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Institutional Logic Conflicts and Coping Strategies in Library Policy-Making: A Case Study of the Performance-Based Funding Policy for Libraries in Illinois, USA (Postprint)

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Abstract

Purpose/Significance: Library policy-making processes face conflicts among multiple institutional logics. Only by adopting adaptive strategies to balance stakeholder demands can library policymakers achieve sustainable library development. Examining the U.S. library policy-making process from the perspective of multiple institutional logic conflicts provides valuable insights for China's library policy formulation and implementation.

Methods/Process: Through an analysis of the background and process of Illinois' performance-based funding policy for libraries in the United States, this study elaborates on the coping strategies adopted by library policymakers to balance stakeholders under conflicts among multiple institutional logics (social logic, library operational logic, and marketized government logic).

Results/Conclusions: Research findings indicate that in the process of formulating library policies, to resolve institutional logic conflicts and their legitimacy crises, policymakers may adopt actions such as establishing broad policy networks, engaging in multi-level incremental negotiations, fully utilizing strategic space, altering policy types, and constructing policy amendment mechanisms to balance the interests of policy participants.

Full Text

Preamble

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Institutional Logic Conflicts and Coping Strategies in Library Policy-Making: A Case Study of Performance-Based Appropriation Policy

in Illinois Libraries

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Library policy-making faces multiple institutional logic conflicts. Only by adopting adaptive strategies to balance stakeholder demands can library policymakers achieve sustainable development. Examining the U.S. library policy-making process from the perspective of multiple institutional logic conflicts provides valuable insights for China's library policy formulation and implementation. **[Method/Process]** This paper employs case study methodology, collecting and analyzing materials related to the formulation of Illinois' library performance appropriation policy. Based on a multiple institutional logic conflict perspective, it examines the library policy-making process to derive beneficial implications for China's library policy formulation and execution. **[Result/Conclusion]** The study reveals that policy actors flexibly respond to legitimacy pressures and systemic logic conflicts by establishing extensive policy networks, conducting phased consultations, analyzing strategic spaces, transforming policy types, and establishing policy self-correction mechanisms.

2. Policy Background and Process

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in America's social, political, and economic environment. The 2007-2008 financial crisis brought library performance appropriation policies back to the attention of government agencies. Against this backdrop, state governments have gradually reduced financial allocations to libraries while operating expenses continue to rise, severely impacting collection development and opening hours. To address the financial crisis, the Obama administration promoted governance concepts of "change" and "economic revitalization," advancing reforms particularly in the public service sector. In 2009, the federal government implemented performance appropriation policies to drive library performance improvement, with various foundations vigorously promoting this reform across different types of libraries.

Illinois serves as a representative example. Since the 21st century, mounting economic pressure has compelled the state government to compress library funding. Combined with foundation advocacy, Illinois undertook sweeping reforms to its library appropriation policies, attempting to improve funding efficiency through performance-based allocation amid fiscal constraints. The policy formulation process unfolded in three distinct stages.

2.1 Stage One: Policy Origins

In 2009, Illinois formulated the *Illinois State Library Strategic Plan: 2008-2011*, which elaborated on the state's overall library development strategy. During this

planning process, the term “performance appropriation” was introduced for the first time. This proposal triggered widespread resistance from libraries, resulting in performance appropriation provisions being excluded from the final report.

2.2 Stage Two: Policy Proposal

In 2010, to promote implementation of the aforementioned plan, Illinois established a Library Financial Advisory Management Committee composed of multiple stakeholders to research and formulate appropriation policies, bringing performance appropriation back onto the policy agenda. In May 2010, the committee submitted a report to the state legislature recommending performance appropriation policy implementation. However, due to significant controversies regarding appropriation ratios, funding sources, allocation amounts, and indicator design, no consensus was ultimately reached.

2.3 Stage Three: Policy Negotiation

With support from the state government and foundations, Illinois created a state-level library management body—the Performance Appropriation Committee—comprising state legislators, librarians, library management agencies, non-profit organizations, and experts. This committee was responsible for discussing, negotiating, and reviewing the specific content of the library performance appropriation policy. After multiple consultations on funding allocation ratios, funding channels, and indicator design, the committee finalized the Illinois library performance appropriation policy, which stipulated that 0.5% of state library funding would be contingent upon performance evaluation results. By designing a sophisticated and complex appropriation indicator calculation system, the committee ultimately achieved a balance among various library stakeholders.

