

Postprint: An Experimental Comparative Study on the Effectiveness of University Classic Reading Promotion Models

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To compare the effectiveness of different classic reading promotion models and facilitate the effective implementation of classic reading promotion practices.

[Method/Process] Based on the degree of control that reading promotion activities exert over the audience's reading process and outcomes, current classic reading promotion methods are categorized into four types: classic bibliography recommendation model, conventional reading exchange model, reading project model, and reading community model. Experimental research and questionnaire surveys are employed to conduct a comparative analysis of the promotion effectiveness of these four models.

[Results/Conclusion] The reading community model represents the ideal approach for university classic reading promotion.

Full Text

An Experimental Comparative Study on the Effectiveness of University Classic Reading Promotion Models

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] This study compares the effectiveness of different classic reading promotion models to facilitate the implementation of successful classic reading promotion practices. [Method/process] Based on the degree of control that reading promotion activities exert over the audience's reading process and outcomes, current classic reading promotion methods are categorized into four models: classic bibliographic recommendation, regular reading communication, reading project, and reading community. Experimental re-

search and questionnaire surveys were employed to conduct a comparative analysis of the promotional effectiveness of these four models. [Result/conclusion] The reading community model emerges as the ideal approach for university classic reading promotion.

Keywords: university; classic reading promotion model; experimental effect; reading community **Classification Number:** G252 **DOI:** 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2019.18.005

1 Research Background

In the process of building a society that embraces reading for all, reading promotion has become not only a core business of public libraries but also a key service component of university libraries. According to a previous national survey of university libraries, 91.53% of respondents believed their libraries attach importance to reading promotion, and 68.93% of libraries conduct reading promotion activities year-round. These figures demonstrate that university libraries generally prioritize and have implemented reading promotion initiatives. Among these, humanities classics constitute the focal point of promotion, ranking first among all resource types with a selection frequency of 88.14% [1]. This indicates that classic reading promotion has become the mainstay of university library reading promotion efforts.

Building upon diverse campus classic reading promotion practices, researchers have conducted extensive studies. A title search for “classic reading” in the CNKI database yielded 1,869 results (as of March 10, 2019). The findings show that literature on classic reading methods existed as early as 1956, and by 2008, over 50 papers were published annually. The number continued to grow, reaching 104 in 2011, surpassing 214 in 2015, and peaking at 279 in 2017. Examination of these publications reveals themes encompassing the significance and value of classic reading, the relationship between classic reading and cultural inheritance or humanistic quality enhancement, connections with general education, classic reading methodologies, library promotion strategies [2], application of new media and technologies for classic recommendation, and classic reading education in primary and secondary schools [3].

Among these predominantly theoretical analyses, some researchers have identified problems in classic reading promotion practice. For instance, Wang Yu et al. noted that many libraries remain perplexed and indifferent toward classic reading [4], while Qu Shaobing et al. argued that classic reading promotion lacks systematicity, effectiveness, and sustainability [5]. Other scholars have proposed more systematic design frameworks from the perspective of comprehensively advancing classic reading and enhancing promotion effectiveness, such as Chen Youhua et al.’s suggestion to construct a classic reading promotion system from the angles of physical space, mobile platforms, and diverse promotional activities [6], and Zhu Yuanliang et al.’s proposal of a “five-dimensional integration” university classic reading system encompassing physical space, promotion plat-

forms, promotion projects, testing systems, and effect evaluation [7].

Regarding effect evaluation, researchers have proposed indicator systems, such as Yue Xiuzhi's reading promotion activity evaluation index system comprising 6 first-level indicators, 19 second-level indicators, and 92 third-level indicators from a public project perspective [8]. Various evaluation methods have also been studied, including dynamic fuzzy comprehensive evaluation [9], refined evaluation [10], and the AHP method [11], though these focus on evaluating a single promotion model. Among published literature on classic reading, no studies have employed experimental research methods to compare the effectiveness of different classic reading promotion models.

Overall, current university campus classic reading promotion methods and models are highly diverse, yet lack empirical research testing the implementation effects of different models. We live in an era that attaches great importance to cultural confidence and the inheritance of excellent traditional culture, and promoting classic reading constitutes a fundamental pathway for advancing this mission. Therefore, exploring effective classic reading promotion models based on scientific evidence is a proposition that all promotion entities must consider. Accordingly, this study undertakes two tasks: first, systematically summarizing and categorizing current university classic reading promotion models using characteristic classification principles; and second, employing experimental research and questionnaire surveys to conduct comparative analyses of different models' effectiveness, thereby identifying the optimal model to provide substantive guidance for university classic reading promotion practice.

