Research on the Functional Orientation of County Libraries in the Public Cultural Service System

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Abstract. Through the discourse analysis of the policy "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a Modern Public Cultural Service System," this paper concludes that county-level libraries in the modern public cultural service system serve as the inheritor of historical culture, the breeder of popular culture, the advanced cultural disseminator, and the multicultural collaborator, and offers suggestions to realize these functions with Guiding County Library as an example.

Keywords: Modern public culture service system · county libraries · function orientation

1 Introduction

With the promotion of related policies such as the construction of public cultural service system, the government has increasingly paid attention to and attached importance to the value and role of culture in rural construction and governance, and formulated and introduced a series of policies and measures related to the construction of public cultural service system. Public libraries play an increasingly prominent role in the public cultural service system. However, as an important part of the public library system, the county library's reading service development is not optimistic, especially the county library in the economically underdeveloped areas, which is difficult to fully meet the reading needs of the local people at the present stage. This paper studies the functional positioning of county library, takes the reading service of Guiding County library in Guizhou province as an example, applies abstract theory to practice, provides theoretical guidance for county library service in western underdeveloped areas, and puts forward specific development strategies for county library service according to the cultural development of Guiding County.

2 Overview of Public Cultural Service System

The public cultural service system is an umbrella term for non-profit cultural institutions and public cultural services, whose mission is to preserve the cultural rights and interests of citizens. In January 2015, the General Office of the Chinese Communist Party of China

and the General Office of the State Council released "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a Modern Public Cultural Service System," which clarified the direction and approach of the construction. The public cultural service system comprises numerous cultural institutions, the most significant of which are libraries, cultural centers, and museums. There are similarities and differences between the services offered by the three types of institutions. Yet, cultural centers place a greater emphasis on organizing mass-appeal cultural activities and fostering cultural education through entertainment that incorporates stimulation and audio-visual enjoyment. Museums collect, exhibit, and conduct studies on natural and human objects, with a concentration on the classification of objects of scientific, historical, or artistic value in order to educate the public. Libraries place a stronger priority on collecting, preserving, arranging, and developing literature works for public use than cultural centers and museums. It also serves to maintain human cultural legacies, spread scientific information, develop intellectual resources, and provide cultural entertainment.

3 Overview of County-Level Libraries

County-level libraries serving the cultural requirements of the populace are a vital component of the modern public cultural service system and a crucial pillar connecting the cultural growth of townships and rural areas with the culturally affluent provinces, cities, and districts [1]. The county-level libraries are linked to provincial, city, and district libraries, distributing the work of the provinces and cities to villages; they also coordinate and plan cultural resources and reading activities in the county, such as in town, community, and rural libraries, to promote modern public cultural services, thus ensuring the smooth operation of system construction work.

Libraries and cultural centers are the most essential cultural institutions for the public welfare in the county. Notwithstanding the fact that both organizations provide public cultural services, the nature and delivery of their services are clearly distinct. Cultural centers are mass cultural institutions at the county and city levels where mass cultural and recreational activities are conducted. Its services primarily consist of organizing popular cultural activities, directing the building of amateur art teams, instructing and training people, executing mobile cultural services, etc. The original definition of a library is an institution that collects, organizes, and stores books and other reference materials for public use. With the development of science and technology, as well as the diversification of people's demands, the library's service forms have become more abundant and diverse. Activities involving cultural exchange are no longer restricted to the borrowing and returning of books. Reference and consultation services, seminars in a variety of professional sectors, reading promotion initiatives, and specialized services for certain groups are gaining popularity. In comparison to cultural centers, libraries appear to serve the dual purposes of knowledge inheritance and social education [2].

4 Research Methods

4.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis refers to the dissection of diverse symbols, texts, and discourses in communication activities with the use of symbolic interactionism and discourse theory in order to uncover the hidden and true meanings behind the lines. Not only is it an applied theory, but it is also a frequently employed research method in numerous contemporary scientific domains, including philosophy, aesthetics, literature, history, political science, sociology, psychology, communication, culture, international relations, etc. Discourse analysis differs from content analysis in that it focuses on exposing underlying ideologies in order to warn the world [3].

4.2 Case Study

This paper's research object is the Guiding County Library because of Guiding County's unique natural and economic setting and the museum's innovative service methods. Guiding County is a key transportation hub in southwest China, with "five railways, two highways, and an airport" constituting a well-developed transit network. In addition to its rich mineral and groundwater resources, the region is also home to approximately a thousand kinds of wild animals. Being a multiethnic region, more than half of this region's population consists of ethnic minorities, suggesting a diversity of ethnic cultures. Guiding County has grown fast in recent years due to its own natural and economic assets, garnering numerous honors in 2018. In 1956, the Guidance County Library was created. Throughout its operation, it has adhered to a service philosophy of "everything for readers, for all readers" and a mission of "readers first, service first," and has actively collaborated with other social institutions to develop innovative service forms. In addition, it continually investigates ways to address the cultural requirements of the county as a whole, offering equal, accessible, and shared cultural services to the local inhabitants [8–10].

