Reevaluation of the Value System and Core Values in University Libraries during the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract: With the profound global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, university libraries, as academic and cultural centers, have undergone significant transformations. The pandemic has heightened the demand for digitization, remote access, and academic support, offering new perspectives on the value system and core values of university libraries. This article aims to delve into this newfound understanding, analyze the impact of digital transformation on library services, and provide specific guidance for the future service and development of university libraries to adapt to the evolving academic environment and user needs. Through a reevaluation of the role of university libraries in the post-pandemic era, we can better comprehend their crucial role in knowledge dissemination, academic support, and cultural exchange. This understanding enables the optimization of service models, ensuring that university libraries offer comprehensive, flexible, and efficient support to the broader academic community.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges worldwide, requiring university libraries to not only address these challenges but also provide essential support to the academic community. This has prompted university libraries to reexamine their value system and core values, and reassess their service models and resource allocation.

2. Under the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, high university libraries

2.1. Global Impact of COVID-19

At the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, a disease caused by a coronavirus rapidly spread worldwide, leading to unprecedented impacts on people's daily lives, the global economy, and various industries.

Pressure on Healthcare Systems: With a surge in the number of infections, many countries' healthcare systems came under immense pressure. Hospitals and clinics quickly became overwhelmed, leading to a shortage of clinical resources, medical equipment, and healthcare personnel. Some countries even had to establish temporary medical facilities to cope with the rapid increase in healthcare demand.[1]

Stagnation of the Global Economy: COVID-19 had profound effects on the global economy. As countries implemented lockdown measures and social distancing policies, many industries, especially tourism, hospitality, and entertainment, were severely affected. Global trade volumes decreased, supply chains were disrupted, resulting in production halts and a global economic recession.

Disruption and Transformation of Education: School and university closures disrupted the education of hundreds of millions of students worldwide. In response to this challenge, many educational institutions quickly shifted to online education, accelerating the development and application of educational technology.

Changes in Social Habits: Due to the pandemic, people's social habits also underwent significant changes. Online meetings and remote work became the new norm, family and community connections grew stronger, while in-person social activities significantly reduced.

Cultural and Psychological Impact: COVID-19 also had cultural and psychological effects globally. People's focus on health and safety increased, and social distancing and personal protective measures became particularly important. At the same time, due to prolonged lockdowns and social isolation, many individuals experienced feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression.

Acceleration of Research and Technology: The pandemic also stimulated global research collaboration and the rapid development of technology. Research institutions and pharmaceutical companies worldwide accelerated the development of vaccines and treatment drugs, while data analysis, artificial intelligence, and remote sensing technologies played crucial roles in pandemic monitoring and forecasting. Overall, COVID-19 had profound implications for the world, not only altering people's lifestyles and thought patterns but also significantly impacting the global economy, culture, and technological development. Despite the challenges it brought, the pandemic also gave rise to innovation and opportunities, heralding the arrival of a new global era.[2]

2.2. Responses and Transformations of Higher Education Institutions

The COVID-19 pandemic had far-reaching effects on the global education system, particularly on higher education institutions. The pandemic forced universities to confront unprecedented challenges but also provided opportunities for transformation and innovation. In this context, the responses and transformations of higher education institutions are of significant importance.[3]

Facing the reality of lockdowns and social distancing, many universities swiftly transitioned to online teaching models. By utilizing online education platforms, video conferencing software, and cloud computing technology, teachers and students could engage in educational activities from anywhere, at any time. This not only ensured the continuity of education but also offered universities opportunities to explore new teaching methods and technologies.

For disciplines that rely on experiments and on-site research, the pandemic posed significant challenges. Many laboratories and research facilities were forced to close, severely disrupting research activities. To address this challenge, some universities began to explore technologies such as remote experiments, virtual laboratories, and digital simulations to ensure research activities could continue.

With students unable to return to campus, universities needed to provide more online services and support. Various student services, from counseling and career guidance to academic support, shifted to online modes. Additionally, universities increased support for disadvantaged students, international students, and those with special needs.[4]

The pandemic had a significant impact on international cooperation and exchange activities at universities. Many student exchange programs and overseas internships were canceled or postponed, and international conferences and seminars shifted to online modes. Despite these challenges, universities continued to strive to maintain connections and collaborations with international partners,

transcending geographical and time barriers through technological means.

The pandemic affected the enrollment, funding, and operations of universities, placing financial and management pressures on these institutions. Many universities began to explore new funding sources, optimize resource allocation, and strengthen risk management to ensure their long-term sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges to universities but also provided valuable opportunities for transformation and innovation. Through rapid, flexible, and targeted responses, universities can not only mitigate the impact of the pandemic but also lay a solid foundation for their future development.[5]

2.3. New Challenges and Opportunities for University Libraries

2.3.1. Challenges Limited Use of Physical Resources

With the spread of COVID-19, most universities implemented closures or restrictions, making it difficult for students and faculty to access library physical resources directly. This led to a sharp increase in the demand for online resources and also necessitated a reevaluation of resource allocation and service models for libraries.

