to the strategic positioning and development layout design for university and scientific professional libraries over the next five years and beyond. It involves analyzing the library's current status, development environment, and trends, surveying experts, users, and librarians, and formulating the library's mission, vision, values, goals, and action plans that are continuously revised and improved to shape an ideal library that better meets user needs. Strategic planning has become an essential component of innovation and development for all types of libraries, including academic libraries. The scope of planning involves strategic direction, overall objectives, main tasks, key steps, and major measures, essentially serving as a program for library transformation and development. Its connotations mainly include: (1) strategic planning represents the library's strategic decisions and development direction, driving the implementation of strategic goal management; (2) it involves strategic planning and deployment, requiring implementation and continuous adjustment and improvement; (3) it is based on anticipated future trends and environmental changes, with clear organizational missions and development visions; (4) it encompasses long-term development goals and implementation paths, including mission, vision, strategic priorities, and action plans; and (5) it constitutes a systematic project of library governance with holistic, forward-looking, dynamic, and scientific characteristics.

Library strategic planning is the guiding program for library development and a declaration of the library's spirit and innovative transformation, carrying profound strategic significance. First, planning is an integral part of library management, drawing blueprints for future development that clarify mission, objectives, priorities, and service directions, adjusting management mechanisms, and advancing library work to new heights. Second, it encourages library leaders

to actively learn, engage in strategic thinking, improve decision-making capabilities and execution, effectively respond to challenges and opportunities, and promote sustainable development. Third, it familiarizes librarians with the library's future prospects and tasks, broadening their horizons, building confidence, and inspiring enthusiasm to creatively fulfill their responsibilities toward achieving strategic goals. Fourth, it enables libraries to recognize their own problems, respond quickly to reader needs and external challenges, and integrate resources rationally according to strategic requirements to maximize resource utility. Fifth, as a programmatic text, strategic planning guides orderly library work while establishing development directions for the coming years, aligning them with the goals of parent academic institutions.

The transformation and innovative development of academic libraries must be built upon predictions and understanding of future development, requiring both crisis awareness and vigilance. As Su Dongpo observed: "The most dangerous situation in the world is appearing peaceful and stable while harboring unforeseen troubles." To prevent problems before they occur, libraries must formulate plans and implement reforms, as "without reform, one will be reformed." Strategic planning enables libraries to position themselves accurately, grasp directions, build teams, create environments, innovate services, and transform development. As the saying goes, "One who fails to plan for the ages cannot plan for a moment; one who fails to plan for the whole cannot plan for a part." Strategic planning requires library professionals to: (1) adopt a holistic perspective to comprehend library development, comprehensively grasping the general direction and overall objectives through macro-level reflection; (2) closely integrate long-term goals with immediate tasks, grounding efforts in the present while looking to the future; (3) enhance the foresight of strategic planning to grasp future trends; and (4) recognize that the whole and its parts are interdependent and inseparable. Therefore, developing library plans is an important responsibility of leaders and directors, representing the collective wisdom of the library and a component of university and research institution planning. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated: "What matters most is doing our own work well, deliberating before acting, and accumulating strength for breakthroughs."

2. The Key to Strategic Planning: Resolving Principal Contradictions

To formulate strategic plans scientifically, libraries must address principal contradictions. Whether and how libraries develop depends on their ability to recognize, grasp, and resolve these contradictions. Different development periods exhibit different main characteristics and contradictions.

Traditional libraries are characterized by "collections," "buildings," and "in-person services," focusing primarily on print publications with services centered on print materials. Although most libraries today feature open stacks and open access, emphasizing bringing people closer to books and shortening the distance between people and materials, they still belong to the traditional library cate-

gory. Traditional libraries feature user needs for documents, with basic functions of document provision (knowledge repository) and document services. During this period, the principal contradiction was between users' document needs and insufficient document resource guarantees. Although library acquisition budgets increased annually, collection quantities never fully satisfied users' growing document needs.

