

Investigation and Reflection on Extended Services of University Libraries During Graduation Season: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Graduates constitute a specific user group of university libraries. Investigating and analyzing extended services and activities for the “graduation season” can provide reference for related practical work.

[Method/Process] A sample survey was conducted on web news releases and WeChat push notifications regarding extended services and activities for the “graduation season” in university libraries in 2017, and their overall characteristics were analyzed.

[Results/Conclusion] Suggestions for improving extended services for the “graduation season” in university libraries are proposed from the aspects of special funding and operation teams, librarians’ emotional and energy investment, classic projects, creative services, integration with alumni extended services, and branding and promotion.

Full Text

Preamble

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Investigation and Reflection on Outreach Services of University Libraries During “Graduation Season”

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Graduates constitute a specific user group of university libraries. Investigating and analyzing outreach services and activities

during “Graduation Season” can provide references for related practical work. [Method/Process] This study conducted a sampling survey of web news releases and WeChat push notifications regarding university library outreach services and activities during the 2017 Graduation Season, analyzing their general characteristics. [Result/Conclusion] The paper proposes recommendations for improving university library outreach services during Graduation Season from the perspectives of dedicated funding and operational teams, librarians’ emotional and energy investment, classic projects, creative services, integration with alumni outreach services, and branding and promotion.

Keywords: university libraries; graduation season; outreach services

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1 Research Background

1.1 The Meaning and Development of Outreach Services and the Connotation of Specific Users in University Libraries

The earliest practice of library outreach services originated from services for disadvantaged reader groups, and early related research also reflected a focus on special populations while emphasizing practicality. For example, A.J. Ayer noted in 1955 that rather than defining outreach services, it was better to explain the concept through specific work content [1]. W.J. Martin believed that outreach services meant librarians leaving the library to reach people, breaking traditional library thinking and practice, being both symbolic and actual action. Its symbolic significance lay in opposing the traditional library concept of “neutrality” in the name of social equity, while its actions included extending services to under-educated individuals or minority communities [1]. As society developed, the meaning of library outreach services continuously expanded. In 1993, L. Westbrook and R. Waldaman defined library outreach services as all services provided by libraries outside their premises [2]. S.E. Pointon also argued that drawing a circle around the main library building, all library services, programs, and related activities conducted outside this circle constituted outreach services [3]. Defining library outreach services by physical space boundaries appears somewhat simplistic and has significant limitations. A 1998 survey report by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) defined outreach services as services provided by libraries to users outside the university community, including services for affiliated or non-affiliated remote users [4]. Therefore, library outreach services can be understood from the perspective of user groups, and the definition also includes content related to virtual libraries, i.e., virtual outreach services. B. Doherty et al. believe that outreach services represent libraries’ exploration of new mechanisms, models, and fields for providing various services to readers to adapt to social development and changing reader needs, continuously improving service capabilities, expanding service coverage, and providing diversified and personalized services to readers [5].

He Dingfu et al. propose that “extension” has two meanings for library services: first, the expansion of “points, lines, and surfaces” in library career layout, i.e., spatial development and quantitative growth of libraries; second, expanding projects and improving efficiency in service functions and levels [6]. In nearly a decade of domestic research, a consensus has basically been reached: library outreach services represent an extension of basic and routine services. For example, Huang Wei believes that library outreach services refer to libraries making full use of their professional and technical advantages to extend the reach of library services and strengthen the “breadth” and “depth” of services on the basis of doing routine services well [7]; Peng Suyun believes that library services can be divided into basic services and outreach services, where basic services are conventional services required by library responsibilities and long-formed in the library community, while outreach services are extension services beyond library responsibilities [8]; Wu Hanhua believes that library outreach services are extensions of basic and routine services, which can be divided into three types: time extension, space extension, and content extension [9]; Xiao Yongying et al. believe that university library outreach services have broad and narrow meanings. Broad university library outreach services refer to the general term for all new services developed by university libraries on the basis of original services; narrow university library outreach services refer to expanded services actively provided by university libraries to faculty and students on campus, breaking through the physical walls of the library, with the purpose of enabling faculty and students to enjoy more services beyond basic services [10].

