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Research on Libraries Empowering the Construction of New Public Cultural Spaces (Postprint)

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Abstract

The empowerment of new types of public cultural spaces by libraries constitutes the core content in constructing a new public cultural infrastructure system and spatial service scenarios. Through methods such as deductive induction and case analysis, this article analyzes the research framework for library empowerment in the construction of new public cultural spaces from three dimensions—theoretical empowerment, practical empowerment, and standard empowerment—and proposes implementation pathways for the future construction of new public cultural spaces in China. Theoretical empowerment includes using third-space theory to guide the main-branch library construction model, employing spatial production theory to direct socialized operation models, and utilizing spatial justice theory to steer urban-rural cultural integration models. Practical manifestations tend toward digital transformation driving the extension of public cultural cloud space scenarios, smart transformation expanding the operation and maintenance of public library spatial changes, and “library city” initiatives facilitating the service transformation of urban cultural spaces. Meanwhile, standard empowerment encompasses relevant standards and specifications for library architecture, library services, and library evaluation. In the future, libraries need to refine their development pathways from four aspects: improving relevant standards, strengthening technological development, aligning with the realities of the cultural undertaking and industry, and constructing a supply system, thereby serving the construction of a modern public cultural service system with Chinese characteristics and independent innovation.

Full Text

Abstract

Library empowerment in the construction of new public cultural spaces constitutes a core element in building a modern public cultural infrastructure system and spatial service ecosystem. This study employs deductive and inductive

methods, combined with case analysis, to explore a research framework for library empowerment in new public cultural space development across three dimensions: theoretical empowerment, practical empowerment, and standard empowerment. The article further proposes implementation pathways for future construction of new public cultural spaces in China. Theoretical empowerment encompasses the third space theory guiding main-branch library construction models, spatial production theory directing socialized operation models, and spatial justice theory guiding urban-rural cultural integration models. Practical modalities include digital transformation driving the extension of public cultural cloud space scenarios, intelligent transformation expanding public library space operations and maintenance, and the “Library City” concept facilitating the transition of urban cultural space services. Standard empowerment covers relevant standards and norms for library architecture, library services, and library assessment. Looking forward, libraries must enhance their development pathways by improving relevant standards, strengthening technological development, aligning with practical industry needs, and constructing a comprehensive supply system to serve the establishment of a modern public cultural service system with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: Library; New Public Cultural Space; Empowerment Framework

1. Theoretical Empowerment for Innovative New Public Cultural Space Service Models

As new public cultural spaces emerge as a key driver for high-quality economic and social development, accelerating cultural facility construction across cities and regions has effectively promoted innovation in spatial service models. Analysis of current practices reveals that theoretical empowerment for new public cultural space service models in China primarily manifests in three approaches: third space theory guiding main-branch library construction, spatial production theory directing socialized operation, and spatial justice theory guiding urban-rural cultural integration.

1.1 Third Space Theory Guiding Main-Branch Library Construction

The third space concept, originally proposed by American scholar Edward Soja, emphasizes open architectural spaces, communication-oriented functions, experience-focused operations, and user freedom. This theory has become a crucial framework for public libraries’ overall transformation in the digital era. Main-branch library systems, as a national public cultural service strategy, institutionalize management and services to extend quality resources and services to grassroots levels, achieving comprehensive coverage. However, main-branch construction still faces challenges including lagging institutional reforms, insufficient understanding, and unreasonable spatial planning. Through third space theory empowerment, libraries can better leverage the coordination

functions of main-branch systems in new public cultural space construction, achieving effective and professional services.

1.2 Spatial Production Theory Directing Socialized Operation Models

Spatial production theory, developed through critique of traditional spatial concepts, emphasizes that social spaces encompass production and reproduction relations, providing appropriate venues for these relationships. As a typical social space, libraries have constructed communities of knowledge production and cultural transmission among staff and users. Socialized operation models, including trusteeship management, cooperative management, and resident self-management, provide important momentum for library development. However, these models face challenges such as unclear contractor responsibilities, weak reader-staff connections, and inadequate management systems. New public cultural spaces, as emerging phenomena, represent crucial entry points for social forces to participate in library construction. Guided by spatial production theory, libraries can restructure existing public cultural spaces, integrate functions, and transform operational mechanisms based on understanding social relations within the space, making them more responsive to social development needs.

