

Service Strategies for Specialized Reading Spaces in Academic Libraries: A Case Study of Shenyang Normal University Library (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper introduces the construction practice of the classic reading space at Shenyang Normal University Library, aiming to provide reference for future space renovation in university libraries. [Method/Process] Based on an overview of the current status of space renovation in domestic and international university libraries, and taking the Mingde Lecture Hall of Shenyang Normal University Library as a case study, this study summarizes the practical experience of its classic reading space services and proposes strategies for promoting the construction and service of characteristic reading spaces in university libraries. [Results/Conclusion] Classic reading space services should center on traditional culture, aim at extended services, adopt personalized service as the approach, and uphold proactive self-directed learning as the tenet, thereby cultivating innovative knowledge talents with profound cultural confidence.

Full Text

Preamble

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Service Strategies for Characteristic Reading Spaces in University Libraries: A Case Study of Shenyang Normal University Library

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Abstract: *[Purpose/Significance]* This paper introduces the practice of constructing a classical reading space at Shenyang Normal University Library, aim-

ing to provide reference for future space transformation in university libraries. *[Method/Process]* Based on an overview of current space transformation practices in university libraries both domestically and internationally, and taking the Mingde Lecture Hall of Shenyang Normal University Library as an example, this paper summarizes practical experiences in classical reading space services and proposes strategies for promoting the construction and service of characteristic reading spaces in university libraries. *[Result/Conclusion]* Classical reading space services should take traditional culture as the core, extended service as the goal, personalized service as the approach, and active self-directed learning as the purpose, thereby cultivating innovative knowledge talents with profound cultural confidence.

Keywords: university library; space transformation; active space; classical reading

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1. Overview of Space Transformation in University Libraries

The transformation of university library spaces is deepening, with many libraries creating distinctive shared spaces that fulfill guiding, supporting, and facilitating functions, contributing to readers' acquisition of knowledge and development of innovative capabilities. Taking Shenyang Normal University (hereinafter referred to as "SYNU") Library as an example, to better achieve service transformation, the library has renovated over 20 shared learning spaces, among which the "Mingde Lecture Hall" is specifically designed to promote classical reading, providing a tranquil and elegant place for users who love reading classics. As a characteristic reading space brand of the library, Mingde Lecture Hall was broadcast on Liaoning Satellite TV in May 2018, receiving high praise and encouragement. In November 2018, it won the first prize in the "Discovering Library Reading Promotion Characteristic Humanities Spaces" competition hosted by the Reading Promotion Committee of the Library Society of China, gaining recognition and appreciation from colleagues in university libraries. To enhance professional exchange, this paper shares the design elements, spatial practices, and innovative services of Mingde Lecture Hall, hoping to provide reference for space transformation practices in university libraries.

1.1 International University Library Space Transformation

Since the new century, world-class university libraries have successively formulated and implemented space transformation plans. In practice, maker space construction has received significant attention, with many university libraries shifting from building information commons to creating maker spaces. For instance, more than 30 libraries, including those at the University of Michigan,

Stanford University, North Carolina State University, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Nevada Reno's Science and Engineering Library, University of Maryland Washington, Columbia University, and Valdosta State University's Odum Library, have all renovated and reconstructed maker spaces. Among them, Carnegie Mellon University, as a model for emerging creative industry teaching and research, transformed its library space to create a digital fabrication lab, physical computing laboratory, and interactive media black box, equipped with traditional manufacturing facilities, collaborative design studios, and multimedia laboratories, evolving the library into an intermediary space for learning commons. Overall, the transformation of American university libraries focuses on meeting readers' diverse and complex individual needs, emphasizing information sharing, experiential research, technology application, and collaborative cooperation, with priorities on developing virtual spaces, protecting characteristic collections, and creating high-quality first-class service spaces. However, spaces dedicated to promoting classical reading and consolidating foundational knowledge are relatively scarce. Although there are cultural and educational differences between China and the West, the experience of foreign university library space transformation provides many valuable lessons.

