

Two Case Studies of Topic-Related Multidimensional Reading Services in China

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a brief summary of the development of topic-related multidimensional reading services in academic libraries in China. The authors mainly introduce the methods and practices that Tongji University Library has developed for this type of service. The authors also include a briefing about a multidimensional reading service event called “Reading the city Jinling - the Red Mansions” which was hosted by Nanjing Agriculture University Library in 2017. Theoretical and practical explorations suggest that academic libraries could integrate more resources from different areas to promote a deeper understanding of reading, and to make more contributions to knowledge transformation and innovation in China.

KEYWORDS

Case Study, Cultural Heritage, Library, Reading Promotion, Topic-Related Multidimensional Reading

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important way to acquire knowledge and gain wisdom. It is also an important channel for a country to develop its “cultural spirit” and inherited civilization. The Chinese people have a tradition of reading for thousands of years. They consider books as one of the most precious heritages, and pass this tradition to the younger generations. Currently, the Chinese government takes reading as an important measure to build a learning society. A nationwide reading campaign was initiated in 2006 with the goal that every resident will read in their life time. Nationwide Reading has been identified as a national development policy. Several regulations have already been made and legislation is being considered to guarantee the campaign’s success (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, 2016).

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A reading service is a traditional service provided by libraries. Encouraged by the “Nationwide Reading” policy, traditional libraries responded to this policy with enthusiasm, and organized various types of reading activities. The Library Society of China has set up two committees to promote nationwide reading: the Guidance Committee for the Popularization of Science and Reading, and the Reading Promotion Committee.

Libraries also actively extend the connotation of reading. Fan (2014) analyzed the basic theory of reading promotion and the new function of reading so that all citizens, including the people with reading difficulties, can enjoy reading. Zhang and Fan (2015) studied how China’s public libraries should provide the reading service for visually impaired readers. In comparison, Western libraries go even further. Robertson (2008) introduced a healthy reading scheme to treat readers with mental health problems. Using books and reading, librarians make libraries a healthy workplace to provide therapy-based wellness programs (Tukhareli, 2017).

Readers not only read on their own, they also interact with each other. Different reading services, including the introductions of classic bibliography, exhibitions, lectures (including on-site), performance (including film and television documentary), are combined together. Besides spontaneous reading, librarians are trying to guide readers to read about a specific topic and discuss what they acquired from their reading. Readers can attend shows, listen to lectures, watch movies, read classic literature, enjoy music, and interact with famous experts of this topic. The traditional paper reading or electronic reading evolved into a new reading model combining sound, light, shape, and other forms. The new reading model is called the “topic-related multidimensional reading service.”

Chinese academic libraries nowadays are trying to develop the topic-related multidimensional reading service. In this contribution, we used Tongji University Library and Nanjing Agricultural University Library as two cases to illustrate how Chinese academic libraries provide this service to its readers. Figure 1 shows the location of the two libraries.

Figure 1. Location of two libraries



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