3. Institutional Logic Conflicts in Policy-Making

Long-standing institutional arrangements and their corresponding action mechanisms in a particular field constitute institutional logic, which forms the basis for behavior patterns within that domain. P. DiMaggio et al. identify government, market, family, religion, and democracy as the primary institutional logics in Western societies, whose conflicts drive institutional change. These five basic institutional logics continuously conflict, merge, and evolve throughout history, generating diverse new logics such as marketized government logic and social organization operation logic. Because institutional logic conflicts profoundly influence policymakers’ and actors’ thinking and behavior, they become critical factors that must be considered in library policy-making.

When formulating library performance appropriation policies, three main institutional logics come into play: marketized government logic, library operation logic, and social logic. Conflicts among these three logics reflect tensions between

the ambiguity, complexity, and diversity of library outputs and policy objectives, as well as the risks and uncertainties inherent in library policy-making.

3.1 Influence and Conflict of Three Institutional Logics

From the perspective of library performance appropriation policy, the conflict between library operation logic and marketized government logic is particularly prominent, manifesting in four key aspects: (1) The latter emphasizes libraries' economic functions and attributes, demanding improved management efficiency and input-output benefits through performance appropriation, focusing on return on investment. The former, however, maintains that economic development is not libraries' primary function, and that emphasizing efficiency without improving service quality cannot realize libraries' true value. (2) Marketized government logic uses output as the standard for resource allocation, requiring clear, quantifiable calculations of library outputs. Library operation logic argues that numerous factors influence library outputs—such as staff quality, collection quantity and quality, supporting facilities, and institutional norms—and that improving management alone cannot solve all problems. (3) Marketized government logic demands competitive mechanisms to enhance library performance, but different libraries have varying orientations and development goals, making them incomparable. (4) Marketized government logic requires libraries to resolve output and funding shortages through improved internal management efficiency under relatively fixed government financial input. Library operation logic, however, views library services as public goods for which government bears responsibility to provide necessary funding. Improving library output and service quality becomes extremely difficult when government financial input remains unchanged or continues to decrease.

3.1.1 Marketized Government Logic With the rise and development of the New Public Management movement, market logic and government logic have intermingled and permeated each other, forming a new institutional logic—marketized government logic. In the 21st century, the new accountability movement has elevated the influence of marketized government logic in federal government-led library policy-making activities. In formulating library performance appropriation policies, marketized government logic functions in three aspects: emphasizing libraries' role in promoting socioeconomic development; stressing library performance and output, requiring result-oriented quantitative evaluation; and providing library users with more choices and opportunities through increased information access channels and transparency.

Specifically, in Illinois' library performance appropriation policy text, marketized government logic manifests in three ways: (1) Requiring libraries to play a greater role in local economic development. As the Illinois Library Association Conference explicitly stated: “Library development plans should be implemented around the state's overall development plan, not limited to internal library concerns. Libraries should prioritize promoting state development rather

than merely satisfying internal development needs” [14]. (2) Policy formulation and implementation must be result-oriented, requiring a comprehensive quantitative evaluation indicator system. (3) The ultimate policy goal is continuously enhancing Illinois’ position and influence in the national economic system. The *Illinois State Library Strategic Plan: 2008-2011* noted that “Illinois ranks among the top states in library user numbers, and Illinois will provide better library services to people in economically underdeveloped areas, bringing the state’s library services to advanced national levels.”

As marketized government logic’s influence continues to grow, its conflict with library operation logic intensifies. Scholars argue that prominent value contradictions in library policy-making manifest in conflicts between economic value advocated by market logic and libraries’ own knowledge value. If marketized government logic plays a dominant role in library policy-making, economic rationalism inevitably becomes the driving force of library reform [15].

3.1.2 Library Operation Logic Unlike marketized government logic, library operation logic has unique characteristics. First, libraries have diverse social functions, such as knowledge transmission and dissemination, information organization, ensuring information access, and promoting social development. Second, efficiency and effectiveness are not libraries’ sole objectives; they emphasize more on knowledge inheritance, literature resource preservation, promoting user development, and expanding social influence. Finally, libraries have multiple goals, and library outputs are difficult to manifest in the short term [16].

3.1.3 Social Logic Social logic refers to normative systems related to social structure that receive broad public support and recognition. Regarding library performance appropriation, social logic emphasizes fairness—improving library performance must not come at the expense of vulnerable groups. Fairness possesses the strongest legitimacy and represents a universal, fundamental, and crucial demand in human society. Therefore, both federal and state governments must protect vulnerable groups’ interests.

