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New Achievements in Promoting the Sustainable Development of Library Co-construction and Sharing: A Postprint of *An Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of China's Inter-system Regional Library Consortia*

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper reviews the book *An Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of China's Inter-system Regional Library Alliances*, aiming to enable readers to understand the current development status of China's inter-system regional library alliances and how to better promote their development. [Method/Process] Using methods such as content analysis, induction and deduction, this paper analyzes and comments on several distinctive features of the book from aspects including research themes, research content, and research methods. [Results/Conclusion] This book is a representative monograph that provides a good understanding of the current development status of China's inter-system regional library alliances. It obtains detailed data through solid empirical research, proposes scientific and rational development strategies for the sustainable development of China's library alliances, and its research has broad social significance and practical implications.

Full Text

A New Achievement in Promoting Sustainable Development of Library Resource Sharing and Co-construction—A Review of *Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of Cross-System Regional Library Consortia in China*

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[Purpose/Significance] This article reviews *Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of Cross-System Regional Library Consortia in China*, aiming to help readers understand the current development status of cross-system regional library consortia in China and how to better promote their development. **[Method/Process]** Using content analysis, inductive and deductive methods, this paper evaluates several distinctive features of the book from the perspectives of research topics, content, and methodology. **[Result/Conclusion]** This monograph represents a valuable work for understanding the development status of cross-system regional library consortia in China. Through solid empirical research, it obtains detailed information and proposes scientific and reasonable development strategies for the sustainable development of library consortia in China, holding broad social and practical significance.

Keywords: cross-system regional library consortium; library co-construction and sharing; empirical study; book review

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The Internet has provided convenience and platform-building conditions for the resource sharing and co-construction that library professionals have pursued for many years. Consequently, over the past three decades, library consortia aimed at sharing document resources and information have developed rapidly worldwide, and the same is true in China. Library consortia can be broadly divided into two categories: one is vertical, primarily consisting of national or regional industry-based alliances, such as the familiar China Academic Library & Information System (CALIS, a university library consortium), China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (CASHL, a university library consortium), National Science and Technology Library (NSTL, a specialized scientific library consortium), and Jiangsu Academic Library & Information System (JALIS, a regional university library consortium). The other is horizontal, defined by geographical region and composed of different types of libraries across systems and industries, such as the “Shanghai Document Resource Co-construction and Sharing Cooperation Network.”

Professor Zhao Naixuan, Director of the Library of Nanjing Tech University, has recently published *Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of Cross-System Regional Library Consortia in China*[1]. Upon receiving the book, I immediately read it with great interest and have been invited to share my reflections.

1. Innovative Concept and Unique Perspective

Empirical Study on Cross-System Regional Library Consortia (hereinafter referred to as *Consortium Study*) demonstrates considerable conceptual innovation and a unique research perspective, addressing gaps in library consortium research.

During their more than 20-year development history, China’s library consor-

tia experienced vigorous growth in their early stages, primarily because they realized many ideals of resource sharing and co-construction from traditional print libraries, such as coordinated resource development, shared cataloging, union catalogs, interlibrary loan, and document delivery, creating numerous opportunities for libraries. However, with the development of digital libraries, informatization, and even artificial intelligence, library consortia have encountered bottlenecks. Although many regional consortia continue to operate, they face the critical question of “where do consortia go from here?”—how to innovate and achieve sustainable development has become a major challenge.

The *Consortium Study* courageously takes on this challenge by selecting cross-system regional library consortia—the weaker yet highly promising segment of library consortia—as its entry point for empirical research. Based on this investigation, it proposes an integrated framework for the sustainable development of regional library consortia and offers strategic recommendations for their advancement. Therefore, whether from practical or theoretical perspectives, the book’s topic selection meets current needs, demonstrates bold innovation, features a unique viewpoint, and possesses distinct characteristics. Its research subjects hold universal significance, and its content fills gaps in regional library consortium research within the field of library and information science.

2. Solid Research Foundation

The *Consortium Study* employs extensive empirical research methods, establishing a robust research foundation.

The understanding of empirical research varies considerably. I have frequently encountered research projects claiming to use “empirical methods” when in fact they merely designed one or two questionnaires for relevant personnel to complete. As such practices have become common, many people are now reluctant to fill out questionnaires. To ensure adequate sample sizes, questionnaire designers tend to simplify them as much as possible, creating a vicious cycle—oversimplified data prevents in-depth research, making it difficult to determine whether the survey content and sample data from such “empirical studies” are truly representative.

