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## Investigation and Reflection on Innovative Practices for Expanding Community Services in U.S. Academic Libraries: Postprint

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] While serving teaching and research, American university libraries also attach great importance to social services, and have carried out expansion, innovation, and transformation of social services in the “Internet Plus” era. Characterized by early development, high openness, broad service targets, diverse service content, and varied service methods, American university libraries have gradually formed mature and distinctive service models, which can provide valuable reference for the expansion and innovation practices of social services in Chinese university libraries. [Method/Process] In 2016, the author conducted field investigations on social service innovation practices at multiple American university libraries, interviewed librarians engaged in social services, and under the guidance of American librarians, designed an online survey questionnaire based on American university library consortia regarding the current status of social service expansion and innovation practices. Through analysis of the survey results, the author summarized the current development, practical innovations, and operational models of social services in American university libraries. [Results/Conclusion] The path of innovative development for social services in Chinese university libraries needs to focus on the following aspects: emphasizing openness to different social groups; promoting innovation in open access methods for library resources; adopting multiple means to achieve resource sharing; expanding funding sources for libraries; and constructing new social service models suitable for China’s national conditions.

## Full Text

# Research and Reflection on the Innovation Practice of Social Service Development in American University Libraries

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## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** While serving teaching and research, American university libraries also attach great importance to social services, and have expanded, innovated, and transformed these services in the “Internet Plus” era. Characterized by early development, high openness, broad service targets, diversified service content, and varied service methods, American university libraries have gradually formed mature and distinctive service models that can provide valuable references for the expansion and innovation of social services in Chinese university libraries. **[Method/Process]** In 2016, the authors conducted field investigations into innovative social service practices at multiple American university libraries, interviewed librarians involved in social services, and designed an online survey questionnaire on the current status of social service expansion and innovation practices based on American university library alliances under the guidance of American librarians. By analyzing the survey results, this paper summarizes the current development, practical innovation, and operational models of social services in American university libraries. **[Result/Conclusion]** The path to innovative development of social services in Chinese university libraries needs to focus on the following aspects: emphasizing openness to different social groups; promoting innovation in library resource open access methods; adopting multiple means to achieve resource sharing; expanding funding sources for libraries; and constructing new social service models suitable for China’s national conditions.

## 2 Research Review and Significance

### 2.1 Domestic Research Review

**2.1.1 Feasibility and Necessity of Social Service Expansion and Innovation** Feasibility is manifested in the advantageous conditions for university libraries to carry out social services, including policy orientation, concentrated advantages, and social demand. Necessity is reflected in whether domestic university libraries need to open to the public. For instance, some university libraries have not yet adequately met the needs of internal readers before turning to serve the public. If Chinese university libraries open to the public, they should properly balance the information resource demands of internal readers and the public. On the other hand, from a service perspective, university libraries should no longer be limited to traditional basic service content and methods, but should instead conduct more rich and diversified innovative services to adapt to trends.

This paper is precisely based on the premise of university libraries opening to the public and providing socialized services under the trend of transformation and development.

### 2.1.2 Current Research on Social Service Expansion and Innovation

**(1) Comparative Studies:** These investigate the official websites of multiple specific university libraries through network surveys, conducting comparisons from various dimensions and perspectives. By comparing service expansion targets, regional distribution, service methods, service fees, and other content, problems are identified and corresponding countermeasures are proposed. Examples include comparative analyses of social opening conditions of China's "985 Project" university libraries [2], survey research on social services based on "211 Project" university libraries [3], and research on the current status of social service expansion in Anhui university libraries [4].

**(2) Case Studies:** These select typical domestic and foreign university libraries that practice or create social service innovation models. Examples include analyzing typical cases of social service expansion in American university libraries [5], exploring multiple model case studies of university library social service expansion practices [6], case studies of social service expansion at Dalian Vocational and Technical College Library [7], case studies of social service expansion at Guangdong Ocean University Library in the Internet era [8], and case studies of innovative social service expansion at the University of Arkansas Library [9]. Through these specific cases of innovative social service practices at typical university libraries, the effects of practical development and the selection of innovation models are further analyzed.

