

## Evolution and Implications of Australian Primary and Secondary School Library Standards (Post-print)

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**Date:** 2023-08-27T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study examines the evolutionary trajectory of Australian primary and secondary school library standards, aiming to provide references for the formulation and construction of school library standards in China. [Method/Process] Employing literature analysis and textual analysis methods, this paper investigates four national standards for Australian school libraries: the “1979 Standards,” “1993 Standards,” “2001 Standards,” and “2005 Standards.” Their development and implementation reflect the developmental course of Australian school library standards. [Results/Conclusion] This paper systematically reviews the evolutionary background and general overview of the four national standards for Australian school libraries, analyzing them from four perspectives: historical role of standards, key focus areas, conceptual highlights, and standard implementation. Three implications are derived: focusing on internal issues in the construction of China’s school library standards, leveraging multi-party collaboration to fulfill school library functions, and establishing competency framework standards for school librarians in China.

### Full Text

**Vol. 62 No. 24, December 2018, ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal**

**The Evolution of Australian School Library Standards and Its Implications**

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/Significance] This study examines the evolution of Australian primary and secondary school library standards to provide reference for the development and construction of school library standards in China. [Method/Process] Using literature analysis and textual analysis, this paper explores four national standards for Australian school libraries: the “1979 Standards,” “1993 Standards,” “2001 Standards,” and “2005 Standards,” whose development and implementation reflect the developmental trajectory of Australian school library standards. [Result/Conclusion] By examining the evolutionary background and overview of these four national standards, this paper analyzes them from four perspectives: historical role, standard focus, conceptual highlights, and implementation. Three key implications are drawn: focusing on internal issues in China’s school library standard construction, promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration to maximize school library functions, and constructing a competency framework standard for school librarians in China.

**Keywords:** Australia; School Library Standards; Evolution; Implications

Australian libraries comprise four major categories: public libraries, academic (university) libraries, school libraries, and specialized libraries in state and federal government departments. School libraries generally refer specifically to primary and secondary school libraries. Currently, there are approximately 7,000 public and private primary schools and 2,000 secondary schools nationwide, serving as important auxiliary institutions for basic education activities and powerful drivers of educational practice in Australia. Since the 1960s, Australian school libraries have undergone a series of explorations. Particularly with the development of Australian school education, school libraries have evolved from early venues simply displaying memorabilia to learning activity centers. Through the care of professional associations and the Australian government, active participation of scholars, and the promotion of school education, the Australian School Library Standards Advisory Group (AGSS), the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) have successively promulgated the “1979 Standards,” “1993 Standards,” “2001 Standards,” and “2005 Standards,” forming the latest Australian school library standards that guide further development. This paper focuses on analyzing the most recent “2001 Standards” and “2005 Standards” in detail, aiming to provide reference and enlightenment for the formulation and construction of school library standards in China.

## 1 Evolutionary Background of Australian School Library Standards

In the 19th century, many Sunday Schools in Australia opened libraries, with relevant research briefly introducing these collections and explaining their organizational forms and objectives [1]. Before the early 1960s, primary and secondary school libraries were not regarded as centers for learning activities [2]. In the 1960s, the Library Association of Australia (LAA) actively advocated and worked with other groups to launch a series of school library initiatives. In

1965, E. Rose's *Teachers, Librarians and Children* became an important driving force for Australia's attention to and emphasis on libraries [2]. In 1966, S.L. Fenwick's *School and Children's Libraries in Australia* further laid the foundation for the development of Australian school libraries [3]. In the same year, the LAA published *Standards and Objectives for School Libraries*, providing good reference for establishing library norms, and established a school library group with dedicated personnel responsible for related matters [3].

In 1968, the Australian Library Promotion Council (ALPC) selected senior librarian M. Trask (a member of the Commonwealth Secondary School Libraries Committee and the Australian Schools Commission) to draft *School Libraries: A Report to the Nation* and published *Planning of Australian School Libraries*, which played a positive role in the construction of Australian school libraries [2]. In 1969, the Commonwealth Secondary School Libraries Committee (CSSLC) formulated *Standards for Secondary School Libraries* [3], but it was not officially launched until 1971. This standard primarily addressed guidance schemes for government subsidy design and was not a normative text applicable to all primary and secondary school libraries. Its greatest impact was prompting state and local governments to attach importance to libraries and increase funding, creating a series of training courses and training a large number of teacher-librarians, thus forming a solid foundation for the development of Australian school libraries [3].

