

## Reflections on CASHL Operation and Development Strategies Based on the Current Situation of Some Member Libraries (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Through field research and analysis of the current status and issues regarding foreign language resources in humanities and social sciences and CASHL services among selected member libraries in the CASHL North China region, combined with feedback from member libraries, this study provides recommendations for the operation and development of the CASHL consortium.

[Method/Process] Adopting a combination of on-site visits and discussions, web-based surveys, and one-on-one consultations, this study investigates the current status of electronic resources in humanities and social sciences, specialized resources, and CASHL services across 14 member libraries.

[Results/Conclusion] Based on the field research findings, this paper explores strategies for CASHL operation and development from the perspectives of resource development, service platform optimization, and service improvement.

### Full Text

#### Preamble

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#### **Reflections on CASHL Operation and Development Strategies Based on the Current Status of Select Member Libraries**

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## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** Through field visits and analysis of current issues concerning humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources and CASHL services among select member libraries in the CASHL North China region, combined with feedback from member libraries, this study proposes recommendations for the operation and development of the CASHL consortium. **[Method/Process]** The study employed a combination of site visits, web-based research, and one-on-one consultations to investigate the status of humanities and social sciences electronic resources, featured resources, and CASHL services across 14 member libraries. **[Result/Conclusion]** Based on the findings from these visits, the paper discusses CASHL operation and development strategies from the perspectives of resource development, service platform optimization, and service improvement.

**Keywords:** CASHL; library consortium; resource sharing; platform optimization; service strategy

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The China Academic Humanities and Social Sciences Library (CASHL) has developed distinctive resources and established a relatively complete management and operation model since its establishment in 2004. Currently, CASHL comprises a project management center, two national centers, seven regional centers, and eight discipline centers. According to the *CASHL Management Measures* revised for the third time by the CASHL Management Center in 2008, one of the important responsibilities of regional centers is to “conduct training and publicity with a focus on the local region.” Since 2006, Beijing Normal University Library (hereinafter referred to as “BNU Library”) has successively served as the acting/regional center for CASHL North China, continuously promoting CASHL across the five provinces in North China. This extensive engagement has provided BNU Library with a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances of member libraries in the region. From 2006 to 2012, BNU Library conducted “Walk-in” activities to promote CASHL’s interlibrary loan and document delivery services, train interlibrary loan staff from member libraries within the region, increase CASHL membership, and expand CASHL’s influence in North China. Since 2012, BNU Library has collaborated with other CASHL regional and discipline centers to continuously conduct discipline-based promotional activities for institutions with education programs nationwide, enhancing the utilization of CASHL’s education discipline resources and expanding the scope of resource sharing. After more than a decade of effort, the work focus in the North China region has gradually shifted from “general promotion” to “discipline-based precision promotion.” However, as users’ dependence on library resources decreases, CASHL’s foundational resource sharing services face considerable challenges. Simultaneously, against the backdrop of the “Double First-Class” initiative, numerous member libraries are expanding in-depth discipline services, prompting CASHL to emphasize strategic service transformation.

Based on these considerations, to gain an in-depth understanding of the current actual conditions and development needs of member libraries in the North China region, and to align with CASHL's service strategy transformation, BNU Library formulated and completed a work plan from 2016 to 2018 to visit and survey select CASHL member libraries in the North China region. The objective was to thoroughly understand the actual conditions, problems, and suggestions of member libraries of different regions, types, and levels, thereby providing recommendations for CASHL resource development, service platform optimization, and service strategy improvement. Although development varies across regions and libraries, and the selected libraries cannot fully represent the overall situation of the CASHL North China region or CASHL nationwide, the visited member libraries are representative among the existing 158 member libraries in the CASHL North China region in terms of school type, library type, and business activity level. Through investigation and reflection on representative CASHL member libraries in the North China region, this study provides reference for member libraries in other CASHL regions.

