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## **Postprint: A Study on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Peer Education Services in Chinese University Libraries**

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### **Abstract**

[Purpose/Significance] This study investigates the current status and existing problems of peer education services in domestic university libraries, and proposes corresponding development strategies based on these issues, aiming to expand the channels through which university libraries serve student groups and promote service innovation. [Method/Process] Through a combination of website surveys of 42 first-class university libraries and questionnaire surveys of 254 university libraries across 29 provinces and municipalities, this study investigates and analyzes the current status of peer education services in domestic university libraries. [Results/Conclusion] Currently, peer education services in domestic university libraries are underdeveloped in various aspects and remain at a preliminary stage of development. To ensure the development of peer education, it is essential to fully recognize the importance of peer education conceptually, emphasize the recruitment and training of peer mentors, provide human and financial support from libraries, strengthen cooperation with other peer education programs on campus, establish effective evaluation mechanisms, and fully leverage the advantages of peer mentors in the new media environment.

### **Full Text**

#### **Preamble**

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**Research on the Current Status and Development Strategies of Peer Education Services in Domestic University Libraries**

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## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** This study investigates the current status and existing problems of peer education services in domestic university libraries, proposing corresponding development strategies to expand service channels for student populations and promote service innovation.

**[Method/Process]** The investigation employed two complementary methods: website surveys of 42 first-class university libraries and questionnaire surveys of 254 university libraries across 29 provinces and municipalities.

**[Result/Conclusion]** The findings indicate that peer education services in domestic university libraries remain immature across all dimensions, currently in a primary stage of development. To ensure healthy development of peer education, libraries must fully recognize its importance ideologically, emphasize peer mentor recruitment and training, provide human and financial support, strengthen collaboration with other campus peer education initiatives, establish effective evaluation mechanisms, and leverage peer mentors' advantages in new media environments.

**Keywords:** university library, peer education, peer mentor, primary stage

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## Introduction

In 1999, the United Nations Population Fund introduced the concept of peer education to Renmin University of China, focusing on improving adolescent reproductive health. In September 2003, Marie Stopes International China (MSIC) collaborated with eight domestic universities, including Tsinghua University, to implement peer education models for college student sexual health education. Peer education, also known as peer-to-peer education, refers to a process where individuals of similar age, knowledge background, and interests utilize mutual influence to disseminate knowledge and ideas, share experiences, and impart skills, achieving educational goals through resonance, internalization, and subtle influence.

Subsequent domestic research on peer education primarily focused on sexual health, HIV/AIDS prevention, and mental health. Beginning in 2007, universities gradually applied peer education to freshman orientation, career planning, English writing instruction, and ideological and political education. For instance, Capital Normal University selected outstanding doctoral and master's students with strong communication skills and willingness to help others as peer mentors, launching its graduate student peer mentor program. In 2015, Nankai University initiated the "Gongneng" Peer Mentor Program, elevating its student part-time counselor positions to "Gongneng" peer mentors to leverage mutual assistance and positive influence among peers.

As integral components of universities, libraries gradually recognized the impor-

tance of peer education in service innovation, particularly in serving student populations. Beginning in 2009, libraries progressively applied peer education concepts across various service domains, capitalizing on peer mentors' advantages of being similar in age, knowledge background, and interests to students, thereby facilitating mutual influence and self-education capabilities. After targeted training by librarians, peer mentors proactively disseminate library knowledge and skills to fellow students, thereby achieving the educational goals of university libraries as second classrooms. However, with only eight years of development since its inception, peer education in libraries lacks experience in multiple areas, including institutional prioritization, mentor recruitment and training, and activity organization. This study therefore proposes targeted development strategies based on survey findings to promote peer education development.

## 2. Current Status of Peer Education Services in Domestic University Libraries

To comprehensively understand the development status of peer education services in domestic university libraries, this study employed both website surveys and questionnaire analyses, using these two methods complementarily. Website surveys of “double first-class” university libraries are representative in terms of geographic distribution, service philosophy, and service levels, though not all peer education services are reflected on websites. Questionnaire surveys, while geographically limited (focusing primarily on the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region), provide deeper insights into actual implementation levels, compensating for website survey limitations.

### 2.1 Website Survey of Domestic University Library Peer Education Services

This study surveyed the websites of 42 domestic “double first-class” university libraries between October and November 2017. The survey focused on whether libraries mentioned peer education services, whether they offered peer education-natured services, and which peer education models they employed. The results are shown in .

