

Practical Exploration and Reflection on Driving Service Innovation through a Project-Based System in University Libraries: A Case Study of Service Innovation Project Initiation at Northeastern University Library (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The field of library and information science is witnessing the emergence of new business forms and development opportunities. Traditional operational models that rely on individual librarians or single functional departments can no longer effectively address urgent, temporary, and complex tasks, adequately support the new development of university libraries, or respond to continuously emerging external challenges such as nationwide reading initiatives, “Double First-Class” construction, cultural inheritance, and diversified reader demands. Consequently, reforming the organizational system of libraries is imperative to better leverage the subjective initiative and creativity of librarians. [Method/Process] By drawing on the principles of the project-based system and integrating the practical experience of service innovation project initiation at Northeastern University Library, this study explores methodologies and approaches for university libraries to adapt to new challenges and tasks. [Results/Conclusion] The adoption of the project-based system proves more conducive to organizing and implementing service innovation activities in university libraries, mobilizing the enthusiasm and creativity of librarians, and promoting the enhancement of service capabilities in university libraries.

Full Text

Preamble

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Practice Exploration and Reflection on Promoting Service Innovation through Project System in University Libraries: A Case Study

of Northeastern University Library's Service Innovation Project Initiative

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] New business formats are emerging in the field of library and information science, ushering in new opportunities for development. The traditional business organization model, which relies on a single librarian or a single functional department, can no longer effectively accomplish urgent, temporary, and complex tasks, nor can it better support the new development of university libraries or respond to emerging external challenges such as nationwide reading promotion, "Double First-Class" construction, cultural inheritance, and diversified reader demands. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the organizational system of libraries to better leverage the subjective initiative and creativity of librarians. [Method/Process] Drawing on the principles of project management and combining them with the practice of Northeastern University Library's service innovation project initiative, this paper explores ways and methods for university libraries to adapt to new challenges and tasks. [Result/Conclusion] The application of a project system is more conducive to organizing service innovation activities in university libraries, mobilizing the enthusiasm and creativity of librarians, and promoting the enhancement of university library service capabilities.

Keywords: project system; project management; service innovation; university library

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Faced with the continuous changes in the information environment and the increasing demands of users, the service capabilities of university libraries also need to continuously adapt. University libraries have always focused on adjusting their organizational structures according to needs and changes, exploring organizational setups and personnel organization methods that align with service goals. In recent years, Peking University Library [1] and Shanghai Jiao Tong University Library [2], among others, have conducted new rounds of top-level design, business reorganization, and institutional reform based on changing business needs, driving a new wave of organizational restructuring in university libraries. Chen Sitong and Na Chunguang [3] conducted a survey of 39 "985 Project" university libraries and found that many libraries have promptly adjusted, optimized, or reorganized themselves in response to internal and external environmental changes, proposing recommendations to break administrative barriers, optimize organizational structure design, and establish multi-functional, cross-level temporary project teams or regular work teams to conduct business.

In practice, organizational restructuring involves not only internal library staff but also external organizational and personnel management departments and

school decision-making bodies. It must consider not only new demands and changes but also the historical evolution of the university, making it a relatively complex and comprehensive systematic project that requires considerable time. In the current context of rapid change and complex internal and external situations, is there a more flexible, long-term, and easier-to-operate approach to compensate for the shortcomings of traditional hierarchical systems and fixed work groups? Drawing on matrix organizational structures from management and project system theory from social governance, Northeastern University Library (hereinafter referred to as “the Library”) has made active attempts, and libraries such as Shenyang Jianzhu University Library [5] have also carried out similar activities. This transformation adapts to the needs of service innovation activities, facilitates the optimization and effective use of personnel and resource organization methods, stimulates the vitality of university library teams, mobilizes the enthusiasm of librarians, and promotes the enhancement of service capabilities and benign development of university libraries, enabling them to better adapt to the “Double First-Class” construction in higher education and other new challenges.

