

User-Oriented Service Strategies for Higher Vocational College Libraries: A Case Study of Students from 10 Vocational Colleges in Zhejiang Province (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To identify the new characteristics of vocational college students' library service demands in the "Internet+" era and enhance the pertinence and effectiveness of library service strategies. [Method/Process] Through a questionnaire survey of 1,070 students from 10 vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province, this study investigates the current status of vocational college students' demands for library services and existing problems. [Results/Conclusion] The survey results indicate that restricted network access, incomplete information resource construction, and low librarian service capability are important factors affecting the diversity of vocational college students' demands. Corresponding improvement measures and optimization paths are proposed from four aspects: diversified collection resource construction, rational and efficient infrastructure construction, high-quality team building, and high-quality reader service work, to further enhance the service functions and scope of libraries.

Full Text

Preamble

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Research on Service Strategy of Higher Vocational College Libraries Oriented to User Demand

—A Case Study of Students from 10 Higher Vocational Colleges in Zhejiang Province

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study identifies new characteristics of library service demand among higher vocational college students in the “Internet Plus” era to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of library service strategies. **[Method/Process]** Through a questionnaire survey of 1,070 students from 10 higher vocational colleges in Zhejiang Province, this research examines the current status of library service demand and existing problems among these students. **[Result/Conclusion]** Survey results indicate that restricted network access, imperfect information resource construction, and low librarian service capacity are important factors affecting the diversification of student demand. Corresponding improvement measures and optimization paths are proposed from four perspectives: diversified collection resource construction, rational and efficient infrastructure development, high-quality team building, and superior reader services, aiming to further enhance library service functions and scope.

Keywords: higher vocational college; library; user demand; service strategy

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With the introduction of strategies such as the Belt and Road Initiative and Made in China 2025, cultivating hundreds of millions of engineers, senior technicians, and high-quality professionals with strong practical abilities and professional ethics—who are “willing to work at grassroots levels, remain in their positions, and prove their value”—has become a powerful driver for China’s economic transformation and upgrading. Consequently, China has continuously increased support for vocational education and improved evaluation policies for higher vocational colleges, actively fostering a spirit of craftsmanship that pursues excellence. As the primary venue for campus cultural atmosphere construction in higher vocational colleges, libraries’ information service levels and capabilities have attracted attention from both college administrations and various departments. Key questions emerge: How can libraries effectively analyze and summarize the information demand characteristics of higher vocational students according to the orientation of serving local economic development? How can they leverage rich collection advantages to support teaching and research services? How can they attract more students to use libraries, utilize their resources, and develop a love for learning through service innovation and guidance? These have become urgent issues for library professionals.

Ranganathan’s *Five Laws of Library Science* provides systematic interpretation of user demand: library resource construction should meet user needs (every reader has his or her book), achieve rational resource allocation according to user demand (every book has its reader), and ultimately improve service efficiency and quality (save the time of the reader) [1]. Current research primarily focuses on the concepts, characteristics, and influencing factors of user demand.

Regarding demand characteristics, scholars generally agree that higher voca-

tional students' information needs follow Zipf's principle of least effort and Moore's law—they prefer economical, convenient, simple, and efficient ways to obtain information and resources [2]. Shao Qihui [3] identifies low information literacy, diversified information acquisition channels, diversified information needs, diversified online activities, and staged information demands as prominent characteristics of higher vocational students. Xie Zhaohui [4] summarizes user demand features as diverse document types, extensive resource content, flexible service methods, and lightweight resource carriers. Regarding influencing factors, with the development of information technology, internet communication technology, big data, and cloud computing, personal factors, network environmental factors, and technology and resource factors have become important obstacles affecting library user demand construction [5].

User demand serves as the crucial basis and driving force for library resource construction and optimization, representing a highly concerned research area in library and information science. Ranganathan's systematic interpretation of user demand in *Five Laws of Library Science* emphasizes that library resource construction must satisfy user needs, allocate resources rationally according to user demand, and ultimately enhance service efficiency and quality [1]. To improve library service levels and capabilities and effectively meet contemporary higher vocational students' new service demands, this study selected 10 higher vocational college libraries in Zhejiang Province as research subjects, investigating students' new demands for library services and existing problems in library services to identify issues, analyze and summarize their core points, and propose feasible service innovation strategies from four perspectives—diversified collection resource construction, rational and efficient infrastructure development, high-quality team building, and superior reader services—providing direction for the development of higher vocational college libraries.

