

Analysis and Reflections on University Library Resource Service Practices in Hong Kong and Taiwan Regions of China: Postprint

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Date: 2023-08-26T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Based on the service innovation and practice of university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan regions, this study identifies the service focus and core values of university libraries. [Method/Process] This paper introduces the service innovation and practical activities of university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan regions of China, which are centered around the resources they can provide, from five aspects: “demand-driven resource organization,” “comprehensive discovery and integration of resources,” “emphasis on collaborative resource development and sharing,” “advanced spatial service concepts,” and “convenient self-service,” thereby prompting reflection on the service focus and core values of university libraries. [Results/Conclusion] This paper proposes that mainland university libraries should shift their mindset, place the service focus on the resources that libraries can provide, implement service innovation in concrete terms, and concentrate on the systematization, specialization, digitization, integration, and interconnection of resources to deliver excellent resource services.

Full Text

Preamble

Vol. 62 No. 8, April 2018
ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal

Analysis and Reflection on the Practice of University Library Resource Services in Hong Kong and Taiwan

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Based on service innovation and practice in university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan, this paper identifies the service focus and core values of university libraries.

[Method/Process] From five perspectives—"demand-driven resource organization," "comprehensive resource revelation and integration," "emphasis on resource co-construction and sharing," "advanced space service concepts," and "convenient self-service"—this study introduces service innovation and practical activities in university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan centered around available resources, prompting reflection on the service focus and core values of university libraries.

[Result/Conclusion] Mainland university libraries should shift their mindset, focusing service priorities on the resources libraries can provide and implementing service innovation through concrete actions. Resource service work should concentrate on systematization, specialization, digitization, integration, and interconnection of resources.

Classification Number: G254

Keywords: resource service, university library, learning space, space transformation

DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2018.08.008

In 2016 and 2017, the author visited university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan for study and investigation. In Hong Kong, the primary institutions were Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Institute of Education. In Taiwan, the main institutions were National Kaohsiung Normal University, National Taiwan Normal University, National Tsing Hua University, and National Changhua University of Education. The overall impression was that Taiwanese university libraries generally have larger physical spaces but suffer from obvious personnel and funding shortages, with relatively old facilities and urgent needs for space renovation. During these visits and exchanges, one phrase was heard most frequently: "What can be achieved through technology should not be done by manpower." The primary reason for this approach is the lack of personnel and funding, which has led to a shift toward reliance on technical solutions.

1 Service Innovation and Practice in Hong Kong and Taiwan University Libraries

1.1 Demand-Driven Resource Organization

University libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan place great emphasis on collection development. Compared to print resources, they focus more on digital resource construction, with digital resources accounting for over 80% of annual collection development budgets. Moreover, they basically do not purchase duplicate

copies of print materials, allowing limited library space to store a larger and richer collection. Therefore, in terms of collection development, they differ significantly from mainland university libraries. Libraries allocate more funding to electronic resource procurement, and electronic resource collections have developed rapidly across institutions. Electronic journals have become the mainstay of periodical collections, while e-books are gradually becoming the primary form of book collections. Simultaneously, these libraries attach great importance to digitizing print materials, with secondary literature databases almost completely replacing print documents. Taking Hong Kong Institute of Education Library as an example, during the 2008-2009 academic year, the library accumulated over 700,000 print books and 50,000 e-books. By the 2016-2017 academic year, print books had only increased by about 50,000, while e-books reached 1.5 million. Furthermore, from 2009-2010 to 2016-2017, e-book usage increased more than eightfold, and from 2011-2012 to 2016-2017, e-journal usage increased nearly fourfold. Other university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan show similar trends in collection development and utilization [1]. In contrast, mainland university libraries had an average digital resource proportion of 54.4% in 2016, representing only a 3.1% increase from 2015 [2]. Among 40 university libraries in Shanghai, only eight (primarily science and engineering universities such as ShanghaiTech University, Tongji University, and East China University of Science and Technology) had digital resource proportions exceeding 70%. Twelve libraries had proportions between 50-70%, while 20 had less than 50% [3]. This demonstrates that Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries generally have higher proportions of electronic resources than their mainland counterparts, with electronic resources having become the main collections and primary resources used by faculty and students.

