

An Exploration of the Current Status, Models, and Future Development Strategies of Themed Library Construction: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The construction of themed libraries constitutes an important component of innovative development in China's library sector. Through nationwide investigation and analysis of the development status of themed libraries, this study explores a library development path with Chinese characteristics, promoting the continuous expansion of the library system and the continuous improvement of service quality. [Method/Process] Based on analyses of the definition and characteristics of themed libraries, as well as the overview of their domestic construction and development, this paper discusses the existing problems in themed library construction and summarizes future development strategies for themed libraries. [Results/Conclusion] Themed libraries have become an integral component of China's main-branch library service system and an important measure for deepening services, requiring vigorous promotion to achieve flourishing development.

Full Text

Theme Library Construction: Current Status, Models, and Future Development Strategies

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Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] Theme library construction constitutes an important component of innovative development in China's library sector. Through investigation and analysis of the national development status of theme libraries, this study explores a development path for libraries with Chinese characteristics,

promoting continuous expansion of the library system and continuous improvement of service quality. [Method/Process] Based on analysis of the definition, characteristics, and domestic construction development overview of theme libraries, this paper discusses existing problems in theme library construction and summarizes future development ideas. [Result/Conclusion] Theme libraries have become an integral part of China's public library main-branch service system and an important measure for deepening services, necessitating vigorous promotion toward flourishing development.

Keywords: public library; theme library; innovative model; national layout

1. The Historical Context of Theme Library Construction

Ranganathan's fifth law of library science—"the library is a growing organism"—has been validated through continuous growth and innovative development in library sectors across both Europe, America, and China. Libraries worldwide have evolved from single-library systems to sprouting branch and theme library communities, with new-generation theme libraries flourishing and presenting numerous successful cases. The New York Public Library system includes theme libraries such as the Library for the Performing Arts and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Seoul's public library system features design libraries, travel libraries, and cooking libraries [1]. China has also witnessed explorations and practices in theme libraries, including Shanghai's Fashion Industry Theme Library and Wenzhou Library's Costume Library.

Representative examples include Hangzhou Library's theme library construction efforts. Monastery libraries in medieval Europe that primarily collected theological books could be considered early precursors to theme libraries. By the early 20th century, scientific research specialization had led to significant development of various professional and specialized libraries. The United States established the Special Libraries Association in 1909, followed by the UK in 1924. In the 21st century, theme libraries have continuously emerged across China, undoubtedly catalyzed by the era's cultural powerhouse construction backdrop.

First, theme libraries address national cultural construction needs. The 18th Party Congress report in 2012 placed the improvement of public cultural service efficiency on the agenda, proposing to consider both basic and diverse cultural needs of the populace while promoting the transformation of public cultural services toward quality services. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, county-level cultural centers and libraries were promoted as hubs for main-branch system construction, achieving integration and interconnectivity of rural and urban community public cultural service resources. In 2018, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established, forming a multi-department collaborative framework to promote cultural-tourism integration development, boosting

transformation and upgrading of both industries while creating vibrant new industrial forms for national cultural heritage development.

Second, theme libraries respond to public cultural life needs. As material living standards improve, people demand higher-quality spiritual and cultural consumption—not merely quantitative increases but qualitative enhancements. Facing broader service groups and multi-level service demands, libraries must adapt accordingly through continuous innovation to better satisfy readers' literature needs and cultural life requirements.

Third, theme libraries support library sector development needs. Economic development drives library sector progress and serves as a source of motivation for continuously innovating service methods. As supplements to comprehensive libraries, theme libraries can compensate for homogenization deficiencies in service objects, literature resources, service content, and service approaches, forming important components of library service systems. Theme library construction represents a crucial means for libraries to provide diversified services and products.

2. Current Development Status and Cases of Theme Library Construction

Beginning in March 2020, this study investigated theme library status through various library homepages, CNKI, online information, and research materials. After six months of survey and statistical analysis, employing clustering comprehensive analysis methods including practice selection, new perspective approaches, and opportunity 线索 methods, we obtained national theme library construction and service status data, presenting representative cases from across China. While the survey statistics are not exhaustive, the overall data content is authentic and reliable, highlighting key points with sufficient evidence to strongly support this research.

