

## Diligent Thinking and Earnest Practice: Meng Liansheng's Applied Research and Academic Impact in Library and Information Science (Post-print)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Taking Mr. Meng Liansheng as a case study, this research investigates his work practices and related research in the field of library and information science since the late 1970s, analyzes his academic influence, reviews the development trajectory of modern Chinese library and information science, and comprehends the essential principles underlying the development of the library and information science profession. [Method/Process] Employing literature content analysis combined with Mr. Meng's autobiographical materials, this study systematically reviews his professional practices and research achievements; bibliometric methods are used to analyze his academic influence. [Results/Conclusion] Mr. Meng exemplifies the unity of knowledge and action. His practices and research in citation analysis, information resource construction, information services, digital library development, and the construction of the National Science and Technology Library are mutually reinforcing. His academic influence primarily stems from his problem-oriented practical research and reflections. Mr. Meng's practices in library and information work and his related research on the library and information science profession embody six essential elements for the development of the field: resources, technology, management, services, research, and talent. Resources are the foundation, talent is the essence, technology enhances efficiency, services establish the library, scholarship invigorates the library, and management strengthens the library.

### Full Text

### Preamble

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## Think More, Learn More, and Be More—Meng Liansheng’s Professional Practice, Academic Research, and Influence on Library and Information Development in China

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### Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] Taking Mr. Meng Liansheng as a case study, this paper explores his professional practice and related research in library and information science since the late 1970s, analyzes his academic influence, reviews the development of modern Chinese library and information services, and identifies the core elements of library and information development. [Method/Process] Content analysis of literature combined with Mr. Meng’s self-reported materials was used to sort out his professional practice and research achievements, and bibliometric methods were employed to analyze his academic influence. [Result/Conclusion] Mr. Meng exemplifies the unity of knowledge and action. His practice and research in citation analysis, information resource construction, information services, digital library development, and the construction of the National Science and Technology Library complement each other. His academic influence primarily stems from his problem-oriented practical research and reflections. His practice in library and information work and related research reflect six essential elements: resources, technology, management, services, research, and talent. Resources are the foundation, talent is the core, technology improves efficiency, services establish the library, research invigorates the library, and management strengthens the library.

**Keywords:** Meng Liansheng; library and information services; intelligence work; information resource construction; information services; digital library

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Individuals who received library science education in the 1970s represent a generation that bridges past and future in the development of China’s library and information services. Mr. Meng Liansheng (hereinafter referred to as “Mr. Meng”) is a distinguished member of that generation. Reviewing his long career in library and information management and exploring his main research trajectory and academic perspectives in the field helps us understand history, draw wisdom, deepen our understanding of the laws governing library and information development, grasp its future direction, and inspire technical support.

Mr. Meng was a graduate student jointly supervised by Research Librarian Peng Chongyuan of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library and Professor Zhou Wenjun of the Department of Library Science at Peking University. Professor Zhou was a pioneering advocate of the “document exchange theory,” while Mr. Peng had studied at the Simmons College Library School in Boston and

possessed extensive disciplinary knowledge and strong practical skills in scientific and technical information retrieval. Mr. Meng was one of the first four master's students recruited by the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library, with the other three classmates specializing in computer science. His classmates Zhu Xianyou and Xu Zhiqiang provided selfless assistance during data processing. The guidance of his mentors and support from his peers laid a solid foundation for his early work in bibliometrics and related practice.

In 1972, Peking University resumed enrollment through a “department-library cooperation” model, recruiting worker-peasant-soldier students. In 1975, Mr. Meng was recommended by Factory 774 to attend the Library Science Department at Peking University. After the Cultural Revolution, China's scientific work ushered in the “spring of science,” with increasing national attention and funding for library and information work, providing Mr. Meng with a broad stage to contribute to China's library and information services.