## 2 Survey Implementation Overview

### 2.1 Overview of CASHL Member Libraries in North China Region

The North China region currently has 158 member libraries, including 93 in Beijing, 20 in Tianjin, 24 in Hebei, 11 in Shanxi, and 10 in Inner Mongolia. Among them, nine member libraries provide CASHL services (i.e., CASHL service libraries), while the remaining 149 are CASHL user libraries. The 158 member libraries exhibit the following characteristics: (1) **Resource level disparities:** Significant and unbalanced gaps exist in resource levels across regions. Beijing and Tianjin possess strong literature resources and well-developed regional library consortia, while Hebei, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia have relatively weaker literature resources and library consortium development [1]. (2) **School type differences:** The region encompasses diverse member library types, including comprehensive research universities, specialized application-oriented institutions, universities strong in humanities and social sciences, and science and engineering institutions. (3) **Differences in connectivity with regional centers:** Member libraries in Beijing have frequent daily contact with the regional center, receive CASHL updates in a timely manner, provide good feedback, and maintain relatively deep mutual understanding; other regions need strengthening in these aspects.

### 2.2 Survey Plan Formulation

Given the above circumstances, BNU Library selected Tianjin, Hebei, Inner Mongolia, and Shanxi—four provinces/municipalities outside Beijing—as target regions for visits. When identifying specific member libraries, the selection considered not only humanities and social sciences-focused institutions and libraries with active CASHL services, but also science and engineering institutions and “zombie libraries” where CASHL services were stagnant, striving to survey

various types of member libraries with different service statuses. Additionally, the selection prioritized provincial key universities with strong regional influence to understand the overall regional situation. Accordingly, BNU Library visited and surveyed 14 libraries over three years, including three normal university libraries, six science and engineering university libraries, and five comprehensive university libraries, as shown in .

\*\* Universities Visited During 2016–2018\*\*

Date of Visit	University Library
April 6–8, 2016	Tianjin Normal University
June 13–15, 2017	Inner Mongolia University of Science and Technology, Inner Mongolia Normal University, Inner Mongolia University of Technology
April 18–20, 2018	Shanxi Normal University, North China Electric Power University, Tianjin University of Technology, Inner Mongolia University, Taiyuan University of Technology, Taiyuan University of Science and Technology

### 2.3 Survey Implementation Details

During the three-year period, a research team of 4–5 people from BNU Library, including the library director, deputy director in charge of resource development, and CASHL-related staff, conducted preliminary website research followed by on-site discussions and visits. The team engaged in exchanges and discussions with library directors, CASHL business supervisors, librarians, and even end users. The main topics included: (1) Introducing CASHL’s latest developments in “regional and country-specific studies” and the “Belt and Road Initiative” resources, as well as new services such as CASHL’s dual micro-platforms (Weibo and WeChat), master lectures, and large special collections; (2) Based on the characteristics of CASHL’s humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources collection, investigating the construction of humanities and social sciences foreign-language electronic resources and featured resources in member libraries to explore regional sharing of distinctive foreign-language literature resources; (3) Investigating issues related to CASHL services and operational development, including service promotion, platform usage, user experience and needs, and subsidy policies, and discussing improvement directions based on feedback and suggestions from member libraries regarding existing CASHL services; (4) Understanding member libraries’ business developments and exchanging operational strategies such as personnel management and environmental development, as well as business experience in discipline services; (5) For time-liness considerations, between June 19–22, 2018, website research and online or

telephone instant communication were used to verify and update the resource and service status of the visited member libraries from 2016 and 2017.

Based on the survey content and results, BNU Library analyzed and organized the findings from two perspectives: the humanities and social sciences foreign-language resource construction of member libraries and the status of CASHL service implementation, thereby conducting in-depth reflection on issues related to CASHL consortium resource development, service platform, and service development, and proposing relevant recommendations.

### 3 Results and Analysis

Resources form the foundation of services, and the richness of a member library’s collection determines its dependence on CASHL. Through the visits, the North China Regional Center gained an understanding of the basic conditions of visited member libraries regarding humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources, open access (OA) resources, and featured resource development.

#### 3.1 Status and Analysis of Humanities and Social Sciences Foreign-Language Electronic Resources in Visited Libraries

Based on website research and discussions, an overview of humanities and social sciences foreign-language electronic resources (i.e., databases purchased or accessible by member libraries) was compiled, as shown in .

