

Exploration and Practice of Building Children' s Reading Service Brands in Public Libraries Under the “Double Reduction” Policy (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Leveraging the cultural resource advantages of public libraries, this study explores the development of children' s reading service brands with Chinese characteristics to facilitate the effective implementation of the “double reduction” policy. [Method/Process] Employing literature research, comparative research, and other methods, the study systematically reviews relevant literature retrieved from the WOS and CNKI databases, and combined with practical cases, analyzes the current status of children' s reading service brand development both domestically and internationally, thereby exploring optimization pathways for public libraries in constructing such brands. [Results/Conclusion] By drawing upon successful experiences from public libraries' children' s reading service brands at home and abroad, this paper proposes optimization strategies for brand construction across seven dimensions: policy and regulation, reading space, service effectiveness, reading groups, reading models, professional training, and social participation.

Full Text

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study explores the construction of children' s reading service brands with Chinese characteristics in public libraries, leveraging their cultural resource advantages to promote effective implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy. [Method/Process] Through literature research and comparative analysis, this paper systematically reviews relevant literature from both the Web of Science (WOS) and China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) databases, analyzing the current state of children' s reading service brand development domestically and internationally while summarizing optimization pathways for public libraries. [Result/Conclusion] Drawing on

successful experiences from public libraries worldwide, this paper proposes optimization strategies for building children' s reading service brands across seven dimensions: policies and regulations, reading spaces, service effectiveness, target groups, reading models, professional training, and social participation.

Keywords: Double Reduction; Public Library; Children' s Reading; Service Brand

1.2.2 Characteristics of Children' s Reading Service Brands

Public library children' s reading service brands differ from corporate brands, exhibiting unique cultural characteristics including distinctiveness, variability, social responsibility, heritage, and timeliness. First, each public library possesses its own history, type, nature, scale, psychological context, and staff qualifications, while each region has its own local customs and social qualities. Consequently, children' s reading services in different locations possess irreplaceable uniqueness rooted in regional culture. Second, public library children' s reading services must advance with the times, continuously adjusting service content and methods to accommodate changing lifestyles and evolving spiritual pursuits. Third, the essence of these services lies in cultivating children' s early social emotions, which vary across different social systems, requiring public library services to align with societal institutions. Additionally, public library children' s reading service brands must facilitate the orderly inheritance of traditional culture. Finally, these brands must keep pace with contemporary developments, maintaining effective synchronization with changing times.

2 International Experience in Creating Children' s Reading Service Brands

Children' s reading services represent a crucial and particularly distinctive domain within public library cultural services. The author conducted a search in the Web of Science (WOS) database using the keywords "Public library or library," "Children' s reading or reading," and "Brand," and a parallel search in CNKI using "公共图书馆或图书馆," "少儿阅读或阅读," and "品牌," covering literature from 2008 to 2023. The initial retrieval yielded 102 documents (58 from WOS and 44 from CNKI). After screening titles, abstracts, keywords, and full texts, 11 irrelevant articles were excluded, resulting in 91 final research documents (48 English and 43 Chinese). Through in-depth reading and categorical analysis of representative literature, the author found that most studies examine public library children' s reading service brands from perspectives of service models and pathways. Compared with domestic research, studies from the United States, Japan, Russia, and other countries started earlier, offering richer experiences and more advanced theories. The analysis below proceeds from four key aspects.

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Numerous countries worldwide attach great importance to developing children's reading initiatives, enacting comprehensive legal policies to provide institutional guarantees and policy support for reading promotion activities. Japan promulgated the *Act on Promotion of Children's Reading Activities* in 2001, designating April 23rd, "World Book Day," as Japan's "Children's Reading Day" [10]. Leveraging this global occasion, Japan mobilizes societal support for children's reading from all sectors, stimulating nationwide attention to this cause.

Russia has established a relatively complete legal and policy framework for children's reading, successively issuing the *Federal Law on Library Science in the Russian Federation*, *Model Standards for Children's Libraries*, *National Program for Supporting and Developing Reading*, *Program for Supporting Reading Among Children and Adolescents*, *Guidelines for Developing Regional Programs to Support Reading Among Children and Adolescents*, and *Concept for Supporting and Promoting Reading Among Children and Adolescents in the Russian Federation*. These protections permeate the entire process of brand creation, development, and expansion, reflecting Russia's high priority on children's reading and legally standardizing it at both federal and policy levels.

