

Current Status and Strategies of Remote Services via WeChat Official Platform in University Libraries During Public Health Emergencies: A Case Study of 36 “Double First-Class” Class A University Libraries (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study investigates the current status of university libraries providing remote services via WeChat Official Account during the COVID-19 pandemic, explores strategies for university libraries to develop remote services during public health emergencies, and provides reference for university libraries to offer remote services through the WeChat public platform.

[Method/Process] By surveying data from the WeChat Official Accounts of 36 “Double First-Class” Category A university libraries, this research analyzes the current status and existing problems of remote services delivered via WeChat Official Account by university libraries, and proposes optimization strategies.

[Result/Conclusion] In the new media environment, the WeChat Official Account has become an important platform for university libraries to provide remote services. Remote services of university libraries need to be normalized. When public health emergencies occur, libraries should focus on resource support, service support, reading activities, remote education for readers, and psychological counseling to provide strong support for university teaching, research, and talent cultivation.

Full Text

Title and Authorship

Current Status and Strategies of Remote Services via WeChat Public Platform for University Libraries in Public Health Emergencies: A Case Study of 36 “Double First-Class” Class A University Libraries

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study investigates the current status of remote services provided by university libraries through WeChat public platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, explores strategies for delivering remote services during public health emergencies, and offers reference for university libraries to improve their remote service capabilities. **[Method/Process]** We examined WeChat public platform data from 36 “Double First-Class” Class A university libraries, analyzing the current state and existing problems of remote services, and proposed optimization strategies. **[Result/Conclusion]** In the new media environment, WeChat public platforms have become crucial channels for university libraries to deliver remote services. Remote services should be normalized, and during public health emergencies, libraries should provide comprehensive support for teaching, research, and talent cultivation by ensuring resource access, service guarantees, reading activities, remote education, and psychological counseling.

Keywords: public health emergency; university library; WeChat public platform; remote service

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On May 9, 2003, the State Council of China promulgated and implemented the *Regulations on Emergency Response to Public Health Emergencies*, which defines public health emergencies as sudden occurrences that cause or may cause serious harm to public health, including major infectious disease outbreaks, unexplained group illnesses, major food and occupational poisoning, and other events that severely affect public health [1]. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic has affected over 200 countries and regions worldwide, posing severe challenges to global public health systems. In response to this sudden crisis, libraries at all levels have actively adapted by shifting from traditional offline services to online platforms, maximizing the protection of readers and staff health while ensuring service continuity. This paper examines the current state of remote services provided by university libraries through WeChat public platforms during the pandemic, identifies existing problems, and proposes optimization strategies to provide reference for establishing emergency remote service frameworks, improving service content, and minimizing the impact of public health emergencies on library services.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International Research

International scholarship on library services during public health emergencies has primarily focused on the role positioning of libraries and librarians. A. M. Yousuf et al. proposed that librarians must transform their roles during such crises by disseminating relevant information to raise public health awareness, providing up-to-date information and literature to support research teams, and addressing core user needs [2]. S. J. Phillips et al. noted that the U.S. National Library of Medicine integrates medical language systems and medical subject headings to reveal natural and biological disasters, helping users access relevant information [3]. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the library prominently featured a “Coronavirus Disease 2019” special topic on its homepage, through which readers and researchers could quickly access open data on coronavirus gene sequences from the National Library of Medicine’s genetic database via the “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” data hub [4]. J. Ma et al. identified responsibilities for health information specialists in medical library consortia, including morning briefings, retrieval support, real-time information searches, institutional decision-making support, remote reference consultation, curriculum development, subject guides, and providing information for patients and the public [5]. E. D. Amy et al. surveyed hospital librarians’ disaster management activities, finding that hospital librarians play effective roles in disaster management and that experienced teams are emerging [6].

