JOURNAL OF LIBRARY SCIENCE IN CHINA

Volume 4, 2012

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CONTENTS

Special Topics: Libraries in the Public Culture Service System in China

005 **The establishment of demonstration projects and the development of public libraries**
LI Guoxin

019 **A Study on the Zhucheng Model of providing public library services to rural China**
ZANG Yunping, SONG Guijuan, ZHENG Mansheng, MU Xiaoguang, JIANG Renzhen & YU Liangzhi

040 **Jiaxing Mode: An extension from main-branch library system to library service union system**
LI Chaoping & ZHANG Fengming

053 **The regulation design for deepening the Suzhou Model in the establishment of demonstrative districts**
QIU Guanhua

Research Papers

065 **Design and application of SOA-based terminology registries and terminology services**
OU Shiyan

084 **Investigation and analysis of library information resource sharing mechanisms in China**
ZHANG Xinhe & XIAO Ximing

108 **On the method of third-order disjoint literature-based knowledge discovery**
LI Yong, LENG Fuhai & WANG Lin

115 **The construction of *Chinese Thesaurus* in web environment**
ZENG Jianxun, CHANG Chun, WU Wenna & SONG Peiyan

128 **Community-based question answering sites and joint reference services: A comparison and evaluation**
WU Dan & DANG Wanyu

148 **Comparative study on the obsolescence of domestic humanities and social sciences**
QIU Junping, SONG Yanhui & YANG Siluo

164 **A study on the intellectual structure and evolution of library and information science in China based on author co-citation analysis**
MA Ruimin & NI Chaoqun

Reviews

177 **Strategic regard to public library development during the 12th Five-Year Plan Period: An interpretation of *the National Plan for Public Library Development During the 12th Five-Year Plan Period***
SHEN Xiaojuan, HU Jie & LI Dan

190 **A prospect of the next five years' key research areas and topics for library, information, and archives sciences: An interpretation of *the Research Report on the Strategic Planning of the Library, Information, and Archives Sciences by the Management Science Section of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences for Colleges and Universities in China***
YE Jiyuan

Discussion Papers

204 **RDA and China: The internationalization of cataloging**
Barbara B. Tillett

214 **Non-topical attributes of academic papers and implications to information retrieval**
ZOU Yongli

231 **Report on Hangzhou library foundation**
LIU Ziheng & YAN Yuejun

239 **A chronicle of events of Chinese library community in 2011**

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CONTENTS

Special Topics: Libraries in the Public Culture Service System in China

The establishment of demonstration projects and the development of public libraries
LI Guoxin 5

A Study on the Zhucheng Model of providing public library services to rural China
ZANG Yunping, SONG Guijuan, ZHENG Mansheng, MU Xiaoguang, JIANG Renzhen & YU Liangzhi 19

Jiaxing Model: An extension from main-branch library system to library service union system
LI Chaoping & ZHANG Fengming 40

The regulation design for deepening the Suzhou Model in the establishment of demonstrative districts
QIU Guanhua 53

Research Papers

Design and application of SOA-based terminology registries and terminology services
OU Shiyan 65

Investigation and analysis of library information resource sharing mechanisms in China
ZHANG Xinhe & XIAO Ximing 84

On the method of third-order disjoint literature-based knowledge discovery
LI Yong, LENG Fuhai & WANG Lin 108

The construction of *Chinese Thesaurus* in web environment
ZENG Jianxun, CHANG Chun, WU Wenna & SONG Peiyan 115

Community-based question answering sites and joint reference services: A comparison and evaluation
WU Dan & DANG Wanyu 128

Comparative study on the obsolescence of domestic humanities and social sciences
QIU Junping, SONG Yanhui & YANG Siluo 148

A study on the intellectual structure and evolution of library and information science in China based on author co-citation analysis
MA Ruimin & NI Chaoqun 164

Reviews

Strategic regard to public library development during the 12th Five-Year Plan Period: An interpretation of *the National Plan for Public Library Development During the 12th Five-Year Plan Period*
SHEN Xiaojuan, HU Jie & LI Dan 177

