

Analysis of Reading Group Habits in Professional Libraries in the Converged Media Era: Postprint

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Abstract

Objective: To analyze the reading habits of hospital library users in the era of integrated media, thereby enhancing the service capabilities of professional libraries. **Methods:** Taking the library of Tongling People's Hospital as an example, this study employed a questionnaire survey method to analyze the reading habits of hospital library users. **Results:** A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, with 180 returned, all of which were valid. The survey revealed that: (1) Among all user groups, over 70% were aged 20-40, more than 60% held a bachelor's degree or higher, and the proportions of readers with junior and intermediate professional titles were 36.1% and 41.7%, respectively; the reading purposes across groups exhibited diverse characteristics. (2) Regarding reading channels, readers acquiring professional knowledge via WeChat Official Accounts accounted for the highest proportion (38.3%), followed by electronic journals (21.7%) and print journals (16.1%). (3) In terms of reading time, the majority of surveyed users read for less than 2 hours daily (81.6%); the peak reading periods were during working hours from 8:00-12:00 and 14:00-17:00 (73.3%). **Conclusion:** The reading habits of users at Tongling People's Hospital Library demonstrate characteristics of diversity, complexity, and convenience-orientation. Measures should be tailored to our hospital's actual conditions to strengthen library functions, enrich digital collection resources, customize personalized reading programs, and enhance comprehensive service capabilities.

Full Text

Preamble

With the continuous development of the information industry, integrated media has emerged as a novel concept that consolidates the advantages of traditional media such as print and multimedia. It has profoundly impacted the entire traditional media industry chain in information production, exchange, and dissemination, leading to a new understanding and experience of communication

media.[1-2] As specialized libraries, hospital libraries face significant challenges in the integrated media era, while also encountering development opportunities. How professional libraries can firmly capture readers' attention in this era represents a critical question for hospital library staff.[3-4] Faced with these challenges and opportunities, hospital libraries must first thoroughly understand their service groups, namely reading groups.

2.2 Reading Channels of Reading Groups

According to statistical results on reading channels among the surveyed reading groups, readers who obtain professional knowledge via WeChat official accounts constitute the highest proportion (38.3%), followed by e-journals (21.7%) and print journals (16.1%). See Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

Figure 1 Reading Channels of Reading Groups

2.3 Reading Time of Reading Groups

Reading habits are ultimately cultivated through long-term practice in work and daily life, representing a natural behavioral tendency formed under the combined influence of subjective and objective conditions, such as fixed reading channels, time, and content.[5] The arrival of the integrated media era has significantly impacted the reading habits of reading groups, compelling traditional reading methods and service models for hospital library reading groups to adapt accordingly.[6] As a member of specialized libraries, hospital libraries must grasp the reading habits of their inherent reading groups to develop targeted reading services and find opportunities for survival and development amid the powerful impact of the integrated media era.

The library of Tongling People's Hospital not only serves the information resource needs of its medical staff but can also extend its reach to other local medical institutions and medical colleges, providing substantial information services for medical professionals in the city and demonstrating considerable potential for development and growth. It warrants further enhancement of its service capacity as a specialized library.

Our survey results reveal that over 70% of the library's reading group are aged 20-40, more than 60% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and those with junior and intermediate professional titles account for 36.1% and 41.7% respectively. These findings suggest that constructing specialized libraries in the integrated media era should focus greater attention on this particular reading group, as they require richer and more cutting-edge professional information to enhance their professional competence compared to other groups. According to statistics on total daily reading time among surveyed reading groups, the majority (81.6%) read for less than 2 hours per day, with peak reading periods occurring during working hours from 8:00-12:00 and 14:00-17:00 (73.3%). See Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] and Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper].

