

## An Exploration of the Professionalization of College Librarians

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**Abstract.** The professionalization of college librarians is one of major approaches for application-oriented colleges to provide stronger support to teaching and research in the era of digital humanities. This article discusses the path of the professionalization of college librarians from three aspects- occupational concept, professional function and organizational building.

### Introduction

The professionalization of college librarians concentrates on professional awareness and professionalization orientation of library management and involves the expansion of specialized knowledge of each librarian, with a view to maximize the benefits of library service achieving the unity of knowing and doing. This not only is a clear main thread of the requirements of *Regulations on Libraries in Institutions of Higher Education* issued by the Ministry of Education, but also is a guidance and a practical requirement for college library work in the era of digital humanities.

### Build a Professional Team of Librarians

#### Professional Team Building

##### Professional Team Concept

Professional team concept means following *Code of Professional Ethics for Librarians*, keeping up ideologically, self-discipline in action, taking the initiative to perform duties and acting proactively in serving teachers and students.

“Sincere service for readers, civilized, warmhearted and convenient” cannot be only lip service. A library seeks for opinions by visiting the college once a year or holding a colloquia with students at the end of the year, and their solutions are simply placing several book self-service equipment or posting some posters in the campuses. This way of working, in essence, remains formalistic. Because teachers and students will constantly have new needs, so libraries should really go outside the library and keep abreast of dynamic information.

Currently, the low frequency of some library surveys and interviews and the passivity of leading reading or carrying out volunteer services show the drawbacks of library service, which draw serious attention from the management. A manager needs to plan scientifically, act proactively, and vigorously seek for weak points of the services, such as carrying out personalized service for the group of poor students, conducting projectized service operation and other measures, actively guiding and encouraging librarians, strengthening horizontal

cooperation and support, and displaying existential value and professional ethics of the library.

### **Professional Team Spirit**

To reinforce professional team building, management should proceed from the whole situation, promote the building of a team of professional librarians and assistant librarians with a broad horizon and vision, and strive to make the number of professional librarians take up 50% of the total number of librarians. Meanwhile, management should constantly train the team of librarians, strengthen their occupational identity, team spirit and team cohesiveness, promote a positive and healthy library culture, construct a vigorous work environment, and provide unique support and guarantee for college teaching and scientific research.

Once, someone consulted world-famous conductor Kara Yang about how to conduct a symphony orchestra, Kara Yang answered: "I only stress three sounds to make my orchestra a team. First, 'staring sound', disorderly staring sound will result in a chaotic performance. Second, individual 'specialized sound', whether you are a hornist or a drummer, all should make their best and the most accurate sound. Third, 'team sound', when you show your 'specialized sound', you need to think about the whole, whether you will disturb others' sound".

Management regard a library as an orchestra, "staring sound" means setting a shared goal, "specialized sound" is to let each librarian give full to their strong point, "team sound" is "teamwork and a concerted effort." It unities individual power into powerful synergy of the team, make their respective advantages complementary to each other to achieve something.

Developing team spirit is premised on is premised on the fulfillment of responsibility and based on the improvement of work style. Librarians seriously perform their job responsibilities and assume professional mission, which practically means shouldering duties, putting the needs of teachers and students in mind, and being devoted to work.

### **Create a Team of Professional Librarians**

Professional team asks librarians to learn, expand their cognitive boundary and shake off the fetters of unidirectional thinking and singular space. The particularity of library work requires public culture and reading places to keep quiet, and librarians are not allowed to leave their post at will during work hours. If democratization channels are obstructed and librarians are unclear about relevant policies involving individual vital interests, job burnout and negative emotion will arise.

Climb high and hence gaze far. So, besides institutional improvement, librarians can safeguard their rights via normal channels and try to think from multiple perspectives, understand the origin of one thing, and seek solutions. Meanwhile, librarians should enhance their ability of thinking professionally, persist in improving the ability to acquire professional knowledge, fully demonstrate professional value at work, and help themselves "voice" effectively.