Through comparison, the author found that university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan share basically the same principles in resource organization, manifested in three main aspects:

- (1) **Transition from “ownership” to “access rights.”** Libraries reduce print resource procurement while expanding electronic resource acquisition. Previously, collection development in these university libraries was similar to mainland practices: open stacks contained large quantities of low-use print materials; different libraries within university systems and regional areas held numerous duplicate copies; collections were built primarily in anticipation of potential future needs. The current situation, however, shows that electronic resources cover broader types and content than previous print resources; print materials can be preserved and used through interlibrary cooperation within university systems and regions; and e-books are only purchased when actually used by readers.
- (2) **Transition from “print preservation” to “digital sharing.”** Libraries accelerate the digitization of their collections to facilitate rapid user access. Previously, print resource utilization was constrained by time and space; resource sharing among different libraries within university sys-

tems and regions remained restricted; and interconnections among print resources were not fully realized. The current state shows that characteristic resource databases, subject resource databases, and secondary literature databases have been established; and open access systems for resource databases are gradually taking shape.

- (3) **Transition from “just-in-case” to “just-in-time.”** This primarily involves replacing traditional title selection with patron-driven acquisition (PDA), allowing readers to participate in building collection systems. Previously, resource procurement in these libraries was similar to mainland university library models, mainly involving librarians selecting from approval plans or through blanket orders, with collection systems based on speculation about reader interests and usage patterns. Now, the PDA model is adopted, where e-books are only selected after readers express demand, gradually shifting collection systems to ones independently established by readers.

1.2 Comprehensive Resource Revelation and Integration

University libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan conduct cataloging for all collection resources, whether traditional print materials, non-book materials (audiovisual resources), electronic resources, network resources, or even teaching support resources (such as games, maps, and teaching aids). All are MARC-cataloged and integrated into the OPAC retrieval system to achieve unified searching across all resources. For purchased databases, not only are the databases themselves cataloged, but e-journals and e-books within them are also cataloged. Cataloging data is primarily provided by database vendors, with libraries reviewing the data and adding link fields. For self-built databases, such as the Republic of China Map Database at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Library and the Modern Chinese Drama Database at Chinese University of Hong Kong Library, these libraries not only emphasize the digitization of characteristic resources but also catalog both the databases and their included resources. For useful web information on the internet, reference departments primarily select relevant web pages and provide them to cataloging departments, which then perform cataloging and maintenance.

Cataloging, as an important component of resource integration in Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries, is completed by professional catalogers. Rather than being weakened, cataloging work is continuously strengthened. This represents a significant difference from mainland university libraries, where most libraries only catalog print resources, with only a few including electronic resources in their cataloging work. Moreover, most mainland libraries outsource cataloging to book vendors or specialized data companies, with some even omitting data review.

Thus, Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries catalog all collection resources, including e-books and e-journals, and provide multiple search interfaces. Addi-

tionally, they integrate subject resources from disciplinary utilization perspectives, fully demonstrating interconnections among resources, expanding resource utilization channels, and enabling readers to search through multiple approaches and angles. Simultaneously, in-depth integration of subject resources allows librarians to connect with various disciplines from a resource provision perspective and implement subject services effectively. Mainland university libraries, which do not catalog electronic resources, prevent readers from searching through OPAC and can only achieve cross-database retrieval through navigation or integrated platforms, limiting many search functions by platform or database capabilities and constraining retrieval effectiveness. From a resource provision perspective, subject services cannot be deeply developed.

1.3 Emphasis on Resource Co-construction and Sharing

Resource co-construction and sharing among university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan is primarily achieved through establishing close regional library consortia. Eight university libraries, including University of Hong Kong and Chinese University of Hong Kong, formed the regional library consortium JULAC (The Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee). Resource co-construction and sharing among member libraries is carried out very meticulously, extending beyond traditional interlibrary loan and joint procurement to seek broader cooperation in collaborative storage and shared cataloging. Collaborative storage primarily refers to establishing a university joint repository for storing outdated but still valuable materials and rare books from JULAC libraries. Cataloging sharing is achieved through a unified automated management system, enabling remote retrieval and data entry for joint cataloging and strengthening interlibrary resource co-construction and sharing. Additionally, JULAC's strategic development plan in 2013 proposed establishing a large-scale library system—the “Common Library Integrated System”—planning to transfer the independent information management systems of eight libraries to a cloud-based library service platform, thereby seeking deeper resource co-construction and sharing among university libraries. This system includes two sub-platforms: a unified “library service platform” and a unified “discovery service platform.” After completing preparatory work from system proposal to working group establishment, content determination, bidding, and contract signing, the first batch of data transfer testing began in August 2016. A second data transfer occurred in January 2017, with official launch in July. Although various problems exist in platform operation, this cooperation and exploration represents the development trend of university library collaboration in the same region and offers many valuable lessons.