2 Summary of Classic Reading Promotion Practice Models

Based on various forms of comprehensive promotion and practical attempts in reading promotion, this study summarizes university classic reading promotion into four models, as shown in .

2.1 Bibliographic Recommendation Model

The bibliographic recommendation model primarily involves recommending classic titles. Organizers publish classic reading lists, and some may arrange reading exchange activities for readers. Currently, almost all university libraries publish classic reading recommendation lists, but generally do not involve reading process control or outcome evaluation.

2.2 Reading Communication Model

The reading communication model mainly consists of single reading exchange activities. These activities focus on reader communication, featuring several core readers sharing their experiences or inviting reading instructors to introduce specific classics or categories and exchange reading experiences. Primary forms

include reading clubs and human libraries, without reading process control or outcome evaluation.

2.3 Reading Promotion Project Model

The reading promotion project model operates in project format, with planning, organization, and objectives, often supplemented by incentive measures. Activities include book review competitions, recitation contests, and various performance competitions. Examples include One Campus One Book [12], One City One Book [13], teachers and students reading together [14], classic book review contests, and classic recitation competitions [15]. While these activities culminate in selecting winners and awarding prizes, reading process and outcome evaluation remain difficult to control.

2.4 Reading Community Model

The reading community model is primarily established based on community theory, representing a relatively rare approach. Communities, with their strong cohesion and members' profound sense of belonging, have become effective organizational forms for solving problems that individuals cannot tackle alone [16]. The presence of authoritative forces within a community provides cohesion and serves as a sanctuary for community security and a guarantee for member progress. Shared goals, identity, and belonging constitute the main characteristics of a community, with community culture construction serving as the primary pillar for its sustainable development [17].

Regarding reading groups, reading associations and reading communities also exist, but these primarily conduct the first three types of promotional activities, with relatively loose member structures, lacking strong cohesion or close collaborative relationships. In contrast, reading community members share common, binding beliefs and values, and build strong, positive reading collaborative relationships under authoritative guidance, forming cohesion and a sense of belonging. Faced with the current difficulty in controlling reading promotion effectiveness, the reading community model—with its strong member cohesion and sense of belonging, combined with expert guidance, effective management by reading promoters, and community culture construction—holds promise as a solution.

Therefore, the reading community model is a reading promotion approach conducted in diverse reading spaces to enhance members' reading-related abilities, cultivate reading habits, and acquire knowledge to realize life values. It involves expert guidance, organization by reading promoters, and reader participation, featuring strong collaborative relationships with mutual influence, incentive measures, and community culture construction.

Current prototypes of the reading community model include Northwestern Polytechnical University's "Little White's Big Challenge—21-Day Reading Check-in

Ranking Competition” [18], Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics’ Summer Training Camp [19], and Shenyang Normal University’s “Study Tour Reading” model [20]. However, these prototypes have not yet formed a fixed reading model, sustainable development mechanism, or reading community culture, nor have they specifically explored classic reading, requiring further improvement.

3 Experimental Design

3.1 Experimental Model Design

Based on the four models above, this study designed a series of experiments and conducted comparative analysis of results through questionnaire surveys. To test the effectiveness of different models, this study utilized multiple student reading organizations at a university to design four comparative test groups corresponding to the aforementioned models.

Group 1 was the bibliographic recommendation group, where readers organized activities independently with the purpose of recommending classics. Group 2 was the reading communication group, involving reading promoters and reader groups aiming to stimulate reading interest through classic reading exchange activities. Group 3 was the reading project group, involving reading promoters and student groups in project-based planning and implementation with reading tasks and incentive mechanisms, aiming to cultivate classic reading habits and interest. Activities in this category, such as classic book review contests and whole-campus shared reading, were held annually at the researchers’ university but lacked process control and outcome evaluation. For this experiment, the research team upgraded the shared reading activity to include reading process control, making the effects more pronounced. Group 4 was the reading community group, involving reading promoters, expert guides, and reader groups with incentive mechanisms to solidify reading achievements and form community culture, aiming to cultivate classic reading habits and interest while building a strong reading atmosphere and culture.

3.2 Selection of Test Subjects

All test subjects were drawn from student reading organizations under a university library. The library supervised numerous student reading organizations, and this experiment selected four groups—A, B, C, and D—for testing. These organizations conducted reading activities of varying depth, aligning with the experimental group design.