While all accumulations, including cultivation in dribs and drabs, will ultimately return to the original point of service. The unity of studying & applying and knowing and doing by librarians will all be embodied in the original intention of "putting readers first", kindheartedness to readers, service with more meticulousness, breadth and depth, ordinary and trivial persistence day by day, self-cultivation in the process of fulfilling the responsibility, contribution even with tiny energy, and taking them as professional belief and lifelong pursuit.

## **The Professionalization of College Librarians is Rooted in Two Major functions of the Library**

### **Achieve Educational Function**

*Regulations on Libraries of Regular Institutions of Higher Learning* (Ministry of Education [2015] No. 14) clearly points out: “Main functions of libraries are educational function and information service function. Librarians should give full play to their role in personal training, scientific research, social service and cultural inheritance and innovation in school. ”

Libraries should fulfill two responsibilities and be a firm practitioner of “cultural confidence”, which needs librarians to nurture students with socialistic core values and excellent achievements of human civilization, exert educational function and guiding function of culture, absorb wisdom of science, power of theory and spiritual nutrients from them, convert it into the ability to foster character and civic virtue and then convey it to farther future of the students.

Furthermore, librarians need to take education through service as the best measure for carrying forward the “main melody” and spreading positive energy. Education through service means educating people through environment in the first place. It is about creating a harmonious, upbeat and literary ambience in a library, to make readers feel the peace of mind and pleasure brought by books and comprehend the inner strength of self-purification when treated respectfully.

Education through service should take promoting, guiding and serving nationwide reading as an important mission. Library itself not only needs to be “lead in reading” in reading promotion campaign, but also should ally with student clubs and organizations, construct a diversified reading promotion model, initiate a series of brand activities, lead the healthy growth of this generation of young people, and take reading promotion campaign as a major task in expanding new services of the library.

More importantly, education through service should be “subtle” care in work. Librarians should be more efficient to make readers “wait” less; be more “circumspect” to let readers feel less “inconvenient”; “delve” more to make readers less “anticipated”...Seemingly ordinary persistence reflects the mission of “laying a foundation and serving long-term goals”. With the responsibility in mind, work that seems ordinary will become extraordinary.

### **Fulfill Information Service Function**

Persist in strengthening library with resources, and highlight cultural function. Nation-building with culture is a national development strategy, and cultural inheritance is a priority for colleges and libraries. Quality books bear the collective memory of our nation which is passed down from generation to generation, while excellent traditional Chinese culture nurtures the precious spiritual character of the nation. Libraries must keep up with school development plan, drive resource development with readers’ needs, “collect ancient and modern books of China and foreign countries, sow the seed of civilization and harmony”, create a sound cultural ecology, and keep the pure world of culture.

Moreover, it is necessary to design a document resource guarantee system matched with school development, be oriented by high-quality books, leave the option to purchase books to readers, and form the supply side of book resource development.

Besides, giving play to education function and information service function of library is a subtle systematic engineering, which requires all members to develop the consciousness of

education through service, revolve around school development goal and personnel training, and incorporate responsibility into the whole process and all aspects of library work.

### **Strengthen the Professionalization of Libraries**

#### **Strengthen Professional Awareness of Library and Reach a Consensus**

The understanding of library by colleges concentrates on resource supply and service level, and they have a lack of understanding of some major works, including library's participating in school personnel training, information construction, campus culture development, and socialized services. Library Working Committee holds meeting in a hurry, making it hard to discuss the specifics of literature information work. If the meeting is scheduled at the end of the year, a busy period, it will be hard to solve practical problems.

Newly-established application-oriented colleges consider professional needs of libraries less when choosing their chief librarian, leading to the mismatch between the chief librarian and the post. Some chief librarians hold this post through job rotation from an administrative post, some are preferentially arranged as they approach retirement age, and there are only a few high-end professional and technical posts stipulated by relevant document. Hence, it is highly necessary to explore a reasonable sharing mechanism among managers and technicians.