5 Functions

5.1 The Inheritors of History and Culture

5.1.1 What it Ought-to-Be

Article 5 of the "Opinions" says "it should support old, young, frontier and poor areas to excavate, develop, and utilize ethnic and folk cultural resources to enrich public cultural services [1]." Article 17 says that "governments should encourage localities to integrate excellent Chinese cultural resources and develop characteristic digital cultural products [4]".

Whether it be national culture, local culture with distinctive characteristics, or ancient literature left over from history, all of these are witnesses to local history. The mission of county-level libraries is to collect, organize, restore, and preserve significant records and resources so that locals can learn the history and culture of their community and carry on this rich culture from generation to generation.

5.1.2 What it is

Guiding County's paper collections contain local documents such as "Twenty-Four Histories," "Qiannan Series," "Guizhou Tujing Xinzhi" from the Ming Dynasty, and "Guiding County Chronicles." As seen by the collection and organization of local documents, the library gives local history and culture a high priority. Yet knowledge must be acquired anyway. Consideration should be given to how to optimize the value of these local documents. In this regard, I recommend the following:

First of all, the content of local literature is not limited to history. The past is significant, yet knowledge and culture endure uninterrupted. In the future, the present will become history, and every era will have wonderful authors and creations. While collecting local history and culture, the library should also focus on exceptional contemporary writers and works and compile them into volumes. This type of record preservation can not only help the public comprehend the cultural traits of a region, but also inspire contemporary authors to write. Second, Guiding County is a multiethnic region where Buyi, Miao, Shui, Dong, and other ethnic groups make up over half the population. Consequently, Guiding County Library may take this into account, from language and writing to clothes and food, by digging up and documenting the history behind them and promoting them through lectures, exhibitions, and other creative endeavors. This action is not only a sign of respect for the national culture but also a way for the people to learn about the culture of their hometown, thereby fostering national unity.

5.2 Breeders of Popular Culture

5.2.1 What it Ought-to-Be

Article 6 of the "Opinions" says "it should guarantee the basic cultural rights and interests of special groups, actively carry out non-profit cultural and artistic training services, performances, and science and technology popularization activities for the elderly and minors; carry out basic reading promotion work for preschool children and recommend excellent publications to primary and middle school students; provide barrier-free facilities for the disabled, build audio libraries; and meet the basic cultural needs of migrant workers, especially the new generation of migrant workers [4]."

The county library is the most accessible department in the public library system, serving a population with multi-level characteristics. The elderly, housewives, left-behind children, the disabled, the blind, etc., make up a disproportionately large share of county-level library patrons in impoverished western regions. Nevertheless, these people's cultural requirements are frequently more pragmatic. Individuals require not just the opportunity to improve their living situations but also the means to integrate into a rapidly growing society. County-level libraries must give full play to their social education duties and provide humanized services, making it easier for readers to get the information they require.

In addition, the role of the breeder of popular culture is mirrored in the cultural creation that results from the collision of thought. Article 15 of the "Opinions" states, "It shall carry out extensive reading activities for all people and promote reading for all people in families, communities, universities, rural areas, enterprises, and government agencies. It should actually encourage art for all, physical health for all, science for all,

and the rule of law for all. It should launch grassroots cultural brand-building initiatives and encourage more people to participate in cultural activities with a sense of the times [4]".

The county library provides a venue for cultural exchange for the local inhabitants. In this pleasant setting, locals can not only contemplate alone but also break through the boundaries of time and space to exchange ideas with the authors of the text or meet like-minded individuals through activities. Regardless of the form, it is a process of social and cultural gestation where the county library provides resources, space, and atmosphere.

5.2.2   What it is

The Guiding County Library moved from the old city to the Wentu Building on Hongqi Road, adjacent to the Guiding County Party Committee Square, in February 2013. It is surrounded by a number of companies and hotels, including the Public Security Bureau, Bank of Guizhou, Hang Sheng Bank, China Mobile, etc., as well as a residential area with easy access to transit. Each room is air-conditioned, and the free tea is available. In addition to providing excellent humanistic services to its readers, the Guiding County Library prioritizes digital resource services. The library has 36 computers with 20 megabytes of network connection, one e-book lending machine for children, one e-journal lending machine, and three e-book lending machines. In addition, the library offers 24-h e-book reading and downloading, an official WeChat account, a mobile library, and a portal website with 10 TB of documents where readers may access millions of e-books and video resources. The pleasant surroundings and ambiance lure readers to the library, igniting their excitement through such accessible borrowing channels. Yet, resource utility maximization is also a worthy topic of consideration. The balance between supply and demand is crucial not just for the economy, but also for the provision of cultural services. We can make the best use of everything and efficiently spread knowledge only if we grasp the features of the readership and their actual demands and conduct research on the supply based on those needs.

