

Research on the Content and Current Status of Data Promotion in University Libraries in the Big Data Environment: A Case Study of Library Annual Data Bills (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] In the context of big data, data promotion through annual data reports is gaining increasing recognition and adoption among university libraries. However, significant variations exist in the content, models, and promotion effectiveness of annual data reports across different institutions. This study therefore investigates and examines the promotion content and current status of annual data reports in domestic university libraries.

[Method/Process] Through web-based investigation, 21 university libraries were selected based on criteria of structural integrity and content richness of their 2017 data reports, while concurrently conducting retrospective tracking of each library's 2016 annual data reports. The study explores the current status and development of content, promotion models, and service models of annual data reports in university libraries, and proposes recommendations for future development.

[Results/Conclusion] Currently, there is no unified and long-term effective model for the promotion of annual data reports in university libraries, with problems including poor temporal sustainability, incomplete content value, and lack of cultural inheritance and extension functions and effects. Recommendations are proposed for improvement and enhancement from the perspectives of the value of data promotion content and sustainability of activities, marketing brand building, and library service optimization strategies based on user profiling.

Full Text

Research on the Content and Current Status of Data Marketing in University Libraries Under the Big Data Environment: A Case Study of Library Annual Data Bills

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] In the big data environment, data marketing through annual data bills has gained increasing recognition and adoption among university libraries. However, significant variations exist in the content, format, and effectiveness of these annual data bills across different institutions. This study investigates and examines the current status and promotional content of annual data bills in domestic university libraries. **[Method/Process]** Through web-based research, 21 university libraries were selected based on the structural completeness and content richness of their 2017 data bills, with retrospective tracking of each library's 2016 annual data bill. The study explores the current state and development of content, promotion models, and service models of university library annual data bills, and proposes recommendations for improvement. **[Result/Conclusion]** Currently, there is no unified and long-term model for promoting university library annual data bills, with problems including poor temporal continuity, incomplete content value, and lack of cultural inheritance and extension functions and effects. Recommendations include improving the value of data marketing content and the sustainability of activities, constructing marketing brands, and developing library service optimization strategies based on user profiles.

Introduction

As hubs for resources and data, university libraries possess large volumes of diverse and structurally complex data groups, including business data, reader data, resource data, and service data. The maturation of big data, data mining, and processing technologies, combined with the development and widespread application of new media, provides university libraries with more modes and channels for revealing, promoting, innovating, and marketing their big data. Library data marketing refers to the use of data analysis techniques and online promotion methods to present library big data to readers in vivid and specific forms, achieving the promotion of library services and resources.

Since early 2013, when Shanghai Library launched “My Reading 2012” and released Shanghai’s “2012 Reading Report” covering annual reading rankings and reader bills through social media platforms like WeChat and Weibo, the model of using annual reading bills to provide individual readers with annual reading statistics has been increasingly recognized and adopted by university

libraries. With the convenience and extensive use of social media, particularly the development of university library WeChat official accounts and their improved functionality, data marketing based on annual data bills has become an effective means for libraries to promote services, enhance user stickiness, and improve social reputation.

Currently, domestic university library data marketing primarily follows two models: one provides university reading data reports for graduates, a promotion project already implemented by most libraries with relatively mature promotional methods and content. For example, Xiamen University Library's "Picture · Time" activity for graduates, launched in 2013, provides all data related to the library during their university years, including borrowing records and library visit frequency. This activity has continued to this day and won second place in the 13th IFLA BibLibre International Library Marketing Award. The other model is the library annual data bill, which refers to series data generated from interactions between the library and readers within a calendar year. The annual data bill is formed by processing and analyzing this data into vivid and specific reading reports and data rankings. Chen Junjie et al. statistically analyzed the 2014 annual data bills of six university libraries including Peking University, proposing that using infographics to display library annual data reports and promoting them through new media platforms is an effective means for library service promotion [2]. Gu Shihui et al. researched the release content and platforms of 2016 annual data bills from 32 university libraries and provided targeted development recommendations [3].

