Research on Services for Primary and Secondary School Students in County-level Libraries in China

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ABSTRACT

At present, there is a significant gap in the reader services for primary and secondary school students in China compared to developed countries. The construction of primary and secondary school libraries targeting a large number of primary and secondary school readers in China has just begun. County-level libraries should undertake social education functions, help cultivate good reading habits and library utilization habits among primary and secondary school students, and cultivate their reading interest and reading ability in reading activities. Through research, it has been found that there are the following problems with the services for primary and secondary school students in county-level libraries in China: the collection structure for primary and secondary school students is unreasonable, the service space is too narrow and the layout is unreasonable, the number of librarians is insufficient, professional competence needs to be improved, the services lack scientific planning and innovation, and cooperation with relevant social forces needs to be strengthened. In response to the above issues, this article proposes the following suggestions: optimizing the collection construction for primary and secondary school students, combining virtual and real resources to optimize service space, improving personnel structure and quality, strengthening service planning and innovation, and collaborating with social forces to carry out extended services.

Keywords: County-level libraries, Primary and secondary school student services, Reading promotion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has developed the "Guidelines for Children's Library Services" and "Guidelines for Library Services for Young Adults" for children and adolescents, respectively, which provide relevant explanations on the service objectives, collection resources, service projects, personnel requirements, and other aspects of libraries. It is pointed out that for children who attend school before the age of 13, libraries should help them acquire visual, digital, and media literacy, reading ability, and lifelong-learning ability, and encourage them to become confident and capable individuals; For primary and secondary school students aged 12-18, libraries should provide targeted education, information, cultural, and recreational services to promote their cultural literacy, lifelong learning, information skills, and leisure reading abilities. However, currently the service level of primary and secondary school libraries in China is generally low, unable to meet the target requirements in the library service guidelines, and the reading needs of the majority of primary and secondary school readers cannot be effectively met. Compared with primary and secondary school libraries in China, public libraries have relative advantages in terms of literature resources, building area, librarian services, and funding sources. Studying the services for primary and secondary school students in public libraries is beneficial for improving their comprehensive quality. It is necessary to perfect the theory and practice of public library services for minors, and promote the overall development of China's library industry.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1 Social Education in Public Libraries for Primary and Secondary School Students

From both theoretical and practical perspectives, the content of social education in China can be roughly divided into social moral education, social intellectual education, social sports, social aesthetic education, and social life education. Social moral education is the core of social education. The focus of social education for primary and secondary school students in public libraries is on moral, intellectual, and aesthetic education.

Library education is an important component of social education, characterized by comprehensiveness, autonomy, diversity, and sustainability. The general forms of social education in public libraries include providing loanable literature and materials, creating a comfortable and quiet reading atmosphere, organizing reading activities such as lectures, competitions, and book exchange meetings, and building knowledge service platforms for interlibrary borrowing and resource sharing. With the development of technology and society, the form of social education provided by libraries has also undergone changes. The innovative thinking of "library +" has been integrated into traditional library services, crossing and integrating social education functions with other functions, expanding the breadth and depth of library education functions, and making readers' experience and sense of gain more genuine and beautiful.

As a public cultural service institution catering to the cultural needs of grassroots masses, county-level libraries are not only an important component of the county-level public cultural service system, but also an important pillar connecting the cultural development of townships and rural areas with the cultural prosperity of provinces, cities, and districts in the public library service system. The social education function of county-level libraries for primary and secondary school students is mainly reflected in the following four aspects: the first is to leverage the advantages of county-level library's literature and information resources to meet the basic reading needs of urban and rural primary and secondary school students, narrowing the urban-rural gap, and promoting the equalization of basic public cultural services; the second is to organize collaborative reading activities to enhance the reading interest of primary and secondary school students and cultivate their reading ability through the activities; the third is that by leveraging relevant policy advantages and its own institutional strengths, reading services can achieve spatial and regional extension through the establishment of branch libraries, circulation service points, and other forms; the forth is that by leveraging the policy advantages of the public cultural service system and establishing a social service network for primary and secondary school students in China through collaborative services, libraries can make up for the shortcomings of school education and family education, and help children grow up healthy.