As China enters a new socialist era, libraries have also entered a new development period—the new-era library period. New-era libraries (what Mr. Wu Jianzhong calls “third-generation libraries”) are characterized by “people’s libraries,” “knowledge fountains,” and “knowledge sharing.” This period emphasizes people-oriented principles, gathering space and knowledge resources according to human needs, highlighting library spatial functions (interaction, experience, and creation), and promoting information and knowledge exchange and sharing. Providing new services is the primary mission of new-era libraries. The principal contradiction in new-era libraries has shifted to the contradiction between users' demand for new library services and insufficient library service capabilities. The fundamental reason for this transformation is that library document resources have gradually become digital resources, and the principal contradiction is no longer about resources. Users' demands on libraries extend beyond documents to include service demands, particularly for new services, yet libraries still exhibit significant gaps in new service capabilities.

In this contradictory state, libraries currently face numerous challenges: (1) limited foundations addressing higher social expectations; (2) limited resource guarantees addressing extensive information needs; (3) limited personnel addressing professional requirements; (4) limited technology applications addressing changing information environments; and (5) limited service capabilities addressing complex service demands.

Humanity has entered the all-media era, where both information carriers and information acquisition and knowledge sharing methods in library services have changed. Users are accustomed to obtaining information and sharing knowledge in all-media environments. The key issue is that new-era libraries must transcend “book-centered libraries” and truly transform into “people-centered libraries,” achieving a major paradigm shift. To address challenges and solve problems, libraries must grasp the pulse of the times and future development trends, clarifying the core of new-era library transformation: (1) Conceptual transformation. Libraries must genuinely adopt people-oriented principles, positioning “people’s libraries” as their conceptual foundation. Users constitute the library; user needs demonstrate the library’s value; user satisfaction proves the library’s effectiveness; and users are the fundamental basis for librarians’ survival and success. (2) Spatial transformation. Rigid, monotonous library spaces do not meet user needs. Traditional library buildings require disruptive renovation, with spatial layout, models, technology, resources, functions, and environments designed from the perspective of user needs to create suitable spaces and provide interactive experience venues, building a new-era physical

library. (3) Service transformation. Moving toward the all-media knowledge service era, libraries must function as knowledge fountains, providing various information and knowledge services adapted to the times, enhancing basic service functions to emphasize utilization over mere intermediation. Librarians must possess advanced education, high quality, and knowledge-sharing capabilities, dedicating themselves to talent support, intelligence tracking services, disciplinary competitiveness services, and strategic intelligence support. (4) Management transformation. Without management transformation, no other transformation can occur. The core of management transformation is achieving high-quality development, which requires high-quality services. The focus must shift from quantity to quality, from input to efficiency, and from document services to knowledge services, emphasizing overall effectiveness, brand marketing, and coordination.

Only by confronting contradictions and problems that arise during reform and development, and by identifying and grasping principal contradictions, can libraries drive reform and development forward. By addressing principal contradictions, other problems will be readily solved. All library work should be user-centered, starting from meeting users' information and knowledge needs. Resolving principal contradictions means addressing user needs and achieving organic alignment between user demands and service capabilities.

3. The Dominant Factor in Strategic Planning: Establishing Element Relationships

The essence of dominant strategic planning is reallocating library resources and re-establishing relationships among library elements. Professor Cheng Huanwen of Sun Yat-sen University proposed more than a decade ago that “resources are king, services are the concubine, and technology is the maid,” representing early understanding of library development elements. Recently, he revised these relationships to “resources are king, services are the foundation, and technology is the tool,” reflecting his consistent management philosophy and three core element concepts—resources, services, and technology—continuously endowed with new connotations. He emphasizes that “library value includes resource value and social value, with information resources, spatial resources, and cultural resources as basic elements of library resource value, and freedom and equality as the foundation of library social value.” Regarding resources, he believes all library work begins with knowledge resource accumulation, which must be treated as the primary task, with print resources remaining a long-term construction focus—acquisition and ownership are hard principles. Regarding services, he considers service as the library's foundation, with the essence of management and service lying in personality equality and opportunity equality, integrating equality throughout library services. Regarding technology application, he views information technology as a powerful tool for library development: to do a job well, one must first sharpen one's tools; the library is the body, and information technology is the application. From the height of library manage-

ment theory, this provides top-level design and important guidance for library development.