The bibliographic recommendation group (Group A) comprised members from Association A, organized by the association president with a member exchange group, involving 200 participants. The reading communication group (Group B) comprised members from Group B, guided by reading promoters who led students in reading and organizing activities. During actual testing, members

were drawn from first- and second-year students in a particular school, with 150 participants. The reading project group (Group C) comprised members from Association C, guided by library reading promoters, with 100 participants. The reading community group (Group D) comprised members from Classic Reading Group D, guided by reading promoters with expert participation, organized by group leaders, with 80 participants. To ensure unbiased results, all test members were unaware they were in an experimental environment, guaranteeing objectivity and authenticity.

3.3 Experimental Process

This experiment was not completed simultaneously, spanning a considerable timeframe with each group tested separately.

Association A, participating in the bibliographic recommendation group, had been established for 20 years. After World Book Day 2017, the association's supervising teacher required the president to post daily reading themes and recommend readings in the Readers Association QQ group at 9 PM each night, with reading exchange activities organized every Friday, including sharing sessions and film screenings. The activity deadline was April 23, 2018, lasting one year. However, this activity had become a habit for group members and continues to this day. The experiment randomly selected one week for tracking and investigation.

Group B, participating in the reading communication group, had conducted over 60 reading promotion activities since its establishment in 2015. The experiment selected an activity in May 2018 for tracking and investigation. Planned since April and jointly organized by the library and a school youth league committee, with the school student union as 承办方, all participants chose to read the classic *Les Misérables*. After approximately one month of reading, a large reading exchange meeting was held on May 23.

Association C, participating in the reading project group, was established in 2016. The association frequently organized classic recitation activities, with members winning awards in major recitation competitions at various levels, including the first prize in the National College Students' Chinese Classics Recitation Competition in 2018. The association also regularly held classic reading exchange activities. This experiment tracked and investigated their *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* reading exchange activity, which began planning in March 2018 in project format, 正式实施 in April, and featured a large reading exchange event on the evening of April 25. Organizers established a 21-day reading habit formation plan for participants and worked closely with student departments, which recommended student reading promoters with strong organizational capabilities to coordinate implementation. After launching the activity, student reading promoters posted daily reading tasks via an online platform; participants completed tasks daily, described reading content, excerpted classic passages, and wrote reading reflections uploaded to the platform, culminating in

classic book reviews. Incentive measures included rewards and honors.

Classic Reading Group D, participating in the reading community group, was established by library reading promoters in September 2017. Activity planning built upon the reading project model by adding expert guidance and real-time reading exchanges. Organizers established a semester-long reading plan for all members, longer than the 21-day plan but without requiring a specific number of books per semester. After launching the activity, experts delivered three lectures on classic reading techniques, classic book review writing skills, and classic recitation techniques. Mentors for each classic delivered guided reading lectures, guiding members in reading classics and expressing their insights. Student reading promoters posted daily reading tasks via an online platform to control and track the reading process. Participants completed tasks daily, described reading content, excerpted classic passages, and wrote reading reflections uploaded to the platform. Weekly reading exchange activities were planned and organized by different student reading promoters with themes, inviting experts or mentors to evaluate, answer questions, and interact, while recognizing outstanding readers, excellent book reviews, and high performers on classic tests. Ten classic reading exchange report sessions were organized consecutively, one per week, throughout the semester. After the activity, organizers summarized the process and outcomes, established relevant mechanisms and culture, and solidified achievements by publishing them in a collection.

Given the substantial time span across the four experiments and lack of uniform duration, an explanation regarding the impact of time length on reading promotion effectiveness is necessary. In Experiment A, the activity has continued for nearly two years with fixed participants, weekly consistency, and this study selected one week's activity to investigate its effect. In Experiment B, reading promotion activities continued for nearly three years with monthly activities of the same model, and this study selected one activity to investigate its effect. In Experiment C, to highlight effectiveness, the experiment incorporated 21-day reading habit training and process control from effect control measures. The difference from Experiment D was that Experiment D added expert guidance, companionship, and real-time reading exchanges (for example, when reading *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the mentor participated throughout, creating strong cohesion, with members eventually following the mentor's other courses), and gradually formed a strong reading community culture during the activity (including institutional guarantees, platform construction, reading environment development, incentive measures, reading achievement displays, and member communication). Groups A and B lasted two to three years but lacked activity control, resulting in unsatisfactory experimental effects. Groups C and D were shorter in duration but demonstrated significant effects. Therefore, the effectiveness of the four groups did not have an absolute causal relationship with experimental duration; the primary influencing factors were the control intensity and implementation model applied to reading promotion activities. The experimental results confirmed this.

