

## Research on the Development of Grassroots Public Reading Spaces in Changsha: A Case Study of He+ Shared Library in Yuhua District (Post-print)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To analyze the construction status of the “He+ Shared Library,” reflect general issues in privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha, and propose optimization recommendations for their sustainable development.

[Method/Process] Through field observation, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and other methods, this study examines the construction status and characteristics of the “He+ Shared Library,” identifying problems such as shortage of professional staff, low space utilization, and singular marketing approaches.

[Results/Conclusion] Optimization recommendations include: establishing an operational management mechanism; strengthening professional staff training; enhancing service accessibility of public reading spaces and diversifying service marketing forms, thereby promoting the healthy development of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha.

### Full Text

## Research on the Development of Privately-Run Public Reading Spaces in Changsha: A Case Study of “Harmony + Shared Library” in Yuhua District

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### Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] This paper analyzes the current construction status of “Harmony + Shared Library” to reflect general issues in privately-run public

reading spaces in Changsha and propose optimization suggestions for their sustainable development. [Method/Process] Through on-site observation, questionnaire surveys, and interviews, the construction status and characteristics of “Harmony + Shared Library” were examined, revealing problems such as shortage of professional personnel, low space utilization rate, and monotonous marketing forms. [Result/Conclusion] Optimization suggestions include: constructing an operation and management mechanism; strengthening professional personnel training; enhancing the accessibility of public reading space services; and enriching service marketing forms to promote the sound development of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha.

**Keywords:** public reading space; privately-run; Changsha City; public cultural service

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Public reading spaces refer to public welfare venues that are independently or jointly established by government, enterprises, social organizations, or individuals within communities, primarily providing knowledge services to the public through literature resources [1]. Currently, China features diverse types and considerable numbers of public reading spaces. Among them, privately-run public reading spaces, as a representative type, have gradually become an important component of the public cultural service system due to their accessibility in time and space, as well as their people-friendly characteristics. This positive trend aligns well with China’s overall advocacy for nationwide reading and the construction of a scholarly society.

### 1.1 Overview of Public Reading Space Research

Current research on public reading spaces mainly focuses on the following themes: (1) **Typology of public reading spaces** [1-4]. For instance, based on founding entities, they can be divided into privately-run, privately-run with government assistance, and government-run with private assistance; according to reading needs, they can be categorized into professional reading spaces and interest-based reading spaces; and based on reading duration, they can be classified as long-duration or short-term (instant) reading spaces. (2) **Value of public reading spaces** [5-8]. Scholars argue that the emergence of public reading spaces represents a transformation and upgrading compatible with the public cultural service system, enhancing the service efficiency of public libraries, based on their internal and external characteristics. (3) **Case studies of public reading spaces** [9-16]. Examples include Beijing’s One-Way Street Library, Shanghai’s “Wo Jia Study,” and Hefei’s “Yue Study Room.”

With government promotion, social forces have actively participated in constructing the public cultural service system. From a long-term development perspective, the “government-society cooperation” model of public reading spaces will gradually play a leading role. However, it is undeniable that the traditional privately-run type will not be replaced in the history of public reading space

development.

## **1.2 Driving Factors for the Development of Privately-Run Public Reading Spaces**

The development of privately-run public reading spaces requires joint driving forces from multiple parties. Based on current research findings, these driving factors can be divided into three categories:

### **1.2.1 Growing Public Demand for Cultural Consumption**

With increasing material living standards, public demand for spiritual fulfillment has also grown rapidly. Traditional reading spaces represented by libraries can no longer fully meet readers' changing demands in knowledge acquisition. Conventional public libraries have experienced varying degrees of misalignment with reader needs in terms of service hours, coverage scope, and service environment. Therefore, the significance of public reading space construction extends beyond knowledge dissemination to become a venue for public spiritual exchange. The privately-run type of public reading space can deeply explore public spiritual needs and is thus significant in promoting cultural heritage and constructing the social cultural system.