Generally, library operation logic aligns with social logic, as libraries also emphasize equitable and free access to information and focus on serving vulnerable groups. However, because libraries carry additional policy objectives, conflicts with social logic can emerge during operation. When formulating library performance appropriation policies, conflicts arise among marketized government logic, library operation logic, and social logic. Marketized government logic emphasizes output and efficiency, requiring libraries to optimize management to improve performance and determine appropriation amounts accordingly. However, for some state or community libraries whose mission is to expand service populations and scope, enabling more people to access information equitably, their outputs naturally differ significantly from research libraries. If library policies overemphasize output, some libraries will inevitably change their development philosophy and modify service content, potentially harming vulnerable

groups' interests. Similarly, while library operation logic emphasizes service quality improvement, the widespread application of information technology has created new digital divides due to differential access opportunities, preventing some special groups from using library resources and services, thereby conflicting with social logic that emphasizes fairness.

3.2 Manifestations of Three Institutional Logic Conflicts

Institutional logic conflicts encompass two dimensions: (1) Conflicts between policy goals and values. Scholars note that performance appropriation policy value objectives include at least four basic components: quality, efficiency, choice, and fairness [17]. From the library operation logic perspective, libraries prioritize quality to protect their interests and enhance social status. From the marketized government logic perspective, efficiency and choice are primary policy goals. For social logic, inter-group relationships receive greater emphasis, thus stressing fairness. Since efficiency, quality, fairness, and choice always conflict, performance appropriation policy-making becomes complex and uncertain. (2) Conflicts among policy stakeholders. Illinois' library performance appropriation policy involves three main stakeholder groups: government departments, parliaments, and their representatives, who hold policy-making dominance and decision-making power, tend to make decisions according to marketized government logic and emphasize control over libraries; library managers, librarians, and library service user groups, who emphasize libraries' knowledge value, oppose quantitative evaluation and ranking of libraries, and stress acting according to library operation logic and social logic; and non-profit organizations or related groups, who care about vulnerable groups' interests, follow social logic, and work to resolve issues of equitable information access for vulnerable groups. Although these policy stakeholders' motivations or behaviors may change over time, their games and conflicts inevitably exert tremendous influence on library policy-making outcomes.

4. Policymakers' Strategic Behaviors

Policy goals are fraught with institutional logic conflicts primarily due to legitimacy pressures in their institutional environment, which also existed in Illinois' library performance appropriation policy-making process. From the federal government perspective, against a backdrop of domestic economic weakness and increasingly fierce international competition, dominant policy actors such as the federal government and foundations continuously emphasized challenges and crises facing libraries to secure more legitimacy for performance appropriation policies. Through constructing policy network systems, publicity and education, and financial incentives, they pushed performance appropriation policies nationwide. When discourse such as "Performance appropriation policy is coming" and "Performance appropriation leads the new normal of library development" swept across the country, the urgency of performance appropriation policy-making became paramount. Under these circumstances, policymakers had to adopt ef-

fective measures to ensure policy acceptance by all parties despite institutional logic conflicts.

4.1 Constructing a Comprehensive Policy Network System and Strengthening Policy Legitimacy Advocacy

The more diverse and complex the policy objectives, the more extensive stakeholder participation is required. Ignoring certain groups' interest demands makes effective conflict balancing impossible, hindering smooth policy implementation. Illinois' library policy-making process fully recognized this point. The Illinois Library Financial Research Committee noted in its public report that performance appropriation policies remained immature and required enhanced communication and cooperation to determine more reasonable performance indicators and policy objectives [18]. Consequently, Illinois specifically established a library policy network system covering different policy stakeholders.

Policymakers maintained good communication and interaction with other stakeholders throughout the policy formulation process. During strategic plan development, organizers held multiple hearings and seminars, collecting opinions and demands from various interest groups through multiple channels and incorporating them into policy proposals. Conducting policy publicity and education to continuously improve stakeholders' understanding and recognition of policies can effectively consolidate the policy's legitimacy foundation. By fully considering policy conflicts and providing platforms for different stakeholders to express their demands, Illinois' library policy-making process helped improve policy implementation effectiveness.

