

Several Key Issues in the Innovative Development of Public Libraries During the 15th Five-Year Plan Period

Authors: Chu Jingli

Date: 2025-06-28T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

For the ‘15th Five-Year Plan’ period and future development, public libraries should align with national strategic needs and their own inherent characteristics, focusing on solving problems in three key areas: continuously strengthening foundational business development, further emphasizing innovative development design, and continuously enhancing librarian capacity building, thereby achieving high-quality development of public libraries during the ‘15th Five-Year Plan’ and beyond.

Full Text

Key Issues in the Innovative Development of Public Libraries During the 15th Five-Year Plan Period

National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences; Department of Information Resources Management, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences

Abstract

Facing the 15th Five-Year Plan period and future development, public libraries should address three key issues by aligning with national strategic demands and their own institutional characteristics: continuously strengthening foundational business construction, further emphasizing innovative development design, and consistently enhancing librarian capacity building, thereby achieving high-quality development during the 15th Five-Year Plan and beyond.

Keywords: Public libraries; 15th Five-Year Plan; innovative development; strategic planning

Facing the 15th Five-Year Plan period and future development, public libraries must, while adhering to their own institutional attributes, align with the “Digital China” strategy and the “Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of the National Cultural Digitalization Strategy,” further implement the “Public Library Law of the People’s Republic of China,” and integrate into local science, technology, economic, and social development frameworks. By demonstrating their responsibility and contributions to society, enhancing their influence and value among government, communities, and the public, libraries can secure greater support and achieve a virtuous cycle of investment and performance. This will enable public libraries to play greater roles and demonstrate greater value during national and local 15th Five-Year Plan periods and beyond.

1. Continuously Strengthening Foundational Library Business Construction

For the 15th Five-Year Plan period, libraries (including public libraries) must build upon their 14th Five-Year Plan achievements to continuously strengthen foundational business construction. Such construction can only be enhanced, never weakened, yet it must also evolve with the times—seeking constant reform and deepening foundational library operations while solidifying the basics.

1.1 Library Building and Space Reconfiguration

The library building is the most important physical facility of a library, serving as its venue and space, as well as a city’s landmark, calling card, and image—aligning with the city’s cultural taste, functions, and status. The size, condition, and functional configuration of the building directly impact service delivery. Building considerations include its existence, scale, whether to expand or renovate, and whether to undertake functional transformations. Libraries with adequate facilities should consider space reconfiguration based on emerging needs, such as creating or developing discussion spaces, maker spaces, recitation areas, parent-child reading zones, and local cultural exhibition spaces.

1.2 Document Resource Construction

Document resources constitute a critical service guarantee for libraries. These resources must be not only numerous but also high-quality; quantity alone is insufficient. They must match user needs, satisfying demands for research, teaching, and general reading across all user groups. Libraries should balance print and digital resources (the “print-digital balance”), fully utilize open access and preprint resources, scientifically organize and deeply reveal resources, and construct a well-structured, efficiently-serving document resource system. Concurrently, collaborative models such as remote stacks, intelligent warehouses, interlibrary loan, and document delivery should be considered. Most importantly, libraries must translate resource potential into service reality.

1.3 In-Library Services

In-library services are foundational to libraries. Whenever patrons visit, they should receive attentive, warm, thoughtful, and home-like reception and service. These services serve as a window to the library, forming users' "first impression" and shaping the library's service image. Libraries must attract more visitors by strengthening service etiquette training for librarians, establishing good professional images, and improving professional competence. A relatively complete in-library service system and business standards should be constructed.

1.4 Reading Promotion

Reading promotion has always been a crucial business component of libraries, reflecting their service characteristics and serving as an important means of collection revelation. Against the backdrop of the nation's strong advocacy for nationwide reading, libraries must further strengthen reading promotion efforts, establishing dedicated departments, positions, and funding when necessary. By collaborating with relevant social departments and planning diverse reading promotion activities, libraries can contribute to the "Scholarly China" initiative and cultivate nationwide reading habits and social ethos through concrete actions.

1.5 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, derived from corporate culture, exists in any organization and encompasses vision and goals, atmosphere and spirit, core competitiveness, and innovative development momentum. Its formation involves both long-standing traditional factors and continuous efforts by management and staff to refine consensus. A strong organizational culture fosters librarians' drive for excellence and generates lasting innovation motivation.

1.6 Librarian Team Building

Among all factors influencing library development, librarian team building is paramount. Without a competent librarian team, development is impossible regardless of other favorable conditions. Libraries must strengthen professionalization by recruiting talents with library and information science and other disciplinary backgrounds, systematically conducting planned training, and emphasizing the cultivation of leading business backbone personnel, especially department heads. The issue is not merely quantity but knowledge structure and professional competence. Librarians must be adept at using technological tools to enhance service effectiveness.

2. Further Emphasizing Innovative Development Design

For the 15th Five-Year Plan period, public libraries must continuously seek new breakthroughs and focal points while consolidating foundational business construction, driving development through greater innovation and demonstrating

public libraries' value and social contributions.

2.1 Culture-Tourism Integration

Following the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2018, the general principle of “integrate where appropriate, integrate to the fullest extent” was established, and the 20th Party Congress report explicitly proposed the strategic deployment of “promoting deep integration of culture and tourism.” This strategy has formed a two-way empowerment model of “shaping tourism through culture and highlighting culture through tourism” in practice. Libraries must find entry points for culture-tourism integration, striving to become check-in destinations for tourists and the public through initiatives such as displaying rare and precious books, exhibiting local characteristic resources, digitally presenting documentary heritage, showcasing celebrity manuscripts, and organizing themed exhibitions.