2.1 Public Library-Level Theme Library Construction Cases

2.1.1 Shanghai Theme Library Construction Shanghai represents a highly developed region for public libraries in China, with relatively early theme library construction. Most Shanghai theme libraries follow a model where Shanghai Library collaborates with district and street libraries to establish theme branches, while some district libraries co-build with relevant institutions, optimizing resource allocation and conducting reading promotion activities based on regional culture, institutional needs, and audience differences. Shanghai's main-branch system centers on Shanghai Library as the main library, with county/district libraries and university libraries as branches, establishing Shanghai's central library service system from a systematic perspective.

Shanghai's theme library construction demonstrates three characteristics: First,

it combines theme libraries with branch libraries' historical accumulation of characteristic literature and regional cultural features, integrating with branch librarians' professional capabilities. Examples include genealogy literature libraries, cultural celebrity manuscript libraries, finance libraries, and fashion industry theme libraries, ensuring theme libraries have justification for construction, sources of demand, service objects, and development space. Second, it implements a "one-card" book borrowing system, practicing a "borderless" concept to maximize resource co-construction and sharing. Theme libraries not only provide online services such as joint knowledge navigation stations and database queries, but also integrate literature information, digital resources, video-on-demand, exhibition lectures, and network services, achieving information sharing that coexists with tradition and modernity. Third, it emphasizes cooperative system construction among public libraries, university libraries, and specialized libraries, allowing each to play unique roles at different levels. In property management, floating collection management is adopted where literature property rights belong to the purchasing library, but usage rights belong to the entire system, with library card income going to government-designated fiscal accounts. In literature circulation, universal borrowing and returning is implemented. In librarian training, mutual dispatch and phased training are combined. In management systems, a transition from dual-track to integrated main-library management systems is underway.

After years of effort, Shanghai has completed over 20 theme libraries according to incomplete statistics, as shown in Table 1 .

2.1.2 Hangzhou Theme Library Construction Based on initially achieving "full coverage and equalization," Hangzhou's public library service system strives to provide personalized and professional services for readers. Combining local cultural characteristics and citizens' actual needs, Hangzhou fully taps public libraries' professional service capabilities, relying on government support and social forces to actively develop theme branch construction. Since Hangzhou Library established its first theme branch in 2007, it has built 27 theme branches to date, including 11 in 2018-2019 alone, experiencing "blowout" development. The service scope covers 11 districts and counties in Hangzhou, with building area exceeding 20,000 square meters and total collection reaching over 1.1 million volumes [2]. After more than a decade of effort, theme branch construction has achieved scale and gradually developed successful experience, becoming a national model for public library theme branch construction, as shown in Table 2 .

Hangzhou's theme library construction philosophy employs advanced library management concepts, high-end audio-visual equipment, rich collections, and wonderful activities to fully leverage theme libraries' role, aiming to provide community residents within a 3-kilometer radius with a relaxed reading cultural venue and spiritual home for leisure exchange. This represents both an innovation in public cultural services based on Hangzhou's local characteristics

and an enrichment of people's daily cultural life, promoting neighborhood harmony and integration. With prominent service characteristics, Hangzhou has formed a complete theme system with rich theme selections and strong service brands, such as "Health and Wellness Theme Branch," "Poetry Space Branch," and "Film Library," all becoming major platforms for resident exchange and interaction. Hangzhou's theme libraries have been praised as "the warmest reading places" and selected as one of "Hangzhou's Most Quality Experience Points" in the 2020 Hangzhou Citizens Experience Day [3].

Hangzhou's theme library construction features include: First, closely integrating library construction with government urban development planning and related policies. Second, primarily following the main-branch model with flexible and diverse library-building approaches, emphasizing various forms of social cooperation. Third, fully considering environmental-theme compatibility and target user needs in site selection, expanding library service spaces. Fourth, constructing unique collection systems and conducting experiential theme activities. Fifth, ensuring construction conditions, operation methods, service standards, and service effectiveness through institutionalized, standardized, and normalized governance approaches.

