

# Information Equity and Cultural Sharing: The Service for Migrant Workers in Hangzhou Public Library

Shuqing Chu, Zhejiang Library, Hangzhou, China

Shumin Tu, Hangzhou Public Library, Hangzhou, China

Nuo Wang, Hangzhou Public Library, Hangzhou, China

Weiran Zhang, Hangzhou Public Library, Hangzhou, China

## ABSTRACT

It is very important to study public library services available to migrant workers, which have the potential to enrich public library services and promote social equity. After analyzing the present situation and characteristics of migrant workers in China, this article takes the services for migrant workers offered by Hangzhou Public Library as an example and explores the best ways to service migrant workers in public libraries, including how to further break down the obstacles to service, how to expand the mode of service, and how to make a greater effort to optimize the growth environment of migrant workers and promote their integration into urban cultural life in the future.

## KEYWORDS

Hangzhou Public Library, Migrant Workers Service, Public Library, Social Equity

## INTRODUCTION

As a non-profit social institution, it is the responsibility and mission of public libraries to ensure all citizens have free and equal access to knowledge, information and cultural services. Migrant workers have grown into a new labor force during the processes of industrialization and urbanization since the Chinese economic reform began. Their households are registered in rural areas, but while they work and live in the city, they should have the same right as full-time residents of the city to enjoy the services provided by public libraries. Meanwhile, public libraries should be responsible for helping them to integrate into the city's community as soon as possible. From the perspective of information equity and cultural sharing, it is of great importance for public libraries to explore the method and pathways of services to migrant workers so as to promote the practical services of public library and improve the perception of services offered by public libraries.

## Mission of Information Equity and Cultural Sharing

The public library has been a symbol of information equity and cultural sharing system since its beginning. Edward Edwards's civilians library ideas in the mid-19th century, the "people's university"

DOI: 10.4018/IJLIS.2020010102

This article, originally published under IGI Global's copyright on October 11, 2019 will proceed with publication as an Open Access article starting on January 20, 2021 in the gold Open Access journal, International Journal of Library and Information Services (converted to gold Open Access January 1, 2021), and will be distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the author of the original work and original publication source are properly credited.

put forward by Dewey (Melvil Dewey) in the late 19th and early 20th century, and then the “social and democratic protection” trend in the mid-20th century, all reflect the spirit of equality and sharing in public libraries. Public libraries still keep the same essence and core ideals.

The first public library and the first national public library law in the world both originated in the United Kingdom, thanks to father of the British public library-- Edwards. Edwards defined the public library as an organization authorized by a local authority, supported by local tax expenditures, and free of charge for all taxpayers (namely, the whole public) (Zhong,2012). The coverage of library services expanded to include all members of society.

Dewey’s theory, the *People’s University*, inherited the spirit of the public libraries that Edwards advocated. In Dewey’s opinion, the public library should be a place where everyone has access to information, and can learn and share knowledge. It should also be a powerful tool to inform new generations of civilized nations (Zheng, 2011). This theory was written into the *IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto* (1949 edition) and became one of the basic spirits of the *Public Library Declaration*.

*Public Library Declaration*, is one of the most classic and authoritative pieces of literature in the history of contemporary library development. First published in 1949, and revised twice in 1972 and 1994, the declaration is not only a product of the emergence and development of the public library; it also represents the guiding principle of the public library and embodies the position of the international community in regards to the public library. This important document also clearly states the spirit of the public library and the value it places on shared resources and public and equal access: “the services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all people, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, such as linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison” (Unesco, 2017).

International documents such as the *Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom* (IFLA, 1999), *The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries*, and the *Information Services and Intellectual Freedom* (IFLA, 2002), all express and strengthen the responsibility of public libraries in regard to information equity and cultural sharing, and aim to promote and maintain information equity to support vulnerable groups around the world (Zhang, 2005).

With the development of social politics and the economy, there have been more and more discussions about the spirit of public library in China. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, the library rights movement launched by Chinese scholars has promoted a change in service policy and the concept of service in Chinese libraries. Some policies led to the development of China’s public library business, and pushed the concept of library service back towards the ideals fairness and freedom. For example, *Library Service Manifesto* (LSC, 2008) clearly pointed out that all members of society should enjoy universal access to library services (*Library Society of China*,2008); *Opinions on Promoting the Free Opening of Art Museums Public Libraries and Cultural Centers* (MCPRC, MFPRC, 2011) promoted the free entry process of China’s public library (*Gov.cn*, 2017) ; *Public Library Service Standards* (GB/T 28220-2011) stated in the general provisions that the public library services shall cover all the public, especially the special needs of the disabled, the elderly, migrant workers, people in rural and remote areas (Wang, 2011).

These service policies and declarations reflect the basic commitment of public libraries to our society. As Professor Wu Weici of Peking University said, until today, comparing various types of organizations in our society, it is difficult to find an organization other than a public library which can be close to the masses, with a complete center-branch libraries system that is basically free, regardless of age, race, gender, religious beliefs, nationality or social status (Ji & Wang, 2007). The public library ensures that knowledge is not monopolized by a single group, so that disadvantaged groups at the bottom of society have a relatively fair place to acquire knowledge. It can be concluded that serving the people at the bottom of society is the duty of public libraries; fairness and sharing are values of the public library.

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/article/information-equity-and-cultural-sharing/240795](http://www.igi-global.com/article/information-equity-and-cultural-sharing/240795)

## Related Content

---

### Value Co-Creation in Archival Resources: Exploring the Feature of National Archives of Bangladesh (NAB)'s Open Access Project

Md. Mukhlesur Rahman, Toufiq Ahmed and Kunio Shirahada (2017). *International Journal of Library and Information Services* (pp. 37-56).

[www.irma-international.org/article/value-co-creation-in-archival-resources/188343](http://www.irma-international.org/article/value-co-creation-in-archival-resources/188343)

### Web-Scale Discovery Service in Academic Library Environment: A Birds Eye View

Mahendra Kumar Sahu (2018). *International Journal of Library and Information Services* (pp. 1-14).

[www.irma-international.org/article/web-scale-discovery-service-in-academic-library-environment/198400](http://www.irma-international.org/article/web-scale-discovery-service-in-academic-library-environment/198400)

### Capturing Scholarly Communication in Southeast Asia: A Bibliometric Perspective

Songphan Choemprayong (2014). *Library and Information Science Research in Asia-Oceania: Theory and Practice* (pp. 141-164).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/capturing-scholarly-communication-in-southeast-asia/99957](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/capturing-scholarly-communication-in-southeast-asia/99957)

### User Satisfaction With Library Information Resources and Services: Improvement and Innovation of Effective Activities of Research Scholars

S. Muthuvennila and P. Kannan (2021). *Research Anthology on Collaboration, Digital Services, and Resource Management for the Sustainability of Libraries* (pp. 1038-1059).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/user-satisfaction-with-library-information-resources-and-services/274802](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/user-satisfaction-with-library-information-resources-and-services/274802)

### Emotional Dimensions of Academic Librarianship

(2018). *Examining the Emotional Dimensions of Academic Librarianship: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 54-71).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/emotional-dimensions-of-academic-librarianship/189698](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/emotional-dimensions-of-academic-librarianship/189698)