
AI translation · View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202308.00394

Analysis of Multicultural Services in Public Libraries in the Taiwan Region (Postprint)

Authors: Yan Beini, Xing Xin

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

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] By introducing the current status of multicultural services in public libraries in the Taiwan region of China, this study provides reference and inspiration for multicultural services in public libraries in Mainland China.

[Method/Process] Using literature survey and web survey methods, this study investigates and analyzes the current status of multicultural services in the Taiwan Library, National Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library from four aspects: service policies, service resources and activities, website construction, and service librarians.

[Results/Conclusion] The study summarizes the implications derived from the multicultural services of public libraries in the Taiwan region of China, including formulating multicultural service policies, integrating multicultural service resources and promoting various activities, constructing multicultural service websites, and cultivating multicultural service librarians, thereby promoting the development of multicultural services in public libraries in Mainland China.

Full Text

Preamble

Vol. 62 No. 4 February 2018 ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal

Analysis of Multicultural Services in Public Libraries in Taiwan, China

Yan Beini¹, Xing Xin²

¹School of Management, Anhui University, Hefei 230039

²School of Information Management, Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This paper introduces the current state of multicultural services in public libraries in Taiwan, China, providing a reference for improving multicultural services in mainland China's public libraries. **[Method/Process]** Using literature survey and network survey methods, this study investigates and analyzes the multicultural service status of Taiwan Library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library from four dimensions: service policy, service resources and activities, website construction, and service librarians. **[Result/Conclusion]** The paper summarizes the enlightenment from Taiwan's public library multicultural services, including formulating multicultural service policies, integrating multicultural service resources and promoting various activities, constructing multicultural service websites, and cultivating multicultural service librarians, to promote the development of multicultural services in mainland China's public libraries.

Keywords: Taiwan of China; public library; multicultural services

Classification Number: G259

DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2018.04.006

In recent years, multicultural services in libraries have become a focal point of attention in the library community. Researchers have extensively discussed research reviews [1-2], relevant documents [3], connotations [4-5], existing problems and countermeasures [6-9], and foreign practices and enlightenment [10-12]. However, existing research reveals that mainland scholars have not yet analyzed the current state of multicultural services in Taiwan's public libraries, which hinders the mainland library community's understanding of recent developments in Taiwan's library multicultural services. The concept of multicultural services has broad and narrow definitions. According to IFLA's "Multicultural Communities: Guidelines for Library Services," the broad definition of public library multicultural services has a relatively extensive scope, including both services to all types of users and specialized services for multicultural groups, with libraries needing to pay special attention to local multicultural populations, including immigrant groups, indigenous peoples, refugees, temporary residents, and ethnic minorities [13]. The narrow definition of public library multicultural services focuses specifically on services provided for multicultural groups, targeting library services for populations with different languages, cultures, and social backgrounds, rather than referring to the diverse services libraries provide to all types of users [14]. The level of service for multicultural groups reflects the degree of equalization in public library services and, in the long term, can play a positive role in assisting impoverished populations and enhancing their cultural literacy. In recent years, Taiwan's public libraries have deeply recognized the trend and necessity of providing multicultural services to readers, ensuring that these services meet the needs of ethnic minorities through detailed multicultural service plans, rich thematic activities, learning opportunities, and life support.

Since Taiwan Library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library are four public libraries in different regions of Taiwan with dense multicultural populations and early implementation of multicultural service activities—for example, the Library of Public Information pioneered Taiwan’s “American Cultural Center,” and Taipei Public Library pioneered Taiwan’s “Multicultural Resource Center”—these four libraries have rich experience in multicultural services, relatively complete information, and distinctive features that can represent and reflect the state of multicultural services in Taiwan’s public libraries. Therefore, this study selects these four public libraries as research subjects, using literature survey and network survey methods to analyze their multicultural service practices from four dimensions: service policy, service resources and activities, website construction, and service librarians, examining their work characteristics and proposing operational recommendations for optimizing public library multicultural services.