Taiwanese university libraries have established nine regional consortia, basically thematic alliances such as resource procurement consortia and cataloging consortia, primarily aiming to achieve resource co-construction and sharing—obtaining maximum benefits with minimum funding—including sharing of service concepts. Additionally, Taiwanese university libraries emphasize not letting tech-

nology bind libraries but rather allowing libraries to exercise more autonomy. Therefore, in developing service platforms or designing service systems, one or several libraries typically take the lead.

1.4 Advanced Space Service Concepts

1.4.1 Learning Spaces Learning Commons (LC), which first emerged in European and American university libraries, is a new service model developed on the basis of Information Commons (IC), integrating functional computer hardware/software facilities and rich information resources to provide one-stop services for individual and group learning, discussion, and research activities, thereby promoting learning, communication, collaboration, and research among readers. University libraries in Hong Kong attach great importance to LC service models and space renovation. Among the four libraries visited, all established comfortable and free learning spaces on lower floors (basement or ground level), mostly featuring central service desks, group or individual study rooms, casual learning areas, and printing/production rooms. Some LC spaces also include personalized areas such as multimedia centers, learning planning rooms, audio-visual areas, conference rooms, multi-function classrooms, and test-adaptation rooms as needed.

To compare the transformation and development of space design concepts from IC to LC in Hong Kong and Taiwan, this study compares the hardware, software, and services of learning spaces in four Hong Kong university libraries, as shown in Table 1 :

Table 1 Comparison of Software, Hardware, and Services in Learning Spaces of Four Hong Kong University Libraries

[Note: The Learning Garden at Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Learning Commons at University of Hong Kong, and the Research Commons at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology are LC spaces; the others are IC spaces]

The Learning Garden at Chinese University of Hong Kong Library covers approximately 2,600 square meters, located in the library basement. Designed by a Japanese architect in a minimalist style, it primarily utilizes glass skylights for natural lighting and has a separate entrance for use after the library closes at 10 PM. The space is divided into collaboration zones, IT zones, leisure zones, and quiet zones. Since opening in 2013, it has been extremely popular among students, with utilization rates reaching 98% during exam periods. It is more popular in the evenings than during the day, with students describing it as “an open learning place, not a quiet study space.”

The Learning Commons at University of Hong Kong is located on the library’s third floor. Renovated from an IC space in the past two years, it is the most comprehensive among the four universities in terms of spatial design, hardware facilities, and service provision. Hong Kong University of Science and Technol-

ogy has two learning spaces: a comprehensive Information Commons on the ground floor (the typical IC space) and a comprehensive Research Commons on the basement level—a relatively advanced and novel LC space.

These two spaces at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology each have their own history, characteristics, and strengths. The Information Commons, launched in September 2006, currently provides 600 square meters of individual or group learning space equipped with over 70 high-end computers. The IC learning area includes individual and group study rooms, discussion rooms, and presentation rooms. Some study rooms are equipped with electronic whiteboards, and there is also a reference service desk and reference collection for convenient use and consultation. The Information Commons was established primarily for university students' learning and research purposes. The Research Commons, a new learning space launched in 2012 after preparation and construction beginning in 2010, incorporated multiple reader surveys during its design phase, integrating student suggestions into the LC space design. Currently, the Research Commons covers approximately 1,800 square meters with 600 seats and over 80 high-end computers. The learning area includes 17 group discussion rooms, 2 learning rooms, and some tutorial spaces. The creative media area consists of media production rooms, post-production rooms, and graphic studios. LC spaces are equipped with relatively advanced facilities, mainly electronic whiteboards and interactive projectors. Additionally, the LC leisure area features soft seating and coffee tables, with snack and vending services available. Compared to the Information Commons, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology students prefer the LC space. To facilitate student use, the library separated the LC space from the main library with glass doors and established a new entrance, allowing the LC space to open independently. Simultaneously, to enable evening use, a 24-hour access area was established within the LC space.

The transformation of library learning spaces from IC to LC represents a shift in library service philosophy, moving from passive to active service, thereby promoting new service methods. For example, students can use LC classrooms for classes, encouraging other teaching support departments to provide services in the LC, promoting learning-related activities in the LC, and providing learning interactions beyond class hours. These services strengthen cooperation with other departments, enrich learning activities and student interaction and collaboration in the space, and transform and improve students' utilization methods and efficiency of library resources and spaces.