4.2 Multi-Level Gradual Consultation

P. A. Hall divides policy into three levels: goals, instruments, and precise settings [19]. Different policy elements correspond to different institutional standards and requirements, and policy actors must act according to these varying levels to ensure minimum legitimacy requirements are met [20]. Analysis of Illinois' library policy-making model reveals that performance appropriation policy was not implemented overnight but proceeded in a hierarchical, phased manner.

In the first phase, policymakers discussed the relatively uncontroversial policy goal of "whether to implement performance appropriation models to improve library performance." After reaching consensus on this issue, policymakers legislated this agreement and established plans and objectives for the next phase. In the second phase, policymakers focused on funding issues—specifically, the proportion of performance appropriation. The most controversial performance indicator selection and weighting arrangements were scheduled for the third phase. However, because the performance appropriation funding proportion was relatively low, conflicts and contradictions encountered at this stage were also relatively minor. This demonstrates that Illinois adopted a phased, multi-level, gradual approach in its library policy-making process—first reaching consensus

on less controversial issues, codifying negotiated outcomes through legal documents, then addressing more conflict-ridden aspects to minimize resistance and obstacles in policy-making.

4.3 Using Strategic Space and Strategic Behavior to Promote Consensus on Important Issues

Strategic space refers to the series of planned, targeted strategic behaviors that policy objects adopt to steer policy-making toward directions favorable to their needs—legitimate spaces that the policy system can provide [21]. For policymakers, strategic space represents the room for flexible negotiation and bargaining with policy objects. Different strategic spaces lead to different strategic behaviors. American management scholar C. Oliver argues that under dual pressures of institutional pressure and structural contradictions, organizations can flexibly choose among five strategies: compliance and implementation, negotiation and consultation, evasion or concealment, resistance or confrontation, and control or influence over the environment [22]. Illinois flexibly selected different strategic behaviors according to different strategic spaces during its library performance appropriation policy formulation.

Regarding the policy goal or tool of adopting performance appropriation to improve library performance, strong legitimacy pressure from federal and state governments left relatively little room for negotiation. Government and foundation actors adopted firm stances. Although some libraries, librarians, or users held different opinions, they still chose compliance and implementation, reserving their advocacy space for other details.

Regarding funding proportion settings, policy promoters such as state governments, foundations, and legislators all hoped to increase the proportion of performance appropriation funding, while libraries tend to reduce the proportion of performance-based appropriation to avoid negative impacts of performance appropriation policies on libraries. Since U.S. states have different regulations on funding proportions, considerable negotiation space existed on this issue. Simultaneously, this issue was critical to policy-making and implementation, and library representatives held relatively unified positions, issuing public statements to express their protests. Because substantial negotiation space existed, policymakers tended to use negotiation and consultation strategies. However, internal games emerged within the library community, with two main camps: research library alliances (such as the University of Illinois Library) and public library alliances (such as the Chicago State Library and community libraries). Since the latter's outputs are more difficult to measure, they occupied a weaker position in performance appropriation. As public libraries involve more vulnerable group interests, some social organizations joined this camp. In this situation, authoritative institutions served as coordinators, such as the Illinois Library Association.

To coordinate conflicting interests, policymakers first categorized libraries into

different types with differentiated indicator weights. Second, to accommodate research libraries' needs, they added an indicator of "ratio of research service expenditures to total expenditures." Third, to balance interests between state public libraries and community libraries, they appropriately increased weights for vulnerable groups to correct deviations caused by performance appropriation policies. Finally, in indicator weight design, the committee granted libraries greater autonomous decision-making power to assign their own weights. This approach effectively resolved the bargaining among all parties, and also improved the flexibility and scientific nature of performance indicator weight settings.

4.4 Transforming Redistributive Policy into Symbolic Policy to Improve Policy Feasibility

Harvard Professor Lowi studied policy classification, summarizing four policy types based on government coercion likelihood and applicability: distributive (allocation of benefits or rights to individuals with low policy coercion), redistributive (income redistribution with high coercion likelihood), regulatory (control policies over individual behavior with high coercion), and constitutive (rules about rules with low coercion). He noted that policy differentiation inevitably creates different power fields, each forming unique political systems, structures, processes, and group relationships [23]. Library performance appropriation policy belongs to the redistributive type, facing significant conflicts during policy-making due to funding allocation among different interest groups.