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YE Jiyuan 190

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RDA and China: The internationalization of cataloging
Barbara B. Tillett 204

Non-topical attributes of academic papers and implications to information retrieval
ZOU Yongli 214

Report on Hangzhou library foundation
LIU Ziheng & YAN Yuejun 231

A chronicle of events of Chinese library community in 2011 239

Editor's Note: In early 2011, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance jointly launched the establishment of Demonstration Projects for the National Public Cultural Service System. The Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the National Outline for Cultural Reform and Development for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period (2011-2015) point out that "efforts should be made to advance the establishment of demonstration projects for the national public cultural system", which indicates that the establishment of demonstration projects has been placed high on the agenda of China's public cultural service system development. Given this fact, it is worthwhile to consider what measures public libraries should take to seize the opportunity and obtain more favorable policies for their development. With the second round of applications for Demonstration Projects fast approaching, this Journal includes a special column on "Libraries in the Public Cultural Service System" which aims to offer guidance and insights for public libraries' more active role in the establishment of demonstration projects.

The establishment of demonstration projects and the development of public libraries

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Abstract

The Twelfth Five-Year Plan offers a good environment for public libraries and an opportunity to create the national public cultural service system demonstration projects.The main themes and issues reflected in the demonstration projects' creation standards are: enhancing service capacity and improving service effectiveness; promoting remote and mobile services; and advancing the indexing of key tasks. There are three types of "public library projects" in the first demonstration projects: exploration and practice of the main-branch library system; infrastructure construction for community public libraries; national reading activities. To participate in creating demonstration projects, public libraries need the following: first, to form a schedule, a roadmap and supporting mechanisms that reach the standards; and second, to identify problems that need to be solved in the creation process. The problems that need special attention include: improving service capability and efficiency in an open and free environment; building a scientific and appropriate facility coverage radius and relevant metrics and investigating the principles and standards of mobile, digital, and location-based services; exploring and utilizing equipment from the culture sharing project and the integration plan for digital libraries and digital culture centers.

Keywords

Public cultural service system, Demonstration projects, Public libraries

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In early 2011, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance jointly launched the establishment of Demonstration Projects for National Public Cultural Service System. Using the principles of non-profit, equal access, convenience of use and provision of basic services, a batch of well-planned, full-functioned and highly-efficient demonstration projects will be established to cover both urban and rural areas for the development of regional public cultural service system. Additionally, in-depth research into certain aspects or components of the public cultural service system is to be conducted with the establishment of a series of innovative, pioneering and scientifically-designed demonstration projects ("Blueprint for national public cultural service system demonstration projects", 2010). It is planned that about 90 demonstration projects and 180 demonstration projects will be established in three groups within two years. The central government revenue will allocate 12 million RMB Yuan for the West Region, 8 million RMB Yuan for the Middle Region, and 4 million Yuan for the East Region for the establishment of demonstration projects. In terms of demonstration projects, the central government revenue will allocate 1.5 million RMB Yuan, 1 million RMB Yuan and 0.5 million RMB Yuan to the West Region, the Middle Region and the East Region, respectively. The establishment of demonstration projects will offer exemplary models in guiding the future sustainable development of the public cultural service system.

In early 2011, based on the regulations that prefecture-level city government can apply for demonstration projects and prefecture-level city culture administrative bureaus can apply for demonstration projects, 31 prefecture-level city governments (including country-level governments directly under the provincial jurisdiction, vice-provincial city governments) obtained the qualification to develop demonstration projects and 47 culture administrative bureaus of prefecture-level cities received qualifications to develop demonstration projects following the independent review of the Committee of Experts on National Public Cultural Service System, the approval of the Executive Team for Developing National Public Cultural Service System, as well as going through the public notice and feedback procedures. From March to April 2012, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance organized mid-term reviews of the first batch of demonstration projects. The evaluation is scheduled for the first half of 2013. If accepted after the evaluation, the first batch of demonstration projects will formally become demonstration projects of the national public cultural service system. The second batch of applications and appraisal for the qualifications to develop demonstration projects is scheduled to start in the second half of 2012.