2 Multicultural Services in Taiwan’s Public Libraries

As early as 2008, Taipei Public Library published “A Study on Multicultural Collection Development and New Immigrant Library Information Services” [15], conducting research on user groups from different cultural backgrounds. In addition to organizing multicultural-related literature, the study surveyed 217 new immigrants using questionnaires to investigate their information needs and behavioral patterns, ultimately offering recommendations for public library multicultural service work. Furthermore, Taipei Public Library incorporated multicultural service work into its strategic planning documents, such as the “2005-2010 Strategic Plan,” “2011-2015 Strategic Plan,” and “2016-2020 Strategic Plan” [16], formulating development visions, missions, and core values for multicultural services according to specific conditions at different stages, and planning implementation programs accordingly, demonstrating the value of multiculturalism. Additionally, the Library of Public Information formulated the “Short, Medium, and Long-term Development Plan for Southeast Asian Language Book Collection” [17] in 2010, systematically developing Southeast Asian multicultural collection resources to provide quality book selection and acquisition channels and assist county and city public libraries in purchasing Southeast Asian language materials to meet diverse reading needs in counties, cities, and townships. In 2014, Taiwan Provincial Library compiled the “Taiwan Public Library Multicultural Service Guidelines” [18] with reference to IFLA’s multicultural library service documents, introducing definitions and principles, roles and functions of public library multicultural services, and proposing relevant standards from five aspects: funding guarantee, information needs assessment and services, collection development and maintenance, librarian requirements, and outreach services, for reference by public libraries at all levels. These documents demonstrate the importance Taiwan’s public libraries attach to multicultural service work, with planning and layout from both provincial and municipal levels.

3 Multicultural Service Resources and Activities in Taiwan's Public Libraries

3.1 Multicultural Service Resources in Public Libraries

Collections are the prerequisite for library services, and the primary task of providing multicultural services is developing diversified collection resources. This study investigated the basic situation of multicultural service collections in the four public libraries from March 1 to March 31, 2017, finding that their multicultural service collections primarily focused on foreign language collection development, as shown in Table 1 .

Table 1 Overview of Main Collection Resources in Multicultural Services of Four Public Libraries

Among the four public libraries, Taiwan Library and Library of Public Information provide relatively rich collection resources for European and American countries. Taking Library of Public Information as an example, the library houses American, French, and British Cultural Centers. Due to limited resources, the Library of Public Information has established cooperative relationships with other libraries to extensively collect relevant newly published books, audiovisual materials, etc. For instance, the Library of Public Information established Taiwan's first American Cultural Center and French Cultural Center. Its American Cultural Center mostly receives collections selected and sent by the U.S. Department of State, while the French Cultural Center is provided with publications by the French Office and digital collections from the French National Library.

Among the four public libraries, Taipei Public Library and Kaohsiung Public Library target Southeast Asian readers, extensively collecting literature and materials from Southeast Asian regions. Taking Taipei Public Library as an example, it created Taiwan's first Multicultural Resource Center in 2007, primarily providing book materials from Southeast Asian countries. Table 2 shows the overview of Taipei Public Library's multicultural collections in 2015. As shown in Table 2, Taipei Public Library provides collection resources in eight Southeast Asian languages, offering more diverse types of Southeast Asian collection resources compared to other libraries. In 2015, its Southeast Asian collection totaled 15,176 volumes, and the same year, the library's Multicultural Resource Center lent 12,047 volumes, with an average monthly circulation of 1,003 volumes [19].

