



**Transition to an e-and-globalised age: Shanghai Library's practice of change**

**Wu Jianzhong**  
Shanghai, China

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**Abstract:**

*In the past decade or so, Shanghai Library has evolved from a traditional library to a modern one that accommodates the needs of the e-and-globalized age. The paper introduces the recent innovative attempts on the part of Shanghai Library from the perspectives of strategic restructuring and technical breakthroughs. Important foundations have been laid for transformational development by means of reorientation, upgrading traditional services and strengthening cooperation with stakeholders, while particular efforts devoted to technical advancement via programs such as e-card system and e-book commons in the meantime.*

Keywords: e-card system; e-book commons; hybrid library; paradigm shift; Shanghai Library

The Shanghai Library and Institute of Science and Technology Information of Shanghai (ISTIS) were merged in 1995. Since then, the new organization has been exploring new development models and presented a new public image with new technology and open services.<sup>1</sup> In 1996 the Library began to use a windows-based automatic library management system, which was the first in the library community in China, and among the first in the world. The automatically operated CD-ROM tower was the hot spot for visitors to the new library building then. Another example is the open service. In the Shanghai Library, there were 1 million books on the open-shelf, which at the time was considered a very bold move, when the popular model was semi-open-shelf or open only to a small group of readers. Since then, the Shanghai Library has not closed its door for a single day. Even during the SARS epidemical period in 2003, the Library still opened everyday. As one of the 10 new cultural facilities in Shanghai at that time, the new library building demonstrated a good image for the city.

Today, the library is in the transitional period toward an e-and-globalised age: from print materials as the center of development to the digital materials as the center of development. In the period of print materials as the main body, the Library carried out open services to the maximum: for instance, opening 84 hours a week, making sure that readers could acquire materials from any stack in the library building within 20 minutes, etc. But how far and how deep can a traditional library go? Opening 100-hours a week? Responding to the request within 10 minutes? It is possible, but there is definitely a limitation: service only to those who come to the library. Apparently, to become a world-class metropolitan library, the Shanghai Library needs a fundamental change to cope with the changing e-and-globalised environment.

In 2002, the Library invited a local consulting group to undertake a diagnosis on the library. After a year's study, the group submitted a report, stressing that the library needed a strategic and technological change.<sup>2</sup> The Library accepted the recommendations and started strategic planning afterwards. The evolution from a traditional library into a modern library meeting the needs of the e-and-globalised age means a paradigm shift, and this process is difficult and tortuous. In the past decade, the Shanghai Library has made great efforts and developments on the strategic adjustment and technological breakthroughs. There have been detours and difficulties, but these developments and innovations have witnessed the transformational process of the Shanghai Library from a traditional library to a modern institute.

## **1. Paradigm shift**

The strategic adjustment of the Shanghai Library consists of three areas.

The first is to determine a new orientation and develop new strategies. The Shanghai Library is an information institute serving the various stakeholders in Shanghai, not merely on-site readers in the library. Therefore, the library's development must take into consideration the development of Shanghai as a whole, and be closely associated with Shanghai's economic, social and cultural development.

Shanghai Library has set its own development goal as to establish a world-class metropolitan library. Its mission is to pursue excellent services through developing an accumulated knowledge base and the Core Values of the Library is to provide excellent services, encourage sincere cooperation, guide learning and inspire intelligence. Meanwhile, the Shanghai Library has identified a service system of three orientations, namely the orientations towards the general public, the research community and the decision-makers. Service to the general public is the Shanghai Library's fundamental service, but this service should be in accordance with the other public libraries in Shanghai, so that the 245 public libraries in Shanghai can jointly undertake public service duties. The realization of one-card-through service among public libraries has established a good network of public reading, and at the same time, helped to develop the function of interlibrary loan services and mobilized library information resources in Shanghai; Service to the research community is an advantage of the Shanghai Library. The Shanghai Library provides information support and advisory services to businesses and research institutions with its wealth of resources. The