### **1.2.2 Industry Self-Renewal Needs**

Privately-run public reading spaces originated from the transformation and exploration of urban private independent bookstores in China. Affected by rising rents, personnel costs, taxes, the popularity of e-books, and online book purchasing, urban private independent bookstores entered a significant depression period starting in 2007, with over 10,000 bookstores closing nationwide by 2011 [1, 17]. The industry believes that the decline of urban private independent bookstores stems not only from the rise of online bookstores and electronic books but also from single traditional business models. Consequently, some bookstores have achieved “breakthroughs” through business transformation, actively catering to public needs in location, service content, and space design, and creating mixed business models of “books + cultural creativity + catering.” This evolution has made them a fundamental form in the urban public cultural service system and helped traditional urban independent bookstores find the correct path for industry self-renewal.

### **1.2.3 Government Top-Level Design**

Since 2014, Premier Li Keqiang has mentioned “advocating nationwide reading and building a scholarly society” for eight consecutive years in government work reports [18]. In July 2020, the 19th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 13th Hunan Provincial People's Congress passed the “Hunan Province Implementation Measures for the Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People's Republic of China” [19], which stipulates that governments at all levels and relevant departments should promote nationwide reading, improve reading facilities, provide reading services, and guide citizens to develop good reading habits. Government top-level design has provided policy support for the devel-

opment of privately-run public reading spaces. The participation of social forces in privately-run public reading spaces has, to some extent, solved the dilemma of public reading service supply, enhanced the accessibility of reading services in terms of time and space, and achieved overall improvement in service quality.

## 2. Development Context of Privately-Run Public Reading Spaces in Changsha

Changsha, the political, economic, cultural, scientific, and commercial center of Hunan Province, located in the lower reaches of the Xiangjiang River, has cultivated Hunan culture characterized by “practical application and inclusiveness” and the Changsha spirit of “worldly concern and pioneering courage.” In 2015, the “Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a Modern Public Cultural Service System” issued by the General Office of the Hunan Provincial Committee of the CPC and the General Office of the Hunan Provincial People’s Government encouraged and guided social forces to participate in constructing the public cultural service system, establishing and improving the government procurement mechanism for public cultural services from social forces. The document also called for enriching mass cultural life and deeply carrying out the “Scholarly Hunan · Nationwide Reading” campaign to promote reading in government agencies, campuses, enterprises, communities, families, and military camps [20].

As one of the first national demonstration zones for the public cultural service system, Changsha has made beneficial explorations in privately-run public reading spaces. Numerous enterprises, social organizations, and even individuals have actively explored public reading space construction with relevant policy support, establishing a series of privately-run public reading spaces such as Desiqin Bookstore, Dangdang Meixi Academy, Zhijian Bookstore, HOME Study Room, Peirong Study Room, and Yuhua District’s “Harmony + Shared Library.” Among them, Yuhua District’s “Harmony + Shared Library” has achieved initial success through its geographical advantages and innovative “shared” service concept, becoming a successful case of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha.

On February 28, 2021, Wu Guiying, member of the Standing Committee of the Provincial Party Committee, Vice Governor of the Provincial Government, and Secretary of the Changsha Municipal Party Committee, conducted an in-depth investigation of “Harmony + Shared Library” during her research in Yuhua District, pointing out that its service concept should be used as a reference to better meet people’s higher spiritual and cultural needs [21]. On March 22, 2021, Liu Dan, Vice President of the Provincial Party School, and his delegation visited “Harmony + Shared Library” for exchange and learning, noting that its operation model is highly worthy of promotion and hoping to expand this coverage model to more communities and platforms in the future, making greater contributions to improving the quality of the entire population and promoting the construction of Hunan Province’s public cultural service system [22]. “Harmony

+ Shared Library” has become a cultural 名片 (calling card) of Changsha City.

Under market mechanisms, the government pursues maximization of public interests, while social capital seeks the highest capital returns. As a privately-run public reading space fundamentally based on public welfare, “Harmony + Shared Library” can achieve a balanced game between public welfare and profitability. This makes it not only an excellent example of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha but also provides inspiration for the future development of public reading spaces. Selecting it as the research object of this paper is both unique and representative.

