

THE REFORM OF THE LIBRARY OF THE CHINESE ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES*

By Lu Qisu

Abstract: The Library of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), composed of the academy library and 16 branch libraries has acquired 5.14 million volumes and currently has a staff of 400. The original closed management system as well as the financial problem caused by the soaring prices of books and serials in recent years has made the library find itself in a tight corner. Now it has been reforming its management system and has already won initial success, resulting in breaking basically the past closed state of 34 research institute libraries, each of which formed its own system, and saving a huge amount of money which helps strengthen the vitality of the library. At the moment, the library is deepening its reform in the operational mechanism and automation construction in a bid to turn the library within the shortest time into a social science documentation and information institute which will realize the scientific management, networking in structure, modernization in means and socialization in function and also establish extensive relations of exchange and cooperation with the foreign counterparts.

The library of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is a national research library with long history, largest scale and richest collection in the system of social sciences in China. In fact, the CASS library is a library system because it consists of the academy library and 16 branch libraries. The CASS library system with a staff of near 400 comprises a stock of 5.14 million volumes. Its aim is to provide about 3600 scientific researchers in 32 research institutes with documentation and information services.

Experiencing the initial stage in the 1950s and the 1960s and the development stage in the 1970s and the 1980s, the library system began to fall into dire straits in the 1990s. To meet the challenges of the New Situation, it is now carrying out a reform. The consolidation of the former Center for Documentation and Information and the 14 institute libraries in the main building of the academy to form the academy library in January 1995 was just the outcome of this reform. At present, the library is conducting in-depth reform on such aspects as management

* Paper delivered at the workshop of the IFLA section Social Science Libraries at Renmin University Beijing, August, 29th 1996 (slightly abridged by the editor).

system, operation mechanism and the construction of automation. Although there exist many problems and difficulties, the direction of reform is irreversible.

The Initial Stage and development

The CASS was established in 1977. Its predecessor was the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CASS), under which were altogether 17 research institutes. Each institute set up its own division of books and reference materials at the beginning of its establishment. After the establishment of the CASS, with the institutes growing gradually from the original 17 to 32, the divisions of books and reference materials were increased to 34 correspondingly. The institutes which set up the divisions of books and reference materials as early as 1950 were the Institute of Linguistics, the Institute of Archaeology and the Institute of Modern History. The Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies was the latest one which set up the division in 1988. For most of the institutes, the same kind of divisions were established one after another in the years between the 1950s and the 1970s. These divisions developed gradually into the institute libraries at the end of the 1980s.

At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, everything which was previously left undone needed to be done. The New China was faced with an arduous task in the establishment and development of its social science undertaking. At the time, to create the research means which were most essential to social scientists, the researchers, and even the leaders of the institutes together with the staff of books and references materials did everything possible to collect books, archives, and other documents and materials which were valuable to research. With their joint efforts, the division of books and reference materials were formed.

The sources of documents held at the various divisions were very limited then. Some of the documents were taken over from the former Central Research Institute or other academic institutes or schools. For instance, the division of the Institute of Economics took over a collection 70,000 volumes from the former Central Research Institution and the division of the Institute of Archaeology received a collection of 40,000 volumes from the former Beijing Research Institute. Some of them were brought from the liberated areas. The collection of the division of the Institute of Modern History included the publications in the liberated areas before the founding of the New China, such as the early translations of Marx's and Lenin's works, separate editions and selected works of Mao Zedong as well as periodicals and newspapers published in the liberated areas. Most of the holdings were built up bit by bit through long years by the staff

and scientific researchers. For example, the vast collection of 0.7 million volumes held by the division of the Institute of History records the great concern and contributions of the old generation of historians like Mr. Guo Moruo, Mr. Hou Wailu, Mr. Yen Da and Mr. Xun Deji. From the 1950s to the mid-1960s, these old experts were once the leaders of the research institute. So they designated the experts or scholars of great attainment for the collection of materials with the staff of books and reference materials. They had overcome one difficulty after another. They went to the second-hand book markets in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Xi'an, and even went deep among the people to collect and purchase various kinds of ancient books. Even during the three-year period of difficulties in economy in the early 1960s, this kind of work didn't stop. The „contracts and documents of Huizhou area“, a rare treasure which had been almost disposed as „waste paper“ was purchased just because Mr. Xun Deji insisted on purchasing it. The division of the Institute of Literature (it is now called library) has made its holding reach over 0.4 million volumes after more than thirty years of efforts under the conditions of limited resources of budget and staff, following the holding principle of „putting emphasis on specialized collection and seeking completeness under the premise of better quality collection“ raised by Mr. He Qifang, a famous writer and the director of the institute.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, under the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, only a few research institutes were set up in some traditional disciplines, with not many scientific researchers and quite a few well-trained staff of books and reference materials. Each division of books and reference materials had its own mode of management. Its bookfund came from the funds of the research institute it is subordinated to and it purchased books, periodicals and newspapers only according to the need of its own institute. In common words, the characteristics of these divisions can be generalized as „small library with complete holdings“. However, this „small library with complete holdings“ once played an important role under the historical conditions at that time. First, the enthusiasm of scientific researchers and staff of various institutes were fully aroused. They collected materials everywhere according to the need of the development of academic disciplines and built up quickly their own „specialized“ libraries; second, the quality of collections was raised under the guidance of experts and with the expert's participation in this work; third, the quality of the staff was enhanced rapidly with the help of the experts; fourth, these divisions served scientific researchers well.

