

# The Difficulties and Obstacles of Socialized Service in University Library

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**Abstract:** University library plays an important role in serving all lecturers and students as it is a place where books and other information resources are collected and gathered for the purposes of reading and reference. As time goes by, university libraries have gradually open to the public to fully make use of its function as an educational and social platform. The socialized service of university library has the advantages of promoting cultural virtue and moral integrity to the public. However, there remain many issues during the development of socialized service in the university library. Besides, analyzing the difficulties and obstacles faced in socialized services of the university library, this paper aims to provide countermeasures to solve the problems.

**Keywords:** *University library; socialized service; difficulty; obstacle; countermeasure*

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## 0 Introduction

People living in this information age pay more attention to the construction of spiritual civilization and have stronger desires in obtaining information resources. Therefore, there is a need to extend and transform the university library from its traditional function in serving only university lecturers and students to socialization that can serve the public. The socialized service of the university library is conducive in satisfying the needs of readers, improving comprehensive literacy and providing favorable conditions for the development of China's soft power. At present, many

universities libraries have gradually implemented socialized services to comply with the current need for development. However, in reality, the development of socialized service in university library does not go smoothly as there are many difficulties and obstacles faced in this process. For this reason, it is necessary to have a more critical analysis of the difficulties and obstacles faced in developing the socialized service of university libraries. Besides, it is also important to propose the corresponding solutions to solve the issues.

## 1 The historical development process of the socialization of university libraries

The socialized service of university libraries was first proposed by Americans and has been implemented in China since the 1980s. There have been >30 years of implementation in China ever since this idea was brought into this country. Moreover, based on the huge literature database of China, it shows that research literature has been started since the 1980s. The research works mainly focus on the feasibility and necessity of the socialized service of university libraries, as well as the obstacles and potential problems in the development of socialization. In addition, the researchers also focus on analyzing the situation in the development of socialized service of university libraries in China and summarize the challenges and opportunities therein. Nonetheless, the research is incomplete due to the lack of systematic and in-depth research. At the same time, some researchers have performed an analysis on the current public access to university libraries in China. According to the findings, out of 1600 universities in China, there are 276 universities libraries have started to open to the public with different levels of restricted access. This also means that the opening rate

is relatively low as only 17.25% of university libraries are open to the public. Furthermore, those universities libraries which open to the public are mainly saturated in the developed cities, such as Beijing, Guangzhou, and Tianjin. On the other hand, the proportion of university libraries which open to the public is relatively low in second and third-tier cities<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 2 The difficulties and obstacles in the socialized service of university libraries

### 2.1 Lack of comprehensive policies and regulations for the socialized service of university libraries

At present, there is no specific law for the socialized service of university libraries in China. Nevertheless, the socialization of university libraries is developed within the scope of their basic obligation, which is mainly determined by the characteristics of the information resources of the university libraries. Although China's constitution has provided a brief statement about the socialized services of university libraries, no clear regulations have been made. Therefore, the more comprehensive law is needed for the socialized service of the university library to strengthen the law and policy<sup>[2]</sup>. Meanwhile, there is still a lack of government supervision in terms of the socialized service of university libraries. At present, both central and local governments have not conducted scientific guidance and regulations for the socialization services of university libraries. Although Beijing, Shanghai, and other places have begun to investigate and introduce the corresponding regulations, the socialized service is still imperfect due to its lack of thorough and detailed study. For instance, socialized services in universities libraries in some areas are mainly focused on the secondary and primary student with respect to their corresponding guideline and rules. While other social entities have been neglected due to the limitation in terms of law and guidance. This further leads to serious impact by slowing down the progress of the socialized service process in university libraries.

### 2.2 The influence of traditional mindset on the socialized service of university libraries

University library is also an important part of China's soft power. Since university libraries mainly serve lecturers and students, their management systems are developed based on lecturers and students from their universities. However, it shall be noted that if the

socialized service of university library was opened to the public; it can enhance its socialization functions. Furthermore, it will inevitably lead to a sharp increase in the number of staffs in the library, intensify the workload of the library and improve the order maintenance of the library<sup>[3]</sup>. Moreover, the management systems of university libraries lack idea sharing and innovation as university libraries have not attempted to open to society. Due to many reasons, many university libraries are not willing to participate in social services; the socialized service becomes limited. In addition, modern society lacks awareness about effective information, which, in turn, leads to ineffectiveness of society in recognizing their own social functions in developing the university libraries. Most people believe that the access of a university library is only restricted to the students from that university. For this reason, there remains a great difficulty in spreading the socialized service of university libraries<sup>[4]</sup>.