In 1972, the report *Secondary School Libraries in Australia* was promulgated as the first formal feedback report evaluating and improving Australian school libraries to enhance secondary education quality. It fully affirmed the improvements in library construction through federal government funding, stimulated enthusiasm for teaching and student learning, and trained a large number of librarians. Based on the "1972 Report" and influenced by the rapid growth of the library and information services industry from 1968 to 1979 [4], *Books and Beyond: Guidelines for Library Resource Facilities and Services* (hereinafter referred to as the "1979 Standards") was released in 1979 [5]. This report marked the final formation of Australia's first truly national primary and secondary school library standard, truly unveiling the curtain for Australian school library standards. The "1979 Standards" specified detailed requirements for collections, personnel, library buildings, equipment, and basic book quantities in primary and secondary school libraries, with the goal of building Australian school libraries into high-quality libraries [5].

## 2 Overview of Australian School Library Standards

### 2.1 The 1979 Standards

Although the LAA's 1966 *Standards and Objectives for School Libraries* and the CSSLC's 1969 *Standards for Secondary School Libraries* were named as library standards, they were not applicable as national standard texts. In 1979, the Advisory Group on School Library Standards of Australian Schools formulated

the 1979 Standards, whose core content established detailed specifications for collections, personnel, library buildings, equipment, and basic book quantities in primary and secondary school libraries. The goal was to build Australian school libraries into high-quality libraries [5].

## 2.2 The 1993 Standards

In 1993, to make the “1979 Standards” more operational and applicable with quantifiable indicators, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), based on surveys of 1,000 primary and secondary school libraries in Australia and through collaborative review and revision by experts, scholars, teachers from various fields, and librarians, jointly released the 1993 Standards with the Australian School Library Association (ASLA). The core contents of this standard included: tracing the development of Australian primary and secondary school libraries and information services; guiding discussions on school libraries; providing a basis for schools to evaluate information literacy development; presenting quantitative assessment requirements for school development; and offering opportunities for information literacy and information services needed in primary and secondary school libraries.

## 2.3 The 2001 Standards

Beginning in 1980, Australian school libraries entered a rapid development phase. In 1984, the world’s first national catalog database specifically designed for primary and secondary school libraries—the Australian Schools Catalogue Information Service (ASCIS)—was launched [3]. In the early 1990s, the Australian primary and secondary school library standard *Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Australian Schools* (hereinafter referred to as the “1993 Standards”) was released. In 2001, the “1993 Standards” were revised to adapt to Australian educational reforms, and *Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Australian Schools (2nd Edition)* (hereinafter referred to as the “2001 Standards”) was promulgated by ASLA and ALIA. This standard shifted its focus from outcome-oriented to learning-based, explicitly proposing that the value of primary and secondary school libraries lies in cultivating students’ learning concepts and skills, and establishing complete information literacy indicators.

The “2001 Standards” comprises six chapters with unique design concepts and content requirements. Each chapter’s main content is summarized in .

Australian *Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Australian Schools (2nd Edition)* Standard Framework and Core Content

**Chapter 1: Introduction.** Clearly states how to extract various needed information to achieve the vision of lifelong learning in the 21st-century information age, and how school libraries should support students’ effective learning and effective use of ICTS (Information and Communication Technologies) as Australian education shifts from focusing on learning outcomes to emphasizing the

learning process.

**Chapter 2: Learners and Learning.** Systematically explores the concepts of information and information communication technology literacy, aiming to address the needs of users within the school learning community while focusing on the role of knowledge management in the learning process within the school community.

**Chapter 3: Teachers and Teaching.** Points out that the tremendous changes in 21st-century society usher in a knowledge society where independent learning and inquiry-based learning emphasizing resources and technology become trends. This change requires teachers and teaching teams to expand access to curriculum information to support students' diverse and inquiry-based learning.