Through continuous discussion and practice regarding library management elements, Professor Chu Jingli of the National Science Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences, from the perspective of transforming from resource capacity to service capacity, explored how to achieve this transformation by examining environmental changes, user demand changes, and library service capacity changes. He clearly proposed the urgency of libraries adapting to changes, offering the perspective of “demand-oriented, resource-based, technology-winged, service-king,” insisting on placing user service in the supreme position and proposing key elements and relationships for library development from another dimension.

“Demand-oriented” reflects the people-oriented library philosophy, insisting that library development should be user-demand-oriented rather than object- or technology-oriented. Demand determines existence—as long as users need libraries, they will exist. An important marker of transformation from traditional to new-era libraries is the shift from “resources determine services, services determine demand” to “demand determines services, services determine resources,” representing an essential change in library science understanding. “Resource-based” means resources are the cornerstone of libraries. As more resources exist in digital form, organizing, linking, mining, and revealing these digital resources to provide knowledge discovery services becomes a major issue libraries must address. “Technology-winged” means technology is the means and tool for library services, reflecting emphasis on, support for, and recognition of technology’s increasingly critical role in library services. “Service-king” means service is the essence and core of all library work. After acquiring resources, what solutions can libraries provide users? What problems can they solve? What services can they provide for teaching, research, and management users? Service determines success or failure, and service determines a library’s status, value, and influence. No matter how adequate resource guarantees or in-person services are, without deep knowledge services, libraries’ roles remain difficult to gain user recognition. Only by achieving this transformation from resources to services can libraries have greater development opportunities. Therefore, demand determines service, service determines resources, and a library’s success lies in its services.

User demand is the origin. To address user needs, resources, technology, and other conditions and means are also required, with service being the result of various elements working in synergy. Demand is the driving force, while resources and technology are essential tools to satisfy demand. The ultimate purpose of all element relationships is to achieve “service.” In the digital age, network age, and knowledge service era, if libraries cannot convert resource value into service value and transform resource potential into service capability, they will be unable to complete transformation and reform or carry out the value mission of new-era libraries. Understanding academic libraries’ development elements and their relationships is also a process of examining their significance and value. In future development, how academic libraries handle these element relation-

ships will not only affect their development but also their survival. During the “14th Five-Year Plan” period and beyond, grasping library development element relationships will be the main thread of library strategic planning.

4. Demand-Driven Development: Grasping User Needs

User needs may seem simple but are actually complex because they include both actual and potential needs, explicit and implicit needs. The library service process is a process of meeting needs. Without understanding user needs (including potential and implicit needs), resource development, user services, technology support, and management decisions are impossible. Only by valuing, understanding, and 挖掘 ing user needs can libraries find ways to meet them through services. Where there is user demand, there is library existence, which also serves as the driving force for continuous library innovation and development.

Currently, the environment in which libraries operate is changing dramatically, bringing changes to traditional user needs and behaviors. We categorize user needs into three main types: (1) On-site user needs. These primarily involve place, space, print and network resources, environment, and technology. Libraries provide various services to on-site users, which is relatively easy to satisfy as long as space, resources, facilities, and services are in place. (2) Needs of users who rarely visit. In university and professional libraries, graduate students are the main users who rarely visit. They have some on-site learning needs but rely more on networks for research needs. (3) Needs of off-site users. These are primarily faculty, researchers, and administrators who, due to heavy teaching, research, or management responsibilities, basically do not use the physical library. However, because their needs are important, satisfying them becomes more complex and requires higher-level services.

The greatest change in user behavior is the shift from primarily relying on physical libraries for information to mainly depending on networks and search engines. “If it’s not found online, it doesn’t exist” has become users’ basic cognition and behavioral characteristic, representing the greatest challenge facing libraries today. Relying solely on user demand surveys is insufficient; understanding user needs requires librarians’ wisdom. Today, as we emphasize building smart libraries, we must make predictions about user needs based on big data analysis, anticipate user needs, and transform from “you ask for what I provide” to “what I provide is what you need.” Today’s users do not need no library; they need a different library from traditional ones. This requires meeting users’ potential, implicit, and various information needs of off-site users. Therefore, librarians must analyze, 挖掘, stimulate, and transcend user needs, thereby transforming the potential of library document resources into service capabilities that satisfy users’ potential and actual needs.