As the annual data bill promotion model has gained widespread recognition, an increasing number of university libraries have joined this marketing trend. However, the content, release format, audience reach, promotional effectiveness, and duration of these annual data bills vary significantly across institutions. This study conducted web-based research, selecting 21 university libraries' 2017 annual data bills based on structural completeness and content richness as criteria, while simultaneously conducting retrospective tracking of each library's 2016 annual data bill. The study examines the current status and development of content, promotion models, and service models of university library annual data bills and proposes recommendations for improvement.

2. Survey Method and Data Statistics

2.1 Survey Method and Process

University library annual data bills are generally released through WeChat official accounts and Weibo, concentrated around the end of each year and the beginning of the next. This study conducted web-based surveys of WeChat push content from domestic university library official accounts between December 1, 2017, and January 31, 2018, to select and identify target institutions. Selection criteria included the structural completeness of the annual data bill, thematic richness, and promotional effectiveness. After content analysis and screening,

21 representative university libraries were selected as research subjects [4-24]. Further retrospective investigations were conducted on the corresponding data bill promotion on Weibo and the release of 2016 annual library data bills for these 21 libraries. Finally, statistical analysis was performed on the content of 2016 and 2017 annual data bills from each library.

2.2 Survey Data Statistics

An overview of the 2017 annual data bill releases from the 21 selected university libraries is presented in Table 1, including statistics on data report names, release dates, release channels, formats, and influence. Through content interpretation, data analysis, and classification, relatively high-coverage content items were listed and statistically analyzed (see Table 2). Influence refers to the impact on readers and dissemination effectiveness of the annual data bill. Zheng Liyong et al. proposed that metrics such as reading rate and forwarding rate can evaluate media influence [25], while Gu Shunli [26] demonstrated that reading, liking, and forwarding counts can serve as dissemination indicators to evaluate the influence of library WeChat official accounts. Fu Yan [27] proved in a study of library Weibo influence that forwarding volume directly affects the degree of interaction, with better interaction indicating greater account influence. Based on these social media influence evaluation indicators, this study selected reading count, liking count, and forwarding count for quantitative research on influence.

Retrospective tracking of the same institutions' 2016 annual data bills revealed:

Three university libraries (Shanghai University, Central University of Finance and Economics, and Hubei University) had not released 2016 annual data bills;

Sichuan University Library released a personal data statement requiring individual reader login; Network access links for 2016 annual data bills from Fudan University and Zhejiang Gongshang University Libraries were invalid and could not be accessed; Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University Library only released book borrowing rankings and reader borrowing volume rankings in 2016, without forming a structured data report.

3. Survey Results Analysis

3.1 Overview of Annual Data Bill Releases

3.1.1 Naming of Data Bills In the online social environment, the naming of new media graphics is an important factor in attracting readers. Although university libraries have stable reader groups, research has shown that the choice of wording in push content titles for library WeChat official accounts can cause significant differences in readership for the same content [28]. The naming of 2017 annual data bills primarily falls into three categories: Networked vocabulary naming: 12 libraries chose this approach, such as Shenyang Normal University Library's "When the Library Meets Buddhist Readers—2017 Reading Data Report," Sichuan University Library's "2017 Annual Reading Statement|Face-Slapping or Face-Saving, You'll Only Know After Seeing the Bill!" and Central

China Normal University Library’s “Graphic|Central China Normal University 2016-2017 Academic Year Reading Report Released, Mountain Dwellers Love These Books.” Terms like “big roundup” from Hubei University Library and “freshly released” from Shanghai University Library also belong to networked vocabulary. Emotional series naming: Three libraries used this approach, including Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics Library’s “Data Tells—The Library Accompanied You Through 2017,” Central University of Finance and Economics Library’s “[Bill] Thank You for Being There Through 2017,” and Renmin University of China Library’s “Renmin Library, Walking Through 2017 with You.” Simple declarative naming: This simple and uniform format generally follows the pattern “University Library Name + 2017 Data Bill Release,” such as “Shaanxi Normal University Library 2017 Reading Report,” “Wuhan University Library 2017 Annual Data Release,” and “Fudan University Library 2017 Annual Statement.” All three naming types achieved certain readership levels, with minimal performance differences, indicating that while naming approaches somewhat influence promotional effectiveness, they are not the most critical factor.