\*\* Overview of Humanities and Social Sciences Foreign-Language Electronic Resources in Visited Libraries\*\*

	Humanities & Social University Sciences Disciplines	Comprehensive Databases	Specialized Databases	Shared Databases
Tianjin Nor- mal Univer- sity Tianjin Univer- sity of Tech- nology North China Elec- tric Power Univer- sity				

Humanities & Social Sciences Disciplines	Comprehensive Databases	Specialized Databases	Shared Databases
Inner Mon- golia Univer- sity			
Inner Mon- golia Nor- mal Univer- sity			
Inner Mon- golia Univer- sity of Tech- nology			
Inner Mon- golia Univer- sity of Sci- ence and Tech- nology Taiyuan Univer- sity of Tech- nology Taiyuan Univer- sity of Sci- ence and Tech- nology			

	Humanities & Social University Sciences Disciplines	Comprehensive Databases	Specialized Databases	Shared Databases
Shanxi Nor- mal Univer- sity				

In , comprehensive databases refer to those containing both natural sciences and humanities/social sciences resources, such as ScienceDirect; humanities and social sciences comprehensive databases refer to those focusing on humanities and social sciences, such as JSTOR; humanities and social sciences specialized databases refer to resources targeting specific disciplines within humanities and social sciences, such as Westlaw; “shared” refers to the same type of humanities and social sciences foreign-language databases owned by multiple visited libraries within a region, though “shared” does not mean completely identical, as differences exist in specific resource packages and access years; humanities and social sciences foreign-language OA resources refer to OA resources containing humanities and social sciences foreign-language content that libraries present on their homepages for user access.

**3.1.1 Regional Resource Comparative Analysis (1) Resource quantity disparities.** Tianjin university libraries have the largest total number of databases, followed by Inner Mongolia, while Hebei and Shanxi are relatively scarce, showing obvious regional gaps. The Tianjin region shares eight databases, including EBSCO, Emerald eBook Series, and SAGE Journals, representing the largest number of shared resources, while Hebei and Shanxi have significantly fewer shared resources. This demonstrates the facilitating role of regional consortia such as TALIS (Tianjin Higher Education Documentation Information System) and NALIS (Inner Mongolia Higher Education Documentation Guarantee System) in supporting resource development within their regions.

In terms of unique databases, among the 14 visited libraries, 11 possess unique databases within their regions, ranging from 2 to 29 unique databases. Nankai University has 29 unique databases, significantly outperforming other libraries with more distinctive resource features and stronger support for humanities and social sciences research at the university.

Resource gaps among libraries within regions are also evident, with prominent libraries in each region being local comprehensive university libraries: Nankai University, Hebei University, Inner Mongolia University, and Shanxi University.

**(2) Resource structure and type distribution characteristics.** From the perspective of resource languages, only Tianjin purchases two minor-language resources (EastView Russian Complete Database and Maruzen eBook Library), while all other databases are in English. Although English-language databases

are the most numerous worldwide, the presence of only two minor-language resources among 14 university libraries in four regions reflects the imbalance in resource language distribution to some extent.

In terms of database types, visited libraries' resources are concentrated primarily in comprehensive discipline databases, followed by humanities and social sciences comprehensive databases, and finally humanities and social sciences specialized databases. Except for Nankai University, other member libraries have significantly fewer humanities and social sciences comprehensive and specialized databases, with five libraries having zero of these two types, and all four libraries in Shanxi having zero specialized social science databases. Compared to comprehensive resources, the guarantee situation for foreign-language resources targeting humanities and social sciences users is clearly inadequate.

**3.1.2 Resource Comparison Across Different Library Types** Compared to normal university libraries and science/engineering libraries, comprehensive research libraries have significantly richer humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources. Science/engineering libraries' social science resources are mostly “incidental” resources within comprehensive discipline databases, with minimal investment in humanities and social sciences comprehensive and specialized databases. Normal universities have more humanities and social sciences disciplines and greater dependence on literature resources, but their related resources are fewer than those in comprehensive libraries. Among similar libraries, Tianjin Normal University has the most related resources, while normal universities in Inner Mongolia and Shanxi have significantly fewer humanities and social sciences resources.