2.2 Thomas' Five-Factor Theory

In his doctoral thesis "The Origin of the Development of Minors' Services in American Public Libraries: 1875-1906" completed in 1982, American scholar Thomas proposed five factors that affect library services for minors: specialized collections, specialized spaces, professional personnel, specialized services, and collaborative networks. Specialized collections, specialized spaces, and professional personnel are the foundation and prerequisite for libraries to provide services for minors. Specialized services and cooperative networks are effective ways to promote the development of public library services for minors.

Specialized collections refer to the collection resources provided to minors that cover the reading needs of minors of different age groups; Specialized spaces refer to the independent reading and activity space provided by public libraries for minors;

Professional personnel refer to librarians who provide services to minors. In addition to possessing the professional qualities of ordinary librarians, such librarians also need to understand the psychology of minors and master the working methods and skills of serving minors; Specialized services refer to reading guidance and social education activities provided to minors; Cooperative networks refer to the service network formed by the cooperation between public libraries and social institutions such as schools and school libraries.

The above five factors are one of the reference standards for evaluating the professionalization of children's library services in the United States, and

also the theoretical basis for many countries to formulate regulations and systems for library services for minors. County-level libraries can combine Thomas' "Five-Factor" theory to improve service conditions, pay attention to service details, and enhance service efficiency in order to implement reading services for primary and secondary school students.

3. PROBLEMS IN THE SERVICES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN COUNTY-LEVEL LIBRARIES

3.1 Unreasonable Library Structure for Primary and Secondary School Students

The content categories and book copy quantities of the literature resources purchased by the library do not match the actual needs of primary and secondary school students. The collection system related to primary and secondary school students lacks construction goals, and there is a lack of planning for the increase or decrease of collection resources, which is particularly evident in digital resources. The access restrictions outside the digital resource library also reflect to some extent the unreasonable structure of literature resources. For example, users who have not obtained a reader card cannot log in and use the database on the official website platform. Most primary and secondary school students have not obtained a reader card, which will greatly reduce the utilization rate of the database ordered by primary and secondary school students on the official website platform. If the click through rate is solely used as a reference for whether to renew the database, it will have an impact on the formulation of subsequent digital resource procurement plans and the overall structure of library resources.

3.2 Too Narrow Service Space and Unreasonable Layout

The service space cannot meet the management requirements of dynamic and static zoning. The space service of the library should provide a quiet and comfortable learning environment for readers who come to the library to read and study, and also provide venue space for reading activities. If the space of the library is too narrow, the original service activity arrangement will also be affected due to venue issues. The unreasonable spatial layout is mainly reflected in the fact that some libraries arrange disabled reading rooms on the basement level, elevators cannot be used normally, and readers can only enter the library through stairs. Some libraries have children's reading rooms arranged on the upper and third floors, which is unsafe for younger children to go up and down stairs. The layout of library facilities should be based on the concept of humanization, starting from reality, and bringing maximum convenience to readers.

3.3 Insufficient Number of Librarians and Inadequate Professional Competence

Taking county-level libraries in Guizhou Province as an example, the number of staff on duty in county-level libraries is around 5, and the number of staff in children's reading rooms is 1-2. The number of librarians can basically maintain daily basic services. If reading promotion activities or extended service activities are to be carried out, human factors will directly affect the effectiveness of the activities. According to multiple librarians, the library is currently in urgent need of information technology talents and corresponding professional talents. The current professional background of librarians in public libraries is mostly in education, with a general diploma. Although they have rich work experience, they lack professional knowledge in the field of libraries, as well as theoretical knowledge in education and psychology.

3.4 Cooperation with Relevant Social Forces Needing to Be Strengthened

The main cooperative institutions of county-level libraries are the Cultural and Tourism Bureau, and some libraries cooperate with kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, but the cooperative objects are fixed and do not meet the requirements of joint services involving multiple subjects.

Specifically, it manifests as: the first is a single form of cooperation. The cooperation between county-level libraries and other institutions is mostly carried out in the form of sharing single resources such as books, space, and manpower, with less involvement in the sharing of combined resources, as well as cooperation in management and service models; the second is that joint services lack planning. The library's understanding of joint services is not accurate enough, believing that joint services are resource sharing and division of labor

cooperation between institutions. There is relatively little discussion on the ways and plans to achieve win-win outcomes for multiple institutions under the joint service model.

