

Analysis of Themes and Distribution Characteristics of Academic Conferences in the Field of Library, Information and Archives in the New Era: A Case Study of Reports from the “Tuqinghui” WeChat Official Account (Postprint)

Authors: Yang Siluo, Liu Huawei, Dong Jiahui, Xiao Aoxia

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Abstract

[Purpose / Significance] This study analyzes conference information in the library, information, and archival science (LIAS) domain to understand the thematic and distributional characteristics of academic conferences in library and information science, thereby revealing the current development status of academic conferences in the LIAS field.

[Method / Process] By collecting conference information published by the “Library, Information, and Archival Science” WeChat official account from August 31, 2019 to August 31, 2020, this study compiles statistics on basic conference information and dissemination patterns. Employing quantitative research methods, it analyzes various dimensions including conference scheduling, location, and organizing institutions; examines disparities in attention between domestic and international conferences; and conducts text mining on conference backgrounds and themes to uncover the distributional characteristics and current state of LIAS academic conferences in the new era.

[Results / Conclusions] The findings indicate that offline conferences in the LIAS field are predominantly scheduled on weekends, whereas online conference timings are more flexible. Conference venues are primarily concentrated in central cities with abundant LIAS disciplinary resources, such as Wuhan, Beijing, and Shanghai. International conferences garner greater attention than their domestic counterparts. Conference themes concentrate on innovation, intelligence, integration, openness, and related aspects, with conference content becoming increasingly rich.

Full Text

Analysis on the Distribution Characteristics of Academic Conferences in the Field of Library and Information Science—Take the Public Account “Meetings of LIS” as an Example

Yang Siluo, Liu Huawei, Dong Jiahui, Xiao Aoxia

School of Information Management, Wuhan University, Wuhan 430000

Abstract

[Purpose/significance] Through analyzing conference information in the field of library and information science (LIS), this study examines the themes and distribution characteristics of academic conferences in the LIS domain, revealing the current development status of such conferences. **** [Method/process]** ****** By collecting conference information published by the “Meetings of LIS” WeChat public account from August 31, 2019, to August 31, 2020, this research compiled statistics on basic conference information and dissemination patterns. Using quantitative methods, we analyzed conference timing, venues, and organizing institutions; explored differences in attention between domestic and international conferences; and conducted text mining on conference backgrounds and themes to uncover distribution characteristics and current trends in LIS academic conferences. **** [Result/conclusion]** ****** The study found that offline LIS academic conferences are predominantly held on weekends, while online conferences show no fixed scheduling pattern. Conference venues are mainly concentrated in central cities with abundant LIS resources, such as Wuhan, Beijing, and Shanghai. International conferences receive greater attention than domestic ones. Conference themes focus on innovation, wisdom, integration, and openness, with increasingly rich content.

**** Keywords:**** LIS; conference; distribution characteristics; Meetings of LIS

1 Introduction

Academic exchange forms the foundation of science, and academic conferences serve as a crucial pathway and method for such exchange. In the new era of continuous information technology development, academic conferences have become more convenient and frequent to organize. The library, information, and archival science field (hereinafter referred to as “LIS”) has always emphasized academic exchange and conferences, which play a vital role in showcasing cutting-edge achievements and revealing future development trends in the domain. For scholars, students, and practitioners alike, academic conferences provide a platform for sharing research findings, inspiring in-depth research, and

broadening perspectives. For research institutions, enterprises, and the public closely connected with the LIS field, conferences also offer opportunities to understand the latest developments.

Author information: Yang Siluo (ORCID: 0000-0003-3228-1102), Professor, Ph.D., E-mail: 58605025@qq.com; Liu Huawei (ORCID: 0000-0001-5604-0392), Master's student; Dong Jiahui (ORCID: 0000-0002-6668-5300), Master's student; Xiao Aoxia (ORCID: 0000-0003-2173-0996), Master's student.

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3.2 Conference Location

Analysis of 219 academic conferences reveals the distribution shown in [Figure 3: see original paper]. For domestic conferences, only cities hosting more than three events are displayed. The results show that, aside from Asia, international LIS academic conferences are distributed across various regions, with a notable concentration in Europe forming distinct clusters. Domestic LIS academic conferences, however, are clearly concentrated in three central cities: Beijing, Wuhan, and Shanghai. Beijing hosted the most conferences with 25 events, followed by Wuhan with 15, and Shanghai with 11. Other cities such as Nanjing and Guangzhou also hosted multiple conferences. Notably, despite the pandemic's impact, numerous domestic LIS academic conferences were successfully held, demonstrating that academic research never ceased even under lockdown conditions, and that online academic conferences played a crucial role as an important channel for academic exchange. Overall, LIS academic conferences have gradually formed a LIS circle centered around Beijing, Wuhan, and Shanghai.