2.1.3 Guangzhou Theme Library Construction Guangzhou Library promotes theme library construction and services from legislative, practical, and reader demand perspectives. In 2012, Guangzhou restarted the legislative process for the "Guangzhou Public Library Regulations" and launched "Library City" construction. Article 16 of the "Guangzhou Library City Construction Plan (2015-2020)" stipulates: Encourage libraries at all levels to strengthen collection, organization, and protection of local literature based on regional characteristics, humanistic environment, and industrial advantages, establishing and developing special collections or theme libraries on Lingnan culture, creative design, laws and regulations, animation and games, knowledge economy, and free trade to promote diversified library services [4]. This provides policy support and encouragement for Guangzhou's theme library construction while clarifying future development directions.

Since 2013, Guangzhou has conducted effective explorations in theme library construction, successively establishing in-house "library-within-library" facilities such as Guangzhou Humanities Library, Multicultural Library, and Language Learning Library, while building multiple theme libraries combining regional characteristics, as shown in Table 3 .

These theme libraries demonstrate advantages in regional environment, thematic characteristics, and service functions, contributing to Guangzhou's public cultural undertakings. For example, the Toy Library is Guangzhou Library's parent-child service project integrating Gardner's eight multiple intelligences theory, emphasizing children's multiple intelligences development and promoting healthy parent-child relationships [5]. The Law Branch is a professional branch co-established by Guangzhou Library and Guangzhou Maritime Court,

focusing on law literature to build a special collection center providing research support for legal scholars and meeting public demand for legal literature resources [6]. Additionally, the Haichuang Temple Branch (Buddhist Library), Vanke Urban Experience Center Branch, and Xiyangyang Animation Theme Library constitute the core of Guangzhou's theme libraries, becoming venues for citizen quality cultivation and demonstrating theme library excellence.

2.1.4 Shenzhen Theme Library Construction As a “Global Model City for All-People Reading” and “China’s Most Innovative City,” Shenzhen takes the lead in urban cultural construction, proposing the goal of building a “Library City” and practically promoting the main-branch system. With increasing government investment, continuously strengthened hardware facilities, improved literature support, and deepening unified services, public libraries at all levels have built theme branches deeply integrated into urban neighborhoods, creating Shenzhen scenarios for theme branches [7], as shown in Table 4 .

Shenzhen’s theme library construction features legal guarantees, with the municipal government successively issuing documents including “Implementation Opinions on Promoting Public Library Enhancement Projects in Accordance with the Public Library Law” and “Shenzhen District-Level Cultural Center and Library Main-Branch System Construction Acceptance Standards,” comprehensively promoting integrated main-branch management and improving grassroots library management systems and service environments guided by law. Upholding the philosophy of “service-based library, technology-strengthened library, and culture-innovated library,” Shenzhen leverages the thematic cultural role of the “Library City,” striving to create an important urban 名片 and symbol of “Cultural Shenzhen,” creating wonderful library cases. For example, the Hongfa Temple Library features rich collections and comprehensive services, integrating public library and Buddhist professional library functions into a modern library [8]. The Cultural Creative Park Library creates innovative cultural spaces and builds platforms for ideological and cultural exchange. The Green Low-Carbon Theme Library is China’s first theme library advocating low-carbon living concepts, serving as both advocate and practitioner of “green low-carbon” ideals [8]. Shenzhen emphasizes urban reform, innovation, and leapfrog development, building theme library brands to promote citizen cultivation and enhancement, transforming Shenzhen into a “cultural lighthouse” city.

2.1.5 Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region Theme Library Construction Although theme library construction in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region is not as developed as in Shanghai and Hangzhou, Beijing, as the national political and cultural center, was among the earliest cities to develop theme libraries. According to a December 4, 2003 Beijing Evening News report, Beijing was actively developing small theme libraries featuring social hotspots, with Xicheng, Dongcheng, Chongwen, Chaoyang, and Haidian districts already having considerable scale [9], forming a landscape of theme library construction in the Beijing area.