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2. Basic Principles and Application of the Project System

The “project system” is a concept with Chinese characteristics that breaks through the constraints of the original bureaucratic system. In the field of social governance, the project system, which originated from project management thinking, has been widely applied and has gradually become a prominent field of study [6]. The traditional bureaucratic system is based on high division of labor and specialization, with each department working according to its functions and clear boundaries between departments. When encountering new problems and challenges, departments tend to shift responsibility onto each other; when dealing with cross-functional issues or multi-departmental collaborative work, there are often multiple policies from different sources and low efficiency [7]. Since

the mid-1990s, with the reform of the national tax-sharing management system, the project system has emerged as a governance model that allocates resources through specialized funds from top to bottom, outside the regular distribution channels and scale of the fiscal system [8]. In the field of higher education, the project system serves as a specific funding and institutional arrangement to support universities in various aspects such as scientific research, teaching, talent development, and discipline construction [9]. Various types of funds and project applications are specific manifestations of the project system.

The implementation of the project system involves a matrix organizational model, where the personnel organization method breaks down inherent barriers and enables multi-departmental staff to collaborate on tasks. The matrix structure represents an innovative development based on traditional vertical communication systems and command-style communication methods in hierarchical systems, forming a horizontal project team organizational management structure for specialized projects or tasks [10]324-325. Project teams composed of personnel from different professional backgrounds, knowledge and skills, and departments can be used to complete broad-scope, temporary projects or tasks. Such teams possess strong flexibility, can better adapt to diverse psychological needs of personnel, and offer advantages such as mutual inspiration, brainstorming, full utilization of talent, and tackling various complex challenges [10]144-146. This organizational model has been widely applied in enterprises and institutions [11], financial institutions [12], and university disciplines, scientific research, and management [13-16]. Taking libraries as an example, the structure is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

Project management is goal-oriented, supported by policies and funds, and backed by flexible personnel organization methods. It implements project management by applying key knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to enable projects to complete phased, temporary work such as creating unique products, services, or results under limited resources [17]4-10, achieving organizational management innovation and enhancing organizational competitiveness to better respond to changes in the internal and external environment. Continuous innovation makes the organization itself full of vitality and a learning organization capable of responding to environmental changes. Currently, some university libraries adopt the project system as an incentive mechanism. By establishing supporting mechanisms, they encourage librarians to actively participate in project applications on the one hand, and guide librarians' academic research and business research on the other hand, thereby promoting business innovation and academic development in libraries.

Specifically, research and practice on project management began earlier abroad and have been implemented in some university libraries. A basic search in the Web of Science Core Collection with the theme "project near/0manage* and university near/0library" (search date: February 4, 2020) yielded 15 relevant documents. The literature shows that the prototype of project management methods first appeared in the early 19th century when the United Kingdom

adopted a national strategy to improve agricultural management. It began to appear in materials issued by the U.S. government in the early 20th century and was later applied to national defense, technology, and engineering [18]. H. Cheney [19] in 1993 described the management methods for the library automation project at Indiana State University Library. J. Evans, S.J. Bevan, and J. Harrington [20] introduced the background, content, and implementation process of BIODOC at Cranfield University Library in the UK in 1995 (“BIODOC” was a project jointly carried out by Cranfield University’s Information and Library Services Department and Cranfield Biotechnology Centre. The project implementation demonstrated that information services that enhance understanding of user literature needs and provide rapid response are more efficient and valuable than traditional journal collection information services). They found that this “cross-team” work model, where team members came from different work areas of the library, could better provide information services. S. Chambers and D. Perrow [21] published literature in 1998 introducing the introduction of project management techniques at Robinson Library, Newcastle University. Based on interviews about the implementation of library relocation projects, service desk replacement, and group study room booking systems, they proposed project management methods for Newcastle University Library. Practice showed that implementation effects need to be evaluated in the context of specific library environments, and that using project management techniques and software has obvious benefits for both library management and library project team members, with advantages accumulating and becoming more prominent over time. Loughborough University [22] implemented project management in the process of establishing an institutional repository, forming a project team composed of librarians, information science, and engineering teaching center staff. The University of Malawi [23] applied project management methods to the floor renovation project of the Chancellor College Library, and proposed establishing a project management knowledge system, conducting formal project management training, and simplifying project management methods as much as possible.