Table 2 Overview of Multicultural Collections at Taipei Public Library in 2015 [19]

3.2 Multicultural Service Activities in Public Libraries

Taiwan Library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library actively carry out multicultural user education activities, which can be divided into several categories: 1) Reading promotion activities,

such as reading promotion lectures, thematic book exhibitions, storytelling, and reading clubs. 2) Cultural and creative activities, such as cultural festival exhibitions, art exhibitions, performances, and food exchanges organized by the Library of Public Information, attracting Southeast Asian nationals to participate and share their cultural experiences while allowing local residents to experience the connotations and characteristics of Southeast Asian culture, demonstrating respect for cultural differences and diversity. To promote library resource sharing and multicultural collection usage, the Library of Public Information established “Multicultural Book Boxes” in 2013, providing group applications for borrowing books in six Southeast Asian languages to promote resource sharing and increase multicultural collection utilization. 3) Skills training activities, such as computer and library utilization education workshops for new immigrants conducted by Taipei Public Library in cooperation with cultural institutions, with 77 sessions held in 2015 and 1,402 participants [19]. 4) Language learning courses: To help multicultural populations acquire basic speaking and reading abilities and quickly integrate into Taiwan’s social life, Taipei Public Library periodically offers Chinese and Hokkien learning courses. Chinese courses start with basic phonetic symbols and Chinese character recognition, while Hokkien teaching focuses on daily life matters and includes Hokkien folk songs.

3.3 Effectiveness of Multicultural Service Activities in Public Libraries

The four public libraries demonstrate gradually emerging scale effects through providing quality multicultural resources and rich, colorful service activities, mainly in two aspects: First, the libraries have specially established independent spaces for multicultural services and built rich multicultural collections. According to 2016 data on per capita public library resources in Taiwan, each Southeast Asian immigrant averaged 3.66 volumes of Southeast Asian language collections (total Southeast Asian language collections in Taiwan’s public libraries / total Southeast Asian immigrant population in Taiwan), while in Taipei, each Southeast Asian immigrant averaged 35.81 volumes from Taipei Public Library’s Southeast Asian language collections, far exceeding the average [20]. Second, the four public libraries have relatively large influence in activities targeting multicultural groups. Taking new immigrant reading promotion activities as an example, Table 3 shows the 2015 new immigrant reading promotion activities held by Taiwan Library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library. In 2015, the four public libraries held a total of 248 new immigrant reading promotion activity sessions with 40,267 participants. In 2015, Taiwan’s 305 public libraries held a total of 747 new immigrant reading promotion activity sessions with 94,557 participants [20]. The four libraries’ new immigrant reading promotion activity sessions accounted for 33% of Taiwan’s total, and participants accounted for 43%, demonstrating the significant effectiveness of these libraries’ multicultural service activities.

Table 3 Overview of New Immigrant Reading Promotion Activities

at Four Public Libraries in 2015

4 Multicultural Service Website Construction in Taiwan's Public Libraries

To enable multicultural groups of different languages to more conveniently utilize library resources, all four libraries have established distinctive multicultural website portals to create a friendly reading and service network platform. Taiwan Library provides a multilingual catalog search system service, with its catalog search system offering not only traditional Chinese and English versions but also a dedicated secondary catalog search page for “Multicultural Resource Zone Books and Audiovisual Materials,” providing search functions in Vietnamese, Indonesian, Burmese, and Thai. The Library of Public Information provides multilingual electronic resource services, with 13 language learning databases. Taking the “Dr. Chinese” database as an example, it plans Chinese learning courses divided into themes such as Chinese character recognition, Chinese pronunciation, daily conversation, Chinese reading, and writing to help foreigners learn Chinese. Taipei Public Library has established a multilingual web portal with service content including center introduction, service instructions, collection introduction and content, latest news and activity information, online resources, and virtual classrooms. Kaohsiung Public Library provides multilingual online catalog services; for example, its multicultural theme website offers borrowing instructions in eight languages: Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Burmese, Lao, Cambodian, Filipino, and Malaysian. Additionally, Kaohsiung Public Library provides multilingual website links for learning and daily life to meet the information needs of multicultural populations in their daily work, life, and study.