The United States, among the earliest nations to establish children's libraries, has achieved notable service effectiveness. In 1969, the American Library Association first promulgated *Public Library Standards for Children's Services*, establishing children's reading services as the most important component of domestic public library offerings. These standards emphasize standardized services for both hardware and software resources. Hardware standardization encompasses funding, physical facilities, human resources, and collection resources. Software resources involve age-appropriate standardization of reading activities, including graded booklists, reading guidance, and reading programs. Libraries promote children's reading services through standardized services and reading club programs, forming fixed service brands that disseminate the latest research findings and service experiences to the public through community-based library systems.

2.2 Clear Positioning and Segmented Service Categories

Developed countries demonstrate accurate and distinctive positioning for children's reading activities, segmenting service categories according to national conditions. Since 2007, Japan has implemented the "Comprehensive After-School Children's Plan," the "Saturday Education Activities Promotion Project," and the "New Comprehensive After-School Children's Plan." Through collaboration with libraries, children's centers, and other institutions, Japan has established safe and convenient after-school service venues, gradually developing characteristics in practice such as coordinating diverse stakeholders, conducting varied activities, clearly segmenting target populations, and emphasizing service outcomes.

The UK' s “Summer Reading Challenge” for school-age children is positioned to promote summer reading, encouraging young readers to visit libraries and read six or more books during vacation. With different annual themes adapted to changing reader needs, the program has established a clear brand image in young readers' minds since its inception in 1998 [11]. Beyond daily children' s reading services, U.S. public libraries launch annual student summer reading brand programs each year, paying particular attention to age differences among adolescents and meeting diverse needs for sustained summer reading through varied resources and activities. For students from disadvantaged families, the U.S. enacted the *Every Student Succeeds Act* in 2015 to ensure educational equity and encourage personalized and blended learning.

Through refined service segmentation, foreign public libraries not only help children grow through reading but also promote their social skills and creativity. Furthermore, most foreign public libraries feature dedicated children' s reading areas providing space, resources, and services, with after-school service measures starting earlier and being more comprehensive than in China.

2.3 Emphasis on Children' s Reading and Parent Training

In addition to diverse children' s reading activities, libraries in several countries universally emphasize parent training. U.S. public libraries not only provide traditional children' s reading services but also offer parents guidance on family education, information on nearby child-friendly activity locations and schedules, and introductions to public welfare education programs. Although Russian public libraries and children' s centers have family reading research institutions, the Russian Cultural University has offered a specialized “Family Reading Course” since the mid-1990s. New Zealand public libraries emphasize entertainment and interactivity in children' s reading education, using stories, songs, and interactive activities to improve reading skills, striving toward the goal of “every child is a library member” [12]. For school-age children' s reading, Australian libraries collaborate with local government programs to support public library professionals in providing parents with age-appropriate reading resources and strategies. Librarians play a crucial role in program delivery, implementation, and sustainability. North American libraries widely implement the “Mother Goose on the Loose” program, which is child-centered and integrates research-based learning theories with music, puppetry, picture books, nursery rhymes, art, mathematics, games, and language activities to help children' s behavioral development meet school learning requirements [13].

Educator Boris Sidis believed that early reading education significantly influences an individual' s future social cognition, learning ability, and lifelong happiness. As children' s first teachers, parents serve as early reading mentors. Parental modeling helps children develop good reading habits, and thematic reading clubs covering family education concepts and methods enable parents to acquire knowledge about child psychology and healthy growth, helping them better handle parent-child relationships and fostering family harmony.

2.4 Strengthening Brand Operations with Multidisciplinary Talent Support

Developed countries' libraries are committed to building children's reading service brands while also focusing on brand operation and influence expansion. To achieve this, they maintain high professional requirements for librarians, who must possess not only library science expertise but also specialized fields. For instance, Japanese librarians typically have professional backgrounds in education and psychology [14], greatly benefiting youth reading services. In the Internet era, new media operations have become key to establishing library reading service brands and expanding reach. Representative public libraries in countries like the United States actively offer new media operation courses to help librarians master basic computer and network operation skills, using new media tools to interact with readers and enhance public libraries' influence in daily life.