1.4.2 24-Hour Spaces The ultimate goal of library resource services is that any user can obtain any resource owned by any library anytime, anywhere—the “5A” theory [5]. Implementing 24-hour library access not only meets the needs of different readers and promotes personalized library services but also concretely realizes the “5A” concept. All four Hong Kong universities have 24-hour spaces, as shown in Table 2 :

Table 2 24-Hour Space Settings and Operating Conditions of Four

Hong Kong University Libraries

The 24-hour space at Chinese University of Hong Kong Library is located in the Learning Garden. As the largest, most comfortable space with the most equipment, students have considerable freedom there. The 24-hour space at Hong Kong Institute of Education Library is located on the ground floor circulation hall, normally fully open but separated by a glass door in the evening to form an independent space. A separate access control entrance was also created for evening student entry. Through student surveys, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Library learned that students highly value 24-hour access, with comments such as “Never been so excited to come to the library.” University of Hong Kong Library has established a dedicated space on the ground floor providing 24-hour access, though it only offers tables, chairs, and lockers—relatively simple facilities.

Currently, few mainland university libraries have implemented 24-hour spaces, making Hong Kong’s practices valuable. As library service concepts innovate, establishing 24-hour spaces will be accepted and implemented by more libraries.

1.4.3 Personalized Spaces Although Taiwanese university libraries are not as large-scale or conceptually advanced as Hong Kong University Library in space construction, their spatial design and layout are very humanistic. They consider not only librarians’ opinions but also students’ ideas, reflecting strong humanistic care. For example, at National Kaohsiung Normal University’s Yan-chao Campus Library, a relatively secluded area on the second-floor reading hall features several rows of sofas for lying down and resting, along with footstools—very popular among students. Additionally, libraries have created creative spaces such as IREAD (Love Reading Pavilion), which emphasizes color coordination and comfort, with long opening hours and high user freedom, allowing students to read freely.

1.5 Convenient Self-Service

University libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan basically all provide convenient and intuitive new book guidance services. New book areas are generally located in hall corners or centers, featuring uniquely designed bookshelves and comfortable sofas, or specially designed bookshelves created by renovating walls. These areas primarily display recently purchased books for easy student browsing. Previously, such new book shelves existed but had low utilization rates. After changing the display method to show book covers facing students, the effect was unexpectedly positive. Many students now enjoy sitting there browsing new books, with borrowing rates increasing significantly compared to before.

Additionally, self-service is ubiquitous in Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries, closely related to their “user-centered” service philosophy. Even simple amenities like a printer, a binding machine, or a video tutorial on searching beside bookshelves convey meticulous care and thoughtfulness for users.

2 Reflections Triggered by Hong Kong and Taiwan University Library Service Practices

During visits and exchanges, the author deeply realized that whether in service innovation or transformation, Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries center closely on the resources they can provide. This raised the question: What exactly is the focus of library services? And what is the core competitiveness of modern university libraries?

2.1 “Resource Service” as the Focus of Library Services

Mainland library circles hold many different views on the focus of library services. As early as the 1980s, scholars proposed “knowledge” as the research object of library science, a view quickly embraced by young and middle-aged researchers. In 1985, Mi Hao, director of the Library and Information Science Department at East China Normal University, proposed the “knowledge communication theory” in his work, making “knowledge service” a widely accepted concept in library and information science [6]. Since the 1990s, “knowledge”-labeled research has emerged continuously in mainland library and information science, accompanied by new concepts such as knowledge management, knowledge transfer, knowledge service, knowledge innovation, knowledge mining, and knowledge discovery, generating new service theories and viewpoints. But are these “knowledge”-labeled services truly the focus of library services?

Through exchanges with Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries, the author found that these libraries rarely involve or practice services currently popular in mainland university libraries that use “knowledge” as a label, such as knowledge services or institutional repositories. Instead, reader-oriented resource services—services conducted around resources libraries can provide, including print resources, electronic resources, network resources, teaching support resources (games, maps, teaching aids, etc.), and space resources—remain the focus of library services. Whether in current service innovation or future business transformation, all aspects including resource organization, revelation, integration, regional cooperation, and co-construction and sharing are closely centered on providing better resource services to readers.

The author searched CNKI using “knowledge discovery” (a popular term in mainland library circles in recent years) as the keyword (search date: June 30, 2017). Among over 4,000 results, most were from computer science researchers, with only about 50 from library science fields. Most of these papers discussed concepts and theories of knowledge discovery, with none specifically addressing “how to discover knowledge.” Additionally, current “knowledge discovery” systems developed and promoted by database vendors essentially only retrieve batches of relevant documents, far from achieving the goal of quickly discovering relevant “knowledge.” This indicates that library services have boundaries. While library collections contain massive amounts of knowledge and libraries have close relationships with “knowledge,” making knowledge-related services

understandable objects of attention in library and information science, they are not the focus of library services [8]. The author also believes that many currently popular research topics such as scientific data management, institutional repositories, MOOCs, and artificial intelligence may merely represent practical applications of modern technical means in library resource service work, rather than the focus of library service development.