1.2 Domestic University Library Space Transformation

Affected by the impact of networking and digitization as well as the influence of foreign university library space transformations, Chinese university libraries have also begun to attach importance to transforming traditional spaces. Represented by libraries at Peking University, Wuhan University, and others, most have renovated physical spaces, optimized space service quality, and met readers' learning and research needs, creating new-era library service models. With the philosophy of "readers as heaven, resources as earth, and service as ladder," university libraries have promoted the extension and transformation of traditional "collection + lending" spaces into new-type spaces such as "collection + reading + exhibition + reporting + audio-visual + maker + experience + competition + bookstore," enabling libraries to function as knowledge centers, learning centers, information centers, exchange centers, experience centers, and cultural centers. Currently, there are certain differences between Chinese and foreign university libraries in terms of funding investment and transformed space service models. Chinese libraries primarily treat classical reading as an eternal theme of reading and establish independent spaces specifically for classical reading. Examples include Tongji University's "Wenxue Hall," Nanjing Normal University's "Yiyuan," Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications' "Classical Reading Shared Space," and Guangdong Industry Polytechnic's "Red Classics Reading Theme Space." Particularly noteworthy is South China Normal University Library's "Zhishan Hall," a dedicated space for classical reading that includes classic lectures, Xingzhi forums, classical recitation and performance, human library meetings, reading marathons, and Guya collections, focusing on promoting humanities reading, classical reading, and deep reading, providing a quiet spiritual desk for readers who love classics and uphold the fragrance of

books.

Looking at the transformation and development of university libraries, both domestic and foreign libraries regard space transformation as an inevitable choice for reform and innovation practices. The difference lies in that foreign university library space transformation emphasizes the cultivation of readers' autonomous abilities, while domestic libraries pay more attention to classical reading spaces as an option for space transformation. This is because Chinese classics represent the essence of outstanding human culture that needs to be promoted and inherited. Therefore, classical reading is necessary, worthy of advocacy, and constitutes the core part of the entire reading process. Reading based on classical reading is ideal and valuable. Only with such cognitive concepts can libraries truly value classical reading, guide students back to classical reading by providing a space environment guarantee for reading classics, and enable them to accept excellent cultural heritage to resist the impact of fast-food culture.

2. Construction of Classic Reading Space at Shenyang Normal University Library

SYNU Library serves as the spiritual hall and cultural landmark of the campus. With university support, the library has transformed its physical space, creating a brand-new environment that includes a dedicated space for readers who love Chinese classics, classical literature, and reading—the Mingde Lecture Hall—continuously striving to promote the positive energy of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

2.1 The Creative Naming of “Mingde Lecture Hall”

In the spatial transformation layout of SYNU Library, Mingde Lecture Hall was precisely created according to local conditions as a classical reading space. The name “Mingde” originates from the opening of the Chinese Confucian classic *The Book of Rites · The Great Learning*: “The way of the great learning lies in illuminating illustrious virtue, in loving the people, and in resting in the highest good.” Illustrious virtue refers to the virtue of precision and unity, implying that only through precision and unity can scholarship and career progress and innovate with each passing day. The original intention of establishing Mingde Lecture Hall was to promote SYNU's motto of “Erudition, Virtue, Appreciation of Beauty, and Healthy Practice,” to demonstrate and practice the beauty of Chinese traditional cultural classics, to lead faculty and student readers to extensively, deeply, and intensively read Chinese traditional classics, to make reading, appreciating, and inheriting classics become common practice among university faculty and students, and to cultivate students' profound scholarship, spiritual nourishment, and moral cultivation through classical essence, ultimately achieving the goal of promoting readers' humanities quality education.

2.2 Philosophy of Classic Reading Space Construction

As humanity enters the digital age, traditional library service models have faced tremendous impact and challenges. New library service concepts have emerged, achieving service transformation and upgrading through space renovation and technological innovation, providing readers with a new type of learning space, new learning models, and a new spiritually nourishing learning exchange community. Mingde Lecture Hall was created as one of the characteristic reading space brands, seizing the opportunity of library space transformation. From its inception, the space has defined its functional positioning as promoting canonical, authoritative, and timeless masterpieces from ancient and modern times, both Chinese and foreign. With classical space and resources as guarantees and classical creativity as guidance, it provides an interactive academic display platform for spreading classical culture, inheriting humanistic spirit, cultivating aesthetic sentiment, and fostering virtue through professional classical guidance, classical study seminars, reading salons, and speech sharing sessions. This not only aligns with the national initiative to promote classical reading and strengthen students' humanities education but also provides a guaranteed reading space for scholars who love reading classics.

