

Adjusting the information service strategies according to users' requirements —A survey of the library users' information requirements in the four library systems of Zhejiang province^①

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Abstract Based on a survey of the circumstances of the information requirements in social science from more than 3,800 library users in 48 libraries of the four major library systems in Zhejiang Province, this paper analyzes the present main characteristics of the users' requirements to the social science document information and puts forward some proposals for adjusting the document information service strategies for the library and information institutions.

Keywords Zhejiang province, Library, Social science information service, User survey, Information service strategy

Service strategies must satisfy users' requirements so as to improve the quality and level of service. This also applies to the social science document information service. In order to gain an accurate knowledge of users' information requirements, the utilization of the document information from various libraries and information media, and of their expectations on libraries and information organizations, and to promote the collection development of social science of libraries in Zhejiang province, thus better serving social science information users, decision-making by the leadership as well as the economic and cultural development, the team of the project "Research on the Development of Regional Central Libraries and of Provincial Social Science Document Information Center", with the support of Zhejiang Province Information Society for Social Sciences, Zhejiang Province Library Society, and Zhejiang Steering Committee for Academic Libraries, conducted



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an extensive survey from November 2005 to April 2006 on the distribution of library collection resources (with separate reports) and on users' information requirements, which are summarized as follows:

1 Methods and contents of the survey on users' information requirements

- Questionnaire was distributed to users coming to read or consult information in the library or to the departments related to teaching and researching.
- The questionnaire is divided into five major sections with 17 items. Each item includes several sub-items which consist of single-choice options or multiple-choice options. In total, there are more than 100 sub-items.
- The questionnaire falls into two categories: one for users of university libraries, and the other for users of public libraries. The major difference between them is that the former includes two sub-items: academic title, and scientific & research projects completed or engaged in, which are changed to occupation by the latter.
- The research team has distributed a total of 9,000 questionnaires to 92 libraries of the four major systems, namely, university and college libraries in Zhejiang province, libraries of Party schools at the prefecture (city) level or above, libraries of academies of social science and public libraries. Among them, there are 7,800 questionnaires for academic libraries (including universities, Party schools and academies of social science) and 1,200 for public libraries, with 60 questionnaires per library for small libraries and 100–300 per library for large ones. Most libraries received 100 questionnaires. The respondents of academic libraries were requested that the teacher and the student should account for 50% each. But in practice, the number of the questionnaires filled in by students was more than 50%. And the respondents of public libraries were requested that ordinary users and key users should account for 50% each. But in practice, ordinary users prevailed.
- After nearly five months of survey, 3,830 valid questionnaires were sent back from 48 libraries (among which are 18 university libraries, 9 college libraries, 12 libraries of Party schools, 2 libraries of academies of social sciences, 5 public libraries, and 2 libraries serving both as libraries of university zone, college libraries and public libraries), with the feedback ratio of 42.56%. Among them, the number of valid questionnaires for library users of university and college users were 3,229, and the feedback ratio is 41.44%. The number of valid questionnaires for public libraries users were 601, and the feedback ratio is 50.08%. Among the 3,830 questionnaires, a few respondents did not fill in all major items. To ensure the authenticity of data, percentage and data are calculated according to the actual number of valid respondents. And questionnaires with three or more major items left blank are considered invalid.



2 Profiles of Respondents

2.1 Age

The largest part of respondents, either of university and college libraries or of public libraries, is between the age of 18 and 30, accounting for 68.06% and 50.75% respectively, followed by the respondents between the ages of 30 and 45, representing 23.21% and 19.30% respectively. Respondents of the two above categories divided by age totaled 3,358, or 87.93%. Due to the randomness, the survey shows that the largest part of the library users are people between the ages of 18 and 45. Users between the ages of 46 and 60 are the backbone of teaching and researching, occupying the third place in university and college libraries (accounting for 7.05%), but holding the lowest proportion (8.32%) in public libraries. In comparison with other users of public libraries, this indicates that people between these two ages have little enthusiasm for reading, possibly because of a relatively heavy burden of work and family, and therefore, the users at ages from 46 to 60 is even fewer than those at the age of 60 and above (accounting for 9.32%). Respondents under the age of 17 account for only 0.44% in university and college libraries, but take up 12.31% in public libraries, ranking as the third place, which shows that juvenile users take public libraries as their second classroom.

2.2 Educational level

Respondents with a bachelor degree rank the first among both university and college libraries and public libraries, accounting for 52.80% and 33.28% respectively, followed by respondents with college diploma, taking up 30.10% and 26.79% respectively. Respondents of university and college libraries who rank from the third to the sixth places are as follow: masters (10.5%), senior high school graduates (4.18%), doctors (1.8%), and junior high school graduates (0.62%). Respondents of public libraries who rank from the third to the sixth places are shown as: senior high school graduates (26.46%), junior high school graduates (8.82%), masters (3.66%), and doctors (1%). The above data indicates that 95.2% of university and college library users hold the college diploma or above, and senior high school graduates and junior high school graduates also occupy a certain proportion. However, public library users with a senior high school diploma almost equal those with a college diploma, while the users with a master and/or doctor degree are much fewer. That shows that two kinds of libraries have different users.