Based on domestic and international scholars’ research, this paper believes that library outreach services can be broadly understood as extension, breakthrough, and innovation of libraries’ basic services and routine business. Library outreach services should be considered from three dimensions: Time dimension—24 hours/lifelong is undoubtedly the maximum time extension; Space dimension—including increased and innovative utilization of physical space, as well as expansion and innovation of virtual space; Content extension—referring to specific outreach service projects, which can be developed in combination with specific users, reader needs, industry trends, and other factors, and continuously improved and adjusted with technological progress and environmental changes. The three dimensions of time, space, and content can be considered in cross-sectional and three-dimensional ways, with content extension as the main dimension of examination [11]. At the same time, this paper believes that library outreach services are a relative concept—a new service, after long-term implementation, gradually transforms into basic and routine services. Therefore, trying new work content and methods for existing services is the significance of outreach services.

Some scholars believe that “one of the major challenges facing university libraries is meeting the needs of diverse user groups, including (but not limited to) prospective students, enrolled on-campus and off-campus students, faculty and staff, students of color, international students, disabled teachers and students, community members, etc.” [12]. Indeed, the main service targets (users)

of university libraries are the university's researchers, teachers, students, and other related readers. However, among these service targets, there are some "specific" users with different characteristics and special needs, such as research project teams, academic groups, virtual readers, reader associations, international students, freshmen, graduates, etc. Conducting research on these specific user groups or individuals, summarizing their different needs, and developing various forms and methods of outreach services based on this can provide ideas for libraries to explore service innovation, improve service levels, and demonstrate service diversification beyond conventional and basic services. Therefore, it is very necessary for university libraries to plan and implement outreach services for specific users.

1.2 The Special Significance and Necessity of University Libraries Conducting Outreach Services and Activities During "Graduation Season"

In recent years, the practice of outreach services and activities during "Graduation Season" in domestic university libraries has been emerging. Although related research achievements are not numerous, most studies believe that the practical work of university libraries during "Graduation Season" has important and special significance. For example, Yu Jing et al. point out that the significance of "Graduation Season" themed activities lies in innovating reading promotion activity models, promoting campus culture construction, and providing spiritual care for graduates [13]; Zhang Miao mentions that the "Graduation Season" service produces a "recency effect" that influences graduates' overall memories and emotions of their alma mater, reflecting the persistence and innovation of library services, and representing an important manifestation of humanized services and humanistic care [14]; Huang Yanhua believes that "Graduation Season" themed activities are highlights of phased reader service work, representing the embodiment, sublimation, and deep penetration of library core values, and can enhance the library's influence in campus culture construction [15]. In addition, this paper believes that as one of the specific user groups of university libraries, graduates' needs should receive more attention and satisfaction. Previous basic and routine services for graduates can no longer fully meet the deep-seated needs of such users. Moreover, conducting outreach services and activities during "Graduation Season" can provide ideas for university libraries to break through traditional service concepts and work models, explore service innovation, improve service levels, and demonstrate service diversification. Therefore, it is very necessary for university libraries to conduct outreach services and activities during "Graduation Season."

1.3 The Rise of University Library Outreach Services During "Graduation Season"

As one of the specific user groups of university libraries, graduates' needs have never been neglected. Conventional services with strong specificity generally

include: graduation thesis literature resource retrieval lectures and guidance, degree thesis collection, graduation procedures, book donation acceptance, etc. With the development of information technology and enhanced awareness of service innovation, libraries are trying to do more extensions beyond the above conventional projects in services for graduates. Various themed activities around graduates are the main forms of university library outreach services during “Graduation Season.”

A 2013 study showed that among 39 “985 Project” university libraries, 11 held themed activities during the 2013 Graduation Season, accounting for 28.2% of the total [13]. Another related study two years later [14] indicated that “most university libraries began conducting Graduation Season themed activities in 2013, and by 2015, 17 university libraries had joined this ranks, making this themed activity long-term and standardized.” By comparing the results of these two studies, it can be seen that from 2013 to 2015, the number of “985 Project” university libraries conducting Graduation Season activities grew from 28.2% to 43.6%. In addition, a 2015 study [16] conducted an online survey of 116 “211 Project” university libraries and found that “in 2015, 37 university libraries conducted at least one themed activity for graduates, accounting for 32% of the total.”

Existing research literature and data show that university library outreach services and related activities during “Graduation Season” are emerging. Not only the “985” and “211” university libraries mentioned in the above literature, but more and more domestic university libraries are holding “Graduation Season” services and activities.

