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China Direct: Successful Practice of Cross-Domain Information Service between China and Germany

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Abstract This article describes the background of the Sino-German co-operation in document delivery, necessity and possibility of co-operation, and the objectives, content, and the task of the collaboration, as well as the characteristics of China Direct system. It also introduces the co-operation mechanism of cross-domain information service and the significance of co-operation in document delivery services and future development.

Keywords China Direct, cross-domain information service, subito

1. Introduction

The rapidly changing information environment and user requirements have created significant challenges for library and information services. The traditional single library services model or local co-operation services model could not satisfy the needs of users completely. We must break the barrier of language and region, and conduct cross-domain information services, in order to adapt the increasingly diversified customer needs in a digital environment.

In recent years, the colleagues around the world actively explore the ways to promote cross-domain information services. The “Sino-German collaboration in library and information services” project is a successful example of them.

The “Sino-German collaboration in library and information services” project is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and the German Science Center. Since the inception of the project in 2007, under the support from the Sino-German Science Center, the achievements in scientific and technological information services in China and Germany have been widely disseminated and significantly promoted the developing of the libraryship both in China and Germany.

Sino-German co-operation in document delivery (China Direct) is a sub-project of “Sino-German Cross-Domain Information Service” project. The sub-project has made substantial progress through the joint efforts, continuous research and in-depth discussion of both partners in China and Germany.

This article describes the needs, the possibility and objectives of co-operation, and explores the co-operation content, co-operation mechanism, and tasks of two sides, and analyzes the significance of co-operation and development in future, which aims to provide some thoughts to spark your study and discussion in cross-domain information services.
2. Requirements and Basis for Co-Operation of "China Direct"

China Direct is a joint document delivery service project between Subito and some Chinese libraries, currently including National Science Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing University Library and Shanghai Library. It is a co-operative project proposed by Chinese libraries and Subito based on the characteristics and the needs of their users. Both sides can conduct document access and full-text providing services directly via Subito service system. The project will effectively promote library's information resources sharing between Chinese and German.

2.1 The Necessity of Co-Operation

Subito is an international library document delivery system which was built up by German Ministry of Education and Research in order to speed up the document providing. There are currently 35 supplier libraries from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and other countries that have created an important base for literature information providing on nature science, social science and economic fields [1]. However, as an international document supply system, Subito's lack of Chinese resources turned out to be the fly in the ointment.

In addition, China's current development has attracted worldwide attention, more and more Westerners want to understand and study Chinese culture, history and development; While China needs to open to the world and seeks opportunities for international co-operation, and needs to introduce foreign information resources and services into China, in order to provide services for domestic users faster and better. Therefore, the co-operation is quickly promoted after proposed. To a great extent, such co-operation is not only co-operation between the libraries, but also between two countries and two different cultures.

2.2 The Possibility of Co-Operation

2.2.1 Subito Overview

Subito is a web-based and crossing-border document delivery service system, which integrates access, user requests and libraries service in one system, users can search holdings of supplier libraries and send requests to obtain the articles or borrow books via Subito system. Namely, Subito can provide a remote document delivery and book loan service [2].

All users can enjoy the fast and efficient library resource sharing services by requesting and obtaining documents at home or office directly [1]. Such service mechanism provides a basis for the two sides to co-operate.

2.2.2 Overview of Three Chinese Libraries

The three Chinese participating libraries, National Science Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai Library, and Beijing University Library, belong to three different types: academic libraries, public libraries and university libraries. The three libraries have a great influence in the domestic library community, especially for their document delivery services.

National Science Library (NSL) is the largest science and technology based specialized library, after decades of development, creating a complete holding system on the feature of basic sciences area of natural science and high-tech information resources. Document de-
livery services have been carried out more than ten years and have more practical experiences, NSL has established document delivery services co-operation with more than 100 libraries at home and abroad. NSL has organized and managed the "Chinese Academy of Sciences document delivery and interlibrary loan services" (CSDL Document Delivery system). It is also an important member of national platforms – National Science Technology Library (NSTL). NSL has plenty experience of document delivery and interlibrary loan services, and accumulates much more services running, coordinating, managing experience [3].

Beijing University Library is the oldest university library in China. It is famous for its huge collections, especially for its rare books and rubbings. The library also is the management center of two national resources sharing projects: "China Academic Library Information System (CALIS)" and "China Academic Humanities and Social Sciences Library (CASHL)", funded by Ministry of Education, and has set up co-operative relations with more than 100 domestic and foreign libraries in document delivery and interlibrary loan service [4].