Developed countries' libraries demonstrate advantages in legal framework development, service category refinement, family-library collaboration, and brand operation awareness, achieving global influence that has impacted China's children's reading service brand construction. However, due to differing national conditions, China needs to build children's reading service brands with Chinese characteristics, necessitating further domestic research.

3 Domestic Case Analysis of Public Library Children's Reading Service Brands

As China's "Double Reduction" policy gradually advances, educational models have undergone qualitative transformation, with children's reading demand showing an upward trend and parents increasingly emphasizing reading literacy cultivation. According to the 2023 National Reading Survey released by the China Press and Publication Research Institute, in 2022, Chinese minors' reading ability steadily improved, with a reading rate of 84.2% and an average of 11.14 books per capita [15]. This indicates tremendous potential for public libraries in serving children's reading. Many public libraries have begun creating distinctive children's reading brands, such as the "SUNDAY" brand for younger children launched by Tianjin Binhai New Area Library, which subsequently introduced "SUNDAY Picture Book Story House" and "SUNDAY Cloud Story House" [16]; Shenzhen Library's "City of Libraries" Children's Science Popularization Month, tailored to children's psychological development characteristics; and Nanjing Library's popular series including "Cultural Walks," "Little Chinese Studies Lectures," and "Science Open Classes."

Through web-based and literature research, this paper examines successful cases of domestic public libraries' children's reading service brands to analyze their construction status.

3.1 Leveraging Local Historical and Cultural Heritage to Create Distinctive Brands

In building children's reading service brands, public libraries must develop core competitiveness. Only by identifying unique focal points that differentiate them from other brands can they stand out and achieve sustainable development. With 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, every locality possesses its own historical and cultural heritage. Integrating children's reading service brand creation with local cultural promotion undoubtedly constitutes a viable path. As the birthplace of Qi culture and home to the world's earliest government-run higher education institution, the "Jixia Academy," Zibo City has uniquely positioned its library to develop the "Qi Style" children's reading service brand, promoting both historical culture and the city's humanistic charm [17]. The Changchun Children's Library invited architectural masters to introduce the city's historical evolution when creating its "Youth Reading" lecture platform, deepening children's love for their hometown and strengthening their desire to return and contribute after their studies [18]. Nanjing Library has also established the "Book Sea Heritage" brand, integrating Jiangsu Province's intangible cultural heritage inheritance. Drawing on its collection resources and inviting experts and cultural volunteers, the library promotes intangible heritage study tours, campus programs, open classes, exhibitions, and online teaching videos, striving to cultivate people through culture and connect hearts through art.

3.2 Edutainment Through Action

Based on children's physical and psychological characteristics, purely indoor reading can appear monotonous and yield low acceptance, potentially diminishing brand service effectiveness. Designing activities that impart knowledge through play achieves subtle, intangible educational impact. The Shanghai Children's Library employs "picture books meet improvisational theater," where children participate in story performances through improvisation and role-switching, exercising their adaptability and comprehension while receiving widespread social acclaim [19]. Nanjing Library's "Cultural Walks" brand invites book authors and walk leaders to interpret works through a "reading + walking" approach. In 2021, the program design team used seasonal changes as an entry point, combining Nanjing's historical and cultural attributes to create a framework titled "Seasonal Jinling" incorporating elements of "mountains, water, city, and forests." The program conducted themed walks including "Spring at Niushou," "Summer at Zhongshan," "Autumn at Qixia," and "Winter at Stone City" according to seasonal themes, generating unprecedented reader enthusiasm.

3.3 Fragrant Books in Every Household: Supporting Family Reading

The family constitutes the fundamental social institution for children's reading, with parent-child reading representing the best family education. China actively advocates nationwide reading, and family reading has gained increasing attention. In 2017, the State Council Legislative Affairs Office reviewed

and passed the *Regulations on Promoting Nationwide Reading*, proposing that “parents or other guardians of minors should play an important and positive role in safeguarding minors’ basic reading rights, ensuring they obtain necessary reading resources and guidance” [20]. The 2023 *Implementation Opinions on Carrying Out the “Fragrant Books in Every Household” National Family Reading Action* provides timely policy support for public libraries to promote nationwide reading starting from families.