1. Research on Library Service Demand of Higher Vocational College Students

2. Research Design and Survey Description

2.1 Indicator Design

To comprehensively reflect the service status of higher vocational college libraries and students' new service demands, this study designed questionnaire items from two dimensions: demand characteristics of higher vocational students and major problems in library services. The research team reviewed extensive literature and conducted interviews with 15 library directors. Following questionnaire design principles and methods, the survey was developed covering students' reading levels, service demands, resource content, information channels, information carriers, and reader satisfaction. After multiple rounds of expert review and revision, 33 question items were finalized. The demand characteristics dimension included 20 items, such as “How much time do you spend reading in the library daily?” “What are your main reading acquisition channels?” “What is

your main purpose for visiting the library?” and “Are you satisfied with librarians’ service levels?” The library service deficiency dimension included 13 items, such as “What deficiencies do you think exist in library resource construction?” “What problems exist in library infrastructure?” “When encountering book or network problems in the library, what solutions would you choose?” and “How well do you understand the library’s resources?”

2.2 Sample Description

The selection of college samples fully considered types and scales of higher vocational colleges. Classification standards vary by perspective: by nature, there are public and private institutions; by status, there are national demonstration, national backbone, provincial demonstration, and provincial backbone institutions. This study categorized higher vocational colleges into four types: national demonstration, national backbone, provincial demonstration, and general institutions, while fully considering gender, grade level, and other student sample factors. Using a combination of on-site and online questionnaires, the research was conducted across 10 higher vocational colleges, represented by codes where the first two letters indicate college type and the last two digits represent numbering: GS01, GS02, GS03, GG01, SS01, SS02, YB01, YB02, YB03, and YB04 (with YB03 and YB04 being private institutions). A total of 1,200 questionnaires were distributed, 1,147 were returned, and after eliminating incomplete responses, 1,070 valid questionnaires were obtained. Among these, 32.1% came from national demonstration colleges, 10.6% from national backbone colleges, 19.2% from provincial demonstration colleges, and 19.8% from private colleges. Male participants accounted for 45.7% and females for 54.3%. The sample covered first-, second-, and third-year students, representing proportions of 28.3%, 36.1%, and 35.6% respectively, demonstrating strong representativeness.

2.3 Reliability and Validity Testing

To ensure the effectiveness and accuracy of measurement indicators, this study conducted a pilot survey at Wenzhou Vocational & Technical College, distributing 200 questionnaires and recovering 182 valid responses. Using SPSS 20.0 for internal consistency reliability testing, the results showed the total internal consistency coefficient of the measurement scale was 0.837 (>0.7). Content validity testing of each item revealed Cronbach’s α values between 0.690-0.830 with relatively high correlation coefficients. Overall, the questionnaire demonstrated strong reliability and validity.

3. Empirical Analysis of Library Service Demand of Higher Vocational College Students

3.1 Characteristics of Higher Vocational Students' Library Service Demand

Higher vocational colleges are oriented toward industry and enterprise talent needs, cultivating skilled personnel with practical operation abilities and good professional qualities through work-integrated learning, school-enterprise cooperation, and internship programs. Their teaching processes and curriculum design require higher vocational education to be vocational, skill-oriented, and specialized [6]. For higher vocational students, in an atmosphere emphasizing skill development, they prefer to spend time on enterprise training and practical internships, resulting in relatively weak utilization of library resources and services, and their library service demands exhibit five distinct characteristics:

3.1.1 Low Reading Demand The student quality in higher vocational colleges primarily comes from secondary vocational and technical school graduates entering through “continuous education” programs, as well as regular high school students with relatively lower academic performance. Higher vocational students generally exhibit insufficient learning motivation, weak learning abilities, low learning initiative and enthusiasm, and lack of self-confidence. Overall, their reading levels and abilities are relatively low. Survey results show that nearly half of students spend less than two hours daily on professional knowledge acquisition and ability improvement, with only 14% spending four hours or more; 70.6% read no more than one book per month, with only 9.2% reading three or more books; 30.8% have almost never visited the library, while only 11.2% visit daily and utilize various resources; 37.8% have never used service functions on the library homepage, and 10% are unaware of the library’s website and services.