2 Sampling Survey of University Library Outreach Services During “Graduation Season” in 2017

There are numerous universities of various types nationwide, and many libraries conducting outreach services or activities for graduates. To understand the latest situation of such services, this study examined web news and related push notifications of “Graduation Season” activities conducted by university libraries in 2017, using Baidu web search and WeChat public account browsing for random sampling surveys.

2.1 Web Survey Results of University Library “Graduation Season” Related Webpages

The domestic public search engine “Baidu” has strong functionality and high retrieval efficiency. Therefore, from May 25 to July 1, 2017, the author used “Baidu” as the search tool, inputting the search term “library * graduation season,” then filtered the search results, and compiled relevant webpage news/activity content, release dates, and click counts of university libraries (excluding higher vocational colleges and college libraries) into table form, as shown in Table 1 .

Table 1 University Library Webpage Releases of Graduation Season Outreach Services and Activities in 2017

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
Guizhou University Library	“Li • Travel Notes” reading memorial card (borrowing history), “June” creative graduation photos, Scholarly Guizhou—passing on a youth memory (book donation)	2017/5/15	-
Henan University of Economics and Law Library	2017 Art Department graduation exhibition, Book Wall Fragrance (recommending books once read), Book Journey Return Memorial (borrowing history memorial), Graduation Season film week	2017/5/12	-
Chongqing University Library	Reading, Library love water—a cup of deep affection, Human library—talking about “graduation matters”, Scholarly fragrance 留影, “My Study” points for gifts, “See you again” graduation concert, Chongqing University footprint photo exhibition, [Memory] “Book • Time” graduation memorial card set, [Action] Graduation Season themed flash mob, [Enjoy] Book drifting	2017/6/8	-
Jinan University Library	Library reading data—memory • my library time, Graduate departure guide—smooth graduation, Library graduation wall—Jinan garden youth and memories, Show graduation photos—freeze youth, commemorate Jinan University, Graduate film screening, Graduate book donation	2017/6/5	-

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
Hunan Normal University Library	2017 Library Graduation Season activity plan: Graduation Season book overdue zeroing activity, “Library Time • Reading Archive” Hunan Normal University graduation	2017/6/2	-
Peking University Library	2017 Graduation Season series activities launched: [Feeling] “Graduation has deadline but Yan 缘分 endless” graduation wall, [Image] “Yanran smiles” 2017 graduation photography	2017/4/28	-
Guizhou Minzu University Library	Don't say goodbye • Library 2017 Graduation Season series activities: Youth • Memorial (graduation postcards), Youth • Message (message wall), Enjoy • Film (film screening)	2017/6/6	-
Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology Library	Scholarly fragrance accompanies • 17 sets sail: Recalling ink fragrance (custom borrowing history memorial card), Heart wishes (message wall), Freezing youth (open reading rooms and art museum for photo taking)	2017/6/23	-

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
Beijing Foreign Studies University Library	“Writing youth, planning future with maps” themed activity strongly coming: Youth imprint—leave your image and message: 1. Show you four years ago; 2. Time travel of words (time mailbox); Youth voice—tell your youth story: 1. Collect micro videos, audio, classic beautiful texts; 2. Establish graduation season topic discussion area (Weibo follow-up); Youth vision—spread wings: 1. Send you an encounter with books; 2. CNKI database new functions introduction (lecture); 3. Taylor & Francis database retrieval competition (online prize)	2017/5/19	-
Harbin Normal University Library	2017 Library Graduation Season activities: Custom reading memorial card “those books I once read”, Issue alumni reading card “revisit scholarly fragrance”, Graduation memorial bookmark, Youth light and shadow “quiet time in the library” (photo in stacks)	2017/6/7	-
Qufu Normal University Library	Don't live up to youth, youth enlightenment: Reading • Enlightenment reading 感言 collection, Youth • Imprint print your own book list, Farewell • Set sail graduation message wall	2017/6/5	-
Shaanxi Normal University Library	Library holds Graduation Season themed activity: “Pack wisdom luggage, accompany you to sail” (provide off-campus access to electronic resources for graduates)	2017/6/2	-

