

WHITE PAPER TO LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT -- FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO LAC

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【Abstract】

The Library Association of China (LAC) has announced its *White Paper to Library Development – ROC 2000* in April 2000 to serve as a guideline for the future direction of library/information services in the 21st century. It took five long years for this document to reach its completion. The drafting of the document was initiated by Professor C.K. Wang at his Presidency of

LAC in 1994, and accomplished by Dr. Margaret Fung at her Presidency of LAC in 1999. Announced by Professor S.H. Huang, the current President of LAC, in April 2000, and wished to promote the legislative process of Library Law in Legislative Yuan. Library Law was passed in January, 2001. White Paper to Library Development has played an vital role in this movement. This paper highlights the essence of the document.

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INTRODUCTION

The Library Association of China (LAC) has announced its *White Paper to Library Development – ROC 2000* in April 2000 to serve as a guideline for the future direction of library/information services in the 21st century. Particularly, LAC had wished the document being able to persuade and promote the legislative process of Library Law in Legislative Yuan. Library Law has passed in January, 2001. *White Paper to Library Development* has played a vital role in this movement.

The drafting of the *White Paper to Library Development* had been initiated by Professor C.K. Wang at his Presidency of LAC in 1994, continued by Professor James Hu at his presidency in 1996, and accomplished by Dr. Margaret Fung at her Presidency of LAC in 1999. Announced by Professor S.H. Huang, the current President of LAC in April 2000. The drafting of the document was assigned to the Committee of Research and Development in 1994, chaired by Dr. Mei-Mei Wu at National Taiwan Normal University. Requested by LAC, the chair was then to form a Committee on White Paper to Library Development. Six members were invited, Professor Chao-Chen Chen at National Taiwan Normal University, Professor Li-Kuei Hsueh, at National Chengchi University, Ms. Ophelia Chun-yin Liu, at Academia Sinica, Professor Mei-Ling Wang at Hsuan Chuang University, and latter Professor Ting-Ming Lai at Shih Hsin University. Ms. Hsiao-Wen Yang at National Central Library Taiwan Branch served as secretary. Professor C.K. Wang and Dr. F.J. Chuang, Director of National Central Library consultant of the Committee.

During the past years, literature review, field interviews of libraries and librarians, public hearings had been conducted to collect the required information for diagnosing the status and difficulties confronting libraries of all sorts. Action agenda including the issues of policy, resources, management as well as professional efforts had been prescribed and suggested accordingly. Drafts had been put on the web for public review.

The essence of the White Paper is illustrated, the missions and goals of library/information service is depicted, status of library/information services is

analyzed, the dilemmas confronting library development are identified, action agenda including the issues of policy, resources, management, and professional efforts to achieve the missions and goals are proposed.

GOALS AND MISSIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICES

Five missions and goals of library services are claimed by LAC:

a. To preserve all forms of information: Libraries should preserve human knowledge and cultural heritage from generation to generation. In the digital era, libraries also need to create and preserve information in digitized form.

b. To protect the right to know: Only with well-informed citizens, can a real democratic society exist. Being major institutions of social education, libraries should assure people the right to be thoroughly informed. Libraries, therefore, should provide equal opportunities for citizens to get access to information.

c. To organize information: Libraries should organize information for individual and community users to get access to library and information with ease.

d. To fulfill information needs: Libraries should collect information on all subjects to meet the different needs of users at all levels.

e. To support lifelong learning: Libraries should support citizens' lifelong learning by building up learning resources and imparting information literacy skills.

CURRENT STATUS OF LIBRARY SERVICES

A total number of 4,830 libraries was calculated in Taiwan and Fukien Area by 1997, including one national library, 435 public libraries, 158 college/university libraries, 440 high school and technical high school libraries, 719 middle school libraries, 2,540 primary school libraries and 537 special libraries. The total amount of library collection were 91,036,856 volumes; among which 2,183,438 volumes were held by the National Central Library; 16,562,408 were held by the public libraries; college/university libraries held 36,392,587 volumes;

school libraries had a total of 28,293,067 volumes and the special libraries held 7,605,356 volumes. Besides the two million more collection for NCL, the average public library holdings yielded only forty-five thousand volumes; average university/college libraries held approximately 263.4 thousand volumes; average school library holdings yielded 10 thousand volumes, and average 25 thousand volumes for special libraries.