Just because of the above advantages, the academy didn't consider establishing a unified academy library in 1977 when the CASS was established. Instead, the

newly established institutes, set up their own libraries by still taking the pattern of „small library with complete holdings“ used in the 1950s. At that time, the institutes new and old, in traditional disciplines and newly-emerging disciplines purchased as many Chinese and foreign books, periodicals and newspapers as possible by taking the advantage of annually growing bookfunds and lower prices of books. During the 10 years from the establishment of the CASS to the end of the 1980s, the institute libraries developed rapidly in step with the development of academic disciplines.

The Status Quo and Difficult Position

After over 30 years of working hard and with perseverance, the CASS library has now developed into a library with an extensive collection and relatively complete service functions. Among its collection of over 5 million volumes, 75.000 volumes in 6461 titles are the precious and rare books, and 550,000 volumes in 19.000 titles are thread-bound ancient books. Besides, the paper back Chinese books total 2.73 million volumes, while the foreign books in nearly 50 languages stand at about 1.06 million volumes. It has also collected a total of 515,000 bound volume newspapers and periodicals in Chinese and foreign languages and 220,000 volumes of materials as well. The above covers all the fields in philosophy, social sciences and the humanities. According to major subject areas, there are:

	volumes (mio)	% of total
philosophy and religious	0.36	7
political science and law	0.41	8
sociology and national studies	0.48	9,5
economics	0.80	15,5
literature and linguistics	0.97	19
historical science	1.49	29
regional studies	0.43	8.5
newly-emerging disciplines and others	0.20	3

In the said major subject areas, the collections in the traditional disciplines such as literature, historical science, philosophy and economics as well as national religious are the richest and have the highest quality. Among them, there are 40 uniques, such as „A Dream of Red Mansions“ (Cheng Weiyan’s first version and the hand-written copy in the year of Qianlong, and „Comments on the Book of Changes in the Late Ming Dynasty and Early Ching Dynasty“ by Fang Yi zhi.

Another main feature of the library's collections worth mentioning are the „experts libraries“ and „Special collection library“. The former includes the „Gu Jigang Library containing 45,000 copies of valuable books donated by Mr. Gu Jigang, the late famous historian, the „Three Old Experts Library“ containing about 30,000 copies of thread-bound ancient books and over 1200 items of various epigraphs and rubbings presented by Mr. Hou Wailu, Mr. Xun Deji and Mr. Xie Guozhen, the famous historians“, and the „Oshima Kiyoshi Library“ containing more than 10,000 books presented by Mr. Oshima Kiyoshi, a famous Japanese economist. The latter includes „Library of Contracts and Documents of Huizhou Area and Dun huang Historical Materials“ and „Library of Chinese Social Science Dissertations and Theses“. The materials in these „libraries“ are highly-specialized and have no duplicate copies. Many of them are unique copies in the world. Some of them are of the matchless special collection.

The CASS library system now has 80 book stacks, 5 computer rooms and 52 reading rooms with a total of 1200 seats for readers, including Comprehensive Reading Room, Periodical Reading Room, Reference Reading Room and Special Collection Reading Room. For some larger institute libraries with a collection of 0.2 million volumes or so, the last three reading rooms are usually set up. For some institute libraries, there are also reading rooms for audio-visual materials. As of now, every library still aims its service primarily at meeting the needs of the academy's scientific researchers and at the same time also provides free or paid service to the scholars outside the academy according to circumstances. Much of the stock in libraries is kept on open shelves for reading or borrowing. But the valuable books and materials are in closed access.