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
University of Electronic Science and Technology Library	Chengdu e-grid (class graduation memorial display), Write to unknown you—graduation message, Scholarly Chengdu (lifelong reading account), Graduate class VR experience, Picture time (electronic memorial album), Custom graduation class film special, Graduation themed book push	2017/5/27	-
Fujian University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Library	Leaving is also starting—2017 Library Graduation Season themed activity: “Heluo map light” borrowing record, Book recommendation, Sincere message wall, “Most beautiful graduation photo” collection, Book donation	2017/6/7	-
Northeast Agricultural University Library	Graduation Season themed activity—help future with love: Graduate exclusive reading archive, Graduation Season “Pinyue” book recommendation, Graduate signature wall	2017/6/2	-
Hunan University of Science and Technology	Picking up past memories, reading memory (print borrowing book list), “Graduated, let scholarly fragrance continue” (book donation), “To our years in the library” (photo souvenir), Freshman to senior comparison photos recording the most beautiful graduates	2017/5/11	-

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
Southern Medical University Library	“South library accompanies, blueprint to shore” Graduation Season activity started: “My favorite library book” essay competition, “My favorite library book” themed book exhibition, Reading • Time—reading memorial card, Share “Reading • List”, Graduate message & photo collection, Graduation season, confession has gifts! (online space sincere confession), Scholarly • Fate—Graduation Season library donation activity, Emotion connects alumni, don’t say goodbye: Alumni card processing	2017/6/5	-
Xi’an Electronic and Science University Library	Youth doesn’t graduate, reading doesn’t disperse: Theme spray painting, Reading big data, Hand-drawn map, “Flower fragrance and book sea” postcards, Friend circle photo stand, Old books and notes recycling	2017/6/19	-
Shanghai University Library	Read • Youth Graduation Season activity started: Graduation Season message board, My book time, “Donate a book, send a feeling”—drifting book collection, Graduation Season bookmark and memorial seal, Worth remembering university president’s classic graduation messages	2017/6/9	-

Library	News Topic/Activity Content	Release Date	Clicks
Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics Library	“Book • Record” (borrowing record), “My story with it” (photography work collection), “Graduation voice” (interview outstanding graduate representatives), I want to say to you (message board), “Recalling years” (outstanding graduate exchange meeting)	2017/6/8	-
Shanghai University of International Business and Economics Library	Life • Call—Graduation Season series activities: “One word connects to SUIBE” WeChat message wall, “Youth • Memory” scholarly archive, “Call of love and dream, write to future self”—mail postcards activity, “Enjoy reading classics, enjoy thinking source” themed book recommendation: “2017 graduation navigation”	2017/3/30	-
Shanghai Maritime University Library	Marry/welcome library (photo scene and self-service photo printing), Graduation message board, Borrowing archive, Time letter, Passing the torch (book donation), Graduation Season film screening	2017/6/28	-

Note: Ranking is not in order; data as of July 1, 2017

2.2 WeChat Public Account Push Notifications of University Libraries

At the same time, the author searched for the theme “library * graduation season” on the WeChat platform, followed the WeChat public accounts of some university libraries, browsed, screened, and excerpted WeChat push notifications related to graduation season from university libraries, selecting some with higher attention levels, and listed the push dates and reading volumes, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Graduation Season Related Push Notifications from Some University Library WeChat Public Accounts in 2017

Library	Theme/Content	Push Date	Reads
Xiamen University Library	“Li • Story” collection	2017/5/27	2980
Wuhan University Library	“Beautiful Campus • Beautiful Wuhan University” art work collection conference	2017/5/27	2740
Shandong University Library	“I love you, goodbye” graduation film exhibition	2017/6/2	1816
Beijing Normal University Library	“Li • Time” message wall	2017/6/7	4036
Sun Yat-sen University Library	Graduation book donation	2017/6/19	2814
Fudan University Library	A love letter to graduation from Xiaobu	2017/5/31	17110
East China Normal University Library	Looking for “most beautiful graduation photo”	2017/6/3	2992
Tsinghua University Library	“Those comics related to ‘graduation’ ” (reading recommendation)	2017/6/4	-
Sichuan University Library	Handicraft bookmark making activity	2017/6/24	-
Shenzhen University Town Library	Micro topic your future you decide (WeChat message wall)	2017/6/7	-
Xiamen University of Technology Library	“The best youth was that summer” (graduation photo display)	2017/6/13	-
Nanjing University of Finance and Economics Library	Beiyou 24 solar terms hand-drawn postcards first look	2017/6/15	-

