

Post-print Reflections on Issues in Academic Translation of Library, Information and Documentation Science

Authors: Wang Yu, Wu Jin

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Abstract

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[Method/Process] Based on an investigation of the current state of academic translation in Library, Information, and Documentation Science, this study analyzes the reasons why China’s academic translation in this field fails to gain international traction, and explores future directions for improvement.

[Results/Conclusion] Academic translation in Library, Information, and Documentation Science is imperative. It is recommended that top-level management improve institutional frameworks, the academic community enhance its sense of social responsibility and mission, remain true to its original aspiration, elevate conceptual understanding, strengthen practical efforts, narrow the gap in disciplinary translation, and plan carefully and act decisively.

Full Text

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Reflections on Academic Translation of Library, Information and Documentation Science

Wang Yu & Wu Jin Library of Shenyang Normal University, Shenyang 110034

Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] The National Social Science Fund's "Chinese Academic Translation Project" represents a systematic national initiative for disseminating Chinese scholarship to the West and enhancing China's cultural soft power. Examining and exploring academic translation within library, information and documentation science can propel the discipline onto the global stage, secure its place in mainstream international communication channels, and elevate its international discourse power and status.

[Method/Process] Based on an investigation of the current state of academic translation in library, information and documentation science, this paper analyzes why the discipline has failed to "go global" and explores future directions for improvement.

[Result/Conclusion] Academic translation in library, information and documentation science is imperative. The paper recommends improving top-level management systems, enhancing the industry's sense of social responsibility and mission, remaining committed to original aspirations, advancing conceptual frameworks, strengthening practice, narrowing the gap in academic translation, and acting decisively after careful planning.

Keywords: National Social Science Fund; Chinese Academic Translation Project; Library, Information and Documentation Science; Chinese Learning Spreading to the West

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Entering a new era, realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation represents the goal of our Party and people. While enhancing hard power in politics, economy, and military affairs, strengthening cultural soft power constitutes not only a strategic priority in national cultural construction but also an essential prerequisite for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In this context, our Party has formulated a cultural strategy to advance Chinese academic culture onto the world stage and enhance international discourse power, enabling outstanding Chinese culture to demonstrate its attractiveness and cultural strength in global ideological arenas. This has led to the successive launch of various translation projects, including the "Chinese Academic Translation Project." Though seemingly "soft" in nature, this academic translation initiative represents a formidable cultural force that cannot be ignored. Over the years of implementation, China's philosophical and social science masterpieces have continuously reached global audiences, making significant contributions to enhancing China's international influence and discourse power. The academic translation of Chinese library, information and documentation science constitutes an indispensable component of this broader project.

1 Overview of China's Book Translation and Publishing Projects

1.1 The 2004 Launch of the “China Book International Promotion Plan”

Since the implementation of China's cultural soft power enhancement strategy, relevant departments have made every effort to devise initiatives for promoting outstanding Chinese publications worldwide. In late 2004, the State Council Information Office, the General Administration of Press and Publication, and the Publicity Department jointly launched the “China Book International Promotion Plan,” which included multiple programs funded through translation subsidies to encourage and support the publication and distribution of excellent selected works abroad, providing strong support for domestic publishing institutions to “go global.” The plan comprised several key initiatives: First, the “Chinese Cultural Works Translation and Publishing Project,” an enhanced version of the promotion plan designed to accelerate the pace of Chinese books going global. Second, the “Classic China International Publishing Project,” officially implemented by the former General Administration of Press and Publication in 2009 as a national-level key project with annual reviews, which achieved remarkable results over nine years of implementation. Third, the “China-Foreign Book Mutual Translation Plan,” actively facilitated by the China Publishing Group through translation symposia and continuously expanded to include more titles, with translation cooperation agreements signed with over 50 countries. Fourth, the “Silk Road Book Publishing Project,” the only major project in China's press and publishing industry incorporated into the national “Belt and Road” initiative, officially approved by the Publicity Department in December 2014 with a planning horizon extending to 2020. These initiatives demonstrate the nation's commitment to promoting Chinese cultural classics globally. However, the actual results have been unsatisfactory, with translated publications failing to achieve widespread dissemination on the international stage and struggling to reach foreign bookshelves, particularly in the field of library, information and documentation science, where no translated publications have been identified—a regrettable sign of the times.