### 3. Investigation and Analysis of “Harmony + Shared Library” in Yuhua District

This paper takes “Harmony + Shared Library” as a case study, conducting research through questionnaire surveys and field investigations. It examines six aspects: location, construction entity, internal functional zoning, resource construction, service forms, and service effectiveness, combined with on-site interviews for in-depth analysis of its construction achievements.

#### 3.1 Introduction to “Harmony + Shared Library” in Yuhua District

Among the many types of libraries in Changsha, “Harmony + Shared Library,” founded in 2018, is a rising star among privately-run public reading spaces, located in the Guitang River Park. The library made a bold attempt at “opening with an empty library,” calling on the public to share their favorite books in a purely public welfare manner and write their insights on the title page to exchange souls with readers through books. It aims to read a book with warmth, gather a group of interesting people, and build a shared platform for all citizens. It has initiated the “Reader Convention” to the whole society: love the country, love home, love oneself, lifelong learning, self-management, and share an interesting life with you. “Harmony + Shared Library” advocates book sharing, nationwide reading, and joint participation, aiming to become a comprehensive library integrating reading, training, exhibitions, reader salons, and forums. This new service model of book sharing has attracted numerous readers, realizing the public welfare circulation of books through reader participation, strengthening exchanges between readers and between readers and the library, representing an effective attempt by “Harmony + Shared Library” to promote nationwide reading.

Founded on July 1, 2018, “Harmony + Shared Library” was jointly built by Hunan China Tobacco Industry Co., Ltd., Bank of Communications Hunan Branch, Tianxia Harmony Academy, and Changsha Yuhua District Yiyouhui Public Welfare Promotion Association, among others. As a privately-run public reading space fundamentally based on public welfare, how can the profit-seeking nature of some sponsoring institutions be balanced with the public welfare nature of the reading space? Through an on-site interview with the operation manager

Mr. S, the author learned that the main investors—Hunan China Tobacco Industry Co., Ltd. and Bank of Communications Hunan Branch, as well-known enterprises in Hunan Province—are driven by social responsibility to jointly build a public reading space fundamentally based on public welfare. Although this public reading space construction does not generate capital returns for the enterprises, the social value created by “Harmony + Shared Library” far exceeds capital returns. The founding entities’ spiritual aspirations are satisfied by “Harmony + Shared Library,” which in turn secures operational funding. Daily operation and management are handled by the Yiyohui Public Welfare Promotion Association, including personnel training, event hosting, infrastructure maintenance, and reading promotion. Library staff consist of Yiyohui personnel and recruited volunteers (“Harmony Readers”), making it a typical privately-run public reading space. The overall strength, participation enthusiasm, and professionalism of construction entities and operators directly or indirectly affect the development of public reading spaces.

### 3.2 Investigation Implementation Process

This investigation employed a combination of questionnaire surveys, on-site interviews, and field investigations. The author conducted field investigations on December 6, 12, and 16, 2020, examining aspects such as location layout, internal functional zoning, and service forms and content of “Harmony + Shared Library.” On December 16, the author interviewed operation manager Mr. S, three volunteers, and randomly selected 30 readers, conducting both interviews and questionnaire surveys. The interview outlines and questionnaires included multi-dimensional questions about the library’s construction entity, resource utilization effectiveness, service effectiveness, and library satisfaction.

### 3.3 Analysis of Investigation Results

#### 3.3.1 Location

Location is crucial for public reading spaces, with basic requirements including convenient transportation, elegant environment, dense population flow, and community distribution [23]. Through on-site visits, the author observed that “Harmony + Shared Library” is located on the banks of the Guitang River—the mother river of Yuhua District and the only inner-city river in Changsha (see [Figure 1: see original paper]). In recent years, the Yuhua District government has adhered to the development concepts of innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing, strengthening ecological environment protection and water quality improvement in the Guitang River basin, forming a naturally breathing water ecosystem and exquisite landscape system. Consequently, “Harmony + Shared Library” has been endowed with high economic and cultural value, becoming a beautiful place for people to share reading time and healthy lives.

