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Postprint: New Situation in the Development of Library Science and the Construction of the Library-Information-Archives First-Level Discipline

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Facing changes in the domestic and international disciplinary development environment, such as the 5th round of discipline evaluation, “New Liberal Arts” construction, and the iSchool movement, library science discipline construction is confronted with new opportunities and challenges. This study returns to the fundamentals of library science, proposes that library science needs to consolidate its foundation while innovating, and simultaneously coordinate with the construction of the first-level discipline of Library, Information and Archives Management, so as to provide insights for the long-term development of library science education and first-level discipline construction in China. [Method/Process] Through analyzing the origins of library science as a discipline, library science education, and the coordinated development with first-level disciplines, this paper explores the new situations that China’s library science discipline construction and the first-level discipline of Library, Information and Archives Management construction need to face. [Results/Conclusion] The study proposes three fundamentals of library science, emphasizes that library science discipline construction requires consolidating the foundation while innovating, conducts library science discipline construction with a coordinated view of discipline construction, and proposes that library science discipline construction should have a development view that is strategic, coordinated, and high-quality.

Full Text

Preamble

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The Development of Library Science and the New Situation of First-Level Discipline Construction in Library, Information, and Archives Management

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] Faced with changes in the domestic and international disciplinary development environment, such as the fifth round of discipline evaluation, the “New Liberal Arts” initiative, and the iSchool movement, library science discipline construction is encountering new opportunities and challenges. This study returns to the fundamentals of library science, proposing that the discipline needs to both consolidate its foundations and pursue innovation while coordinating with the construction of the first-level discipline in library, information, and archives management, thereby providing insights for the long-term development of library science education and first-level discipline construction in China. [Method/Process] Through analysis of the origins of library science and the collaborative development between library science education and first-level discipline construction, this paper examines the new situations confronting discipline construction in library science and the first-level discipline of library, information, and archives management in China. [Result/Conclusion] The study proposes three fundamentals of library science, emphasizing that discipline construction must be based on consolidating foundations while innovating. It advocates for a collaborative view of discipline construction and puts forward a development perspective for library science that is strategic, collaborative, and quality-oriented.

Keywords: library science; library, information, and archives management; discipline construction; 14th Five-Year Plan

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This article primarily analyzes several important issues concerning library science discipline construction and talent cultivation from the perspective of the fundamental nature of library science, while also exploring the new situation of first-level discipline construction in library, information, and archives management.

2. Collaborative Development of Library Science Discipline and First-Level Discipline Construction

When discussing library science discipline construction and development—whether summarizing the past or looking toward the future, whether facing existing problems or new opportunities and challenges—library science must clearly answer the question: What are the fundamentals of library science, and how should we treat them? Overall, library science has at least three fundamental aspects.

The first fundamental is literature, which constitutes the source and foundation of library science. The second fundamental is libraries and the library profession, which form the main body of library science. Libraries are living organisms that grow, and the library profession is both global and Chinese. This fundamental aspect, built upon the foundation of literature, represents the main body of the discipline. The third fundamental is paradigm. Through research and summarization of disciplinary history by library science scholars, China has formed first-, second-, and third-generation scholar groups and research paradigms. This historical accumulation has created a rich knowledge system in which core knowledge has been perfected, establishing basic paradigms for library operations and library science as a discipline. This third fundamental is closely connected with the first two, forming an integrated whole.

While the importance of information and big data is constantly emphasized, we must ask: Where do data and information originate? Their fundamental source lies in literature. When the library science community engages in innovation, upholding integrity is crucial, but preserving the fundamentals is even more important—we must not discard our foundations. Experience from library science education and research demonstrates that once there is blind worship of Western trends or blind pursuit of new fads, the fundamentals of library science are lost or abandoned, leading to a situation where we neglect the essentials and lose our direction. Today, merely preserving the fundamentals is insufficient; we must also strengthen and expand upon them. Following the developmental laws of library science, firmly establishing its foundations, and using these fundamentals as a basis to explore new fields and directions while allowing new developments to nourish these foundations—these are essential emphases for library science discipline construction. This is not merely an academic concern; recent discussions in the professional community have also addressed this issue, though some differing opinions exist, indicating that a clearer articulation of library science’s fundamentals is needed.

Regardless of how far library science extends into new domains, it must not abandon the fundamental aspect of literature. Whether referring to the author’s own theory of knowledge resources [1] or Professor Cheng Huanwen’s concept of “resources as king” [2], both are based on literature. Although not every institution still offers bibliography courses in their library science curriculum today, a number of universities—including Nankai University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-sen University, Wuhan University, and Northeast Normal University—continue to uphold these fundamentals by offering courses in philology and bibliography. One focus of bibliography education is bibliographic work. The theory and method of literature essence, established by Professor Ni Xiaojian—a renowned bibliography scholar and former director of the Library Science Department at Beijing Normal University—continue to play an important role to this day.

