INFO 505

Assignment: Library/Archive Visit Report

Place: The National Library of China

Reporter: Xujian Zhang

It’s my pleasure that I had the chance to visited the National Library of China. The National Library of China is located at No. 33, South Street, Zhongguancun, Beijing, adjacent to the Gaoshi River and Zizhuyuan Park of Baishi Bridge in Haidian District. The National Library of China covers an area of 7.24 hectares and a building area of 140,000 square meters.

The National Library of China is divided into the South Hall of the General Hall, the North Hall of the General Museum and the Ancient Books Museum. The collection of books is 31.19 million, of which there are more than 2 million books of ancient books. In 2008, the National Library of China has a building area of 280,000 square meters. It is the largest library in Asia and the third largest in the National Library of the World.

The National Library does not need to turn on the lights most of the time. Of course, when the sun is on the top of the head, the central control will unfold the gray curtain of the ceiling to block the glare, so that the light inside the house will always remain bright and soft, so as to ensure that the reader has a good and comfortable reading environment.



Looking down from the top floor, the entire reading hall is full of people reading books. The seats for readers to read and read are almost full, there are seniors, more young people, some of them are busy on laptops, some with headphones. In listening to public classes, more people are holding books and pens, reading, thinking, and recording. Readers who are at the desk in front of professional books such as medicine and law should look at their equipment and be a frequent visitor here. I feel that every seat has its own fixed owner. I walked silently between the bookshelves. Thousands of people were in the same hall, but they were silent and surrounded by so many books.

I found a normal staff which is a book manager, and asked him some questions:

1. How large is the library’s staff and is there an organization chart?

He told me that the National Library of China is a very large library which has almost 1300 people work in it. The whole library has 28 departmental institutions and more than 100 subordinate units.

1. Who does the library or other information organization primarily serve? What are the demographics of the community and of the users? These may differ widely. What outreach programs are available?

There are two parts that the National Library serves: one is for public people, the other one is for Chinese government department such as ministry of civil affairs, central policy research office, ministry of finance and so on. The National Library serves more than twenty thousand people each day. About the outreach programs, the book manager didn’t know.

1. Does the organization have a mission statement for the information center and for the larger institution (e.g., university)? When were they last updated?

In addition to targeting individual readers, the National Library also provides interlibrary loan services for public libraries, university libraries, secondary libraries, and professional libraries in mainland China. It is the national interlibrary loan center in China. And the National Library provides a variety of document information services for domestic and foreign educational research institutions, reference consulting services and academic activities support.

1. What policies does the organization have, such as an Internet use policy, donor restrictions, collection development, or privacy policy? If this is a public or school library, are there filters on computers used by children?

For Internet use policy, the manager gave me a guide and it told that please consciously abide by the "Regulations on the Security Protection of Computer Information Systems of the People's Republic of China" and other 4 Laws and regulations. Instead of the laws, there are no specific privacy policy.

Children between the ages of 6 and 15 must be accompanied by a parent if they need services. And without their parents, children can’t use any computer.

1. Do they have a written collection development policy?

The collections of the National Library of China include books, periodicals, historical documents, academic papers, Jinshi rubbings, audio-visual products, digital publications, etc. in various languages. By the end of 2005, it had reached 25,049,236 copies (pieces); as of the end of 2007, the collection of documents reached 26.31 million copies (pieces); and the number of copies per year was between 600,000 and 700,000.

1. Is one person solely responsible for purchasing materials and handling licensing agreements for e-resources, or is the responsibility shared among several staff members?

He didn’t know clearly. But he told me that there are strict procedures for purchasing e-resources. It won’t be one person.

1. What electronic resources and databases are available for patrons to search? Does a librarian or other information professional provide instruction or training on how to search these resources?

The public can search for books, periodicals, newspapers, essays, ancient books, music, film and television, as well as scanned copies of various materials, foreign documents and translations. Yes, all the librarians have been trained to provide service.

1. Does the staff offer information literacy training for its patrons? If so, what is offered?

The staff will teach their patrons how to use a mouse and a keyboard. Tell them where to find the books or papers.

1. Does the organization have any digital collections available? If so, list a few of the more important collections. Does it provide e-readers or other devices for using these collections?

Yes, the collections of the National Library of China include rare books of ancient books, rubbings of oracle bones and stones, ancient Chinese maps, celebrity manuscripts, Chinese minority literatures, etc. Among them, the "four major collections" are "Dunhuang suicides", "Zhaocheng gold collection" and "Yongle Dadian" And "Wenjinge Sikuquanshu" is the most eye-catching.

1. Is the librarian or archivist satisfied with the use that the collection receives, both digital and paper-based?

Yes, the manager is prod of all the collections in the National Library.

1. How does the library raise funds for staff, services, and collections? Is there an active Friends of the Library or Archive group or other partners/supporters?

All the funds are provided by Chinese government. There are no other person or group provides funds.

1. What are the biggest challenges facing the library/archive at this time?

In 2003, with the approval of the state, the National Library was expanded. The second phase of the new building was opened in September 2008 and became the North District of the National Library of China. After the expansion, the total area of the National Library of China reached 250,000 square meters. However, it may not have enough room in several years.

1. Is the librarian or archivist involved in any particular association to support him or her professionally? How has this helped him or her?

The manager told me no because he should stay in the library almost every day for serving people. He didn’t have enough time.

After I asked all the questions, I told him that I asked them because an assignment and I will provide a hypothetical advocacy plan. He laughed and said that, does the biggest library of China need more developed? I said everything has its limitation.

I asked some personal question next:

1. What would your “wish list” contain?

He told me that he hopes to tour all over the world. But maybe after retire he will have the chance.

1. If money were not a concern, what would he/she most like to do or accomplish?

He wanted to get married!

1. What does the library need most now?

The rest time.

1. Does he/she believe the resources are adequate to meet the needs of the patrons?

Yes. He told me that everything you need to search or find in a library is easy to take in the National Library.

1. Does the library/archive need to supplement its services by relying on outside resources to meet the needs?

Yes. Because the library is the center of all the libraries in China, sometimes the library should ask for some specific materials for other libraries.

I’m lucky that because of the flight issue, when I saw the assignment I still stayed in Beijing. It’s the first time I’m been the National Library and the trip is so impressive. The National Library is a very modern library. The collection and the surrounding lawn area are covered by a wireless network Reader. Each reader can access the Internet with their own reader card. At the same time, the library management system of the National Library is also very advanced. Readers who want to find a book can search for the specific location of the book by entering the title or uniform book number, and can also see the book placed on the computer. Which area of which shelf is on which shelf. And the books on the bookshelf are also well tracked, and the books are counted every time they are flipped, so that you can know which books are popular and which books are rarely read, so the valuable bookshelf space can be based on the readers. Demand is more rationally utilized.