1.2 The 2010 Launch of the “Chinese Academic Translation Project”

In 2010, the National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Sciences launched the “Chinese Academic Translation Project,” which stands out for its distinctive features in management authority, selection criteria, and publishing requirements. The project primarily funds outstanding achievements in Chinese philosophical and social sciences research, supporting their translation into foreign languages and publication by authoritative foreign publishing houses to enter mainstream international distribution channels. This aims to enhance foreign understanding of contemporary Chinese philosophy and social sciences and traditional Chinese culture, promote Sino-foreign academic exchanges and dialogue, elevate the international influence of Chinese philosophy and social sci-

ences, and advance China's outstanding academic achievements and talent onto the global stage. The project provides detailed application guidelines offering clear operational requirements for applicants, as shown in Table 1 .

The project management mechanism has gradually improved over time. From 2010 to 2014, applications were accepted twice annually without a recommended title list, relying primarily on individual applications. Beginning in 2015, the project shifted to annual applications and introduced a "Recommended Title List for Chinese Academic Translation Projects," making recommended titles the primary focus while allowing self-selected topics requiring recommendations from two disciplinary experts. Starting in 2019, the project was divided into "Key Projects" and "General Projects," with key projects funding national-level outstanding publishing achievements and works by renowned authors and publishers. The Chinese manuscript should 原则上 be no less than 80,000 characters and generally no more than 200,000 characters, with works exceeding 300,000 characters requiring compression and rewriting. Since 2015, project announcements have listed 95 publishing and distribution institutions across 17 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Russia, Germany, and France. The project is open to teachers and researchers in foreign languages, translation, and humanities and social sciences from universities and research institutions, requiring translations to remain faithful to the original while accommodating foreign readers' habits. Approved projects grew from 13 in the inaugural year to a peak of 185 in 2018, reflecting a shift from indifference to fierce competition. Over ten years, 1,030 academic achievements representing the standard of Chinese philosophy and social sciences and embodying the essence of Chinese culture have been approved, covering 28 first-level disciplines including economics, history, philosophy, law, and political science, and 17 languages, published by a strong lineup of internationally renowned publishing institutions and gradually entering information resource databases, schools, and homes worldwide. This has brought outstanding national culture from the Eastern power to the world, made tremendous contributions to the overseas dissemination of Chinese scholarship, and enhanced China's cultural soft power.

2 Overview of Academic Translation Projects in Library, Information and Documentation Science

2.1 Current State of Academic Development in Library, Information and Documentation Science

Library, information and documentation science is a discipline concerning both people and objects, existing as a hybrid of social and humanistic sciences with unique theoretical systems and practical models. Since the 21st century, China's library sector has achieved considerable development, with the discipline continuously evolving and producing numerous talented scholars. The renowned doctoral supervisors in the field are all exceptionally knowledgeable and prolific, with an increasing number of PhD graduates each year driving fruitful

academic research. Notable works include *20th Century Western and Chinese Library Science*, a theoretical history study of Western and Chinese library science from the perspective of foundational theory; *Introduction to Library and Information Science*, a theoretical overview integrating the common core content of library and information science; and *Research on Digital Reference Services in Libraries*, which constructs a representative disciplinary system with clear thinking and rigorous argumentation. Innovative transformation service models have emerged from “library + internet” to “internet + library.” *The Hangzhou Model of Thematic Libraries* represents a work exploring a development path for public libraries with Chinese characteristics and international demonstration significance. The discipline’s educational rules and positioning concepts profoundly influence the continuous development of library undertakings and research. Nearly a hundred national fund projects are completed annually, yielding a steady stream of academic achievements. This demonstrates that China’s library, information and documentation science discipline possesses a strong contingent of high-end talent in education and research, along with service concepts for the transformation and development of various types of libraries and creative characteristic service models. The annual publication of academic works all demonstrates certain penetrating power and explanatory capacity, constructing a rigorous, complete, large-scale, and standardized library and information science system that represents the contemporary academic standard of Chinese library, information and documentation science and holds international influence and cultural value worthy of global dissemination.

2.2 Progress in Academic Translation of Library, Information and Documentation Science

Although some library science achievements have gone abroad in recent years—such as Mr. Wu Jianzhong’s *New Perspectives on 21st Century Libraries* (published in 2003 with Japanese and English editions, though focusing on library management rather than disciplinary theory), and Professor Wu Weici’s *Introduction to Library Science* (2018 edition), of which only partial chapters have been translated into English, Japanese, and Korean, making it the only introductory textbook from contemporary Chinese library science circles to be partially translated—these sporadic translations have not achieved broad or lasting influence. As mentioned earlier, the four translation projects launched under the 2004 “China Book International Promotion Plan,” despite their significant contributions to Chinese culture going global, have not made substantial impacts in international academic circles. Overall, unclear management authority and overall coordination, combined with the lack of unified planning for translation and publishing, have prevented these initiatives from adequately reflecting China’s tremendous achievements in philosophy and social sciences, and none have achieved ideal results. In the field of library and information science, translated publications are virtually nonexistent, let alone demonstrating any actual effect of “going global.”