2.3 Design Elements of Classic Reading Space

Mingde Lecture Hall was completed in September 2017, with a total area of approximately 120m². Its constituent elements include three aspects: First, environmental decoration. The overall decoration of Mingde Lecture Hall follows a new Chinese classical style, with simple and elegant 造型设计, rich and mature colors. On both sides of the interior stand floor-to-ceiling antique bookshelves, with precious celebrity calligraphy and paintings displayed on the surrounding walls. The desk style imitates ancient private school classrooms, and antique hanging lamps create an elegant, restrained, dignified, and magnificent classical reading space. Second, resource composition. The literature resources combine physical and virtual formats. The space houses over 2,000 classical works in Chinese studies, literature, law, philosophy, education, psychology, management, and sociology. It is equipped with advanced touch-screen e-readers, writing whiteboards, microphones, sound systems, monitoring systems, and comprehensive wireless network coverage. Special facilities include tea service, fresh air conditioning, and electric floor heating to provide convenience and comfort for readers to conduct Chinese classics reading activities. Third, scientific management. Mingde Lecture Hall is open all day during teaching hours. Readers can make free reservations through the library homepage, WeChat official account, telephone, QQ consultation, or on-site visits. The lecture hall primarily accepts learning teams of more than 15 people to conduct academic exchange activities related to classical reading, such as teaching, lectures, and reading salons.

2.4 Innovative Value of Classic Reading Space

Mingde Lecture Hall is a culturally profound space meticulously created for readers with elegant style and deep connotation. Compared with similar spaces, its innovative value lies in: First, it is specifically built to lead classical reading. It creates value for serving classical learning by completely returning to classical reading in terms of spatial environment, resource guarantee, reader experience, and reading activities. Second, the space service has clear thematic goals. It takes reading activities of world masterpieces, traditional classics, contemporary classics, ethics and morality, and national culture as the axis, leading readers to systematically study and move from tradition to the future. Third, the space activities are systematically rich. A series of activity chains including classical themes, expert lectures, reading seminars, exchange speeches, micro-media displays, and incentive research have profound connotations, wonderful presentations, and infinite charm. Fourth, the space has complete facilities and a comfortable environment. Comfortable seating conditions, high-end equipment, convenient access to classical literature, and high-quality librarian services increase readers' sense of dependence and high demand. Fifth, classical reading is combined with study tours. Integrating classical reading with study tours and visits achieves extensive cultural immersion, enabling readers to understand the breadth and depth of human spiritual achievements and increase cultural cultivation and foundation. These characteristics have created the space's classical cultural value.

3. Practical Strategies for Classic Reading Space Activities

3.1 High-Level Reading Guides as a Guarantee for Attracting Readers

The successful creation of a library's classical reading space involves not only physical space construction but more importantly, how to endow the space with the connotation of spreading classics. The selection of reading guides for space activities is a key element and an important factor in attracting reader participation. Libraries should carefully consider when inviting classical reading guides. First, guides must regard reading promotion as a responsibility, possessing full enthusiasm and willing to share classics with readers in a positive energy-gathering manner. Second, guides should have profound expertise in interpreting classical works and attain a self-forgetting realm in reading and writing about classics. Finally, guides should view reading promotion as a fortunate event for spreading classical culture, focusing on dedication rather than personal gain. The selection range for guides is broad, including well-known university professors, social classical experts, famous reading promoters, distinguished alumni, and student society members. High-quality guides guarantee the effectiveness of guided reading. Libraries should treat classical reading promotion as a responsibility, a habit, a realm, and an activity mode of reading space to attract readers back to classical reading.