The development and processing of secondary documents is another important task of the CASS library system. For a long time, the staff have compiled various kinds of special bibliographies, title lists, indexes, abstracts and compilations of reference materials to support scientific research. Some staff members also have undertaken academic researchers and done the work like the translating, editing and processing of materials. At present, there are 5 retrieval journals, which are published and issued openly every year, 88 special bibliographies, title lists and indexes for internal use and 52 compilations of reference materials. Among them, the serial retrieval publications which enjoy higher reputation are „A Collection of Titles of Social Sciences Literature in China“, „Abstracts of Chinese Social Science Dissertations and Theses“, „CASS Union Catalog of New Foreign Books“, and „The Index of Social Sciences Papers in Foreign Countries“. The special retrieval publications include „CASS Union Catalog of Foreign Reference Tools“, „A Guide to Reference Tools relating to Economics“, „A Handbook for the Retrieval of Laws and Regulations in the UK, America, Russia, Japan and

France“, „Catalog of the Materials concerning ‘A Dream of Red Mansions’, „A Guide to the Documents concerning Ceramics in China“, „Index of Papers and Materials on World General History“ (1949-1984), „The Essential Bibliography on the Documents concerning China’s Modern History, Published Abroad“, „Social Sciences Reference Catalog“, „Index of Papers and Materials concerning Nationalities Studies“, „Index of Papers on Linguistics in China“, „Compilation of the Documents on the Issue of Nationalities in the Former Soviet Union“, „The Bibliographic and Indexing Database on the Issue of the Former Soviet Union and East Europe Since 1949“ (Chinese version), „The Chinese Bibliography on African Studies (1900-1990)“, „Index and Bibliography on the Chinese Papers and Materials concerning the Issue of Latin America in the 40 years after the World War II (1945-1985)“, „Chronicle of Events in Latin America“, „Chronicle of Events on the Relationship between China and the Countries in South Asia“, „Bibliography on American Studies“, „Special Materials, concerning the Adjustment of Japan’s Economic Structure“, and „Reference Bibliography on West European Studies“. The aforesaid publications have authoritativeness recognized generally within the system of the Social Science information Services in China.

The above-mentioned professional work like collection development, and the development and processing of documents are all conducted tightly around the direction of offering specialized service to social science research in a bid to build the CASS library system into a special centre for books and reference materials covering all the fields in the social sciences in China and one of the important centres for social science documentation and information in the world. Besides, the CASS library system is making preparations actively for the establishment of resource-sharing network linking first with the corresponding research institutions outside the CASS in China and with those in the advanced countries in the world. To this end, the CASS library system has already laid an initial foundation in the preparations of both materials and staff.

The aforementioned shows that the CASS library system has achieved great progress in the past 30 years. However, its closed management pattern of „small library with complete holdings“ is a very backward one instead of the modernized, unified and scientific one. As the institute libraries usually choose their professional orientation according to the traditional orientation of the institutes which they belong to, the weak points and draw backs in the operational mechanism of the library system itself have been revealed obviously day by day.

1. The increasingly serious chaotic situation of document management results from the decentralized management of the library system. As every library has not

used the unified classification system for books and materials, there are as many as 10 kinds of classification systems for books. It is even worse for the classification systems for materials. Therefore, it is very difficult for the CASS library system to produce a union catalog reflecting the complete collection of the academy and to make scientific researchers enjoy resource sharing.

2. The heavy duplications in acquisition have caused serious waste of staff, material resources and financial resources, thus leading to the difficulty in optimizing the structure of collections. For instance, the Institute of National Minorities Literature had purchased 5000 copies of books on the characters of national minorities and because of the need of research, it also purchased a large batch of Chinese books (about 25,000 copies), which, however, the Institute of Literature had already held in its library. But because the two institute libraries belong respectively to the different institutes, the duplicate purchase could not be avoided. The same is almost true for the situation of the Institute of Economics and its related Institutes like the Institute of Industrial Economics, the Institute of Rural Development, the Institute of Financial, Trade, and Materials Economics. As a result, there are a large number of duplicate copies in the academy's collections.

3. Since there haven't been a set of rules and regulations on the standardization of document-management, which every library must abide by, to realize the automation of documentation and the modernization of service means is also a difficult thing. After entering the 1980s, modernized means with the computer technology as its symbol have been gradually applied in libraries' work. But under the decentralized management system, each library can only make its own plan for the technological application, and organize and implement it under the environment of its single library, which will not only cause greater waste of staff, material resources and financial resources but make the automation of the CASS library system impossible.