Library	Theme/Content	Push Date	Reads
Southwest Petroleum University Library	Treasure your exclusive “Muduo memory”	2017/6/23	-
	Graduation reading card—Graduation Season egg giveaway	2017/6/9	-
	When parting with you, graduation wall stands as a poem	2017/6/13	-
	Book rhyme Kangle book guide	2017/6/13	-
	Message wall strongly coming	2017/6/15	-
	Youth doesn't disperse, leave memory in library	2017/6/21	-
	Graduation Season: We don't say goodbye	2017/6/23	-
	Graduation travel themed guide	2017/6/9	-
	Graduation Season special planning: take you to flirt with literary heart (message board and semi-proposition sentence filling, special collection tour, archive bag and wax seal, DIY workshop)	2017/6/13	-
	What to store your youth—library “graduation memory archive bag” available	2017/6/16	-
	First ancient book protection and restoration professional master graduate exhibition	2017/6/20	-
	Awesome Word graduates (reading star or library expert)	2017/5/24	-
	Graduation Season let's travel together (reading recommendation)	2017/6/2	-

Library	Theme/Content	Push Date	Reads
	N ways to take library away (bookmark, photo collection, custom photo, my library memory)	2017/6/22	-
	Graduation Season cute readers (photography exhibition)	2017/5/17	-
	Graduation Season special documentary screening	2017/5/27	-
	Graduation Season special bookshelf (2 times)	6/13, 6/15	-
	“Hello • Goodbye” write your graduation voice	2017/6/20	-
	Graduation Season art library recommended books	2017/6/26	-
	Read youth (borrowing history)	2017/6/27	-
	2017 Graduation Season photo wall: how to occupy library big screen?	2017/6/15	-
	To my youth in library—library	2017/6/20	-
	Graduation Season series activities (graduation • imprint, message wall, photo taking, classic recommendation, book donation)		
	Graduation • trace, book donation	2017/6/7	-
	Nan Cai reader—Graduation Season touch: a paper “home letter”	2017/6/11	-
	Library, I want to say to you... (electronic message wall)	2017/6/17	-

Note: Ranking is not in order; data as of July 1, 2017

3 Analysis of Results

Due to access restrictions on some university websites, public search engine retrieval results were limited. At the same time, related themed WeChat push notifications were relatively scattered. Additionally, it cannot be ruled out that some university libraries did not report or push “Graduation Season” related work through official websites or WeChat public accounts. However, the content listed in Tables 1 and 2 can roughly reflect the situation of university library outreach services and activities during “Graduation Season” in 2017. Currently, university library outreach services and themed activities during “Graduation Season” generally present the following characteristics:

3.1 University Library “Graduation Season” Outreach Services and Activities Received Varying Degrees of Attention

Survey results show that, except for Tibet and Xinjiang regions, relevant cases exist in other domestic regions, indicating that a relatively large number of libraries conduct “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities with wide regional distribution.

According to data in Tables 1 and 2, although the earliest relevant webpage news release dates were at the end of March or April, most university libraries conducted “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities in May and June, about two months before graduates leave campus. Conducting “Graduation Season” related services and activities during this period can more easily resonate with graduates emotionally and attract their attention and participation. Therefore, most university libraries choose May and June as the time to launch “Graduation Season” services and activities.

The data in Tables 1 and 2 list the click counts and reading volumes of “Graduation Season” news and push notifications from the surveyed libraries. These data reflect two aspects: first, webpage news publicity effects are significantly lower than WeChat public account push effects. For example, in Table 1, the highest click count for webpage news publicity is 1,329 times, and the lowest is 54 times, while in Table 2, the highest reading volume for WeChat public account push notifications reaches 17,110 times, and the lowest is 322 times. Second, the numerical gaps between “click counts” and “reading volumes” in Tables 1 and 2 are large, showing that the “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities launched by university libraries in 2017 received varying degrees of attention.

The differences in attention levels, apart from factors such as service duration, publicity methods, and activity planning, most importantly depend on whether they are emotionally closer to graduates. For example, the most followed activity in Table 2 is Wuhan University Library’s “A Love Letter to Graduation from Xiaobu,” where the virtual librarian “Xiaobu” pours out a “love letter” to graduates, accompanied by simple comics, which easily resonates emotionally with graduates and therefore receives more attention.