The 2010 launch of the National Social Science Fund’s “Chinese Academic Translation Project” presented an opportunity for outstanding academic works in library, information and documentation science to reach the world. Its importance is self-evident: it meets the need for China’s library and information community to integrate into the international community and achieve exchange and development status with international peers; it fulfills the need for Chinese library academia to deliver a strong “Chinese voice” and enhance international discourse power; and it serves the need to disseminate the outstanding national culture and “people-oriented” service concepts of the Eastern power to people worldwide. Seizing this opportune moment when China’s academic achievements are qualified, capable, and must go global, this paper provides statistics on academic translation projects in library, information and documentation science (hereinafter referred to as LIS) for clarity, as detailed in Table 2 .

An overview of the project’s ten-year progress reveals that while LIS is undoubtedly included within the scope of the Chinese Academic Translation Project, the recommended title list since 2015 has featured only 1,152 titles, with merely one LIS work (*History of Ancient Chinese Books*). During the project’s ten-year execution, the LIS discipline has barely secured four approved projects, as detailed in Table 3 : one in 2011 (a dictionary) and three in 2018 (one book, one journal). The *Journal of Data and Information Science* (quarterly) was not on the recommended list (likely a self-selected topic). The results demonstrate that while the Chinese Academic Translation Project has effectively promoted international academic exchange, approving 1,030 translation projects over ten years, LIS projects account for only 0.39% of the total—a disappointing outcome that raises concerns among LIS scholars about whether Chinese LIS academic masterpieces can stand among the world’s library and information science community.

3 Situational Analysis of Library, Information and Documentation Science’s Failure to Go International

3.1 Marginalization in Top-Level Project Planning

The obstacles facing academic translation in China’s LIS discipline are closely related to top-level project planning. The National Social Science Fund Committee’s top-level planning bears guiding responsibility, yet the reality indicates that library, information and documentation science occupies a marginalized position. Regarding project funding orientation, according to the 2019 application announcement, the academic translation project primarily supports five areas: research on Marxism, particularly the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics; outstanding works interpreting China’s path, model, and experience; cutting-edge achievements in Chinese social science research; studies on outstanding traditional Chinese culture with cultural accumulation and dissemination value; and research on topics of common human concern and major international and regional issues. The objectives are relatively clear. However,

regarding guidance through the recommended title list, since 2015, the Chinese Academic Translation Project's recommended list has included 1,152 titles, with only *History of Ancient Chinese Books* representing LIS, visually demonstrating that the discipline falls outside the primary funding scope and leaving applicants without clear target topics. Regarding approved project results, over ten years, only three LIS projects have been approved (one dictionary, one book, and one journal), which overall fails to comprehensively reflect the academic achievements of Chinese library, information and documentation science.

3.2 Scarcity of Professionals in the Application Process

During the initial launch of the Chinese Academic Translation Project, it received enthusiastic responses from academic circles, particularly university teachers and researchers, with experienced experts from many disciplines actively applying. However, this situation quickly shifted toward a cooperative model where publishing institutions and project translators jointly assumed implementation responsibility. The surge of publishing institutions ultimately squeezed out researchers, with most projects awarded to publishers. For instance, the ratio of publishing institutions to professionals from 2016 to 2018 was 1.5:1, 2.06:1, and 3.1:1 respectively, all overwhelmingly favoring publishers—a trend that has become increasingly pronounced. In reality, cooperation between publishers and professionals has been rare, leaving individual applicants at a significant disadvantage and severely dampening the enthusiasm of experts and scholars. Particularly for the LIS discipline, which already receives insufficient attention in recommended title lists, self-selected topics require recommendations from two experts, submission of translation samples, and securing publication contracts with designated international publishers. Additionally, project selection is largely determined by judges' subjective judgments with minimal consideration for the discipline's international status and role, making approval probability extremely small even when all conditions are met. These practical application constraints have prevented genuine LIS experts from participating.