### 2.1.3 Research on Problems and Countermeasures in Social Service Expansion and Innovation

Problems in university library social service expansion mainly include imperfect relevant legal policies, passive conceptual awareness, and overly single service content and methods. Corresponding countermeasure research includes improving the legal and policy mechanisms for domestic university library social service expansion and innovation, enhancing the awareness and ability to actively serve users including internal and external personnel, and enriching the content, methods, and means of social service expansion and innovation. Examples include research on problems and measures faced by university libraries when opening to the public [10], research on problems and measures in the process of university libraries' socialized opening services [11], research focused on obstacles to university library social service expansion [12], and research focused on countermeasures for university library social service expansion [13].

## 2.2 Foreign Research Review

Foreign research uses interview skills and visualization information literacy methods to study university library social service expansion and innovation mod-

els [14], utilizes exploratory research to excavate university library social service expansion and innovation models [15], analyzes university library social service expansion and innovation practices under management and support mechanism models [16], and uses social media to enhance social service expansion levels [17], among other approaches.

### 2.3 Research Significance

On one hand, from the perspective of openness, university libraries need to gradually achieve socialized opening and continuously improve their degree of openness based on their own circumstances. On the other hand, from the service perspective, university libraries should no longer be limited to traditional basic service content and methods, but should instead conduct more rich and diversified innovative services to adapt to trends. The characteristics of socialized services in American university libraries include early development, high openness, broad service targets, diversified service content, and varied service methods [18-19]. In view of this, this paper studies the socialized services of American university libraries, focusing on their expansion and innovation practices, current development status, and future trends. Through reference and reflection, it aims to propose corresponding suggestions for the practice of socialized services in Chinese university libraries.

## 3 Empirical Design

### 3.1 Survey Design and Findings

During the summer of 2016, author Yang Meng conducted exchange studies and investigations at Appalachian State University Library in North Carolina, USA, and used the online questionnaire software SurveyMonkey to design and distribute a survey questionnaire on social service expansion and innovation practices in American university libraries. The survey was launched on July 13, 2016, within the American university library online alliance group. By July 26, 2016, after two weeks, 70 samples were collected, including 69 valid samples. The purpose of this survey was to gain in-depth understanding of the real current situation of social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries. The English questionnaire consisted of 13 specific questions, including both simple multiple-choice questions and descriptive questions regarding social service work, experiences, insights, suggestions, and reflections. The survey content covered service targets, service content, and service methods involved in American university library social service expansion and innovation practices, hoping to provide references for expanding social services in domestic and foreign university libraries. It should be noted that while the 69 American university library samples obtained in this paper are relatively small compared to the total number of American university libraries, they can to some extent reflect the current situation of social service expansion and innovation practices in American university libraries.

The survey found that American university libraries generally have a high degree of socialized openness, basically achieving comprehensive opening to local citizens and community residents. Second, the situation of social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries varies considerably. Some university libraries still focus primarily on supporting internal student needs, with public needs as secondary, while others treat internal and external users equally. Third, the targets and content of social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries also have their own characteristics (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]), which mainly depend on the university's own attributes and specific historical development. For example, Catholic university libraries provide special support to clergy, libraries at universities formerly known as normal schools provide research support to local high school students, and medical university libraries provide learning spaces for alumni groups such as nurses. Finally, American university library social service expansion and innovation also face problems of funding instability and shortage. Some universities generally report that libraries do not have special funds specifically to support social service expansion and innovation, resulting in libraries sometimes being unable to conduct such activities effectively or at all.

## 3.2 Questionnaire Results Analysis

**3.2.1 Sample Analysis (1) School Attributes:** The majority of schools surveyed were four-year private schools, followed by four-year public schools and community colleges, with a very small number of for-profit universities (see Table 1 ). School attributes can be used to determine the main focus of American university library services. Generally speaking, public university libraries have a higher degree of social openness than private university libraries, mainly due to comprehensive factors such as fiscal appropriations and historical roots.