In 1979, Mr. Meng was admitted as a graduate student at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library (now the National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences). After graduating in 1982, he remained at the library. At that time, China had ordered two sets of *Science Citation Index* (SCI), one of which was housed at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library. As China's largest scientific and technical library and one of the earliest to experiment with computer applications, the library's leadership in library automation provided Mr. Meng with the necessary environment and conditions for his research.

During his career, Mr. Meng pursued advanced studies at Seton Hall University in the United States, the École Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques in France, and the University of Technology Sydney in Australia. He also conducted in-depth exchanges at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library on two occasions and frequently attended international conferences or visits abroad, regularly receiving foreign colleagues. These international experiences broadened his academic horizons and increased his knowledge reserves, enabling him to stay informed about the latest international developments and learn from advanced experiences in construction and services, while also providing opportunities to disseminate and introduce domestic achievements internationally.

The early 1980s can be considered an academically formative period in Mr. Meng's library and information career. His understanding and reflections on the nature of intelligence (information), intelligence work, scientific research, and scientific communication formed the theoretical foundation for his library and information work. All his subsequent work in library and information construction, organization, and management aimed to “improve the efficiency and quality of intelligence transmission and accelerate the cycle of scientific research-scientific communication-scientific research to promote scientific and technological development.”

## 2. Practice and Academic Perspectives in Library and Information Science

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundation—On the Nature, Significance, and Role of “Intelligence Work”

Mr. Meng actively conducted basic theoretical research in information science, with his academic perspectives on the nature, significance, and role of intelligence work serving as important annotations to his diligent scholarship. In 1980 and 1981, he published two papers in *Information Science* providing in-depth analysis of “intelligence work.” He argued that intelligence is an entity in a state of transmission that can cause matter and energy to combine and change in certain ways. Intelligence work primarily aims to solve the problem of intelligence transmission, which constitutes the main contradiction in intelligence work, with all other tasks revolving around this central link. Intelligence transmission consists of an undirected phase (including collection, processing, and storage) and a directed phase (including reference consultation, lending, reading, document copying, promotion, and selective dissemination of information), with undirected transmission forming the basis for directed transmission. This understanding reflects the idea that document resource construction is the foundation of intelligence services.

Mr. Meng also discussed the dialectical relationship between intelligence work and science and technology, arguing that intelligence work promotes scientific development while scientific development continuously improves intelligence work methods. He viewed intelligence as a key factor constraining the pace of scientific development and elaborated on the argument that matter, energy, and intelligence are the “three pillars” of modern society, metaphorically comparing intelligence work to the nervous system of society. Poor intelligence work would paralyze society and stall scientific progress, making an intelligence society an inevitable trend.

Following his reflections on “intelligence work,” Mr. Meng compared “intelligence work” with “intelligence analysis and research work” from the perspective of scientific communication. He argued that the essence of scientific research is transforming non-semantic information into semantic information, with the process of transmitting semantic information called scientific communication. Intelligence work is part of scientific communication, developed to resolve the contradiction between the vast quantity of literature and people’s specific information needs. General intelligence services aim to query, reveal, and transmit intelligence without changing its substantive content. In contrast, intelligence analysis and research involves analyzing large amounts of intelligence to acquire new knowledge, discover new patterns, and create new intelligence, representing pure scientific research. He also believed that the establishment of scientific intelligence analysis centers represents the inevitable deepening of intelligence work.

## 2.2 Integration, Co-construction, and Standardization—Information Resource Development

After entering the library and information field, Mr. Meng's primary work focused on information resource construction. Since graduating in 1982, he worked at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library (now the National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences), serving as Director of the Database Department and leading the construction of multiple literature databases for the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He divided China's scientific literature database construction in the 20th century into three stages: the exploratory stage from the late 1970s to mid-1980s, which prepared necessary ideological and technical foundations; the development and experimental stage from the mid-1980s to early 1990s; and the market-oriented development stage beginning in the early 1990s. He personally and effectively traversed each stage.