Domestic university libraries have had research on the project system since 2014, but it has mainly focused on applying project management methods to innovate specific business implementations. A literature search on CNKI with the theme “project system” and “library” (excluding public libraries) (search date: February 4, 2020) yielded 5 Chinese documents. Yang Yan [24] proposed conducting information services during the project decision-making, planning, operation, and closing phases, and discussed the advantages and prospects of embedding targeted information services in various stages of projects. Zhao Shanshan [25] analyzed the feasibility, implementation methods, and work content of library participation in university think tank construction through the project system, believing that project system participation in university think tank construction is more operable and provides better support. Yu Pei and Xiao Peng [26], based on the specific practice of the East Campus Library of Sun Yat-sen University, proposed that library marketing work, which covers multiple aspects, involves

functions of multiple departments, requires mobilizing various resources, and involves a large amount of cross-departmental cooperation, is suitable for project system management. However, practical work also revealed problems that need to be solved, such as how to conduct systematic theoretical guidance and overall planning and how to coordinate cross-departmental resources.

Therefore, adopting the project system to promote organizational reform and service innovation in university libraries should absorb and learn from the initial, specific experiences and methods accumulated in project management implementation in university libraries at home and abroad, and combine them with the actual situation of the library for systematic, localized, and personalized innovation and practice to comprehensively enhance the scientific nature and operability of the project system. In existing research, university libraries at home and abroad have basically borrowed project management ideas to carry out innovative work in specific library businesses and individual businesses. There are fewer practical explorations and studies that treat the project system as a macro management system. The research has discussed how university libraries can better play a role as participants in some new businesses, but there are no results that examine improving library organization and management from the perspective of the project system to respond to the library's own service innovation needs and continuously changing service demands.

3. Practice and Reflection on Promoting Service Innovation through Project System at Northeastern University Library

3.1 Design Philosophy

Currently, new development formats are emerging in the field of library and information science, ushering in new opportunities for development. The “Double First-Class” construction and “smart library” construction have endowed university library development with richer new connotations, and the roles of librarians are becoming diversified. Relying on a single librarian or a single department can no longer effectively complete urgent, temporary, and complex tasks, especially major innovative service tasks, which require the project system to accomplish. The *Regulations on Libraries in Regular Institutions of Higher Education* [27] also states: “Libraries should encourage librarians to apply for various levels and types of scientific research projects, and may establish their own research topics according to needs.” The project system uses project tasks as a driving force to promote the aggregation of resources toward special tasks that the organization urgently needs to solve. Flexible and diversified personnel composition can supplement the “gaps” in the “bureaucratic system” and “fragmentation,” and collaborate to complete special tasks. Centered on departmental planning (or strategy) and work objectives, and guided by goals, a “full-staff, all-round, multi-perspective, multi-level” project system management system should be established. Implementing a project management approach

of “macro guidance, independent application, expert review, full-process guidance, and final acceptance,” followed by “performance rewards, promotion and application, and feedback adjustment” in operations management, can improve the rational allocation and use efficiency of resources, better supplement the deficiencies of fixed institutions and routine work, and enhance departmental service capabilities and service value. Its core elements are: decomposing plans and objectives, building platforms, allocating resources, and focusing on solving challenging problems that align with organizational goals and reflect departmental value, to better provide comprehensive support for university talent cultivation, scientific research, social services, and cultural inheritance and innovation.

Led by the library director and studied by the library leadership team, Northeastern University Library decided to organize service innovation project initiatives within the library on an annual cycle starting from 2017. This work is assigned to a deputy director for specialized responsibility, with the office serving as the specific management institution. Over three years, 55 projects have been supported through the initiative, covering reading promotion, information literacy education, library space environment (new library opening, old library renovation, cross-campus library operations), subject services, intellectual property information services, business and management reform team building (service processes, organizational management, support technologies), and other aspects. Each year’s initiative begins with topic selection and guidance, proceeding through independent application, expert review, project approval, full-process guidance, and final acceptance, followed by performance rewards and feedback collection for improvement in the next year. Through performance rewards, promotion and application, the labor value of librarians is demonstrated, project results are maximized in application and benefits, the enthusiasm and creativity of librarians are widely mobilized, and the library’s service capabilities and innovation are enhanced. The specific implementation process is shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper].

(1) Macro Guidance. By studying the department’s vision, long-term plans, and annual work priorities, soliciting topics from various departments, and considering feedback information, the department’s annual service innovation project tasks are formed. A *Notice on Launching the Annual Service Innovation Project Application Work* is issued to all librarians to initiate the service innovation project initiative. Before the first implementation of this work, some topics were solicited from department heads and library leaders. Simultaneously, during the solicitation process, librarians’ willingness was stimulated, their thinking was expanded, and their attention was focused, forming the ideological foundation for carrying out service innovation project initiatives. Combined with hot issues in library research, a topic guide was formed to provide guidance for librarians’ applications. From 2017 to 2019, the guides proposed 37, 59, and 40 topics respectively.