Our survey analysis indicates that reading purposes across groups exhibit diverse characteristics. Among different age groups, those reading at the library for “work needs” account for 3.6%, followed by “cutting-edge information” at 17.8% and “exam preparation and promotion” at 15.6%. Among readers with different educational backgrounds, those with bachelor’s degrees show the greatest demand for library services, with 18.3% coming for “work needs,” followed by “thesis writing” (14.4%) and “research projects” (11.1%). Among readers with different professional titles, those with junior and intermediate titles reading for “work needs” represent 26.1%, while intermediate title holders reading for “exam preparation and promotion” account for 7.8%. These findings suggest that “work needs”—that is, solving practical problems encountered in work—remains the primary demand for medical workers, with other reading purposes being secondary. For instance, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid delivery of international frontier literature was the most urgent need for medical staff, demonstrating that specialized libraries must possess rapid emergency response capabilities during public health emergencies.[7-8]

Our data also reveal inconsistencies in reading habits among surveyed reading groups, specifically manifested in the following aspects: (1) Regarding reading channels, WeChat official accounts represent the highest proportion at 38.3%, which is inseparably linked to the widespread use of WeChat. Regularly pushing information through WeChat official accounts serves as a reliable and convenient means of obtaining information in the integrated media era, highly welcomed by medical workers. However, e-journals and print journals remain important channels for acquiring professional knowledge, potentially preferred by older readers compared to WeChat pushes. (2) Regarding total reading time, 56.1% of reading groups can persist in reading professional knowledge for approximately 1 hour daily, while 30.0% can sustain about 1-2 hours, with reading duration correlating with work requirements, research projects, thesis writing, and other commitments.[1] (3) Regarding reading time slots, morning and afternoon working hours constitute peak reading periods, accounting for 56.7% and 25.6% respectively, with fewer readers consulting professional materials during other time periods. Based on the above analyses (2) and (3), the existence of specialized libraries is not only necessary but also requires enhanced service capacity building.

3. Discussion

Comprehensive analysis reveals that current reading habits of reading groups exhibit characteristics of diversity, complexity, and convenience-orientation. The author contends that capacity building for specialized libraries in the integrated media era should center on the reading habits of reading groups. Based on our hospital’s actual conditions, the following specific strategies can be implemented:

First, strengthen library functions. Hospital libraries in the integrated media era are no longer traditional libraries or “scripture repositories” for medical staff. Medical workers now have numerous channels to acquire knowledge and

information, making library visits unnecessary for solving practical problems and work tasks. Hospital libraries should integrate survey findings with actual hospital conditions, engage more deeply with clinical frontlines, listen to medical workers' business needs, research progress, and industry dynamics, comprehensively utilize technologies brought by the integrated media era, and fully transition from a single borrowing development model to a multi-information model. They should focus on both hospital medical workers and medical talents citywide, seizing new development opportunities.[9-10]

Second, enrich digital collection resources. Increase funding investment, emphasize the hospital's professional orientation, and selectively introduce high-quality digital resources based on actual needs. Purchase more online resources and introduce premium newspapers and journals, emphasizing depth and breadth. Departments can be entrusted to recommend preferred publications for centralized library subscription and distribution. Collections should be tailored to different reading groups' purposes: purchase more SCI journals for staff needing cutting-edge information; acquire more practical exam preparation and promotion electronic materials for interns and residents; prepare abundant resources on National Natural Science Foundation and provincial foundation project applications for department directors and deputy directors with research project assignments to facilitate actual needs.[11-12]

Third, customize personalized reading programs. The aforementioned targeted introduction of digital resources constitutes one aspect of personalized reading. Additionally, based on reading preferences, collect more professional and authoritative WeChat official accounts for readers inclined toward WeChat information and promote them within the hospital for easy following and use. Online service platforms can also be established to provide Q&A services for junior medical staff, visiting doctors, interns, and residents, saving time and improving efficiency.[13] Embed library links in existing hospital WeChat official accounts to regularly push latest information to hospital staff and medical workers both inside and outside the hospital for easy access, truly transforming "reading" into "joyful reading."

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

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