While the construction scale of theme libraries in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region is not large, government collaboration with civil society organizations has activated grassroots library construction, as shown in Table 5. Beijing's existing theme libraries primarily develop through "library-within-library" and "library-outside-library" forms, with the library-within-library model being more common. Beijing's traditional district-level libraries (Xicheng, Dongcheng, Haidian, Chaoyang, Fengtai, Shijingshan) mostly build subordinate (community, street) theme branches, such as Xicheng District No. 1 Library which governs 12 street libraries [10], generally named after street addresses. Tianjin Binhai New Area has recently built large libraries that have become "internet-famous libraries," with the China-Singapore Friendship Library drawing on Singapore National Library's experience in mobile book borrowing, intelligent shelving robots, and other advanced management systems. Its outdoor book shuttle return system allows readers to quickly return books without leaving their vehicles, becoming a veritable smart library [11].

2.1.6 Theme Library Construction in Other Regions Under national policy guidance and advanced library demonstrations, library construction increasingly develops toward diversification and specialization. Many libraries exploring characteristic services have built series of libraries with different models and themes around local economic development characteristics, urban humanistic history, and cultural hotspots, substantially constituting each city's book fragrance map and cultural landmarks, advancing local brands for national public library theme library construction, as shown in Table 6.

Currently, theme library construction across China is burgeoning with vitality. The Yangtze River Delta region's major libraries are all exploring main-branch systems, having started theme library construction earlier and developing steadily. Provinces and cities like Jiangxi have clear construction goals: in 2014, Jiangxi Province designated 26 pilot units for the first batch of theme libraries, mining specific field expertise topics and services to meet users' personalized needs, such as "Yuzhang Culture Theme Library," "Anyuan Railway and Mine Workers Movement Historical Materials Theme Library," and "Ji'an Red Culture Theme Library," providing the public with literature resources and cultural services featuring distinctive Jiangxi characteristics [12]. Chengdu High-tech Zone plans to build 10 major reading theme blocks with 27 branches, led by Chengdu Library's Giant Panda Theme Branch, guiding Chengdu toward "Book-Fragrant Chengdu" and meeting the masses' personalized and diversified cultural needs [13]. Shaanxi Province's pioneering "Yellow River Cultural Memory Theme Library" is a cultural resource database focusing on Yellow River culture and represents an important cultural asset for Fugu County [14].

These regional theme libraries feature: first, highlighting local cultural characteristics to create unique brands; second, forming characteristic brands into systems to achieve resource co-construction and sharing.

2.2 University Library Theme Library Construction

University libraries are important cultural carriers and educational function institutions, serving as vital venues and bases for promoting university culture and 理应 becoming main forces in transformation development. While striving to meet reader service needs, they should also focus on thematic service goals, designing and creating personalized service spaces with different themes and functions based on resources, technology, space, and service elements. Professional branch libraries established in various university departments are very common, but truly meaningful theme libraries are relatively rare, as shown in Table 7.

Comparatively, university theme library construction continues to develop, with typical cases demonstrating particular 特殊性. For example, Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Li Zhengdao Library is a multifunctional theme library integrating library, archives, museum, art museum, and science museum functions, collecting Li Zhengdao's papers, manuscripts, letters, books, audio, video, and other related materials with cross-complementary literature functions [15]. The Overseas Chinese Literature Information Center primarily collects various overseas Chinese literature, academic research journals, hometown newsletters, community publications, overseas Chinese newspapers, and rare folk documents from the late Qing and Republic periods such as certificates, bills, contracts, overseas Chinese remittance letters, and confessions, forming a treasure trove of overseas Chinese literature information resources [16]. Additionally, Xiamen University's Lin Yutang Memorial Hall, Shenzhen Polytechnic's Automotive Culture Theme Library, and other cases feature prominent themes, contributing to education and social service [17].

3. Theme Library Construction Models and Characteristics

3.1 Theme Library Construction Models

The 2006 “National Cultural Development Plan Outline for the 11th Five-Year Plan” explicitly proposed that county and municipal libraries gradually implement the main-branch system and comprehensively promote it, formally establishing the public library main-branch system as a national cultural development strategy. The 2011 “National Public Cultural Service System Demonstration Zone (Project) Creation Work” launched, promoting the main-branch system nationwide. Led by Hangzhou Library, China has developed distinctive theme library models. Currently, theme libraries mainly follow five construction models.

