

The innovative development of libraries requires research-driven approaches.

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Abstract

The history of library development is a history of continuous discovery, innovation, and practice. From ancient book repositories to modern public libraries, spanning modern physical libraries, entering the digital library era, and up to the current construction of intelligent libraries and smart libraries, it continuously transcends existing boundaries, achieves breakthroughs, and even subverts traditions. The forces driving library innovation and development are diverse and complex, including external factors such as political environment, economic development, cultural prosperity, technological innovation, and educational strength, as well as internal factors such as library strategic planning formulation, management mechanism innovation, business model transformation, spatial reconstruction and remodeling, information technology empowerment, and enhancement of librarians' professional capabilities. Faced with the uncontrollability of external factors, libraries are often powerless, but they possess a considerable degree of initiative in shaping and optimizing internal factors. Within a given external factor environment, the innovative development of libraries stems from the active operation of internal factors. And research becomes the primary engine and driving force for these internal factors.

Full Text

Preamble

The history of library development is one of continuous discovery, innovation, and practice. From ancient book repositories to modern public libraries, through the era of physical libraries, into the digital library age, and up to today's construction of intelligent and smart libraries, the field has consistently transcended existing boundaries, achieved breakthroughs, and even disrupted traditions.

The forces driving library innovation are diverse and complex, encompassing external factors such as political environment, economic development, cultural

prosperity, technological innovation, and educational strength, as well as internal factors including strategic planning, management mechanism reform, business model transformation, space reconstruction, information technology empowerment, and enhancement of librarians' professional capacities.

Faced with uncontrollable external factors, libraries often find themselves powerless, yet they possess considerable agency in shaping and optimizing internal factors. Within a given external environment, library innovation and development stem from the active operation of these internal elements, with research serving as the primary engine and driving force.

Library research differs fundamentally from that of pure academic institutions such as university departments and research organizations. It is not limited to applying for projects and publishing papers, nor is it merely for professional promotion and advancement. Instead, it is deeply rooted in and focused on generating insights and solutions for the individual library and the entire library profession. This research emphasizes application-oriented studies, supplemented by theoretical research, concentrating on practical problems while maintaining a forward-looking perspective.

Library innovation is first researched, then practiced. Library reform, transformation, and innovation are all built upon a foundation of research. A library's ability to innovate and develop is invariably supported by strong research capabilities. For contemporary libraries, research capacity determines the level of innovation, which in turn determines development quality, speed, and the library's status and influence in society.

Regarding library research work, the following thoughts and recommendations are offered:

1. Enhancing Understanding of Library Research

The *Regulations for University Libraries* positions university libraries as academic service institutions, reflecting that they must emphasize both service and scholarly characteristics to distinguish themselves from pure academic institutions. For contemporary libraries, without research-driven academic excellence, there can be no innovation-driven service capacity. The entire organization must strengthen its understanding of the library's positioning and nature, using research to drive library innovation and innovation to drive library development. The higher a library's status and level, and the more complex its tasks, the greater the demands on its services, which consequently means higher demands on its research. Research capability and library development are positively correlated and mutually reinforcing.

2. Conducting Organized Research

Compared with pure academic institutions, libraries can secure limited research projects, funding, and resources. Moreover, librarians must devote most of

their time and energy to specific operational work, making research essentially “part-time” in nature. As an organization, libraries should concentrate their limited human, material, and financial resources, strengthen top-level research design, fully mobilize librarians’ research enthusiasm and creativity, focus on important problems needing resolution in the library field (especially within the individual library), establish research teams, actively pursue various research projects both inside and outside the university, support the growth of research-capable individuals, and enhance the overall research capacity of the library.

3. Emphasizing Applied Research

Distinguishing itself from pure academic institutions, librarians’ research topics should appropriately concentrate on practical and forward-looking problems urgently needing resolution for the library’ s current and future development, striving to integrate theory with practice and emphasizing applied research to propose genuine, practical, and exceptional solutions for existing problems and dilemmas. Evaluation should not be based solely on papers or publications. Regardless of the research output form—research reports, consultation proposals, think tank reports, planning designs, etc.—as long as it contributes to promoting library innovation and development and enhancing service levels, it should be strongly supported. Special encouragement should be given to librarians to propose innovative business practices based on their own positions and practical experience.

4. Continuously Improving Librarians’ Research Capabilities

Although librarians have heavy operational workloads, they must also dedicate adequate time (mainly outside regular working hours) to actively conduct research. For librarians, research is not optional, nor should it be motivated solely by utilitarian considerations (such as professional titles, advancement, or awards), but rather by the needs of their positions and the development of the library profession. The ability to conduct research effectively is crucial. Research capability is the ability to discover, analyze, and solve problems, reflecting innovative capacity. Only librarians with strong research capabilities can develop better operational capabilities and become experts. The innovative development of libraries requires cultivating a large number of expert librarians.

5. Creating Favorable Conditions for Librarian Research

Libraries must value librarians’ research, organize targeted research activities, and provide necessary support in terms of human resources, materials, and finances. Librarians’ research is not merely an individual matter but a library-wide concern, essential for the library’ s innovative development and an important manifestation of its capabilities. Libraries should strengthen training in research capabilities, select promising young talents for specialized further

study at universities, participate in professional capacity enhancement training, attend research and academic writing workshops, establish in-house research projects, secure university-level projects, and support applications for Ministry of Education, National Social Science, and National Natural Science Foundation projects. Librarians with outstanding research achievements should receive appropriate rewards, cultivating a cohort of librarians who understand operations, can conduct research, and are capable of innovation.

6. Emphasizing Effectiveness Evaluation

All investment requires output. Library research depends on inputs of human resources, finances, materials, and time, and must also objectively examine and measure its output to create optimal input-output efficiency. Library research outputs manifest in securing projects at various levels, publishing textbooks and monographs, producing numerous academic papers, providing think tank reports for schools or governments, offering consultation suggestions for industries, and obtaining patents or software copyrights. As long as these achievements benefit the individual library or the development of the library profession, they are important and valuable, and their impact will certainly be significant and far-reaching.

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

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.