**3.1.3 Characteristics of OA Resource Utilization** OA resources accelerate the dissemination of academic research and significantly reduce users' costs for obtaining literature resources. The development of global OA resources is flourishing, forming a comprehensive resource guarantee system together with print collections and commercial digital resources. Visited member libraries generally have awareness of promoting OA resources, with science/engineering libraries being particularly notable—Inner Mongolia University of Technology is the most prominent, having organized and presented 33 related resources, followed by North China Electric Power University and Tianjin University of Technology. The primary method of presenting OA resources is providing links on homepages, lacking in-depth introduction to OA resources and guides for their use, let alone processing of OA resources.

In summary, the guarantee situation of humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources among the 14 member libraries shows obvious gaps across regions, within regions, among similar libraries, and across different library types. These disparities are closely related to factors such as institutional history, university type, disciplinary construction priorities, and library funding. Although the visited science/engineering institutions have been developing humanities and

social sciences disciplines in recent years, their related foreign-language resource guarantees are clearly insufficient. Normal universities have more humanities and social sciences disciplines and greater literature dependence, but they also lag significantly behind comprehensive universities, leaving room for CASHL resource promotion in normal and science/engineering institutions.

### 3.2 Featured Humanities and Social Sciences Foreign-Language Resources and Development in Visited Libraries

Among the 14 member libraries, Nankai University, Tianjin Normal University, and Shanxi University are CASHL service libraries whose related foreign-language resources and common minor-language resources such as Japanese and Russian have been presented on the CASHL platform. Although Inner Mongolia University is a CASHL service library, its Mongolian featured resources have not been incorporated into CASHL. Inner Mongolia Normal University and Hebei University are user libraries only, yet they each have their own foreign-language featured resources, summarized as follows:

**(1) Rich and distinctive Mongolian resources in Inner Mongolia region.** Inner Mongolia University is the “National Ministry of Education Mongolian Studies Documentation Information Center for Ethnic Disciplines,” with nearly 15,000 types and 120,000 volumes of Mongolian books, over 50 Mongolian journals, and relatively rich international Mongolian studies literature in English, German, and Japanese. The digitization of Mongolian resources is a key focus of the library. Over 2,000 types of Mongolian literature have been digitized; featured Mongolian studies databases, Chinese Mongolian Journals Network, and Mongolian Studies Information Network have been established; in 2017, the digitization of the library’s treasure—the 1720 imperial woodblock-printed *Ganjur* sutra (Tripitaka, 109 volumes)—was completed, with the full-text database launched in May 2017. Inner Mongolia University has independently developed the Yiliba Mongolian retrieval system, now used by eight libraries in Inner Mongolia and also by the library of Minzu University of China. Despite these fruitful achievements in Mongolian-related resource development, technical difficulties currently hinder integration into other union catalogs, limiting the scope of mutual awareness and sharing.

**(2) Inner Mongolia Normal University** holds 55,000 types and 152,792 volumes of Mongolian books and periodicals, 4,250 volumes of Mongolian scriptures and ancient books, and some Mongolian books and textbooks published during the Republic of China period. Japanese original books donated annually by the Japan Science Society constitute an important source of Japanese collection. The university has exchange student programs with Russia and Outer Mongolia, maintaining stable investment in Russian and Mongolian resources over the years.

**(3) Hebei University** possesses a large collection of Japanese books in humanities and social sciences accumulated during the Republic of China period,

but they remain un-cataloged due to limited manpower and funding.

**(4) Featured foreign-language humanities and social sciences resources in the North China region** are either distinctive but not widely shared, or completely dormant and underutilized.

### **3.3 Feedback on Utilization of Special Funds for Humanities and Social Sciences Book Acquisition**

The “Special Funds for Humanities and Social Sciences Book Acquisition in Higher Education Institutions” program, launched in 1982, has provided stable and sustained support for foreign-language book development in humanities and social sciences in Chinese universities, optimizing collection structures in terms of languages and disciplines, coordinated procurement, and large special collection acquisition [2]. Nankai University, Tianjin Normal University, Shanxi University, and Inner Mongolia University all agreed that special funds have strongly supported their humanities and social sciences foreign-language book development. However, as resource prices continue to rise, the program’s financial support is increasingly strained. Shanxi University adopts a strategy of rotating purchases by relevant disciplines annually to ensure fairness in resource allocation. Inner Mongolia University mainly uses special funds to purchase foreign-language resources in Mongolian studies and ethnology, but due to overspending in 2014, the funds have been suspended for several consecutive years, interrupting the continuity of Mongolian studies resource development to some extent.