3.1.1 “Library-Within-Library” Model This model establishes theme libraries within existing library buildings. During library transformation and development, many libraries concentrate theme collections in specific areas,

adding theme zones called “library-within-library.” Examples include Dongguan Library’s “Cantonese Opera Library,” which develops both regional and characteristic literature while forming theme libraries. The library-within-library model transforms existing theme collections or special literature reading rooms without requiring substantial funding. Unified management within the same building is relatively convenient, equivalent to a fully serviced theme reading room. This model primarily concentrates characteristic theme literature resources, implements thematic literature collection management, and provides thematic information services within the unified work scope of the library. It is a widely adopted approach for various library function optimization, particularly space reconstruction [18].

3.1.2 “Library-Outside-Library” Model This model establishes relatively independent theme libraries outside the main library building. Under the guidance of main-branch construction thinking, regional public libraries layout according to local cultural characteristics and literature resource demands. Examples include Hangzhou Library’s “Urban Studies Branch” featuring urban studies collections displayed through “city study rooms,” “special study rooms,” and “characteristic shelves” [19]. Shaanxi Provincial Library has built over 20 theme branches including “Art School Branch,” “Xi’an Prison Branch,” and “New Youth Branch for Juvenile Delinquents,” forming a public library service system covering Xi’an urban areas and greatly expanding the provincial library’s service scope [20]. Compared to the library-within-library model, this model faces greater difficulties in site selection, funding, space, theme resources, and management services, particularly regarding whether target audiences will accept certain themes, all of which become constraints on library-outside-library construction.

3.1.3 “Independent Library” Model This model refers to separate theme libraries that are not affiliated with or subordinate to large main libraries, operating independently. The concept involves building new libraries based on regional cultural characteristics to promote local cultural spirit. For example, Shanghai Pudong New Area’s “Fu Lei Library” is a new library invested in and built by Zhoupu Town Government, located near Fu Lei’s former residence, comprehensively promoting Fu Lei culture and focusing on inheriting Fu Lei’s spirit as the library’s theme. Management services are planned and operated by “Da Yin Book Bureau” (an outsourcing company) under a council-led, socialized operation system, strengthening operational professionalism and service humanization. The library has also established a Zhoupu Fu Lei research expert database, created special funds for Fu Lei cultural research, and built an international exchange platform for Fu Lei culture [12]. Whether in construction quality, thematic characteristics, or management operations, this model has pioneered innovative paths and represents an indispensable model in the theme library system.

3.1.4 “Multi-Party Cooperation” Model Multi-integration refers to cooperation between libraries and cultural institutions, enterprises, public institutions, and various social forces, utilizing multi-party resource complementarity and integrated services to improve the scale and quality of all-people reading services and fulfill public cultural service coverage and popularization guarantees. Models include “public library + public library,” “public library + enterprise,” “public library + research institution,” “library + bookstore,” “library + museum,” “university library + public library,” and “university library + bookstore”—both intra-industry and cross-industry integration. Cases include Shenzhen University Town Library, Ningbo Beilun Library, Henan University of Science and Technology Library, and Daqing Petroleum University Library [21]. Such cooperation is numerous, but content and depth vary significantly, including partial integration, characteristic co-construction, and initial merger followed by separation. Regardless of construction model, any approach that fulfills libraries’ thematic service functions and reading benefits makes practical contributions to all-people reading.

3.1.5 “Comprehensive Integration” Model In recent years, library integration construction has continuously extended in depth and breadth, moving from simple union catalogs, interlibrary loans, and resource co-construction and sharing among similar libraries toward comprehensive cooperative construction between libraries. This represents comprehensive cooperation between partners in service concepts, resource construction, and information services. In 2012, Xiamen Library and Huaxia College jointly established the “Huaxia College Branch,” which networked with Xiamen Library’s main library and district libraries, implementing a unified operation platform, unified reader management, and city-wide universal borrowing and returning, opening all digital resources to Huaxia College Library readers [22]. This represents an early comprehensive integration model between public and university libraries, not only extending public libraries’ social service scope but also enabling university teachers and students to timely enjoy public libraries’ rich literature resources.

