

Reflections and Practice on Thematic Construction of Local Documents—A Case Study of the Establishment of Pudong Documentation Center (Postprint)

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of transformation and development in service concepts in the new era, this study addresses the transformation demands of local documentation work, conceptualizes new strategies for the Pudong Documentation Center, and opens new horizons for local documentation construction and services. Through a methodology combining field investigation and literature research, it analyzes the current research status of thematic construction of local documentation and experiences from economically developed regions in China, thereby proposing construction concepts and principles. Seizing the opportunity of establishing a regional local documentation center, the study explores innovative ideas and measures for practicing thematic construction of local documentation: establishing six key themes for Pudong documentation and driving the construction of the Pudong Documentation Center through five major tasks.

Full Text

Abstract

Against the backdrop of evolving service philosophies in the new era, this article addresses the transformational demands facing local literature work, envisions a new strategy for the creation of the Pudong Literature Center, and seeks to open new horizons for local literature development and services. Through a combination of field investigation and literature review, the study analyzes the current state of theme-based local literature construction research and draws lessons from experiences in China's economically developed regions to propose construction concepts and principles. Seizing the opportunity presented by establishing a regional local literature center, the article explores innovative ideas and practical measures for theme-based local literature construction, proposing

the creation of six major themes for Pudong literature to drive the development of the Pudong Literature Center.

Keywords: Pudong Literature Center; local literature; innovative development; theme-based construction

Preamble

Local literature serves as a crucial repository for preserving regional cultural heritage and an important source for inheriting outstanding traditional culture. While managing the relationship between preservation and innovation, libraries must implement development strategies that keep pace with the times in local literature construction and services. As social demands and technological environments evolve, local literature work faces urgent needs to improve effectiveness through innovative development, broaden construction approaches, and achieve transformational development. This has become a pressing priority.

Shanghai Pudong Library, as a district-level public library in Pudong New Area, bears the responsibility of concentrating and serving as an axis for regional local literature. With strong support from higher authorities, the library has proposed the strategic creation of the Pudong Literature Center, forming institutional arrangements in management structure and staffing. The center features an independent department, increased investment in human and financial resources, and a functional orientation focused on regional cultural characteristics, making beneficial attempts at innovative transformation and development of local literature.

1. Origin of Pudong Literature Center Construction

1.1 Transformational Demands in Local Literature Work

The Public Library Law of the People's Republic of China has institutionally incorporated local literature work into district-level management, reducing coordination costs and demonstrating increasing official recognition. However, common challenges persist, including overly broad collection scopes without clear priorities, insufficient staffing, inadequate utilization of social resources and channels, outdated institutional frameworks that haven't evolved with the times, space layout limitations that hinder reading experience improvements, and traditional dissemination and service approaches that fail to fully realize the value of local literature. Both construction investment and service effectiveness remain suboptimal.

To address these issues, Pudong Library has established a Pudong Local Literature Leadership Group and Working Committee headed by the library director, actively collaborated with Pudong New Area authorities to issue local publication deposit regulations, and convened library council meetings to formulate work plans with clear objectives and funding guarantee mechanisms. Through this series of institutional developments, local literature work has been elevated

to the district level, reducing coordination difficulties and providing a sound institutional foundation for local literature construction.

1.2 Literature Review and Practical Experience

Research on local literature and themed libraries has yielded relevant findings. In the local literature field, theoretical research has accumulated but has not kept pace with practical work. Theoretical studies concentrate on basic concepts, attributes, and characteristics, while practical research focuses on domestic experience discussions and typical case studies. Theme-based or specialized local literature work predominantly emphasizes practical research, particularly specialized collection development. In the themed library field, research concentrates on conceptual definitions, attributes, and construction mechanisms, with typical case studies from libraries such as Shenzhen, Dongguan, Hangzhou, Shanghai Library East, Nanjing Library, and Jinling Library.

Pudong Library has conducted its own practices through building characteristic thematic collections, specialized spaces, and thematic services. The self-built Pudong Development and Opening-up Database contains literature dating back to 1990, including tickets, certificates, and physical objects. The library has also created a Pudong Historical Figures Database covering 1,600 individuals, collaborated with the Pudong New Area Health and Family Planning Commission on the Shanghai School of TCM Pudong Base Project, and established inheritance bases for pediatric and other specialties. These initiatives demonstrate new pathways for local literature development and utilization.

2. Path Selection for Local Literature Construction

Through field investigation of libraries in the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, and East China coastal regions, combined with literature research using CNKI, Wanfang Data, and DuXiu Database, this study distills advanced experiences in local literature work and proposes innovative ideas and feasible solutions for theme-based construction, providing theoretical foundations for the Pudong Literature Center's innovative practices.