Shanghai Library is a large, comprehensive academic-based public library. Document Supply Center was established in 2003. The Service has been developed rapidly and formed some features. Now Shanghai library has established co-operative relations with more than 80 libraries and has accumulated amount of experiences in the process of document deliver services. Shanghai Library is a member of OCLC of document resource sharing system [5].

The co-operative team is the basis and condition for the co-operative project. In the process of co-operation, the three Chinese libraries have co-operated and supported each other friendly. Based on the hard working of three Chinese libraries and Subito, the co-operation has gotten satisfied results.

3. The Objectives and Content of Co-Operative Project

3.1 Co-Operative Objectives

China Direct, Sino-German co-operation project of document delivery services loads Chinese resources data into the Subito system, and delivery documents for Subito users, Services based on one platform bring Chinese libraries into the Subito service system, and introduce Subito services into the Chinese library services, and establish a very smooth workflow for resource sharing.

3.2 Details of the Co-Operation

Based on the three Chinese libraries’ data of Chinese periodicals (see Table 1), Subito creates a portal, China Direct, that includes information access interface, users request interface, the request processing operating system of supplier library and so on. Both sides could request and obtain documents directly via Subito document delivery system according to the agreement reached by two sides, which covers the service time and period, document delivery type, service fees, accounting and intellectual property protection issues, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Science Library</td>
<td>6.652</td>
<td>Natural science/Society science</td>
<td>1909–now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing University Library</td>
<td>16.163</td>
<td>Natural science/Society science</td>
<td>1834–now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai Library</td>
<td>13.701</td>
<td>Natural science/Society science</td>
<td>1915–now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.516</td>
<td>Natural science/Society science</td>
<td>1834–now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Data from three Chinese libraries

3.3 Tasks for Both Sides

3.3.1 Chinese side is responsible for providing data about Chinese Periodicals

According to the features of Subito retrieval system, the data element of Chinese journals list should include: ISSN, Chinese title, English title, pinyin title, the beginning and ending years of publication and holdings information, the three libraries export basic data from their library systems and provide them to Subito after making some appropriate changes, corrections and additions, which includes:

- To add missing ISSN
- To merge duplicate journals by comparing ISSN
- To unify the Pinyin format of journal title
- To review and correct the errors in holding information, and add journal publication beginning year and ending year in records.

3.3.2 Subito is responsible for creating document delivery service portal-China Direct

China Direct portal is embedded into Subito system, According to Chinese journal data provided by Chinese libraries, several access points are set up in the retrieval system, including Chinese titles, English titles, Chinese Pinyin titles and ISSN. The information of libraries' holdings will be shown in the search results, if the holding libraries are more than one, the libraries' name will be juxtaposed in the search results, users can choose supplier library they want. Search results can be further refined by publication year, in order to locate resource efficiently. User's requests can be sent directly to the supplier library via email. There are two links in email, one is for upload documents, the other is the link to explain why the request could not be full filled. Also, the librarian could login to the tracking system to check the requests. The portal is a flexible, user-friendly and ease-of-use system and provides users and librarians convenience.

4. Co-Operation Mechanisms

4.1 Cross-Domain Mechanism for Joint Service

According to the objectives and content of co-operation, Sino-German co-operation project team established the workflow, rules and mechanisms of cross-domain co-operation services that include: basic format of Chinese journal data, data update frequency and mode, portal system function, document delivery type, user group and service fee, accounting,
China Direct: Successful Practice of Cross-Domain Information Service between China and Germany

copyright fees, service time, service response speed, and service after delivery, etc. After
discussion, two sides reached the agreement as below:

1. User groups: Based on Subito user category and its service policy and Chinese special
   policy, document delivery service is offered only for user’s study and research needs,
   both side decided that: “China Direct” only supply services to non-commercial users of
   Subito and other areas in the world. Namely, users are group 1, 3, 4, 8 of Subito
2. Search/Browse: The system supports the search and browse of Chinese journal title.
3. Type of delivery: The main delivery type is in PDF format, supplier library scans the
   article into PDF file and upload it. It is not allowed to use any e-journals for document
   delivery via Subito. It is not allowed to print out first and than to scan. So the service is
   to prepare PDF file only from print material.
4. Service time: According to the policy of Subito, The available service time of China
   Direct is from Monday to Friday in weekdays, services are closed on national holidays
   of China and weekends. For normal service: user’s requests will be handled in 72 hours
   (working day), for Express service in 24 hours (working day), currently we offer normal
   service only.
5. Service fees: For different user groups, the service fee is different (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service price</th>
<th>User type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Service type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 EUR</td>
<td>User group 1</td>
<td>Student and researcher in university and research institute in Germany, Austria, Switzerland</td>
<td>Normal service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User group 4</td>
<td>Libraries in Germany, Austria, Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 EUR</td>
<td>User group 3</td>
<td>Personal users in Germany, Austria, Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 EUR</td>
<td>User group 8</td>
<td>Libraries in other areas of the world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not offered currently; we might add it in the future, it depends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subito handling fee</td>
<td>1 EUR handling fee to Subito Office. First 6 months it will be free handling. The handling charge will be collected from 7th month after the system is running.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Express service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Service fee for different user group

6. Accounting: we have discussed and decided to adopt Central Regulation – Subito Office
   takes charges of central invoicing, monitors incoming payments, sends reminders and
   credits liabilities to the supplier libraries. In order to reduce the difficulty of payment,
   Subito retains the monthly credit notes on a separate account until settlement is made
   with the supplier libraries. Settlement is made on an annual basis.
7. Service after delivery: Another important thing is service after delivery. For example,
   sometimes users ask re-delivering documents because of some impersonal reasons.
   How to handle user’s request? Now, we have a uniform regulation: The supplier library
   should re-deliver the document free of charge due to any quality problems such as the
   copies are not clear or pages are missing.
8. Considerations for Updates: The data updating is very important for service. We have considered that the stock data is updated yearly. For this purpose the Chinese libraries will receive a list of current data from Subito, which can be corrected, extended and returned to Subito. The list is provided prior to 1st September of each year.

9. Service agreement: Both sides will sign an agreement which include all the content above to ensure the service and co-operation going smoothly. Both sides should take the responsibilities and rights defined in the agreement. The agreement will be in two versions: Chinese and German.

4.2 Inter-System Co-Operation Mechanism

Three Chinese libraries belong to different library types, locate in different regions, and have different service policies, rules and users. These bring some difficulties in communicating and co-operating. However, after various efforts, the Chinese side reached consensus in the data format, service fees, service time, and co-operation mechanisms, they work together as one unit to co-operate with Germany side. This creates a new co-operation model. Inter-library system co-operation deepened mutual understanding, and accumulated cross-regional and cross-system services experience in working for the future services, as well as more extensive and in-depth co-operation has been laid a good foundation.

4.3 The Significance of Co-Operation

China-Direct is a Cross-Domain Information Services based on multilateral co-operation in China. This is the pioneer of Cross-Domain Information Services in China. It is a reciprocal co-operation between China and Germany. Chinese libraries join the Subito as an associate. We have obligation to supply service and have right to use services in meantime. China Direct enriches the Chinese resources in Subito and broadens the service content of Subito. Users can search and obtain Chinese documents in foreign document delivery system directly. It explores a new approach to share resources across different areas, especially for non-local and other country’s documents in different language. It has achieved cross-domain resource sharing, a cross-domain information services and co-operation mechanisms, which is the real practice of cross-domain information services.

5. Further Development

China Direct system has been running up, it is a result of the co-operation project in documents delivery. Regarding how to develop the co-operation in future, we have some discussions as below.

5.1 To Market Services

It is very necessary to let more and more people know the service and use it correctly. For this purpose, it is very important for us to market service in various ways after the system running.
5.2 To Improve Mechanisms for Data Update

Currently, the way of data updating is batch mode, it is low efficiency and time-consuming. After the system running stably, we expect to switch it from batch updates to real-time. It would greatly enhance the data quality. Development of technology has provided a possibility for data real-time update of union catalog, it will be an important point of the project in future.

5.3 Making the Co-Operation Regulations More Perfect

Sino-German co-operation in document delivery is a cross-domain information service as a new model of exploration. All of the content and processes of services, services mechanism is an attempt. It needs to continuously improve and refine through the actual operation and practices.

Maybe we need to enlarge the co-operation to other types of materials, such as books. We also think about to increase the participating libraries or broaden the user groups (eg. “How to offer services to commercial users”).

As long as the two sides make joint efforts to promote co-operation, China Direct will burst out with splendor.

6. References