Pressure on Technological Infrastructure: Due to the increased demand for online resources and services, library technological infrastructure faced unprecedented pressure. Servers, network bandwidth, and online service platforms had to handle a large volume of concurrent access, posing significant challenges to library technology teams.

User Skill Training: Swiftly transitioning to an online mode means that users need to have certain skills to efficiently utilize library online resources and services. Providing rapid and effective user skill training becomes another challenge for libraries.

Staffing and Training: The pandemic changed the demand patterns for library services, requiring libraries to reconfigure and train their personnel to meet the new service demands.

2.3.2. Opportunities Accelerated Digital Transformation

The pandemic prompted libraries to accelerate their digital transformation processes. Many libraries increased their investment in electronic resources and introduced more online services such as online consultations, remote training, and virtual exhibitions.

Innovative Service Models: Faced with the challenges of the pandemic, many libraries began exploring new service models, such as "books delivered to your door," online book recommendations, and online reading clubs. These innovative services not only meet immediate user needs but also provide new perspectives for the future development of libraries.

Deepened Cross-Sector Collaboration: The pandemic encouraged collaboration between libraries and other institutions, such as educational departments, technology companies, and other libraries. Through cross-sector collaboration, libraries can share resources, technology, and expertise, providing more diverse and enriched services.

User Experience Emphasis: During the pandemic, libraries placed a stronger emphasis on users' online experiences. Through data analysis, user surveys, and feedback mechanisms, libraries can better understand user needs and habits, optimizing their service processes and content.

3. Acceleration of the Digitalization Process and Its Significance

3.1. Increasing Demand for Remote Access

With the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale, all aspects of society

have experienced unprecedented disruptions, with higher education being particularly affected. The pandemic forced a large number of students to postpone their return to campuses, making remote learning and education the new norm.[6] Consequently, the demand for remote access has rapidly surged, presenting new opportunities and challenges for educational institutions.

Under the impetus of the pandemic, many academic resources that were previously limited to physical access have started to transition into digital formats. Libraries, research centers, and academic publishers have been working diligently to transform their collections and publications into digital forms, enabling scholars and students to access them remotely. This transformation not only makes academic resources more accessible but also broadens their audience, allowing more people to share in the fruits of knowledge.

Simultaneously, the rapid advancement of technology has provided robust support for remote access. High-speed internet connections, cloud computing technology, and various online learning and collaboration tools have made remote access possible. Teachers and students can communicate in real-time, share materials, and even conduct online experiments and research, breaking down geographical limitations.

However, the widespread adoption of remote access also brings about a series of issues and challenges. Network security and data protection have become focal points of concern for academic institutions and scholars. As a substantial volume of teaching and research data flows to the cloud, securing this data and preserving privacy has become an urgent matter to address. Additionally, issues related to intellectual property and copyright have emerged. In the digital age, the balance between open access and copyright protection is a topic that warrants in-depth exploration.

Furthermore, remote access has transformed the learning and research habits of scholars and students. The convenience and richness of online resources enable them to efficiently access and process information, but this might lead to an overreliance on digital technology, potentially overshadowing the importance of field research and experiments.

3.2. The Value of Digital Resources

With technological developments, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital resources have become an indispensable part of the academic landscape. University libraries and other academic institutions have further increased their investment and maintenance of digital resources during this period. This shift is not just a response to current circumstances; it reflects the growing value of digital resources in higher education.

Firstly, digital resources provide constant accessibility. Unrestricted by time and place, scholars and students can access the required materials anytime and anywhere, greatly enhancing the freedom and convenience of learning and research. This flexibility is particularly crucial for remote learning and international collaboration, ensuring that scholars from different locations and time zones can effectively collaborate and share knowledge.

Secondly, digital resources exhibit high scalability. In contrast to traditional physical resources, digital resources can be easily duplicated, stored, and transmitted, reducing issues related to resource scarcity and redundancy. Furthermore, digital technology allows for in-depth organization and mining of resources, such as data analysis, visualization, and machine learning, offering new possibilities for academic research.

Moreover, digital resources play a crucial role in the dissemination and democratization of knowledge. The rise of open access initiatives and various online educational platforms has made a vast amount of academic material available to the public for free or at a low cost, promoting the democratization of knowledge. This not only increases the influence of the academic community but also helps cultivate public academic literacy and critical thinking.