The majority of the visitors to the Guiding County Library are senior citizens, youths, and job seekers.

Elderly readers have relatively free time to visit the library. Assuming there are no exceptional situations, they will come nearly daily. In the newspaper room, these seniors favor Guizhou Daily, Qiannan Daily, and Reference News in particular. Their interest in electronic devices is average, far lower than their appetite for print newspapers. Knowledge does not consist solely of static absorption; connection with like-minded others is also crucial. Thinking and sharing are not only helpful to the health of the elderly but also compensate for their inner emptiness. In this regard, the author suggests the following: Firstly, host regular tea parties, choose a few topics, allow everyone to speak freely and share their views and opinions, and award the best viewpoints each time. It is possible to select topics by asking older readers or reviewing prominent newspapers and magazines. The second step is to create a WeChat group for senior readers. These days, though smartphones are ubiquitous, mobile phones for the elderly are confined to making and receiving calls. It is not that the elderly lack the will to learn, but rather that they lack the means to do so [5]. Via tea parties, we may bring

together the elderly, assist them in downloading WeChat, set up group chats, follow the library's public account, and educate them on how to use WeChat. This action can not only provide a communication platform for senior citizens but also boost their collective sense of belonging and satisfaction through group conversations, as well as facilitate reader management and information notification in the library. In addition, the elderly are sluggish to acquire new information, have a low capacity for learning, and suffer from memory loss; therefore, they require the patient care of librarians. A volunteer from the library can be assigned to run the WeChat group for the elderly.

The library is often frequented by adolescents on weekends and holidays. In this context, the library might implement flexible opening hours, extending its hours on weekends and holidays as necessary. Due to severe academic pressure and a rebellious mindset during puberty, junior and senior high school students are susceptible to psychological disorders, which will negatively impact their health and academic performance. In this aspect, the library can serve as a supplement to school and family education by providing mental health education, knowledge access, and creative thought development. The library can collaborate with psychologists and offer free psychological consultations on a regular basis to help children overcome their inner turmoil. Obviously, the idea of consultation is to create a comfortable environment for young readers and to respect their privacy.

Self-study rooms are the library area most regularly visited by unemployed individuals. For this reading group, we can extend the library's closing time, increase the number of seats in the self-study room, and hire a volunteer who is studying at the library to manage the opening and closing of the self-study room each day.

5.3   Disseminator of Advanced Culture

5.3.1   What it Ought-to-Be

Article 1 of the "Opinions" states, "It must follow the correct direction. It must be centered on the people, guided by socialism's core values, and build advanced culture, innovate traditional culture, support and guide popular culture, transform backward culture, and oppose harmful culture. It should support the development of constructive spiritual pursuits and healthy, civilized lifestyles throughout the entire society." Article 15 states, "It should support the building of red culture, community culture, local culture, campus culture, corporate culture, military culture, and family culture, fostering a pleasant, healthy, and colorful social and cultural form, and encouraging mass cultural interactions and integration in minority-dominated frontier regions and elsewhere. It must strengthen international exchanges of mass cultural activities, encourage the internationalization of mass culture, and establish a multi-level structure of foreign cultural exchange [4]."

As a cultural organization that provides public services, the fact that the county library conveys the national ideology to the public is one of its most distinguishing characteristics from other cultural service institutions. China's national conditions dictate the direction of its economic, political, and cultural development. The socialism core value system reflects the current social and cultural evolution. With the assistance of county-level libraries, a non-profit cultural institution, individuals are able to comprehend the connotation and significance of China's contemporary mainstream culture,

thereby enhancing their sense of national cultural identity, self-confidence, and pride in national culture, as well as promoting national unity and the growth of Chinese culture.

5.3.2 What it is

Adhering to the principles of "equality, openness, and free of charge," the Guiding County Library opened its library to the public and established a public welfare cultural lecture brand called "Maixi Lecture Forum," which reflects the spirit of the current era and the main theme and core values of socialism. The primary distinction between county-level libraries and other cultural service organizations rests in the communication of national ideology. With the assistance of the library, spreading the voice of the times in a manner that is popular with the people will improve the absorption and feedback of serious topics. Using Xinwen Lianbo as an example, anchors broadcast the news with Internet buzzwords, attracting the attention of many people born in the 1990s and 2000s and also enhancing the public's perception of the news. Subsequently, Xinwen Lianbo also created a short video series titled "Anchors' Views" on Weibo, expressing the host's views on a particular news story, which was well received by the public. In addition, Xuexi Qiangguo's Bailingchuang is a method of integrating excellent culture with casual expression, which the library can emulate. The author advises that the important elements of "Maixi Forum" be delivered to readers in the form of short videos, which can not only achieve the effect of publicity in advance but also benefit readers in reviewing the material afterward. Likewise, the public should be more receptive to short videos lasting a few minutes than to lengthy paragraphs of text. People are important to the creation of culture, particularly Internet culture. Following the current trend of expressing and communicating in a manner that the public enjoys would yield twice as many positive results with half the amount of effort.