2.2 Domestic Research

Domestic library research on public health emergencies has concentrated on three areas: (1) **Public Libraries**: Yang Siluo et al. used the 4R crisis management model to compare and analyze the overall crisis management posture of public libraries during public health emergencies through questionnaires and official library data. During COVID-19, public libraries provided quality online digital services, served as information centers, and participated in social aid such as donation coordination. However, they lacked mature theoretical support and practical experience, insufficient crisis awareness led to delayed preparations, and unconventional service levels need improvement [7]. Wei Yongli et al. proposed establishing library health emergency organizational systems through developing emergency plans, strengthening emergency teams, conducting drills, securing funding, establishing monitoring and early warning systems, optimizing information reporting mechanisms, and improving emergency response procedures [8]. Ma Zhuying et al. suggested that libraries should provide transparent tracking reports for society, decision-making information services for government, valuable scientific intelligence for researchers and medical staff, and psychological health support for readers [9]. Zhou Jingping emphasized that for small and medium libraries, information exchange is crucial in emergency response systems, and librarians can quickly query, integrate, and edit profes-

sional materials while communicating synchronously with readers and experts online [10].

- (2) **University Libraries:** Shi Huiyuan argued that crisis awareness is the starting point for university library crisis management, requiring principles of “facing problems, unified leadership, decisive measures, and reader-first” to improve staff crisis awareness, establish leadership groups, and create effective environmental support systems [11]. Huang Wei identified health and safety hazards in university libraries as primarily related to book hygiene, indoor air pollution, and contamination of public facilities, recommending improved sanitation concepts and enhanced disinfection measures [12]. Liao Lixiang emphasized that university libraries should attach great importance to public health emergency management by establishing special columns on their websites to popularize relevant knowledge and enhance readers’ coping capabilities [13].
- (3) **Medical Libraries:** Zhu Hong et al. proposed that medical libraries should leverage their advantages to establish specialized databases, conduct comprehensive data mining and knowledge discovery on past public health events, and provide valuable practical references [14]. He Wei et al., using the U.S. National Library of Medicine as an example, suggested that medical libraries should maintain keen information awareness and crisis consciousness, reserve information resources, broaden communication channels, and compile emergency manuals to maximize emergency service capabilities [15].

3. Current Status of Remote Services via WeChat Public Platform

3.1 Data Sources

This study collected data from the WeChat public platforms of 36 “Double First-Class” Class A university libraries between May 25 and May 31, 2020. The collection covered content published from January 25 to May 24, 2020, including posts, section settings, presentation formats, and remote service implementation. The remote services provided by these libraries during the pandemic through WeChat public platforms represent the current state of domestic university libraries, making them appropriate sampling subjects for analysis.

3.2 Status Analysis

3.2.1 Overall Overview The surveyed libraries’ WeChat public platforms include both service accounts and subscription accounts. During the sampling period, all 36 libraries published content that could be categorized into service promotion, resource 推送, reading promotion, reader education, and psychological counseling [Figure 1: see original paper]. Libraries fully utilized the broad reach and fast dissemination of WeChat to release service updates, reveal digi-

tal resources and access methods, promote online reading, conduct remote education, and provide psychological counseling, delivering timely, professional, proactive, and effective remote services during the pandemic.

3.2.2 Remote Borrowing Services Libraries promptly released pandemic-related service updates via WeChat, including closure notices, book renewal extensions, and remote access information. Twenty-one libraries provided remote borrowing services for on-campus faculty and students, such as book delivery to buildings, online ordering systems, and contactless borrowing. Peking University Library and University of Electronic Science and Technology Library pioneered paper collection delivery services . Additionally, three libraries established special pandemic columns: Peking University Library’s “Anti-Epidemic Services” column covered innovative services, e-resources, guides, and lectures; University of Electronic Science and Technology Library’s “Anti-Epidemic Services” column included innovative services, resource updates, and announcements; and Northwestern Polytechnical University Library’s “Epidemic Special Supply” column featured off-campus e-resource access, service guides, and overdue book policies. Such information integration demonstrates thorough service planning and facilitates reader access to remote services.