Many public libraries leverage their venue, resource, and professional talent advantages to create locally influential family reading promotion brands. The National Library’s Children’s Library promotes “New Book Joy Club,” sending the latest books to participating families so parents and children can access new publications and latest knowledge simultaneously. Hangzhou Library’s Children’s Branch offers “Sun Wind Literature Society” and “Reading Club,” continuously organizing lectures, training, exhibition experiences, and parent-child activities that attract increasing family participation, helping many families acquire knowledge and foster harmonious family atmospheres. The Sanming City Library in Fujian Province conducts family-shared reading activities driven by parental growth, enhancing parents’ reading levels and initiative while making them trusted, experienced guides for their children’s reading [21]. Suzhou Library’s “Happy Reading Moms” volunteer training program aims to cultivate parents’ reading abilities to influence and guide their children’s reading, with these moms also strengthening the library’s volunteer team and supporting various activities. Establishing a sound family reading service system can help entire families develop long-term, stable reading habits and warm, egalitarian parent-child relationships.

3.4 Integrating Multiple Technologies: Exploring the World Online

Scientific and technological progress has endowed traditional reading with new connotations and vitality. Through various technological presentations, virtual displays can showcase local customs and cultures worldwide without leaving home. To better utilize digital resources and promote digital reading, Dalian Children’s Library launched rainbow-themed reading activities primarily using digital resources, delivering digital reading resources to remote areas and using digital technology to extend children’s reading brand services to underserved regions [22], multiplying library readership and solving physical space limitations. Anhui Provincial Library uses its official website, WeChat public account, Weibo, and Douyin as primary platforms for audio services [23], enabling visually impaired children in society to become library readers. Nanjing Library established the “Nanjing Library Takes You to See the World” brand, helping readers under 12 broaden their horizons and learn about different regions and countries through concise geographical and cultural knowledge explanations and immersive cultural experiences. Using AR and VR technologies, the program presents rich geographical and cultural knowledge from collection materials through images and short videos, allowing these compulsory education-stage

readers to “travel thousands of miles” without leaving home.

While domestic children’ s reading brand construction shows growing brand awareness, deficiencies remain in legal framework development, dedicated space creation, resource optimization, service effectiveness improvement, professional capacity building, and social participation enhancement. These initiatives lack systematic and sustainable brand operations, with influence requiring further strengthening. To continuously increase engagement with young readers, improve their comprehensive literacy, and truly fulfill the social education function of a “second classroom,” public libraries must continue exploring high-quality children’ s reading service brand construction.

4 Optimization Strategies for Public Library Children’ s Reading Service Brand Construction

Through in-depth research on the most representative content and universal patterns of children’ s reading service brands in public libraries worldwide, combined with practical adaptation to China’ s context, this paper proposes the following optimization strategies for building children’ s reading service brands with Chinese characteristics.

4.1 Improve Policies and Regulations for Children’ s Reading

China is currently in the development stage of children’ s reading service brand construction and should emphasize brand operation guarantees, maintaining brand vitality and competitiveness through multi-level support. Building upon existing policies and regulations including the *Public Library Law of the People’ s Republic of China*, *Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law of the People’ s Republic of China*, *Regulations on Promoting Nationwide Reading*, *Standards for Public Library Children’ s Services*, and *China Children’ s Development Outline (2021-2030)*, China should draw upon IFLA’ s *Guidelines for Children’ s Library Services* and other professional guidance documents for children’ s librarians. The goal is to establish specialized laws, regulations, policies, and standards that are modernized, globally oriented, and future-focused, meeting the development needs of Chinese children’ s libraries and safeguarding children’ s reading rights, thereby continuously promoting the popularization, standardization, and normalization of children’ s reading services in public libraries.

4.2 Create Dedicated Children’ s Reading Spaces

Domestic research has noted that Russia already had over 4,500 specialized children’ s libraries by 2017. By the end of 2020, China had 146 independently established children’ s libraries and 1,319 branch libraries [24]. According to the *Seventh National Population Census Bulletin (No. 5)* [25], China’ s population aged 14 and under exceeded 250 million as of November 1, 2020—nearly ten times the number of children in Russia—yet China’ s library construction numbers are less than one-third of Russia’ s. This paper proposes a two-pronged

development path for creating dedicated children' s reading spaces. First, new library constructions should include supporting children' s libraries whenever possible. Second, existing library renovations should prioritize establishing dedicated children' s reading spaces. Where conditions permit, beyond expanding physical space for children' s libraries, libraries should integrate language, video, audio, and virtual reality technologies with print materials to enhance digital reading interactive experiences, effectively mobilizing children' s autonomous reading enthusiasm and supporting the exploration of multimodal children' s reading service brands.