#### 3.3.2 Construction Entity

The main investor, Bank of Communications Hunan Branch, has long been

committed to cultural integration-based cooperation with Hunan China Tobacco Industry Co., Ltd. for mutual prosperity. As the only financial enterprise among the library's founding entities, it proposed the concept of "Harmony + Financial Ecosystem," created the "Harmony and Sincerity Together" brand, and provided product support and strategic advice for the library's WeChat public account and mini-program development. The main operator, Yuhua District Yiyouhui Public Welfare Promotion Association, is a community public welfare platform jointly created by many caring individuals, with public welfare creativity as its core competitiveness and cultural inheritance as its core content, integrating the "Harmony Culture" into the shared library's construction concept. Diversified construction entities can better leverage operational advantages, maximize the library's public welfare nature, and further create an excellent cultural 名片 (calling card) for Changsha.

### 3.3.3 Internal Functional Zoning and Space Layout

"Harmony + Shared Library" has two floors, with exterior design featuring log-colored doors and unique glass display windows. The first floor features a high-ceiling design, with a solid wood book island at the center surrounded by carefully selected bestsellers and new book recommendations. The first floor is divided into four spaces: Reading Space, Parent-Child Space, Creative Space, and Cultural Creativity Coffee Bar (see [Figure 2: see original paper]). Notably, there is a "Harmony - Shared Ecology Tree" in the first-floor lobby, with each leaf representing the library's 大大小小的共建方 (large and small co-construction partners), such as "Ximalaya FM," "Fandeng Reading Club," "Yanke," "Furong Scholar," "Youyou Town," and "Yuhua Women's Reading Club." In the interview, Mr. S expressed that "Harmony + Shared Library" has planted a shared seed in the soil of hope, using internal drive to invite more partners to join this public welfare cause. He firmly believes this ecology tree will flourish and thrive endlessly. The second floor encompasses four functional areas: Harmony + Lecture Hall, Fun Reading Space, Shared Space, and Meditation Space. The library's clear functional zoning and combination of dynamic and static areas attract numerous readers to this lakeside library to enjoy time for self-dialogue.

### 3.3.4 Resource Construction and Utilization

The resource sharing method of "Harmony + Shared Library" differs from traditional libraries. All books in "Harmony + Shared Library" are shared by caring individuals. According to statistics, since its opening, the library has received hundreds of thousands of books shared from across the country. Due to the large number of books and the lack of a mature book warehousing system, books are roughly divided into six categories: culture and art, spiritual growth, science and technology, parent-child reading, economic development, and general books.

In terms of resource utilization, "Harmony + Shared Library" mainly relies on its WeChat public account and embedded mini-program. The public account has three main directories and 13 subdirectories (see ). The mini-program's main sections include Book List, Sharing, Borrowing, and Harmony Coin Mall. The

“Book List” section recommends 13 selected book lists for readers’ reference. The Sharing and Borrowing modules are primarily used for readers to share and borrow books. Notably, sharing books does not incur any fees; readers simply need to scan the book’s barcode in the “Sharing” module to complete the process. Borrowing books requires a deposit of 69 yuan (refundable anytime), after which readers can scan the QR code at the bottom of the book in the “Borrowing” module. Returning books can be completed by administrators scanning the QR code at the bottom of the book. This new borrowing and returning rule not only enhances reader participation but also improves reading enthusiasm, representing a beneficial attempt.

### 3.3.5 Service Forms and Content

“Harmony + Shared Library” operates from 10:00 to 20:30, with special holiday opening hours announced through its WeChat public account. The library is free and open to all groups. Service content includes: (1) **Borrowing services**, providing book reading and QR code-based shared borrowing to all public; (2) **Space services**, providing reading spaces, cultural spaces, and public leisure spaces; (3) **Reading promotion services**, with Yiyouhui currently operating four public welfare sectors: environmental friends, traditional Chinese culture dissemination, community service, and youth development attention. Leveraging the library’s advantages, it has created numerous signature activities such as Youth Knowledge-Action Training Camp, Harmony + Nature Reading School, Harmony Reader Growth Salon, Three Morning Meetings, Public Welfare Parent Classroom, and Reading Club; (4) **Information services**, allowing users to learn about newly arrived books and register for activities through the WeChat public account; (5) **Special group services**, providing rich public welfare services for minors, the elderly, and socially vulnerable groups; and (6) **Convenience services**, offering free hot water, cultural creativity coffee and tea, desserts, and wireless network.