Library science discipline construction cannot be isolated; it must be coordinated with the construction of the first-level discipline in library, information, and archives management. Adopting a collaborative view of discipline construc-

tion requires developing synergy in four areas.

First is synergy with library profession development. In recent years, China's library profession has experienced rapid development, with practical library construction surpassing library science research. The rapid advancement of public cultural service construction, represented by three major national projects—the National Cultural Information Resources Sharing Project, the Digital Library Promotion Project, and the Public Electronic Reading Room Construction Project—has greatly propelled library profession development. How to integrate library science with library profession development has become an important collaborative consideration for library science discipline construction.

Second is synergy within the national library, information, and archives management first-level discipline. The three second-level disciplines—library science, information science, and archival science—must not favor one over another but should advance together and promote mutual development.

Third is synergy with the first-level discipline construction within one's own institution. Universities such as Wuhan University, Peking University, Nanjing University, and Nankai University all have first-level disciplines in library, information, and archives management. How library science discipline construction can achieve proper coordination within the first-level discipline at specific universities is a question that cannot be ignored.

Fourth is synergy with the university's overall discipline construction. In 2019, 13 ministries and commissions including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology officially launched the "Six Excellence and One Top-Notch" Plan 2.0, comprehensively promoting the construction of "New Engineering, New Medical Science, New Agricultural Science, and New Liberal Arts," with the concept of New Liberal Arts gradually gaining prominence [3]. Professor Wang Yuguang of Peking University and Professor Zhang Bin of Renmin University are members of the Ministry of Education's New Liberal Arts Construction Working Group. Many universities are currently building or preparing to build New Liberal Arts programs. What position does library science hold within New Liberal Arts, and how should it manifest itself? Library science programs should stand out in their universities' New Liberal Arts construction and achieve development. How to expand second-level disciplines and strengthen and enlarge discipline construction is an important question.

Meanwhile, the national discipline catalog is undergoing adjustment. Discussions in 2019 about the first-level discipline name were based on this background. China conducts a major discipline catalog adjustment every ten years through rigorous procedures. The number of discipline categories has grown from 10 in 1981 to 12 in 1997, and currently stands at 13, with library, information, and archives management located within the management category. In the latest adjustment, interdisciplinary studies may become the 14th discipline category. Interdisciplinary studies have developed rapidly in recent years; statistics show that from 2011 to 2014, 147 universities established 480 interdisciplinary pro-

grams (excluding military science).

An important agenda item at the conference was whether to rename the first-level discipline of library, information, and archives management, with a special report prepared on this issue. Most experts believed that renaming would be acceptable if beneficial to discipline development. Some suggested using “Information Resources Management” as the first-level discipline name, others proposed “Information Management,” while some insisted on retaining “Library, Information, and Archives Management.” During this process, issues concerning second-level discipline construction were also discussed. New second-level disciplines have developed based on the original three, including information resources management, editing and publishing (including publishing distribution), information analysis, ancient book preservation, medical information management, and data science. Consensus has been reached among experts on how to develop these second-level disciplines: expansion must be planned based on the three original disciplines of library, information, and archival science.

3. Library Science Education and First-Level Discipline Point Construction

3.1 Graduate Education in Library Science

On January 8, 2018, the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council officially announced the results of the 2017 review for new first-level doctoral degree authorization points nationwide. The additions to first-level doctoral programs in library, information, and archives management fell into two categories: (1) upgrading from existing second-level disciplines to first-level, including Nankai University (library science, information science), Central China Normal University (information science), and Sun Yat-sen University (library science); and (2) direct addition of first-level disciplines where no second-level discipline previously existed, including Hebei University, Nanjing Agricultural University, and Xiangtan University. As of July 2020, East China Normal University had passed its self-established first-level doctoral program in library, information, and archives management, in which the author also participated in the evaluation. To date, the number of first-level doctoral programs in library, information, and archives management nationwide has reached 12, with further expansion anticipated.

According to survey data, 39 institutions currently offer undergraduate programs in library, information, and archives management, 56 offer master’s programs, and 24 offer doctoral programs. In 2018, a special evaluation was conducted for Master of Library and Information Science professional degree authorization points, with 12 institutions passing the evaluation. In recent years, the professional degree in library and information science has developed rapidly, growing from 18 universities enrolling students in 2010 to 49 institutions nationwide training professional master’s students by 2018. Both enrollment and graduation prospects are promising, with some universities enrolling over 100

students per cohort. These developments in library and information science and library science reflect strong social demand.

3.2 Undergraduate Education in Library Science and the “Double Ten-Thousand Plan”

Amid new higher education initiatives and programs, how should undergraduate programs develop? The “Double Ten-Thousand Plan” for first-class undergraduate program construction includes 4,054 national-level first-class undergraduate programs (1,691 in the central track and 2,363 in the local track), along with 6,210 provincial-level first-class undergraduate programs identified through review and recommendation by provincial education administrative departments. This represents significant progress in the 2019 national “Double Ten-Thousand Plan.”