3.2 Characteristics of Theme Libraries

Theme libraries are connected with specialized libraries and characteristic libraries but demonstrate greater specificity, intuitiveness, and flexibility in specific field collection determination, content organization, service objects, and activity promotion. Professor Wang Shiwei noted: “Theme libraries are libraries that meet people’s specialized knowledge and information needs through specific field (one or several fields) collections and services.” He provided detailed analysis of the relationship between theme libraries and specialized libraries, concluding that while connected, they also have differences. The connection is that some specialized libraries (religious libraries, medical libraries, etc.) can be included in the theme library category. The difference is that theme libraries’ essential characteristic lies in “specific field collections,” with the logical starting point being “specialization” rather than distinguishing library types by insti-

tutional nature. Theme libraries can be independently established libraries, main-branch system branches, or characteristic reading service areas in larger libraries (based on considerable-scale collections) [23].

Professor Ke Ping provided detailed and accurate interpretation in “Hangzhou Model of Theme Libraries” [24] and “Issues and Development Thinking in Theme Library Construction.” He stated: “Theme libraries, also called theme literature libraries, are new-type libraries that organize collection resources and carry out diversified services around specific themes to meet readers’ thematic literature information needs and realize library functions” [18]. This definition reveals the complete connotation of theme libraries. The authors agree that theme libraries meet readers’ specialized knowledge and thematic information needs through specific thematic field collections and diversified services. In public library service systems, theme libraries play important and irreplaceable roles due to their 特殊性.

The distinctions among theme libraries, specialized libraries, and characteristic libraries are shown in Table 8 .

Theme library model characteristics include: First, rich professional collections—comprehensively and systematically collecting literature information in one or several professions, categories, or fields, demonstrating greater specificity, intuitiveness, and flexibility in specific field collection determination, content organization, service objects, and activity promotion. Second, broad service groups—theme library services meet people’s professional knowledge and information needs, serving all members of society. Third, diversified service connotations—while meeting general reader needs, theme libraries must also satisfy professional reader needs, presenting diverse service approaches applicable to all library types. Fourth, flexible organizational forms—theme libraries suit independent establishment, main-branch establishment, or thematic reading service areas within libraries. Fifth, precise service capabilities—since services revolve around specific themes, librarians must understand collection characteristics and possess professional knowledge to effectively serve readers [18]. Theme library construction provides new development platforms for libraries, representing a new stage in library sector development.

Theme library functional characteristics mainly include: First, thematic characteristics—all library activities revolve around themes. Second, socialization characteristics—library construction and activities integrate with society. Third, personalization characteristics—libraries demonstrate individuality in functional design, space layout, resource construction, and service activities. Fourth, experiential characteristics—libraries inherently possess experiential functions for reading and thematic series experiences. Fifth, quality characteristics—theme libraries feature concentrated collections, elegant spaces, specialized and deep services, and refined management, providing high-quality specialized services.

4. Problems and Countermeasures in Theme Library Construction

4.1 Strengthen Service Philosophy and Distance from Commercial Purposes

Due to participation from various social forces in theme library construction, inevitable commercial elements emerge to achieve co-construction and win-win outcomes. However, pursuing commercial value must be avoided as it weakens libraries' core service functions. Theme library construction should first focus on cultural powerhouse building, social environment, citizen cultivation, and service innovation needs, then scientifically select themes based on regional cultural characteristics, collection advantages, target audiences, and resource conditions, determining construction models according to actual conditions. All libraries must expand new cultural visions, upgrade cultural positions, and embrace the eternal philosophy of inheriting national culture, building urban culture, promoting national spirit, upholding patriotism, developing socialist culture, and building a cultural powerhouse.

4.2 Ensure Continuous Investment in Human, Financial, and Material Resources

Current theme library construction builds upon existing county/district and community libraries, with management subordinate to provincial, municipal, county, and district governments. Multi-level management units cause internal operational inconveniences in main-branch construction, lacking principal guarantees for continuous human, financial, and material investment, making unified personnel and funding management difficult to achieve. If libraries coordinate with government departments at all levels, with governments planning and designing small and medium-sized theme library groups close to citizens with brand chain effects based on neighborhood population distribution and street industrial characteristics, creating a community-based professional library path led by the government, then the government can ensure continuous investment guarantees. If multi-level management is implemented with no one responsible for continuous investment, even established libraries may struggle to survive.