3.3 Conference Supporting Media

Analyzing conferences with media support reveals the pattern shown in [Figure 4: see original paper], displaying media that supported more than one conference. Core journals in the LIS field, including *Library and Information Service*, *Library and Information Knowledge*, *Library Tribune*, *Library Journal*, and *Library Construction*, actively supported academic conferences. Among these, *Library and Information Service*, as an authoritative journal in the field, served as supporting media for conferences seven times, while *Library and Information Knowledge*, *Library Tribune*, and *Agricultural Library and Information Science* also participated extensively. The study found that media participation has become increasingly common and indispensable in conference organization. With the rise of online conferences, traditional journals that previously relied on submissions have transformed their development models to accommodate

both online and offline formats, adapting to the big data and intelligent society development.

At the 2019 Youth Scholars Forum for Library and Information Science and Archival Management, the LIS Young Scholars Salon and the Journal Center of Wuhan University School of Information Management jointly organized a journal exchange reception. Professors Ma Feicheng, Chen Chuanfu, and Fang Qing from Wuhan University, along with editors-in-chief, deputy editors, and editors from 22 invited academic journals, attended the exchange. Journal participation in academic conferences not only helps secure quality conference resources but also achieves a win-win-win situation for conference participants, organizers, and journals.

3.4 Conference Organizers

Statistical analysis of conference organizers reveals the top 10 institutions by number of events hosted, as shown in . The China Society of Library Science and its branches organized the most conferences with 23 events, followed by Wuhan University School of Information Management with 16 events. Among these top 10 organizers, most are universities, with Wuhan University hosting the most academic conferences. As primary centers for scientific research, universities demonstrate close connections with academic conferences in the LIS field, which also reflects that conference organization can reveal the latest research advances in the domain. Moreover, conference organizers align with the three central cities identified earlier, as conference venues are concentrated in cities rich in LIS resources such as Wuhan and Beijing. This correlation likely stems from the continuous growth of the LIS field, with increasing university participation in conferences and top-ranked LIS universities located in these three central cities.

4 Conference Content Theme Analysis

By compiling and summarizing conference themes and call-for-paper topics, we used Tagxedo software to create word clouds shown in [Figure 5: see original paper] and [Figure 6: see original paper]. Conference themes represent macro-level understanding of domain development and primarily reflect field trends, while call-for-paper themes represent micro-level manifestations of specific disciplinary research frontiers. The conference theme word cloud shows that current conferences mainly revolve around innovation, wisdom, integration, and openness, closely aligning with today's information technology development trends. The call-for-paper theme word cloud, featuring keywords such as information, service, data, and innovation, demonstrates detailed and comprehensive characteristics.

Analysis of the word clouds reveals that current LIS academic conferences primarily focus on four aspects:

4.1 Innovation

Innovation is the eternal theme of scientific research, receiving greater attention in the context of new technologies in the new era. As a platform for information exchange and a medium connecting scholars, conferences serve as a cradle for nurturing innovative achievements. Characteristic innovation is an important feature driving the establishment of the LIS discipline system and enhancing disciplinary research capabilities. In the new intelligent era, promoting deep integration of new-generation information technology with industry, academia, and research to achieve information system development and innovation in smart society construction represents a crucial step. At the 2019 Youth Scholars Salon for Library and Information Science and Archival Management, participants proposed inheriting core knowledge and innovating theoretical systems. Young scholars argued for preserving knowledge points from traditional knowledge systems that facilitate integration among secondary disciplines, maintaining unique knowledge systems of secondary disciplines, and further integrating theoretical construction paths of secondary disciplines based on their advantages in solving specific cultural and information institution problems. Through fusion and integration strategies, they advocated increasing disciplinary theoretical confidence, establishing long-term disciplinary self-reflection mechanisms, and achieving characteristic development.

ALIRG2019 embodied innovative thinking in its conference content by combining the current status and characteristics of Asian library and information science development and education. Using collaborative, interdisciplinary thinking, it integrated library science and information science while fully considering their development and innovation. Currently, China's LIS disciplinary innovation practice has advanced ahead of theoretical development, with insufficient theoretical support for practice. Ma Feicheng et al. proposed that China's LIS discipline should face new problems, innovate methodologies, and construct a methodological system for Chinese library and information science. Only in this way can China's LIS discipline better employ new methods and theories to solve new problems in new technological environments.

4.2 Wisdom

With the development and application of emerging technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, scientific research has gradually shifted from "intelligent" to "wisdom." Wisdom services represent a new developmental stage following document services, information services, and knowledge services, and will become the mainstream concept and approach for intelligence services.

In the library domain, the term “wisdom” has been applied to “smart library” construction. However, a library’s “wisdom” should not be limited to technology application but should encompass broader connotations and practical significance. Smart libraries represent not only a specific library form pursued by current academia and practice but also, from the essence of library knowledge services, a long-term development philosophy that libraries must adhere to.