4 Experimental Results

This study hypothesized several factors for evaluating reading promotion effectiveness: whether reading behavior occurred, whether reading goals were completed, whether reading habits were formed, and whether deep reading behaviors such as book review creation and classic reenactment were demonstrated. Based on these elements reflecting reading effectiveness—reading behavior occurrence, reading goal completion, and reading habit formation—the experiment designed questionnaires to obtain statistical data and conducted interviews with relevant members. Deep reading data were derived from book review quantity and classic reenactment behaviors in exchange meetings, such as recitations and stage play performances.

4.1 Questionnaire Statistics

In the questionnaire survey, the bibliographic recommendation group distributed 180 questionnaires and recovered 162 valid responses; the reading communication group distributed 150 and recovered 138; the reading project group distributed 100 and recovered 100; and the reading community group distributed 80 and recovered 80. The minimum recovery rate was 90%, with an overall good recovery rate.

4.1.1 Reading Behavior Regarding reading behavior occurrence and reading goal completion, the question asked: “Have you finished reading a classic?” Options included: finished, read most, read some, and have not started. Results are shown in .

Based on , the percentage of reading behavior data among valid questionnaires was calculated with weighted values. Setting the efficiency value for finishing (a) at 100%, reading most (b) at 67%, reading some (c) at 33%, and not reading (d) at 0, the efficiency value was calculated using the method: $a1 + b0.67 + c0.33 + d0$. The results are shown in .

4.1.2 Reading Habits Regarding reading habit formation, the bibliographic recommendation and reading communication groups did not specifically establish habit training, while the reading project group implemented 21-day habit training based on psychological habit formation methods. The reading community group established training including reading interest cultivation, habit formation, writing training, and expression ability training, reinforced with long-term reading plans to consolidate these abilities and habits.

The questionnaire included: whether there was a reading plan; whether daily reading occurred; whether daily classic passage excerpting occurred; whether daily reading reflection writing occurred; whether daily classic passage recitation occurred. After completing the statistical analysis of questions 2, 3, and 4, results were carefully compared with reading task submissions on the

online platform from the reading project and reading community groups, with questionnaire results basically matching actual conditions, as shown in .

The data for all five results were weighted at 20% based on their proportion in valid questionnaires to obtain efficiency values, as shown in .

4.1.3 Deep Reading Related Data Guiding readers into deep reading represents an important manifestation of effective reading promotion. Data reflecting deep reading thinking, creation, and expression were primarily derived from book reviews and classic reenactment in exchange meetings. Results are shown in .

4.2 Analysis

The questionnaire survey and deep reading data analysis clearly show that the reading community group achieved the highest efficiency value, followed by the reading project group, with the bibliographic recommendation and reading communication groups scoring far lower.

Reading promotion aims to advance reading for all, with the strategic goal of improving human cultural quality, enhancing national soft power, and accelerating national prosperity and rejuvenation. It comprises activities conducted by institutions and individuals to cultivate public reading interest and habits and improve reading quality, ability, and effectiveness [21]. This definition reveals that reading promotion targets four core aspects: reading interest, reading habits, reading quality and ability, and reading effectiveness evaluation. The following analysis examines the four groups based on these target dimensions.

The experiments for the bibliographic recommendation and reading communication groups targeted reading recommendation and interest cultivation. Due to organizers' lack of control over readers' reading behavior, both groups demonstrated low efficiency values in reading behavior and habit formation. Regarding reading reflection writing, without deep reading, speakers at exchange meetings shared only out-of-context classic excerpts, plagiarized others' insights, or presented fragmented thoughts. A plagiarism check of six pre-arranged book review speeches for the bibliographic recommendation group revealed duplication rates ranging from 68% to 100%, indicating serious plagiarism. In the reading communication group, despite planning and promotion by reading promoters, results were also poor, though slightly better than the bibliographic recommendation group due to requirements for selecting excellent book reviews for exchange meetings, resulting in a decent quantity of submissions but concerning quality, with only about 20% being original works.

The reading project group experiment targeted habit formation and quality improvement. Results showed that classic reading training activities primarily aimed at cultivating reading habits achieved good effectiveness, with 46 participants completing entire classics and another 39 reading most (later interviews revealed students found the 1,200-page classic too lengthy to finish in 21 days).