3.1.2 Diversified Service Demands With continuous expansion of library service functions, higher vocational students’ demands for library facilities and literature have become increasingly diverse. Beyond free wireless networks, comfortable environments, multi-functional spaces, and various thematic lectures, their information resource needs have expanded from pure text to picture collections, concise and vivid audio, video, and other formats. Survey results on students’ motivations for library visits reveal three main categories: (1) Utilizing library resources and services, including borrowing/returning books (77.2%), reading books and periodicals (44.3%), participating in thematic learning and skills training on information retrieval (38.1%), and searching databases for professional learning (23.8%); (2) Utilizing the quiet and harmonious spatial environment for self-study (53.8%) and leisure communication to pass time (26.1%); (3) Utilizing library wireless networks (23.9%). Details are shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

Regarding book type preferences, trends toward entertainment, specialization,

and practicality are evident. The top five borrowed book types are literary fiction (69.2%), certification exam materials (64.7%), professional materials (48.2%), entertainment (40.1%), and sports (25.5%) (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). This indicates that higher vocational students have strong demand for professional and certification materials related to their studies, while also emphasizing quality development through literary fiction and cultural arts. This aligns with higher vocational colleges' goal of cultivating technical and skilled talents and is closely related to the dual-certificate system for technical personnel, reflecting the applied talent cultivation orientation of higher vocational education.

3.1.3 Extensive Channel Demand With economic development and scientific-technological progress, new ideas, technologies, and knowledge constantly emerge. Only through continuous information acquisition, updating, and application can individuals adapt to societal development. Research on higher vocational students' information acquisition channels shows that the internet, professional books, and newspapers/magazines are the main ways connecting individuals with society, accounting for 89.6%, 76.2%, and 36.4% respectively, demonstrating high recognition and demand for networks among higher vocational students. Regarding professional books and information acquisition, 37.3% of students choose online downloads, 27.7% purchase independently, and only 16.5% search and borrow through the library—a relatively low proportion, as shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper].

Further analysis of students' online downloading behavior reveals that 85.4% use search engines like Baidu and Google, while only 9.3% retrieve and download through library digital resources, indicating weak awareness of digital resource utilization. This suggests that library promotion and marketing of existing resources need strengthening.

3.1.4 Lightweight Carrier Demand The popularization of the internet and widespread use of mobile terminals such as smartphones and iPads have made information acquisition possible “without leaving home,” enabling readers to access target materials more conveniently and quickly. For higher vocational students, increased learning tasks such as production training and internships have significantly shortened their time on campus, making it mainstream to access library resources and obtain information through readily available devices. Research on reading carrier preferences shows that mobile phone reading and paper reading are the main forms, with 45.1% preferring mobile phone reading and 28.3% preferring paper reading. Overall, convenient terminals such as mobile phones, Kindles, and computers account for over 68% of preferred reading carriers among higher vocational students, as shown in Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper].

Additionally, information needs vary by grade level, showing staged characteristics. At the beginning of enrollment, freshmen face vast library collections

without knowing how to search and obtain materials, and their reading demands are influenced by schools, departments, and teachers, showing blind and uncertain characteristics. During professional learning stages, they primarily focus on professional books and exam materials, with reading interests stabilizing but information literacy remaining low. During production training stages, targeted, practical, and vocational information resources related to training and production become the main demand, aiming to solve unexpected problems and difficulties encountered in practice.

3.2 Major Problems in Higher Vocational Library Services

In recent years, higher vocational colleges have increased investment in library resource construction and hardware, and overall service awareness and levels have improved significantly. However, due to various reasons including school scale, strength, and history, significant gaps remain between library service capabilities, informatization construction, and student demands. According to the survey (see Table 1), funding investment is generally insufficient, with only 30% of higher vocational colleges meeting the standard of 80 volumes per student stipulated in the *2015 Regulations on Libraries in Regular Institutions of Higher Education* (Implementation Guidelines for Higher Vocational Colleges). Moreover, funding investment shows little correlation with college type, with no significant differences between national demonstration, national backbone, provincial demonstration, and general institutions—in some cases, general institutions even invest more than national demonstration colleges. Private institutions generally lag behind public institutions in both library space and funding investment.