(2) Independent Application. The notice clearly encourages cross-departmental team formation based on actual project conditions. To ensure

broad participation, each project generally has no more than 5 members (including the project leader), each person can lead no more than 2 projects, and each person can participate in no more than 3 projects. Considering technical support needs, personnel with computer-related professional backgrounds or technical development expertise may have their participation limits appropriately relaxed if the project truly requires it. Each department must apply for at least 1 project, with no upper limit. Individuals who cannot form a team but have ideas and advantages regarding a project are allowed to apply independently as backup personnel for approved projects. The project application is organized by the project leader, who conducts feasibility analysis, formulates implementation plans, and prepares budgets. Application materials are reviewed and guided by the department head, obtaining the department head's approval and support.

(3) Expert Review. After the application period, the library leadership and invited experts from the university's publicity department, student affairs office, academic affairs office, scientific research institute, relevant schools, and directors from other university libraries serve as judges for joint review. Judges listen to each project's application presentation, raise questions and suggestions, and score from perspectives such as innovation, practicality, operability, and project significance. Based on the judges' scores, projects are approved according to a certain proportion and priority. Projects that are not closely related to the library's goals, lack practicality, or have insufficient feasibility are not approved.

(4) Full-Process Guidance. The library leadership team studies the expert review results and determines the project approval plan based on departmental work realities, publicizing it within the department through announcements. The project number, contact library leader, funding level, and amount are all specified in the project announcement. Project implementation is the responsibility of the project leader, with a contact library leader system implemented. Generally, each approved project is assigned a contact library leader to whom project progress and coordination matters can be specifically reported and resolved. Library leaders provide full-process guidance and promote project implementation. During implementation, expenditure issues are reported to the library director for approval and then paid according to the university's financial system. Priority is given to supporting project leaders in participating in various trainings, exchanges, and awards. Thematic learning exchanges and discussions are conducted through the library's staff academy and staff salon.

(5) Final Acceptance. Each project summarizes its completion status, fills out a project completion application form, and presents relevant materials such as text, images, and videos that reflect project results, with particular emphasis on quantitative summaries of results and their impact. A completion defense PPT is prepared. Experts from within and outside the university conduct comprehensive on-site evaluations based on project completion, mainly from the perspectives of innovation and practicality. Project achievement levels are assessed, and opinions or suggestions are provided for subsequent prospects, application

value, or improvements. Projects are categorized as first, second, or third prize, or as passed, based on evaluation results, and acceptance announcements are issued.

(6) Performance Rewards. Performance rewards are one of the important policies guiding the sustainable development of service innovation projects. Based on project completion, points are awarded in annual performance evaluations. For example, according to the evaluation level, an excellent first prize in the library's service innovation project receives 30 points, second prize 20 points, third prize 15 points, and passed projects 10 points. The team leader is responsible for distributing individual scores among team members. Teamwork is encouraged, and cross-departmental teams receive a 10% bonus at the same level.

(7) Promotion and Application. Some projects are completed upon acceptance, while others can be further promoted and applied. After project acceptance, practical projects with broad service coverage are selected for follow-up support to maximize the value of results. For example, exchanges and discussions are organized within the library, where project leaders can serve as speakers to explain the application methods and precautions of project results, enabling librarians to first understand and use project results to serve readers. Support is provided for creating navigation websites and WeChat theme columns, and various platforms such as school homepages, library websites, and WeChat official accounts are used to expand awareness and effectiveness of resources and services, allowing project results to be implemented and more widely applied.

(8) Feedback and Adjustment. After the annual service innovation project work is completed, experiences are summarized in a timely manner to provide references for adjusting the next year's work. For example, in 2018, the limit for each person leading projects was expanded from 1 to 2, and participation limits were expanded from 2 to 3 projects. Restrictions on personnel with computer professional backgrounds or technical development expertise were relaxed. The contact library leader system was added, with the contact library leader responsible for guiding project progress and coordination matters. Projects were divided into exploratory research projects and applied practice projects, balancing practicality and forward-looking perspectives, and encouraging projects to conduct pioneering and exploratory research while closely integrating with departmental work realities. Projects can be categorized as annual or long-term, with long-term projects participating in annual acceptance based on annual task completion status. If tasks are not completed as planned due to objective reasons, extensions can be applied for to avoid pursuing quantity and completion time at the expense of actual problem-solving effectiveness. In 2019, requirements for project result publication were added, such as requiring published papers to be approved by the project leader and properly handling authorship issues.