**Chapter 4: Resources to Support the Curriculum.** The purpose of effectively supporting curriculum resources is to ensure students can access the latest and most beneficial information to enhance learning, during which teachers also improve their own professional development. Access channels should include school resource management systems and off-campus community resources, such as state libraries, public libraries, and electronic resources.

**Chapter 5: Facilitating Information Access.** Emphasizes providing professional systems and services for information access through school information services, covering appropriate resources, national cataloging standards, information organization and storage, effective information utilization, application of information communication technology, and attention to information patents.

**Chapter 6: Developing the Learning Environment.** Equipping dedicated personnel and providing core access to cross-school learning resources, facilities, and equipment to create a suitable learning and teaching environment space is of significant value.

The “2001 Standards” specifically addresses librarian issues in its appendix. Since Australian primary and secondary school librarians must first have school teacher status and then complete library-related coursework, the requirements are quite high. Only those who can fulfill three roles—curriculum leader, information expert, and information service manager—can provide complete primary and secondary school library services.

## 2.4 The 2005 Standards

In 2005, to further highlight the importance of teacher-librarians in primary and secondary school libraries and supplement the missing librarian standards in the “2001 Standards,” the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) jointly promoted the *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher-Librarians* [6] statement. This statement describes the professional knowledge, skills, and commitment demonstrated by teacher-librarians at an excellent level. It represents the goals that all

Australian teacher-librarians should pursue and provides ideas for quality teaching and continuous professional practice. The formal publication *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher-Librarians* aimed to achieve national consensus on excellence standards for Australian primary and secondary school teacher-librarians to improve professional practice and enhance student learning outcomes. Its standard content requirements are shown in .

Australian Primary and Secondary School Library *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher-Librarians* Framework Structure and Content Requirements

**Professional Knowledge:** - Understanding principles of lifelong learning - Understanding teaching and learning in curriculum areas and developmental levels - Having in-depth knowledge of the school community and curriculum - Possessing expertise in information, resources, technology, and library management

**Professional Practice:** - Engaging and challenging learners in a supportive, information-rich learning environment - Collaboratively planning and resourcing curriculum programs that incorporate transferable information literacy and reading outcomes - Providing exemplary library and information services that meet national standards - Evaluating student learning and library programs and services to strengthen professional practice

**Professional Commitment:** - Modeling and promoting lifelong learning - Committing to principles of education and librarianship - Demonstrating leadership in school and professional communities - Actively participating in education and library professional networks

The “2005 Standards” involves 11 standard requirements across three dimensions: professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional commitment. Each standard requirement includes 3-5 specific requirements, with main contents as follows:

**First Dimension: Professional Knowledge.** 1) Understanding principles of lifelong learning: enabling others in the school community to become lifelong learners; conducting research to provide evidence-based innovation in school library programs; engaging in debates on educational issues within the school community; creating and promoting library-related professional development opportunities for staff. 2) Understanding teaching and learning in curriculum areas and developmental levels: having detailed knowledge of current teaching methods; being thoroughly familiar with learners’ information literacy and information needs, skills, and interests; fully understanding the need to accommodate learners’ social, cultural, and developmental backgrounds in program implementation and curriculum resource allocation. 3) In-depth understanding of the school community and curriculum: comprehensive understanding of literacy, reading among children and young people, school curriculum and specific subjects; detailed knowledge of how to promote reading; thorough understanding of current assessment theories and processes. 4) Expertise in information,

resources, technology, and library management: understanding that professionally managed and well-resourced primary and secondary school libraries are crucial to school community achievement; having rich professional knowledge of national library and information management standards; comprehensive understanding of national information retrieval standards.