4. It is impossible to realize grouping of staff and to raise the service level of libraries. Among the present staff, over 80% of them have obtained education at or above the college level. The staff with the background of library science account for 32.5% and the staff with the background of foreign languages account for 20%. Such a knowledge structure of staff could have satisfied the requirement of library management if optimal grouping had been conducted, followed by necessary training. But, due to the closed management of staff, they cannot be deployed reasonably. Some libraries don't have one professional in library science and even have no undergraduates, while some libraries have so many, which not only has caused the great waste of talent, but influenced directly the overall

service level of the CASS library system. The above weak points and drawbacks have made the CASS library system lose the ability to meet an emergency. Therefore, under the shock of the new situation both at home and abroad, the CASS Library system has soon fallen into a crisis.

First, after entering the 1990s, with the construction of the information highway undertaken in the advanced countries, the demand of the CASS library system on high level modernized means for access to information is much more urgent than anytime before. The institutes specialized in the studies of international issues, such as the Institute of World Economics and Politics, the Institute of Asian Pacific Studies, the Institute of American Studies, the Institute of Japanese Studies, as well as the Institute of East European and Central Asian Studies not only need the information provided by the academy's libraries, but need to know in time the information and materials held in the corresponding research institutes in foreign countries. This demands that the CASS library system should break the „self-closing“ management system and forge link with foreign countries through networks. One of the trends in the development of social sciences is that there will be more and more frontier disciplines and newly emerging disciplines and the trends of mutual infiltration between disciplines will become increasingly obvious. If the management pattern of „small library with complete holdings“, used in the 1950s and the 1960s will be adopted continuously to meet the needs of scientific research, the bookfund will increase several times, and even dozens of times, which any social science research institutes can not afford.

Especially, the continuous spiral book price rising both at home and abroad and zero-increase from the mid-1980s to 1993 to libraries' funds (standing at 5 million yuan or so) caused the big reducing for the documents' stock. This problem was exacerbated by the annual growth rate of imported books' prices rising from 30% to 55% due to the great increase of exchange rates, resulting from the integration of China's financial market and the international financial market in 1993-1994. Under such a situation, the storage amount of publications of various institutes has decreased year after year. Instead of development, every library has shrunked seriously. From the state of the former Centre for Documentation and Information, which had the largest bookfound compared to other institute libraries, we can see the general situation of the sharp decrease of annual intake.

The State of Acquisition at the former Centre for Documentation and Information (1986-1993)

Year	Foreign Serials	Chinese Serials	Foreign Books	Chinese Books
1986	1.600 titles	600 titles	5.000 volumes	6.000 volumes
1989	1.300 titles	500 titles	3.000 volumes	5.000 volumes
1992	800 titles	400 titles	600 volumes	800 volumes
1993	400 titles	400 titles	...200 volumes	300 volumes

The above shows that under the restriction of bookfund, the collection development of the CASS library system has shrunk so seriously that the library system is facing the problem of survival. By 1993, the acquisition of books and periodicals fell to the lowest point in history. Assuming that the 1993's additions of foreign periodicals will remain unchanged in 1994, the fund would grow to 6.74 million yuan or so, which means that the whole budget for books and serials will increase by 2.4 million yuan. If the factor of price rise of Chinese books and periodicals is considered, the total book fund of the academy would increase by 3 million yuan, which could not be obtained from the state at all. The shock of shortage of funds has made all the contradictions in the original management system of the CASS library system intensified all of a sudden. On one hand, there is a shortage of fund, on the other hand, there is serious waste caused by the „small library with complete holdings“. On one hand, it is urgent to develop a computer network, on the other hand, the self-closing management system hinders the development of the network. Under such a situation, the CASS library system is forced to carry out the reform of its system.

Reform and Prospects

To turn the above-mentioned severe situation, the leaders of the CASS were determined to conduct the reform of its library system. So at the CASS working conference held in February 1994, it was decided that the present library system should be reformed and the academy library established. Considering the actual conditions that there were lack of adequate facilities and limited funds and many doubts were in the minds of some scientific researchers, the academy's leaders decided that the reform should follow the principle of „meticulous design, safe operation, stable transit and better service“. „Meticulous design“ means formulating a feasible plan for reform. „Safe operation“ means doing well the ideological work and organizational work in every aspect in the course of the implementation of the plan in order to bring as little influence as possible on scientific research. „Stable transit“ means carrying out reform orderly and by stages. We should both have confidence in reform and consider the actual

conditions to avoid fulfilling the plan in one step. „Better Service“ means promoting promoting reform by raising the quality of service.

To strengthen the leadership of the reform and implement the plan for reform, a leading group, a coordination team and an office for library reform were set up separately. On the basis of a large number of investigations and repeated proofs as well as broadly heeding the opinions of the masses, the office for library reform drew up 6 plans for implementation including „The plan for Forming the Academy Library“ (draft), „The plan for Implementing the Unified Acquisition Programme“, „The Plan for the Reform of Unified Cataloging Work“, The Plan for Picking up the New and Weeding out the Old from the Holdings“, „The Plan for the layout of Specialized Book Stacks“, The Plan for Circulation and Reading“, „The Plan for Automatic Technology Support for the Formation of the Academy Library“. After several modifications, these plans were approved by the leaders of the academy at the end of September 1994.