\*\* Survey of Peer Education Services on Websites of Domestic “Double First-Class” University Libraries\*\*

The website survey revealed that none of the 42 “double first-class” university library websites explicitly mentioned peer/peer-to-peer education services. Employed students were primarily work-study students and volunteers, some called assistants. Library websites clearly defined student staff responsibilities, which mainly involved basic daily operations. For example, Peking University Library student assistants were responsible for daily duties including book circulation, shelving, public equipment management, and reader consultation.

Although some libraries did not use the term “peer education,” the work per-

formed by employed students already possessed peer education characteristics. The survey identified 17 libraries offering services with peer education qualities. For instance, Tsinghua University Library categorized recruited students into two types: work-study students assisting librarians with duties such as shelving, data processing, and reader reception; and student consultants organized through the Library Student Advisory Committee (“Tuxuehui”). The committee’s responsibilities—feedback collection, consultation, resource promotion, and activity organization—clearly positioned student advisors as peer mentors delivering peer education services.

While the other 16 libraries did not distinguish responsibilities as explicitly as Tsinghua, work-study students performed both basic tasks and peer education-natured work. For example, Beijing Normal University Library established 49 student assistant positions, with roles such as WeChat design/editing, event planning, and video production clearly exhibiting peer promotion characteristics. The fundamental difference between peer education services and basic work-study tasks lies in their purpose: the former aims to improve student learning capabilities through trained peer mentors, while the latter primarily reduces staff workload.

The survey showed that among the 17 libraries, eight offered peer consultation services, where trained peer mentors provided consultation at service desks, reducing student anxiety compared to interactions with librarians. Peer promotion services were most common, with 14 libraries organizing activities to promote library resources and services, leveraging peer mentors’ new media skills and understanding of student psychology. Only Shanghai Jiao Tong University Library’s website mentioned peer training services, where mentors participated in information literacy instruction, using more relatable language and similar experiences to enhance training effectiveness. No libraries offered peer learning services, where mentors would embed library skills into peers’ academic learning—the fundamental goal of peer education.

## 2.2 Questionnaire Survey of Domestic University Library Peer Education Services

The questionnaire was distributed via Wenjuanxing platform through WeChat, QQ, and web links. The 20-question survey covered respondents’ basic information, current student employment status, and peer education implementation. Of 384 collected responses, 11 from public library staff were excluded, leaving 373 valid responses from 254 university libraries across 29 provinces and municipalities.

**2.2.1 Sample Distribution** The 373 valid responses came from library staff at 254 universities across 29 provinces, with approximately 50% from Tianjin, Beijing, and Hebei. Among the 254 libraries, 237 were regular higher education institutions (including 14 “double first-class” universities), five were independent colleges, and 12 were vocational colleges.

**2.2.2 Peer Education Implementation Status** Of the 373 valid responses, 40 indicated their libraries did not employ students, while 333 did. Among those employing students, only 48 respondents (14% of total valid responses) confirmed their libraries conducted peer education/peer-to-peer education services, while 325 (86%) reported no such services.

**2.2.3 Peer Education Models** The questionnaire offered five model options: peer consultation, peer promotion, peer training, peer learning, and other. Results showed domestic university libraries primarily employed peer promotion and peer training, followed by peer consultation, with peer learning being the least implemented. No respondents selected “other,” indicating these four models constitute the current landscape, as shown in [Figure 1: see original paper].

[Figure 1: see original paper] **Library Peer Education Service Models**

**2.2.4 Peer Education Effectiveness** Among the 48 libraries implementing peer education services, satisfaction levels were: very satisfied (7 respondents, 15%), satisfied (18, 37%), average (20, 42%), dissatisfied (3, 6%), and very dissatisfied (0, 0%). Satisfied and very satisfied responses totaled 52%, while 42% rated effectiveness as average.

**2.2.5 Challenges in Peer Education Implementation** Survey results identified primary challenges as peer mentors’ limited work hours (64.58%) and lower-than-expected student participation (64.58%), followed by insufficient funding (41.67%) and extensive training time required from librarians (33.33%). Library leadership and full-staff support were also deemed crucial, as shown in .