### 3.3.6 Simple Statistics of Daily Service Data

On December 12, 2020 (Saturday) from 10:00 to 20:00, the author counted the number of on-site users, gender, age groups, and in-library behavior types at “Harmony + Shared Library” every hour. Due to it being a weekend, the average number of visitors was relatively high, with an average of 20 readers. Peak hours were concentrated between 14:00-16:30, with a maximum of 37 people, while fewer people came in the morning and evening. The gender structure of readers was basically balanced. Many parents brought their children for parent-child reading, making youth and children the main reader groups, with proportions of middle-aged, teenage, and elderly groups being relatively close.

The author roughly categorized readers’ in-library behaviors into: reading, self-study, communication, and leisure. Reading includes browsing, borrowing, and returning books; self-study includes studying, working, and taking online classes; communication includes gathering and chatting and participating in activities; leisure includes using mobile phones, reading and exchanging, and resting. Through observation, readers engaged in reading accounted for the

largest proportion, averaging 62%, followed by self-study users at 31%, while leisure and communication accounted for only 4% and 3% respectively.

## 4. Construction Achievements and Shortcomings of “Harmony + Shared Library” in Yuhua District

### 4.1 Construction Achievements

#### 4.1.1 Upholding the Public Welfare Nature

Public welfare is the fundamental attribute of public reading spaces. As a successful case of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha, “Harmony + Shared Library” has consistently adhered to the principle of public welfare. Unlike independent bookstores and other types of reading spaces that adopt market-oriented operation models, “Harmony + Shared Library” provides free book browsing, borrowing, and other services to the public, while also providing knowledge and information acquisition services, compensating for the shortcomings of insufficient public library quantity and inadequate service radius. Privately-run public welfare reading spaces provide important supply channels and generate factual public welfare benefits [24].

Since its opening nearly three years ago, Mr. S stated that the library has received nearly 100,000 readers, held 337 public welfare and reading activities, and connected with 52 government departments, enterprises, and social organizations for co-construction. Currently, over 500 people provide volunteer services for the library, and 1,468 teenagers have conducted social practice there. Moreover, “Harmony + Shared Library” continuously listens to readers’ opinions, regularly opening a “Director’s Mailbox” column on its WeChat public account to humbly accept readers’ criticism and suggestions. Allowing readers to participate in library construction can continuously increase their sense of responsibility and participation, serving as a powerful driving force for the library’s continuous improvement. Random interview results show that readers strongly approve of the library’s public welfare nature, and “Harmony + Shared Library” has even become a “cultural 名片 (calling card)” of Changsha City, continuously permeating the city’s cultural quality.

#### 4.1.2 Enhancing Reading Convenience

The cultural quality of residents determines the sustainable development of a city, and the improvement of residents’ cultural quality cannot be separated from the city’s public cultural services and nationwide reading promotion [25]. “Harmony + Shared Library” provides knowledge services that greatly broaden people’s cultural and knowledge horizons. In terms of location, it is situated in densely populated residential areas, providing convenience for nearby reading and enhancing people’s initiative for active reading. The library’s beautiful environment and wide array of books provide a brand-new cultural atmosphere and personalized “pleasure reading” space. New borrowing and returning rules improve readers’ reading efficiency, while functional zoning and space division change the monotonous reading atmosphere of traditional libraries, making read-

ing an enjoyable experience.

In the author's on-site random interviews regarding satisfaction with "Harmony + Shared Library's" service quality, 89% of readers expressed great satisfaction and 10% expressed satisfaction. Regarding satisfaction with service convenience, 96% expressed great satisfaction and 3% expressed satisfaction. "Harmony + Shared Library" provides a brand-new reading destination for residents living and working in the surrounding area.