Schools consider non-teacher staff when designing on-the-job continuing education plan for young teachers, but if the department is understaffed and management is supportive, it will be hard to ensure the implementation of relevant policy due to the job nature of the library, which is likely to frustrate professional improvement and initiative of librarians.

The management of a library have the responsibility and obligation to propagandize relevant documents and policies released by the Ministry of Education among school managers at all levels, strive for maximum support, remove worries of librarians, and create conditions for the building of knowledge-based professional team.

#### **Strengthen the Building of a Learning Organization, and Put Efforts into “Learning”**

Learning is an inexhaustible impetus for the sustainable development of the library. Building an expert team of librarians offering superior service is an organizational guarantee for libraries to exert two functions. The construction of a learning organization focuses on highlighting the normalization and effectiveness of learning. Library resource development and service improvement need be achieved by high-level and high-quality librarians. Furthermore, librarians need to persist in keeping a foothold in their post, intensify professional studies and hone professional “skills”. Besides, library should set up a study reporting and exchange mechanism, highlight the precision and effectiveness of learning should center on new requirements for professional quality in the new era, and meet current and future requirements of the post. Moreover, librarians need to uphold solid work and strictly execute as their work orientation, and play an exemplary and vanguard role in their post.

#### **Strengthen Service-oriented Organizational Building, and Seek Practical Results in “Using”**

First, it is imperative to strengthen the bond with readers. Libraries should keep abreast of the times, comply with social changes, constantly strengthen service awareness, walk into colleges, thoroughly investigate, strengthen the study of readers' new needs and the analysis

of resource utilization, put heads together to seek optimal solutions for universal opinions, and achieve normalized routine management.

Second, it is necessary to stick to service extension. With the service concept of “vitalizing” resources, resource supply is extended to classrooms and dormitories of students as a ubiquitous service mode, subject service is extended to colleges, information accomplishment education is integrated into all media platforms of the libraries, and more resources and services are extended step by step to facilitate teaching, learning and research.

Third, it is necessary to attach importance to service marketing. Specifically, it is advisable to place equal emphasis on online and offline campaigns, make good use of new media in library, intensively conduct physical publicity, proactively promote library resources and services, and give play to service benefits in effect.

### **Strengthen the Exploration of “New” Services, and Concentrate Efforts on the Satisfaction of Teachers and Students**

At present, the rapid development of the society and the constant emergence of new technology in the information and network environment are changing and diversifying choices for mass culture. College libraries are transforming and upgrading in the direction of digital library, ecological library and smart library. Standing at the gate of the new era, college librarians should strive to seek for new growth point of service.

Intensifying the exploration of “new” services should consider optimizing the organizational structure of the library in the first place. What college students frequently complain about is various hard-to-use designated apps, so it is hoped that they may log in with one click and use after integration. But as a matter of fact, it is difficult to integrate information resources from different sources. There are technical problems and other constraints. Schools may consider setting up an information center, incorporate campus network center into libraries, exploiting the advantage in information technology talents, integrating teaching resources and library resources like Moocs, and hence integrating campus information into the same platform to enable one-stop search, making it easy-to-use for students.

As newly-established colleges, their library service lags far behind that of established universities in terms of connotation, detonation, level and quality. Future college libraries should meet cultural needs of teachers and students in the era of digital humanities, and become a comprehensive public culture service platform and a knowledge exchange platform. In this process, librarians must have the courage to assume new mission in the new age, break existing management and operating models, and put efforts into expanding “new” services with the help of new methods and new approaches. For example, “audio” reading, spatial service, knowledge value-added services and other problems that test traditional library service.

Now, library managers should have a high level of consciousness, gain insights into new requirements of the reform and development of higher education, make concerted effort with one mind, visionary yet down to earth, and work unremittingly to reach the goal of professionalizing librarians.

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