**2.2.1 Construction of Multiple Literature Databases at the Chinese Academy of Sciences** The Chinese Academy of Sciences literature database development began in the 1990s. While writing his master's thesis *Chinese Scientific Citation Analysis*, Mr. Meng experimentally compiled China's first comprehensive scientific citation database, largely laying the groundwork for the subsequent development of the Chinese Science Citation Database (CSCD). Recognizing that citation indexes not only provide unique retrieval functions but also play important roles in scientific research and research evaluation management, he advocated for creating China's own Chinese science citation index. With support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the CSCD project team was established in 1989, officially launching CSCD construction in 1991. During the 1990s, Mr. Meng participated in organizing the construction of the "Chinese Scientific Literature Database," standardizing previously separately processed multi-format data to create a unified and standardized Chinese scientific literature abstract database. Subsequently, they developed and published various database CDs, including the Chinese Scientific Literature Database, Chinese Science Citation Database, Chinese and Western Language Periodicals Union Catalog Database, and Chinese Scientific Literature Full-text Database.

**2.2.2 Construction of the National Science and Technology Library Network Service System** Mr. Meng participated throughout the construction of the National Science and Technology Library (NSTL) network service system. On June 12, 2000, NSTL was established, and Mr. Meng was seconded to the center office, playing a role in the preparation, design, establishment, and development of the NSTL network service system. He considered the official launch of the national science and technology literature resource network service system on December 26, 2000, as "marking the fruitful achievements of China's largest information resource co-construction and sharing project." He argued that "in library and information services, resource sharing represents a rational adjustment of information resource allocation, an optimization of infor-

mation service work, and an effective means of integrating dispersed resources and improving resource utilization. Modern resource sharing has deeper connotations, with its most prominent feature being the emphasis on co-construction alongside sharing—in other words, a form of sharing built upon the foundation of co-construction.”

**2.2.3 Development of the Literature Information Resource Processing and Organization System** As Director of the Database Construction Department at NSTL, Mr. Meng engaged in literature database construction and data processing organization and management for many years. He believed that literature information processing is a crucial link in information resource and service system construction, and that data quality is the lifeblood of databases. Following leadership directives, he worked closely with the head of the NSTL Data Processing Working Group to organize the formulation of the *National Science and Technology Library Database Construction Management Measures* and a series of other management regulations and data processing rules, improving and perfecting processing models and management mechanisms. By implementing an integrated data processing system, he continuously advanced NSTL’s data processing and database construction.

**2.2.4 Construction of the International Science Citation Database** With foresight, Mr. Meng advocated for building an international science citation database to enhance the independent service capabilities of China’s library and information institutions. In 2006, with support from NSTL leadership, he organized experts in database construction to complete two research projects: the “Feasibility Study Report on NSTL’s Construction of an International Science Citation Database” and the “International Science Citation Database Construction Plan.” In October of the same year, the project was included in the National Science and Technology Support Program. After one year of development, when the database reached a certain scale, retrieval services for users nationwide were launched on the NSTL network service system, providing users with a new channel for scientific and technical literature information retrieval that was widely welcomed.

**2.2.5 Construction of Knowledge Organization Systems** Mr. Meng paid close attention to emerging information organization methods. Collaborating with his doctoral students, he published the article “A Comparative Study of Ontology Construction Methodologies,” comparing seven ontology construction methods. In 2008, he organized a special research project on “Network Annotation Behavior and Its Impact,” with multiple research results published in the first issue of *Library and Information Service* in 2008. He argued that network annotation has undergone tremendous changes compared to traditional annotation in terms of form, annotation objects, content, usage methods, and utilization value, evolving from an individual behavior to a social method of information resource organization and utilization. After 2009, he also partic-

ipated in the preliminary research and organizational and investigative work for the project “Knowledge Organization System Construction and Application Demonstration for Foreign Language Scientific and Technical Literature.”

