Chapter VII

Information Resources Development in China: History, Present Situation and Problem Discussion

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the history and current situation of information resources development in China, with emphasis on the introduction of various initiatives underway and the initial impact of some information resources development policies of the Chinese government. It also analyzes problems in China’s information resources development and raises possible solutions.
INTRODUCTION

Under the promotion of the international information technology revolution, China has been experiencing an upsurge in information development since the last decade of the 20th century. Information infrastructure construction keeps a rapid pace in development. The ownership of telephones, cellular phones and computers has been increasing steadily. The overall scale of China’s information infrastructure now ranks number two in the world. On the other side, however, information resources development is lagging far behind. The lack of information, especially Chinese information, in networks and information systems influences the benefit of investment in information technology, which has become a major obstacle not only to China’s informationalization drive but also to the competitiveness of Chinese economy.

This paper intends to introduce the history and current situation of information resources development in China, discuss its problems, and put forward several countermeasures.

BRIEF REVIEW ON THE HISTORY AND PRESENT SITUATION OF CHINA’S INFORMATION RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

History of Information Resources Development in China

In its several thousand years of social progress, China has put continuous efforts on cultural development. Various ancient Chinese dynasties, such as the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing, carried out large-scale cultural development movements, which to a certain extent contributed to the exploitation and utilization of information resources.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the government has been attaching great importance to information resources development. In 1956, the government set “March Towards Science” as the directing principle for the course of information resources management, and made a conscientious plan in information resources development with the emphasis on collecting, rearranging, analyzing, indexing, and reporting scientific and technical documents from home and abroad to serve the needs of professionals in various disciplines. Until 1987, the scientific and technical information sector alone has already possessed 26,000 foreign periodicals, 6,000 domestic periodicals, 120 million patent manuals, and more than 32 million books. There were 236 abstracting and indexing journals published annually, covering more than 1.2 million documents and articles. Besides this, there were 2,038 public libraries at county and higher levels, collecting more
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