

## Library Receipt of Research Postprints Based on a Pledge Model

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The library physical donation model faces dilemmas, while the cash donation model based on online crowdfunding also encounters numerous problems. Although the library pledge donation model, which integrates characteristics of both cash and physical donations, possesses various advantages, its practical effectiveness remains less than satisfactory, leaving room for further innovation. [Method/Process] This study conducts a detailed analysis of the dilemmas and formation mechanisms of the library physical donation model and its innovative explorations, comprehensively investigates the current practice status of library pledge donation in China, and proposes an innovation framework for the library pledge donation model based on analyzing its advantages and exploring its existing problems. [Results/Conclusion] Based on internet thinking and technology, aiming to enhance donation efficiency and quality, strengthening effect feedback and process transparency, creating a standardized, easily replicable, and operable pledge system and implementation plan, and forming a multi-win public welfare ecology constitute the direction and pathway for library pledge donation innovation.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

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Research on Library Donations Based on the Designated Object Model  
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#### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The traditional in-kind donation model for libraries faces significant challenges, while cash donation models based on online crowd-

funding also suffer from numerous problems. The designated donation model, which combines features of both cash and in-kind donations, offers considerable advantages, yet its practical implementation has yielded unsatisfactory results, indicating substantial room for further innovation. **[Method/Process]** This paper provides a detailed analysis of the dilemmas and underlying mechanisms of the in-kind donation model and its innovative explorations, comprehensively surveys the current state of designated donation practices in Chinese libraries, and proposes an innovative framework for library designated donation models based on an analysis of their strengths and identified problems. **[Result/Conclusion]** Leveraging Internet thinking and technology to enhance donation efficiency and quality, strengthening effect feedback and process transparency, creating standardized, easily replicable, and operable donation systems and implementation plans, and forming a mutually beneficial public welfare ecosystem represent the direction and path for innovation in library designated donations.

**Keywords:** library; designated donation model; donation

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The Public Library Law implemented in 2018 explicitly states: “The state encourages citizens, legal persons, and other organizations to donate to public libraries according to law.” Libraries of all types have long regarded accepting donations as a routine operation. Accepting donations serves as both an important channel for libraries to acquire literature resources at low cost and a crucial means for social forces to participate in library construction, holding significant meaning for library resource development and the cultivation of a public welfare culture. Both in-kind donation models and crowdfunding-based cash donation models face urgent operational challenges, while the emerging designated donation model shows promise as a new approach to resolving libraries’ donation dilemmas.

## 1 Research Status

Currently, research on library designated donations remains relatively scarce both domestically and internationally, though related studies on library donations are more abundant, primarily covering four aspects:

### 1.1 Survey and Analysis of Domestic Library Donation Practices

Survey targets mainly include libraries in Liaoning Province, libraries across the Taiwan Strait, “211 Project” university libraries in East China, and provincial public libraries. These investigations reveal that in-kind donations constitute the primary content of library donations, with most libraries beginning to experiment with innovations to the in-kind donation model.

## 1.2 Innovation Research on Library In-Kind Donation Models

As the main model for library donations, in-kind donation faces numerous problems in the new environment. The mismatch between donation needs and supply not only affects donation quality but also undermines the donor experience and dampens enthusiasm. Consequently, scholars have proposed various innovative directions and measures, including: strengthening donation promotion through the Internet, developing dedicated donation websites, enriching donation feedback and acknowledgment methods, deepening donation information disclosure, integrating donations with library social services, and improving donation management mechanisms. While these improvements and explorations provide direction for library donation innovation, in-kind donations inevitably become a bottleneck for further innovation.

## 1.3 Innovation Research on Internet Crowdfunding-Based Library Donation Models

Replacing in-kind donations with cash donations represents a significant breakthrough, offering new opportunities for library donation innovation. However, numerous problems persist. Public crowdfunding, characterized by cash donations, mass participation, small contributions, and online payment, provides an innovative approach for library donations, though it is currently mainly used to raise funds for school libraries in impoverished areas, differing substantially from traditional library donations. Issues with information transparency and effect feedback remain problematic. A new library crowdfunding model featuring mass micro-donations, designated library resources, library vendor coordination, extreme information transparency, and continuous feedback on donation effects further innovates upon library crowdfunding, absorbing its advantages while strengthening transparency and feedback. However, this asymmetric crowdfunding model presents considerable operational difficulties, involves multiple stakeholders, requires integration of heterogeneous systems, and faces significant promotion challenges. Further exploration is needed for the integration and innovation of cash donations in libraries.