**Second Dimension: Professional Practice.** 1) Engaging and challenging learners in a supportive, information-rich learning environment: creating and nurturing information-rich learning environments that support school community needs; providing access to information resources through efficient, effective, and professionally managed systems; cultivating environments that encourage learners to read, view, listen, and respond with understanding and enjoyment; understanding the dynamic nature of ICT and its role in education. 2) Collaboratively planning and resourcing curriculum programs: working with teachers to plan and implement information literacy and reading curricula that produce positive student learning outcomes; ensuring curricula meet the needs of learners in the school community; providing equitable access to professionally selected resources to support learning and teaching; assisting individual learners in developing learning independence; teaching appropriate and relevant use of information communication technology and information resources. 3) Providing exemplary library and information services that meet national standards: ensuring library policies and procedures fulfill the school's mission; providing exemplary reference and information services to the school community; conducting strategic planning and evaluation improvements for library and information services programs; applying information management practices and systems that comply with national standards. 4) Evaluating student learning and library programs and services: monitoring teaching practices to ensure improved learning and teaching; evaluating student learning to provide evidence of progress in information literacy and reading; measuring library resources, facilities, programs, and services against current policies, standard documents, and benchmarks; using evidence to validate programs and services.

**Third Dimension: Professional Commitment.** 1) Modeling and promoting lifelong learning: enabling others in the school community to become lifelong learners; conducting research to provide evidence-based innovation in school library programs; engaging in debates on educational issues within the school community; creating and promoting library-related professional development opportunities for staff. 2) Committing to principles of education and librarianship: committing to excellent professional service; emphasizing the learning and teaching focus of school library programs and services; promoting the teacher-librarian profession in schools and the wider community; fostering a reading culture through reading promotion; engaging in continuous professional development. 3) Demonstrating leadership in school and professional communities: actively participating in school leadership and important committees; promoting information literacy policies and implementation in primary and secondary schools; building and nurturing collaborative teams within school and professional communities; providing effective and transformative leadership for school

library and information services staff. 4) Actively participating in education and library professional networks: modeling knowledge sharing; actively participating as members of professional communities; demonstrating collegiality and mentorship; promoting libraries and information services to schools and the wider community.

### 3 Evolutionary Analysis of Australian School Library Standards

#### 3.1 From a Historical Role Perspective

Reviewing the evolution of Australia's four national primary and secondary school library standards, it is evident that from the 1970s to the latest 2005 standards, each has played an important historical role. The "1979 Standards" established, for the first time, a standard rule for equipping libraries based on student numbers, becoming Australia's first truly national primary and secondary school library standard. After approximately 15 years of implementation, to meet the changes of the information age, the "1993 Standards" were released, highlighting that the focus of school library construction lay in providing rich resources. This standard provided a process framework for comprehensively monitoring the effectiveness of Australian primary and secondary school library resource centers and for developing and improving school library information services [5], opening the way for future learning and demonstrating how Australian school libraries could advance toward information services to achieve leadership and value. The subsequent revision, the "2001 Standards," is regarded as a comprehensive and forward-looking standard guide for Australian school library information services facing future learning. The "2005 Standards" responded to Australian educational reforms, serving both as a need to align with other professional association standards and as an important supplement to the "2001 Standards" text. "Teacher-librarians play a very important role in primary and secondary school libraries; they can help strengthen student capabilities" [7]. This standard clearly defines the responsibilities that excellent librarians in Australian primary and secondary school libraries should undertake and provides a benchmark for how to become a professionally excellent school librarian.

#### 3.2 From a Standard Focus Perspective

Examining the background and content overview of Australia's national school library standards reveals that the focus has shifted from early emphasis on quantification to emphasizing qualification, moving toward student-centered learning and focusing on student learning outcomes. Early standards emphasized minimum requirements for facilities, equipment, building conditions, and staffing, listing series of quantitative standards that were gradually adjusted according to circumstances. However, while revising these quantitative indicators, the emphasis gradually shifted to considering the core value requirements of school

libraries and media specialists, directly presenting these in national school library standards. Improving student learning outcomes became the core of the standards, with emphasis on cultivating students' information literacy and technological literacy, transforming previous static, object-focused standards into dynamic, people-focused standards, as shown in .