The authors of *Consortium Study* overcame the difficulties of data collection and rigorously applied empirical research methods. Beyond conventional literature reviews, they conducted field visits to over ten cross-regional library consortia distributed across Shanghai, Jiangsu, Ningbo, Jiaying, Zhejiang, Beijing, Jilin, Sichuan, Chongqing, Guangdong, and other regions. They accumulated substantial first-hand data, including detailed information on each consortium’s launch date, leading organization, organizational structure, funding situation, service functions and scope, operational management, number and types of member libraries, cooperative projects, training programs, implementation effects (such as public awareness, document utilization efficiency, and whether investments increased accordingly), visibility, and credibility. This rich dataset laid a solid

foundation for subsequent analysis and conclusions, ensuring the scientific validity, rationality, reliability, and standardization of the research findings.

The research team also investigated international cross-system regional library consortia, including LYRASIS, the Boston Library Consortium (BLC), the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), the Massachusetts Library System (MLS), and OhioLINK in the United States, obtaining considerable first-hand materials through field visits. They particularly selected LYRASIS as a typical case for more in-depth investigation and analysis of its history, management system, funding, services, cooperation, development planning, characteristics, and benefits.

Based on this solid investigation, the authors conducted a comparative analysis of domestic and international cross-system regional library consortia from three perspectives: literature review results, typical case analysis, and network effects. They concluded that foreign cross-system regional library consortia have considerable advanced experience in non-profit management models, diversified funding channels, attention to user education and experience, and the application of cloud computing and big data management. These insights offer valuable guidance for the sustainable development of China's library consortia. From my years of experience working with library consortia and understanding of domestic consortia, this comparative analysis is scientifically sound and reasonable, directly confronting the problems facing China's library consortia and providing strong guidance for practical work.

3. Conclusions with Social and Practical Significance

The final conclusions proposed in *Consortium Study* hold both social and practical significance.

The conclusions presented in *Consortium Study* comprise two aspects:

First, model theories derived from practice. Based on empirical research, the authors distilled and summarized the elements and operational status of China's cross-system regional library consortia into several theoretical models, including: (1) The "Clustering Model" theory, which emphasizes that an ideal cross-system regional library consortium should possess three modules—spatial clustering, management clustering, and service clustering—while continuously optimizing inter-module relationships. (2) The "Multipolar Pattern" theory, encompassing three modes: platform-sharing, agreement (charter)-based, and main-branch library composite, suggesting that stable operational models for cross-system regional library consortia generally fall within these three categories. (3) The "Social Capital Collaborative Operation Model," which emphasizes the introduction and application of social capital theory in the construction and operation of library consortia, arguing that this can strengthen cooperation among member libraries and ensure sustainable consortium development.

Second, an integrated development strategy further refined from these theoret-

ical models. Centered on the core concepts of “synergy,” “momentum,” and “vitality,” the authors propose three major strategies: (1) Optimizing consortium development elements to enhance the synergy of resource sharing and co-construction; (2) Strengthening consortium innovation capacity to provide a sustainable source of momentum for development; (3) Stimulating cooperative vitality to demonstrate the advantages of multi-system integration. Additionally, the book proposes specific development measures related to these three strategies, such as a “large network + small core” consortium operation model, a “specialization + marketization” consortium management mechanism, and the transformation of consortia toward intelligence- and technology-oriented organizations.

While the theoretical model extraction provides universal guidance for consortium development, the integrated development strategy is particularly illuminating. After all, over the past two decades of development, many library consortia have often been passively constrained by issues such as funding limitations, short-term project effect management, and staff shortages, lacking high-level, comprehensive thinking on how to break through and innovate. Therefore, these two aspects of conclusions offer highly instructive recommendations for consortium development, possessing broad social and practical significance.

In summary, *Consortium Study* is a timely and highly practical research achievement that responds to societal needs, proposing scientific and reasonable development strategies for the sustainable development of China’s library consortia. It is highly recommended for consortium management, consortium practitioners, and relevant researchers to study and reference. Regrettably, perhaps due to time constraints in completing the project, the book’s comparative analysis of Chinese and foreign library consortia lacks depth in data analysis and employs insufficiently diverse analytical methods. Hopefully, these aspects can be further improved and supplemented in future work.

References

[1] Zhao Naixuan, Jin Jieqin, Feng Qin. *Empirical Study on the Construction and Development of Cross-System Regional Library Consortia in China*[M]. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2018.

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

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