3.2.1 Resource Structure Needs Optimization Survey results on “What deficiencies exist in library resource construction?” show that students’ opinions focus on paper and database resources. Specifically, 34.8% believe there are insufficient certification exam books; 30.3% think professional books are inadequate; 23% report that borrowing accompanying CDs is complicated and inconvenient; and 13.5% state that book updates are too slow to meet the rapidly changing information society and professional learning needs. Regarding database resources, 26.2% of students indicate that library database resources are insufficient, particularly lacking professional e-books and databases.

3.2.2 Infrastructure Needs Improvement Survey results on “What problems exist in library infrastructure?” reveal that unstable networks and restricted off-campus access are common concerns, accounting for 52.5% and 49.3% respectively. Additionally, 29.1% report insufficient library seating, especially serious seat occupation during exam periods; 17.1% note slow software updates on library computers; and 13.9% consider library hardware facilities outdated with safety hazards. Furthermore, 70% of students hope for quiet learning and communication spaces, with 19.3% reporting that the current library environment is relatively noisy and unfavorable for studying.

3.2.3 Service Capacity Needs Strengthening Although librarians' educational levels have improved annually, their knowledge structure is not entirely reasonable, affecting overall service quality. According to 2015 data from the Ministry of Education's "College Library Statistics Database," librarians with master's degrees or above account for 31%, showing steady growth in highly educated personnel. However, the proportion of professionals in library and information science, computer science, or information technology is not high, affecting the professionalization, informatization, and intelligentization of libraries and making it difficult to meet user demands, particularly students' information retrieval needs. Consequently, nearly 40% of students do not understand library services and functions during their college years, let alone know how to effectively utilize library resources to solve difficulties in professional learning.

4. Countermeasure Analysis

Based on the status survey and problem analysis of higher vocational students' service demands, the focal issues urgently needing resolution in higher vocational libraries can be summarized into four aspects: collection resource construction, infrastructure development, librarian team building, and reader services. If we view the people, objects, and behaviors involved in libraries as an organic whole, diversified and practical collection resource construction is the core; rational and efficient infrastructure development is the important support; high-quality team building is the strong guarantee; and professional, superior reader services are the main approach to achieving library-student interaction and improving students' information literacy.

4.1 Strengthen Resource Integration and Enhance Collection Structure Diversification

Given the current situation of lower information literacy, insufficient learning initiative, and strong demand for certification materials and enterprise-related resources among higher vocational students, libraries should adopt user demand as the starting point and ultimate goal, reasonably optimizing resource structure [4] and increasing digital resource construction to meet the social trend of mobile learning and convenient reading in the new era.

4.1.1 Construct Rationally Arranged Paper Book Subject Libraries Based on Higher Vocational Students' Usage Needs Specific measures include: (1) To address students' difficulties in finding books and the need for timely resources, higher vocational libraries can establish new book and periodical resource libraries to keep abreast of development trends and latest hotspots in various disciplines and specialties. (2) In line with the dual-certificate talent cultivation model and graduation requirements, libraries can establish certification exam resource libraries according to different professional qualification certificate examinations and grading requirements, enabling students to find exam-related materials more comprehensively and conveniently. For example,

Wenzhou Vocational & Technical College and Zhejiang Financial Vocational & Technical College have already established new book libraries and certification exam subject libraries according to student needs. (3) Guided by higher vocational students' vocational information needs, with the socialization service of higher vocational libraries as the purpose, and school-enterprise cooperation as the approach, establish corporate culture columns collecting comprehensive materials such as product introductions, case analyses, and internal publications to enhance libraries' "craftsmanship spirit" cultivation capabilities.