Both the "*Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues Pertaining to Deepening Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Flourishing of Socialist Culture Passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth CPC Central Committee*" and the "*National Guideline for Cultural Reform and Development for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period (2011-2015)*" include the establishment of demonstration projects into the overall strategic planning of the public cultural service system, clearly pointing out that "efforts should be made to

advance the establishment of demonstration projects for the national public cultural system". This indicates that the establishment of demonstration projects, which was formerly a culture-sector-specific endeavor, has now become a key task in the CPC and the government's efforts for cultural development. Public libraries constitute an important part of public cultural service system and therefore improving public libraries' infrastructure and services is included within the objectives of establishing demonstration projects. In this sense, public libraries should seize this opportunity and obtain more favorable policies for sustainable and rapid development in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period (2011 – 2015).

1 Public library standards in Demonstration Projects Targeted Standards

The Ministry of Culture formulated Demonstration Projects Targeted Standards for the East Region, the Middle Region and the West Region respectively. Cities that obtain the establishment qualifications should fully reach the standards within two years, which is a reflection of the overall improvement of public culture service system.

The Demonstration Projects Targeted Standards cover five aspects of the development of public culture system, i.e. infrastructure system construction, service supply, organization support, financial, technical and human resources, as well as service evaluation. Targeted Standards for the East Region include 30 items and 95 indexes, for the Middle Region, the Targeted Standards contain 29 items and 90 indexes, and that of the West Region cover 25 items and 77 indexes. Table 1 shows the items and indexes directly related to public libraries.

Items and indexes in Table 1 are drawn comprehensively from theoretical and practical research results and experience of public libraries in China in recent years. The items and indexes aim to improve the overall development and service of public libraries and therefore have clear visionary and distinctive features.

First, improving service capability and benefits is an important component of the standard set. Five key indexes are put forward in the Demonstration Projects Targeted Standards, including 1) Per Capita Number of Books of Public Libraries, 2) Per Capita Annually Increased Collection of Public Libraries, 3) Collection Circulation Rate of Public Libraries, 4) Per Capita Annual Visits to Public Libraries, and 5) Number of Hits and Downloads of Digital Libraries. The first and the second indexes are requirements for public libraries to develop fundamental resources to support sustainable service capacity. The third to the fifth are requirements on the service benefits of public libraries. Without fundamental resources of certain scale and quality, public libraries cannot develop essential and sustained service capacity; and without steadily improved service benefits, the functions and value of public libraries cannot be fully demonstrated. The establishment of demonstration projects is to guide and promote public libraries to the road of scientific and sustainable development through setting the above-mentioned standards.

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Table 1. Items and indexes directly related to public libraries in Demonstration Projects Targeted Standards.

	Items	Indexes for the East Region	Indexes for the Middle Region	Indexes for the West Region
1	Percentage of Established Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	100%	100%	100%
2	Percentage of Public Libraries that Meet the Required Standards at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	100% Reach the Level 2 and above Standards Set by the Ministries	100% Reach the Level 3 and above Standards Set by the Ministries	100% Reach the Level 3 and above Standards Set by the Ministries
3	Per Capita Number of Books in Public Libraries	Above 1 Item	Above 0.6 Item	Above 0.4 Item
4	Per Capita Annually Increased Collection of Public Libraries	Above 0.04 Copy	Above 0.03 Copy	Above 0.02 Copy
5	Average Number of Annual Circulation Times of Each Item in Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	Above 1 Time	Above 0.7 Time	Above 0.5 Time
6	Per Capita Annual Visits to Public Libraries	Above 0.5 Time	Above 0.3 Time	Above 0.2 Time
7	Standardly Equipped Electronic Reading Rooms in Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	Establishment Percentage 100% Percentage that Meet the Standards 100%	Establishment Percentage 100% Percentage that Meet the Standards 80%	Establishment Percentage 100% Percentage that Meet the Standards 80%
8	Services and Events Specifically Designed for Rural Migrant Workers, the Elderly, Children, and People with Disability by Public Libraries	Availability of Areas for Holding Events, Availability of Equipment and Resources, Availability of Service Items	Availability of Areas for Holding Events, Availability of Equipment and Resources, Availability of Service Items	——
9	"Free Admission" of Public Libraries	100%; Annual Incr-ease of Service by over 10%	100%; Annual Incr-ease of Service by over 10%	100%; Annual Incr-ease of Service by over 10%
10	Weekly Opening Hours of Public Libraries	Above 56 Hours	Above 56 Hours	Above 56 Hours
11	Establishment of Main-branch Library System and Provision of "Borrow Anywhere, Return Anywhere Service" in Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	Preliminary Comple-tion of Main-branch Library System; Provision of "Borrow Anywhere, Return Anywhere" Service in Certain Regions on a Trial Basis	Establishment of Main-branch Library System and Other Service Patterns in Certain Regions on a Trial Basis	——