2.2 Digital and OA Resource Construction

As publishing models shift from print to digital (and even purely digital), and as library subscription models move toward open access, libraries' resource construction policies and models must also transform. Libraries should balance print and digital resources, ensure print collections, increase the proportion of digital resources, and serve in-library patrons while also procuring databases to provide network services for remote users through digital libraries. Particular attention must be paid to acquiring increasingly abundant open access (OA) resources, preprint resources (such as ChinaXiv), and other free resources for integration into the collection system.

2.3 Smart Library Construction

The state has begun planning smart library construction, yet this remains a long and arduous task. If smart libraries were not considered during the 14th Five-Year Plan, they must be incorporated into the 15th Five-Year Plan. Smart libraries are not merely intelligent libraries; they require wisdom-led services, provide intelligent knowledge services, and integrate organically into smart cities. While no mature models exist, libraries must strengthen experimentation and exploration to evolve from physical and digital libraries to smart libraries.

2.4 Knowledge Services

Libraries must prioritize “service as king,” gradually moving toward knowledge services and intelligent knowledge services. While providing quality public services, public libraries should actively explore potential and implicit needs, continuously expanding the breadth, deepening the content, and updating the means of knowledge services. This includes providing consulting services for government agencies, intelligence services for researchers, competitive intelligence

for enterprises, and think tank services for decision-makers. Through knowledge service practice, libraries can continuously enhance their status and influence.

2.5 AI Technology Empowerment

AI development is remarkably rapid, seemingly ubiquitous and omnipotent. Libraries must emphasize AI technology adoption, delegating to AI what it can do while librarians focus on what AI cannot. AI excels at routine, procedural, process-oriented, and transactional tasks, whereas librarians must engage in more creative, innovative, emotional, and interactive work. AI and librarians should mutually support and complement each other. Ignoring AI development and application will inevitably render libraries incompatible with the era's progress.

2.6 Digital Humanities

The development of digital and AI technologies presents new opportunities for public libraries to engage in digital humanities. With powerful knowledge organization capabilities, digital humanities can not only enable knowledge mining, association, and services for collection documents (especially ancient books) but also provide digital memory for regional historical development, digitally recreating important events in regional evolution such as “Beijing Memory” and “Chifeng Memory.” Digital humanities holds broad application prospects in public library innovative development.

2.7 Community Culture

Public libraries grow within communities and must integrate closely into social and cultural construction, becoming important drivers of community cultural development. They should actively support community public reading, public education, cultural popularization, and civic literacy (such as health literacy), creating citizen reading rooms, urban reading spaces, and themed libraries throughout cities. Building more libraries or self-service libraries in airports, hotels, and parks enhances intimacy with citizens and brings public libraries into people's daily lives.

2.8 Research-Driven Innovation

Libraries have traditionally undervalued research, viewing it as merely related to personal interests (such as professional title evaluation). In future development, librarians without research capability will lack innovation capability. Research ability entails the capacity to pose, analyze, and solve problems—the essence of continuous thinking and innovation. Library innovative development is fundamentally built upon research. Competition among libraries is essentially competition in librarians' research and innovation capabilities. Research-driven innovation inevitably influences libraries' sustainable innovative development.

3. Continuously Strengthening Librarian Capacity Building

Library innovative development is influenced by many factors, among which the most important and fundamental is people (librarians). Strong librarian capacity enables better library innovation. Success depends on human effort; without a competent librarian team, innovative development remains a castle in the air.

3.1 Leading Talent Team Building

In libraries, leading talents refer to directors, deputy directors for business/technology, department heads, etc. They are the soul of the library. With a team of leading talents, the entire librarian workforce becomes energized and can be mobilized as a whole. Leading talents can be acquired through recruitment, introduction, and cultivation. Libraries must be adept at identifying leading talents and providing them with platforms. Fundamentally, leading talents emerge from and grow through competition in library innovative development. They represent not merely titles, designations, or honors, but rather innovative capability.

3.2 Providing Effective Incentives for Talent

Management theory holds that people require motivation. Library managers must provide opportunities for frontline business and management backbone personnel to demonstrate their abilities while also giving them due rewards, both material and spiritual. Incentive measures are diverse and should be adapted to local conditions and capabilities. A dedicated librarian (talent) working selflessly deserves greater consideration, fostering a fair competition and innovation-oriented cultural atmosphere. Egalitarianism only undermines the innovation development ecosystem of libraries.

3.3 Emphasizing Research and Innovation Capacity Development

Research and innovation capabilities are neither innate nor achieved overnight. Individuals with such capabilities must first undergo rigorous scientific training, possessing scientific thinking, critical spirit, academic norms, innovation awareness, and mastery of rigorous scientific research methods and techniques. Libraries should recruit more master's and doctoral graduates with backgrounds in library and information science and scientific research, actively undertake library-level and higher-level research projects, and integrate these with the library's development issues and practical needs.

3.4 Cultivating Expert Librarians

The strength of a librarian team lies not in its size but in the number of expert librarians. Expert librarians are creative and innovative, experienced, wise, and

adept at solving complex problems in library development and those raised by users. Their status is not determined by professional titles but by high recognition of their “expert” identity by users and peers. With compressed library staffing, expert librarians become particularly precious. A library with a cohort of expert librarians gains greater status and earns more trust and recognition from users and society.

Facing the 15th Five-Year Plan and future development, each library’ s tasks and implementation paths may differ. Most importantly, based on analysis of the broader environment and user needs, libraries must seize development opportunities, identify key issues requiring resolution for their 15th Five-Year Plan innovative development, adapt to changes, anchor strategic goals, actively plan development, prioritize innovation layout, and continuously seek breakthroughs. By contributing to social development while achieving their own high-quality development, libraries can realize synchronized resonance and cultivate a better development ecosystem.

(Note: This article will be published in the third issue of 2025 in *Libraries and Lifelong Learning* by the Capital Library)

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.