3.3 Project Approval Status

Referring to the classification of service innovation case applications in the “National University Library Service Innovation Case Competition” hosted by the Teaching Steering Committee for Library and Information Work in Higher Education Institutions under the Ministry of Education—reader activities, basic services, resource promotion, space decoration, and other categories [28] as primary classifications, and referring to related research that divides innovation types in university library service innovation into five types: organizational management innovation, service product innovation, support technology innovation, service process innovation, and specialized innovation [29] as secondary classifications, the project approval status over three years was statistically categorized. The results are shown in Table 1 (department names and data in Table 1 are as of November 30, 2019, the same applies to tables and text below), to preliminarily understand the motivation and coverage of project approvals.

Among them, organizational management innovation includes changes in organizational forms and structures, addition or reduction of organizational elements, and innovation in management methods and means. Service product innovation includes the development and introduction of entirely new service products. Support technology innovation includes the introduction of existing or new technologies not previously applied in the organization. Service process innovation includes changes in service production and delivery procedures or regulations. Specialized innovation includes proposing specific solutions to users’ specific problems and standardizing, normalizing, and standardizing them [29].

When determining approved projects, dual factors of external situation changes and internal development needs are comprehensively considered. Projects that the library “can do” internally and “might do” in response to external factors, as well as projects that “need to be done” for macro and micro reasons, jointly promote library innovation and development [17]7. Many project initiations simultaneously satisfy both internal and external factors. In practice, projects with multiple motivations, key or unique motivations, and sufficient conditions are given priority and key support.

From the aggregated data, there are 6 reader activity projects, 31 basic service projects, 5 resource promotion projects, 5 space decoration projects, and 8 other projects. Basic service projects that closely integrate with job realities to carry out basic service innovation have the highest proportion and cover all library departments. Project leaders mostly come from departments responsible for the relevant business or have research expertise and technical strengths in the relevant areas. Projects include service process and organizational management innovations for internal library operations, service product innovations for external readers, and support technology innovations for library and service support, fully reflecting the prominent characteristic of combining project approval with actual work. They represent emergency responses, supplements, improvements, breakthroughs, and innovations based on daily work. Reader activities and

resource promotion projects mainly target readers and attract reader participation, relatively concentrated in the circulation department, reading room department, reader services department, and systems department. Among them, the systems department is responsible for the operation and technical support of the library's official WeChat account.

Space decoration projects require corresponding design professional backgrounds and are also concentrated in a few departments, reflecting that project approval fully combines with the library's actual situation. The need for new library opening and old library renovation from 2017 to 2019 also concentrated space decoration projects in a few departments.

Other projects are exploratory research based on new problems and tasks in libraries. For example, research on the operation mechanism of university libraries under new circumstances, analysis and decision support for characteristic discipline cluster construction, and development of archival and cultural resources of Northeastern University Library under the background of digital humanities. Research results may not produce immediate application effects but will lay the foundation for library management, development trend judgment, and possible service innovations.

Project content includes both traditional document construction and circulation services, as well as new content such as information construction, subject analysis, and intellectual property information services, reflecting the timeliness of the project guide and the initiative of librarians.

Matrix cross-departmental team projects numbered 3, 6, and 5 respectively over the three years, accounting for 15.8%, 30%, and 31.25% of the annual total projects, showing an upward trend. Cross-departmental teams (see Table 2 and Table 3) have project leaders covering the document construction department, reading room department, office, technical services department, and circulation department. Some departments mainly form teams within the department, where project personnel composition has higher professional requirements and is closely related to daily business.