library serves not only large enterprises and their central research institutes, but also SMEs. The Source of Creation Service established in 2009 is well-received by small and medium enterprises; Service to decision-makers has been developed in recent years. Providing the Shanghai municipal government with information and advisory services has become a regular library operation. Advisory services to the municipal government decision-makers are mainly represented by special bulletins and consultation reports. Such special bulletins as science and technology briefings provide the government with timely information on a particular field, while consultation reports are in-depth research and development papers prepared by the experts of the Shanghai Library in collaboration with government officials. The *Report on the Construction of Shanghai World Expo Security System* and the *Post-Expo Cultural Development Report* have received the government's great attention. The *Shanghai Culture Yearbook* published annually and the *World Business Report* and the *World Modern Manufacturing Report* published every other year by the Shanghai Library have become the library's name brands. The "three-orientation" knowledge services have laid an important foundation for the economic and cultural development of Shanghai.

The second is to enhance the traditional service capabilities. Since its original service structure is basically book-oriented, the first challenge the Shanghai Library faces is how to enhance the traditional service to an omnimedia service environment. For example, the library has opened a news room in the reading area, which integrates the television news, electronic newspapers and print newspapers into a single reading room, providing one-stop services. The World Expo Information Reading Room combines all the resources related to the World Expo, including grey resources, to facilitate readers' access to information on the World Expo and meet their research needs. Meanwhile, the World Expo Information Reading Room is equipped with reference librarians, answering readers' questions related to the World Expo. Take another example, the Shanghai Library launched its lecture service in 1978, and is now giving a public lecture every two days, covering such fields as economy, society, culture, life and library use. These lectures used to be classroom lectures, but now they are diversified in form and content. For instance, many lectures are broadcasted on the Shanghai TV network, and readers can access the Internet video on demand on the Shanghai Library Lecture website. A lecture library is planned to integrate print, multimedia, television and other types of resources into a common space and attract instructors to communicate and share information.

The third is to strengthen cooperation with stakeholders and the sharing of information. The Shanghai Library is not merely a message entity, and therefore, the library should strengthen cooperation with other stakeholders and play a leading role in information provision.

The Shanghai Library has not only carried out cooperation with libraries and information institutes for resource sharing activities, but also undertaken cooperation with government and commercial consultation organizations to develop consulting and research services, forming a professional team to meet the needs of the society. The characteristics of the Shanghai Library research team are to adapt to needs of the social development and provide information consultation and reference resources. For example, when Shanghai was

conducting the "12<sup>th</sup> 5-year Plan" research, the library carried out cooperation with the government and relevant departments to do a research on the long-term strategic planning, and provided domestic and international methods and case studies of the long-term development strategy. As Shanghai is building itself into an economic, financial, shipping and trade center, the Library realizes that there is a lack of shipping resources, so the Library has taken the initiative to cooperate with the Shanghai Maritime University and established the Shanghai Shipping Information Center to make up for the insufficient resources. In addition, The Shanghai Library and the Shanghai Institutes for Biological Sciences have jointly established the Life Science Library, and with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences jointly established the Shanghai Social Sciences Library, achieving the sharing of resources.

## **2. Technological breakthrough**

The Shanghai Library is making the greatest efforts in technology research in recent years. Naturally, the library should make full use of modern technology to enhance its service capabilities. But currently, the Shanghai Library's entire operational process is incompatible with the development of modernization. The library workflow is streamlined in accordance with the arrangements of print materials, from acquisitions and cataloging, to the reading rooms and the stacks and so on. Problems cannot be solved by simply adding one or two modern machine or change a single project. For example, The Shanghai Library has proposed to raise the budget for digital resources to 30% of its acquisitions fund, but this goal has not been reached yet because the whole environment is not suitable for the new media. The current budget is still about 10 percent.