3.2.3 Remote Resource Support All surveyed libraries used WeChat to promote remote resources. Except for China Agricultural University Library, which only posted one article on digital reading platforms, the other 35 libraries continuously promoted databases, online learning platforms, quality e-books, and digital reading platforms. In response to the Ministry of Education’s January 29 call for “suspended classes but continued learning” via online platforms, 19 libraries released information on remote access to electronic textbooks and teaching references, with nine launching online textbook platforms before March . Peking University, Tsinghua University, and eight other libraries had self-built platforms, while the University of Electronic Science and Technology Library completed a new textbook platform within five days to support continuous learning.

3.2.4 Remote Reading Promotion During the pandemic, remote reading promotion included book recommendations, online reading activities, competitions, online lectures, and cultural promotion. Several libraries maintained regular columns for book recommendations, such as Renmin University Library’s “Good Book Recommendations,” Minzu University Library’s “Fragrant Books Combat Epidemic,” Nankai University Library’s “100 Good Books,” East China Normal University Library’s “Epidemic Bookshelf,” and University of Electronic Science and Technology Library’s “Reading Combat Epidemic.” Wuhan University Library’s “One Book Per Issue” column, featuring librarians recommending and reading aloud books with text, images, and audio, achieved high readership per post. Xiamen University Library’s “Epidemic Book List” campaign, co-organized with graduate and academic affairs offices, reached over 25,000

views. Some libraries experimented with online co-reading activities, such as Beijing Normal University's "21-Day Reading Combat Epidemic" and Fudan University's "Dandan Reading—100-Day Co-reading." The University of Electronic Science and Technology Library organized a co-reading activity titled "Reading Combat Epidemic—Exploring the Meaning of Technology and Life" for Sichuan university libraries, engaging nearly 20,000 faculty and students from 52 institutions.

Thirty libraries launched diverse series of reading promotion activities around World Book Day (April 23). Activities shifted offline events online, including online human libraries, competitions, "cloud" lecture series, and online exhibitions. Harbin Institute of Technology and Nankai University integrated traditional culture with online competitions, while Dalian University of Technology, Southeast University, Fudan University, and East China Normal University combined classic literature appreciation with online cultural lectures and reading contests.

3.2.5 Remote Reader Education and Psychological Counseling Following the COVID-19 outbreak, university libraries launched online education programs, including third-party lecture series on database usage and academic writing. Eighteen libraries, including Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Peking University, offered library-hosted online lecture series in addition to third-party content. Sichuan University Library and Beijing Normal University Library provided customized online lectures, while Dalian University of Technology Library offered video replays via Baidu Netdisk.

Mental health during public health emergencies deserves attention. The *Guidelines for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Higher Education Institutions* notes common stress responses including anxiety, depression, compulsive behaviors, hypochondria, and physical symptoms [16]. Twenty libraries provided psychological counseling by disseminating virus prevention knowledge, revealing research data platforms, recommending psychological guidance books, promoting exercise programs, offering online psychological counseling, and organizing reading activities. Wuhan University Library invited psychology professors to recommend anti-epidemic and psychological books and published contact information for mental health support services. The University of Electronic Science and Technology Library conducted "Small Map Co-reading" online discussions via voice conferencing to help students cope with the pandemic and remote learning, and used the "Reading a Poem for You" column to help readers relieve negative emotions through positive poetry. Beijing Normal University Library shared original anti-epidemic poems by librarians to inspire optimism, while Sichuan University Library's "Mu Xin Cottage" provided reading therapy through email correspondence and literature recommendations. Lanzhou University Library published 11 consecutive posts from January 29 to February 23 revealing virus research resources to help readers understand the pandemic's development.

4. Optimization Strategies for Remote Services

4.1 Existing Problems

Despite their commitment to serving teaching and research, university libraries' WeChat-based remote services exhibit several shortcomings:

- (1) **Slow Response and Lack of Holistic Planning:** While service information (closure notices, renewal extensions) was released promptly, responses regarding teaching and research support (e.g., textbook platform development), online education, psychological counseling, and online activities were slower. Only eight libraries, including Tsinghua and the University of Electronic Science and Technology, released electronic textbook platform information before March (22.2% of surveyed libraries). Additionally, content lacked overall planning and branded column construction, with the majority being homogeneous resource 推送 lacking personalized customization.
- (2) **Insufficient Intelligent Consulting Services:** Among surveyed libraries, 17 had not enabled intelligent reply functions. Of the 16 that did (Chongqing University Library's details were inaccessible as it required user binding), only six—Peking University, Beijing Normal University, Minzu University, Tianjin University, Southeast University, and Sichuan University—had set up intelligent replies for public health emergencies covering issues like delayed opening and book returns .
- (3) **Monotonous Online Reading Activities:** Most online reading activities adopted a “co-reading” format with libraries publishing book lists and unidirectional output, lacking interactive elements and reading guidance. Collaborations with third parties produced overlapping content like English speaking contests and reading check-in activities with few personalized customizations.
- (4) **Inadequate Attention to Psychological Counseling:** Only 55.6% of libraries promoted mental health through epidemic-related literature, 5.56% helped readers verify information to face the pandemic rationally, 8.3% attempted to communicate with readers through online activities to relieve anxiety, and only one library collaborated with psychology professors to provide online counseling .

4.2 Optimization Strategies

Based on the analysis, university libraries can improve WeChat public platform services and remote service quality through enhanced content planning, personalized services, intelligent Q&A, and strengthened psychological counseling.

Libraries should pre-establish remote service frameworks and normalize remote service preparation. The remote service content framework via WeChat public platforms can comprise modules for resource services, borrowing services, read-

ing promotion, online education, and psychological counseling [Figure 2: see original paper].

- (1) **Categorized Digital Resource 推送:** Beyond revealing remotely accessible resources, libraries should attempt subject-based categorized 推送. For example, Shanghai Jiao Tong University Library integrated subject-specific digital resource packages for personalized delivery. Categorized 推送 avoids homogeneous content and improves service timeliness.
- (2) **Featured Borrowing Services:** When physical libraries cannot operate during public health emergencies, libraries can provide on-campus book delivery services. Under intellectual property protections, they can also develop digital borrowing services for textbooks and other resources to meet faculty and student needs.
- (3) **Enriched Online Activity Content and Formats:** Beyond book recommendations, libraries should leverage internet platforms to develop interactive online activities such as reading salons, human libraries, cultural lecture series, and online exhibitions. Remote interaction enhances activity engagement and satisfies readers' communication needs.
- (4) **Enhanced Online Education and Psychological Counseling:** Libraries should fully utilize professional librarians to develop remote education programs alongside third-party lectures. Beyond information literacy education, they should add humanities lectures to build cultural confidence and alleviate anxiety. As crucial information hubs, libraries should integrate reliable pandemic information and collaborate with relevant units to provide online psychological counseling.
- (5) **Improved Intelligent Q&A and Reader Feedback:** Libraries should utilize WeChat's auto-reply functions or third-party products to develop intelligent Q&A capabilities, helping readers quickly access information while collecting user concerns to facilitate platform improvement.

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Yu Mengqian: Research positioning, framework design, initial draft writing and revision;

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Zhang Yuhan: Literature collection and paper review;
Yang Jiayan: Literature collection and organization.

The Current Situation and Strategy of Remote Service of WeChat Public Platform in University Libraries in Public Health Emergencies: Taking 36 “Double First-Class” Class A University Libraries as Examples

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] This paper analyzes the current situation of remote service of university libraries through WeChat public platform, discusses remote service strategy of university libraries in response to public health emergencies, especially in the current special period of the COVID-19 epidemic, and provides reference for university libraries to carry out the remote service of WeChat public platform. [Method/process] Through the investigation and analysis of the WeChat data of 36 “Double First-Class” university libraries, this paper analyzed the current situation, main service contents and existing problems of remote service carried out by university libraries through WeChat public platform, and put forward corresponding optimization strategies. [Result/conclusion] WeChat has become the important platform for university libraries in remote service in the new media environment. The university libraries should make the emergency service plan. When there is a public health emergency, it should focus on resource guarantee, service guarantee, online education of readers, etc. to provide strong support for teaching, scientific research and personnel training.

Keywords: public health emergency; university library; WeChat public platform; remote service

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

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