\*\* Primary Challenges in University Library Peer Education Implementation\*\*

### 2.3 Analysis of Current Peer Education Service Status

Comprehensive analysis of website surveys and questionnaire results reveals that although domestic university libraries began employing students in library operations before the 1980s, basic tasks like shelving, circulation, and data entry remain dominant. While some libraries have utilized students for resource promotion and simple consultation—exhibiting peer promotion and consultation characteristics—the overall implementation rate remains low. Only 31 of 254 surveyed libraries reported peer education services, and just 17 of 42 “double first-class” university libraries offered peer education-natured services. Moreover, no library websites explicitly mentioned peer education, indicating that domestic university library peer education services remain in a primary development stage.

Among implementing libraries, peer promotion is most common due to its ease of implementation and flexibility. Peer training primarily focuses on freshman orientation and lectures, with less involvement in information literacy courses.

Peer consultation mainly handles simple inquiries, with professional consultation rarely implemented. Peer learning, requiring high-level library skills and subject expertise along with extensive training, remains in the exploratory phase.

### **3. Development Strategies for Domestic University Library Peer Education Services**

Domestic university library peer education services face immature development across all aspects, primarily due to: (1) insufficient recognition of peer education importance among library leadership and staff, resulting in inadequate human and financial investment; (2) peer education actually increasing rather than reducing staff workload, requiring extensive mentor training and real-time guidance; (3) lack of organizational experience leading to lower-than-expected student participation; and (4) limitations such as mentors' time constraints and high turnover, particularly in sustained participation. Since California State University Library first applied peer education theory to reference services in 1975, foreign university libraries have developed mature theoretical and practical frameworks in peer consultation, promotion, training, and learning, accumulating rich experience in mentor recruitment, training, implementation methods, and evaluation. Domestic libraries can draw from these experiences while adapting to local contexts.

#### **3.1 Fully Recognizing the Importance of Peer Education**

The slow development of peer education in domestic university libraries stems significantly from insufficient recognition of its importance. Although some libraries have involved student ambassadors in resource promotion and freshman orientation after recognizing students' greater influence on peers compared to librarians, they have not extended this influence across all library operations. As a major library user group, students share similar ages and educational backgrounds, face common library usage challenges, and possess initiative for mutual assistance and self-education. Libraries should leverage peer mentors' credibility and acceptability among students to increase interest, participation rates, and the efficiency of promotion, consultation, training, and learning.

#### **3.2 Peer Mentor Recruitment and Training**

As peer education implementers, libraries must prioritize mentor recruitment and provide continuous training.

**3.2.1 Peer Mentor Recruitment** Current domestic recruitment requirements emphasize coordination, communication, organizational skills, strong work ethic, academic excellence (e.g., Beijing Normal University Zhuhai Campus requires a 3.0+ GPA), and time commitment (e.g., Nankai University's School of Life Sciences requires at least one semester of service). Unlike work-study recruitment, which prioritizes responsibility and attitude

(96.7% of librarians), peer mentor recruitment emphasizes communication and organizational abilities due to the need for peer influence. Since the four peer education models represent a progressive process, continuity requirements are higher than for work-study positions. Some libraries also require research capabilities, particularly for professional consultation and peer learning models.

**3.2.2 Peer Mentor Training** Training content should encompass not only library resources and information retrieval skills but also user service principles, communication skills, and public speaking abilities due to the face-to-face service nature. Training formats include lectures, scenario-based simulations, group discussions, and practical coaching. Training should progress from foundational knowledge to in-depth understanding of core resources, retrieval strategies, and methods, particularly for mentors providing professional consultation, information literacy instruction, and peer learning services. Training should combine initial and end-of-semester intensive sessions with weekly feedback sessions and on-the-job coaching.

### **3.3 Human and Financial Support and Enhanced Collaboration**

Peer education requires substantial librarian time and effort, from recruitment and training to supervision. Gettysburg College Library's 2016 program employed 10 peer mentors supervised by five librarians (a 1:2 ratio), while St. Olaf College Library's program grew from one to seven mentors managed by a dedicated R&I librarian. The University of Saskatchewan Library initially had three librarians managing mentors before creating a dedicated position. These examples demonstrate that peer education requires dedicated staff rather than reducing workload. The survey identified insufficient funding as a major challenge (41.67%), as promotional materials, event organization, and material incentives require financial support.