### **2.3 Collaboration, Openness, and Sharing—Digital Library Development**

Mr. Meng participated in and witnessed multiple digital library practice projects in China. In 2000, he drafted the *Construction Plan for the Chinese Academy of Sciences Science Digital Library*. By the end of 2001, the Chinese National Science Digital Library (CSDL) project officially launched, with Mr. Meng serving as Director of the Project Management Center Office and participating extensively in project organization. He astutely pointed out that China’s information resource construction at that time seriously lagged behind national information infrastructure development, creating an awkward situation on the national information highway of “roads without vehicles, vehicles without goods, and low-quality goods.” He argued that developing the digital library industry was the best solution. The goal of digital library construction is to create an information environment supporting universal access, distributed management, and integrated services, with its core being accurate and rapid information delivery to users based on unified standards and specifications, rich digital information resources, intelligent retrieval technology, broadband high-speed networks, and e-commerce management services.

In 2002, Mr. Meng participated in the investigation of the “Digital Library Standards and Specifications Preliminary Research Project.” Subsequently, he participated in organizing the Ministry of Science and Technology’s research project “Digital Library Standards and Specifications Construction.” Following the principles of “collaboration, openness, and sharing,” he coordinated specialized research projects among the National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China, National Library of China, CALIS Management Center, Shanghai Library, and Peking University Library. As project leader, he organized the investigation of the “Digital Resource Unique Identifier Application Specification” with the participation of multiple information institutions. He also undertook an NSTL project, organizing more than ten people to conduct research on “Digital Library Construction and Development Models,” clarifying digital library development trends. For many years, Mr. Meng taught the doctoral course “Digital Library Theory and Practice” at the National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences, promoting learning through practice and research through teaching.

### **2.4 Digitization, Networking, and Intellectualization—Scientific and Technical Information Services**

The ultimate purpose of resource construction is to serve users. Mr. Meng experienced the transformation of information services in China’s library and information institutions from traditional to digital and networked services. Dur-

ing this process, he participated in organizing multiple projects, promoting the establishment and improvement of various types of networked information services.

**2.4.1 Early Chinese Internet Online Literature Retrieval Services** In the mid-1990s, to promote the application of the Chinese Scientific Literature Database, Mr. Meng facilitated cooperation between the National Science Library and the Computer Network Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, placing all abstract data of the database on the China Science and Technology Network to provide literature retrieval services for researchers nationwide, becoming China's earliest online literature retrieval service on the Internet.

**2.4.2 NSTL Network Information Services** The NSTL network service system is China's largest online scientific and technical literature information service system, serving as a public welfare platform for the entire scientific and technological community. Mr. Meng participated multiple times in organizing the design and upgrading of the system's homepage, promoting continuous improvement of service functions. He organized investigations into the full-text service subsidy policy and wrote price adjustment proposals for full-text provision services. He also participated in organizing the construction of the NSTL Science and Technology Hotspot Portal Service System and undertook resource selection work for the "Library and Information" portal.

**2.4.3 Internet Full-text Literature Services for the National Scientific Community** In the early stages of NSTL's establishment, Mr. Meng participated multiple times in negotiations with foreign publishers, facilitating agreements with numerous foreign publishing houses to provide full-text online journal services for hundreds of foreign journals on the Internet for scientific and technical workers nationwide, significantly improving the information utilization environment for domestic scientific communities.

**2.4.4 Open Access Scientific Journal Integration Services** Mr. Meng organized the Agricultural Information Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and other units to conduct project demonstration, implementation, system design, and resource collection and processing for the "Open Access Scientific Journal Integration and Discovery Platform." The system officially launched in October 2009, providing convenient conditions for users to search and utilize open access literature resources.

**2.4.5 Digital Reference Consultation Services** Based on research into "digital reference consultation services," Mr. Meng published multiple academic papers promoting theoretical exploration of digital reference consultation. He argued that digital reference consultation "has fundamentally changed the traditional library and information institution service in terms of service models,

working methods, reference resources, and even service objects. Network-based digital reference consultation can provide users with more efficient and effective information services.” Alongside theoretical research, he also promoted practical application.