3.2 Some University Libraries Have Not Yet Developed Brand Awareness for “Graduation Season” Related Services and Activities

Tables 1 and 2 list some university libraries that conducted “Graduation Season” as a series of services or special activities. From the content and frequency of news and push notifications, these activities were systematically and meticulously planned. Some libraries have developed certain brand awareness in related work, creating “Graduation Season” services and activities into clearly themed, strongly targeted library series services and activities, which helps enhance the influence and participation of this work.

However, during the retrieval process, the author found that some libraries embedded “Graduation Season” related activities into other themed activities. For example, Lanzhou University Library added “Scholarly Love” graduate electronic memorial album to its “Scholarly Lanzhou” Reading Festival series activities; Wuhan University of Science and Technology Library conducted graduation season “Book Exchange Market” activities within its “Scholarly Campus, Happy Reading in KUST” national reading series activities; Shenyang Aerospace University Library launched “To the Youth I’ve Read” (borrowing history) as an important activity of its campus reading festival for graduates. The reasons why “Graduation Season” outreach services have not formed a brand may include: Awareness issues—basic services for graduates have become fixed patterns, and apart from graduation procedures, some university libraries have not yet recognized graduates’ emotional and guidance needs; Funding issues—any large-scale service and activity requires financial support, and some university libraries may be limited by funding constraints in designing and conducting “Graduation Season” as a theme for related outreach services; Time issues—since April 23 is “World Book Day” each year, many university libraries plan a series of activities during this period, some of which last for a long time and naturally overlap with “Graduation Season.” However, this paper believes that when conditions permit, conducting “Graduation Season” services and activities as special topics has more important significance for graduates who are about to become alumni.

3.3 University Library “Graduation Season” Outreach Services and Activities Show Some Homogenization Tendencies

By comparing the “Graduation Season” related news and push notifications in Tables 1 and 2, the most frequently held types of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities include: borrowing history, message walls, graduation photos, reading recommendations, book donations, and memorial seals. These types of services and activities adopt different theme words and slogans. For example, borrowing history type titles include: Li • Travel Notes, Picture Time, Scholarly Archive, Reading Archive, Read • Youth, Reading Big Data, Book • Record, etc., mainly providing graduates with their library usage and data during their study period, generally in two forms: paper lists and electronic memorial albums, with the latter also providing sharing links and self-service printing

functions. In addition, message walls have also become the most common activity in university library “Graduation Season” series. Although titles vary and display forms differ, they all provide graduates with a platform for emotional expression, topic discussion, and information exchange. Borrowing history, message walls, graduation photos, reading recommendations, book donations, and memorial seals are common types of services and activities in library “Graduation Season” work. Although publicity methods and implementation approaches differ, the content and essence are largely the same.

Of course, since the targeted users themselves have the same characteristics and similar needs, it is understandable that some university libraries have similar “Graduation Season” work plans. Such homogenized services and activities, held continuously for many years and imitated by more and more libraries, will develop related work into routine work. At that time, the direction of library “Graduation Season” related work will lie in extension and innovation in methods and approaches.

3.4 “Graduation Photos” Are the Creative Source of University Library “Graduation Season” Outreach Services and Activities

Reviewing the situation of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities conducted by some university libraries in 2017, combined with the practice of “Graduation Season” work in the author’s university library, this paper puts forward several suggestions. Looking back at the “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities of some university libraries in 2017, combined with the practice of the author’s university library, this paper proposes several recommendations.

Innovative practice cases found during the survey show relatively high reader attention, reflecting that these cases already have some influence, and “graduation photos” are the main creative source of these cases. For example, one of Wuhan University Library’s “Graduation Season” activities was “Looking for ‘Most Beautiful Graduation Photo.’” The library’s first push notification on WeChat public account was on June 4, with 2,992 reads. The activity lasted for a relatively long time, and the WeChat public account made several follow-up push notifications: “13 Styles of Graduation Photo Shooting” on June 14, with 5,073 reads; “Different Love Letter to Graduates” on June 20, with 4,026 reads; “Hand Language of Graduation Modeling Poem” on June 22, with 2,684 reads; “Send You an Exclusive Memory” on June 23, with 6,590 reads; and “Looking for ‘Most Beautiful Graduation Photo’ TOP10 Revealed” on June 28, with 5,028 reads (data cutoff date: July 1, 2017). From the reading volumes of these WeChat push notifications, this activity received relatively high attention. According to reports, the library received nearly 2,000 参选 graduation photos, with many reader comments on the WeChat article and good interaction with administrators, all showing high participation and influence.