## **4 Current Status and Issues of CASHL Services in Visited Member Libraries**

During visits and discussions, BNU Library also focused on understanding existing problems with CASHL services in member libraries. Since 2016, BNU Library has maintained contact and communication with visited libraries based on business and North China regional center work. Over the two-year period, visited member libraries in Tianjin, Hebei, and Inner Mongolia have not undergone major adjustments or breakthroughs in CASHL human resources and services. Consequently, except for Nankai University and Tianjin Normal University, which have stable service teams, other member libraries face the following issues:

### **4.1 Human Resource Scarcity**

Human resource scarcity is a widespread problem among member libraries. For example, Shanxi University, the largest CASHL user library in Shanxi province, has reassigned its key personnel to new positions due to business expansion, leaving no dedicated staff for CASHL services. Currently, the library only posts promotional activity notifications, with part-time staff handling daily application processing. Similar situations exist at Inner Mongolia University of Science and

Technology, with some libraries' CASHL services even at a standstill. Human resource shortages have led to unstable service promotion, insufficient user cultivation, and inadequate exploration of user needs. Additionally, the lack of staff development mechanisms in some libraries affects librarians' work motivation and professional orientation.

#### **4.2 Lack of Service Standards and Awareness**

CASHL's foundational service operations involve a series of processes and standards for account approval, application inquiry, document circulation, and fee settlement, with numerous details. Errors in any single link can trigger subsequent problems. Many member libraries lack standardization awareness, experiencing issues such as not knowing CASHL platform account passwords after staff turnover, unfamiliarity with business processes and job responsibilities, and insufficient service awareness, leading to inadequate business continuity and difficulties in specific work implementation.

#### **4.3 Funding Support Issues**

Due to subsidy funding from TALIS, Tianjin enjoys good financial conditions and can provide substantial subsidies to users. Inner Mongolia benefits from CASHL's free document delivery policy for western institutions, which greatly improves its funding situation. Hebei and Shanxi must provide their own subsidies or charge users full fees, affecting service development.

#### **4.4 Significant Diversion of User Demand Channels**

Users' channels for obtaining literature resources, especially journal articles, have become increasingly diverse and convenient. Frontline librarians generally report that most foreign-language document delivery needs can be met through channels such as Duxiu, VIP, Baidu Scholar, and other literature 互助 platforms or OA resources, which feature simple procedures, rapid response, and are widely welcomed by users. In contrast, CASHL services involve more procedures, longer processing times, and incur fees.

### **5 Reflections and Recommendations Based on the Survey**

Based on the resource and service status of visited member libraries and combined with feedback from discussions, this section proposes strategies and recommendations for CASHL management and operation from three levels: resources, system platform, and services.

#### **5.1 CASHL Resource Development Strategies**

**5.1.1 Gradually Increase Member Libraries' Self-Development of Resources and Integrate More Featured Resources into CASHL** Numerous CASHL member libraries have purchased one or multiple commonly used

foreign-language databases (such as Emerald, EBSCO, and ScienceDirect). Although gaps between regions and libraries remain evident, university libraries are generally resource-rich overall. In terms of resource languages, English literature holds absolute dominance. Existing research indicates that foreign-language collections in Chinese universities have incomplete disciplinary coverage, limited publication date spans, severe overall scarcity of minor-language literature, and extremely unbalanced language resource distribution [3–6]. Under these circumstances, some member libraries’ minor-language resources have not been mutually recognized or even retrospectively processed. Such resources precisely provide powerful supplements for older, minor-language, and neighboring country literature. Therefore, it is recommended that CASHL launch retrospective work on member libraries’ self-owned relevant resources and supplement CASHL’s multi-language older resources through multiple channels to enhance differentiated resource development. Simultaneously, through mutually complementary and collaborative development strategies in resource construction, member libraries’ enthusiasm for and contributions to CASHL work and services can be enhanced.