The seemingly low library holding was caused by budget constrains. Taking public libraries as an example, of 435 public libraries, a total budget for library acquisition was NT\$1,432,110,000 in 1998. With a total population of approximately 22 million, it was only NT\$65.00 acquisition fee for each resident. If every resident was to have one book available, with a total of 22 more million population and 16 million volumes of collections in the public libraries, it would need to add 6 more million volumes to the library collection. At an average and minimum cost of NT\$250 per volume, it would need at least NT\$1.6 billion more for acquisition!

The total number of full-time staff were 8,837 from 2,747 libraries reported, including 233 staff members in National Central Library, 1,905 librarians in 242 public libraries, 2,637 librarians in 136 college/university libraries, 3,082 in 1,446 school libraries, and 980 librarians in 168 special libraries. The 1997 NCL statistics showed that there were only 3.2 librarians in each library, with an average 7.8 full-time staff in the public libraries, 2.0 staff in school libraries. That is to say that approximately one professional public librarian serves 6,183 registered patrons in Taiwan. College/university libraries were known to have better collections, qualified staff and better facilities; school libraries were somewhat limited as far as space, collection and staff were concerned. Shortage of professional staff in public and school libraries was the common phenomenon in Taiwan.

Regarding library users and use, the total number of library users registered were 35,428,102. Just to highlight the two types of libraries with public libraries, 16,906,969 in 351 responding public libraries, and 12,500,798 in 132 responding college libraries. A total of 28,112,882 users borrowed books

from all types of libraries between 1996 to 1997. Total volumes circulated in the same year were 58,719,462, with approximately an average of two volumes for each check out.

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

Through thorough literature review, group interview and discussions, and a public hearing held in May 1998, twelve major dilemmas confronting library development had been identified:

a. Inadequate public understanding of library services and functions: Most citizens view libraries as places to borrow books and/or read newspapers. The role of libraries as institutions to obtain information needed for daily life is not recognized. Without such public understanding, little progress can be expected of libraries.

b. Inflexible school curricula discourage active use of libraries: Due to the inflexible design and heavy load of school curricula, students are not encouraged to use the libraries actively. Current curricula design for K-12 students does not support a constructive approach to learning by exploring new knowledge independently or with the assistance of librarians. In colleges, not many faculties encourage students to use libraries effectively for self-paced learning. The younger generation, therefore, is unable to realize the libraries' essential function to provide resources for as lifelong learning resources.

c. Inadequate and underqualified library staff: Professionally trained staff is crucial to library service quality. At present time, many public and school libraries are not staffed with qualified professional librarians. Up to now, there is no law enforcement upon this important issue.

d. Insufficient funding for library collections: Budgets for library collections are limited. Total collections in public libraries stood at 15,602,955 volumes in 1997. With a population of twenty-two more million, acquiring one volume per citizen at NT\$250 per volume would require a collection budget totaling NT\$1.6 billion!

e. Ineffective mechanisms for library administration: For example, county cultural centers and libraries are supervised and funded by the

cultural department of the central government, township libraries are supervised by the cultural centers but are funded by the township themselves. Such administrative system indeed restricts the development of local and small libraries.

f. Lack of overall planning and coordinating administrative mechanism: Different types of libraries report to different administration. University libraries and school libraries are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and local governments. Both cultural department of the central government and local government administers public libraries. Poor coordination and cooperation among university, school and public libraries are thus evident.

g. Omission of legislative support for library development: For the last thirty years, although with the continuously devoted efforts of Library Association of China, library related laws and regulations had not been stipulated by the government. To assure effective library management, library infrastructure such as funding, staffing, building, as well as library management policies for collection development and public information services need to be legalized.