2.3 Professional title

This item is designed only for respondents of university and college libraries. Respondents with no professional titles occupy the largest part (accounting for



Research Papers

63.65%) for three reasons. The first reason is that students do not hold professional titles. The second one is that some younger teachers do not get professional titles. And the third one is that some respondents did not fill in this item. The respondents with titles totally amount to 1,160, accounting for 36.35% (nearly 40%). Among them, respondents with the middle title, primary title, vice-senior title, and the senior title account for 16.17%, 9.3%, 8.81% and 2.07% respectively. This ranking order accords with the proportion of professional titles in universities and colleges.

2.4 Research projects completed or engaged in

This item is also designed only for respondents of university and college libraries, but was left blank by most respondents. One reason is that some respondents actually do not undertake any scientific or research project. Another reason is that some respondents did not fill in the detailed project information (respondents are requested to fill in the name, main research contents and the level of the project) to save their trouble. In addition, 246 respondents (accounting for 7.85%) filled in this item, of which 105 projects are at the provincial and ministerial level, 96 projects at the prefectural and municipal level and 45 projects at the national level. Despite a small part, these users are in urgent need of document information with strong and clear directionality. Therefore, their requirements should be taken into full consideration in developing social science information resources.

2.5 Occupation

This item is designed for users of public libraries. Among the 23 occupations offered, all options have been chosen except housekeeping service. The top 10 occupations are as follow: students (28.12%), enterprises and public institutions (11.65%), retirees (6.32%), others (6.32%), civil servants (5.99%), technology, manufacture and production (4.66%), business (4.49%), public services (4.16%), education (3.83%), and finance (3.83%). The data indicates that the people with the above 10 occupations take up nearly 80% of public library users. Other occupations such as self-employed, IT industry, medical staff, unemployment, researchers, media industry, agriculture, literature and art, health service, army, insurance and agency, altogether account for 20.63%.

3 An analysis on the requirements of Chinese social science information users

It is seen from the survey that the requirements of Chinese social science information users have the following features:



3.1 Print documents such as library collections, newspapers, magazines, and books, and Internet are the main channels through which users acquire information and knowledge on social science

In order to understand the main channels through which users acquire information and knowledge on social science, the questionnaire offers four items in section two. The results show:

3.1.1 Nearly one third users read social science literature on a regular basis

According to the survey, nearly one third library users chose “Regularly”, 57.57% chose “Occasionally”, and less than 10% chose “Seldom”, which indicates social science information has occupied a certain position in people’s ordinary life. It is worthwhile to mention that the proportion of public library users that chose “Regularly” is higher by 7.02% than that of university and college library users. This result shows that social science information is closely associated with people’s daily life and reading such information is a real demand for many library users. (See Table 1)

Table 1 Do you read social science documents on a regular basis (single choice)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Occasionally | 1,877 | 58.60 | 1 | 1 | 52.08 | 313 |
| Regularly | 1,016 | 31.72 | 2 | 2 | 38.77 | 233 |
| Seldom | 310 | 9.68 | 3 | 3 | 9.15 | 55 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,203 | 100 | – | – | 100 | 601 |

3.1.2 Print documents such as library collections, newspapers, magazines, and books, and Internet are the main channels through which library users acquire information and knowledge on social science

According to the survey, more than 50% of library users chose traditional or popular channels such as reading books, newspapers, magazines, TV or Internet. Chosen by 69.77% of library users, newspapers rank first. Magazines rank second (67.17%) among university and college library users but drop to the fourth place (52.58%) among public library users, while books rank second among public library users (57.57%), but become the fifth place among university and college library users (60.58%). In recent years, Internet has become an important channel for young people to obtain information. However, as a channel to obtain social science information, Internet only takes the third place among university and college library users, the majority of whom are young people, and the fifth place among public



Research Papers

library users. Fortunately, these figures are not a far cry from the data of other channels. Compared with the newspaper that takes the first place, there is only a gap of 4.98% and 16.8% respectively. And there is a possibility that it will catch up with the newspaper in the future. Among the two kinds of library users, choices that took the sixth place and behind are radio, popular science lectures, academic exchanges, others and conferences, only with the order varying slightly. Among choices that took the top five places, newspapers, magazines, books and Internet are all the service provided by libraries and information institutions. Print documents like newspapers, magazines and books are not only easy to carry, but fit in people's reading habits, therefore, are still popular among library users. Based upon this fact, we should do a good job not only in the management and service on the new information dissemination channel—Internet, but also in the management on traditional information dissemination channels like newspapers, magazines and books. Other channels like popular science lectures, academic exchanges and conferences also have been selected by about 10% of library users. These activities may not be necessarily organized or guided by libraries and information institutions, but it is necessary to do a good job in sorting out the information of these activities and passing it in time to people who join the activities and who are not on the spot but access the information by media. (See Table 2)