Xiamen University Library also made push notifications about graduation pho-

tos on its WeChat public account from May 27 to June 12, totaling 5 times. The article titles and reading volumes were: “Me and Li” with 2,980 reads; “I Love You, Goodbye” with 2,740 reads; “Recalling My Li Time” with 1,816 reads; “Junior Schoolmates, We Graduated” with 4,036 reads; and “Reluctance” with 2,814 reads (data cutoff date: July 1, 2017). Although this activity was not held as a prize competition, it also received a certain degree of attention.

Innovative practice cases in 2017 university library “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities also include: Chongqing University Library’s “Scholarly Fragrance Photo” activity, where the library provided free in-library rental services of retro student uniforms, Hanfu, and cheongsam for graduates [17], providing clothing props for graduates to take various styles of graduation photos, which is rare among university libraries; Southern University of Science and Technology Library provided “Me and My Library” Polaroid gift service for graduates [18], allowing graduates to obtain graduation photo prints instantly, making up for the texture deficiency of electronic photos; University of Electronic Science and Technology Library held graduation VR parties for graduate classes [19], applying trendy wearable audio-visual equipment to “Graduation Season” outreach services, which is innovative; Guangdong University of Foreign Studies Library built creative photo backdrops, class graduation photo “drone” aerial photography services, and “Rain Heart Record” graduate follow-up video shooting, production, and dissemination [20], which received high attention and participation on campus and won praise from most graduates.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Dedicated Funding and Operational Team Are the Most Important Guarantee

In the outreach services and activities conducted by university libraries during “Graduation Season,” many projects require funding support, such as physical expenses for setting up display boards, customizing souvenirs, and setting activity awards, as well as costs for developing one-stop departure systems and designing electronic memorial albums. Therefore, setting up dedicated funding in advance and allocating it properly is an important guarantee for university libraries to conduct “Graduation Season” related work.

At the same time, because “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities are phased work that may also require cross-departmental collaboration, mobilizing human resources to form a dedicated operational team is also an important guarantee for this work. In cases of tight library human resources, leveraging student associations, volunteers, and even professional companies is also advisable. However, resources and forces from all parties need to be uniformly directed and coordinated by the library’s “Graduation Season” work operational team to ensure the quality and sustainability of “Graduation Season” outreach services.

4.2 Librarians' Emotional and Energy Investment Is an Essential Element

The starting point of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities lies in graduates’ complex emotions before leaving campus (reluctance, expectation, confusion, dreams, etc.), which is different from conventional formulaic services such as collecting degree theses, recalling books, paying fines, and handling departure procedures. Therefore, the planning and implementation of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities require librarians to be emotionally closer to graduates, truly thinking from graduates’ perspectives, and providing considerate outreach services and activities for graduates during their final time on campus, all of which will constitute graduates’ beautiful memories of university.

From the practice of some university libraries’ “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities, some projects require librarians to invest sufficient time and energy to complete. For example, graduation themed reading recommendations require careful selection of related books; WeChat public account message confession type activities require constant attention and timely responses; electronic graduation memorial album design includes various stages such as back-end system construction, data import, copywriting creation, and artistic design; video interview type activities include preparing interview content, on-site shooting, video editing, and broadcast push work. Therefore, individual librarians’ emotional and energy investment in “Graduation Season” work is an essential element to ensure the smooth implementation and perfect conclusion of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities.

4.3 Classic Projects Are the Foundation of “Graduation Season” Outreach Services

Earlier “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities include book donation or drifting, graduation message walls, borrowing records, etc. For example, Peking University Library has arranged graduation wall message boards and held book drifting activities since 2010; Tsinghua University Library has distributed “Read Youth” (borrowing history) since 2011; Chongqing University Library has conducted “Chongqing University Memory” (personal item storage) since 2013. These services and activities, held continuously to this day, can create shared memories for each cohort of graduates and have therefore become classic projects, forming the foundation of “Graduation Season” outreach services.

