

Research on the Uniqueness and Characteristic Development of University Library Cultural Services: Practices at Wuhan University Library

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ABSTRACT

Characteristic development is a process of intentionally solidifying and cultivating something's uniqueness. This article analyzes the uniqueness of university library cultural services in comparison with those provided by other service institutions. Furthermore, this article reveals the differences between cultural services and other types of library services. Based on these analyses, this constructive research finds a way to achieve cultural services' characteristic development by taking service factors as the breakthrough point. The main strategies include building a professional service team, focusing on user demands, constructing characteristic resources, optimizing service spaces and facilities, and upgrading service brands; all of these strategies should be developed round the issue of culture. Finally, corresponding to the above strategies, this paper article the measures and effects of Wuhan University Library cultural services to share their experience.

KEYWORDS

Brand Building, Characteristic Development, Cultural Services, Service Factors, University Library, Wuhan University Library

INTRODUCTION

By reflecting upon the process though which ancient book collection buildings developed to modern libraries, we could easily find the connotation of library service has been revealed and established by a visible change. With the advent of the digital age and a sharp increase of virtual resources and mobile services, the library as a physical entity has gone beyond the single function of literature resources collection, and gradually begun a multi-functional development (Lu, Wang, Sha, Lyu, & Liu, 2014). Cultural service is one of the important directions among those; it refers to various types of cultural support provided by service institutions for social cultural practice, including the provision of cultural facilities, the organization of cultural activities, the promotion of cultural information and the collection of cultural products. For one thing, libraries are preservation institutions of human culture: their nature implies the mission of utilizing resources to carry out this type of service. For

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another, libraries are social places and living organisms influenced by their environment; innovating kinds of services is necessary to deal with the question: “do we still need libraries when more and more information is available on the net?” (Berndtson, 2012).

However, affected by traditional ideas, most university libraries still emphasize the support of teaching and scientific research, leading to a marginalization of cultural services in the service system. Many libraries have launched cultural services in the name of classical reading and cultural lectures, whether they realize it or not. It is undeniable that the existing services have a tendency towards homogenization. Contrast with homogenization is a characteristic development. So how to understand the “characteristic development”? Maybe it is better to explain in a Chinese context. According to the *Annotation to Origin of Chinese Characters* (Duan, 2013), the Chinese character “Te” is interpreted as males, odd numbers and extended into something alone, making up the basic meaning of Chinese word “Du Te” (equivalent to “uniqueness”) or “Te Se” (equivalent to “characteristic”). The characteristics of a person or thing are the qualities or features that belong to them and make them recognizable, relying on and reflecting their core values. They are determined by congenital conditions and uniqueness and shaped and promoted by acquired environment. Thus, “characteristic development” means a process of intentionally solidifying and cultivating something’s uniqueness. It is key to survival the thing being characterized; this is also applicable to libraries (Pan, 2008).

There are some university libraries that did have achieved satisfactory results in cultural services. Wuhan University Library is one of examples in China; it got the title of “National Reading Promotion Base” in 2016 and won the International Marketing Award presented by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) in 2017. The library was founded in 1917. After several expansions, the new central library is located in the center of campus at the foot of Luojia Mountain (a symbol of the university) in Wuhan of Hubei Province (Figure 1). The central library and three branch libraries occupy a total area of 77,389 square meters. Wuhan University Library mainly serves the teachers and students of the university, but people outside can also access the library by registering.

Figure 1. The location of Wuhan University Library



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