Table 2 Main channels through which you acquire social science knowledge and information (multiple choices)

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Newspaper | 2,263 | 70.08 | 1 | 1 | 68.05 | 409 |
| Magazine | 2,169 | 67.17 | 2 | 4 | 52.58 | 316 |
| Internet | 2,102 | 65.10 | 3 | 5 | 51.25 | 308 |
| TV | 2,030 | 62.87 | 4 | 3 | 54.08 | 325 |
| Book | 1,956 | 60.58 | 5 | 2 | 57.57 | 346 |
| Radio | 761 | 23.57 | 6 | 6 | 15.64 | 94 |
| Popular Science Lecture | 457 | 14.15 | 7 | 7 | 9.82 | 59 |
| Academic exchange | 426 | 13.19 | 8 | 9 | 6.66 | 40 |
| Others | 315 | 9.76 | 9 | 8 | 6.82 | 41 |
| Conference | 292 | 9.04 | 10 | 10 | 4.16 | 25 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

3.1.3 Borrowing from libraries is the first choice for users to acquire social science information

Of this major item, the choices of university and college library users are basically the same with those of public library users. 77.23% of library users chose the option "Borrow from libraries", 25.32% higher than library users that chose the option



“Download from Internet” which takes the second place. This fact shows that libraries are the first choice for them to obtain social science information. In addition, Internet is also an importance choice. The choices that rank from third to eighth are as follow: purchase from bookstores, purchase from newsstand, borrow from others, subscription by organization, borrow from other information organizations, and book clubs. It is worthwhile to note that besides the channel of borrowing, a considerable number of users still obtain social science knowledge and information through purchasing books, newspapers and magazines (bookstore purchases and newsstand purchases account for 44.07% and 32.25% respectively). (See Table 3)

Table 3 Channels through which you obtain social science information (multiple choices)

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Borrow from libraries | 2,511 | 77.76 | 1 | 1 | 74.38 | 447 |
| Download from Internet | 1,743 | 53.98 | 2 | 2 | 40.77 | 245 |
| Purchase from bookstores | 1,445 | 44.75 | 3 | 3 | 40.43 | 243 |
| Purchase from newsstand | 1,026 | 31.37 | 4 | 4 | 34.78 | 209 |
| Borrow from others | 858 | 26.57 | 5 | 5 | 17.97 | 108 |
| Subscription by organization | 408 | 12.64 | 6 | 7 | 8.65 | 52 |
| Borrow from other information organizations | 336 | 10.37 | 7 | 6 | 9.32 | 56 |
| Book clubs | 69 | 2.14 | 8 | 8 | 3.39 | 21 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

3.1.4 Libraries of universities and colleges, Party schools, and academies of social science as well as public libraries have all been playing an important role in offering users with social science information.

According to the survey, except their own library, university and college library users prefer to borrow social science documents from libraries of other universities and colleges most, followed by borrowing from public libraries, that is very close to the first place. Among the options of public library users, public libraries take the first place by an overwhelming majority. “Others” and “Universities and colleges libraries” take the second and third place respectively. Totaling these two kinds of users, “Public libraries” will take the first place (39.58%), 8.2% higher than “University and college libraries” that take the second place, which shows that thanks to its openness to the public, the public library has become the first choice for library users besides the libraries of the universities, colleges or institutions they work in, followed by university and college libraries. Other four channels (reference rooms of the organization, libraries of Party schools and of academies of social



Research Papers

science, and others) cannot be ignored, either, accounting for 29.04% of the total. (See Table 4)

Table 4 Besides your own universities, colleges or institutions, which kind of library do you mostly acquire social science information from (single choice)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Universities and colleges libraries | 1,088 | 34.83 | 1 | 3 | 13.38 | 80 |
| Public libraries | 1,076 | 34.44 | 2 | 1 | 66.39 | 397 |
| Others | 446 | 14.28 | 3 | 2 | 14.21 | 85 |
| Reference rooms of the organization | 262 | 8.39 | 4 | 4 | 5.35 | 32 |
| Libraries of Party schools | 191 | 6.11 | 5 | 5 | 0.50 | 3 |
| Libraries of academies of social science | 61 | 1.95 | 6 | 6 | 0.17 | 1 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,124 | 100 | — | — | 100 | 598 |

3.2 Social science information plays an important role in users' improving themselves and doing a good job

In order to gain a clear knowledge of users' reading requirements, the questionnaire offers two items in section three, namely, the users' main purpose of reading social science literature, and the categories of social science literature that interest users. It can be seen from the result that social science information has a great impact on the study, work and life of users and has attracted wide interests from them.