#### Comparison of Focus Areas in Australian School Library Standards

*Books and Beyond: Guidelines for Library Resource Facilities and Services (1979)*: - Quantitative development standard elements - Outcome-oriented focus

*Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Australian Schools (1993 & 2001)*: - Shifted to primarily qualitative indicators - Established information literacy indicator elements - Learning-based focus

*Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher-Librarians (2005)*: - Essential requirements for excellent teacher-librarians

### 3.3 From a Conceptual Highlight Perspective

The implementation of school library standards requires coordination among key stakeholders—including school administrators, teachers, and students—within the school context and beyond. Only through such collaboration can student learning outcomes be improved, learning-based approaches be focused on, and thinking horizons be expanded. Examining the background and processes related to Australian school library standards reveals that standard development integrated contemporary educational concepts, resonating with mainstream education at the time and aligning with the concepts of Australia's 2008 *Global Perspectives: A Framework for Global Education in Australian Schools* [8]. As P. Mitchell noted, implementing the Australian curriculum in the context of school libraries considers the priorities facing teacher-librarians and school leadership teams in ensuring successful library support, with learners and teachers selecting, organizing, and facilitating access to curriculum resources [9], which in turn drives Australia's national curriculum reform movement [10]. Furthermore, Australian school library standards pay close attention to information literacy concepts, adapting to educational reform needs by “providing effective teaching and learning strategies, relevant and appropriate resources, and integration of digital technology” [11], timely adjusting and providing complete standard specifications, demonstrating unique vision and foresight that truly reflects responsiveness to educational reform priorities and shows progress with the times.

### 3.4 From a Standard Implementation Perspective

Over 50 years of international research by K. Haycock [12] and K. Morrison et al. [13] have identified three major characteristics of effective school libraries: First, having a qualified school librarian who has received formal library science education and classroom teaching education, possessing professional knowledge

capable of fulfilling complex roles integrating instruction, reading and literacy cultivation, school library management, collaboration with teaching staff, and educational community engagement. Second, providing targeted, high-quality, and diverse collections (including print, multimedia, and digital collections) to support both formal and informal curriculum teaching, including personal planning and personal development courses. Third, developing detailed sustainable development policies and plans [14]. Australian school library standards have evolved from the “1979 Standards” focusing on external construction, to the “1993 Standards” focusing on internal construction, then to the “2001 Standards” revising internal construction standards, and finally to the recent “2005 Standards” focusing on implementer-librarian standards. This evolutionary trend reflects a transformation in Australia’s understanding of school library standard construction. The supplementary *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher-Librarians* fully demonstrates that Australia has deeply recognized that while perfect standard formulation is a prerequisite, the actual implementers—the librarians—are the real key and focal point. Only high-quality, high-level librarians can truly implement the concepts and requirements of school library standards.

## 4 Implications

### 4.1 Focus on Internal Issues in China’s School Library Standard Construction

“Standards are unified regulations for repetitive matters and concepts, based on the synthesis of science, technology, and practical experience, negotiated and agreed upon by relevant parties, approved by competent authorities, and released in specific forms as common guidelines and bases” [15]. School library standards are significant for library construction, development, guidance, and standardized services. Reviewing existing research on CNKI reveals only seven relevant studies, including “Discussion on Standardized Construction Standards for Primary and Secondary School Libraries (Rooms) in Guangdong Province” [16], “Research on Primary and Secondary School Library Construction Standards Across the Taiwan Strait” [17], “Comparative Analysis and Reflection on Primary and Secondary School Library Construction Standards in Mainland China and Taiwan” [18], “Three Departments Issue Opinions Requiring Strengthening of Primary and Secondary School Library Construction and Application Work in the New Era: Most Primary and Secondary Schools to Have Standard Libraries by 2020” [19], “Most Primary and Secondary Schools to Have Standard Libraries by 2020” [20], “Collection Literature Allocation Standards for Primary and Secondary School Libraries (Rooms) in Beijing” [21], and “Demonstration County (District) Standards for Primary and Secondary School Library (Room) Construction in Liaoning Province” [22]. These studies primarily focus on external construction standards for school libraries, showing a significant gap compared to Australian school library standards.