3.1.2 Release Channels, Formats, and Influence Annual data bills are primarily released in graphic-editing or multimedia formats. Among the surveyed subjects, 66.7% chose graphic-editing formats. The main difference is that graphic-editing uses “images + text” for planar data display, while multimedia formats use H5 and other tools for automatic playback or micro-video 立体 presentations. Reading, liking, and forwarding counts on WeChat and Weibo can serve as quantitative indicators reflecting the influence of push content [29]. The highest WeChat readership was Sichuan University Library’s 13,349 views, followed by Xiamen University Library’s 5,593 views. The lowest was Hebei Normal University Library with 672 views. Only three libraries (Hebei Normal University, Northwestern Polytechnical University, and Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University) had fewer than 1,000 views; three libraries had 1,000-2,000 views, while the remaining 15 libraries achieved relatively high readership for their 2017 annual data bills, indicating good promotional effectiveness. Although follower counts vary across libraries, readership still reflects influence differences. For example, Hebei Normal University Library had 9,153 WeChat followers on the release day but only 672 views (7.3%), indicating low influence and poor promotional effectiveness among readers.

Different social media platforms yield varying marketing influence due to differences in promotion methods and online audiences. This study found that WeChat and Weibo, as primary release channels for library data bills, show significant influence differences. All 21 libraries chose WeChat as the primary release channel for their 2017 annual data bills, with only Xiamen University, Shenyang Normal University, Sichuan University, and Hebei Normal University Libraries conducting secondary promotion via official Weibo, though with poor influence far below WeChat. Further investigation revealed that the Weibo operation status of the 21 libraries lagged far behind WeChat, with some libraries

having long intervals between updates and some even ceasing updates entirely. Therefore, besides differences in message push modes, network audiences, and inherent influence across social media platforms, libraries' Weibo operation status, service investment, and response speed are also important factors affecting the influence of annual data bill promotion on Weibo.

3.2 Content of Annual Data Bills

3.2.1 Library Overview Library overview includes macro-level data such as total opening days, resource acquisition volume, and total visitor numbers. In the 2017 annual data bills, Beijing Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University, and Fudan University Libraries provided the most complete library overview data, covering all data items. New resource volume, total book borrowing volume, and total visitor numbers were the most frequently revealed data points, with over half of libraries also summarizing and revealing annual WeChat/Weibo reply, interaction, and follower growth statistics. After the mature application of convenient retrieval channels like mobile libraries and WeChat-embedded OPAC, library homepage visit volume has become easily overlooked data. However, nine institutions including Beijing Normal University and Shanghai University Libraries statistically revealed this data. Subsequent retrospective tracking found that homepage visit volumes increased year-over-year at all nine libraries, indicating that library homepage construction remains essential.

3.2.2 Space and Equipment Library space and equipment data primarily come from seat and study room management system statistics and self-service printing equipment usage data. Over half of libraries released annual data on library spaces and equipment in both 2016 and 2017 bills. Beijing Normal University, Xiamen University, and Zhejiang University Libraries supplemented and improved their 2017 data based on 2016, while Northwestern Polytechnical University and Shenyang Normal University maintained unchanged data indicators, only publishing study room reservation and usage data.

Incomplete space and equipment data publication mainly results from: Some libraries have not introduced seat and study room reservation systems, preventing space usage statistics; Some libraries have multiple campuses with cross-departmental data that cannot be unified; Some libraries do not provide self-service printing services or have suspended them. For example, Hebei Normal University Library suspended printing services in 2017, resulting in missing data in its 2017 annual data bill.

3.2.3 Cultural Extension and Reader Services Cultural extension and reader services include training lectures, cultural exhibitions, interlibrary loan, and document delivery data. These data directly reflect the depth and breadth of a library's humanistic construction and subject services. Different libraries vary in expression forms and content, leading to significant differences in pre-

sentation forms and degrees across annual data reports. Training lecture data was the most revealed item. Seven libraries including Jiangxi Science and Technology Normal University did not release cultural extension and reader services data in their 2017 annual data bills, with Beijing Technology and Business University, Hebei Normal University, and Central China Normal University Libraries also lacking this data in their 2016 bills. Most libraries added or adjusted items based on their 2016 data structure, with Xiamen University Library having the most comprehensive data release, followed by Beijing Normal University Library.