#### **4.1.3 Playing Multiple Spatial Functions**

As a privately-run public reading space, "Harmony + Shared Library" overlaps with traditional public libraries in function and service but also has its unique features. In terms of development model, "Harmony + Shared Library" has continuously practiced innovation, ultimately exploring a library development defined by the "sharing" concept. With book borrowing as the main function and supplemented by activities such as Youth Knowledge-Action Training Camp, Harmony + Nature Reading School, Harmony Reader Growth Salon, Three Morning Meetings, Public Welfare Parent Classroom, and Reading Club, it has become a diversified library. This development model has gained readers' recognition, allowing them to share books and insights, acquire knowledge, improve expression abilities, enrich life experiences, and empower their own lives. "Harmony + Shared Library" has become a "social university." Unlike school education, social education has broader characteristics, which public reading spaces well embody [26]. "Harmony + Shared Library" not only provides reading spaces but also spaces for ideological exchange and public welfare leisure, serving as both a guide for readers and a spiritual resting place for busy people.

#### **4.1.4 Improving Changsha's Public Cultural Service System Construction**

The introduction of social forces in supplying public cultural services has broken the government's traditional construction and inherent management system of public cultural undertakings [16]. The construction of "Harmony + Shared Library" has effectively achieved the vertical expansion of Changsha's public reading spaces, expanded the scope of public cultural service supply, and essentially promoted "streamlining administration and delegating power" in the public cultural service field. Through public reading space construction, more social forces have been attracted to participate in Changsha's public cultural service construction, not only stimulating the cultural vitality of private enterprises, organizations, and even individuals but also alleviating pressures on funding, personnel, and resources. As small arteries and capillaries in the modern public cultural service system, public reading spaces play a key role in building "a scholarly aroma everywhere in Star City," further broadening the exploration path of Changsha's public cultural system and empowering the improvement of Changsha's public cultural service system construction.

## 4.2 Construction Shortcomings

While “Harmony + Shared Library” provides a good model for new public reading spaces in Changsha, like Desiqin 24-hour Bookstore, Dangdang Meixi Bookstore, and other privately-run public reading spaces, it faces common issues such as low capital linkage, insufficient government support, and lack of overall management. The author’s field investigation of “Harmony + Shared Library” also revealed some specific problems requiring urgent solutions.

### 4.2.1 Shortage of Professional Personnel

Since the main operation entity of “Harmony + Shared Library” is Changsha Yuhua District Yiyohui Public Welfare Promotion Association, library staff are composed of Yiyohui staff and recruited volunteers (“Harmony Readers”). Currently, the library needs management personnel, especially those majoring in library and information science, but in practice, recruitment does not reflect professional requirements. According to management feedback, current staff lack strong professionalism and their business capabilities need improvement. The shortage of professional personnel may lead to low capacity in providing public cultural services and inability to properly handle professional affairs and emergencies. Tasks such as literature resource management, packaging, statistics, WeChat public account operation, and library hardware equipment maintenance all require professional personnel. Long-term shortage of professional talent will inevitably lead to low construction levels of public reading spaces and inability to maintain good development momentum.

### 4.2.2 Low Space Utilization Rate

Through on-site observation and random reader interviews, the author found that the internal space layout of “Harmony + Shared Library” has not been optimized. Although the library occupies a large area of about 930 square meters across two floors, it has not established more functional zones such as open, private, or special group-specific areas. Preliminary estimates indicate a space utilization rate of about 60%. For instance, the library’s seating and bookshelves are interspersed, which, while bringing readers closer to books, creates interference between book seekers and readers, reducing space utilization efficiency. Although the first and second floors have functional definitions, except for the parent-child reading space, other spaces have no substantial differences. For safety and book placement reasons, children are prohibited from entering the second floor alone, but without dedicated supervision, children frequently access the second floor, causing disturbance to adult readers there. Therefore, it cannot meet the usage needs of different groups, reducing the library’s attractiveness to some extent. Additionally, daily service data statistics show that space utilization indeed needs improvement.