**(2) School Size:** The proportion of school sizes in this survey, in descending order, was: universities with more than 10,000 students, universities with 5,000-10,000 students, universities with 1,000-4,999 students, and universities with fewer than 1,000 students. School size directly affects the quality level of services or resources provided by libraries. It is not difficult to imagine that libraries at universities of the same scale have certain capacity limits. If they receive too many or too few visitors, it becomes a significant problem affecting whether they still have the energy and capacity to open to the public and provide corresponding services (see Table 2 ).

**(3) School Location:** Most of the surveyed universities were located in cities and suburbs, with a small portion distributed in rural areas. School location directly determines the distribution of local population attributes, which can then be used to identify the main targets of university library social service expansion and innovation and their practical characteristics (see Table 3 ).

**3.2.2 Content Analysis (1) University Openness:** Over 90% of American universities allow local citizens and community residents to use their library

resources or services, proving that American university libraries are generally open to the public with a high degree of openness (see Table 4 ).

**(2) Social Service Expansion and Innovation Projects:** American university libraries mostly provide social service projects for citizens and local community residents in the form of workshops or training courses, followed by reader meetups, movie nights, hackathons, and maker conferences. What is thought-provoking is that a considerable proportion of libraries do not provide relevant social service expansion and innovation projects (see Table 5 ).

**(3) K-12 Education:** K-12, short for kindergarten through twelfth grade, generally refers to the basic education stage in the United States. American university libraries attach relatively great importance to K-12 education, with a proportion as high as 63% (see Table 6 ).

**(4) Special Population Groups (such as veterans, homeless people, disabled people, LGBTQ individuals, etc.):** Most American university libraries do not provide relevant services or resources for special groups such as veterans, homeless people, disabled people, and LGBTQ individuals. The root cause may be related to mission segmentation and interest-driven mechanisms (see Table 7 ).

**(5) Specific Demand Groups (such as lawyers, remote workers, entrepreneurs, healthcare providers, etc.):** Most American university libraries do not provide relevant services or resources for professional groups. Among those that do provide services for specific demand groups, the proportion serving healthcare providers is the largest (see Table 8 ).

**(6) Resources or Services Provided through Social Service Expansion and Innovation:** The types of resources and services provided by university libraries through social service expansion and innovation include research assistance, printing services, workshop space services, and certain permissions to access library database systems, with a few libraries providing institutional repository sharing services (see Table 9 ).

**(7) Cooperative Organizations:** Most university libraries cooperate with local public libraries, accounting for more than half of all cooperative relationships. University libraries and public libraries are inseparable in many aspects, making this cooperation obvious. Second, some university libraries also establish cooperative relationships with museums, non-profit organizations, charitable institutions, etc. Of course, some university libraries do not cooperate with other institutional organizations in social service expansion and innovation (see Table 10 ).

**(8) Cooperative Organization Activities:** The types of cooperation between university libraries and local community institutions or cultural organizations mainly focus on exhibition activities, followed by community reading programs such as book festivals, and then multicultural or local culture promotion, maintenance of historical electronic archives, or charitable fundraising

activities and competitions (see Table 11 ).

**(9) Department Setup for Social Service Expansion and Innovation in University Libraries:** Most university libraries do not have specialized departments responsible for social service practice (see Table 12 ).

## 4 Expansion and Innovation of Social Services in American University Libraries

### 4.1 Motivation Analysis

**4.1.1 Legal Foundation** The United States is a federal system, and its legislation mainly includes two parts: federal government legislation and state legislation, and this is especially true for library legislation. The federal government authorizes funding for American library services through Congress and formulates national-level laws that affect library services to help different types of libraries across the country carry out resource construction and social service expansion and innovation, thereby promoting the development of library services across the United States. Examples include the Library of Congress Act (1931), the Library Services Act (1956), the Library Services and Construction Act (1964), the Library Services and Technology Act (1996), and the Museum and Library Services Act (2003) [20-22]. State legislation is established according to the specific conditions of each state's library services. With legal guarantees as a solid backing, American library services, including public libraries and university library construction and services, have been greatly improved and developed. It can be seen that the social service expansion and innovation of American university libraries is precisely carried out on the premise of relatively complete legal policies for American university libraries.