Cultural extension and reader services data also reveal current problems: First, most libraries select training lectures as the primary means of knowledge dissemination and reader services, neglecting richer cultural extension activities that could be conducted through multimedia channels. University libraries should attempt and emphasize theme-based movies or exhibitions for cultural extension and reader services. Second, only a minority of libraries have developed inter-library loan services, mainly due to the absence of regional library consortium book lending and collection sharing systems.

3.2.4 Reader and Library Resource Utilization Rankings Reader and library resource utilization rankings are important components of annual data bills, with some libraries' bills containing only these rankings. Reader type rankings refer to borrowing volume rankings by grade, college, and education level; book category rankings refer to borrowing volume rankings by Chinese Library Classification or by categories like science/technology, humanities, and fiction.

These rankings provide specific revelations of reader behavior and collection utilization, enabling direct understanding of resource needs and preferences across different reader groups during data interpretation and analysis. In the 2017 survey sample, reader borrowing volume and book borrowing frequency were the most revealed data items (86% and 81% respectively), with seven libraries revealing reserved book ranking data. The overall ranking of data items by revelation rate was: reader borrowing volume > book borrowing frequency > reader type > library visit frequency = book category > database visit frequency > reserved book ranking. Comparative analysis of 2016 and 2017 annual data bills revealed that five libraries including Xiamen University and Beijing Normal University reduced reader and library resource utilization ranking data in their 2017 bills, with Shenyang Normal University Library directly omitting this section, indicating that annual data bill content is not fixed across years.

3.2.5 Niche Data Niche data refers to data presented by only a few libraries and not widely revealed. In this survey, niche data falls into three categories: Fudan University Library organized and screened annual WeChat reader message content and interaction quantities, posting fresh and lively personalized messages. This data represents not only an annual summary of library-reader

interaction work but also provides a stage for contemporary readers to express their individuality. Compared to database visit rankings, Beijing Technology and Business University and Xiamen University Libraries statistically ranked popular e-journal visits across all databases, providing deeper and more specific revelations of reader behavior. Exposure data, such as Northwestern Polytechnical University Library's exposure of total non-visitors by department in 2017 and Hubei University Library's exposure of total lost books and number of readers with overdue books in 2017. Although this is exposure data, it does not involve personal privacy information. Exposure data is rare in annual data bills but can attract reader attention and serve as a warning, making it worth selective revelation.

4. Recommendations

Currently, university library data bill promotion lacks a unified and long-term model, with uneven promotional effectiveness. First, temporally, few libraries release annual data bills as a fixed column every year, resulting in poor activity continuity. Second, annual data bills show homogeneity, with content construction primarily relying on reader and resource rankings plus limited characteristic data. Simple data listing leads to incomplete content value and lack of cultural inheritance and extension functions. Finally, libraries have unclear positioning regarding the purpose of annual data bill promotion. The release should not only promote data and services but also enable timely optimization and updating of library services based on reader behaviors and changes reflected in the annual data. How to use data promotion models and influence to provide more support for university library service innovation, promotion, updating, and cultural/knowledge inheritance and dissemination is the ultimate goal of library data marketing. Based on these issues, this study proposes the following recommendations.

4.1 Data Marketing Content Value and Activity Sustainability

The value of data marketing content directly influences marketing effectiveness, cultural extension capability, and reader impact. Different libraries have varying promotional focuses for their annual data bills. For example, Northwestern Polytechnical University Library emphasizes reader information interpretation, while Zhejiang University Library focuses on collection utilization ranking data. Some libraries only release simple data like reader borrowing rankings. Data richness and interpretability are important factors affecting content value. Short data bill structure development time and incomplete cross-departmental statistics can cause missing or incomplete data. Therefore, data marketing content requires multi-party, multi-departmental collaboration with planned, structured organization to ensure value, continuously enrich data content, and enhance marketing effectiveness. Xiamen University Library has begun exploring cooperation with relevant university departments, adding campus card consumption records to its "Picture · Time" graduate reading report to expand data content.

