

## Academic Consciousness, Self-Reflection, and Self-Reliance of LIS Scholars in the New Era: Postprint of a Book Review on “Knowledge Science Studies”

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To achieve a renewed understanding of the content and ideas of the book “Knowledge Science Research”, and to reflect on the academic consciousness formed and demonstrated by LIS scholars in the scientific research process. [Method/Process] Conducting speculative, comparative thinking and inductive analysis of the literature. [Results/Conclusion] “Knowledge Science Research” is a systematic scientific interpretation of social practice activities centered on knowledge and knowledge resources, guided by the “Grand Academic View”; it also holds that library and information science will ultimately be oriented toward “knowledge”. The book embodies the academic self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-reliance of LIS scholars, and its advocated and practiced “Grand Academic View” can provide reference for disciplinary development.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

Opening *Research on Knowledge Science* (Ke Ping, 2017), one might be surprised: an academic monograph elaborating on knowledge science from a broad disciplinary perspective was actually authored by a scholar from library and information science (LIS). Indeed, when LIS has grown accustomed to drawing nourishment from other disciplines, we (as researchers and readers) may tend to question research that exceeds conventional boundaries: Is this something we should be doing? In my view, Mr. Ke Ping’s academic journey—from “bibliography,” which he pursued when first entering the LIS field, to “information management” during his academic development, and finally to “knowledge and culture in the public domain” in his mature period—may well provide an answer to this “ought” question. Here, I attempt to use *Research on Knowledge Science*

and the characteristics of academic consciousness it embodies as an example to articulate and advocate a position: LIS scholars in the new era must consciously reflect upon their own academic consciousness, continuously strive for academic independence and output, rather than merely absorbing and relying on experiences from other disciplines and countries. Therefore, this essay represents both a renewed understanding of *Research on Knowledge Science* and its ideas, and my own attempt to outline and reflect upon the academic consciousness formed and demonstrated by LIS scholars, with Mr. Ke Ping as a typical representative. It may also be considered my own conscious reflection.

## 2. A Macro Academic View from “Bibliography” to “Knowledge Science”

Disciplinary research emphasizes both specialization and integration. *Research on Knowledge Science* integrates relevant research areas concerning knowledge and knowledge activities from a technical perspective, seeking to conduct systematic exploration of this field, form a preliminary disciplinary framework and content system, and thereby become a program for further deepening research in this domain. The macro academic view of *Research on Knowledge Science* is first reflected in its research purpose. As the author states in the preface, “Today’s knowledge science... refers to an emerging comprehensive science about knowledge and knowledge activities, elevating past research on individual areas of knowledge or issues related to knowledge economy, knowledge management, knowledge engineering, and knowledge technology to a higher integrated level to solve complex theoretical and technical problems” [1]. By linking “library science” and “knowledge science” through “knowledge,” the author both breaks through the limitations of the original discipline and provides an alternative possibility for its development. This is an exploration based on thinking about the mission of disciplinary development.

The macro academic view of *Research on Knowledge Science* is also reflected in its research content. The book’s structural system clearly embodies the “macro” nature of its content, which can be summarized as “point-chain-system.” “Knowledge and knowledge resources” constitute the point, forming the basis of the book’s discussion. The author’s definition of the concept of “knowledge” begins with an exploration of terminology, presenting readers with a relatively complete and multi-dimensional conceptual map. On the basis of self-reflection, the author proposes that “knowledge is the sum total of human understanding of natural and social phenomena and laws, as well as the spiritual wealth formed on this basis” [1]. The concept of “knowledge resources” further embodies the author’s macro academic view, proposing that “knowledge resources refer to all resources related to knowledge, including knowledge, knowledge workers, knowledge tools, and knowledge activities” [1]. This concept demonstrates value in constructing a new theoretical system for library science and can further become the main concept for the future growth of knowledge science.

On the basis of “knowledge and knowledge resources,” the author forms a

main content chain through “major knowledge activities,” including knowledge technology and engineering, knowledge organization, knowledge dissemination, knowledge management and services, and knowledge innovation. In this chain, knowledge technology and engineering are the foundation, knowledge organization is the prerequisite, and knowledge dissemination, management, services, and innovation are the main knowledge-centered practical activities. This content chain basically reflects the content of knowledge-centered practical activities and forms a theoretical and practical 呼应 with the concept of “knowledge resources.” Finally, the author adds content on basic theories and the knowledge environment, enabling the book’s content to constitute a three-dimensional system. We do not recommend understanding this system as a disciplinary system; it is more appropriate to view it as a systematic induction and positioning of existing content. In this system, discussions about knowledge and knowledge resources, as well as basic theories and scientific communities, form the foundation of the system, providing rational explanations for the existence of other content; the 梳理 of knowledge environment content provides environmental analysis for the existence of the content system, making it an open system that interacts with the external environment; the knowledge practice chain, including knowledge technology and engineering, knowledge organization, knowledge dissemination, knowledge management and services, and knowledge innovation, constitutes the main body of the system, with knowledge innovation further echoing the ultimate goal of knowledge existence—innovation.