The 2019 National Doctoral Student Academic Forum in Intelligence Science focused on the theme “Innovative Development of Intelligence Science in the Smart Era: Knowledge Fusion,” building an open, free, and inclusive academic exchange platform to more effectively integrate relevant research and expand intelligence science research fields for better adaptation to smart era changes. The 2019 China Future Smart Library Development Forum, themed “Cross-boundary Integration and Wisdom—New Generation Smart Libraries,” aimed to build an academic, business, and technical exchange platform for university and school libraries nationwide. It explored theoretical and practical frontiers of future smart library development from perspectives of campus libraries and public libraries to further promote healthy development of China’s smart library construction. Under current technological backgrounds, smart libraries have innovated traditional library development models and represent an important direction for contemporary library development. Foreign scholar P. F. Yeh also demonstrated through numerous cases that artificial intelligence will play an important role in future intelligence services, indicating that wisdom services represent the future direction of intelligence service development.

4.3 Integration

With the widespread application of computer, network, and communication technologies in scientific communication, interdisciplinary cross-penetration and mutual integration have become trends in modern science development. Dynamic relationships between disciplines are often maintained through knowledge flow, and these dynamic knowledge flows promote disciplinary development, strengthen disciplinary connections, and transmit disciplinary changes. At the 2019 Youth Scholars Forum and Graduate Education Forum for Library and Information Science and Archival Management, experts conducted in-depth analysis and summary on disciplinary development directions and first-level discipline integration issues. Ma Feicheng emphasized that LIS disciplines should keep pace with the times, continuously embrace new concepts, and promote integration. Feng Huiling noted that in ubiquitous digital information environments, disciplines are trending toward digital, social, and knowledge transformation, and young teachers should cultivate interdisciplinary capabilities with broader vision, continuously integrate and innovate, and guide disciplines toward better development with new technologies, ideas, and concepts. Li Guangjian et al. proposed that the development trend of intelligence science in the current

big data environment is moving toward knowledge fusion. Existing knowledge fusion research achievements have played a promotional and supportive role in the innovation of intelligence science and intelligence work under big data environments. As a discipline studying knowledge, intelligence science must fully utilize its existing accumulation and advantages to deeply research, summarize, and discover mechanisms, principles, methods, and technologies of knowledge fusion in intelligence activities.

4.4 Openness

Academic knowledge dissemination has gradually evolved from informal forms such as letters to current models using open access for knowledge production and dissemination, aiming to create a more open scientific communication and sharing system where readers can freely access and disseminate literature. In the era of open, transparent scientific research, libraries closely related to information resources, open access, and knowledge services must early on reconsider and design information resource construction models and development strategies in open science environments based on their own development needs, enhancing core business capabilities. The 2019 Shanghai Forum on Competitive Intelligence (SCIF) and International Council for Scientific and Technical Information (ICSTI) Annual Conference, themed “Open Science and Open Innovation,” gathered intelligence, information, technology, and enterprise professionals to share the latest developments in open science and open innovation, discuss competitive intelligence service models, evolution paths, and development visions under open concepts, and research how competitive intelligence can promote open science in scientific and technological fields for common human benefit, thereby assisting national, regional, industrial, and enterprise open innovation.

Open science has become a trend, and LIS should actively participate in open science infrastructure construction, adjust resource construction models, and lead open science development. The open environment has completely transformed the ecosystem of social knowledge supply and consumption, posing severe challenges to libraries’ traditional advantages and functions. As public cultural facilities open to the public free of charge, libraries should innovate development paths in new environments, gain social empowerment, avoid development risks, achieve high-quality development through higher-level innovation, and thereby maintain their mainstream cultural and information status in open society.

5 Conference Attention Analysis

Conference attention reflects the degree of interest different academic conferences receive. Since this study relies on the “Meetings of LIS” public account platform, fluctuations and uncertainties in follower numbers affect conference

readership. Therefore, analyzing conference attention cannot consider readership alone. As readership correlates with follower count, this study establishes a metric: the ratio of conference readership to current follower count, denoted as a . A higher ratio indicates greater attention. The following analysis examines conference attention from perspectives of domestic versus international conferences and online versus offline conferences.