## 1.4 Research on Foreign Library Donation Practices

In Western countries, particularly the United States, in-kind and cash donations constitute the primary methods of library giving. Harvard University Library once received book donations equivalent to half its collection, while the New York Public Library derives one-third of its tens of millions of dollars in annual operating costs from social donations. U.S. libraries have consistently received substantial and robust support from foundations, often in the form of planned, regular, sustained funding rather than one-time donations. Acknowledgment methods in American libraries are similar to those in China, including website announcements, certificate issuance, and ceremonies, but U.S. libraries additionally assist donors with tax deduction procedures.

Foreign library donation practices share several characteristics: donations represent a relatively large proportion of library resource investment; cash donations account for a high percentage of the donation structure; and various public welfare foundations in society provide substantial support to libraries. This literature review reveals that in-kind donation remains the mainstream model in Chinese libraries, though its problems require urgent solutions. Internet crowdfunding-based cash donation models also face issues with feedback, incentives, and operational difficulty. The designated donation model, attempted by several domestic libraries in recent years, offers a potential breakthrough for current dilemmas, yet targeted research remains limited.

## 2 Overview of Library Designated Donation Practices

Using search terms “library + designated donation,” “book + designated donation,” and “library + donation” across search engines, WeChat, and Weibo, and examining donation sections on “211 Project” university library and provincial public library websites, we identified 25 designated donation projects in China after individual analysis and screening (see Table 1 ).

### 2.1 Participating Entities

University libraries, alumni associations, and foundations serve as the main initiators and active promoters of designated donations, with alumni being the primary participants. Among the 25 cases, 21 involve university libraries, plus three college-level libraries. Except for the National Library of China’s ancient book restoration project, no other public libraries were found to conduct designated donation activities. Although libraries provide the resources for designation, alumni associations and foundations are important drivers or even leaders, with most university library designated donation projects involving these entities. Among the 24 university cases, 15 explicitly target alumni, while the remaining six, though not limiting their targets, still primarily focus on alumni.

### 2.2 Donation Types and Fund Usage

By designation type, library designated donations can be categorized as book designation, seat designation, bookshelf designation, computer designation, ancient book restoration designation, and building designation. Among the 25 cases, most libraries designate books, tables, and chairs as donation objects, except for the National Library’s ancient book restoration and several college-level libraries’ computers and furniture.

Although donated funds are mostly managed through foundations, the majority of these funds ultimately support library-related projects such as literature acquisition and reading activities.

### 2.3 Payment Channels and Donation Amounts

Donation payment channels are diversified with varying donation amounts. Payment methods include on-site payment, bank transfer, remittance, online payment, and campus card payment, with mobile payments like Alipay and WeChat widely applied. A few libraries set donation amounts based on actual book prices, while most establish fixed prices regardless of the actual cost.

### 2.4 Acknowledgment Methods

Donation acknowledgment methods are more diverse. Beyond traditional approaches like website acknowledgments, alumni publication mentions, certificate issuance, and archival registration, most libraries attach donors' names, graduation years, majors, and messages to designated books through stickers or stamps. For table and chair designations, they typically create nameplates with donor information for embedding or display.

## 3 Analysis of the Library Designated Donation Model

### 3.1 Business Process

Compared with in-kind donations, the designated donation model improves upon concepts and processes, enhancing library donation efficiency and quality. However, current practices reveal problems and substantial room for improvement. Taking book designation as an example, the business process includes:

1. **Library Planning:** Libraries select appropriate collection ranges for designation, coordinate with relevant departments to establish online and offline payment channels, and promote the campaign through official websites, WeChat official accounts, and alumni groups.
2. **Donor Designation:** Donors select books from the designated range, pay the specified amount, provide personal information and dedication messages, and choose the publicity level for their information.
3. **Personalized Processing:** Libraries stamp designation marks on designated books, attach stickers presenting donors' names, majors, graduation years, and messages according to their wishes, acknowledge donors on websites, and provide query services for designation information.
4. **Fund Return:** According to the plan, university foundations or finance departments return donated funds to libraries or directly allocate them for collection development and activity implementation.