**4.1.2 Interest-driven Mechanisms** American library law stipulates that library funding mainly comes from government appropriations. In addition to conventional channels, donations and endowments are a major feature of American libraries, mainly manifested in the fact that many private organizations and foundations in the United States provide substantial financial support to libraries. Specifically, the interest-driven mechanisms for social services in American university libraries mainly include funding from industry associations related to library services, foundations, the federal government, state governments, and social groups and individuals. This diversified funding security promotes the economic foundation and interest mechanisms for university libraries to carry out social service expansion and innovation [23-24].

From the perspective of the government, social groups, and individuals, the high degree of socialized openness of American university libraries mainly stems from the fact that their funding sources are national taxes. Therefore, from the perspective of "taking from the people and serving the people," university library resources should correspondingly be made available to the public to a certain extent. The U.S. federal and state governments also formulate certain

incentive measures to actively promote donations from social groups and individuals, ensuring the protection of university library social service expansion and innovation from various angles.

From the perspective of library industry associations, such as the American Library Association, whose main mission is to lead, improve, and develop various services inside and outside libraries, and to lead library professionals to continuously improve their quality so that they can further enhance public reading awareness. The American Library Association has been committed to carrying out colorful reading promotion activities and advancing various network information services, performing outstandingly in domestic and international peer exchanges. This not only continuously improves its own international influence but also enables the social service expansion and innovation functions of public libraries and university libraries to be fully realized.

From the perspective of foundations, for example, in 1996, the Kellogg Foundation funded the establishment of the Kellogg Commission, which focuses on providing opinions on the future development of American land-grant college libraries. The Kellogg Commission's 1999 annual report elaborated on the important impact of American university libraries on public social services. Although it pointed to public higher education institutions, its principles also expressed that carrying out social services is equally important for private higher education institutions. Because land-grant colleges cover a wide range of American universities, they provide a certain driving mechanism and policy support for socialized services in most American university libraries. Coupled with improved legislation and financial subsidies for American university libraries, many university libraries have paid great attention to socialized services in recent years.

## 4.2 Current Service Status

**4.2.1 Service Targets** Most American university libraries are open to the public. With the gradual development of social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries, their service targets have shown a trend of segmentation [25-29]. In addition to internal users and local community residents, the main targets of social service expansion and innovation also include: alumni and visitors, K-12 groups (students from kindergarten to 12th grade), specific demand groups (including remote workers, freelancers, entrepreneurs, etc.), and special population groups (including veterans, disabled people, LGBTQ individuals, African Americans, etc.).

**4.2.2 Service Content (1) Services for Alumni and Visitors:** Most American university library official websites have a special alumni section. After clicking this section and passing identity authentication, alumni and visitors can enter an exclusive platform established for them to obtain corresponding information resources and specific services, including network information resource access, special collection resources, and subject consultation services. This not only enables the full utilization of resources and services within univer-

sity libraries but also solves problems for alumni and visitors, gaining their trust and support and establishing a mutually beneficial and integrated emotional social relationship. Alumni and visitors can also access the school's online open courses, open databases, and other content, enabling off-campus public users to use internal library resources as much as possible.

**(2) Services for K-12 Groups:** Some American universities were formerly normal schools, and universities themselves attach great importance to children's and youth education, so their libraries are also very attentive to children's and youth education. University libraries actively promote library collections and special activities for this group to local school-age children and primary and secondary school educational institutions. Specific manifestations include:

Some university library collections contain many unique and relatively comprehensive physical items and materials involving early childhood education reading materials, picture books, educational toys, and youth reading materials, which are very beneficial for children and youth in the learning sprout and development period; They hold interesting lectures, free training, and other activities conducive to the development of children and youth. A series of social services around these two aspects create a good learning atmosphere for children, allowing them to fall in love with reading and libraries from an early age. In the long run, this is also conducive to achieving a talent-strong country and national prosperity and well-being.