Traditional libraries typically survey user needs through: (1) setting up user suggestion boxes for regularly collecting various opinions and suggestions; (2) periodically producing and distributing user demand questionnaires for collec-

tion, statistical analysis, and feedback; and (3) holding reader symposiums at different levels and disciplines to understand and solicit user needs and suggestions. New methods in recent years include: (1) subject librarians regularly integrating into user communities, understanding user needs anytime and anywhere, and bringing them back for analysis and resolution; (2) librarians integrating into users' virtual communities, including blogs, microblogs, and social circles, to grasp user demand trends; and (3) querying and tracking log records to reveal hidden, previously unknown, and potentially valuable user demand information from large databases. However, the effectiveness of such user need understanding remains limited.

Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, attached great importance to user experience. His view on user needs was: "Users don't know what they want; my job is to tell them what they want." This poses higher requirements for libraries to experience, comprehend, predict, and analyze user needs.

5. Emphasizing Resource Development: Enhancing Guarantee Capabilities

Resource development is a prerequisite for library existence and development, reflecting the basic guarantee capability of libraries to provide services and meet user needs. Without resources, there are no services and no library existence. Emphasizing library resource development, strengthening it through multiple channels and means, and organizing, revealing, and 挖掘 ing collection resources to provide knowledge discovery services are important issues that library strategic planning must address.

Library resource development planning should focus on balancing relationships among different resource types: (1) Print vs. electronic resources, with both coexisting while gradually increasing the proportion of electronic resources. (2) Digital vs. data resources, where digital resources imply special data resources that should be 挖掘 ed, analyzed, and utilized. (3) Subscribed vs. open access resources, as open access resources are increasing in quantity and quality, requiring accelerated budget conversion, collection, and utilization. (4) Public vs. grey resources, where grey literature often constitutes characteristic collections with incomparable significance when systematically collected. (5) Network resources vs. UGC (user-generated content), where network resources, especially user-generated content, become important collection components with the development of networks and self-media. (6) Common vs. characteristic resources, where characteristic resources are uniquely owned documents with special collection and utilization value, requiring continuous improvement of common resources and systematic collection and development of characteristic resources. (7) Learning vs. research resources, where learning resources support knowledge acquisition and research resources support academic research and technological innovation, requiring balanced procurement proportions according to institutional mission requirements to guarantee key needs while considering general needs. (8) Chinese vs. foreign language resources, where both should be guar-

anteed based on user needs and budget capacity, with maximum guarantee capability and active efforts to secure incremental special support. (9) Owned vs. shared resources, where owned resources are independently purchased with absolute usage rights, but no library can meet all user needs through owned resources alone, thus requiring interlibrary loan and document delivery services through library consortia to utilize other libraries' resources.

The core of all these issues is that libraries must scientifically balance various resource relationships and improve resource development according to user needs and budget capacity. In addition to balancing different resource types, libraries must comprehensively enhance their ability to transform resources into services to achieve the function of "resources as service." Future library resource development will prominently feature "resources as service." Resource development is not an end but a means—a guarantee that must convert resources into services immediately, shortening the distance between resources and services. For example, Peking University Library's latest business architecture organically unifies resources and services, breaking down barriers between them to achieve "resources as service" through centers such as document resources, special collections, data resources, computing resources, ancient books, knowledge resources, and collaborative services.

Three key issues must be addressed in resource development: (1) Analysis and decision-making on new resources. With new resources emerging constantly, libraries must analyze which to add to achieve dynamic balance with existing resources and optimize resource structure and layout. (2) Special application issues for new capabilities. For important and highly relevant resources appearing in the market, libraries must conduct feasibility analyses and submit special applications for new capabilities to procure them. (3) Document funding guarantee and optimization. Multiple channels must be sought to raise funds. Overall, resources purchased by libraries are important assets that will have long-term and profound impacts on users. The more document funding, the better, and maximum support must be obtained.