5 Multicultural Service Personnel Work Content and Role

Through accessing Taiwan's public library system, statistics on the personnel composition providing multicultural services at the four libraries in 2016 were obtained, as shown in Table 4 . The four public libraries are committed to improving librarians' multicultural skills by hiring professionals with experience serving multicultural groups, language skills, or cultural knowledge. They also encourage librarians to participate in relevant field courses, such as in-service training programs and online distance learning courses, to enrich their professional competence and better handle multicultural collection acquisition, cataloging, circulation, and activities. Additionally, as shown in Table 4, the proportion of volunteers in the personnel composition of the four public libraries is relatively high. Taiwan's public library volunteer system is relatively comprehensive, including volunteer recruitment and training, work schedules and content, performance evaluation and assessment, volunteer rights, and volunteer rewards [21]. For example, Kaohsiung Public Library's website has a dedicated “Volunteer Garden” page including volunteer guidelines, recruitment, business applications, and experience sharing. Volunteer work content spans all

stages from acquisition to service, specifically including assisting in collecting multicultural information, organizing and translating book materials, compiling resource guides, and activity promotion. Effective volunteer participation not only compensates for insufficient human resources in multicultural services but also enhances interaction between libraries and readers when librarians and volunteers collaborate; moreover, volunteers themselves, as library users, can better understand readers' needs and provide more humanized services.

Table 4 Personnel Composition Overview of Four Public Libraries in 2016

6 Enlightenment from Multicultural Services in Taiwan's Public Libraries

6.1 Formulating Multicultural Service Policies

The multicultural service practices of Taiwan's public libraries have been guided by relevant departmental guidelines and clear service planning and policies that serve as criteria and basis for lower-level units, ensuring that public libraries adapt to local demographic changes and meet the growing information needs of multicultural groups. The "Taiwan Public Library Multicultural Service Guidelines" compiled by Taiwan Provincial Library provide clear direction for multicultural services in public libraries at all levels across Taiwan. Additionally, the "Reading Roots and Space Renovation Plan" includes "enriching reading resource quality and constructing a joyful learning multicultural environment" as one of its three major goals, with specific implementation plans addressing how to assist multicultural groups in integrating into local life and fully supplying books on both local culture and their home countries. For example, its sub-plan "Taiwan Library Characteristic Collection and Digital Resource Enrichment Plan" specifically proposes evaluation standards for Taiwan Library's foreign language collections. Mainland China's multicultural-related systems have long been manifested as large and medium-sized city libraries formulating multicultural service norms and development plans according to their own circumstances, such as Guangzhou Library's "Guangzhou Library Special Plan for Promoting Foreign Cultural Exchange (2012-2015)." However, small and medium-sized city public libraries mostly lack the capacity and resources to develop multicultural services and urgently need higher-level departments to formulate clear, comprehensive service guidelines, policies, and measures to guarantee the development of multicultural service work.

6.2 Integrating Multicultural Service Resources and Promoting Various Activities

In integrating multicultural service resources, Taiwan Provincial Library actively guides the integration of public library collection resources, establishing four major regional resource centers covering northern, central, southern, and eastern regions and eight sub-regional centers [22], with "multicultural" themed

collections being one of the four principles of collection development. Through an expert book selection mechanism, recommended booklists for core collections and characteristic collections are established as the basis for public libraries to enrich their collection resources, and interlibrary loan and collection circulation resource sharing mechanisms are established. For example, the Library of Public Information has specially established multicultural book boxes, batch-lending books in six Southeast Asian languages from its collections; Taipei Public Library provides mobile library services, using bookmobiles to regularly visit areas with high new immigrant populations, making library resources more accessible to new immigrants.

In terms of multicultural service activities, Taiwan's public libraries' "Multicultural Reading and Collection Enrichment Plan" enriches collections in counties, cities, and townships while strengthening segmented reading promotion activities in an integrated and continuous manner using resources from libraries, cultural bureaus, and society at all levels, focusing on different groups' needs to make public library services more aligned with readers' reading habits. The survey found that mainland public libraries' multicultural service resource integration mainly manifests as resource database sharing for ethnic minorities but lacks integration for foreign nationals' multicultural services. Given limited public library funding resources, mainland public libraries can learn from Taiwan's top-down integration of public library multicultural service resources, establishing multicultural regional resource centers and cooperating to develop multicultural service activities.