3.2.1 The main purpose of reading social science documents is to improve personal quality and to do a good job

Two kinds of library users chose "Learning more knowledge" as the first purpose of reading social science literature, followed by "Amusement". These two options are intimately linked with personal quality and interests. Rounding out from the third to sixth places are options closely related to work or job. For university and college library users, the options are "For teaching", "For scientific research", "Promoting the academic degree", and "For employment" respectively. For public library users, they are "Promoting the academic degree", "For scientific research", and "For employment" respectively. "Safeguarding rights and interests", "Educating children" and "Others" are also the purposes of reading, taking from the seventh to ninth places. "For decision-making" takes the tenth place, accounting for less than 10%, which shows that users seldom read social science literature for the purpose of making decisions. (See Table 5)



Table 5 Main purpose of your reading social science documents (multiple choices)

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Learning more knowledge | 2,449 | 75.84 | 1 | 1 | 80.87 | 486 |
| Amusement | 1,487 | 46.05 | 2 | 2 | 40.43 | 243 |
| For teaching | 1,017 | 31.50 | 3 | 8 | 8.49 | 51 |
| For scientific research | 952 | 29.48 | 4 | 4 | 16.47 | 99 |
| Promoting the academic degree | 851 | 26.35 | 5 | 3 | 20.30 | 122 |
| For employment | 842 | 26.08 | 6 | 5 | 15.31 | 92 |
| Others | 528 | 16.35 | 7 | 6 | 13.14 | 79 |
| Safeguarding rights and interests | 356 | 11.03 | 8 | 9 | 8.32 | 50 |
| Educating for children | 327 | 10.13 | 9 | 7 | 8.82 | 53 |
| For decision-making | 301 | 9.32 | 10 | 10 | 7.49 | 45 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

3.2.2 Comprehensive social science information contributes to the improvement of personal quality and doing a good job

Basically, the choices of two kinds of library users are similar. Rounding out the top four are “General books”, “Literature”, “Culture, education and sport.”, “Art” (history and geography), accounting for nearly 40% to 50% respectively, which corresponds to the rank of main purposes of reading social science information in Table 5 that “Learning more knowledge”, “Amusement” are in the top two places.

Table 6 Which categories of social science literatures are you interested in (multiple choices)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|--|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| General books | 1,678 | 51.91 | 1 | 2 | 46.42 | 279 |
| Literature | 1,152 | 48.06 | 2 | 1 | 48.42 | 291 |
| Culture, education and sport | 1,460 | 45.22 | 3 | 3 | 38.27 | 230 |
| Art | 1,215 | 37.63 | 4 | 5 | 31.78 | 191 |
| Economy | 1,139 | 35.27 | 5 | 6 | 30.95 | 186 |
| History and geography | 948 | 29.36 | 6 | 4 | 35.27 | 212 |
| Politics and Law | 936 | 28.99 | 7 | 7 | 26.62 | 160 |
| Philosophy and religion | 872 | 27.01 | 8 | 9 | 22.96 | 138 |
| Language | 849 | 26.29 | 9 | 8 | 24.13 | 145 |
| Military | 629 | 19.48 | 10 | 10 | 18.47 | 111 |
| General introduction to social sciences | 553 | 17.13 | 11 | 12 | 11.48 | 69 |
| Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong thought, and Deng Xiaoping theory | 527 | 16.32 | 12 | 11 | 12.81 | 77 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |



Chosen by nearly 30% of library users respectively, “Economy”, “History and geography”, “Politics and law”, “philosophy and religion”, and “Language” that are closely related to the users’ study and daily life was taken from the fifth to ninth places. Chosen by one fifth library users, “Military” is another subject that interests quite a few library users. Although “General introduction to social sciences”, “Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory” take the eleventh and twelfth places respectively, the proportion is not very low (accounting for 17.13% and 16.32% among university and college library users, and 11.48% and 12.81% among public library users), indicating that there are still a number of people who are voluntarily studying Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory and basic theories of social science. (See Table 6)

3.3 Library users appreciate social science information service provided by libraries and information organizations. However, they think that it is not convenient to acquire relevant information or documents from other libraries and information organizations outside their own library system. An important factor affecting the acquisition is the inadequacy of social science information

This section including five items is designed to obtain the understanding of the media and manner through which library users obtain social science information, the degree of satisfaction at the services provided by libraries and information organizations, and the main factors that influence the acquisition of social science information.

3.3.1 Basically, social science information of various libraries can satisfy the users’ needs. However, there are still some library users feeling “hardly satisfied” or “never satisfied”.