3.3 Weakened Academic Positioning and Competency in the Profession

Undoubtedly, academic translation in library, information and documentation science, as a field within the Chinese Academic Translation Project, requires not only the project leader's professional background and original academic works or journals of high quality but also sophisticated foreign language translation skills. Project leaders must personally undertake translation tasks and strive to improve translation quality to gain recognition from international publishing institutions. While professional talent cultivation in LIS has developed considerably, with increasing numbers of graduates and rising talent levels, along with growing first-level doctoral programs and postdoctoral research stations, the state of professional development remains unsatisfactory. For academic transla-

tion specifically, those with strong LIS backgrounds may lack high-level foreign language proficiency, creating language barriers; those with good translation skills may lack deep professional foundations, creating professional obstacles; those with adequate professional backgrounds and language skills may have no time for academic translation; and those with some application intentions may not know which works to select, lacking evaluation mechanisms for academic works. These objective and subjective obstacles have deterred LIS professionals, revealing a weakened academic position and competency within the profession—an undeniable reality regardless of whether industry insiders acknowledge it.

4 Future Development Directions for Academic Translation in Library, Information and Documentation Science

4.1 Expanding International Participation and Attracting IFLA’s Attention

China has been a founding member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) since 1927, with the Chinese Library Association recognized as China’s sole member in 1981. Beijing hosted the 62nd IFLA Conference in 1996, and over the past 90 years, five Chinese professionals have been elected to IFLA’s Governing Board, with Professor Cheng Huanwen of Sun Yat-sen University re-elected in 2019 after his 2017 term. This has fostered growing international interest in understanding and studying China’s library undertakings, presenting unprecedented opportunities for overseas dissemination of Chinese LIS scholarship. As an important component of the IFLA community, China’s library sector faces an irresistible internationalization trend, with deepening cooperation between IFLA and China. Over 40 university libraries and institutions have become IFLA members, actively participating in core programs and collaborative proposals, hosting various IFLA meetings and bidding for annual conferences. In 2005, Chinese was officially adopted as an IFLA working language, demonstrating that China’s library development and research occupy an important position in contemporary world library history with far-reaching influence. The Chinese Academic Translation Project will facilitate Chinese LIS scholarship’s entry into countries worldwide, directly attracting IFLA’s attention and focus.

4.2 Entering Mainstream International Communication Channels and Seeking Greater Cultural Confidence

Academic translation in library, information and documentation science addresses the need for Chinese LIS to engage in international exchange and cooperation. The global library community needs to understand China, and Chinese LIS academic thought and service models require global platforms. Academic translation is essential for China’s LIS community to integrate internationally and achieve exchange and development status with peers; for Chinese LIS academia to deliver a strong “Chinese voice” and enhance interna-

tional discourse power; and to disseminate the outstanding national culture and “people-oriented” service concepts of the Eastern power worldwide. Through the Chinese Academic Translation Project: First, it should vigorously promote Chinese LIS academic masterpieces into mainstream international distribution channels, explaining and promoting the ideals and paths of China’s library and information cultural undertakings to the world and showcasing the outstanding cultural achievements of a major Eastern nation. Second, it should systematically introduce China’s library, information and documentation science disciplinary system to the world, opening a window for Western scholars to better understand China’s LIS system and achievements and enhancing foreign understanding of contemporary Chinese LIS and culture. Third, it should promote Sino-foreign academic exchange and dialogue, strengthen China’s LIS international discourse power, and advance China’s outstanding LIS achievements and talent onto the global stage. Fourth, it should expand the international influence of China’s library and information cultural undertakings within the world’s diverse civilizational systems, seeking greater cultural confidence and securing an important international position in international relations.

4.3 Creating Academic Vitality in LIS and Enhancing Cultural Confidence and Social Responsibility

The current state of academic translation projects in library, information and documentation science places undeniable responsibility on LIS experts and scholars. Chinese library science has been studied as an independent discipline since modern times, and today, with rapid IT development, the discipline has been endowed with new connotations. Enhanced demand for information and knowledge has expanded the scale and level of LIS talent education. After nearly two decades of development and transformation, China’s high-level LIS education has formed a complete system, continuously supplying professionals to the library industry. This reflects China’s LIS disciplinary system, which is supported by strong faculty, abundant talent, and sufficient capacity. If so, what accounts for library, information and documentation science’s failure to “go global” through academic translation? Frankly, reasons and shortcomings must exist. To boost academic vitality in LIS and promote high-quality “going global” through academic translation, the industry must engage in reflection: How is the academic level of high-level talent in this discipline? Do academic achievements reflect Chinese LIS cultural characteristics? Are there deficiencies in evaluating industry academic achievements? Should Chinese LIS scholarship go global? What contributions have LIS experts and scholars made? These questions cannot be viewed narrowly. Academic translation requires strength as proof. LIS scholars must not ignore or stand aloof from academic translation—it is not merely individual academic activity but part of the larger pattern of national cultural rejuvenation. Therefore, the industry must raise awareness, clarify direction, identify targets, create academic masterpieces, export them worldwide, and strive to integrate with international standards.