3.4 Effectiveness Analysis

Through the implementation of service innovation project initiatives, the enthusiasm and creativity of librarians have been greatly mobilized, and significant progress has been made in annual key work and innovative work. Based on the library's traditional and routine guarantee of literature and information resources, each project closely integrates with departmental development and service innovation needs, playing an important role. The coverage of project categories over the years and the promotion of key innovative work in the library are shown in Table 4 . The main effectiveness can be summarized in three aspects:

(1) Adapting to Demands. In reading promotion, projects such as “Book

Doctor Experience Service,” “Cultural Volunteer Service Construction Based on the ‘1+1+X’ Partnership Plan,” “Creating the ‘Ning Encheng Humanities Salon’ with ‘Cultural Experience Space’ as the Carrier,” “Living Library Lecture Series,” “My ‘Book’ Youth—Carrying Out Various Forms of Book Recommendation Activities,” and “Construction and Opening of the ‘Chinese Classics Museum’ at Hunnan Campus Library” have made library reading promotion services more vibrant and adapted to readers’ diversified and differentiated needs [30-31]. Among them, volunteer service projects won the Excellent Case of Library Cultural Volunteer Service in Liaoning Province and the Excellent Team of Lei Feng Volunteer Service in Liaoning Province, and were invited to present at the National University Library Volunteer Service Work Experience Exchange and Seminar. The “My ‘Book’ Youth” case won the first prize in the National Metallurgical University Library Innovation Service Case Competition and the second prize in the Liaoning Province University Library Service Innovation Case Competition. The library was awarded the “Chinese Traditional Culture Classics Promotion Library” by the Chinese Library Society.

In information literacy education, the project “University Student Information Literacy Education Based on the Library’s Official WeChat Platform—Micro Learning School” formed a WeChat column that reached approximately 310,000 people, with total graphic reads exceeding 15,000. The case won the first prize in the first National Metallurgical University Library Service Innovation Case Competition, the third prize in the National University Information Literacy Education Seminar case category, the first prize in the CNKI Short Video Competition, and the second prize in the National Finals of the Retrieval Courseware Competition. The book *Information Literacy Reader* compiled by the library based on its experience and insights in information literacy education received full funding from the Liaoning Province Excellent Natural Science Works Review.

In intellectual property information services, several projects have established themselves based on new demands undertaken by university libraries in recent years. They independently developed the Northeastern University Patent Information Database, developed a Northeastern University characteristic patent information visualization analysis system, and organized hierarchical intellectual property literacy education, providing important support for the library’s approval as a “National Patent Documentation Service Outlet,” the establishment of the Northeastern University Intellectual Property Information Service Center, and becoming a senior member of the University Intellectual Property Information Service Alliance.

(2) Service Improvement. Externally, service methods have been improved and service efficiency enhanced to promote reader favorability and satisfaction. For example, the project “Integration of Library Business System with ‘One-Network-For-All’ System” closely integrated with the university’s “One-Network-For-All” implementation plan, connecting library OPAC reader authentication, book recommendation, sci-tech novelty search, and collection data

harvesting to the campus unified platform, enabling readers to access relevant library resources using their unified authentication system accounts. The project “Design and Implementation of Sci-Tech Novelty Search Service System” aimed to optimize sci-tech novelty search archive management and improve service efficiency and quality. The system can achieve one-click extraction and packaging of metadata for multiple novelty search reports, realizing intelligent management of novelty search reports and optimization of business processes. The developed system is currently applied to the library’s sci-tech novelty search work, greatly improving the efficiency and quality of novelty search work and receiving recognition and praise from novelty search staff, while also promoting user satisfaction improvement. The project “Quality Control Research of Novelty Search Reports” formed the *Novelty Search Quality Control Manual*, providing important guidance for standardizing novelty search business and training novelty search staff. Through more than three years of operation and improvement, the WeChat official account has more than 18,000 followers and has become an extension and expansion of traditional library services.

Internally, service processes and organizational management have been improved to enhance departmental execution and competitiveness. For example, the project “Development of Archival and Cultural Resources of Northeastern University Library under the Background of Digital Humanities” was composed of personnel from the office, reading room department, and technical department, combining the advantages of mastering the library’s archival materials and the ability to digitize them. Based on the library’s archives, including personnel archives, document archives, technical archives, and reader borrowing statistics archives, the project digitally presented the library’s cultural and historical archives, achieving comprehensive digital recording and preservation of the library’s cultural and historical archives and providing records and references for library development and innovation. Projects such as “Research on Library Management System Construction during the Republic of China Period” and “Research on Organizational Management Innovation of Library Supporting Double First-Class Construction—Total-Branch Library System Construction Based on Business Process Reengineering” provided important support for departmental management improvement and organizational restructuring.