4.3 Improve and Perfect Reader Service Governance Mechanisms

Theme libraries should focus on improving and perfecting governance mechanisms, relying on institutional regulations to constrain and control library operations. With diverse theme library construction models—including government-led, central-library-led, and collaborative social forces—and emphasis on thematic, personalized, and characteristic services, theme libraries lack effective guidance, norms, and constraints for construction goals, resource allocation, service functions, and service effectiveness without corresponding institutional regulations and standard specifications. Service is the foundation, management is the essence, and institutions are the guarantee. Management institutional regu-

lations and standardized business skill standards are indispensable—“governing libraries by law” represents the highest level of library management capability and the means and path toward high-quality development.

4.4 Strengthen Technology Empowerment to Improve Service Quality

Theme libraries’ professional literature information service characteristics require support from high-quality professional personnel. Librarians need both library science knowledge and relevant thematic knowledge, while also emphasizing modernization technology enhancement, empowering librarians with new technologies to strengthen technical capabilities, applying technology to current work to improve efficiency and quality, thereby producing better results and providing high-quality, in-depth thematic information services. Therefore, theme library professional librarian team construction is crucial—librarians’ technical capability enhancement guarantees theme libraries’ soft power improvement. Approaches that focus only on constructing physical library buildings while neglecting professional librarian allocation or even outsourcing services to companies are inadequate and completely violate the original intention of theme library construction.

5. Exploration of Future Development Strategies for Theme Libraries

5.1 Successful Construction Models Can Be Replicated

Theme libraries have now formed in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and other locations, with various models creating templates and brands that provide selectable reference paths for theme library replication and reproduction in different regions. Replicable construction can be comprehensive or partial, mainly including: regional layout thinking, funding collection methods, theme content selection, and service management models. For example, Shanghai Minhang District’s “Intangible Cultural Heritage Theme Library” and Ganzhou Library’s “Ganzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Theme Library” share similar themes. Due to significant cultural differences across regions, not all models have replication value. Replicable templates must be successful, viable, grounded, and have strong future development potential. Simultaneously, replication must be practical, respecting local historical culture and achieving organic integration of specialization, thematization, and localization [25]. When replicating excellent models, summarizing their service innovation passion and experienced difficulties helps avoid detours and walk out successful paths for new library service systems.

5.2 Regional Cluster Management Systems Are Preferred

Theme libraries are cultural complexes gathering thematic resources. They must: first, select professional settings, reader environments, and socialization with breadth, depth, and stickiness; second, adhere to reader concepts, attract reader participation, and cultivate readers' cultural spirit; third, provide more professional and in-depth thematic information services to meet personalized needs of special users; fourth, gradually narrow gaps so everyone both on and off campus can use libraries equally; fifth, apply smart library management service concepts to promote modern all-media technology applications.

All localities must conduct investigation and demonstration when planning branch systems, considering geographical layout and identifying individual library characteristics. Themes should highlight local cultural features, satisfy local citizens' spiritual and cultural needs, and be geographically convenient for readers. They should also combine main libraries' thematic literature collection foundations, professional librarian team quality, and cooperative partner identification, adopting replication or innovation. Hangzhou Library's 26 theme branches have formed a relatively good main-branch service system. Experience proves that regional, clustered, and thematic management system construction is optimal, with advantages in scientific integration of region, cooperation, theme, and overall planning, constituting theme libraries' main-branch system. The business flow, information flow, and reader flow in theme branch service operations circulate a library's core values and service concepts, manifesting the creativity and behavioral patterns of theme libraries as "active wholes." Only decisions based on scientific demonstration can form novel integration power, stimulate strong effectiveness, and promote continuous cultural innovation [26].