The quantity of OA resources is gradually increasing, but quality varies. Although users can quickly obtain OA resources through search engines, identifying resource quality and centrally accessing discipline-related resources requires time costs. Research analyzing the integration of OA academic journals in Chinese university libraries points out that OA academic journal presentation mostly involves simple listing, with problems such as insufficient revelation, lack of organizational standards, and absence of OA discipline platforms, highlighting the importance of building integrated platforms [7]. In OA resource integration practice, the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library has constructed GoOA, a one-stop discovery platform for OA journals and papers primarily serving natural science users, achieving selection, collection, and storage of high-quality OA journals and papers, and providing one-stop discovery search, knowledge graph analysis, and submission analysis functions to facilitate efficient utilization [8]. As the only centralized search and access platform for humanities and social sciences foreign-language resources in China, CASHL should consider, in addition to purchasing external resources and retrospectively processing internal resources, jointly building a humanities and social sciences OA resource integration platform with member libraries to further enrich CASHL’s resource structure and promote the exploration and utilization of OA resources in humanities and social sciences.

**5.1.2 Emphasize Differentiation in CASHL Resource Development and Promote Balanced Resource Structure** According to the 2018 center directors’ meeting, against the strategic backdrop of the national “Belt and Road Initiative,” “regional and country-specific studies,” and “Double First-Class” initiative, CASHL faces new development opportunities. Library consortia can learn from U.S. university libraries after World War II through overall planning to establish national resource centers for “Belt and Road” regions or country-

specific studies [3]. Existing research proposes that domestic library consortia should conduct research on the uniqueness and duplication of national university collections to provide guidance for collection development and resource sharing [9]. If CASHL collaborates with center libraries to conduct collection analysis and formulate macro-level guidance policies and overall plans, it will facilitate differentiated CASHL resource development, promote balanced resource structure development, and realize CASHL's strategic layout for literature in all disciplines and languages.

CASHL should provide guidance to member libraries on actual operations (especially minor-language literature procurement), seek support and establish mechanisms in securing national policies and negotiating cooperation with book import/export companies, and reduce difficulties in introducing minor-language academic literature.

**5.1.3 Optimize the Utilization of Special Funds for Humanities and Social Sciences** Special funds for humanities and social sciences are important guarantees for humanities and social sciences foreign-language resource development. Faced with the reality of unbalanced literature resource development and obvious gaps with top European and American universities, and under national strategies such as “Double First-Class,” the utilization of special funds should be optimized through overall planning and flexible allocation in combination with relevant universities' advantageous disciplines to ensure the continuity and distinctiveness of member libraries' featured foreign-language literature development. Considering actual conditions, macro-level policies should be formulated to prioritize the development of literature in underrepresented languages and to emphasize resources for first-class disciplines, providing direction for fund utilization.

## 5.2 CASHL Service Platform Optimization Strategies

With technological development, digital reading and mobile learning are flourishing. Various internet commercial services continuously improve, becoming increasingly “user-aware,” and users demand higher visual and functional experiences from web pages. Terminal users access CASHL resources and services exclusively through the service platform. Based on feedback from end users, BNU Library proposes the following recommendations for CASHL service platform improvement:

**5.2.1 Optimize Functions and Upgrade Services (1) Optimize federated authentication.** Currently, CASHL authentication is cumbersome, with delayed approval and obvious service lags. If the new platform can interface with member libraries' authentication systems, users could log in and use services directly.

**(2) Optimize resource search and discovery.** Accelerate platform data update frequency to achieve synchronization with service libraries' holdings

data, enabling users to access the latest resources anytime [10]; the platform's search fields are incomplete (e.g., basic book search lacks author fields), search functions have program defects, and result relevance needs improvement. It is hoped that the new platform will enhance one-stop discovery functions and multi-dimensional content aggregation functions to help users discover thematic resources, and deeply reveal resource content such as tables of contents and book reviews to help users clarify their needs.

**(3) Develop mobile services.** Almost all common internet service products are accessible via mobile phones and tablets, enabling users to access information anytime and anywhere. The CASHL new platform must also adapt to current user habits and be compatible with various mobile terminal devices to enhance user experience.