4.3 Optimize Children' s Reading Resources

Public libraries should focus on cultivating stable core reading groups among children and emphasize reading content quality. Excellent reading resources are crucial considerations for brand operation. Libraries can improve children' s reading recommendation systems, utilizing professional cataloging knowledge and techniques for specialized booklist recommendations and guidance to increase resource utilization [26]. On one hand, libraries should explore new digital reading methods, producing audio-visual resources to enhance reading experiences and using WeChat mini-program functions like check-ins, read-alongs, and quizzes to promote positive interaction with young readers. On the other hand, libraries should strengthen brand awareness, emphasizing brand construction by establishing culturally rich, approachable, and easily communicable brand identities. They can also leverage well-known brand identifiers to promote their own brand programs, such as launching children' s reading brand activities on the occasion of "April 23 World Book Day."

4.4 Enhance Children' s Reading Service Effectiveness

Russia' s *Program for Supporting Reading Among Children and Adolescents* proposes implementing differentiated reading services that account for age differences, ability differences, gender differences, and social differences among children and adolescents [27]. Domestic public libraries must acknowledge objective differences among young readers in terms of age, ability, gender, and social background. Regarding gender differences, boys excel in logical thinking while girls demonstrate strengths in visual thinking. Concerning age differences, the *Chinese Language Curriculum Standards* specify different reading tasks and required extracurricular reading volumes for primary and middle school students. Ability differences, including physical and mental maturity, also affect reading. Social differences, including regional and family variations, objectively influence children' s reading. Libraries must avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and explore differentiated reading services for diverse young readers.

4.5 Strengthen Professional Capacity Training for Children's Librarians

Librarians constitute crucial soft power in children's reading promotion, with their professional competence and personal accumulation significantly impacting service effectiveness. Beyond possessing fundamental library science capabilities, children's librarians with expertise in education and psychology can provide more effective services. Specialized children's reading service teams should be established to study brand theory courses, master brand operation models and procedures, and enhance awareness and skills in children's reading brand promotion. For example, Russia's Likhachov Children's Library employs 47 professional technical staff, including 44 skilled librarians who specifically guide children's reading services in 532 school libraries [28]. According to the Ministry of Education's *2020 National Education Development Statistical Bulletin*, China had 210,800 compulsory education schools with 34.4019 million enrolled students and 156 million students in total. Additionally, industry analysis shows that in 2020, China's children's libraries employed 3,965 staff and issued 7.88 million valid library cards [29]. Given the existing and potential service population, although children's reading promotion faces significant challenges, these figures indicate substantial potential for expanding children's reader services in China.

4.6 Mobilize Broad Social Participation

Public library children's reading services constitute a massive, complex, systematic, and professional undertaking, with service quality improvement playing an irreplaceable role in brand strategy implementation. Beyond active participation, public libraries should embrace multi-stakeholder cooperation concepts, incorporating diverse social forces. This paper proposes three recommendations: First, collaborate closely with communities to investigate specific conditions of children's families, thereby developing corresponding brand activity themes for community promotion, ensuring children's reading services truly reach the general public. Second, establish comprehensive volunteer management systems by recruiting high-quality volunteers from various professional backgrounds to broaden children's knowledge and improve their comprehensive qualities. Third, cooperate with relevant social organizations, leveraging respective strengths and advantages to expand and enrich brand connotations, providing equitable, standardized reading service brands for all children, including left-behind children.

As a vital front for social education, public libraries' exploration of how to leverage their advantages and fully perform the social functions of a "second classroom" to better serve children and adolescents under the "Double Reduction" policy holds significant practical importance. This study analyzes successful experiences from public libraries domestically and internationally in creating children's reading service brands, proposing optimization strategies across seven dimensions—policies and regulations, reading spaces, service effectiveness, target groups, reading models, professional training, and social participation—to provide new perspectives and pathways for children's reading promotion and

service brand construction in the “Double Reduction” era.

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