h. Inadequate mechanisms for effective resource sharing: Resource sharing is pivotal to quality information service. Inter-library cooperation is not satisfactorily implemented due to the lack of understanding and legal basis. Resource sharing, up to now, is a concept to which lip service is paid without efficient actions taken.

i. Imbalance in the provision of library facilities in rural and suburban areas: A similar imbalance also exists between rural and urban areas. Facilities are focused on urban areas. If information support systems can be made equally available in both rural and urban areas, this might help alleviating rural population drain.

j. Imbalance in the provision of facilities for different types of libraries: Most facilities and resources are focused on college and national libraries. School and public libraries, particularly the township libraries that are closest to the public, obtain the most limited resources, funding and staffing.

k. Inadequate supply of knowledge-based and valued-added information systems for all subject areas and disciplines: Value-added information systems, which organize knowledge, are the foundation for an information rich and knowledge-based society. Good national bibliographic utilities, indexing and abstracting service thesauri and encyclopedia construction, etc. are major elements of knowledge infrastructure. It will not be possible to achieve the so-called information society without the creation of these knowledge-based, value-added information systems for all subject areas and disciplines.

l. Ineffective management skills for library operation: Little planning and/or evaluation skills are applied to library management by libraries. Without application of these important skills, libraries' efficiency and attractiveness to users are lessened.

ACTION STRATEGIES

The Committee on White Paper to Library Development has suggested the action strategies, including efforts on policy, resource, management, and professional to achieve the mission and the goals for better library services in the 21st century.

Policy Issues:

Policy issues illuminate the urgent requirements for national information services policies, including the legislative process for the Library Law and the Government Information Access Law, etc. The following action strategies relating to the policy issues are highly recommended to the decision-makers in the government agencies:

1. To enhance the legal foundation for library development: Library Law proposed by the Ministry of Education is now in the legislative process at the Legislative Yuan after thirty-three years of efforts by the Library Association of China. The enactment of the law is pivotal to the sound development of library operation. Library community should generate public support to this set of laws and expedite its enactment with speedy and timely efforts. And in order to promote the overall information service environment, information related policies and laws need to be formulated and enacted, such as an Archive Law, a Government Information Access Law, a Privacy Law,

and intellectual property legislation are all vital to building an information-rich society. Both librarians and the public at large should pay attention to these legislative actions.

2. To establish a nationwide administrative mechanism for library services: A nationwide administrative body would function as a national planning and coordinating agency for the betterment of overall library development information services and the enhancement cooperation among different types of libraries. A centralized administrative mechanism, such as the National Commission on Library/Information Services is to be set up for better coordination and cooperation for all libraries.

3. To establish an R&D fund for librarianship: Librarianship is a profession related to knowledge management, reader guidance, user information instruction and customer services, etc. Research and development funding is needed to encourage librarians/libraries to conduct empirical research to build up collections for life-long learning and to implement other meaningful projects. A unique foundation should be established with supports from government and the private sectors are encouraged to allocate such funds to for these purposes.

4. To plan comprehensive, value-added, decision support information systems: A nation needs to accumulate and share its local history and knowledge by collecting, organizing, and publicizing such materials and information. Special disciplined related knowledge-based systems such as agricultural information system; legislative information system and education resource systems are of utmost importance to national development. Such subject-oriented, value-added decision support information systems should be fully planned and generously supported by the government.

Resource Issues:

Resource issues require administrative support for human resources and collection development and funding. The following action strategies relating to resource issues are strongly recommended to library administrators and supervisors:

1. To strengthen human/financial resources, collections and library buildings: Library

administrators and supervisors can strengthen human/financial resources, collections and library buildings by strategic planning and proposals writing for fiscal budgets. Only with well-equipped collections, good staff and good facilities can quality service be expected of libraries.