The choices of two kinds of library users are similar. Nearly 80% of library users chose “Basically, yes”. With those who chose “Satisfied every time”, more than 80% of library users acknowledge the information services provided by various libraries and information organizations. However, it cannot be ignored that there are still some library users who feel “hardly satisfied” and “never satisfied” (accounting for 16.91% among university and college library users and 11.15% among public library users), which shows that the services still need to be improved further. (See Table 7)

3.3.2 Library users feel it inconvenient to acquire social science information at libraries and information organizations outside their own library system

The choices of the two kinds of library users are different. The choice ranking first among university and college library users is “Inconvenient”, followed by “Relatively



Table 7 Do you think that at present, social science information of various libraries can fully satisfy your needs (single choice)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Basically, yes | 2,536 | 79.55 | 1 | 1 | 78.2 | 470 |
| Hardly | 489 | 15.34 | 2 | 3 | 10.48 | 63 |
| Satisfied every time | 113 | 3.54 | 3 | 2 | 10.65 | 64 |
| Never | 50 | 1.57 | 4 | 4 | 0.67 | 4 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,188 | 100 | — | — | 100 | 601 |

convenient” and “Convenient”, while the choice ranking first among public library users is “Relatively convenient” (accounting for 44.26%), followed by “Convenient” (accounting for 40.77%). Totally, the two options among public libraries account for 85.03%. Only a very small part of two kinds of library users chose “Very convenient” (accounting for 2.78% and 7.32% respectively). This fact shows that resources sharing provided by libraries and information organizations is not enough to fully satisfy the users' needs. Maybe because of the professional character of the service provided by university and college libraries and the users' high dependence on their own library system, they feel it inconvenient to acquire social science information outside the system. (See Table 8)

Table 8 Is it convenient for you to acquire social science information at libraries and information organizations outside your own library system (single choice)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Inconvenient | 1,383 | 43.61 | 1 | 3 | 7.65 | 46 |
| Relatively convenient | 1,166 | 36.77 | 2 | 1 | 44.26 | 266 |
| Convenient | 534 | 16.84 | 3 | 2 | 40.77 | 245 |
| Very convenient | 88 | 2.78 | 4 | 4 | 7.32 | 44 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,171 | 100 | — | — | 100 | 601 |

3.3.3 “Printed collection” is the first option of information media for library users' acquisition, while, “Network resources” and “Digital resources” are also accepted deeply by users.

University and college library users took “Network resources” in the first place. However, it is only 0.72% higher than “Printed collection” which took the second place. On the contrary, public library users ranked “Printed collection” as the first



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place, which is 17.47% higher than “Network resources” taking the second place. Summing up the two kinds of library users, library users prefer the “Printed collection” most, accounting for 64.62%. It shows that printed collection is still the most popular information media for library users. Libraries and information organizations should not give up and ignore the traditional services of printed collections while engaging in the work on new information media. However, the number of library users that chose “Network resources” and “Digital resources” has accounted for 85% of the total. With the constant development of the computer, network technologies and relevant equipments, network resources and digital resources will become the main methods for people to obtain social science information. (See Table 9)

Table 9 What are the medias of social science information you acquiring (multiple choices)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Network resources | 2,079 | 64.39 | 1 | 2 | 52.25 | 314 |
| Printed collection | 2,056 | 63.67 | 2 | 1 | 69.72 | 419 |
| Digital resources | 759 | 23.51 | 3 | 3 | 17.64 | 106 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

3.3.4 “Electronic books” and “Book lending” are considered as the most convenient methods to acquire social science information

The ranking is similar to that of the media in Table 9. “Electronic books” and “Book lending” was in the first and second place respectively among university and college library users, while the ranking is reversed among public library users. “Online reference” was in third place among the two kinds of library users. The fourth to sixth places are taken by “Full-text delivery”, “Subject reference service” and “Others” respectively. One reason of why the total proportion of these three options does not exceed 10%, is that libraries and information organizations do not provide these services enough. The other one is that library users have little understanding of them. In general, the proportion of university and college library users that choose “Network resources” is much higher than that of public library users, because most university and college library users are young or middle-aged, at the same time with relatively high-level skills of computer and network technologies. “Book lending” is in the second place, following “Network resources”. It indicates that this method is still widely accepted by library users, and is one of the most convenient methods



for library users to acquire social science document information. Therefore, these two methods should be paid almost equal and unbiased attention. (See Table 10)

Table 10 What is the most convenient method to obtain social science information (single choice)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Electronic books | 1,228 | 38.59 | 1 | 2 | 24.46 | 147 |
| Book lending | 1,073 | 33.72 | 2 | 1 | 38.77 | 233 |
| Online reference | 585 | 18.38 | 3 | 3 | 23.63 | 142 |
| Full-text delivery | 159 | 5.00 | 4 | 6 | 2.83 | 17 |
| Subject reference service | 74 | 2.33 | 5 | 5 | 3.99 | 24 |
| Others | 63 | 1.98 | 6 | 4 | 6.32 | 38 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,182 | 100 | — | — | 100 | 601 |

3.3.5 The main factors that influence the acquisition of social science information are “Inadequacy of information”, “Unavailability of inter-library loan” and problems existing in the acquisition method, efficiency, and retrieval pattern.