Domestic university libraries should collaborate with existing campus peer education programs. For example, Capital Normal University Library's peer education program emerged from a successful graduate school initiative, leveraging its promotional platform. The University of Saskatchewan Library's recruitment and basic training are centrally arranged, with implementation involving collaboration with other peer mentor groups like the Writing Center. Libraries can also partner with schools and departments that have established peer education programs, embedding library peer learning into professional academic activities.

### **3.4 Establishing Effective Evaluation Mechanisms**

The foundation of university library peer education lies in attracting students to utilize library resources and services, enhancing participation and service efficiency. Therefore, effective evaluation mechanisms are essential. Evaluation should encompass three perspectives: peer mentors, librarians, and student recipients, using combined methods of questionnaires, interviews, and experiments.

Peer mentors should write service summaries and self-evaluate effectiveness, identifying problems for improvement. End-of-semester or project-phase interviews should explore motivations, goal achievement, capability development, and willingness to continue participation. For example, Taipei Medical University Library conducted semi-structured interviews with six graduate peer mentors providing consultation services. Librarians should continuously monitor service effectiveness and explore suitable models. Student recipients should be evaluated longitudinally across different implementation stages and comparatively between peer mentors and librarians.

### **3.5 Leveraging Peer Mentors' Advantages in New Media Environments**

A key theoretical basis for peer education is “homophily”—people’s greater acceptance of knowledge and experiences from similar peers. In new media environments, Weibo and WeChat marketing have become important library promotion tools, yet official accounts often lack student engagement. For instance, Beijing Film Academy Library’s WeChat official account has only approximately 20% student follower penetration.

Peer mentors possess superior advantages in this context. As students themselves, they belong to various WeChat groups (class, interest, and club groups), enabling them to disseminate library information to peers with unprecedented speed and breadth through personal networks. Students are more receptive to information shared by peer mentors than official accounts. Additionally, peer mentors are more adept at using new technologies like micro-video editing, emojis, and animation effects, allowing libraries to present promotional content in more engaging and diverse formats.

## **Conclusion**

Both website surveys of 42 top-tier university libraries and questionnaires of 254 university libraries demonstrate that domestic university library peer education services are in a primary development stage regarding mentor recruitment, training, service models, and effectiveness. While measures such as ideological recognition, improved recruitment/training, human/financial support, collaboration, evaluation mechanisms, and new media advantages can facilitate development, implementation requires long-term sustainable planning. This demands adequate mentor time commitment and substantial librarian investment in training and multi-method evaluation with timely problem-solving—a continuous learning and improvement process. Long-term development requires both learning from foreign experiences and constructing a comprehensive domestic university library peer education service system to ensure healthy, sustainable growth.

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## Investigation and Development Strategy of Peer Education Service of Domestic Academic Libraries

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**Abstract:** [Purpose/significance] This paper investigates the current situation and existing problems of peer education service of domestic academic libraries, and puts forward corresponding development strategies so as to expand the channels of university libraries to serve the students and promote service innovation. [Method/process] This paper investigates the status of peer education service of domestic academic libraries through website survey of 42 first-class university libraries and questionnaire investigation of 254 libraries from 29 provinces and cities. [Result/conclusion] The results show that at present, the peer education service of domestic academic libraries is not mature in all aspects and is in the primary stage of development. To guarantee the development of peer education, domestic academic libraries should pay attention to the importance of peer education, the recruitment and training of peer mentors, manpower and financial support, and further cooperation with the other peer mentor projects to establish effective evaluation mechanism and take advantage of peer mentors under the new media environment.

**Keywords:** academic library, peer education, peer mentor, primary stage

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### **Book Announcement**

#### **Network Users and Network Information Services**

Edited by Professor Chu Jingli, this book was officially published by Ocean Press in March 2018.

Grounded in the evolving information environment and focusing on the characteristics and behaviors of network users, this work examines the transformation strategies for library and information services from the perspective of current trends and developments in the field. It systematically addresses key issues that library and information services must resolve in digital and network environments, summarizing research findings and application progress in network information services both domestically and internationally. The content is comprehensive, well-documented, and integrates theory with practice, aiming to help library and information institutions better meet new demands for network information services and enhance professionals' service capabilities.

This book can serve as a textbook for graduate students in library and information science and as an important reference for researchers and practitioners in the field.

**Title:** Network Users and Network Information Services

**ISBN:** 9787502798994

**Publisher:** Ocean Press

**Editor:** Chu Jingli

**Price:** ¥52.00

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

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