In recent years, some classic projects of “Graduation Season” services have been further extended and developed. For example: extending graduation message activities to online social platforms, with forms such as WeChat message walls and online sincere confessions; extending from paper borrowing records to the Internet and shareable social media, with forms such as electronic memorial albums and reading big data reports; extending alumni card functions, retain-

ing library access and adding off-campus electronic resource usage accounts and cloud reading account functions.

4.4 Creative Services Are the Extension of “Graduation Season” Related Practical Work

With the development of information technology and changes in reader preferences, while adhering to and developing “Graduation Season” classic service projects, some university libraries have tried to conduct more creative services. The types roughly include: services around taking graduation photos, including setting up photo backdrops, providing clothing props, creative graduation photo competitions, drone aerial photography of graduation photos, etc.; building reader exchange platform services, including graduate exchange meetings, reading star messages, themed flash mobs, human libraries, book exchange markets, etc.; special exhibition activities, including graduation work exhibitions, special collection tours, handicraft exhibitions, etc.; audio-visual appreciation activities, including themed film screenings, documentary screenings, concert appreciation, graduation concerts, etc.; reading recommendation services, including borrowing rankings, graduation travel, financial management, and graduation-related comics and other book categories. These types of “Graduation Season” outreach services and activities have certain creativity and strong operability and replicability, and can learn from each other.

4.5 Integration of “Graduation Season” Outreach Services with Alumni Outreach Services

Alumni as a (off-campus) specific user group, when circumstances permit, libraries can consider conducting more outreach services for them. University libraries conducting outreach services for alumni have at least three positive significances: promoting alumni lifelong learning, continuously improving literacy, and enhancing their social competitiveness; promoting the development of university library social outreach services, improving library resource utilization, and enhancing library social influence; maintaining and strengthening the emotional bond between alumni and alma mater, promoting exchanges among alumni, and enhancing university cohesion. From an emotional factor perspective, the purposes of alumni services and library “Graduation Season” outreach services are relatively consistent. Therefore, integrating “Graduation Season” outreach services well with alumni services and trying more breakthroughs and extensions is a new idea for university library outreach services.

Currently, common outreach services conducted by university libraries for alumni mainly include issuing alumni cards and collecting degree theses. Some libraries are also trying to provide alumni with cloud reading accounts and access permissions to some databases, which are preliminary attempts at alumni outreach services. Libraries can continue to try providing alumni with paper resource borrowing, remote access to digital resources, information

push, book collection donations, reference consultation, and other personalized services.

4.6 Branding and Promotion Can Promote the Long-term and Sustainable Development of “Graduation Season” Work

To enable “Graduation Season” work to be long-term and sustainable, it is necessary to strengthen brand awareness, establish a “Graduation Season” service brand with clear themes, clear goals, coherence, and innovation, making it a component of campus culture. Common series activities and services in various university libraries include cultural festivals, reading festivals, freshman training, and one-hour lectures, some of which have been held continuously for many years and have formed certain brand effects on university campuses. “Graduation Season” services and activities should receive more attention, be carefully planned and implemented, and gradually develop into university library service brands.

Brand management and promotion are inseparable. Data in Tables 1 and 2 show that official website publicity effects are significantly lower than WeChat public account promotion effects. Therefore, during the graduation season, university libraries need to utilize emerging media more, promote “Graduation Season” services and activities in ways that graduates enjoy, attract more attention and participation, and promote the long-term and sustainable development of “Graduation Season” related work.

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Study on Academic Library Outreach Services in Graduation Season 2017

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Abstract: [Purpose/significance] Graduates are one of the specific user groups of academic libraries. Investigating and analyzing outreach services and activities during “Graduation Season” can provide references for related practical work. [Method/process] This paper conducts a sampling survey and characteristic analysis of academic library outreach services and activities during the 2017 Graduation Season through webpage news and WeChat push notifications. [Result/conclusion] Suggestions are provided for improving academic library outreach services during Graduation Season from aspects of dedicated budget and operation team, librarians’ emotion and energy, classical projects, creative services, connecting with alumni outreach services, branding and promotion, etc.

Keywords: academic libraries; graduation season; outreach services

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.