6. Leveraging Technology: Strengthening Application Effectiveness

The library community is very sensitive to technology and its applications, with almost every new technology finding application in libraries. Libraries do not develop technology but apply it to solve their own problems. Internationally, library development has progressed from the first stage of physical libraries (print libraries) to the second stage of digital libraries (mobile libraries) and then to the third stage of smart libraries (intelligent libraries). The first-stage libraries mainly addressed on-site service issues, driven by users' in-person needs for document services, with technology applications primarily including photocopying, printing, and online searching. The second-stage libraries mainly addressed network information service issues, meeting users' internet utilization needs through networks and smart devices that could be used anytime and any-

where, transcending time and space. The third-stage libraries mainly address knowledge service issues, using IoT and intelligent agent technologies to combine technical capabilities with librarian wisdom, providing more complex and in-depth services.

Technology is the means and tool for library services. Technological capability will determine library service levels and management levels, determining how far libraries can go and enabling library services to become more high-end, simpler, and smarter. Currently emerging technologies increasingly applied in libraries include: (1) AI technology, including computer vision, machine learning, natural language processing, and speech recognition. (2) Data mining technology, including data mining analysis, big data development, cloud computing applications, and user profiling. (3) Context-sensitive technology, which makes intelligent analyses and matches resources and services on demand based on users' locations and tasks. (4) Big data technology, including data collection and preprocessing, data storage, data cleaning, data querying, analysis, and visualization. (5) Cloud computing, including distributed computing, task distribution, and result merging. (6) Cloud services, internet-based models for adding, using, and interacting with related services that provide dynamic, easily scalable, virtualized resources. (7) Augmented reality technology, which calculates camera image positions and angles in real time and adds corresponding images to project virtual worlds onto real worlds on screens for interaction. (8) Visualization technology, including scientific computing visualization, data visualization, and information visualization. (9) 5G technology, the latest generation of cellular mobile communication technology featuring high data rates, reduced latency, energy savings, cost reduction, increased system capacity, and massive device connectivity.

Technology's influence on libraries will grow increasingly significant in future development. Librarians who do not understand technology will be eliminated by the times. However, even artificial intelligence cannot completely replace humans—only simple, repetitive, and routine labor can be replaced, not knowledge-based, intelligent, wisdom-based, emotional, or creative labor, which are inherent limitations of intelligent technology. For librarians, only by continuously enhancing the complexity and innovation of human labor and providing knowledge services can they avoid being replaced by technology and gain advantages in future competition.

7. Emphasizing Space Reconstruction: Reshaping the Physical Library

For libraries, the “place” and “space” of the physical library are irreplaceable. However, traditional physical libraries are rigid, dull, and monotonous, lacking vitality and user appeal. Based on new technological developments and user needs, physical library spaces should be reconstructed and reshaped. Space reconstruction should be based on library realities, researching and designing more new spaces to display the library's spaces and service capabilities. The

purpose is to increase the functionality, attractiveness, and influence of the physical library, creating unique charm in physical space to bring readers back to the library to the greatest extent possible.

Library space reconstruction urgently needs to break through the limitations of traditional spaces, using the open and infinitely extended network power to place reader activities in a broad space. While space reconstruction does not require uniformity, it must take demand as the creative source, adapting to local conditions with clever design and ingenuity to achieve perfect integration of function and art. Shenyang Normal University Library, using limited funds and conditions, achieved a perfect transformation in space reconstruction according to its functional positioning and user needs. The library designed five categories comprising 22 spaces: (1) Learning and research spaces, including reader discussion spaces, language exchange spaces, and Qizhi academic discussion spaces; (2) Information literacy education spaces, including writing guidance and information literacy training spaces; (3) Reading spaces, including Mingde Lecture Hall, Starry Sky Creative Painting spaces, art appreciation spaces, video playback spaces, music appreciation spaces, classic recitation spaces, leisure reading spaces, library-college co-built reading bars, and Shengwen Gardener Bookstores; (4) Maker spaces, including maker gas stations, maker lecture halls, creative discussion areas, creative display areas, video editing spaces, MOOC recording spaces, and new function experience spaces; and (5) Cultural exhibition spaces, primarily cultural exhibition halls. Each library has different innate conditions and can design unique new spaces according to local circumstances, enhancing user pleasure and functionality.