### 3.2 Advantages

The designated donation model offers several benefits:

**3.2.1 Quality Control:** The model adjusts the in-kind donation business process to form a new flow: “accept cash donation → designate existing physical

object → personalized secondary processing.” While donors designate physical items like books or furniture, libraries actually receive cash. This allows libraries to plan designation scope and forms based on collection status before donations and allocate funds according to development needs afterward, effectively avoiding the cumbersome processes, uncontrollable literature quality, and mismatched supply and demand issues of in-kind donations.

**3.2.2 Enhanced Donor Experience:** Although not accepting physical items, cash donations are more flexible and convenient, eliminating the need to purchase books for donation. Online payment methods like WeChat and Alipay facilitate easier transactions. Designation does not substantially affect donors’ choice but rather provides greater selection space based on the entire library collection. Personalized processing with dedication messages on book flyleaves brings donors significant spiritual returns and imaginative space, offering greater appeal than crowdfunding cash donations.

**3.2.3 Public Welfare and Campus Culture:** The connection between donors and designated resources, revealed through methods like flyleaf markings, not only strengthens this bond but also creates a positive public welfare atmosphere. For universities, it helps build spiritual connections between alumni and their alma mater, promoting campus culture construction, which in turn nurtures and educates readers.

### 3.3 Problem Exploration

Despite its advantages, the designated donation model’s practical results have been unsatisfactory, with considerable room for improvement. Current problems include:

**(1) Low Penetration Rate:** Manifested in three aspects: few libraries conduct designated donations—only 25 cases among over 2,000 university libraries and 4,000+ county-level and above public libraries; event-based implementation lacks continuity—only seven libraries conduct designated donations as routine business, while most treat it as occasional activities during anniversaries or graduation seasons; and limited designation scope hinders popularization.

**(2) Low Efficiency:** Evident in donation outcomes. Among libraries publishing donation data, results are underwhelming. Shanghai University of Finance and Economics’ library furniture designation project achieved zero donations; Shanghai Jiao Tong University’s furniture designation project completed only 60.8% of its target over three years; Beijing Normal University’s book designation project raised merely 8,120 yuan from 2010-2014. These poor figures cannot mask the efforts invested, revealing the embarrassment of low-efficiency designated donations.

The unsatisfactory performance stems primarily from:

**(1) Opaque Fund Usage and Insufficient Feedback:** Although designated funds correspond to specific resources like books or furniture, these resources are

already purchased and require no additional expenditure, so donated funds must be allocated elsewhere. However, fund usage information is not transparent—15 of 25 samples only vaguely state funds will support collection development or activities, while several others don't even specify library usage. Regarding feedback, aside from innovative flyleaf markings and furniture nameplates, overall acknowledgment methods remain traditional, with insufficient, untimely, and non-interactive feedback leaving potential underutilized.

**(2) Inadequate Promotion:** Most campaigns target only alumni and campus communities, neglecting broader social public welfare forces with greater scale and potential. Promotion channels are limited to library, alumni association, and foundation websites and WeChat accounts, leaving considerable room for improvement in promotional intensity, effectiveness, and methods.

**(3) Lack of Mature Operational Plans and Standardized Information Systems:** Unlike in-kind donations, designated donations involve receiving cash while designating literature, increasing implementation complexity through payment channel construction, financial risk concerns, and personalized processing of designated objects. Current practices lack replicable mature implementation plans and standardized information systems, resulting in inefficient independent exploration with poor reproducibility, dampening libraries' motivation to launch designated donation programs.