**(3) Services for Specific Demand Groups:** Specific demand groups refer to groups determined by their specific professions, such as remote workers, freelancers, entrepreneurs, etc. Their characteristics include non-fixed office locations, relatively professional needs, and large resource demands. For these specific professional groups, some university libraries provide spaces for handling affairs, professional consultation services, and special information resource services to help them continuously create and share value. It is worth mentioning that modern American university library space settings no longer focus on collections but instead provide more information spaces for users to exchange and discuss problems. For example, many American university libraries provide discussion rooms for research groups and set up workspaces or project spaces for specific social demand groups.

**(4) Services for Special Population Groups:** Special population groups refer to groups with special experiences due to specific physiological needs, identity recognition, and other factors, including veterans, disabled people, LGBTQ individuals, African Americans, etc. For such groups, libraries not only provide convenience in basic facilities but also actively carry out activities according to their information acquisition needs. For example: some university libraries provide exclusive green channels for disabled users to facilitate their entry into the library, set up special reading rooms for disabled people to allow them to read without worry, establish gender-neutral toilets to prevent gender-identity-related embarrassment, provide re-education courses for retired veterans, and provide exclusive historical storybooks for African Americans. These unique

social service expansion and innovation practices not only provide convenient information services for special groups but are also typical examples of university libraries taking the lead in establishing a respectful and harmonious social atmosphere.

**4.2.3 Service Methods (1) Basic Services:** The basic services for social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries are browsing and borrowing services, which have developed relatively maturely. For example, the “wall-less” Ohio State University Library allows the public to enter the library to consult relevant materials; the Montana Tech Library advocates providing open services to local residents while providing academic research services to the university; the University of California Library, while serving its own faculty and students, also opens to local primary and secondary school students, allowing users to enter various reading rooms within the library and enjoy various services [30-32].

**(2) Information Services:** Information services include information reporting and publishing, information consultation, information retrieval, and network information services [33-34]. Information reporting and publishing services refer to university libraries organizing and processing searched materials and information and disseminating them through publicity and reporting. For example, Appalachian State University Library publishes information on the development history of African Americans based on its collection resources. Information consultation services are specialized consulting activities based on users’ actual problems, such as entrepreneurs searching for relevant information about entrepreneurship support policies. Information retrieval services quickly and efficiently search for information matching user needs from corresponding information systems to meet readers’ needs. Additionally, some professional retrieval training courses are conducted to continuously improve users’ retrieval skills so they can obtain information independently. Network information services are reflected in American university libraries using the Internet to provide customized services for different segmented service targets, such as providing exclusive message push and personalized digital library services for users [35].

**(3) Knowledge Services:** Knowledge services are more in-depth content services than information services. The main differences are: information services revolve around data information, while knowledge services focus on data information search from a humanistic perspective; information services involve the organization and processing of general data information, while knowledge services tend to transform general data information into information wisdom. The most typical representative is the personalized integrated service of university libraries. University library knowledge service systems can be used to establish knowledge information databases that match users’ specialties and needs, continuously update subject information resources, and achieve integrated knowledge services.

**(4) Space Services:** University library space services for the public can be

roughly divided into four categories: shared space, third space, maker space, and ubiquitous space. Shared space is a space where anyone can share information and knowledge together. Third space refers to university libraries, as opposed to the first space of home environment and second space of workplace environment, that can also meet users' rest and entertainment needs like art galleries, cafes, museums, and other venues. Maker space originated in Silicon Valley and is regarded as a laboratory space for open communities. Some university libraries can provide specific resources needed by users to meet their needs for unlimited creativity. Ubiquitous space is an information place that anyone can freely enter and use anytime and anywhere without any restrictions. It should be noted that these four dimensions of library space services overlap to some extent but also have their own focuses.

Overall, American university libraries provide space services for their specific users that are diversified in demand, rich in type, multifunctional, and multi-serviced. Specifically, American university library space types are more abundant. In addition to book stacks, circulation, and reading spaces, there are novel and unique discussion areas, learning areas, leisure areas, multimedia areas, visualization laboratories, self-service borrowing and returning, scanning, 3D printing, and other service spaces containing new technologies. The application of American university library space is no longer limited to traditional book storage but has been redeveloped as an application space targeting reader needs, essentially developing into a high-level quality service. Practice has proven that these novel and unique humanized services have been welcomed and loved by many members of the public.