5.3 Actively Explore Cross-Boundary Integration Paths

Cross-boundary integration construction has become a development trend, and theme library construction should also pioneer cross-boundary integration. Beyond accepting inputs and support from competent authorities, local governments, and communities, branch construction should seek cooperation with all walks of life to introduce cooperative library-building partners. For example, Beijing Shijingshan District Library cooperated with the Beijing Winter Olympics Organizing Committee to establish the "Winter Olympics Theme Library" [27]. Cooperative partners should implement element matching and advantage integration around construction goals, demonstrating each party's resource advantages and common interest demands, emphasizing synergy effects and maximizing resource advantage benefits. Hangzhou Library has proposed cross-boundary integration experience—whether partners make large-scale or small-scale attempts, as long as they benefit branch construction and public cultural development, they have cooperative value. Cross-boundary integration is both a development trend and a driving force, representing an important issue concerning future theme library construction and sustainable development across regions. Only through continuous exploration, following trends, and

active attempts can development opportunities be sought in the competitive landscape of branch construction.

5.4 Select Landmark Library Themes

Themes determine library layout and construction. Public libraries selecting branch themes should consider regional characteristics, audience groups, and cultural layout: first, industrial characteristic themes—theme libraries providing series services for local industries, such as Wenzhou Shoe Capital Library; second, regional culture themes—theme libraries supporting local revitalization and development, such as Yunnan Pu'er Tea Culture Library; third, cultural hotspot themes—theme libraries combining national and regional cultural hotspots, such as Jiaying Red Boat · Central Book House Theme Library. University libraries selecting theme branches should closely follow school training goals and professional construction, determine themes based on collection literature resource characteristics, and align with social cultural construction target needs.

5.5 Deepen and Innovate Thematic Literature Resource Services

Theme library construction satisfying readers proves correct theme selection. It results from aggregation of multiple elements including planning, topic selection, construction, management, and service, among which literature resource construction deepening and innovation is the core. Deepening means vigorously collecting and acquiring thematic literature resources based on existing professional literature resources, striving to 搜罗殆尽 diverse literature resources including print, microform, electronic, and audio-visual formats, achieving “what others don't have, I have; what others have, I excel; what others excel, I specialize; what others specialize, I deepen” [28]. Innovation means creating excellent and innovative literature information service means—when a service content has been excellently developed by others, new paths should be explored to create novel and unique service content, achieving ultimate depth. Additionally, physical and virtual resources should receive equal emphasis. Only by gathering rich, high-quality, and superior thematic paper literature and electronic information resources can thematic characteristics be highlighted. Only by providing professional, in-depth, and refined thematic diversified services can libraries become veritable theme libraries and thematic cultural highlands, promoting integrated theme library development with distinctive features, profound foundations, and dazzling highlights.

5.6 Expand Multi-Dimensional Social Services with “Theme +” Thinking

The Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Party Central Committee proposed prospering cultural undertakings, enhancing national cultural soft power, and strengthening cultural confidence, guided by socialist core values for cultural construction, pointing out the direction, clarifying tasks, and bringing new strategic opportunities for library development. Theme library development

blueprints require careful planning, divergent thinking, and expanded social services. With thematic elements as the core, research should be conducted around “thematic elements + N approaches” to create rich and colorful service models. For example, thematic elements + mobile phones create mobile theme libraries; thematic elements + mobile vehicles create mobile theme libraries; thematic elements + intelligence create smart theme libraries [18]. Through “thematic elements +” integration with social enterprises, public institutions, and all walks of life, library services extend to multi-dimensional society—this is a question worth deep consideration during the 14th Five-Year Plan period for optimizing theme libraries’ full-perspective development layout, forming scientific service systems, and providing higher-quality services for users.

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Zhang Yao: Collected materials and wrote the paper;
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Exploration on the Current Situation, Model and Future Development Strategy of Theme Library Construction

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] The construction of “theme library” is part of the strategy of a powerful cultural country in China. Through the investigation and analysis of the development status of national theme library, the paper explores the development path of the library with Chinese characteristics, promotes the continuous expansion of the library system and the continuous improvement of service quality. [Method/process] Based on the analysis of the definition, characteristics and domestic construction development overview of the theme library, this paper discusses the problems existing in the construction of the theme library, and summarizes the ideas for the future construction and development of the theme library. [Result/conclusion] The theme library has become a part of the service system of China’s general and branch libraries and an important measure to deepen the service, which needs to be promoted to vigorous development.

Keywords: public library; theme library; innovative mode; national layout

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

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