Notably, the “macro” in “macro academic view” is first not about being grandiose without substance; it has the logical relationship of “point-chain-system” and the logical basis of “knowledge and knowledge resources.” On the other hand, the purpose of the “macro academic view” is not only about the “small self (library and information science),” but also about developing the “big self (knowledge science)” while simultaneously finding another path for the small self. This should be considered a higher-level consideration.

### **3. The Academic Path from “Bibliographic Intelligence” to “Knowledge and Culture”**

Since we have observed that “macro academic view” and “knowledge as the basis” are two major characteristics of Mr. Ke Ping’s academic path, what transformations has “knowledge as the basis” undergone in his academic development? During the bibliography research period, “bibliographic intelligence” was the main object of study—this was micro-level, specific research that remained within the field of library science, focusing on paper documents. During the “knowledge management” period, “knowledge and knowledge resources in various institutions” began to become the new focus, belonging to meso-level research that started to break free from the limitations of library institutions and library science, focusing on diverse knowledge activities in different social institutions. In the “knowledge science” stage, knowledge and knowledge activities at the macro level were identified as the research object, and at this point,

the research had transcended the boundaries of library science, attempting new disciplinary knowledge exploration and providing feedback to previous research. In his “culture” research stage (focusing on library culture and public cultural services), Mr. Ke Ping further considered “knowledge and knowledge activities” within the social environment, treating public cultural services as a form and carrier of knowledge services, which represents continued exploration on the academic path of “knowledge as the basis.”

#### 4. Understanding and Reflection

*Research on Knowledge Science* is the result of Professor Ke Ping’s years of exploration. Objectively speaking, as a monograph on knowledge science research authored by a researcher in the LIS field, this book may have its shortcomings; but this is precisely the charm of scientific research—it always has space for our continued efforts. What should we value? This is the question I pondered during my second systematic reading after an initial scattered reading, and I attempt to express my personal understanding through this brief review.

First, academic research should express scholars’ conscious thinking about problems, which stems from a sense of responsibility toward the discipline and social practice issues. Observing *Research on Knowledge Science* and the author’s previous academic achievements, we can strongly feel the responsibility and enthusiasm for consciously conducting research for disciplinary development. This also sets a firm and clear example for younger researchers.

Second, academic research should be based on scholars’ self-examination of their own research behavior, which stems from the rigor of scientific research and the cherishing of one’s own research reputation. Whether in early bibliography works, recent works on knowledge management and public library services, or this *Research on Knowledge Science*, the author demonstrates continuous reflection and improvement on his own research. For example, when discussing the definition of the concept of knowledge in *Research on Knowledge Science*, the author reflects on his previous work, writing: “From the perspective of knowledge science research today, this definition is obviously incomplete... Here, the previous definition of knowledge is further revised and supplemented to form a new knowledge definition...” [1].

Finally, academic research should strive for independence rather than completely relying on borrowing and absorbing existing achievements; it should actively attempt to become an academic output entity. *Research on Knowledge Science* embodies this point. The author writes in the book’s postscript: “This book began in 2004. On the one hand, years of exploration in library and information management gradually focused on the knowledge domain... However, the difficulty faced was the lack of knowledge science works with LIS characteristics in China... It was precisely this situation that gave rise to the idea of writing a monograph on knowledge science.” Simple and plain words contain the author’s strong courage to face difficulties for the sake of academic independence.

Finally, I cannot help but think of the recent identity and survival crisis in LIS caused by environmental and demand changes. The “macro academic view closely connected with society” that Mr. Ke Ping has consistently practiced may provide a solution path that fits the problems of China’s LIS discipline and profession. Once again, I pay tribute to the pioneering LIS scholars who have faced difficulties head-on.

## References

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] This paper makes a consideration on the text and the thoughts of *Research on Knowledge Science*. [Method/process] A speculation and a comparative study are used. [Result/conclusion] A systematic explanation on social practices of human’s knowledge and knowledge resources is the main purpose of this book of which main methodology is macro-research; at the same time, knowledge should be the endpoint of LIS. Academic consciousness, academic examination and academic innovation of librarian are conveyed and should be promoted. The methodology of macro-research may provide a choice for LIS development.

**Keywords:** book review *Research on Knowledge Science* knowledge knowledge resources

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

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