3.2 Precise Topic Selection and Serialized Reading Activities

Classical reading space services actively support readers' professional course learning and classical reading by conducting numerous activities on world classics and key discipline masterpieces, including guidance and connotation analysis, thereby enhancing the depth of space activities and the efficiency of space utilization. Classical reading space services advocate precise topic selection and serialized reading activities. The activity planning adopts a combined vertical and horizontal approach: The "vertical" approach refers to a continuous activity format where one classical reading is completed in multiple sessions from beginning to end. For example, *The Communist Manifesto* would follow a sequence from providing reading bibliographies → expert lectures → exchange seminars → reflection essays → speech competitions → award incentives → activity summary, thoroughly mastering one classic. The "horizontal" approach refers to parallel classical reading activities, one type per session, conducted consecutively multiple times. For example, *The Analects*, *The Bible*, *On the Origin of Species*, *Records of the Grand Historian*, *The Art of War*, and *The Eastward Spread of Mao Zedong Thought* would each have lectures without in-depth discussions, aiming to grasp the outlines of multiple masterpieces. This activity approach maximizes space utilization, improves efficiency, reduces costs, and achieves good results. Simultaneously, students develop good habits of anticipating reading, enjoying reading, and focusing on reading.

3.3 Cultivating Readers' Cultural Confidence as the Service Direction

The purpose of establishing classical reading spaces in libraries is to cultivate readers' cultural confidence through classical reading. Therefore, libraries' classical reading promotion should form a long-term mechanism, establish principles for selecting the best guides, and create innovative classical activity content to fulfill the service obligation of cultivating readers' cultural confidence. The creation of library classical reading spaces is an external manifestation of cultural confidence, and strengthening the classical connotation services of reading spaces is even more important. Libraries should carefully plan classical reading activities, effectively stimulate readers' enthusiasm for active and self-directed learning, make Confucian classics, classical masterpieces, Tang poetry, and Song lyrics "come alive," tell Chinese stories well, promote readers' appreciation of classical values and charm, and excavate the deep essence and connotation of classical works. Libraries must rely on classical reading spaces to continuously provide readers with classical cultural feasts, promote readers' experience and love of classics, and cultivate their profound cultural confidence. With cultural confidence leading to path confidence and theoretical confidence, libraries can cultivate readers' cultural characteristics of mastering both Chinese and Western knowledge, understanding ancient and modern times, citing classics, being well-versed in literature, and possessing rich talent, creating a healthy and enriching life.

4. Reflections on Innovative Services for Classic Reading Spaces

4.1 Traditional Culture as the Core: An Eternal Reading Theme

The integration of traditional Chinese culture and Marxism has truly enabled the sinicization, nationalization, and localization of Marxism. China's modernization is modernization based on respecting and affirming traditional culture. Only by cultivating national integrity and cultural identity through traditional culture can we gather national spirit, inspire people's strength, enhance governance capabilities, and thus achieve national greatness. Neglecting traditional culture will inevitably lead to the loss of national cohesion. Therefore, university libraries must recognize the great value and role of traditional culture and make it an eternal core theme in all space activities. With traditional culture as the core theme of library space reading activities and traditional classical culture as the goal, through multi-dimensional perspectives, diverse elements, and multiple products such as classical reading, lectures, forums, speeches, creation, and singing, libraries can immerse, nourish, unite, and cultivate socialist builders and successors, organically integrating excellent traditional culture into the lives of modern college students and making it a means of social interaction and dream realization.

4.2 Creating Extended Services: A Trend in Innovative Service Development

Extended services refer to services beyond conventional 阵地 services and traditional services, where libraries fully utilize collection literature, facility conditions, and information network technology to extend service time, space, and content, providing work beyond the scope of regular services. Extended services are core variables driving library development. Libraries should strive to explore extended space services, pursuing the derivation and 发挥 of diversified space functions. First, correctly understand the relationship between space, literature, and knowledge services—extended services rely on space and literature to further expand and deepen service connotations. Second, promote the transformation of service roles, orient toward knowledge services, creatively design service activities, improve intelligent service capabilities, and achieve reading service innovation. Third, pursue service quality innovation by conducting precise personalized reading recommendations, promptly addressing readers' explicit needs, effectively tracking readers' potential needs, pursuing innovative extensions, and forming a benign collaborative mechanism 闭环. Fourth, form an excellent planning team, which is a necessary prerequisite and important guarantee for extended services—activities conducted randomly without planning cannot achieve extended services.