## **2.5 Management Strengthens the Library, Research Prospers the Library—Management and Research of Library and Information Work**

Mr. Meng believed that “library and information work is highly public welfare-oriented, serving scientific research and economic construction. Therefore, we must first clarify this concept ideologically and implement service-centered management.”

**2.5.1 Research on “Integration of Library and Intelligence Work”** In the mid-1980s, the management model of “integration of library and intelligence work” attracted attention in the library and information community, but this integration is by no means accomplished overnight. As a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library Reform and Innovation Office, Mr. Meng participated in research and drafting of reform proposals. He argued that “integration of library and intelligence work” represents the integration of library systems and intelligence systems within a single administrative unit. “Existing intelligence units should strengthen library work when necessary. Existing libraries should strengthen intelligence work when necessary. Within a department or system that has both intelligence institutions and libraries, conditions should be created to facilitate their merger. Within a department or system that has neither, avoid establishing them separately... If unnecessary, both intelligence institutions and libraries should maintain the status quo, each doing their own work well. We must not force uniformity, make across-the-board changes, or rush headlong into mass action regardless of nature, function, tasks, and conditions, creating new problems.” Reflecting on recent trends in library think tank services and intelligence analysis services, reviewing Mr. Meng’s discussions provides valuable insights into whether and how libraries should conduct intelligence work and achieve integration.

**2.5.2 Promoting Management Mechanisms for Chinese Academy of Sciences Literature Database Construction** In the early 1990s, the Chinese Academy of Sciences had multiple self-built literature databases with problems including decentralized construction, non-standard data processing, data duplication and omissions, and uneven data processing quality. As Director of the Office of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Literature Database Expert Committee, Mr. Meng conscientiously implemented the academy’s reform spirit, emphasizing a database construction philosophy oriented toward scientific research, users, society, and the market. He promoted standardized and normalized construction, established a management model combining centralized database building with centralized and decentralized services based on resource

sharing principles, and facilitated the establishment and development of the Chinese Scientific Literature Database.

**2.5.3 Constructing the NSTL Management Model** As a virtual institution, standardized management plays a crucial role in NSTL's construction and development. Under the director's leadership, Mr. Meng participated in formulating multiple NSTL regulations and systems, actively contributing ideas and proposing many meaningful management reform measures that helped consolidate and develop NSTL's management system and model.

**2.5.4 Promoting the NSTL National Service System** Mr. Meng actively promoted NSTL's service capacity building. In 2003, he participated in preliminary research, planning, and implementation for establishing NSTL mirror sites, facilitating the creation of NSTL mirror stations at the Lanzhou Documentation and Information Center and Chengdu Documentation and Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, taking the first step in establishing NSTL branch service institutions outside Beijing. Subsequently, NSTL adjusted the mirror station model to a service station model, successively establishing over 40 service stations nationwide. Mr. Meng drafted the "National Science and Technology Literature Resource Network Service System Service Guidelines," wrote investigation reports on establishing service stations, and participated in formulating the "National Science and Technology Library Network Service System Service Station Agreement."

**2.5.5 Promoting Academic Development and Cultivating Professional Talent** Regarding the role of academic research in library and information development, Mr. Meng elaborated in his article "Advocating Research to Revitalize the Library and Recreate the Glory of the Science Library." He believed that "research revitalizing the library is a management philosophy, a development strategy, and a development goal. Implementing this strategy and achieving this goal requires high-quality talent." Mr. Meng himself practiced this philosophy, publishing over 100 academic papers and cultivating 20 doctoral students and 7 master's students, playing an important role in promoting academic research and training high-level professional technical talent.

### 3. Analysis of Academic Influence in Library and Information Science

Searching the CNKI platform for literature with "Meng Liansheng" as author yielded 70 journal articles. After excluding 2 irrelevant articles, 68 articles by Mr. Meng were obtained, with the earliest published in 1980 and the latest in 2020, comprehensively covering his research career. Using VOSviewer to create a keyword co-occurrence network map of these 68 articles (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]) shows that his research focused on citation analysis, NSTL, literature databases, bibliometrics, digital libraries, information services, and

digital reference consultation—areas that complement and reinforce his library and information practice. His academic influence in the field stems from his practice-based research.