### 2.3 Lack of motivation in the socialized service of university libraries

University library is the main place in providing reading sources to all the readers. However, the public only thinks of the libraries when they need to access or check information [Table 2]. Majority of society reflect that there will be difficulties in the process of accessing reading materials as there will be a moment where the information cannot be found. For this reason, the public feels that both facilities and resources in university libraries are obsolete. Yet, at the same time, only a small group of people will figure out the root cause that leads to the current situation of the library. The main factor that results in this outcome is due to the insufficient fund for library construction and development<sup>[5]</sup>. Since the university library has always been regarded as a resource within the university, it has not been widely valued by the public which, in turn, results in lower opportunities in obtaining the social donation. Thus, it can be seen that insufficient funding is the main factor that causes the weak socialized service of the university library. Besides, the lack of attention to the socialized service of university Table 1 libraries as well as the shortages

**Table 1: Quantity survey on China's university library public access (n=1600)**

Category	Open to the public with some restricted access	Not open to the public
Quantity of library	276	1324
Percentage (%)	17.25	82.75

**Table 2: A survey on the purpose of using the library**

Purpose of using the library	Frequency (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
Borrow/return books	203 (44.5)	44.5
Read newspapers and magazine	142 (31.1)	75.7
Self-study	69 (15.1)	90.8
Access internet	4 (0.9)	91.7
Retrieve professional electronic resources	33(7.2)	98.9
Others	5 (1.1)	100
Total	456 (100)	

in both performance appraisal and the establishment of incentive systems will affect the development of social services.

### 2.4 The shortage of resources and capital in socialized service of the university library

The shortage of library funds or capital is the most common problem facing by most of the university libraries. Due to this reason, the library may not be able to effectively control the operating cost or resource, which, in turn, lead to aging of library equipment and outdated facility. Moreover, this also causes the downsizing of a library collection that can bring adverse impact to the development of the library socialized service<sup>[6]</sup>. Under the evolution of informatization era, the database of university library has become the mainstream in the development of the library. However, due to lack of funds, the library’s database is unable to update in time and thus become difficult to meet the readers needs which eventually affects the development of university library (Table 3 category of library resource). Meanwhile, this phenomenon will become worse when the increase in operating cost of university library cannot be solved in line with the growth of the country economy.

## 3 The countermeasures for the socialized service of university libraries

### 3.1 Enhance the legal system for the socialized service of university libraries

It is necessary to establish a complete legal administrative law to solve the existing problems occurred in the library. This is to ensure the effectiveness in developing the public service of university libraries in China. Although the existing “higher education law” in China has clarified the advantage of collaboration between universities and scientific research institutions, there is no specific law listed for the university library. Due to this reason,

**Table 3: Category of library resource**

Category	Count	Table n (%)
Book	125	54.1
Magazine	75	32.5
Newspaper	36	15.6
Local journal	34	14.7
Electronic resource	20	8.7

relevant laws and regulations must be enforced especially in the management of university libraries. Authority must provide clear instructions on the socialized service of university libraries, such as the assurance on library resource and the protection of readers’ right. This legal provision will certainly provide the reader and participant with proper guidance and protection.

### 3.2 Utilize university library resources to carry out information services reasonably

The shortage of library funds in university together with the increasing price of paper resources has posed a great challenge for the library. Moreover, the university mainly focuses on scientific research in the procurement of document resources. Therefore, the socialized services in university libraries cannot meet the diverse demand from public readers. However, when compared with other libraries, university libraries still have better human resources. Thus, the libraries can utilize these resources to promote their information services<sup>[7]</sup>. Some examples of these information services include seminar on public welfare, consultation, and public inquiry which can elevate the civilization of citizens and awareness of the public toward the construction of a civilized urban and harmonious society.

### 3.3 Implement resource sharing and expand service resources

The sharing of information resources is an important direction for the development of libraries. However, in

China, the library has been subdivided into different categories, such as public libraries, university libraries, children's libraries, and research libraries. It was found out that the intrarelationship between these libraries is not close and there are many duplications in resources, resulting in lots of inconveniences to the readers<sup>[8]</sup>. With the gradual social development in university libraries, the restrictions between schools have been gradually removed, making the transmission and sharing of resources and information more favorable, affirmed and welcomed by lecturers and students. Different types of libraries have different natures and characteristics. Despite the construction of library resources has their own focuses, the service concept for readers is the same<sup>[9]</sup>. The university library can establish an integrated network platform through the integration and sharing of resources with other libraries as well as an integrated logo for readers so that readers can freely access the database through the network database according to their own identity certificates. This concept of people-oriented service is able to provide a better reading service experience for the public outside of the school.

### **3.4 Develop remote services and expand the extension to socialized services**

From the point of view of the university libraries development in China, there remain great difficulties in fully open the university libraries to the public. This is because the university libraries are mainly for the university lecturers and students. If the library is opened to the public, it means the university libraries have begun to involve in the social competition, and there is bound to be a conflict of interest in this competition. Therefore, in the expansion of socialized service of university libraries, it is necessary to ensure that social services are strengthened without affecting the interests of lecturers and students of the university<sup>[10]</sup>. The university libraries resources have become the limiting factors especially with the rapid expansion of colleges and universities. Besides, there are also certain restrictions on facilities construction and services. Hence, it is almost impossible to accommodate more public readers. However, the construction of digital libraries can effectively prevent this from happening. The construction of digital libraries in colleges and universities is based on the network, using modern

information technology, incorporating the advantages of the library, providing readers with reading resources through remote services, and strengthening the extension of social services for university libraries.

## **4 Conclusion**

The development of China's social economy has slowly shifted people's attention from material to spiritual concern. To satisfy human's spiritual concern as well as strengthening the construction of social culture and enhancing China's soft power, university library must undergo socialization. University libraries in China have prompted to develop socialized services and being able to figure out the existing issues in it. Furthermore, they have strengthened the laws as well as provided comprehensive resources and support, enabling university libraries to be good platforms in sharing information and enhance innovations.

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