6.3 Constructing Multicultural Service Websites

Constructing thematic websites for multicultural groups and providing barrier-free website services are important channels for multicultural groups to understand public library service projects and use service resources. For small and medium-sized public libraries facing fewer multicultural groups, basic functions such as collection catalog searching can be provided, including search interfaces in multicultural group languages to facilitate information searching. For large and medium-sized public libraries serving more multicultural populations, in addition to basic catalog search functions, thematic websites or special zones for multicultural services should be established. For example, Taipei Public Library's Multicultural Resource Center website offers 10 languages for multicultural groups to choose from, with content including latest news, collection resources, and online classrooms, as well as quarterly updated lists of new books, journals, and newspapers in all languages for multicultural groups to check and use in a timely manner. In contrast, mainland public libraries rarely establish thematic websites or zones for multicultural services. For example, although Shanghai Library has conducted extensive research on foreign consulates in Shanghai and the situation of foreigners in Shanghai, compiling "Reader Guides" in 15 languages including English, Japanese, and German, it still needs to reduce language barriers in multilingual network services by providing multilingual rec-

ommended booklists, reader suggestion areas, or message boards.

6.4 Cultivating Multicultural Service Librarians

In 2009, IFLA's "Multicultural Communities: Library Service Guidelines" listed "library staff must be able to adapt to the diverse environment of the community and have the ability to serve different ethnic groups" as one of the four principles of public library multicultural services [13]. Multicultural service librarians work with readers from different language or cultural backgrounds, making their work highly professional; the level of librarians' multicultural literacy will determine the quality of these services. In terms of librarian training, Taiwan's public libraries have formulated clear plans such as the "Library Staff Professional Development and In-service Training Plan," dividing public libraries across Taiwan into 22 regions to cooperate with local cultural bureaus in conducting in-service training courses to enhance librarians' comprehensive qualities. For multicultural librarian training, the content includes not only language skills but also enhancing multicultural service awareness, understanding multicultural differences, and improving professional competence in developing comprehensive evaluation capabilities for multicultural group information needs, consultation services, service activity processes, and activity effectiveness. For example, Taipei Public Library sends librarians to attend Thai, Vietnamese, and other language and culture learning courses to serve new immigrants in Taiwan. Finally, both mainland China and Taiwan need to plan and formulate professional skill indicators for multicultural service librarians to ensure the sustainable development of library multicultural services. Additionally, mainland China can learn from Taiwan's public library experience in forming and improving volunteer resource utilization systems to effectively use volunteer resources to assist in developing multicultural services.

Public libraries shoulder the mission of serving dialogue and exchange between different ethnicities and cultures, and public library multicultural services are an indispensable component of social multicultural construction. Mainland China's public library multicultural services are still in the development stage, and how to provide equalized and standardized services for multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural background reader groups is an important indicator for measuring library service quality. Taiwan's Taiwan Library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library, and Kaohsiung Public Library have some relatively successful practices in formulating multicultural service policies, constructing service resources, promoting service activities, building service websites, and configuring service personnel that are worthy of reference by other public libraries.

References

- [1] Wang Lanxia. Review of research on multicultural services in foreign libraries[J]. *Library and Information Service*, 2013, 57(15): 142-146, 76.
- [2] Zhao Rundi. Review of research on multicultural services in libraries at