4.1.2 Construct Specialized and Vocational Characteristic Digital Resource Libraries Based on Higher Vocational Students' Carrier Preferences

In the "Internet Plus" era, constructing characteristic digital resource libraries is the foundation and lifeline of smart library content construction. Higher vocational libraries should leverage their distinctive industry characteristics to intensify collection of information resources highlighting key disciplinary features and regional historical characteristics, forming systematically complete and content-rich characteristic collections: (1) Collect task assignments, work schedules, and phased achievements involved in students' project or graduation design processes, and construct excellent student achievement libraries according to certain systematic frameworks to form transmission value of research results and content. (2) Addressing the current inconvenience in borrowing accompanying CDs and increasing usage demands, establish an accompanying CD management system using professional software to input CD content into databases and link it to basic book information, enabling convenient downloads through the library website. For instance, Zhejiang Business Vocational and Technical College has built a Chinese cuisine characteristic resource library based on the precious teaching resources accumulated since 1974 and the library's rich culinary collection, providing diverse, comprehensive, and detailed digital resources for culinary students, educators, researchers, and enthusiasts, with effectiveness enhanced through resource sharing.

4.1.3 Establish Dynamic Digital Resource Evaluation Mechanisms Based on Higher Vocational Students' Resource Usage Feedback

Measures include: (1) Construct a digital resource performance evaluation index system based on digital resource update frequency, retrieval result precision and accuracy, economic costs, and backend browsing and download volumes to evaluate purchased and trial data resources, gradually adjusting and optimizing digital resource composition to maximize service effectiveness. (2) Evaluate technical support for digital resources and services provided by suppliers, including user training and digital resource promotion, to understand faculty and student satisfaction with data resources through questionnaires and interviews, optimizing supplier service levels. (3) Actively open database recommendation and purchase information feedback channels, register and screen student-recommended information resources, and open trial and evaluation mechanisms.

4.2 Strengthen Infrastructure Development and Enhance Efficient Support Services

Survey results show that utilizing library space and facilities constitutes an important motivation for higher vocational students to visit the library. Strengthening management and optimization of library space, networks, and other infrastructure is essential for attracting students to use the library.

4.2.1 Create Vibrant Cultural Spaces With the continuous deepening of the “people-oriented” service concept, humanized and cultural space layout and reading space construction have become mainstream trends in library development. Higher vocational libraries are also exploring spatial layouts combining material and spiritual, artistic and technical elements, breaking the traditional “one-size-fits-all” model: (1) Based on student visit purposes, construct shared spaces satisfying multiple cultural demands such as reading exchanges, leisure and entertainment, and media playback. For example, Wenzhou Vocational & Technical College uses bookshelves of varying heights to divide spaces into different functional areas including information sharing zones, audio-visual spaces, and reader salons, with personalized configurations according to each area’s usage purposes. (2) Starting from higher vocational students’ spiritual satisfaction, establish themed cultural walls in various corridors to enhance cultural atmosphere. (3) Focusing on cultivating students’ innovative consciousness, set up 3D printing experience zones and emerging industry technology or product experience zones, obtaining industry support through sponsorships and donations to establish maker spaces and creative spaces.

4.2.2 Build High-Speed, Barrier-Free Network Services Measures include: (1) Addressing student concerns about unstable library networks and restricted digital resource access, higher vocational libraries should continuously improve informatization levels, strengthen information service concepts, and actively construct unified campus portal systems using account/password login to solve VPN access instability and frequent disconnections. (2) Modern hardware facilities can not only reduce librarians’ workload but also provide more free space for students. Libraries should gradually optimize computer configurations, fiber optic capacity expansion, and server additions based on daily equipment usage and average lifespan, allowing students to experience libraries as both knowledge palaces and technology pioneers. (3) Libraries can utilize virtual social platforms such as Weibo and WeChat to provide comprehensive services including interlibrary loans, document sharing, book recommendations, new book purchase recommendations, and activity information release, achieving networked access to collection resources.

4.3 Strengthen Librarian Team Building and Enhance Professional Service Levels

As library service providers, librarians bear responsibilities for collecting and organizing information, selecting and evaluating information resources, and providing information services to users. Their comprehensive qualities and professional levels determine the height of library services. Therefore, all higher vocational libraries should emphasize improving librarians' professional qualities and service capabilities.

4.3.1 Improve Overall Quality Levels Through Existing Librarian Teams Addressing the current situation of poor professional skills, low educational levels, and unreasonable age structures among higher vocational librarians, multiple approaches should be adopted to enhance professional service levels: (1) Through ideological education and team consciousness cultivation, fully mobilize subjective initiative and use new tools such as QQ, Weibo, and WeChat to timely share domestic and international library science development trends and latest achievements, improving librarians' theoretical literacy. (2) Conduct planned job training and continuing education, organizing librarians, especially those without library and information science backgrounds, to participate in business learning, and inviting relevant experts and scholars to hold special lectures or professional exchanges to gradually improve librarians' comprehensive abilities. (3) Improve librarians' career promotion channels to enhance work enthusiasm, achieving "retaining people through emotion, career, and development."