The choices of the two kinds of library users are similar. Both considered “Inadequacy of information” and “Inadequacy of local information resources” as the important factors that influence the social science information acquisition, ranking first and second respectively. “Unavailability of inter-library loan” is another important factor, accounting for nearly one fourth among the two kinds of library users. This indicates that the amount of information is the primary concern of library users, followed by the acquisition methods. “Expensive charges” ranks the last, indicating that the payment is not the main factor affecting the information acquisition. In order to solve those above problems, the article may provide the following suggestions. Firstly, the collection development must be strengthened to enlarge the amount of information. Secondly, the procedure should be simplified, and the services pattern needs to be improved for higher efficiency. Thirdly, more proper retrieval tools or platforms should be developed and improved, with enough training to library users. (See Table 11)

3.4 Library users' expectations on the social science collection development

This section is designed to collect users' suggestions and expectations to national / local governments and information organizations on how to strengthen the social science collection development.



Table 11 Which factors influence your acquisition of social science information (multiple choices)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Inadequacy of information | 1,482 | 45.90 | 1 | 1 | 38.44 | 231 |
| Inadequacy of local information resources | 1,326 | 41.07 | 2 | 2 | 34.61 | 208 |
| Uniformity of acquisition method | 1,180 | 36.54 | 3 | 3 | 30.62 | 184 |
| Unfamiliarity with searching methods | 933 | 28.89 | 4 | 5 | 22.63 | 136 |
| Time-consuming | 772 | 23.91 | 5 | 7 | 17.14 | 103 |
| Unavailability of inter-library loan | 760 | 23.54 | 6 | 4 | 23.29 | 140 |
| Lack of proper retrieval tools | 739 | 22.89 | 7 | 6 | 17.30 | 104 |
| Complicated procedure | 544 | 16.85 | 8 | 8 | 12.48 | 75 |
| Expensive charges | 372 | 11.52 | 9 | 9 | 8.32 | 50 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

3.4.1 Users' greatest expectation is to break down the regional limitation and the restriction of separate management & operation to realize the resource sharing and increase the acquisition methods of social science information.

The choices of the two kinds of library users are almost the same. The first option is "Breaking down the regional limitation and the restriction of separate management & operation to realize resources sharing", followed by "Increasing the acquisition methods of social science information" and "Strengthening the social science collection development" which rank second and third respectively. Although ranking at the last place, "Improving the speed of documents delivery" and "Simplifying the procedure and searching methods" are still chosen by one third to two fifths of library users. All those correspond to the choices in Table 11 from another point of view, with more specific requirements. (See Table 12)

3.4.2 Library users expect that national and local governments support to establish the provincial center of social science information and relevant website, and strengthen the collaboration among different libraries and information organizations.

The choices of the two kinds of library users are the same except that the fourth and fifth places are reversed, which shows that these are the common requirements of the two kinds of library users. Among them, "Establishing the provincial center of social science information and relevant website", chosen by 63.76% of library users, takes the first place. "Strengthening the collaboration among libraries and



Table 12 What should be strengthened or improved by information organizations so as to offer the better service (multiple choices)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Breaking down the regional limitation and the restriction of separate management & operation to realize resources sharing | 1,849 | 57.26 | 1 | 1 | 46.42 | 279 |
| Increasing the acquisition methods of social science information | 1,808 | 55.99 | 2 | 3 | 45.09 | 271 |
| Strengthening the social science collection development | 1,536 | 47.57 | 3 | 2 | 45.59 | 274 |
| Improving the speed of document delivery | 1,351 | 41.84 | 4 | 5 | 35.61 | 214 |
| Simplifying the procedure and searching methods | 1,313 | 40.66 | 5 | 4 | 39.77 | 239 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |

Table 13 What support should be provided to the social science collection development by national/local governments (multiple choices)?

| Options | Choices of university and college library users | | | Choices of public library users | | |
|---|---|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------|--------|
| | Number | % | Rank | Rank | % | Number |
| Establishing the provincial center of social science information and relevant website | 2,104 | 65.16 | 1 | 1 | 56.24 | 338 |
| Strengthening the collaboration among libraries and information organizations | 2,066 | 63.98 | 2 | 2 | 52.25 | 314 |
| Establishing the provincial leading entity to strengthen the unified management and operation | 1,456 | 45.09 | 3 | 3 | 37.27 | 224 |
| Establishing the research novelty search of social science achievements | 1,115 | 34.53 | 4 | 5 | 24.29 | 146 |
| Increasing financial support | 1,065 | 32.98 | 5 | 4 | 34.94 | 210 |
| Bringing the relevant works of social science collection development into the provincial Eleventh Five-Year Plan of philosophy and social science | 823 | 25.49 | 6 | 6 | 16.47 | 99 |
| Others | 430 | 13.32 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The total number of participants in this choice | 3,229 | — | — | — | — | 601 |