The Ministry of Education’s Library Science Teaching Guidance Committee and the Archives Science Teaching Guidance Committee played important roles in recommending double-first-class programs. To date, among library science undergraduate programs, Wuhan University and Sun Yat-sen University have entered the national “Double Ten-Thousand” central track, with none yet in the local track. For archival science, Renmin University and Yunnan University are in the central track, while Shanghai University and Xiangtan University are in the local track. At the provincial level, based on currently available information, the archival science program at Heilongjiang University (2019) was selected as a provincial first-class undergraduate program, while library science programs at Northeast Normal University (2019) and Zhengzhou University (2020) were selected. Therefore, in the coming period, library science must seek development opportunities within the “Double Ten-Thousand Plan,” with each institution striving to become a first-class program at either the central or local level.

3.3 Internationalization: The Impact of the iSchool Movement

The iSchool movement has been discussed extensively for a long time, with both enthusiastic embrace and opposition, as well as calm and observant attitudes. Against this backdrop, as of 2019, there were 107 iSchool members worldwide, with 12 from China; by May 2020, the global total had reached 115 members, with China contributing 15 institutions. Among these 15, the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Nankai University, and Soochow University joined in 2020, while other institutions are preparing to join.

Does joining the iSchool movement benefit library science development? This must be discussed from two perspectives. On one hand, participation in certain iSchool activities can help gain international recognition and expand disciplinary influence. On the other hand, we must note the “de-libraryization” tendency within the current iSchool movement, which runs counter to library science’s principle of “upholding integrity.” While library science must innovate, it must also preserve its fundamentals, and this perspective must be brought into the

iSchool movement. This is a task for the academic community. We cannot avoid internationalization but should instead advocate for the internationalization of library science, while never forgetting its fundamental nature.

4. Discipline Status and “14th Five-Year” Development Strategy

Discipline construction involves research on talent cultivation and disciplinary development. Disciplinary status and influence are crucial—a discipline must have both status and positioning to seek development. How can we elevate disciplinary status? First is status within the university. Between 2001 and 2012, six universities established schools of information management, expanding scale and rapidly elevating their status within their institutions, thereby gaining greater discourse power and access to disciplinary resources. Universities with library science programs must first strive for position within their institutions. Within the first-level discipline, several scholars have already entered university leadership positions, such as Professor Feng Huiling (former Vice President of Renmin University), Professor Xia Lixin (Vice President of Central China Normal University), Professor Sha Yongzhong (Vice President of Lanzhou University), and Professor Wu Ping (Vice President of Wuhan University), as well as Professor Yao Leye (Vice President of Sichuan University). Others have assumed important university positions, such as Professor Chen Chuanfu (Dean of Graduate School at Wuhan University), Professor Zhang Bin (Executive Deputy Director of the Organization Department at Renmin University), and Professor Li Yuelin (Director of International Academic Exchange at Nankai University). These represent important manifestations of the status of the library, information, and archives management first-level discipline.

Second is status within the profession. What position does library science hold within the library profession and in the information management and information fields? The discipline must more closely integrate with the profession and secure its position within it, tightly connecting discipline construction, education, and professional practice. Third is disciplinary status. Beyond university and professional status, we must further elevate library science’s position within the broader academic landscape. These three dimensions of status—within the university, within the profession, and within the discipline—are all crucial for library science discipline construction and development and require greater attention from the academic community.

Looking ahead, library science should embrace three development perspectives. First is a strategic development perspective. Library science discipline construction must have strategic vision, particularly for the 14th Five-Year Plan and strategic directions toward 2035. In setting majors, curricula, and compiling textbooks, we must not focus only on the next three to five years but must look ahead ten, fifteen, or even more years into the future. Only by preserving our fundamentals can we achieve long-term development. Second is a collaborative development perspective. To further develop the first-level discipline

of library, information, and archives management, library science must play a key role. Library science discipline construction needs to expand the scale of doctoral programs while promoting the combination of academic degrees and professional degrees. Institutions like Nanjing University, Sun Yat-sen University, and Nankai University, which are known for their strengths in library science and have historically been leaders in the field, can further consolidate library science's status while developing synergistically with other disciplines. Third is a high-quality development perspective, emphasizing high-quality talent cultivation, high-quality academic research, and high-quality social services in library science. Improving quality and developing library science requires not only current efforts from academia and the profession but also long-term strategy, collaboration, and high-quality development across generations of scholars. I believe that with consensus on the fundamentals of library science, the first-level discipline of library, information, and archives management can achieve further development, and library science discipline construction and talent cultivation will make even greater progress.

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

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