4.4 Unifying Cognitive Concepts and Practical Ideas to Boost Academic Translation Development

Regarding the current state of academic translation in library, information and documentation science, LIS academic elites should elevate their cognitive concepts and put them into practice. First, raise cognitive concepts. The LIS industry must enhance its understanding of the Chinese Academic Translation Project as a responsibility and mission entrusted to the library cause, embracing the concept that “If not us, who? If not now, when?” for establishing Chinese LIS among world library cultures. Second, strengthen practical concepts. Build scientific practical concepts by actively recommending topics, monitoring application deadlines, securing publication contracts, translating sample chapters, and actively practicing applications, as opportunities only come to the prepared. Third, clarify topic scope, including outstanding achievements interpreting China’s LIS path, model, and experience, and research on issues of common concern to libraries worldwide. Fourth, enhance teamwork. Individual power is limited, but team power is infinite. Form collaborative teams based on confidence, determination, creativity, and willingness—when ten thousand people draw their bows together aiming at one target, nothing is missed. Fifth, seek international cooperation. Project leaders should focus on collecting information about foreign sinologists, library and information scholars, and research institutions, strengthening communication and seeking foreign cooperation to further enhance translation acceptance. The unity of cognitive concepts and practical ideas constitutes the complete manifestation of human spiritual power. With spiritual strength, always bearing in mind national, ethnic, and social responsibilities, one can participate in academic translation actions and charge forward when the nation and cause require it.

4.5 Improving Project Operational Mechanisms and Remembering the Original Aspiration of the Chinese Academic Translation Project

The Chinese Academic Translation Project application system has been continuously summarized, adjusted, and updated during its implementation, effectively resolving some issues and achieving better development, but further institutional improvement is needed. First, coordinate horizontal relationships among China’s “going global” cultural projects. Integrate various programs such as the “China Book International Promotion Plan,” the “Great Chinese Library” (Chinese-English bilingual) Project, the “Chinese Cultural Works Translation and Publishing Project,” the “Classic China International Publishing Project,” and the “Silk Road Book Publishing Project” to leverage complementary advantages and form synergies, establishing the core position of the Chinese Academic Translation Project. Second, address imbalances in academic translation development. Given IFLA’s emphasis on and support for China’s LIS undertakings and China’s increasingly rich international exchanges, academic translation has become an urgent priority. It is hoped that the project will begin emphasizing LIS academic translation in its recommended title list to resolve disciplinary

development imbalances and inadequacies. Third, optimize project application and process management. Strengthen process management by enhancing progress and quality control for approved projects and implementing constraint measures for projects failing to complete publication on schedule, preventing the phenomenon of unqualified recipients obtaining projects while capable individuals are denied—an outcome that harms national interests. Fourth, appropriately expand project quantities. If constrained by funding, it is recommended that academic translation project funding levels be comparable to National Social Science Fund project levels, without necessarily exceeding them. This would allow limited annual funding to expand recommended title ranges, increase disciplinary approval numbers, and promote more academic masterpieces going global, addressing issues of balanced and rapid academic translation development.

In summary, enhancing China's cultural soft power and promoting Chinese culture "going global" has become a national strategy, with China's overseas cultural dissemination path continuously expanding. The Chinese Academic Translation Project represents the highest-level research project in the national social sciences domain, building a bridge for Sino-foreign academic exchange and promoting Chinese culture's global reach to achieve the new era's "Chinese learning spreading to the West." Library, information and documentation science belongs in this "Western spread" and urgently needs to enter larger international library platforms. The Chinese LIS community must shoulder its responsibilities and obligations, raise its spirits, and strive to catch up and narrow the translation gap. China's library, information and documentation science must not be submerged internationally. It must disseminate globally China's new concepts in library service transformation, new ideas in academic research, new models in reform and innovation, and new practices in cultural services, delivering China's library voice, demonstrating Chinese librarians' capability confidence and cultural confidence, allowing the world to appreciate the excellence of China's LIS undertakings, transforming vague international perceptions of Chinese LIS, establishing Chinese LIS globally, solving the "discourse deficit" between China and foreign countries, and securing a rightful place for Chinese LIS among world library and information science communities through strength.

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Wang Yu: Responsible for research concept and structural design, writing and

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Wu Jin: Responsible for data collection and writing portions of the content.

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