4.3.2 Improve Talent Introduction Mechanisms and Achieve Reasonable Talent Mobility Competition and cooperation are not only social themes but also important foundations for promoting sustainable library development and cultivating modern high-level talents: (1) Through competitive employment systems, significantly improve the matching degree between talents and positions, fundamentally improving the library's talent structure. (2) Actively introduce information technology professionals and library and information science professionals to inject new vitality into the librarian team, enhancing overall service capabilities and professional levels to achieve a new situation of professional and efficient services. (3) Transfer personnel from various college departments, such as teaching secretaries or frontline teachers from academic affairs offices for resource construction, and counselors from student affairs offices for reader services, changing the previous practice of using libraries as shelters for unassigned teachers.

4.4 Strengthen Reader Services and Enhance Personalized Service Models

Reader services are the focus of library work, aiming to comprehensively promote new resources and services to users and improve user satisfaction during

library utilization. For a long time, due to libraries' "collection-heavy, usage-light" concept and lack of effective guidance on readers' information resource utilization, reader services have been relatively passive. Under the influence of "Internet Plus," library reader services should expand toward specialization, diversification, intelligence, and broadening.

4.4.1 Actively Improve Student Organization and Club Construction Under Library Leadership, Guiding Student Activities to Take Root in Libraries Student organizations and clubs, as important platforms for cultivating student interests and enriching campus cultural life, are becoming important ways for students to participate in departmental activities, expand learning domains, and broaden social networks. Strengthening exchanges and cooperation with student organizations and clubs and actively utilizing their mobilization power can effectively expand student participation enthusiasm and intensity in library activities, further broadening the breadth and depth of library promotion activities. For example, the Reading Promotion Association led by Wenzhou Vocational & Technical College Library and the Self-Discipline Committee of Zhejiang Business Vocational and Technical College Library have made it possible for libraries to efficiently conduct reader services and reading promotion activities.

4.4.2 Conduct Targeted Reader Service Activities According to Staged Characteristics of Higher Vocational Students' Information Needs At the beginning of freshman enrollment, conduct diverse library orientation education for higher vocational students, including library tours, thematic lectures, and H5 WeChat videos, to comprehensively and multi-dimensionally popularize library service concepts, content, and methods from perspectives of library overview, spatial characteristics, resource construction, and featured activities, enabling students to understand the library more intuitively. During professional learning stages, supported by information technology, utilize mobile libraries, Weibo, WeChat, and other media for resource and service promotion, and leverage libraries' "second classroom" function to improve higher vocational students' information literacy. For example, conduct "Human Library" craftsmanship series activities to let students experience the satisfaction of manual production, build student sharing and exchange platforms through "One Book per School" initiatives, hold "Campus Readers" activities to enhance students' language appeal, and invite experts for "Information Retrieval" thematic lectures to improve students' information retrieval capabilities. Alternatively, adopt Sichuan University Library's "Light and Shadow Reading—Micro-Filming E-books" format to gather reading topics through micro-videos, or emulate Wuhan University's "Save Little Bu" campaign by integrating virtual tasks into classic reading to enhance activity 趣味性, or link users' borrowing privileges with activity participation and award rankings to implement an honor system [7], thereby improving the service quality of libraries' core businesses. During graduation design stages, provide

personalized literature push services and information measurement services according to specialty and research topic distribution, guide higher vocational students in academic norms, and assist them in completing graduation designs. Additionally, libraries can establish personal “portraits” for graduates integrating learning experiences and activity participation, providing graduates with a library “root-seeking journey” to enhance the library’s cultural atmosphere.

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Author Contributions

Liu Feng: Designed the questionnaire and wrote the paper;

Li Xiaojuan: Determined the article’s ideas and framework, revised and improved the paper;

Wang Pin: Searched for relevant materials, statistically analyzed questionnaires, and wrote the paper.

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

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