The bottleneck is how to use electronic resources with right facilities. If the problem concerning remote access and intellectual property issues can be solved, then the electronic resources can be fully utilized, and the percentage of electronic resource acquisitions can naturally increase. In recent years the Library has developed the E-card service to solve the problem of remote access, and as a result, the electronic resources have increased greatly. But due to the fact that the library's existing management is not adequate for the application of electronic resources, it is not going smooth. As the digital publications' business model is not really formed and digital publishing has a long way to go before it becomes a mature industry independent of advertising or other commercial supporting factors, two formats will certainly coexist for some time. But we must recognize the fact that the mankind is entering a digital era, and the impact of digital information on the human life has exceeded or is exceeding the traditional media. Because of the Library's innovation and practice, the E-card Service received the Innovation Award from the Chinese Ministry of Culture in 2009.<sup>3</sup>

The Shanghai Library has found a new way in the electronic reader service. At the beginning, a certain manufacturer of E-book reader was willing to promote their e-reader at the Shanghai Library and donated a number of sample products to the library. Then a second and more manufacturers are offering us sample products. So the Library opened an e-book commons in July 2010. It has two advantages. On the one hand, it allows the library users to experience different e-readers in the same area. Now there are 11 types of e-readers on show in the

e-book commons, and the users not only can have the opportunity to know these products and learn how to use them, but also can compare these products and give suggestions to the manufacturers for further improvement. On the other hand, e-reader manufacturers can also have a venue for communicating with each other. Press conferences and reader-manufacturer meetings are held here from time to time, and manufacturers are invited to attend such activities. As a result, the e-book commons has become a communication platform for the e-book users and manufacturers. The Shanghai Library has taken this opportunity to establish an e-book loan service. Currently, there are altogether 300 e-book readers available for circulation. This trial process is the process of library new technology development. Although a variety of problems have been encountered in the course of the trial, this experiment is a valuable activity because it has accumulated experience for the application of new technologies. The Shanghai Library is promoting this service in the other public libraries in Shanghai at the same time. For instance, the Qintu Public Library located in the suburbs has also established this service under the guidance of the Shanghai Library.

E-card service or e-book commons can solve some problems of electronic reading, but it can not really change the entire library operational system and operational process. The library's book-oriented basic process has not fundamentally changed. The next step concerns the whole paradigm shift, that is, to fundamentally change the library's operational process and institutional settings so that it becomes an omnimedia library.

To become an omnimedia library, it is necessary to implement an overall change in the library management and service system. During the transitional period, the cataloging of print materials is still a heavy task, and currently, the Library acquires every year 90,000 titles of new Chinese books, 30,000 titles of foreign language books, 11,000 titles of print Chinese periodicals and 6,000 titles of foreign language periodicals, as well as 100 databases and 32,000 digital periodicals. The management and service of books and journals is still the major concern of the library, therefore, MARC-based cataloging is still its mainstream operation. At present, metadata cataloging is conducted by other departments, such as the Historical Documents Center is responsible for the construction of Genealogy and Rubbings databases. In the future, the Cataloging Center will integrate the cataloging of various resources, including MARC and metadata cataloging, but still based on MARC cataloging. The Cataloging Center will establish metadata rules, but the specific cataloging will be entrusted to the relevant departments. For example, the Lecture Library will deal with the cataloging of non-print lecture resources. However, all bibliographical records will be integrated into a single system and posted through the OPAC. At present, the Shanghai Library's iPAC system is also accessible through the mobile phone to its users.

### **3. Planning for future**

As a public and research library, the Shanghai Library should not only serve the current reality, but also actively reserve resources for the future use. According to its collection development policy, the Shanghai Library will first of all actively build an omnimedia library collection system, integrating the blogs and other media resources into its subject catalog

system. Second, the Shanghai Library will extensively develop electronic resources and gradually increase the percentage of electronic resources in its entire collection system and in the next decade, it will reach 20%, and then 30%, if the digital environment adapts to the digital services. Third, the Shanghai Library will focus on building the National Centre for Serial Publications. According to the traditional work division of the national library resource construction, the Shanghai Library has undertaken the task of establishing the National Serial Center. The Library publishes a monthly *Index to the National Newspapers and Periodicals* in the fields of social sciences and science and technology, and has launched a web site to provide digital journal resources. The editorial department of the *Index to the National Newspapers and Periodicals* has made innovations to integrate the document supply service into database services, based on the traditional indexing service, providing users with the one-stop service from index or abstract retrieving to full text supply. At the same time, the retrospective indexing has already dated back to 100 years ago. At present, 27,619 titles of periodicals are available, including 7,659 titles of historical periodicals. Fourth, at the same time of constructing a local resource center, the Shanghai Library has established databases on various subjects to meet the needs of modern urban development, such as establishing the financial database and shipping database in accordance with the goal of the Shanghai city for building finance and shipping centers.