4.3 Cultivating Active Learning: A Conscious Reading Belief

Active self-directed learning theory originates from educational sociology and psychology, referring to subjective initiative or conscious initiative in learning. The 发挥 of students' learning initiative is a necessary condition for acquiring skills and mastering knowledge. Only by fully 发挥 their subjective initiative can they better absorb knowledge and innovate. Therefore, in space activities, guiding active initiative should run through the entire process, mobilizing readers' power to guide them in planning, organizing, operating, and evaluating activities, thereby exercising readers' organizational abilities. Activity content and forms must continuously innovate to inspire readers' thinking abilities and practical abilities for seeking novelty and difference. Space environments, facilities, tools, resources, and instructors should possess multiple functions to promote readers' imagination, creativity, design, and performance in classical learning activities, cultivating their conscious reading beliefs and creativity. Additionally, space management mechanisms and reading activity incentive policies should be normalized to strengthen readers' subjective initiative and conscious learning.

4.4 Embedding Personalized Themes: A Loyal Service Conviction

The responsibility and mission of university libraries are to uphold a people-oriented service philosophy, create learning spaces with different functions and combinations of quiet and active areas, and fully meet readers' diversified and personalized needs. To this end, libraries must strive to provide space guarantees, information supply, and technical support for teaching and learning, learning and doing, and doing and using through space transformation and service innovation, explore personalized service paths around teaching and scientific research, and promote the maximum 发挥 of space functions through rich and diverse services to meet readers' personalized needs. In providing personalized space services, libraries should also pay attention to readers' 收获 experiences. If libraries' personalized services are 做到极致 and each user's personalized needs are satisfactorily addressed, library space services will certainly shine. Furthermore, libraries should create characteristic mobile reading spaces and online communities that combine virtual and physical elements, vigorously promoting the organic integration of virtual and physical spaces to expand personalized services into deeper fields.

4.5 Cultivating Innovative Talents: A Persistent Professional Aspiration

Innovative talents are those with pioneering and creative abilities who make positive contributions to promoting social innovation and development. Cultivating innovative knowledge talents is a long-term, urgent, and arduous systematic project, the ultimate goal of transformation in all library services, and a persistent professional aspiration of the library profession. Libraries should regard concept innovation as the premise for space services—only with advanced concepts can strategic planning and top-level design be well executed, the correct

development track be led, and the pace of the knowledge economy era be kept up with. Environmental innovation should be treated as a condition for cultivating new talents—with a well-transformed space environment, libraries can purposefully carry out technical collaborative innovation, extend service depth, and cultivate readers' comprehensive qualities and abilities. Organizing student societies should be regarded as the 抓手 for space activities—various student reading clubs and societies should be formed to guide them in planning activities independently. Such societies not only strengthen communication between libraries and readers but also enhance readers' cohesion, appeal, infectivity, and creativity, improving their enthusiasm for participating in learning activities.

In summary, classical reading spaces such as Mingde Lecture Hall, Zhishan Hall, Yiyuan, and Wenxue Hall created by university libraries, with their simple and elegant appearance, profound wisdom connotation, and function of nurturing virtue through immersion, have become business cards for classical reading spaces with strong innovation and remarkable reading effectiveness. These spaces, with their uniquely elegant environments, innovatively extended humanistic services, and active classical reading promotion practices, have achieved composite reading service functions led by moral cultivation, becoming bridges and bonds that closely connect libraries with readers and cultivating readers' conscious reading beliefs and cultural confidence spirit. Classical reading spaces are the calling cards of university library space transformation. As they continue to be constructed and improved, we anticipate that future university library space transformations will give birth to newer, more powerful, and more era-appropriate spaces, making practical and theoretical contributions to library space transformation practices and research.

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- ## Author Contributions

Abstract: *[Purpose/significance]* This paper has introduced the practice of re-constructing the classical reading space in Shenyang Normal University Library, aiming at providing reference for the future space transformation of university libraries. *[Method/process]* Based on the introduction of the status quo of space transformation of university libraries at home and abroad, taking Mingde Lecture Hall of Shenyang Normal University Library as an example, this paper summarizes the practical experience of its classical reading space service, and puts forward strategies to promote the construction and service of characteristic reading space in university libraries. *[Result/conclusion]* The service of classical reading space should take traditional culture as the core, extended service as the goal, personalized service as the means, and active self-learning as the purpose, so as to cultivate innovative knowledge talents with deep cultural confidence.

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

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.