National Science Library,
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Sciences

information organizations” and “Establishing the provincial leading entity to strengthen the unified management and operation”, chosen by 62.14% and 43.86% of library users, take the second and third places respectively. “Establishing the research novelty search of social science achievements” can avoid the repetition and waste of social science research and enhance the research level. Therefore, it is strongly required by researchers in recent years. More than one third of university and college library users and one fourth of public library users choose this option. “Increasing financial support” and “Bringing the relevant works of social science collection development into the provincial Eleventh Five-Year Plan of philosophy and social science” were chosen by nearly one fourth to one third of library users.

4 Suggestions on social science information service strategies

In order to satisfy the requirements of social science information users, libraries and information organizations should make a good analysis of the characteristics of users' requirements, improve service strategies and enhance the level of service. The article put forward the following suggestions:

4.1 Give priority to the work of social science information and strengthen the collection development

Libraries are the main channel through which users acquire social science information. According to the survey, library users, no matter who are subject to university or college, or major in sciences or art and humanity, are all willing to borrow social science literature from libraries. However, it is a pity that many of them feel “seldom satisfied” or “never satisfied”. More than 40% of library users think that “Inadequacy of information” is the primary factor that affects their acquisition of social science information. In order to solve those problems, more attention should be paid to the work of social science information and the social science collection development needs to be strengthened much.

First of all, a misunderstanding that the work of social science information is inessential must be corrected. The whole society should emphasize the relevant work, so that libraries and information organizations will be able to obtain adequate funds, facilities to collect social science information resources. Secondly, libraries and information organizations should design the collection development strategy and balance the proportions of subjects and media of the collection. It is not reasonable to cancel the popular journals which are not core journals, or the high value journals with very low lending frequencies, to assure subjects and core journals. In brief, the social science collections should be kept balanced in media and subject distribution, and the relevant work can not be weakened due to the fund and intentions. Only in this way, can users' requirements for social science information be fully satisfied.



4.2 Strengthen the collaboration among libraries and information organizations, establish the provincial center of social science information, and finally realize resources sharing

At present, libraries in China are affiliated to the different system, such as universities and colleges, public services, Party schools, military colleges and schools, academies of sciences, and academies of social sciences. This is the same in Zhejiang province. The information resources collected by libraries and information organizations of these major systems have their own advantages and disadvantages. Due to the difficulties in inter-library loan, many valuable documents cannot be fully utilized. On the other hand, many researchers are suffering from the unavailability of the desired information. This is why library users feel it inconvenient to get social science information from other libraries and information organizations outside their own system. In order to solve this problem, the regional limitation and the restriction of separate management & operation must be broken down so as to realize resource sharing. That is the greatest expectation of library users on the work of libraries and information organizations in the survey.

So, in order to realize the goal of resources sharing, firstly, the collaboration among libraries and information organizations need to be strengthened much. Currently, libraries and information organizations have established some collaboration mainly within their own system. However, due to the difference in the leadership and the management pattern, extensive and deeper collaboration and resource sharing do not develop a lot. To satisfy users' requirements, libraries and information organizations should no longer confine themselves to the traditional services such as inter-library loan, reading, consortium subscription and united cataloging. Instead, they should push the development of digital resources and network in their own entities or system, make the best use of the various information resources in both China and foreign countries, so as to achieve the high-level resources sharing and development.

Secondly, the provincial leading entity and work office should be established to strengthen the unified management and operation. According to the past work experience, it is difficult to achieve any obvious effect of promoting the unified collaboration if only relying on the libraries by themselves. Therefore, the article suggests to establish the provincial leading entity and work office, for example, establishing the Provincial Committee on the Coordination of Co-development and Sharing of Social Science Information to design the relevant policies, strategies and regulations, organize the pertinent activities, make the control of the collaboration from the macro-view. Only through the unified collaboration including plan, standard, arrangement, work division and implementation, the barriers among the different libraries could be broken and the substantial resource sharing could be developed.