12	Percentage of Equipped Mobile Library Van for Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	100%	80%	——
13	Services for the Grassroots People by Public Libraries	Over 50 Times Per Library	Over 40 Times Per Library	——
14	Digital Library Services	Number of Hits and Downloads Higher Than Provincial Av-erage Level	Number of Hits and Downloads Higher Than Provincial Av-erage Level	Number of Hits and Downloads Higher Than Provincial Av-erage Level
15	Development of Local Featured Databases by Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	More Than 3	——	——
16	Development of Websites of Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	100%, More Than 5 Service Columns	60%	50%
17	Free Allocation of Land for Public Libraries and Other Non-Profit Cultural Facilities	100% Completion	100% Completion	100% Completion
18	Per Capita Cultural Expenses (Permanent Residents)	Higher Than Provi-sion Average Level	Higher Than Provi-sion Average Level	Higher Than Provi-sion Average Level
19	Percentage of Librarians in the Total Number of Staff Members of Public Libraries at the Prefecture (Cities) and County Levels	City Level: Over 70% County Level: Over 80%	City Level: Over 70% County Level: Over 80%	City Level: Over 70% County Level: Over 80%
20	15 Days of Off-the-Job-Training for Staff Members of Public Libraries	70% of All Libraries Reach the Standard	70% of All Libraries Reach the Standard	70% of All Libraries Reach the Standard

Note. Based on Targeted Standards for the Establishment Demonstration Projects of National Cultural Public Service System (See Attachment 2 of Circular on the Establishment Demonstration Projects of National Public Culture Service System Issued by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance, File No. [2010] 49, Department of Community Culture, Ministry of Culture) and Evaluation Standards for the Establishment Demonstration Projects of National Cultural Public Service System (Draft Version for Soliciting Comments)

Second, efforts are made to enhance the capabilities of remote service and mobile service. Driven by the National Cultural Information Resources Sharing Project, the informatization development of China's public libraries at all levels is ranked high among different types of public cultural service institutions. Generally speaking, however, remote service capability of public libraries, particularly those at the grass-root level, is not high. One specific example is that few public libraries at the grass-root level have launched their websites. A survey conducted in 2010 showed that the accessible rate of the websites of public libraries at different levels was barely 20%, among which that of the public libraries of prefectures and cities levels was over 50% and that of the public libraries at county (cities and districts) levels was only 13.97% (Qu, 2010). Mobile library service is another underdeveloped aspect in China's public library services. In 2010, the number of readers who enjoyed the mobile library service only accounted for 5% of the total number of readers of public libraries nationwide, and items loaned through mobile library services only constitute 4.3% of all books loaned in public libraries nationwide ("Basic statistics on public libraries, 2010", 2011). Most of the public libraries at the grass-roots level have not been equipped with mobile library vans and thus are not capable of offering mobile services. Targeted Standards of Demonstration Projects set relatively high requirements for the websites of public libraries at the county level, as well as the equipment rate of mobile library vans for county level public libraries in the East China and Middle China regions. Such measures aim to make up for the deficiencies in China's public libraries services and set examples for enhancing remote service and mobile service capacities of public libraries in China.