2. To connect library systems nationwide to the Internet: Libraries of all types can hope to meet the needs of the information society only if they are connected to the Internet. Administrative agencies need to plan and request budgets to do so.

3. To join library networks to render better and more comprehensive library information services to local users: Libraries and librarians need to work together to provide better services to the public. Libraries are encouraged to join local as well as national consortia to better serve their patrons.

4. To provide continuing education for librarians and information workers: Administrators should create and offer in-service training opportunities for librarians to improve their information technological, human communication and research skills. Incentive systems to encourage librarians to take up in-service training and to participate continuing education are to be devised.

Management Issues:

Management issues suggest the use of modern management skills to facilitate and improve information services for the individual library. The following action strategies relating to the management issues are strongly recommended to library managers for immediate action.

1. To promote library/information service standards: Service standards for library operation are the foundation for quality library services. All types of libraries need service standards with constantly updating to meet the challenges caused by changes of circumstances and /or environments.

2. To provide adequate library collection and quality services to the public: libraries provide adequate collection and quality services to the public by formulating and publishing library service policies, including collection development policies, reference service policies, audio/video service policies, document delivery policies, etc. Each

library needs to formulate its own service policy that meets the circumstances and needs of local patrons.

3. To polish librarians' management skills in terms of planning, operating, and evaluating library performance: Librarians need skills in management, planning, supervising, operating, and evaluation to improve day-to-day performance and thereby attract citizens to use libraries. It is recommended that all libraries conduct annual planning exercises, and evaluate their own performance at the end of each year as a basis for formulating new plans for the subsequent year.

4. To promote information literacy education to the public: Libraries need to provide information literacy training programs to the public in order to equip the citizens with life-long learning skills. Librarians need to view themselves as educators in their community. They need take the lead in influencing the public in learning in the information age.

Professional Support:

Professional issues suggests building a consensus among librarians by issuing a library bill of rights and a statement of ethics for librarians, and by conducting continuous research and study for the improvements of library/information services, theories and library and information science education. The following action strategies relating to professional issues are strongly recommended to library professional associations:

1. To program overall library and information science education/curricula: Professional societies such as the Library Association of China and the Chinese Association of Library and Information Science Education need to review and reform the overall library and information science education/curricula to meet the needs of the information society. Profession knowledge, skills, and ethics issues are the essential concerns. Formal education courses, in-service training programs to upgrade the skills of current librarians, need to be deliberated, studied and designed.

2. To formulate professional ethics codes for librarians and information workers: Librarians' professional associations need to issue codes of

ethics code for librarians to guide their professional behavior.

3. To issue a Library Bill of Right: Librarians' professional associations need needs to issue a library bill of rights to encourage reading and to support intellectual freedom. This document would highlight the role and mission of libraries in a democratic society.

4. To launch strategic planning for different types of libraries: To meet the needs of users and to promote quality library services, different types of libraries need to issue their own strategic planning for action.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Information is considered as an indispensable element in enhancing human progress, advancing scientific and technological developments and upgrading national competitiveness. Libraries are the major institutions, which preserve, process, and disseminate information. From the perspectives of meeting the information needs of life-long learning, of promoting democratic system or of developing national information infrastructure or of establishing Asian Pacific Operation centers, government should pay utmost concerns to libraries development. This White Paper is presented to the government with concrete suggestions on actions to be taken on legislation, policies, budgets, and staffing. At the turn point of information age, it is necessary for all supervising agencies to realize the importance of the betterment of library and information services by giving adequate support. This is the time for librarianship to pursue far-sighted development, to correct what were improperly implemented. For better library/information services, libraries are advised to plan and implement training and continuing education programs to upgrade the professional quality of librarians.

The development of library and information services should proceed from the facets of policy, resources and management. It calls the attention to be paid by government agencies, all libraries and professional library/information workers with constant evaluation of library development objectives. Only with such efforts and commitments,

can we expect a more satisfactory information service system to head for the promising information society in the 21st century

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