### 4.3 Operational Models

Based on the above analysis, it can be found that social service expansion and innovation practices in American university libraries include the following three models: the basic service model of self-construction and self-maintenance by university libraries; the learning support service model of reconstructing and sharing collection resources; and the win-win cooperation service model of actively seeking cooperation with schools, governments, enterprises, universities, and social institutions [36].

**4.3.1 Self-construction Model** This refers to the model where university libraries, while opening to the public and ensuring that the public can obtain needed resources through various means, focus on specific targets, combine their own collection resources, and carry out a series of colorful innovative practice activities around the public. This model is more from the perspective of the library itself, exploring internal and external resources and services to carry out expanded and innovative social services. Its development process generally unfolds along with the overall development of the library, so this model has become relatively mature and is gradually moving toward more segmented services.

**4.3.2 Resource Sharing Model** This mainly refers to the model where university libraries actively seek various ways to construct and reconstruct library resources and achieve full sharing and common use of library resources and services. The most typical representative is the online learning support service of university libraries, which aligns with the “lifelong learning” concept advocated by American society. It specifically launches online learning courses for university students, lifelong learners, and learning-needy members of the public, enabling internal and external public users to obtain needed content through the Internet. While their own network resources are fully utilized, university libraries also effectively promote their positive image.

**4.3.3 Win-win Cooperation Model** This refers to the model where university libraries actively seek cooperation from all parties to achieve greater expansion and innovation in social services. The cooperation subjects include four categories: Cooperation with the government, where university libraries can provide government public documents for citizens to view and use; Cooperation with companies, where they can conduct joint or strong-strong cooperation with enterprises in the same industry or with intersections with the school to create greater economic benefits, such as helping companies establish basic databases, presenting and applying company knowledge achievements to society, and holding commercial exhibitions and performances; Cooperation with universities, establishing university library alliances with their own characteristics, such as Stanford University Library, MIT Library, University of Michigan Library, Indiana University Library, and UC Berkeley Library, which are committed to the development of university education communities and have carried out a series of social service expansion and innovation activities; Cooperation with social institutions, such as cooperating with public libraries, archives, museums, art galleries, and other cultural education institutions to invite the public to actively participate in public welfare lectures, exhibitions, performances, etc.

## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Improve Legislation and Focus on Opening to Different Social Groups

The American Morrill Act strengthened the social service functions of higher education institutions, forming a new higher education system combining teaching, research, and education in university libraries. With the continuous deepening of socialized openness in university libraries, the targets and services of social service expansion and innovation should also be continuously refined to truly achieve precise goals for different needs. Chinese university library social service expansion and innovation should learn from American experiences and formulate library laws suitable for China’s actual conditions to adapt to social service expansion and innovation practices in Chinese university libraries. We should start with legislation, using strong legal systems to guarantee the vigorous development of China’s library services, especially focusing on the impact of

university libraries in social services. We should gradually improve the degree of socialized openness, establish funding guarantee and driving mechanisms, and encourage university libraries to actively and gradually open to the public. We should pay attention to the segmentation of service targets and carry out corresponding services. Under the premise of ensuring the needs of internal readers, we should balance the degree and effect of internal and external social services and carry out social service expansion and innovation.

### **5.2 Promote Innovation in Library Resource Open Access Methods**

A typical characteristic of American university library social service expansion and innovation practices is the emphasis on resource and service sharing and access, which aligns with the current concept of “open access.” The approach of actively exploring and innovating under the premise of recognizing and actively exploring open access is worth learning from. Chinese university libraries must pay attention to open access and can gradually explore the realization of free opening of university academic information to the public, allowing the public to obtain needed academic information and scientific data, and striving to provide corresponding services for internal and external users. In addition, university libraries can use their own special collections, scientific data, etc., to continuously explore social service expansion and innovation practices [38]. On the one hand, they can use open access to achieve information resource sharing, fully publicize and give play to the positive image of the multiple functions of university libraries. On the other hand, they can continuously promote their own collection resource construction and information resource maintenance through public use and sharing of information resources, providing a channel for continuous exchange, interaction, and sharing for both parties, thereby exploring new developments in university library social service innovation practices.