However, during policy formulation, policymakers successfully transformed this redistributive policy into a symbolic policy (a form of advocacy or public opinion without actual effects) by adjusting performance indicators, indicator weights, and appropriation proportions. According to Illinois Library Financial Committee estimates, after implementing the new allocation scheme, funding differences among libraries would not exceed 0.1%—a negligible margin. This policy temporarily would not create significant conflicts or impacts on library funding allocation, thus enabling effective implementation while demonstrating government emphasis on library performance and guiding libraries to improve management and services.

4.5 Establishing Policy Self-Correction Mechanisms

In 2014 [Figure 2014: see original paper], Illinois implemented a new performance appropriation act. Subsequently, to improve policy implementability, the state specifically established a Performance Appropriation Revision Committee responsible for policy interpretation, revision, and supervisory implementation. Actually, as early as 2009, Tennessee adopted this approach, establishing library committees and revision committees composed of different library representatives that revise and adjust performance appropriation indicators and weights every five years to ensure library policies adapt to local socioeconomic development [24]. This practice gained recognition from many other states and was widely emulated. Illinois also established a Library Performance Appropriation

Revision Committee comprising library management personnel and library alliance staff who directly participated in policy formulation and implementation. This mechanism further enhanced policy-making and implementation flexibility, ensuring policies could adapt to institutional environments, delaying bargaining among parties, while also providing policy participants with space for self-adjustment.

5. Implications for China's Library Policy-Making and Implementation

China's library funding primarily relies on government appropriations, supplemented by social forces. The *Public Library Law of the People's Republic of China* provides certain guarantees for sustained library funding but does not specify exact amounts or proportions. Consequently, library funding largely depends on local economic development levels and leadership emphasis on library work. Since China's dominant institutional logic is state (government) logic [25], government logic dominates the formulation of library policies, including library appropriation policies.

Analysis of U.S. library performance appropriation policies offers the following insights: On one hand, China should embrace the "performance" concept, with libraries focusing more on input-output ratio analysis to maximize social benefits with limited resources. On the other hand, as library investment increases, people will pay greater attention to funding efficiency and libraries' fulfillment of social responsibilities. Therefore, performance appropriation models can be appropriately introduced within specific scopes to enhance libraries' motivation and performance.

Meanwhile, under the strong influence of government logic, China's library policy-making and implementation also encounter multiple institutional logic conflicts. On one hand, China's library operation logic frequently conflicts with external institutional logics such as government logic, administrative logic, and market logic. On the other hand, different values within library policies—quality, efficiency, fairness—also conflict with each other. Therefore, U.S. experiences are equally applicable to China. The following approaches can help resolve these conflicts and improve the scientificity, rationality, and efficiency of library policy-making:

- (1) Recognize and respect libraries' own operation logic and value orientations, minimizing administrative and market logic influences on library policies. In China's library policy-making process, administrative and market logic create serious value conflicts. Compared with other organizations, libraries feature multiple objectives, ambiguous processes, and uncertain outcomes. If market or administrative logic alone is applied to libraries, it will inevitably affect libraries' value orientations, leading to deviations, resistance, and other adverse phenomena during policy implementation. Therefore, library policies must respect and value libraries'

own operation logic and value orientations.

- (2) Attach importance to policy stakeholders' demands, identify potential conflicts, and incorporate them into the policy system. Library policies involve highly complex institutional environmental factors, and government departments' value orientations often create direct or indirect conflicts with library practice. Therefore, during library policy-making, institutional environments related to policy implementation, value orientations and ideologies of departments and personnel involved in policy operation must be highly valued, with thorough research conducted and unfolded sequentially, which can effectively alleviate conflicts between library policy and practice.
- (3) Innovate and improve policy communication and coordination mechanisms, transform concepts and working methods, and encourage policy objects to participate in policy-making, fully leveraging different stakeholders' wisdom to enhance policy innovation and feasibility. Additionally, during policy consultation and discussion, opponents' opinions should be absorbed as much as possible to achieve maximum consensus and improve policy completeness, creating favorable conditions for smooth later-stage implementation.
- (4) Establish and improve policy implementation tracking and revision systems. Even with thorough consideration during policy formulation, conflicts behind institutional logics cannot be completely eliminated, making deviations from expected goals and poor implementation effects inevitable. Therefore, establishing a policy implementation tracking and revision system to form a policy operation cycle of formulation, implementation, effectiveness evaluation, adjustment, and revision is necessary to timely track implementation effects and flexibly revise policies according to actual conditions.

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