Space reconstruction will remain a priority for libraries during the “14th Five-Year Plan” period and beyond. Successful cases of library space reconstruction demonstrate that libraries with diverse, distinctive, prominent, and complete functional spaces are more welcomed by users and attract more readers, making them worthy of increased investment. Reconstructed library spaces must keep pace with the times, demonstrate innovation, integrate space with services, blend context with needs, combine function with art, and achieve coexistence of knowledge-seeking and pleasure, reading and literacy, creating a completely new library internal environment and external image that enhances users’ new experiences and perceptions of the library.

8. Building a Service System: Winning Through User Service

“Service” is the starting point and destination of all library work. Building a successful service system guarantees service excellence. If libraries do not provide services, all other work is futile and useless. No matter how good the technology, operations management, or professional talent, if user problems are not solved, it is not what users need and should not be what libraries pursue. All library efforts must ultimately be converted into user services. Users judge libraries not by buildings, resources, equipment, or technology, but by whether

services are well-provided.

To provide good services, libraries must address several issues: shifting from document-centered to user service-centered, from on-site service-centered to embedded user process-centered, from service process-centered to service effect-centered, from document services to knowledge services, from simple and extensive services to in-depth and refined services, from information intermediaries to embedded partners, from fixed users to mobile users, and from manual to tool- and technology-assisted approaches. Fundamentally, this means embodying the principles that “where users are, services are” and “what users need, libraries provide.”

Providing good library services also requires building a service system encompassing “on-site service, telephone service, network service, and on-location service,” offering personalized services to different user groups; providing diversified services based on different service models (inquiry, borrowing, delivery, training, consultation, intelligence); and providing tiered services according to different service depths (document services, information services, subject services, data services, think tank services, and smart services). Around different user group needs, libraries must achieve integration into teaching, embedding in research, and supporting management. These three aspects are equally important and indispensable; only when all three are done well can a library be considered successful. The ability to better integrate into teaching, embed in research, and support management will be an important criterion for judging the success of academic libraries during the “14th Five-Year Plan” and future development. Emphasis on library services cannot be overstated. While library inputs may vary greatly, service effectiveness can be tested, evaluated, and compared.

9. Enhancing Librarian Capabilities: Transforming Library Genes

Library development fundamentally depends on librarian capabilities, particularly the ability to achieve “14th Five-Year Plan” and future development goals and tasks. Without people to implement, promote, and practice, even the best plans remain castles in the air. Library capability is not a single capability but a combination of multiple capabilities, which we call a “capability cloud.” Capabilities can be cultivated and must be enhanced through training. Emphasizing librarian capabilities requires: (1) recruiting more young librarians with expertise, especially recent graduates (undergraduate, master’s, doctoral), and strengthening regular, institutional training for new and all librarians, particularly emphasizing the cultivation of key personnel and academic leaders to leverage individual leadership and team guidance; and (2) establishing good employment mechanisms that motivate individuals to maximize their potential, initiative, and creativity through certain incentives. Librarians’ actual service capabilities and potential research capabilities must be combined, individual expertise integrated with team functions, and user needs aligned with personal capacity improvement.

Traditional library capabilities mainly manifest as ten abilities: document management, in-library services, reference consultation, digital resource management, interlibrary loan and document delivery, reading promotion, information literacy education, institutional repository (IR) construction, intelligence research and analysis, and digital and mobile libraries. As user demands continuously increase and library technology applications multiply, library capabilities must expand to include ten new abilities: knowledge organization, embedded services, knowledge consultation, data management and services, open access resources and services, knowledge discovery, pan-information literacy education, library publishing and publishing services, think tank research and services, and smart libraries and smart services. These capabilities can also be divided into three levels: (1) On-site service capabilities, providing basic services for on-site users (circulation, space services), which remain essential and must satisfy users. (2) Embedded service capabilities, stepping out of library walls to integrate into user frontlines, embedding in research, teaching, and management processes to better support them. (3) Intelligence service capabilities, including disciplinary competitiveness analysis, talent introduction analysis, and intellectual property information analysis. Meanwhile, librarians must possess craftsman spirit, doing work thoroughly, perfectly, and beyond user expectations.

