

2012 Winter Leadership Conference
OSA Library Advisory Committee
February 8-10, 2012
Washington, DC

Multidisciplinary collection development at the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences

Ling LI (liling@mail.las.ac.cn)

National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences
People's Republic of China

1. background

Multidisciplinary collection development at the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) is not new, but a continuous and collective effort of librarians and scientists in a highly diversified environment in terms of subject specialty and geographic location. The central library in Beijing and its three branch libraries in Lanzhou, Wuhan and Chengdu, closely working with more than 100 institutional libraries, provide multidisciplinary collections and services as an integrated network catering to the scholarly needs of 117 CAS research institutes, which are strategically placed in 32 major Chinese cities throughout the country. As the top-notch research organization and a degree-granting institution of China, CAS currently has more than 42,000 researchers and an enrollment of more than 48,000 post-graduates. To support the research and teaching needs of the CAS, the National Science libraries and institutional libraries have developed multidisciplinary collections both at national and regional levels, often subject areas interrelated to assigned disciplinary specialties and concentration.

2. Requisition procedures for multidisciplinary collection development

Electronic databases with comprehensive coverage in science and technology are multidisciplinary in nature. The decision to lease or purchase such databases requires the collaboration of subject librarians and the institutional librarian at local or regional level. Their evaluations and recommendations are normally submitted to the Resources Development Division of the National Science Library in Beijing. To ensure the relevancy and collection balance of databases, the Resources Development Division takes the responsibility to review and makes adjustments before it forwards acquisition requests to the Electronic Resources Group of the CAS. Requisition procedures vary from institute to institute. For effective and efficient collection development programs, librarians at both central and local or regional levels usually exercise joint

judgment in needs assessment, scrutiny and selection of interdisciplinary resources.

3. Subject Librarian Services for multidisciplinary collection development

Since June 2006, under the leadership of Dr. Xiaolin Zhang, the National Science Library has become a more proactive organization in response to user expectation. By the end of 2011, the leadership had selected a team of 56 professional librarians from various geographic locations to form the “Subject Librarian Team”, a mission-oriented group of people who had earned master and/or doctoral degrees in sciences and library and information services. In this new paradigm, subject librarians are centrally assigned to all CAS institutes, working together with institutional librarians and researchers, to provide the local institute with customized services, including R&D trends projection, resources planning and development, collection analysis, information literacy training , reference services. Subject librarians have served as the mediator between resources and CAS users in major cities and other localities in almost all provinces. The innovative Subject Librarian paradigm has brought to fruition at the CAS. This well-known organizational change at the National Science Library has prompted many Chinese specialty libraries and academic libraries to emulate.

As a result of developing multidisciplinary support and expertise-sharing, librarians travel frequently to various CAS Institutes to reach out library users. For example, as a founding member of the Subject Librarian Team, I often travel from Beijing to the Engineering Technology Institutes at Qinqdao and Shanghai, and work with researchers and institutional librarians there. My subject area assignment, Engineering Technology, is multidisciplinary. I enjoy this specialized service by making myself available to clients at distance in a diverse environment for multidisciplinary support.