### 4.2.3 Monotonous Marketing Channels

Public reading spaces require appropriate marketing methods for promotion. The author found during visits that “Harmony + Shared Library’s” existing marketing methods are limited to its WeChat public account and word-of-

mouth among surrounding residents. Many readers are not even aware of the library's public welfare nature, let alone its reader activities and growth salons. Monotonous marketing channels limit the beneficiary groups and are not conducive to public reading spaces understanding community reading needs or receiving feedback for operational improvement [27].

#### **4.2.4 Leisure Service Quality Needs Improvement**

“Harmony + Shared Library” provides readers with free hot water, cultural creativity coffee and tea, desserts, and wireless network services. However, since surrounding catering services are beyond a 0.5km radius and the library currently only sells a few types of coffee and cakes, readers who spend long periods reading cannot access simple meals to satisfy hunger. Additionally, since readers cannot guarantee they will be free from force majeure factors affecting timely book returns during the borrowing period, and children and elderly groups have low penetration rates of smart electronic devices, they cannot borrow or return books effectively.

## **5. Optimization Strategies for the Development of Privately-Run Public Reading Spaces in Changsha**

While “Harmony + Shared Library” has its particularities, it can also reflect general issues in the development of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha to some extent. The author believes that development paths can be optimized from four aspects: operation and management mechanisms, professional personnel training, accessibility of public reading space services, and marketing forms.

### **5.1 Constructing Public Reading Space Operation and Management Mechanisms**

As an effective component of the public cultural service system, the development of privately-run public reading spaces should proceed under sound management mechanisms, mainly including constructing multi-participation mechanisms, service procurement mechanisms, contract management mechanisms, incubation and correction mechanisms, and “Internet +” mechanisms [28]. Since the development of privately-run public reading spaces requires continuous support from social forces, the government should strictly control market access conditions and assessment standards for social forces when guiding construction, establishing a special “measurement system” for effective constraints to make social force participation more orderly and standardized. Consideration could be given to incorporating construction costs of privately-run public reading spaces into the funding guarantee system for local library branch systems or establishing special funds to ensure their development. Funding guarantees and support can help cover basic costs such as environmental facilities and book resources, ensuring balanced development of public reading spaces.

The government can introduce third-party evaluation systems to effectively su-

pervise the operation process of privately-run public reading spaces. Third-party evaluation entities are not limited and can include professional institutions such as library societies or civil organizations like social groups. Excellent privately-run public reading spaces should receive policy and funding support, such as tax reduction and exemption incentives, to stimulate internal motivation for public reading space construction and enhance the enthusiasm of social forces for extensive participation. Additionally, reasonable incentive measures should be formulated, such as increasing spiritual incentives for social forces to promote their enthusiasm for participating in public cultural service construction [29]. The government should actively guide public opinion, stimulate social forces' sense of social responsibility and sharing, and gradually condense Changsha's spontaneous cultural atmosphere.

## 5.2 Strengthening Professional Personnel Training

Staff in privately-run public reading spaces have multiple identities. They are not only responsible for daily activity implementation but also serve as “walking spokespersons” for the reading space, thus imposing high requirements on their professional quality and comprehensive abilities. Changsha's privately-run public reading spaces are currently in a vigorous development stage, but many staff members are still newcomers to the library or public cultural service industries. Therefore, professional personnel training should be accelerated: First, in terms of talent training, professional forces from public and university libraries can be leveraged to regularly and systematically conduct training programs for public reading space management personnel, especially strengthening professional knowledge guidance and practical training. Second, the talent structure should ensure mobility. Regular cooperation with universities or public libraries can be established to allow professional students or socially renowned individuals to serve as “one-day directors,” using their professional level and social influence to strengthen the bond between public reading spaces and readers. Finally, the government can also conduct top-level design for the professional talent structure of public reading spaces. Currently, there is no major directly related to “public reading space,” making it difficult to recruit professionals related to library and information science. Therefore, policy support can be provided for professional skill accumulation of public reading space staff to guide the construction of more complete service talent structures.