Thirdly, the provincial social science information center and the relevant website should be established when ready. That is the first choice of library users concerning what support should be provided to the social science collection development by national/local governments. Although some national coordinated projects and alliance initiated by different library system are running well, for example, China Academic Library and Information System (CALIS), the regional library unions can not be replaced, because national information resource systems are unable to meet some local specific needs. About 80% of the library users' information needs are met locally. Establishing provincial information centers can maximize the regional potentials such as convenient regional transportation, easy collaboration among various libraries, local government support and adjustment, and full representation of local characteristics, so as to make up the deficiency of national or cross-industry or cross-region information resources systems to some extent. Libraries in western countries and Japan pay great attention to regional alliances. For instance, Online Computer Library Catalog (OCLC), a top library union, just developed from a state library union of U.S., 64 participants of 77 U.S. regional university library unions are regional unions within the state, accounting for 83% of the total. Their experience should be referred. In order to satisfy users' requirements, it is necessary to establish the provincial social science information center and the website, so that libraries of universities and colleges, public services, Party schools, academies of social science could be integrated into a whole network. Depending on the actual situation, the network may be real or virtual via Internet and protocols. No matter in what form, the purpose of the network is to form a provincial system of information resources co-development and sharing with the rational distribution of amount, subject, media, etc. in a certain scale, with the goals of the full collaboration among different libraries and the improvement of information service.

4.3 Simplify the procedure, improve the service pattern, and enhance the efficiency of social science information acquisition

In the knowledge-based economy era, the time effectiveness of social science information is of great importance to many aspects such as policy stipulation, decision-making, scientific research, teaching, and enhancement of knowledge. Therefore, library users also emphasize this characteristic, and think that low efficiency is an important factor influencing the acquisition of social science information. However, the procedure of borrowing and searching in some libraries is rather complicated. Especially, most libraries do not have a unified platform to achieve the cross-search of heterogeneous databases. Even, some homogeneous databases are not integrated. Users need to retrieve them one by one. All those decelerate the time effectiveness of the document delivery.



In order to solve the above problems, libraries and information organizations must improve their service pattern. Firstly, libraries need to take people as the foremost, focus on the needs of library users, and simplify the procedure of borrowing and reading to shorten the waiting time. Secondly, the user-oriented retrieval tools should be developed to facilitate the users' retrieval and enhance the efficiency. Many current retrieval tools and software are not convenient for users. In addition, the unified retrieval platform of heterogeneous databases, emphasized by the library professionals and users, is important for the improvement of the retrieval precision ratio and recall ratio. At the same time, it may accelerate the speed of retrieval and document delivery. Considering some foreign countries having developed and spread the software, we had better start our own relevant researches as soon as possible. Thirdly, libraries and information organizations must increase the methods for library users to obtain social science information. With the rapid development of modern communications and network technologies, more and more methods to acquire information are created. Libraries and information organizations should keep up with the development and introduce these new methods in time to the social science information delivery. Besides the traditional modes, network, modern communications channels and personalized services can be applied. In addition, different methods need to be adopted and applied according to the different types and ages of library users.

4.4 Libraries and information organization should do well in the management and reference work no matter what the delivery method is. Simultaneously, they need to have a balanced development between the traditional service and new service.

At present, new communication channels like network and TV have had a great impact on the traditional dissemination patterns of print documents, and even intend to overwhelm the traditional patterns. However, print documents like newspapers, magazines and books will continue to exist because of their portability and conformity with people's reading habits. In particular, due to the good time effectiveness and convenience of acquisition of newspapers, it was selected as the top channel of the social science information dissemination with the rate of 69.77%. Therefore, libraries and information organizations should not only do well in the management and reference work of the new media such as electronic books, but also maintain the management and service quality of print collection like newspapers, magazines, books with unbiased attitude.

Firstly, libraries and information organizations should manage the social science collection in various media from a new perspective. The collections, including electronic publications or print documents, should be managed based on the users' requirements. Traditional management mode, for example, separate management



Research Papers

and storage, needs to be changed. Instead, the collections should be managed and arranged, based on their contents. Meanwhile, libraries and information organizations should edit print catalogs for electronic publications and create databases for print collection, then establish links between them. Thus, the reading requirements of different users can be met, according to users' reading habits. That can also improve the convenience of management and utilization of collection.

Secondly, libraries and information organizations need to develop their management methods to catch up with the constantly changing situation of information media. With the rapid development of modern IT technologies, the new media have derived from the traditional print media. New acquisition and reading methods of social science information are created. In the future, library users may be able to remotely read electronic books, periodicals and newspapers collected by libraries via network, novel receivers, portable readers or cell phones to obtain social science information anywhere at anytime. Libraries and information organizations should adapt themselves to the change of the situation and combine the advantages of Internet and traditional media to innovate the management pattern. Besides subscribing the print books, newspapers and journals, they should also, considering the time effectiveness, purchase and release electronic resources in time. For the storage of social science information, libraries and information organizations could manage them as knowledge unit instead of storing according to the media and calculating amount by volume. Therefore, they should pay attention to reveal the knowledge unit of social science information in new media, compile and edit secondary and tertiary sources, then accumulate those information so as to offer to the users according to the subjects.

In conclusion, libraries and information organizations should adopt all kinds of new methods and new channels to satisfy the ever-changing requirements of library users for social science information.

