

Survey of Reading Promotion of Public Libraries in China

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ABSTRACT

Reading promotion is a key service of the public library. This article investigates the current state of reading promotion in public libraries in China. There were 86 public libraries chosen as a sample. The research finds that Chinese libraries have been paying more and more attention to the importance of reading promotion. A variety of reading promotion services and programs are being carried out, including reading festivals, booklists, reading contests, reading communication and lectures on reading. Public libraries tend to apply more towards the digital platform when promoting reading. Public libraries have cooperated with NGO and business fields to promote reading. This study suggests more can be done to improve the service, including improving the librarian's knowledge of genre books, enhancing reading communication, deeply investigating measurement of reading promotion, and the influence of contracting out reading programs.

KEYWORDS

China, Public Library, Reading Advisory, Reading Promotion, Survey

INTRODUCTION

Before the 21st century, Reading Advisory and Promotion was not a main service or program in public libraries in China, though it is not new to public librarians. Wuxi, the former director of the Reading Promotion Committee of Library Society of China, once pointed out that reading promotion is a marginal service, and always a service as supplemental and occasional (Wuxi, 2015). When the 21st century arrived, the situation changed. The central government of China began to focus more and more on public culture infrastructure to meet the public's needs, and invested more on public culture facilities, including the public library. Many public libraries' space, furniture, buildings, and collection have improved greatly, which built a strong foundation to provide reading services and programs. The Library Society of China (LSC) makes a great effort to push reading services in public libraries. In 2006 LSC founded the Scientific Promotion and Reading Instruction Committee, which had 6 divisions at that time. In 2010, the Committee changed the name to the Reading Promotion Committee and there was an increase from 6 to 15 divisions. In 2015, the number of divisions increased to 22. The Committee published a series of textbooks on reading promotion, held workshops to train

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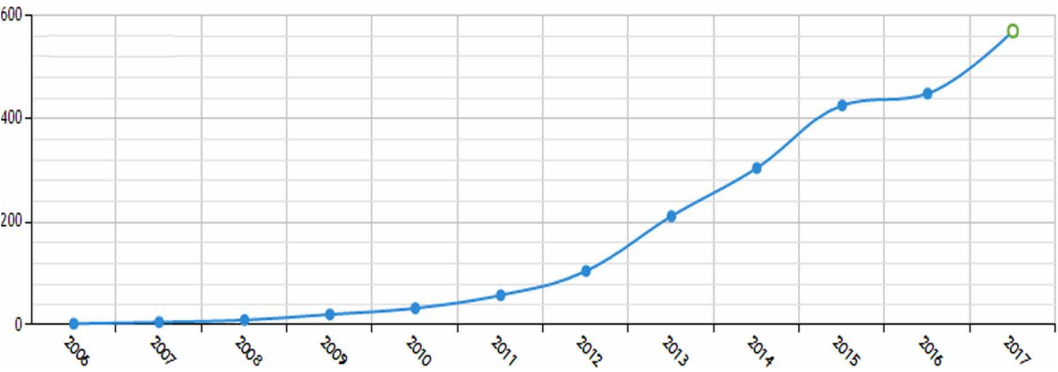
librarians, and set up awards on reading promotion. Due to the emphasis of the central government and the professional efforts of LSC, reading promotion in the public libraries of China developed very rapidly. It has become a fundamental and important service in public libraries. On the annual conference of LSC, the seminars about reading promotion are the most popular ones among all the seminars. Since 2015, the Reading Promotion Committee has held 9 training workshops on different topics about reading promotion, and more than 300 librarians took part in each workshop. In the 6th run of public library assessment which was held in 2017, indications about reading promotion weigh more. As to city level public libraries, reading promotion and social education scores 70, while reference scores 30. This is also a sign that reading promotion is more and more important in public libraries in China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chinese, “reading promotion” is “阅读推广” and “public library” is “公共图书馆.” A subject search with these two words was conducted in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure, the largest academic article database in China). The first article was published in 2006. Since 2012, more than 100 articles were published each year, and in 2016, the number of publications increased to 442. This indicates that scholars in the LIS field are paying more attention to reading promotion in public libraries.

Chinese scholar’s research on reading promotion in public libraries focuses on three aspects. The first is about a specific library’s reading promotion practice, such as Liaoning Province Library (Meng, 2013), Hubei Province Library (Li, 2014), Suzhou Library (Xu, Jin, & Zhang, 2014), and Ningbo Library (Liu & Hong, 2017). Another focus is to investigate the reading promotion practice of public libraries in special areas, such as the Pearl River Delta region (Dai, 2017), Shanxi Province (Li, 2016), Hefei area in Anhui Province (Cheng, 2017), Guangzhou area (Li, 2014), and Dongguan area (Wen, 2017). Besides the focuses mentioned above, there is also research on special kinds of reading promotion, such as survey of story time of picture books in public libraries (Feng li, 2017), exploration on reading salons (Fu, 2014), investigation of reading journal of public libraries (Li, 2014), and book recommendations of public libraries on the web (Xu, 2014). There is also an English paper on reading promotion in public libraries in China, and it is mainly about book recommendations and reading interest of Chinese public library users (Sun & Xie, 2016). All these researches give the study information, data and ideas to further investigate the current state, characteristics and trends of reading promotion in Chinese public libraries as a whole.

Figure 1. Publications on reading promotion in public libraries, 2006-2017



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