4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT SERVICES IN COUNTY-LEVEL LIBRARIES

4.1 Improving Relevant Policy Support by Governments

According to research data, the reading needs of primary and secondary school students mainly include two aspects: their own reading interests and the reading requirements of school education. Understanding the reading needs of primary and secondary school students through multiple channels and collaborating with schools to improve the utilization of digital resources are the main ways to optimize the collection structure for primary and secondary school students. On the one hand, direct methods such as questionnaire surveys and online interactions can be used to understand the reading interests of primary and secondary school students, or the psychological reading demands of different grades of primary and secondary school students can be explored through the theory of underage needs; On the other hand, relevant institutions such as libraries and schools need to pay real-time attention to national education policies and library industry policies to help students meet school education requirements. Improving the utilization rate of digital resources can be achieved through the following ways: the first is to strengthen the promotion and publicity of library digital resources, such as posting notices in the library or posting notices on online platforms; the second is to organize training on the use of digital resources for primary and secondary school students;the third is to improve the access environment of digital resources outside the library, make full use of the library's WeChat official account, and promote the development of online reading services.

4.2 Optimizing Service Space through Virtual Reality Integration

The specific approach is as follows: Firstly, it is necessary to establish a mobile library for left behind children. There is a must to select pilot projects for establishing mobile libraries and

conduct research, develop a directory of books for mobile libraries based on the reading needs of children of different age groups, develop activity plans for left behind children to stimulate their interest in reading, determine the construction budget for the mobile library and submit it to the higher authorities, and establish a mobile library in the pilot area, and observe and summarize the service effect of the extended space; Secondly, it is also necessary to launch a "Cloud based Family Reading Club" for left behind children. There is a necessity to contact the parents of the child through the county-level libraries, obtain their consent, and agree on a shared reading time based on the child's spare time; Through video format, there is also a necessity to allow children and parents to read a book together within a specified time, determine the reading format by the parents and children themselves, and record a shared reading video for parent-child reading activity evaluation [3].

4.3 Improving Personnel Structure and Enhancing Personnel Quality

The specific method is as follows: the first is to establish a special service team. Experienced librarians serve as group leaders, recruiting volunteers to join the group. The librarians lead the volunteers to complete various service tasks. The special group is mainly responsible for various tasks related to promoting reading activities for primary and secondary school students, such as developing reading activity plans, supervising activity processes, estimating activity effects, and summarizing activity experiences. The second is to regularly organize training for librarians. Public libraries can regularly organize librarians to participate in training on services for underage readers. Training methods include short-term continuing education, inviting experts to stay for a short period of time to provide professional guidance to librarians, organizing librarians to watch expert lectures and learn lecture content, and encouraging librarians to participate in various forms of work training.

4.4 Joint Implementation of Extended Services by the Libraries and Schools

Collaboration between libraries and schools is the main way for public libraries to assist school education. The cooperation between public libraries and primary and secondary schools is mainly carried out from two aspects: school education and school library operation. At the school education

level, schools should provide unified reader cards for students, offer social practice bases for students, and provide reference and consultation services for teachers. At the school library operational level: it is necessary to achieve the sharing of library and school resources, mainly involving collection resources, spatial resources, and human resources, and implement the "library + home + school" reading promotion activity model and build a linkage mechanism among the "library, school, and home". The specific approach is as follows: organizing parent-child reading activities on a family basis, carrying out class and campus reading activities on a school by school basis, selecting outstanding works to participate in the evaluation, and giving rewards and publicity based on the evaluation results.

5. CONCLUSION

As an important part of the cultural service system, county-level libraries play a decisive role in the construction of modern public cultural service systems. Despite the large number of county pavilions and significant differences in county development, the basic direction remains the same, which is to serve the people and meet their basic cultural needs. County-level libraries in China should, based on reality, tap into regional resource advantages, leverage strengths and avoid weaknesses, serve the public in a flexible and efficient manner, realize their own functional value, and be good inheritors of historical and cultural heritage, breeders of popular culture, disseminators of advanced culture, and collaborators of diverse cultures in China.

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