As Professor Liu Ziheng from Peking University's School of Information Management stated in a librarian training session: Information resource construction is one of the most important tasks for libraries because information resource construction aimed at owning physical entities forms the foundation for all library services and should naturally be the basis of library core capabilities. Without information resource construction and quality information resources, why would readers rely on libraries, and why would society invest in establishing or maintaining libraries? As former editor-in-chief Wang Zongyi of *Library and Information Service* noted: Libraries are social management institutions for documents, and the focus of all library services and work is the collection. Without collections, we lose our foundation [11]. Therefore, based on practices in Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries and exchange experiences, modern university libraries—regardless of how their status changes or functions are positioned—still rely on rich collections to enhance service capabilities and expand influence. Conversely, without resources, library management and services become “armchair strategies.”

2.2 Resources and Services as the Most Important Core Value of University Libraries

Identifying the core value of libraries can help reposition library functions, enhance core competitiveness in document services, and promote library service development and practice. Since the focus of library services remains resource services, we have reason to believe that resources and services are still the most important core values of university libraries.

The specific practices of Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries in resource organization, integration, and co-construction and sharing highlight their emphasis on resources and services. University of Hong Kong Library considers “intellectual freedom,” “access for all,” and “learning, research, and lifelong learning” as main components of its core values [9]. Additionally, the United States released two surveys in 2010 and 2014 on university faculty perceptions of libraries, showing that the library's portal function declined from 70% in 2003 to 58% in 2009, while the purchasing function steadily increased from 81% in 2003 to 90% in 2009, and the collection function remained basically unchanged at around 70%. These results indicate that university faculty dependence on library portals is decreasing, demand for libraries to purchase needed resources is increasing, while expectations for libraries to maintain traditional collection functions remain [10]. These examples further demonstrate that preserving resources and providing resource services to users remain one of the most im-

portant core values of modern libraries. Compared to traditional libraries, this content has not been weakened but rather strengthened, though some forms may have changed.

3 Implications and Recommendations

The service innovation and practice of Hong Kong and Taiwan university libraries, which closely center on available resources, merit careful consideration and reference by mainland university libraries. Therefore, mainland university libraries should shift their mindset, focusing service priorities on resources libraries can provide rather than pursuing impractical goals beyond library capabilities or only feasible for individual libraries. To enable readers to more conveniently obtain desired resources and conduct resource services effectively, university libraries should implement service innovation through concrete actions, focusing on systematization, specialization, digitization, integration, and interconnection of resources.

- (1) **Rationalize allocation ratios of collection development funds.** While ensuring characteristic print resources, maximize investment in digital resources and gradually shift e-book procurement toward user-oriented PDA models.
- (2) **Strengthen organization and integration of collection resources.** Emphasize not only print resource cataloging but also cataloging of digital resources and other resource types, providing more effective and convenient access according to user habits.
- (3) **Emphasize development of characteristic resource databases and secondary literature databases.** Integrate the latest digital humanities technologies, applying digitization, data management, data analysis, and visualization technologies to resource database construction. While providing massive, standardized digital information and data, reveal interconnections among resources or data to offer resource services and research support in more user-friendly ways [12].
- (4) **Accelerate space renovation efforts.** Focus on creating LC spaces, and during renovation design, actively solicit user and librarian opinions, involving librarians in space color and zoning design when necessary. Simultaneously emphasize creating personalized spaces that reflect library humanism. Where conditions permit, actively promote and establish 24-hour spaces as a future direction for library space services.

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Analysis and Reflection on the Practice of University Library Resources Service in Hong Kong and Taiwan Area

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] Based on the service innovation and practice of university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the service center and core value of university libraries are determined. [Method/process] From five aspects of “demand-driven resource organization,” “comprehensive resource revelation and integration,” “emphasis on resource co-construction and sharing,” “advanced space service concept,” and “convenient self-service,” this paper introduces the service innovation and practice activities of university libraries in Hong Kong and Taiwan around the resources they can provide, triggering thinking about the service center and core value of university libraries. [Re-

sult/conclusion] Mainland university libraries should change their thinking, focus the library service center on the resources that the library can provide, put the service innovation work into practice, and do a good job in resource service work closely around the systematization, specialization, digitization, integration, and association of resources.

Keywords: resource service; university library; learning space; space transformation

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