If current libraries are being marginalized or even becoming extinct, these are merely speculations. What we need to do is not watch from the sidelines but seek practical ways to drive library transformation and reform. Some believe technology can save libraries by comprehensively applying more advanced technology to solve library development problems. Others believe humanities can save libraries by relying on librarians' humanistic spirit to create better service attitudes and warmer environments. We believe service can save libraries—providing services users need, even exceeding their needs, is what users value and the fundamental basis for library survival and development. The core of these debates is actually capability-driven development, integrating all library inputs and elements into librarian capabilities and converting librarian capabilities into reality that meets user needs. Therefore, librarian capability is the library's gene. Good librarian capability means good library genes, providing reliable guarantee for library development. A popular business saying goes: mediocre enterprises do business, excellent enterprises do great things, and outstanding enterprises cultivate talent. To become an outstanding library, the key is attracting, using well, and retaining talent. Libraries must be willing to invest in talent, cultivating more and better talent. Without this, no matter how hard libraries work, they cannot achieve desired results.

10. Enhancing Management: Optimizing Operational Efficiency

Professor Cheng Huanwen discusses ten management principles for first-class libraries in his MOOC: (1) Library spirit is always most important; (2) Users are always right; (3) Culture is the soul; (4) A library is a growing organism;

(5) Planning is not empty talk; (6) Resources are king, services are the foundation, technology is the tool; (7) Space determines the stage; (8) Librarians are angels, funding is wings; (9) Reading is the lifeblood of library development; and (10) Only when everyone says it's good is it truly good. These principles summarize the wisdom and essence of library management. Library management has its unique laws and principles, as well as its particular complexity and requirements. Whether library management is successful depends on superior authorities' attention and support, library directors' professional capabilities and actions, team coordination and collaboration, and mobilizing and leveraging various positive factors. No library is born with perfect development foundations; there are always difficulties and obstacles. However, with vision, planning, innovative spirit, reform courage, awareness of user service, and 魄力 to do library work well, library management can certainly succeed, and all library work can be done well. Among these, the director's role is crucial. The director's disciplinary background, professional experience, and library expertise may not be the most important factors; what matters most is wanting to do things, being able to do things, and getting things done.

Evaluating successful library management requires three types of recognition: (1) Reader recognition. Everything libraries do must meet readers' needs, even exceed them, ultimately maximizing user satisfaction, which is the meaning and value of library existence and development. (2) Staff recognition. Librarians must have a sense of belonging, value, and achievement to develop professional loyalty and dedication. Without team motivation, there is no management success. (3) Leadership recognition. Library success lies in meeting superiors' requirements and expectations, providing effective support for teaching, research, and management in parent institutions, maximizing input-output (benefit) ratios, and fulfilling libraries' proper functions. Success must be demonstrated through service effectiveness and reader 口碑.

In summary, during the "14th Five-Year Plan" and future development, the fundamental driving force for libraries is user demand. For this purpose, resources are the foundation, technology is the means, service is the essence, management is the guarantee, and innovation is the engine. In a May 2019 report at China University of Mining and Technology, the director of Colorado School of Mines Library proposed three library levels: resource-centered libraries are "bad" libraries; service-centered libraries are "good" libraries; and innovation-centered libraries are "great" libraries. Library capability development was once mainly resource-driven but now requires service-driven and innovation-driven approaches. Library survival depends on the ability to provide resource guarantees and basic services for ordinary on-site users. Library status, value, and influence depend on the ability to provide in-depth and innovative services for off-site high-end users. Innovation means continuous transcendence—transcending in concepts, technology, methods, services, and capabilities, rather than low-level repetition, following others, or resting on past achievements.