According to the Shanghai Library's vision, by 2020, Shanghai will establish a STM information consortium based on the comprehensive network of 250 public libraries and more than 60 research libraries. Currently, eight information agencies and enterprises have joined the STM information consortium, and in the future, this consortium will extend to the city's small and medium enterprises. These two fan-shaped structures will form the strategic foundation of the Shanghai Library extensive services.

In addition, the Shanghai Library has also set up a network of the Window of Shanghai opening to the global libraries. Since 2003, the Library has gradually established the Window of Shanghai in the libraries of cities with friendship relation with Shanghai. Currently, there is the Window of Shanghai in altogether 61 libraries overseas, and it is planned to reach 100 by the end of the next decade, so that the Window of Shanghai will cover the whole world. The Window of Shanghai has also started to provide such professional services as exhibition, document supply and interlibrary loan. At the Shanghai International Library Forum held in August 2010, an English version of the document supply and interlibrary loan system was launched and the system is now accessible through the web site of the Window of Shanghai.

#### **4. Conclusion: library as a growing organism**

In the process of the paradigm shift, the Shanghai Library has realized that mind change should go first. Even in an e-and-globalised age, the basic function of the library will not change. The library is a growing organism, with each cell forming an organic part of the library. The library not only should conduct a traditional work flow of cataloging and acquisitions, circulation and collection development, but also integrate a knowledge flow of various subject activities into its organic system. Each cell is interrelated and interdependent.

This people-centered dynamic organism for the purpose of meeting the information needs of the society and the general public drives the library continuously to move forward. Therefore, a modern library should not only actively participate in the knowledge dissemination and innovation for the general public, but also actively participate in the government decision making and policy consultation, the research and innovation of research groups, as well as the industrial development for corporations and freelancers. As a comprehensive information institute, the Shanghai Library is committed to achieving these tasks and objectives.<sup>4</sup>

In the past ten years, the Shanghai Library has put itself in a social context and developed a three-direction knowledge service system for meeting the city's various needs. The Shanghai Expo 2010 has given the Shanghai Library an opportunity to extend its services. On January 2003, that is, one month after the successful bid for the World Expo, the library set up the World Expo Information Center and collected in a short period of time materials covering each world expo since 1851. And then a World Expo Information Reading Room and a World Expo Information Website were established. Since then the center issued 350 newspaper clippings, provided government decision-making departments with 100 World Expo bulletins, held 100 World Expo lectures and 38 exhibitions and published the World Expo series of 8 books and many other books on the World Expo. Almost all library departments, including the departments of cataloging and acquisitions, public services, document supply, information consultation and research, conferences and exhibitions, as well as the Library's publishing house have participated in the World Expo services. Meanwhile, in providing services for the World Expo, the Shanghai Library has actively made innovations in service models, disseminating the World Expo knowledge and information through such services as mobile phone bibliographic search and browsing, SMS and e-books. The Library also entered the World Expo Park to provide journalists with information services, and participated in EXPO research and offer reference services. A group of library staff has been chosen to work on the Expo theme development, Expo Forum and the opening and closing ceremonies and other activities. The successful participation into the expo business is a typical example of a library in a changing environment.

This Shanghai Expo has provided a broad space and expansion opportunity not only for the economic and cultural development, but also for the library development of the city. The Shanghai Library will take this advantage to further develop and innovate in the process of transition to the hybrid library.

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<sup>1</sup> Wu Jianzhong. Establishing a new knowledge channel: a three-dimensional service model of the Shanghai Library. *Library Management*, 25 (1/2): 67-71.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Shiwei. On the Establishment of Library Organization Culture Suiting and Promoting the Development of Library and Information Undertakings [in Chinese]. *Tushu Qingbao Gongzuo* [Library and Information Work], 2002(5):87-92.

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Culture awards prizes for innovative library programs every three years. The Shanghai Library received the prize for its e-card system for users' remote access to the library's digital collections in 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Wu Jianzhong. *The Library of the 21st Century*. San Francisco: Long River, 2005.