2.1 Holistic Thinking

Holistic thinking involves understanding and constructing the Pudong Literature Center according to the inherent laws of local literature. By viewing local literature as an integrated whole and dividing it into sub-themes, the coordinated and interconnected development of each theme becomes an organic process. This approach effectively avoids homogenization in literature resource construction and should become a key principle of theme-based construction. The systematic organization and professional research of local literature materials can be more directional and long-term, creating a non-linear, systematic thought process for local literature construction.

2.2 Pioneering Thinking

Pioneering thinking represents creative and innovative approaches that explore new methods and breakthroughs in local literature construction and services. Grounded in regional culture, this mindset seeks new entry points for local literature work, combining specialized collection development with exploratory initiatives. Distinctive local literature collections reflect a region's cultural taste and spirit, revealing the charm of regional culture within specialized collections and providing quality services with local cultural characteristics. By creating themed reading spaces and designing experiential services that encourage reader participation, libraries can leverage the distinctive advantages of local literature, enhance service depth, and improve effectiveness.

2.3 Integration Thinking

Integration thinking represents a symbiotic approach that links various resources related to local literature, merging complementary resources and technologies to create local literature brands. Local literature constitutes an important component of cultural tourism resources. From the perspective of cultural-tourism integration, collaborative development of local literature can be achieved through partnerships with relevant institutions and individual collectors in resource construction, services, and cultural dissemination. This integrated construction helps partners understand its significance, creates shared resource benefits, and enables value-added resource integration systems. The rapid development of digital technology has spawned phenomena like the metaverse, whose virtual reading spaces broaden service design possibilities and enable more profound empowerment of local literature centers.

2.4 Historical Thinking

Local literature serves as a comprehensive record of a region's past and present, functioning as an important carrier and imprint of regional historical culture with the nature of combining history and chronicles. As a window for understanding the past and future, its significance and value can transcend contemporary times. Local literature contains rich historical materials about regional geography, history, and intangible cultural heritage. Understanding its historicity requires comprehensive consideration of historical context and background, reflecting historical and cultural accumulation through historical understanding. This is crucial for regional cultural inheritance and memory, enabling the construction of refined collections with cultural depth.

2.5 Era-Development Thinking

Local literature must not only inherit history but also embrace the new era and meet new requirements for development. Without systems adapted to contemporary development, local literature cannot generate internal momentum for economic and social progress. Theme-based construction should integrate

with era development strategies, aligning with Pudong's development goals and continuously endowing local literature with new connotations. This is reflected in the systematic organization and professional research of materials, value creation through thematic resource integration, and the development of new products such as research compilations and targeted information services. In the new development pattern, local literature should be integrated into mainstream cultural tourism development, creating new values based on professional techniques while ensuring breadth of resource revelation and accuracy of self-built data.

3. Six Major Themes for the First Phase of Pudong Literature Center

Based on the concept of theme-based construction and following principles of feasibility and practicality, the Pudong Literature Center has selected six major themes as priorities for its first-phase construction and display, determined through multiple internal seminars and expert consultation meetings with Shanghai Library, East China Normal University, Shanghai University, and the Shanghai Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau.

3.1 “Pudong Medicine” Theme

The biomedical industry is one of six strategic emerging industries prioritized in Pudong and represents a key focus for Shanghai's development. Pudong possesses a glorious history of traditional Chinese medicine culture, with Shanghai's first traditional Chinese medicine store established in Chuansha. Since the Ming Dynasty, numerous renowned TCM practitioners have emerged in Shanghai, with dozens of TCM schools, some now on the verge of extinction or without successors, their traces only discoverable through literature. The library holds abundant medical literature, including manuscripts by proletarian revolutionary and early CCP leader Zhang Wentian, and has established inheritance bases for pediatric specialties through collaboration with the Shanghai TCM Museum, Pudong New Area Health Commission, and other institutions. This theme will collect comprehensive medical literature resources.

3.2 “Pudong Celebrities” Theme

Pudong has produced numerous historically significant figures, including educational pioneers like Yang Sisheng, battlefield heroes, literati scholars, and industry leaders. The library holds manuscripts of Zhang Wentian, letters and translations of renowned art theorist and translator Fu Lei, and maintains the Pudong Historical Figures Database covering 1,600 individuals. By collaborating with collectors' associations and private collectors, the library can access rich celebrity-related resources to form specialized collections.