Forty-nine participants persisted in daily uninterrupted reading and excerpting, and 85 submitted book reviews. Original book reviews accounted for 90%, with 32 reviews showing duplication rates below 30% upon repeated checks, representing significant quality improvement compared to the other two groups. When questionnaire respondents answered “What do you think is most important to learn in university?” over 70% considered “good habits,” far exceeding the 20% who chose “professional knowledge and skills.” The questionnaire designated “finishing a classic” as an important measure of reading efficiency, with whole-book reading also serving as a crucial indicator of reading behavior and habits. Ye Shengtao argued that only “whole book” reading cultivates reading habits, stating: “If you want to cultivate reading habits but don’t teach them to read whole books, how can such habits form?” With whole books as reading materials, “though only a limited number of books can be read, those few are truly read with concentration,” thereby developing reading ability and habits so that “when encountering other books, they won’t shrink back” [22]. Experimental results showed that 21-day whole-book reading habit training was effective and significantly outperformed the first two groups.

The reading community group experiment targeted interest and habit cultivation, quality improvement, and enhanced effectiveness evaluation. This group achieved the highest efficiency values in reading behavior, habit formation, and deep reading data. Preliminary guidance by expert lecturers and various skills lectures corrected members’ attitudes, greatly stimulated their reading enthusiasm, and enabled all members to establish and properly implement personal reading plans. Based on members’ online task submissions, some completed up to 10 classics during the activity, most read 3-5 classics, and the minimum was two classics. Book review statistics showed each member submitted at least three reviews, with nearly 90% being original. After a semester of experimental reading, members deeply understood the significance of classics, developed strong reading interest, cultivated good reading habits, learned to think critically, express their ideas, discuss courageously, and progress mutually within the community. Some members repeatedly reread and researched classics of particular interest. When questionnaire respondents answered questions such as “What books should university students read more of?” over 80% considered classics; and “How do you understand classics?” over 90% believed each classic possesses unique life significance worth reading. With excellent atmosphere and platform, members continuously produced outstanding book reviews and stage plays, which were displayed on online platforms or published in internal collections, forming a positive community culture. Private conversations with participating experts revealed that nearly all mentors repeatedly read and researched their assigned classics, conscientiously preparing guidance, exchanges, and interactions. Some experts published related research shortly after the activity concluded, and even student members published academic papers on classic research under expert guidance. Reading promoters also published research papers on classic reading promotion through practical summaries. All reading community members achieved growth and progress within the group.

5 Conclusions and Implications

Experimental results demonstrate that in university classic reading promotion activities, simply advocating bibliographic recommendations and allowing readers to organize activities independently yields the poorest effectiveness. Reading exchange activities organized by reading promoters produce slightly better results. Reading project-based promotion activities organized by reading promoters with incentive mechanisms show a leap in effectiveness. The community model, comprising reading promoters, expert guides, and readers, demonstrates the best results with strong cohesion. The reading community model represents the optimal approach for university classic reading promotion. Professional organization and management by reading promoters, participation of expert guides, and good promotion mechanisms and atmosphere (reading culture) constitute important factors affecting university classic reading promotion effectiveness.

Li Guihua noted that traditional deep reading is difficult to maintain while new deep reading has not yet been established, and this chaotic state presents opportunities for nurturing new ideas. New reading promotion can be advanced through three pathways: creating encounters, enriching experiences, and returning to dialogue [23]. Who creates encounters between readers and readers, knowledge and readers, authors and experts? Library reading promoters. Whose experiences should be enriched? Readers', to give them a sense of belonging. How to return to dialogue? Through expert guidance. Zhang Luyue discussed how strongly and positively collaborative reading communities possess cohesion and belonging that enable readers to develop good reading habits, making promotion effectiveness predictable [24]. Both scholars' concepts reflect the essence of reading communities.

Through the four group experiments, the hierarchy of reading promotion models has become clear. Each level addresses different contradictions and problems, and all have their necessity. For promoting book borrowing and publishing, the bibliographic recommendation model can be used, involving book utilization and publishing economic benefits primarily for the promoter's interests, 附帶向讀者推薦閱讀的效用. The reading communication model suits discussions of popular topics and books, casual chats, and recreational reading. The reading project model can be widely applied to various thematic readings. The reading community model is suitable for classic reading. As Wang Yuguang stated, the inheritance and development of human civilization corely depend on reading classics: for society, classics embody unified social values; for education, classic reading is the core of general education [25]. To establish national spirit and advance reading for all, the core of promotion content should be classics, and the most effective promotion model is the reading community model. How to form reading communities—top-down or bottom-up? How to construct ideal mechanisms and models? What environments and conditions facilitate community formation? These questions require further research and refinement.

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Author Contributions: Zhu Yuanliang: Designed the experiment, collected statistics, and wrote the paper. Chen Youhua: Proposed the research question, collected materials, wrote the literature review, and revised the paper.

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

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