## 4 Model Improvements for Library Designated Donations

As a new model, designated donations require further exploration and improvement. While libraries can designate various resources including books, furniture, equipment, and buildings, the designation models share similar characteristics. Improvement should focus on: (1) building management information systems to reduce operational difficulty and improve efficiency; and (2) strengthening information feedback to donors to enhance their sense of participation and satisfaction. Using book designation as an example, this section explores model improvements, proposing a unified online platform connecting multiple libraries and donors to centralize business processing and information communication.

### 4.1 Desired Scenarios

Through innovation that leverages designated donation advantages while addressing current problems, the following scenarios could be realized:

**4.1.1 Donor Perspective:** Seeing a book designation campaign on social media, a donor scans a QR code to designate a book titled *Attitude* from a university library collection, paying 59 yuan online and providing relevant information. Thereafter, the donor receives feedback on every circulation of the book and occasionally exchanges reading insights with borrowers, experiencing happiness through designating a book.

**4.1.2 Reader Perspective:** Discovering a uniquely labeled copy of *Attitude*

in the library, a reader scans the QR code on the flyleaf to view the donor's name, graduation year, major, and dedication message. The reader can also share reading reflections with the donor through the link.

**4.1.3 Library Perspective:** By logging into a third-party platform webpage, setting up the library management system interface, and entering the university foundation's dedicated donation account, the library completes platform construction. After receiving real-time designation information, the library prints QR code stickers for designated books' flyleaves. Donated funds are settled daily, with usage promptly fed back through the system.

**4.1.4 Platform Perspective:** Any library can access the designated donation platform, and any donor can designate books to libraries through it. The platform identifies popular books through the library management system interface for priority recommendation to donors and charges management fees based on donation amounts.

## 4.2 Model Framework

Based on analysis of current strengths and weaknesses, and aiming to improve efficiency and quality, Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper] presents a new designated donation framework with the following business logic:

**Designation Process:** 1. The designated donation platform periodically traverses library collection and circulation information through the library management system interface, using big data to identify popular books and generate designation catalogs for presentation to donors. 2. Donors select libraries and books, submit payment through the platform to libraries, and provide personal information and dedication messages. 3. Libraries send electronic donation certificates to donors, print and attach designation stickers to book flyleaves, and promptly report fund usage to donors. 4. The platform collects circulation information and reader feedback on designated books to form designation effect information for timely feedback to donors. Libraries provide real-time feedback to donors during book circulation, and readers can share reading reflections through the system. 5. Readers can communicate with donors through QR code contacts in book flyleaves.

## 4.3 Innovation Interpretation

The new library designated donation model addresses many practical problems, helping expand donation scale and improve efficiency and quality. Its innovations include:

**4.3.1 "Internet Plus" Innovation in Library Donations:** The model fully utilizes Internet technology and thinking, representing cross-boundary integration of the Internet and library donation work. Through technical, conceptual, and model innovation, it reconstructs organizational models and business processes, respecting human nature by addressing stakeholders' interests and core

concerns, strengthening information connections, and forming an open, efficient public welfare culture ecosystem.

**4.3.2 Facilitating Popularization and Promotion:** The third-party commercial platform serves as the core, establishing one-to-many relationships with libraries, donors, and readers. Any library can launch designated donation business through simple application and setup, any donor can designate books to libraries through the platform, and readers can provide feedback. This standardized model reduces implementation difficulty, encourages more libraries to adopt designated donations, and commercial operations enhance promotion efficiency and attract more donors.

**4.3.3 Emphasizing Transparency and Effect Feedback:** Compared with current practices, the new model strengthens connections and communication among libraries, donors, and readers through information systems. Libraries promptly disclose fund usage, which donors can query through the system, significantly improving transparency. Every circulation of designated books can be fed back to donors in real-time according to their preferences, and communication between readers and donors constitutes an important form of donation effect feedback.

**4.3.4 Creating a Mutually Beneficial Public Welfare Ecosystem:** The model innovation achieves win-win outcomes: more libraries can conduct designated donation business on a larger scale; donors have more choices during designation and receive timely, continuous feedback afterward for greater spiritual satisfaction; readers experience public welfare culture while gaining opportunities to communicate with donors; and platform operators can obtain commercial benefits from libraries.

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

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