3.3 “Pudong Education” Theme

Pudong has led educational development from early 20th-century industrial education to Huang Yanpei’s vocational education advocacy and modern group-based schooling. With over 100 century-old schools and numerous historical materials, the library’s collection includes local chronicles and yearbooks. Collaborations with the Pudong Education Development Research Institute, Pudong Archives, and Pudong High School will enable the presentation of Pudong’s educational development history through cultural database construction.

3.4 “Pudong Literature, History, and Chronicles” Theme

With over a thousand years of civilization along the riverside and coast, Pudong possesses profound historical accumulation as a fusion of Jiangnan culture and Shanghai-style culture. The Pudong Tongxiang Association was Shanghai’s first civic organization engaged in early Pudong development. The library holds more than 100 types of county annals, yearbooks, and local materials, accounting for a significant proportion of the local literature collection. Good cooperative relationships have been established with the Pudong Literature and History Society and Pudong Archives.

3.5 “Pudong Dialect Arts” Theme

As the most important tool for inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, dialect reflects local characteristics and records local customs. However, modernization has pushed dialect arts into crisis. Pudong dialect has distinct regional colors, used in Pudong storytelling and as the origin of Shanghai opera’s eastern township tune. The library has filmed documentaries and can collaborate with the Pudong Cultural and Arts Guidance Center to digitally preserve dialect arts through exhibitions and reading promotion activities.

3.6 “Pudong Development and Opening-up” Theme

As a frontier of reform and opening-up, Pudong’s achievements are a source of pride and a symbol of national reform. The library’s self-built Pudong Development and Opening-up Database contains literature dating back to 1990, including various document types. These materials vividly reflect Pudong’s development journey and represent the best resources for illustrating Pudong’s sample significance and era value.

4. Development Strategies for Pudong Literature Center Construction

4.1 Theme-Based Construction as the Lever

Theme-based construction enables more precise positioning and easier concentration of construction efforts. Using this approach as the main lever, the center will construct theme pavilions in two phases. The first phase will build the

Pudong Celebrities Pavilion and Pudong Medicine Pavilion, which have relatively mature conditions, providing themed reading space services for readers. The second phase will construct the Pudong Education Pavilion, Pudong Literature/History/Chronicles Pavilion, and Pudong Dialect Arts Pavilion. Based on each theme's literary characteristics, experience and service design will break traditional physical space limitations, extending the connotation of physical reading spaces toward composite cultural spaces integrating collection, reading, research, and exchange.

4.2 “1+X” Matrix Model

Relying on Pudong Library's main-branch library mechanism, the “1+X” matrix model positions the Pudong Literature Center as “1” with multiple Pudong literature branch centers as “X.” This systematic project integrates main-branch coordination, with branch centers being extensions or expansions of the main center. Branch centers can feature specialized collections such as Fu Lei culture in Zhoupu, Gaoqiao architectural craftsmanship, or Pudong dragon dancing, forming a three-dimensional matrix pattern.

4.3 Digital Empowerment of Pudong Local Literature

The rapid development of digital technology has spawned phenomena like the metaverse, whose virtual reading spaces will revolutionize traditional local literature services. Smart libraries represent the future direction for Pudong local literature reading. Digital empowerment through metaverse technology will be more profound, creating digital venues for Pudong culture, integrating digital content creation with local literature resources, using technology to stimulate creativity and upgrade services. Relying on the smart library construction project, high-quality Pudong local literature resources will be transformed into digital content through information digitization collection.

4.4 Multi-Measures to Promote Pudong Regional Culture

Regional culture constitutes important content of traditional culture. Relying on local literature resources to promote and inherit regional culture holds significant meaning. The Pudong Literature Theme Pavilion serves as an important carrier for promoting Pudong regional culture. The integrated resource system preserves regional cultural imprints, helping cultivate and promote Pudong regional culture. Reading promotion activities are important methods, while developing cultural and creative products inspired by Pudong elements represents innovative measures. Multiple approaches enhance readers' interest in local culture and promote the integration of Pudong culture and tourism.

5. Conclusion

Theme-based construction of local literature is a systematic project requiring systematic thinking to design the entire process from collection to service. The

“1+X” matrix model promoted at the district level has comprehensive impacts on Pudong culture, revitalizing local literature and creating new paradigms for themed reading. Future directions include introducing social forces into construction and services, establishing a cooperative platform with the main library and branch libraries, feeding back into collection development through reading promotion activities, outreach services, and research product development. As themes continuously enrich and deepen, local literature will achieve full coverage in construction and expanded services through joint efforts from multiple stakeholders.

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

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