Library annual data marketing is not only an annual work summary report but also, through reader-friendly presentation forms and clear data, helps readers better understand library resources and services, broadens interaction channels with readers during data interpretation, and improves readers' reading and information literacy. Therefore, the temporal continuity of library data marketing activities is particularly important.

4.2 Construction of Library Marketing Brands

A library brand refers to the library image displayed through names, terms, marks, symbols, patterns, or their combinations, which have gained reader recognition for the library's unique resources, services, and cultural activities [30]. A UK survey [31] demonstrated that library branding and marketing can enhance library image, attract readers, and strengthen librarians' work identity.

Library brand construction is still in its early stages, with most libraries lacking awareness of creating corresponding marketing brands, except for a few that have begun brand building practice. Xiamen University Library has consistently used annual data bills since 2014: "Picture · 2013: You and Me," "Picture · 2014: You and Me, Together," "Picture · 2015: You and Me," "Picture · 2016: You and Me," and "LibraryGo!" Beijing Normal University Library's data bill promotion began in 2016 with "Muduo Graphic Memory · 2015," "Muduo Graphic Memory · 2016," and "2017 Library Big Data|Muduo Graphic Memory · 2017." Both Xiamen University Library's "Picture ·" and Beijing Normal University Library's "Muduo Graphic Memory" have formed library marketing brands with certain cultural influence and recognizability.

Library brand construction should first inherit library service models and content, second inherit cultural and knowledge brands, and finally achieve unity and integration with the library's unique cultural philosophy. Both libraries have conducted good brand building practices: First, data promotion content and methods remain consistent, corresponding with graduate data promotion activities (e.g., Xiamen University's "Picture · Time" and Beijing Normal University's "Muduo Memory" integrate with the data promotion activity brands). Second, they achieve cultural inheritance, such as Beijing Normal University Library's "Muduo Graphic Memory" and "Muduo Memory" echoing the university emblem's "Muduo" symbol and the library's "Muduo Search" system, inheriting and integrating the university's cultural philosophy, historical civilization, and library spirit.

4.3 Library Service Optimization Strategy Based on User Profiles

The purpose of library data marketing is to market and promote library resources and services, but more importantly, to explore how to discover readers' potential needs through data content. User profile-based library service optimization strategies can better utilize library data to discover and interpret readers, thereby improving library services. User profiles are target user models

describing user needs and preferences based on real data, enabling inference of real and potential needs for precise services [32].

University libraries have stable reader groups, and annual data bill promotion activities lay the data foundation for constructing reader user profiles. User profile models can build individual profiles for different library user groups and typical group profiles, reflecting readers' direct or potential needs. Individual profiles can directly provide personalized resources, retrieval, and push services to readers, while typical group profiles can promote improvement and enhancement of the overall library service system. User profiles change over time and with reader groups, so user profiles based on annual data facilitate tracking of timely reader needs and synchronous optimization and updating of library service strategies.

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Author Contributions

Chang Yingcong: Responsible for overall research framework design, initial manuscript writing and revision.

Lu Cheng: Responsible for data collection and statistics.

Abstract: [Purpose/significance] The maturity of big data and data mining processing technology, and the development and application of new media give the university library more modes and ways for the data reveal, popularity,

marketing. Annual data bill is increasingly used and promoted by university libraries, while its content, mode and marketing effectiveness are quite different. This paper investigated and researched current status of library data bill marketing. [Method/process] Through the Internet research, the 21 college libraries were selected to be investigated in accordance with the structural and content richness of the 2017 data bill. At the same time, this paper traced back 2016 annual data bill of each library. This paper discussed the current situation and development of the current annual data bill and gave some suggestions. [Result/conclusion] Currently, there is no uniform and long-term marketing model for college library data bill marketing, and there are some problems such as poor time continuity, the lack of content value, cultural inheritance and extension function lack of effect. this paper gave the suggestions as improving the value of data marketing content and the sustainability of marketing activities, building a marketing brand and the library service optimization strategy based on user portrait and so on.

Keywords: data marketing; annual data bill; library big data

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.