Third, key tasks are monitored and driven by targeted standards. "Free Admission" of public libraries, the establishment of public electronic reading rooms, and making rural migrant workers beneficiaries of city public cultural service system are key tasks outlined in the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Major Issues Pertaining to Deepening Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Flourishing of Socialist Culture passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth CPC Central Committee, as well as the National Guideline for Cultural Reform and Development for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period (2011 – 2015). Clear, higher, and quantitative indexes make it easier to monitor and evaluate these key tasks.

2 Public library projects in the establishment of demonstration projects

Eight of the 47 demonstration projects listed in the first batch list are directly related to public libraries (See Table 2).

Table 2. Public library projects in the establishment of demonstration projects

	Name of Cities	Project Names
1	Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province	Establishment of Public Libraries Service System in Urban-Rural Integration
2	Jingzhou, Hubei Province	Little Sun Reading Festival and Nationwide Reading Promotion Program
3	Hengyang, Hunan Province	Public Culture Services Enter the Neighborhood Community
4	Foshan, Guangdong Province	Establishment of Public Culture Service System at County Level of Nanhai District
5	Dadukou District, Chongqing Municipality	Main-branch System of Culture Centers and Libraries
6	Panzhihua, Sichuan Province	Libraries & Reading Rooms Promotion Project in the New Rural Area
7	Tongchuan, Shaanxi Province	Integration Development of Public Libraries Services
8	Karamay City, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region	Integrated Service System of Joint Development and Sharing of Public Libraries

Note. Based on Attachment 2 of the Circular on Release of the First Batch of Demonstration Projects List of National Public Culture Service System Issued by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance, File No. [2010] 26, Department of Community Culture, Ministry of Culture)

The above eight projects can be categorized into three types.

The first type reflects the exploration and practice of main-branch system of public libraries. Establishment of Public Libraries Service System in Urban-Rural Integration of Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province is the expansion and deepening of "Jiaxing Model", which is featured with "government guidance, unified planning, multi-level input, centralized administration, resources sharing and service innovation". "Jiaxing Model" has extensive influence on China's library community: it is considered as a successful exploration of public library system in the economically developed region of East China, and demonstrates the development direction of main-branch system of public libraries in China (Liu, 2012). In the process of the establishment of demonstration projects, the "Jiaxing Model" is further explored and deepened. In terms of exploration, it refers to the expansion of main-branch library service from the city proper to the "Greater Jiaxing" scope which includes five counties and two districts. In terms of deepening, it refers to the establishment of village (community) branch libraries, mobile library services, cross-sector library union, and the resources integration of township branch libraries and village (community) libraries. To reach these goals, the Jiaxing government released demonstration projects implementation plan in the form ofofficial document. The establishment of demonstration projects in Dadukou District, Chongqing Municipality, Tongchuan, Shaanxi Province and in Karamay City, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region represent the exploration and practice of diversified development of public library service in West China. The Dadukou District, Chongqing Municipality established a regional main-branch system of public libraries in the pattern of "one general library + multiple branches +

several service points", and simultaneously applied such a pattern among culture centers, which is unique and distinctive practice nationwide. Based on the practical conditions in West China, Tongchuan, Shaanxi Province summarized major factors for realizing the service integration of public libraries, including acquisition plan proposed by districts and counties, separate payment for acquisition by districts and counties, integrated bidding and acquisition, union classification and cataloging, a mainly centralized resources circulation pattern, and collaborative library service within the city. Karamay City, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region started with the establishment of union catalogue center, and the joint construction and sharing of various types of digital resources, gradually realizing unified acquisition and the operation of the "borrow anywhere, return anywhere" service. In the context of building the public cultural service system, one of the fundamental development directions of public libraries is to form a service system of public libraries. History and present facts at home and abroad both prove that main-branch system is an effective way to form a service system. However, due to the diversified present conditions of different regions, there are different patterns in realizing the main-branch system. The Jiaxing pattern demonstrates the innovativeness and exemplary effect of demonstration projects, whereas the diversified practice in the West Region is a valuable attempt to establish the public library service system in the economically underdeveloped region. In the public library sector, a relatively large number of projects on exploring and operating service systems are listed in the first batch of demonstration projects. This not only represents the development direction of the library community, but also the guiding direction in establishing demonstration projects.