5.4 Multicultural Collaborators

5.4.1 What it Ought-to-Be

The basic principles of the "Opinions" are "adhere to the correct direction, government leadership, social participation, joint construction and sharing, and reform and innovation" [4].

The five adherences are the summary of the multivariate cooperation approach. "Adhering to the correct direction" is the foundation of cooperation; "adhering to government leadership" is the assurance of cooperation; "adhering to social participation" is the method of cooperation; and "adhering to joint construction and sharing" is the goal of collaboration. The diversification of collaboration encompasses service subject, content, form, and other factors. Wang Yan noted in her paper that public cultural venues are the most basic venues for the general public to obtain public cultural services in terms of cooperation topics. Only a network of public cultural facilities with an acceptable layout and equitable access throughout rural areas may accomplish the goal of constructing a public cultural service system. This scenario benefits public institutions, social groupings, and private entities equally [6]. Liu Mei recommended changing the operating mode of each organization, integrating digital cultural resources, avoiding the recurrent development of digital resources, and establishing a situation in which all

organizations collaborate in order to increase the resource service's efficiency [7]. This is the interdepartmental integration of cultural institutions' resources.

The "Opinions" also recommended urban-rural and cross-regional cooperation in addition to interdepartmental cooperation. Article 4 mandates that "the establishment of an urban-rural linking mechanism for public cultural services should be guaranteed. It should encourage the development of a general branch system centered on county-level cultural institutions and libraries, improve the overall administration of rural bookstores, and realize the integration and interconnection of public cultural service resources in rural and urban regions. In addition, it must promote 'cultural matching and cultivation' between urban and rural areas, improve urban support for rural cultural creation, and establish a standardized operating system" [4]. Article 5 states that "it must clarify the service and resource gaps in old, young, frontier, and poor areas and, in accordance with the needs of targeted poverty alleviation, concentrate on implementing a number of cultural poverty alleviation projects, promote regional counterpart assistance, and increase talent exchange and project support" [4].

There are numerous ways of cooperating, including staff training between libraries and colleges, the offer of volunteer jobs, etc., that can ease the talent shortage in county libraries. Libraries can go to the company for experience, following their corporate governance model and forming their own practical, effective and efficient council system.

5.4.2   What it is

Along with rural schools, residents, armed police, and communities, the Guiding County Library has built "Moxiang Bookstore," "Hope Bookstore," "Cinema and Theater Leisure Bookstore," and "Mai Xincheng Bookstore Leisure Reading Space" as well as other types of libraries. In addition, the library collaborates with social organizations such as the Art Association, the Weiqi Association, and the Calligraphers Association to foster the interests of its readers. During the Spring Festival, Guiding County Library also partnered with the Disabled People's Federation for lantern riddles, which provided disabled readers with laughter and warmth. Various cultural organizations have diverse types of cultural communication, which is why a rich and colorful multiculturalism will emerge. Cooperating actively with other cultural organizations in the community enables not only the integration of cultural resources and the elimination of waste but also the identification of our own inadequacies and the ongoing improvement of our services. Aiding the impoverished in rural areas is an example of interdepartmental collaboration. Moreover, the Guiding County Library sent two librarians to the village to assist the needy. When connecting the rural people, the library can play its own function and help the villagers get rid of poverty, for example, by donating books needed by the villagers, guiding the construction of rural bookstores, applying for certificates for the villagers for free, encouraging them to participate in activities in the library in their spare time, etc. The library and school's collaborations are not limited to the donation of books. First, the donated books must be exactly what the youngsters require. Second, the periodic updating of the books is of equal importance. It is best to establish a long-term plan for each cooperative action so that the entire library is aware of the activity's aim, strategy, and impact, and assesses, documents, and summarizes the activity to ensure that each inter-agency cooperation is effective.

6   Conclusion

Being an essential component of the cultural service system, county-level libraries play a crucial role in the development of a contemporary public cultural service system. Despite the high number of county libraries and vast variances in county development, the fundamental mission remains the same: to serve the people and meet their fundamental cultural requirements. The county-level libraries in our country should be based on the actual situation, utilizing regional resources, developing strengths and avoiding weaknesses, serving the public in a flexible and efficient manner, and realizing their own values as historical and cultural inheritors, popular culture breeders, advanced cultural disseminators, and diverse cultural collaborators.

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