References

- [1] Xinhua Net. Action guide for marching toward the second centenary goal [EB/OL]. [2020-11-21]. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2020-11/03/c_1126694193.htm.
- [2] China News Net. Xi Jinping made important instructions! Do you know the answers to these five questions about the “14th Five-Year Plan”? [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2020/08-06/9258289.shtml>.
- [3] Ke Ping, Zhao Yimin, Chen Haolin. Research on Library Strategic Planning [M]. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014.
- [4] Yang Xinya. Reflections on the “14th Five-Year Plan” for academic libraries [J]. University Library Work, 2020(5): 12-15, 33.
- [5] CCTV News. Xi Jinping: What matters most is doing our own work well, deliberating before acting, and accumulating strength for breakthroughs [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <http://news.ifeng.com/c/7mtUwV2Atua>.
- [6] Wu Jianzhong. From “library of books” to “library of people”—Enlightenment from Helsinki Central Library [J]. Journal of the National Library of China, 2019(5): 93-97.
- [7] Chu Jingli. Principal contradictions and development paths of libraries in the new era. 2019 National Symposium on New Library Service Capacity Building [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <http://www.lis.ac.cn/CR/column/item366.shtml>.
- [8] Cheng Huanwen. Value and mission of libraries [J]. Library Journal, 2013(3): 4-8.
- [9] Cheng Huanwen, Zhao Dongmei. Resources are king, services are the foundation, technology is the tool—Cheng Huanwen on the philosophy of university library management [J]. Shanxi Library Journal, 2020(1): 1-10.
- [10] Chu Jingli, Zhao Yan. Library transformation from resource capacity to service capacity [J]. Library and Information Service, 2019, 63(1): 11-17.
- [11] Tuumou Blog. Steve Jobs’ view on user needs [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <http://blog.sciencenet.cn/home.php?mod=space&uid=213646&do=blog&id=531339>.
- [12] Xue Fangyu. Reflections on print and electronic resource development [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/bac6adc473fe9f1ef12d2af90242a8956becaaaa5.html>.
- [13] Wang Yu, Wang Lei. University library space reconstruction and service transformation—A case study of Shenyang Normal University Library [J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2019(4): 61-70.
- [14] Cheng Huanwen. Library Management—Sun Yat-sen University—China University MOOC [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <https://www.icourse163.org/course/SYSU-1207521805?tid=1458400445&{{trace}}{{c}}p{k2}=bcd5815fd3fa4f8aae2e629a1dbca370>.

[15] Chu Jingli. What does library reader recognition depend on? [J]. *Library and Information Service*, 2020, 64(16): 10-11.

[16] Three levels of university libraries: Bad, good, and great [EB/OL]. [2020-08-25]. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/n4B43pD3n1qXPqi71kv9cQ>.

Author Contributions: Wang Yu: responsible for organizing materials, writing and revising the full text; Xie Chaoying: responsible for data collection, participating in writing parts of the content and reviewing the full text; Chu Jingli: responsible for proposing research ideas, framework design, and reviewing and revising the full text.

Top-Cited Papers from 2018-2020 in *Library and Information Service*

Since 2014, this journal has published annual lists of top-cited papers from the current and previous two years. In 2020, *Library and Information Service* continued using the 2019 selection method to identify highly-cited and highly-downloaded papers from the past three years. Based on annual TOP50 lists and considering publication dates, the editorial office selected ten papers for announcement. The outstanding papers from 2018-2020 are:

1. Review of domestic online health community research (2018, 62(9))
2. Blockchain technology and its transformative impact on library development (2018, 62(13))
3. Topic mining and viewpoint identification of different disseminators in microblog public opinion communication cycles (2018, 62(19))
4. Library transformation from resource capacity to service capacity (2019, 63(1))
5. Reader-centered smart library research (2019, 63(1))
6. Practice and reflection on next-generation library system platforms (2019, 63(1))
7. Origin, evolution, and meaning of the security intelligence concept—Speculation from the perspective of security science theory (2019, 63(3))
8. Research on the mechanism of social interaction's effect on users' knowledge payment willingness (2019, 63(4))
9. Multi-dimensional social attribute analysis and visualization of microblog public opinion—A case study of a vaccine incident (2020, 64(3))

10. Influencing factor model and empirical research on live streaming APP usage behavior (2020, 64(5))

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.