1.3 Spatial Justice Theory Guiding Urban-Rural Cultural Integration

Spatial justice theory seeks equitable approaches to spatial allocation, emphasizing spatial difference, fluidity, and inclusiveness. It has become a new growth point for justice theory and a hot topic in Chinese library research. The core principle requires that production, distribution, and exchange of social space and resources conform to objective social development laws. Urban-rural integration has become a primary goal for rural public cultural service development. While new public cultural spaces provide new governance tools for urban-rural cultural integration, challenges such as uneven spatial resource allocation and funding imbalances persist. By applying spatial justice theory to rural public cultural space layout, recognizing economic and educational disparities between urban and rural areas, and ensuring all citizens' equitable access to cultural resources, libraries can promote harmonious development of urban and rural public cultural spaces, advancing high-quality development of rural public cultural services.

1.4 Digital Technology Empowering Urban-Rural Cultural Integration

Digital technology can break public dependence on physical spaces and transform traditional cultural participation methods. Public cultural clouds, as new public digital cultural service models, effectively address issues of fragmented service resources and low effectiveness. The “Opinions on Promoting High-Quality Development of Digital Culture Industry” and other national policies have accelerated urban-rural cultural integration. By creating aesthetically pleasing public cultural spaces and extending service scenarios, digital transformation

has contributed new approaches to urban-rural public cultural service integration and sustainability.

2. Practical Empowerment for Innovative New Public Cultural Space Service Modalities

2.1 Digital Transformation Driving Public Cultural Cloud Space Extension

In the digital era, public cultural clouds have emerged as important platforms for public cultural services, offering integrated, shared, and open characteristics that provide information publishing, querying, and other services. Compared to traditional models, cultural clouds can attract increasing user participation through rich activity forms. However, library virtual spaces still face challenges including inadequate resource cooperation, low user engagement, and incomplete resource coverage. Public cultural clouds provide valuable references for library virtual space construction, enhancing service models and improving public cultural service levels.

2.2 Intelligent Transformation Expanding Public Library Space Operations

Under digital and intelligent transformation, public libraries have entered a new development stage. The “Guiding Opinions on Promoting Healthy Development of Smart Cities” encourages development of mobile internet-based tourism service systems and intelligent public service platforms. Investigation of domestic public cultural space upgrades reveals primary modalities including new public reading spaces, future community cultural spaces, national cultural parks, and urban-rural characteristic cultural spaces. These practices are significant for creating new public cultural spaces, meeting growing public cultural activity demands, and promoting high-quality development.

Emerging technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence are guiding intelligent upgrades in public libraries. Smart libraries provide immersive borrowing, AI-based comprehensive applications, and precision services like intelligent reading experiences. The “Library City” concept, through unified municipal planning, has established citywide coverage in megacities, creating resource-rich reading networks serving all citizens. Examples include Shanghai Library East’s virtual robot assistants and fully reservation-based systems, and unmanned smart bookstores in Xiong’an New Area using facial recognition and IoT technologies for precise book location.

2.3 “Library City” Facilitating Urban Cultural Space Service Transition

The “Library City” concept represents a uniquely Chinese library service system development. Cities like Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing have strengthened policy and legal guarantees, leading the nation in service efficiency. These cities have built cultural complexes integrating book reading, art exhibitions, cultural activities, and learning sharing functions. By breaking temporal and spatial limitations through smart study rooms and creating new urban cultural landmarks, the “Library City” strategy has transformed traditional cultural spaces into new public cultural spaces, meeting diverse cultural needs and advancing socialized public cultural services.

3. Standard Empowerment for Innovative New Public Cultural Space Service Processes

Standards, as normative policies, provide guidance for service content, environment, and other aspects of public cultural institutions. Under library industry promotion, various regions have issued local library governance standards, requiring digital and intelligent technologies to enhance service effectiveness.

3.1 Library Building Standards Regulating Spatial Planning and Design

Libraries are crucial institutions for improving national cultural literacy and social civilization. As library construction deepens, building standards have become important governance tools for scientific and standardized development. National and local building standard systems have gradually improved, guiding spatial function design and operations management. Recent standards include the “Public Library Building Design Code” and various local standards such as “Future Community Public Cultural Space Construction Specifications” (DB3301/T 0352—2021) [Figure 1: see original paper], “24-Hour Urban Study Room Construction and Service Specifications,” and “Neighborhood Library Construction and Service Specifications.” These standards provide basic references for site selection, design, and spatial structure, effectively guiding new public cultural space planning and enhancing service effectiveness.