In the early December, 1994, all the staff members chosen from the various institute libraries went to the academy library to report for duty, thus formally establishing the academy library, made up of the former Centre for Documentation and Information and 14 institute libraries in the main building of the academy with 16 branch libraries outside the main building. From now on, the whole bookfund has been under the control of the academy library and the acquisition and cataloging unified in the CASS library system. The branch libraries which are relatively independent of the academy library and temporarily under various jurisdictions are moving toward the specialized ones. But their use of funds and the management of library procedures like acquisition, cataloging and circulation are subjected to the academy library. In this way, the establishment of the academy library has basically broken the „small library with complete holdings“ closed management system which has been adopted for many years making the CASS library system embark on the orbit of scientific management.

To realize the modernized management is another important project in the course of reforming the old system and forming the academy library. As early as 1989, Mr. Hu Sheng, the President of the CASS pointed out: „The libraries abroad have already forgotten links through networks and catalogs and can be accessed worldwide, but our academy even hasn't an unified classification system and a set of union catalogues. It is a 'disgrace'. In this reform, with the determination of wiping out the 'disgrace', the staff have spared no efforts to undertake the construction of automation with limited financial and material resources. They have established the platform of a microcomputer-based local network and set up 20 working stations and purchased the advanced system softwares including the 5

modules: acquisition, cataloging, circulation, serial control and public access catalog, and other facilities as well.

The opening of 6 reading rooms and the various specialized book stacks on January 3rd, 1995, marked the beginning of the operational stage in the reform of the CASS library system. The first several months of actual work proved that this reform was correct and had achieved obvious results.

Owing to the unified acquisition and cataloging of books and periodicals at the whole academy, the problems of duplications in acquisition and waste of funds which existed for many years have been solved more or less. In the case of the acquisition of foreign newspapers and periodicals in various libraries in 1994, the original titles were 2468, among which 434 were duplicate with duplicate rate of 17.6%. After the unified book acquisition, some duplicate publications and those with low frequency of use were weeded out and 186 titles of much-needed newspapers and periodicals were added. As a result, a fund of 864,000 yuan RMB was saved. The saved money, a considerable figure has poured vigour into the increasingly shrinking system.

Because of the unified management of bookfunds, a greater part of the funds can be allotted to the key disciplines and newly-emerging disciplines. As far as the Institute of Sociology was concerned, the titles of foreign newspapers and periodicals concerning sociology have jumped from 38 before the reform to 71 after the reform, which could not be done in the times of financial stringency without the reform.

In the course of the formation of the academy library, the original staff were redeployed and the working posts of some staff members adjusted too. According to every one's special skill and the requirement of posts, new combination of work was arranged. The system of „determining post and personnel allocation“ was implemented and the best was selected for the key posts. In this way, the optimized combination was realized in the various departments like acquisition, cataloging, circulation and automatic technology. Originally, there were 110 staff members in the 14 institute libraries in the main building of the academy. But only 72 went to their posts. The 38 reduced staff members accounted for 34,5 of the original total members. After the optimized combination, many employees have been made redundant, but the quality of service raised.

The merger of 14 institute libraries has provided favourable conditions for the operation of localcomputer networks. Now, the departments of acquisition, cataloging, reading and holding are all busy with debugging their own modules and will soon establish links to each other through local network.

The reform is now deepening. Although some good results have been achieved, the problems brought by the old system have not been solved completely. As there has been no library building as of yet, the 16 branch libraries outside the main building of the academy can not be completely under the unified management. The drawbacks resulting from „small library with complete holdings“ management system can not be overcome completely at once, which means that it is difficult to avoid the duplication in acquisition within a short period of time. The most urgent and critical thing to do now is to realize the automated management in libraries as soon as possible. To this end, the available financial and material resources must be amassed and the technical training of staff strengthened. In addition, the data standards of collections held at 12 specialized book stacks must be unified in order to make preparations for the early stage project of data input in an effort to lay foundations for attaining the overall goal of reform, that is, building the academy library into a comprehensive social science documentation and information institution which will realize the scientific management, networking in structure, modernization in means, and socialization in function, and also establish extensive relations of exchange and cooperation with the foreign counterparts.

Lu Qisu
Zhong Wanyi
CASS
Jianguomennei Dajie 5 Hao
Beijing
China