**(4) Refine and strengthen statistics.** In the era of big data, user behavior data is crucial for optimizing services and updating products. CASHL platform statistical functions have limited dimensions and coarse granularity, requiring auxiliary tools to complete statistics, and cannot capture user search preferences or evaluate resource utilization in detail. Refining and strengthening statistical functions is urgently needed [11].

**5.2.2 Build User Communities and Create Academic Exchange Platforms** Online communication breaks through time and space limitations, greatly enhancing information acquisition speed and broadening knowledge horizons, making it a very important communication method in contemporary society. Academic exchange communities are important platforms for academic users to share, transfer, and utilize information and knowledge. Knowledge sharing is the core value of academic exchange communities. When knowledge flows among community members, it is continuously shared and transferred, increasing the total knowledge stock of the community while being reorganized and innovated by members, continuously improving the level and quality of knowledge [12–13]. In practice, domestic platforms such as Xiaomuchong and DXY.cn, as well as foreign platforms like ResearchGate and LabRoots, are active academic exchange communities that have gathered large numbers of relevant users. If CASHL expands into academic exchange communities, it will enhance communication among users in relevant fields, improve user interaction experience, and help CASHL analyze user preferences and expand actual business. CASHL possesses natural advantages in building humanities and social sciences academic exchange communities, including a large number of academic users, substantial academic resources, and a systematic publicity and promotion channel.

### 5.3 CASHL Service Improvement Strategies

In addition to the above-discussed CASHL resource development strategies and service platform optimization strategies based on member library resources and

feedback, there is also room for optimization in the work of the CASHL Management Center and regional centers.

**5.3.1 Optimize Foundational Services (1) Establish brands and cycles for foundational services.** Currently, CASHL foundational service promotional activities such as anniversary celebrations, reading festivals, and Teacher's Day events have fixed schedules, while regional and discipline-based activities vary annually and require center libraries to apply in advance. It is recommended that the Management Center select high-quality themes that align with CASHL's "character," customize promotional posters for annual fixed activities and regional/discipline activities, solidify and strengthen activity brands, and create brand images. The annual activity plan should be released to member libraries in advance to allow sufficient time for promotion.

**(2) Share high-quality promotional materials to enhance overall promotional efficiency.** Human resource scarcity and time-consuming promotional work have become unavoidable realities for most member libraries. Currently, the CASHL homepage only provides promotional materials such as roll-up banners and posters featuring primarily text-based introductions, with outdated formats and insufficient appeal. Promotional materials can be mined from forward-looking projects such as "CASHL Service Practice Based on Mind Maps" and "CASHL Resource and Service Expansion Based on Micro-Social Platforms," as well as the 2017 CASHL Micro-Video Competition, to enrich promotional forms, create promotional brands, share promotional materials, and improve promotional efficiency and effectiveness.

**(3) Promote e-book lending services and develop holiday services.** CASHL's foreign-language book resources offer obvious advantages, but traditional interlibrary loan services involve complex workflows, numerous procedures, and long cycles. It is recommended that CASHL accelerate the promotion of e-book lending services to facilitate users and save costs. During winter and summer vacations, some service libraries suspend services to ensure book safety, yet holidays are critical periods for faculty research. Services during these periods provide maximum support to faculty, making e-book lending an excellent solution.

**(4) Expand exchange and training channels, and strengthen sharing of service concepts and business experience.** Frontline librarians report that basic operations such as system platform processes are not core obstacles to CASHL business implementation. What matters more is librarians' understanding of their positions, service concepts, and business experience. The "CASHL/Clarivate Western Librarian Training and Exchange Cooperation Program" provides an excellent platform for frontline librarians. Librarians from Inner Mongolia who have participated in the program stated that it is a good opportunity to broaden business horizons and improve work skills and literacy. During visits, member libraries in Shanxi expressed hope that the CASHL Management Center would extend the program to economically underdeveloped

provinces in central China.

**(5) Strengthen branding of Weibo, WeChat, and website service platforms.** Weibo and WeChat are important publicity platforms for CASHL, but visited member libraries have insufficient understanding of CASHL's "dual micro-platforms." Currently, the primary function of the dual micro-platforms is activity information release. Some librarians hope to develop functions on the CASHL WeChat platform such as submitting applications and obtaining documents to increase user stickiness and expand the user base.