3.2 Library Service Standards Regulating Spatial Management and Operations

Libraries represent public knowledge and cultural spaces with special cultural value. Service standardization helps ensure quality services and promote balanced public cultural services. China’s first national-level public cultural service standard, “Public Library Service Standards” (GB/T 28220-2011), initially

established a national public library service standard system. Subsequent standards have expanded to business specifications, supervision, and assessment. Recent service standards include “Public Library Reference Consulting Service Standards,” “Community Library Service Standards,” and “Urban Study Room Construction and Service Standards” [Figure 2: see original paper]. These standards provide guidance for new public cultural space service models, promoting equalization and standardization. For instance, Weihai’s “Urban Study Room Service Standards” (DB3710/T 115-2020) provides specific construction requirements from five dimensions: service resources, service management, service security, service supervision, and feedback.

3.3 Library Assessment Standards Regulating Spatial Evaluation and Optimization

Assessment standards are crucial for promoting high-quality library development. Central-level assessment standards provide detailed regulations on infrastructure, business development, and special group services, offering important references for optimizing new public cultural spaces. The “Rural New Community Creation Evaluation Standards” (DB13/T 5628-2022) [Figure 3: see original paper] constructs evaluation indicators across four dimensions: infrastructure, community management, services, and sustainable development. These assessment standards, aligned with national library evaluation criteria, provide important content references for developing region-specific new public cultural space assessment standards.

4. Innovation Pathways for New Public Cultural Space Services

New public cultural space development requires comprehensive consideration of diversified public cultural needs. Through library empowerment, innovation must advance through improved management service standards, strengthened smart technology development, alignment with local cultural industries, and construction of balanced, accessible supply systems.

4.1 Improving Spatial Management Service Standards and Norms

While standards ensure high-quality development, China’s new public cultural space construction remains in exploration and pilot stages without unified national standards. Various provinces and cities have issued localized policy documents based on actual needs. National departments should continuously improve standard construction, establishing unified frameworks for infrastructure, technology application, digital resources, and operations management to comprehensively enhance service quality. Recent policies like the “Digital Economy Development Plan” and “Opinions on Promoting National Cultural Digitization Strategy” provide important support for standardization.

4.2 Strengthening Spatial Smart Technology Development and Application

High-quality public cultural service development requires deep integration of culture and technology. The rapid development of digital, networked, and intelligent technologies has transformed traditional resource supply and service models. Libraries must seize opportunities presented by AI, holographic imaging, and metaverse technologies to build smart public cultural service support systems, strengthen resource construction and content supply, and develop integrated online-offline digital cultural experience scenarios. Without innovation in collection and facility supply methods, public cultural supply-demand imbalances will hinder healthy service system development.

4.3 Aligning with Regional Cultural Industry Development Needs

New public cultural space construction must follow local economic and cultural development levels, continuously enriching quality cultural products and services to meet diverse spiritual and cultural needs. National policies like the “Opinions on Promoting High-Quality Public Cultural Service Development” encourage exploring new public cultural space models suited to local conditions. While economically developed regions like the Yangtze River Delta and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei have numerous new spaces, other regions require further development. Aligning with local cultural industries and creating sustainable implementation pathways are crucial for building modern public cultural service systems.

4.4 Constructing Balanced and Accessible Spatial Supply Systems

As of 2022, China has built various new public cultural spaces, with library main-branch systems covering over 95% of county-level regions and cultural center branch systems covering 93%. However, the supply system faces unprecedented complexity from increasing public cultural demands and diversified governance stakeholders. Establishing government-led, multi-stakeholder collaborative governance systems and constructing balanced, accessible supply systems are essential for addressing the contradiction between growing spiritual and cultural needs and insufficient public cultural space quantity.

5. Conclusion

Improving public service levels, enhancing equity and accessibility, and solidly advancing common prosperity are important emphases in the 20th Party Congress report. Through strategic policy guidance, standard norms, and institutional guarantees, China’s new public cultural spaces continuously enhance their capacity to serve national strategies during the integration of regional spatial modalities and digital technology empowerment. This study analyzes

the library empowerment framework for new public cultural space construction from theoretical, practical, and standard dimensions, proposing implementation pathways for the new development stage to promote high-quality new public cultural space services and accelerate modern public cultural service system construction. Future research should investigate formation mechanisms of regional new public cultural space modalities, high-quality development paths, and system construction methods in the digital intelligence era, providing theoretical foundations for deeply understanding public cultural service system construction.

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