(3) Capability Enhancement. Aggregated data shows that total participation in projects over the three years was 78, 92, and 73 person-times respectively. Among them, librarians (non-department heads) serving as project leaders numbered 12, 15, and 13 respectively, accounting for 63.16%, 75%, and 81.25% of the annual total projects. Professional librarians participated with 64 people, accounting for 85.3% of the total number of professional librarians. Each year, 31 people led projects, accounting for 41.3% of professional librarians. Forty people participated in or led 3 or more projects, accounting for 53.3% of professional librarians. Eleven auxiliary librarians participated, accounting for 24% of auxiliary librarians. This project management approach has trained the librarian team, enhanced project management experience, and improved academic research capabilities. In recent years, librarians’ academic paper publications

and awards have shown an upward trend year by year, with more than 100 awards at the university level and above in the past three years.

Librarians' work capabilities have been significantly improved. In subject services, projects such as "Analysis and Prediction of Potential Discipline Development in Universities—Taking Northeastern University as an Example" and "Research Based on Multi-Dimensional Scientific Research Cooperation Network Analysis" provide decision-making reference reports for university leaders, functional departments, and relevant schools. In library space environment construction, projects such as "South Lake Campus Library Signage System Design," "South Lake Campus Library Space Renovation Design Competition," and "Ning Encheng Library Space Beautification" have played important roles in new library construction and renovation work. For example, the "Ning Encheng Library Space Beautification" project was led by the office, with participation from circulation department and reader services department staff. Office staff understand the library's space and overall layout, circulation department staff have the most contact with readers, two staff members have art design professional backgrounds or expertise, and experienced management personnel with rich organizational and coordination skills are also assigned. The project mainly includes systematic beautification planning and design for indoor landscapes, flower arrangements, and cultural display walls in the library. The implementation background was the opening of the new Hunnan Library and the renovation of the South Lake Library. Project team members closely tracked the library renovation and construction process, using the physical library as the research and project implementation object, participating in specialized meetings on library space layout, furniture configuration, and furniture decoration, providing opinions, suggestions, and implementation plans. On the one hand, they made specialized and specific contributions to library renovation and construction; on the other hand, librarians themselves gained a great sense of participation and achievement. The library was awarded "Shenyang's Most Beautiful Library." Ning Encheng Library was listed among the top ten cultural and artistic venues in the Shenyang Cultural and Artistic Evaluation List, the only university library among the cultural and artistic venues in Shenyang, receiving widespread attention and praise from readers. The Ministry of Education's "Weiyuan Education" WeChat official account reported on it with the article "So These Most Beautiful University Libraries Are Right by Your Side."

4. Summary and Reflection

Implementing the project system is goal-oriented, representing improvement and enhancement based on the original management system, and flexibly responding to urgent, temporary, and complex tasks in libraries. For relatively large organizations, it has strong practical value. However, it requires relatively rich knowledge and technology. In practice, several difficulties may be faced: (1) The "what to do" problem—whether project approval aligns with organizational goals and development requirements, maximizes human and material

resources, and helps better achieve organizational goals. (2) The “how to do it” problem—how to better coordinate with fixed organizational institutions during execution. (3) The “who will do it” problem—librarians have significant differences in capability levels and willingness, and their understanding of the necessity of project approval and project management operations varies greatly. (4) Practical application issues. Examining the promotion of organizational strategic goals or planning through the project system from the perspective of project management theory [17]53 (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]), several key issues should be noted.

(1) Guiding Nature of Project Guidelines. Libraries should support service innovation project initiatives in departmental budgets, focusing on closely integrating with library goals and work realities to ensure efficient use of funds and practical effectiveness of personnel in their positions. Fixed departments are mainly responsible for basic business and daily work, while service innovation work is achieved through the project system. This ensures the orderly development of daily work while greatly enhancing the entire department’s ability to respond to challenges and changes. The project portfolio should closely revolve around library planning or strategy, unified and coordinated to promote organizational innovation and long-term development [34]. In terms of project content, there should be both theoretical research and practical exploration, solving current practical problems while having certain forward-looking perspectives. In terms of project results, papers are not the only criterion—plans, manuals, programs, physical objects, etc., can all serve as project results.