- home and abroad[J]. *Library and Information Service*, 2010, 54(3): 89-92, 27.
- [3] Fukai Yoko, Bao Yanming. Goals and strategies of library multicultural services: From “Australian Rules” to IFLA “Multicultural Society: Guidelines for Library Services” (1998 edition)[J]. *Library Journal*, 2000(4): 13-15.
- [4] Pan Yongjun. Analysis of library multicultural services[J]. *Library Work and Research*, 2014(11): 17-20.
- [5] Liu Yaqiong. On library multicultural services[J]. *Library and Information Service*, 2009, 53(15): 92-95, 121.
- [6] Zhao Rundi. Research on problems and countermeasures of multicultural services in domestic libraries[J]. *Information Studies: Theory & Application*, 2010, 33(4): 68-71.
- [7] Li Gaofeng. Research content, existing problems, and countermeasures of multicultural services in domestic libraries[J]. *Library Development*, 2014(9): 47-49, 55.
- [8] Wang Lanxia, Li Gaofeng, Chen Yongping, et al. Multicultural services and their implementation in libraries in western ethnic minority areas[J]. *Information and Documentation Services*, 2010(2): 77-80.
- [9] Zhan Tian. “Guangzhou Model” of public library multicultural services: Taking Guangzhou Library as an example[J]. *Library Science Journal*, 2016, 38(8): 7-11.
- [10] Dong Xiaoqiao. Practice and enlightenment of multicultural services in Toronto Public Library[J]. *Library Science Journal*, 2016, 38(7): 139-142.
- [11] Zhu Meihua, Wang Yue'e. Multicultural services for minority groups in foreign libraries: Taking American and Canadian libraries as examples[J]. *Library and Information*, 2012(4): 115-119.
- [12] Shu Man. Multicultural concepts and multicultural services in American public libraries: Analysis of interviews with American public librarians[J]. *Library and Information Service*, 2012, 56(5): 84-88.
- [13] Multicultural Communities: Guidelines for Library Services[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/library-services-to-multicultural-populations/publications/multicultural-communities-zh.pdf>.
- [14] Liu Renxiang. Research on cooperative provision of multicultural services by public libraries[D]. Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University, 2012.
- [15] A Study on Multicultural Collection Development and New Immigrant Library Information Services at Taipei Public Library[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://www.tpmL.edu.tw/public/Attachment/04817234775.pdf>.
- [16] Taipei Public Library. 2005-2010, 2011-2015, 2016-2020 Strategic Plans[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://www.tpmL.edu.tw/lp.asp?ctNode=62456&CtUnit=11132&BaseDSD=7>.
- [17] Short, Medium, and Long-term Development Plan for Southeast Asian Language Book Collection[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://www.nlpi.edu.tw/ReaderService/Multicultural/NewImmig>
- [18] Taiwan Public Library Multicultural Service Guidelines[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://nclfile.ncl.edu.tw/nclhistory/upload/P1030619002/cats/all.pdf>.
- [19] Taipei Public Library. 2015 Taipei Public Library Annual Report[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://www.tpmL.edu.tw/public/Data/651111483371.pdf>.
- [20] Public Library Statistics System[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://publibstat.nlpi.edu.tw/index.php?do=statist>
- [21] Wang Haibo, Qiang Xiaoni. Research on volunteer systems in Taiwan's

public libraries[J]. Library Science Research, 2009(8): 13-16, 6.

[22] Introduction to Public Library Regional Resource Centers[EB/OL].[2017-06-16]. <http://rrc.ncl.edu.tw/publiclib/>.

Author Contributions:

Yan Beini: Determined the research topic and framework, revised the paper.

Xing Xin: Collected data and materials, wrote and revised the paper.

Abstract: [Purpose/significance] The paper aims to introduce the current situation of public libraries multicultural service in Taiwan, China, and to provide reference for improving the multicultural service of public libraries in mainland China. [Method/process] It uses the method of literature survey and network survey, from the perspective of service policy, service resources and activities, website construction and personnel constitute to investigate and analyze the multicultural service status of Taiwan library, Library of Public Information, Taipei Public Library and Kaohsiung Public Library. [Result/conclusion] The paper summarizes the enlightenment of multicultural service of public libraries in Taiwan area, including making multicultural service policy, integrating multicultural service resources and promoting activities, building multicultural service websites and cultivating multicultural service librarians, to promote the development of public library multicultural service in mainland China.

Keywords: Taiwan of China; public library; multicultural services

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.