Changsha's privately-run public reading spaces can learn from the volunteer structure of “Harmony + Shared Library,” integrating volunteer services into public cultural services to attract readers of different identities and ages to participate in public reading space construction. The formation of volunteer teams is a source of vitality in privately-run public reading space construction. On the one hand, it can help reduce unnecessary operational expenses; on the other hand, participation from multiple parties can enhance public identity in public reading space construction and achieve multi-governance of public reading spaces.

### 5.3 Improving Service Accessibility

Enriching service content and improving service accessibility are inevitable requirements for the sustainable development of privately-run public reading spaces. Improving service accessibility requires not only upgrading traditional services but also continuous innovation: First, service awareness should be further enhanced. The public welfare attribute of public reading spaces requires staff to integrate self-worth with social value, adhere to a reader-centered service concept, attract reading through environment construction and atmosphere creation, guide reading through reading recommendations, and assist reading through precise services [30], continuously improving service levels to bring readers a good reading experience. Second, service models should be improved in a user demand-oriented manner to provide more humanized services, such as offering mail, renewal, book exchange, and return services in different locations; adding manual borrowing and returning channels for vulnerable groups unable to use digital devices; and developing mini-program search and positioning functions for difficult book-finding situations. Third, service standards should be improved. Privately-run public reading spaces should formulate reasonable service standards based on actual conditions, incorporating reader ratings as an item for evaluating service standards to make formulation more effective and optimize service processes. Finally, service content should be innovated by actively learning from successful public reading space operation cases nationwide, innovating in resource integration, utilization, and information consultation to effectively ensure sustainable development. For example, adding simple meals and dedicated dining areas within public reading spaces can improve service accessibility and maximize service effectiveness.

### 5.4 Creating an “O2O” Marketing Form

Changsha’s privately-run public reading spaces greatly cater to citizens’ diversified reading needs, and their operation and management models have certain replicability. When conducting service marketing, “O2O” (Online to Offline) is an effective form. Specifically: First, enhance online cultural interaction. The government and public reading spaces themselves should actively use WeChat, Weibo, Xuexi Qiangguo, TikTok, Bilibili, official websites, and other channels to strengthen interaction with online readers, using internet technology to broaden public reading service scope and convey cultural value through online content output and cultural interaction. Second, break the offline single model, continuously expand service scope, enrich cultural activity content, unite multiple resources, strengthen the sense of experience and interaction in physical spaces, and create a composite and diversified “Books + N” business model while providing reading services and disseminating knowledge. New technologies such as artificial intelligence AI and VR can be used to continuously innovate reading interaction methods, such as using WeChat mini-programs or other applications to accurately categorize and match corresponding books based on readers’ gender, age, and preferences through big data, building humanized public reading

spaces, optimizing public experience, and enhancing interactivity. Online and offline integrated marketing methods create a more concrete imaginative space for the public, conducive to enhancing their reading experience and more effectively promoting the sustainable and healthy development of public reading spaces.

## Conclusion

Based on theoretical analysis of driving factors for privately-run public reading space development, this paper summarized the development practices of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha, analyzed their construction achievements and shortcomings using Yuhua District's "Harmony + Shared Library" as a case study, and proposed corresponding development strategies. The innovations of this paper lie in: First, in terms of research object, it selected "Harmony + Shared Library"—a privately-run public reading space in Changsha—as the object, focusing on various issues in public reading spaces initiated by social forces. This type of privately-run public reading space fundamentally based on public welfare has its uniqueness compared to profit-oriented privately-run spaces. With the launch of "Harmony + Shared Library" Xiangtan High-tech Branch, this construction model demonstrates strong promotion value. Second, in terms of research methods, it used questionnaires, interviews, and field investigations to collect data, based on which it conducted relatively in-depth research on the development paths of privately-run public reading spaces.

The limitation of this paper is that due to the pure public welfare concept of "Harmony + Shared Library's" construction and operation entities, it has certain differences from other privately-run public reading spaces. Future research should expand the sample size and data sources to conduct more in-depth exploration of privately-run public reading spaces in Changsha.

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#### **Author Contributions:**

Dai Yanqing: Proposed research questions, designed the study, and revised the paper;

Zheng Tong: Collected and analyzed data, and wrote the initial draft.

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

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