“Primary and secondary school libraries, as important conditions for serving

education, teaching, and educational scientific research, are important manifestations of basically achieving educational modernization, important contents of balanced and rational allocation of educational resources, and indispensable pathways for students and teachers to obtain information resources. They are important positions for implementing the fundamental task of cultivating morality and people and comprehensively deepening curriculum reform. To enable libraries to fully integrate with education and teaching, becoming high grounds for school information resources and centers for teacher and student wisdom, growth, and activities” [27]. The main challenge affecting the rapid development of primary and secondary school libraries is far from the lack of library hardware, but rather how to enhance multiple service functions and maximize value, making the formulation of systematic standards for school libraries urgent and necessary.

#### **4.2 Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration to Maximize School Library Functions**

Effective learners are not merely knowledgeable individuals; they are people who can find and use information as needed. Effective learners are those with information literacy. Cultivating students’ information literacy capabilities is precisely one of the seven key competencies that Australia’s national education reform focuses on developing in the new century [24]. Australian school library standards are consistent with the national curriculum reform design framework, which is highly worthy of study. This is not only a fundamental tool for empowering students but actually a basic survival skill. The “1993 Standards” and “2001 Standards” both focus on the core theme of “learning for the future,” making school libraries an important carrier of Australian educational reform and “the most powerful learning resource” for students [25]. “School libraries empowering learning has become a landscape in Australia” [26].

Currently, China’s new round of basic education reform is advancing to new heights and depths, with compulsory education and high school education officially entering the era of student core competencies. The cultivation of student core competencies cannot be separated from the school library as a carrier. School libraries need to consider how to act and how to better respond to challenges. As the state increasingly strengthens and improves the construction of basic facilities, personnel allocation, and book acquisition in primary and secondary school libraries, these libraries also need to further consider how to serve and contribute to the cultivation of student core competencies and the advancement of educational reform.

#### **4.3 Constructing a Competency Framework Standard for School Librarians in China**

The most critical condition for an effective school library program is having a qualified library professional. A school library without a teaching plan cannot achieve the proven impact of libraries on teaching and learning, which

depends on a qualified library professional [28]. This shows that librarians' competency levels have a very important impact on school libraries. Since the late 1990s, China has emphasized strengthening primary and secondary school library construction, successively releasing three guideline documents in 1991, 2003, and 2015. Upon careful examination, these texts provide only general and macro-level guidance on the qualifications, competencies, and requirements for school librarians, significantly lagging behind the Australian teacher-librarian standards.

On August 29, 1991, the State Education Commission issued the *Regulations for Primary and Secondary School Libraries (Rooms)*, stipulating that library directors should be familiar with library professional knowledge and staff should have at least secondary education and basic library professional skills. Educational administrative departments at all levels were required to implement business training plans and measures for library staff, with provincial and municipal teacher training institutions primarily responsible for training primary and secondary school library staff [29].

On March 25, 2003, the Ministry of Education issued the *Regulations for Primary and Secondary School Libraries (Rooms) (Revised)* (No. 5 [2003] of the Ministry of Education), proposing that library directors should have library professional knowledge. Secondary school library staff should have college-level education or above, while primary school library staff should have secondary specialized school (including high school) education or above, along with basic library professional skills and computer operation skills. Libraries should have full-time management personnel, and library professionals should implement a professional technical position appointment system [30].

On May 20, 2015, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, and State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television jointly issued the *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction and Application of Primary and Secondary School Libraries in the New Era* (No. 2 [2015] of the Ministry of Education), Article 10 on strengthening team building stated: "Gradually build a management team composed of full-time (part-time) personnel and volunteers. Where conditions permit, full-time management personnel should be allocated. Explore the establishment of professional technical positions for library and information services in primary and secondary school libraries, with staffing reasonably determined within the school's total staff establishment. Establish and improve qualification access, position appointment, and regular assessment systems. Continuously increase the proportion of library professionals. Attract outstanding talents to join the library management team through various means. Provide library business training for part-time teachers engaged in library work, and give library management personnel equal opportunities with teachers in terms of position (title) evaluation, promotion, merit evaluation, and benefits" [23].

Observing these three Chinese standard texts, they do not provide detailed requirements on what professional competency system school librarians need, nor

do they specify how excellent school librarians should design teaching and learning centered on the library and what information literacy services they should provide to promote student learning, thereby enhancing both the library's position in school education and librarians' own professional development levels.

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

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