**5.3.2 Deepen Discipline Services Based on User Needs** CASHL users are diverse and widely distributed, including students and faculty, individual and institutional users, and users from both developed and underdeveloped higher education regions. In addition to literature needs, users have other information requirements. Among visited libraries, 12 libraries besides Baoding College and Shanxi Normal University are focusing on developing discipline services, intelligence analysis, and other businesses. From the consortium development perspective, in addition to inherent resource-based cooperation, CASHL should consider deepening discipline services. Researchers have proposed three principles for discipline services: "taking user needs as the basis and core," "taking value-added realization for users as the goal and purpose," and "taking dynamism and continuity as organizational principles" [16]. At the CASHL discipline service level, this could include: organizing master lectures by discipline to launch thematic series, enriching relevant students' knowledge while promoting scholar exchanges; producing humanities and social sciences database usage tutorials for student users to enhance information retrieval skills; providing social sciences foreign-language journal submission guides and research impact enhancement guides for graduate students and faculty. Through 挖掘 deep service content, diverse and varying levels of user information needs can be met while further strengthening cooperation among consortium member libraries.

**5.3.3 Implement Differentiated Promotion Strategies Based on Institutional Positioning** CASHL member libraries show obvious gaps in school levels, library resources, and service development. Existing "general promotion" cannot meet member libraries' actual needs, making hierarchical and differentiated CASHL service promotion strategies urgently necessary. Science and engineering institutions (such as Taiyuan University of Technology) have begun developing humanities and social sciences disciplines in recent years, many of which are in initial stages with scarce humanities and social sciences resources. CASHL services should focus on assisting such institutions in formulating service strategies, identifying and cultivating key users, and possibly providing preferential policy support. Normal universities have many humanities and social sciences users, making stable publicity and promotion key focuses for CASHL service implementation. For comprehensive research universities, deep discipline services and discipline competitiveness analysis 等业务 business exchanges and collaborative development are more attractive.

As people's aesthetic capabilities improve and webpage production technology advances, CASHL's current homepage design appears outdated, with issues such as insufficiently prominent search boxes, unclear section design, inadequate information display, and lack of visual aesthetics. Webpage design rationality affects readers' perception and utilization, and artistic design can enhance webpage expressiveness, thereby facilitating information transmission and function display. Webpage design must consider layout, color, text, graphics, organizational logic, mobile device compatibility, and other design factors [14–15]. To further enhance webpage utilization and user experience, CASHL homepage redesign needs to be considered.

Through three years of visits, BNU Library has gained practical understanding of the development status of select member libraries, providing new work ideas for the regional center and further sensing the challenges facing CASHL development. Under new circumstances, CASHL requires certain reforms in resource development, services, and publicity promotion. Resource development needs to align with national strategies and research needs, moving toward balanced layout and distinctive differentiation. While optimizing foundational services, different work strategies should be formulated for different users with different needs. BNU Library will use the summary and analysis from three years of visits to further consider the work implementation 思路 ideas and specific plans for various tasks within the CASHL North China region, to fully perform the duties of the North China Regional Center and contribute to the operation and development of the CASHL consortium.

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Zhang Ling: Responsible for designing the article framework and revising the paper;

Niu Aiju: Responsible for drafting the initial manuscript and revising the paper;

Huang Yanyun: Responsible for revising the paper.

## Research on the Operation & Development Strategy of CASHL Based on the Current Status of Some Member Libraries

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] According to the investment and feedback from the 14 selected member libraries of CASHL North China Region in three years, the North China Regional Center of CASHL (BNU Library) found and analyzed problems in resources and services of CASHL, and made recommendations for the operation of CASHL. [Method/process] Using webpage survey, visiting, and one-on-one consultation to investigate the current status of 14 member libraries in CASHL North China region, BNU Library has fully understood the current status of the 14 member libraries in the humanities and social science electronic resources, featured resources, and CASHL services. [Result/conclusion] Discussing the operation and development strategies of CASHL, including of resource co-construction and sharing, service and platform function improvement, etc.

**Keywords:** CASHL; library consortium; resource co-construction; resource sharing; service strategy

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

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