(2) Scientific Nature of Project Selection. Library leaders and internal and external experts should conduct comprehensive evaluations of projects and provide guiding opinions and suggestions. During project approval review, comprehensive consideration, careful screening, and strict control should be exercised to ensure the matching degree, coverage of projects with library goals and work realities, and the continuity and relevance of projects across different years. Projects with little significance or inadequate preparation should be eliminated. Based on evaluation results, the priority of approved projects and different budget amounts should be determined.

(3) Orderly Project Execution. Multiple projects running in parallel and project work outside fixed organizational structures require the overall support and full participation of library leaders. The library’s top leader should attach great importance to this work, incorporate the project system into the department’s overall development, and coordinate the arrangement of time, funds, personnel, venues, and other resources. Projects with needs and further application value should be identified and supported for continued construction, improvement, and promotion and application. Each project should have an assigned contact library leader for full-process guidance and coordination. The project leader is responsible for project implementation, and the library leader is responsible for the entire process of project initiation, implementation, and acceptance. Additionally, hierarchical librarian training should be conducted.

Library leaders and office staff should focus on strategic management and project management system knowledge. Project leaders should focus on learning project management techniques, project management software usage, and communication methods and skills to obtain better and more comprehensive capabilities to support project execution. Project team members should focus on learning the specific knowledge required for the project to complete specific tasks well. For example, internal and external expert judges are invited to provide professional opinions and suggestions, offering valuable references for librarians' project implementation. Materials are purchased for librarian learning, and platforms for exchange and learning are built.

(4) Practical Effectiveness of Project Results. Implementing the project system is an innovation in management methods, with the goal of achieving innovation, breakthroughs, and improved upgrades in library services. Therefore, the ultimate goal of practical application should always be maintained, focusing on identifying and screening results with broader promotion value and further applying them to actual work. In this process, relying on a single librarian or department head is insufficient. The library should coordinate the improvement, implementation, promotion, and use of results, allowing the wisdom and labor of librarians to play a greater role. In this process, promotion and publicity should be emphasized. Relying on platforms such as the school homepage, library website, and WeChat official account, project results should be actively promoted and publicized to expand awareness and effectiveness of resources and services. Thematic websites and WeChat theme columns should be built to comprehensively promote various library resources.

(5) Sustainability of the Project System. The implementation of the project system is a systematic project involving organizational strategic management, human resource management, project management, and other aspects. The concept of total quality management should be established, focusing on quality control throughout the entire process. Closed-loop management should be emphasized, with inspection and processing after project implementation and acceptance, and further improvement measures and implementation plans should be proposed to effectively enhance organizational management and effectiveness. The creativity of librarians should be fully stimulated, and the self-actualization needs of every librarian should be fully respected. Librarians contain tremendous creative potential and development vitality—some have library and information science backgrounds, some have computer science or the university's advantageous discipline backgrounds, and some have rich management experience. Projects that bring together various types of personnel organically can achieve complementary advantages, mutual benefits, and collaborative innovation, jointly solving focal, hot, and difficult problems faced by libraries. Teamwork can also greatly exercise librarians' comprehensive abilities. Continuously promoting the project system can create more possibilities for individual librarian development, reserve a large number of talents for future business reorganization and institutional reform in libraries, and for meeting new challenges and development, promoting healthy and sustainable organizational develop-

ment.

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Practice Exploration and Reflection on Promoting Service Innovation with Project System in University Library—Taking the Service Innovation Project of Northeastern University Library as an Example

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] New business formats are emerging in the field of library and information science, ushering in new opportunities for development. The traditional business organization model, which relies on a single librarian or a single functional department, can no longer effectively accomplish urgent, temporary, and complex tasks, nor can it better support the new development of university libraries or cope with continuous external challenges such as nationwide reading promotion, “Double First-Class” construction, cultural inheritance, and diversified reader demands. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the organizational system of libraries to better leverage the subjective initiative and creativity of librarians. [Method/Process] Drawing on the principles of project management and combining them with the practice of Northeastern University Library’s service innovation project initiative, this paper explores ways and methods for university libraries to adapt to new challenges and tasks. [Result/Conclusion] The application of a project system is more conducive to organizing service innovation activities in university libraries, mobilizing the enthusiasm and creativity of librarians, and promoting the enhancement of university library service capabilities.

Keywords: project system; project management; service innovation; university library

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

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