5.1 Domestic vs International Conference Attention

Sorting a values yields (showing only top 10 conferences). Statistical analysis of these conferences appears in [Figure 7: see original paper], where blue represents international conferences and red represents domestic conferences. Since the a value for ASIS&T far exceeds others, [Figure 7: see original paper] excludes ASIS&T for better overall visualization. The figure clearly shows that international conferences generally have higher a values than domestic conferences. Following ASIS&T, top-ranked conferences are influential international events such as JCDL and CIKM. Calculated average a values are 0.245 for international conferences and 0.086 for domestic conferences—a substantial difference. Overall, international conferences receive more attention than domestic ones, possibly because fewer public accounts report on international conferences and no unified resource platform exists, with most international conference information coming from official websites. “Meetings of LIS” regularly follows international conferences, serving as a platform aggregating international conference information and saving time spent searching various official websites. Domestic conference information can be obtained not only from official websites but also from other channels such as journal public accounts, creating diversion effects. Notably, high-attention international academic conferences also reflect scholars’ emphasis on global events, as major, influential conferences are typically international, such as JCDL, ASIS&T, and iConference.

The sudden pandemic in late 2019 disrupted academic conference exchanges, forcing many LIS conferences to postpone or cancel, later shifting mostly to online formats. Format differences created variations in conference attention and impact compared to previous offline events. Among 219 conferences, 67 were online (30%). Since online conference statistics predominantly represent domestic events, attention comparison focuses on online versus offline domestic conferences. As shown in [Figure 8: see original paper] (orange for offline, blue for online), offline conferences show many extreme high and low values, while online conferences distribute more evenly. Therefore, visual distinction is difficult. Calculating average a values yields 0.07 for online and 0.09 for offline conferences. Currently, online conference attention remains lower than offline but with a small gap, indicating room for online conference growth. Although online conferences are in their infancy in China’s academic community, they have essentially reached relative balance with offline conferences, suggesting online conferences may become mainstream in the near future.

Analysis of online conference platforms appears in [Figure 9: see original paper]. The figure shows that online conferences rely on numerous platforms such as Tencent Meeting, Xueshuzhi, CNKI Online, and Zoom. Tencent Meeting has the highest usage frequency, attributable to its robust features like multi-person online meetings and synchronized live broadcasting, offering greater convenience. Platforms like Xueshuzhi and CNKI Online follow in usage frequency. Different conferences select appropriate platforms based on their needs. Notably, social media platforms also participate in online conference broadcasting, with platforms like Bilibili and Douyin assisting in conference dissemination, 无形中 expanding academic conference communication channels and increasing influence. For participants, online conference attendance is no longer location-restricted, with more diverse participation channels and improved overall attention. Although online conferences cannot replicate face-to-face exchanges, future technological developments may enable more realistic interactions. The pandemic has promoted transformation in academic exchange methods, providing opportunities to try new communication approaches. Under current technical conditions, online conferences still face some issues, but they may well become a normalized conference format parallel to offline events in the future.

6 Conclusion

Analysis of conferences held from August 31, 2019, to August 31, 2020, reveals the following characteristics of LIS academic conferences in the new era:

1. **International conference attention exceeds domestic conference attention.** Although online conferences broaden conference channels and facilitate participation, international conferences maintain higher overall attention. Surpassing domestic conference attention in the short term remains challenging.
2. **Conference venues gradually form a LIS academic circle centered on Wuhan, Beijing, and Shanghai.** From perspectives of organizing institutions and locations, Wuhan in central China serves as a hub radiating northward to Beijing and eastward to Shanghai. LIS conferences are forming an academic circle centered on these three cities. Guangzhou and Nanjing also show strong potential, possibly leading to a “five-pole” structure in the future. Overall, LIS academic conference venues concentrate in regions with abundant LIS academic resources, typically featuring prominent universities.
3. **Academic conferences gradually adopt online-offline hybrid models.** Due to pandemic impact, many academic conferences shifted online, with attention differences between online and offline conferences being relatively small. Although online conferences face network constraints and limited expert interaction to online Q&A formats, they hold potential for growth.

4. **Conference themes focus on innovation, wisdom, integration, and openness.** Research shows conference themes evolve with LIS disciplinary development. Over the past year, themes have demonstrated characteristics of innovation, wisdom, integration, and openness. Innovation reflects domain changes in the new era and embodies novelty in call-for-paper content, formats, and conference themes. Wisdom primarily manifests in smart services and smart libraries. Integration mainly appears in interdisciplinary and cross-boundary fusion. Openness primarily reflects using new AI technologies and big data methods under open concepts to practically advance LIS reform and development, meeting new societal demands.

Study limitations: First, when analyzing conference timing, monthly distribution analysis could be added, but pandemic-related postponements of conferences in the first half of 2020 may cause data errors, so this was not studied; future research could use multi-year data for comparison. Second, attention analysis could be deepened by examining conference information forwarding frequency and social media sharing. Additionally, incomplete reporting by the “Meetings of LIS” public account may introduce some errors.

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Author Contributions

Yang Siluo: Project guidance, paper revision;

Liu Huawei: Research methodology design, data collection and analysis, paper writing;

Dong Jiahui: Paper writing, paper revision;

Xiao Aoxia: Paper revision.

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

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