### **5.3 Adopt Multiple Means to Achieve Resource Sharing**

From the perspective of university library social service expansion and innovation practices, two service methods can be adopted: “Library Plus” and “Internet Plus.” “Library Plus” refers to the cooperation model between university libraries and other physical or virtual institutions. For example, establishing university library alliances with other universities dedicated to academic resource sharing and co-construction; cooperating with government enterprises to provide open access to data information for the public; cooperating with non-profit cultural institutions to focus on the promotion of local culture and the implementation of innovative public welfare concepts; etc. This “Library Plus” cooperation model can provide broader development space for social service expansion and innovation, create a good academic exchange atmosphere, and strengthen communication and cooperation between libraries and related institutions to a certain extent. “Internet Plus” refers to the media method for achieving social service expansion and innovation practices. With the rise of a new batch of Internet-based services such as cloud computing, big data, and the

Internet of Things, the methods of university library social service expansion and innovation have also encountered challenges. University libraries should no longer be limited to traditional basic services but should seize the opportunity of “Internet Plus” to achieve online resource sharing, expanding university library resources and services to community residents, remote online groups, etc., which is what we now advocate as online courses (such as MOOC video courses), truly making it convenient for all people to share information resources and services [39].

#### **5.4 Expand Funding Sources for Libraries**

The interest-driven mechanisms for social service expansion and innovation in American university libraries are diverse, including industry associations related to library services, foundations, the federal government, state governments, and social groups and individuals. Through funding from different objects to library subjects, American university libraries continuously expand and innovate their social services. In contrast, funding for Chinese university libraries has always been an obstacle to their development. To achieve greater development, we must boldly learn from the diversified fundraising methods of American university libraries and actively expand diversified funding sources to provide financial guarantees for various social service expansion and innovation activities. Specifically, although it is difficult for Chinese university libraries to achieve the diversification of fundraising sources of American university libraries, they should learn from their “donation and endowment” model and actively explore funding sources with Chinese characteristics, such as obtaining profits by providing personalized paid services for users (individuals, enterprises, associations, etc.), to maximize the expansion of library funding sources.

#### **5.5 Construct New Social Service Models Suitable for China’s National Conditions**

The social service expansion and innovation models of American university libraries are ultimately products adapted to their economic development systems and speed. For Chinese university library social services to achieve long-term and effective development and innovation, they must be combined with China’s current actual development situation and characteristics to develop characteristic services with Chinese imprints, such as information services and technical support for China’s information disadvantaged groups, rural poor groups, innovation and entrepreneurship groups, and education-poor countries along the “Belt and Road” initiative. This is both inheritance and innovation. Inheritance is manifested in the excavation and analysis of past classics, while innovation is the creative prediction of future classics.

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## Author Contributions

**Zhang Libin:** Responsible for system architecture design, writing part of the content, and finalizing the manuscript. **Hao Qun:** Responsible for topic design and writing guidance. **Yang Meng:** Main author, writing the first, second, and fourth parts of the article.

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] While providing service for teaching and scientific research, American university libraries also attach great importance to social service, and have expanded, innovated, and transformed their social services in the “Internet Plus” era. The social services of American university libraries are characterized by early development, high openness, broad service targets, diversified service content, and varied service methods, gradually forming mature characteristic service patterns that can provide references for the expansion and innovation of social services in Chinese university libraries. [Method/process] In 2016, the authors conducted field investigations into innovative social service practices at multiple American university libraries, interviewed librarians engaged in social services, and designed an online survey questionnaire on the

current status of social service expansion and innovation practices based on American university library alliances under the guidance of American librarians. Based on the analysis of survey results, this paper summarizes the current development, practical innovation, and operational models of social services in American university libraries. [Result/conclusion] The path of innovative development of social services in Chinese university libraries needs to focus on: emphasizing openness to different social groups; promoting innovation in library resource open access methods; adopting various means to achieve resource sharing; expanding library funding sources; and constructing new social service models suitable for China's national conditions.

**Keywords:** American university library; social service; expansion and innovation practice; service target; service content; service method; expanding innovation model

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

*Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.*