### 3.1 Broad Academic Influence

The 68 articles by Mr. Meng collected in CNKI have been cited 1,785 times, with total downloads of 21,136, averaging 26 citations and 311 downloads per article. His h-index in CNKI is 19. Analysis of the 1,785 citing documents reveals that his theoretical and practical research has influenced a very broad range of scholars, with 2,863 citing authors from 1,499 institutions and 1,499 citing journals (see Table 1 ).

The temporal distribution of the 1,785 citing documents is shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. The earliest citing document was published in 1983, with citation counts increasing annually to a peak of 115 in 2008. From 2009 to 2014, citations remained at around 90 per year, and from 2015 to 2020, they stayed above 40 per year, indicating that Mr. Meng’s solo or co-authored papers continue to be referenced and remain influential.

The SCIE platform includes 4 solo or co-authored papers by Mr. Meng, cited 36 times by authors from 16 countries, 84 citing authors, 52 citing institutions, and 18 citing journals. From the titles of the 36 SCIE citing documents, 102 keywords were extracted, with “Patent citation” appearing most frequently (6 times), followed by “Document delivery,” “Knowledge diffusion,” “NSTCL,” “Patents,” “Research evaluation,” and “Science policy” (each appearing twice), with all other keywords appearing once.

### 3.2 Prominent Influence of Practice-Based Research

Thematic analysis of title keywords from the 1,785 CNKI citing documents reveals the main research areas citing Mr. Meng’s work. The results show that the citing documents’ titles primarily involve 11 major categories (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]). Among them, libraries, citation analysis, scientific journals, and bibliometrics have been continuous themes since 1983. Information organization was a mid-term research theme (1997-2012), while his exploratory work with doctoral students in ontology, patent mapping, and patent citation has influenced related research in the past decade.

Table 2 lists Mr. Meng’s top 10 most-cited papers in CNKI, which have been cited 1,164 times, accounting for 65% of total citations. His 1983 paper “Chinese Scientific Citation Analysis” was cited in its publication year by renowned experts in information science such as Wang Chongde, Yang Peiting, and Lu Taihong, and as recently as 2018 by Zhang Yang and Yu Yanhui from Sun Yat-sen University’s School of Information Management in their study on “Academic Information Aging in Twitter.” These 10 papers address citation analysis, digital reference consultation, digital libraries, and information resource construction—themes that closely align with Mr. Meng’s professional

practice trajectory, demonstrating the organic integration of knowledge and action throughout his career.

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## Author Contributions

**Lin Fang:** Data collection, writing and revision of the paper

**Sun Wei:** Data collection, creation of visualizations, thematic and citation

analysis, revision of the paper

**Zhang Xuefu:** Framework determination, revision of the paper

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] Taking Mr. Meng Liansheng as a case, this paper explores his library and information professional practice, related research and academic influence since the late 1970s, with the purpose of reviewing the development of modern Chinese librarianship and comprehending the core elements of library development. [Method/process] Content analysis of literature combined with Mr. Meng’s self-reported materials were used to sort out his practice and research achievements in library and information work. Bibliometric method was used to analyze Mr. Meng’s academic influence. [Result/conclusion] He is honest with himself. His practice and research in citation analysis, information resource construction, information service, digital library construction and the construction of the National Science and Technology Library complement each other. His academic influence stems mainly from his problem-oriented practical research and thinking. The professional practice and the related discussion on library and information work by Mr. Meng reflect the six elements throughout the development of library and information work: information resource, technology, management, service, scientific research and qualified personnel. Information resource is the root. Qualified personnel is the foundation. Technology improves the efficiency. Service builds the library. Academic research prospers the librarianship. And management makes the library strong.

**Keywords:** Meng Liansheng; library and information work; intelligence work; information resource construction; information service; digital library

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

*Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.*