The second type is the fundamental resources and infrastructure development of public libraries at the grass-root level in the context of building the public culture service system. Projects of Foshan, Guangdong province, Hengyang, Hunan province, and Panzhihua, Sichuan province can be categorized into this type. In terms of fundamental resources and infrastructure development, the above-mentioned projects mainly focus on infrastructure construction, resources development, and library staff training. In comparison, economically developed region pays more attention to construction of fundamental resources. For instance, in Foshan City's project "Establishment of Public Culture Service System at County Level of Nanhai District", the main task of public library development is to realize the targets of 1.5 copies in terms of Per Capita Number of Books in Public Libraries, 0.06 copies in terms of Per Capita Annually Increased Collection of Public Libraries, 0.6 times in terms of Per Capita Annual Visits to Public Libraries, and 1.2 times in terms of Annual Circulation of Each Item ("Development plan for the national public cultural service system demonstration projects in Nanhai District", 2011). All these targets are higher than those set in the establishment of demonstration projects in East China. The economically underdeveloped regions in Middle West China pay more attention to infrastructure construction and library-staff training. The "Public Culture Services Enter the Neighborhood Community" project of Hengyang, Hunan Province primarily aims to introduce public cultural facilities into neighborhood communities: establishing culture centers in 23 residential districts and 176

neighborhood communities. The culture centers in residential districts are all equipped with "three rooms, one hall, and one office" (three rooms include one reading room, one classroom for training, and one service room for the Culture Information Resources Sharing Project); one hall refers to the multifunctional hall; one office refers to the general office of the culture center); The culture centers in the community neighborhood have "two rooms, one square, and three supporting measures" (two rooms include one reading room and one recreation room; one square refers to one small-scale square space for cultural activities; three supporting measures include equipment, personnel and events-planning) at their disposal (Culture Bureau of Hengyang, Hunan Province, 2012). Infrastructure network development of libraries (reading rooms) at the grass-root level is solved through implementation of these projects. The "Libraries & Reading Rooms Promotion Project in the New Rural Area" of Panzhihua, Sichuan Province mainly aims at extensively establishing library facilities and arranging staffs in the rural area and urban communities. The Project is designed to build libraries (reading rooms) with "five unified operations (i.e., unified design, unified standards, unified construction, unified input and unified review and evaluation)" in 44 towns, 352 administrative villages and 132 communities. To effectively use and manage these facilities, each library or reading room at the village level is allocated RMB 6,000 Yuan per year to subsidize operational expenses, and in the meantime, the entire city has recruited 482 staffs, each of whom is entitled to RMB 400 Yuan of extra allowance for living expenses and RMB 100 Yuan for working expenses per month. The Municipal Government allocates RMB 10 million Yuan of special funding for unified procurement of equipment and resources for the cultural facilities at the grass-root level ("Development plan for book house project in new villages", 2011). The key areas of infrastructure development vary among the public libraries in different regions. But generally speaking, the establishment of Demonstration Projects has considerably promoted the input of local governments into the infrastructure development of public libraries.

The third type focuses on nationwide reading promotion programs led by public libraries, and the "Little Sun Reading Festival and Nationwide Reading Promotion Program" of Jingzhou, Hubei Province is a typical example. Reading festivals organized by public libraries are not rare nationwide, there are two reasons why Jingzhou's project is selected as a demonstration project: first, the project's comprehensive coverage which involves simultaneous implementation in 6 counties and 3 districts, with a participation of over 100,000 people; second, Jingzhou has put the events of Reading Festival high on the Municipal Government's agenda, integrating the City's 8 communities, 12 enterprises, 20 schools and 30 government bureaus into a networked public culture service system, which serves as an important node and development base for public cultural service provision ("Program plan for Little Sun reading festival and people's reading campaign in Jingzhou Library", 2011). Events-driven development is a distinctive feature of this networked public culture service system.

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