However, the proliferation of digital resources also presents new challenges. For instance, ensuring the quality and authority of resources, handling vast amounts of digital data, and protecting intellectual property and personal privacy. These issues require joint efforts from the academic community, the technology sector, and government authorities to establish relevant standards and policies.

In summary, the value of digital resources in modern higher education is undeniable. They not only meet the growing demands of the academic community but also provide new opportunities for knowledge innovation and dissemination. In the future, with further technological development and societal changes, the value and impact of digital resources will continue to strengthen.

3.3. Integration of Technological Advancements with Library Services

In the rapidly evolving technological landscape of today, technological advancements are gradually reshaping our habits in life and work. University libraries, as centers of knowledge and core institutions for academic research, are no exception.

Firstly, with the introduction of technology, the efficiency of libraries in resource acquisition, organization, and search has significantly improved. Traditional methods of book classification and indexing have now been replaced by electronic catalogs and search engines. This not only greatly accelerates search speeds but also allows users to filter materials based on multiple criteria and perspectives. More importantly, the digitization of collections enables advanced techniques like keyword search and full-text retrieval, providing users with deeper and more personalized content.

Furthermore, technological development has significantly expanded the scope of library services. In addition to conventional borrowing and consultation services, digital resources such as e-books, databases, and online courses have gained popularity. Users can access these resources through various means, such as mobile applications and social media. Moreover, cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality provide libraries with opportunities to create more immersive learning experiences for users.

Additionally, technology has also facilitated the automation and intelligence of library management. For instance, Internet of Things (IoT) technology can assist libraries in real-time adjustment of environmental parameters, ensuring quality and safety within the library environment. The application of big data and machine learning technologies can help libraries more accurately meet user needs and optimize resource procurement strategies. The introduction of technologies like robots and drones further enhances the operational efficiency of libraries.

However, the application of technology also brings new issues and challenges to libraries. For example, ensuring the availability of long-term stored digital resources and protecting library assets when faced with technological risks. To address these challenges, libraries need to collaborate with experts from various fields to jointly research and implement solutions.

In conclusion, the deep integration of technology with university libraries brings new opportunities to the academic community, while also introducing certain challenges. Libraries should proactively embrace these opportunities and continuously improve service quality to meet the evolving needs of modern academia.

4. Revisiting the Value System of University Libraries

4.1. Review of the Traditional Value System

In an era before technology had reached its current heights, libraries were vital repositories of knowledge. Physical books, manuscripts, maps, and other important materials were carefully preserved and managed. This preservation of knowledge was not merely the storage of physical

carriers but also the preservation of the collective memory of human civilization. Each item in the library's collection represented an era, a culture, a field of study, or a unique thought, collectively building the continuity of human history and the diversity of culture.

In addition to preserving knowledge, libraries served as disseminators of knowledge. In the days before the internet and electronic media, people relied on libraries to access information, conduct research, and engage in academic discourse. Professors, scholars, students, and the public would visit the library in person to retrieve materials and share and discuss knowledge. Consequently, the library became a significant hub for academic exchange and a space where knowledge, ideas, and creativity intersected.

Furthermore, libraries also undertook educational and training functions. Through regular lectures, workshops, and training activities, libraries helped readers utilize resources more effectively, enhance their research capabilities, and promote lifelong learning. Additionally, libraries were dedicated to nurturing critical thinking, independent research, and information literacy among readers.

The traditional value system of university libraries emphasized their critical role in preserving, disseminating, and advancing knowledge. Over time, despite significant changes in technology and society, this value system has continued to provide a solid foundation guiding library services and missions.

4.2. Fusion of Modern Technology with the Value System

With the acceleration of information technology and the digitization process, university libraries are undergoing a profound transformation. When traditional value systems face the impact of modern technology, they pose both challenges and opportunities, necessitating a reevaluation of their core values and effective integration with modern technology.

Digital technology allows library collections to be transformed into digital formats, significantly expanding resource accessibility and providing new avenues for the long-term preservation of knowledge. Simultaneously, digital resources of libraries are attracting a broader readership, particularly the younger generation that is more accustomed to online learning and research.

Cloud computing and big data technologies further drive innovation in library services. Digital resource management systems based on cloud platforms offer libraries more flexible and efficient solutions. Big data analytics enable libraries to gain a better understanding of readers' needs, providing them with more personalized services.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies create entirely new interactive experiences for libraries. Readers can virtually tour the library using VR technology or access library-related information in the real world through AR.

Furthermore, open application programming interfaces (APIs) and other open technologies create conditions for collaboration between libraries and other institutions, enabling them to better integrate into the entire academic ecosystem.

The integration of modern technology has brought about a profound transformation in the value system of university libraries. Libraries are no longer solely centers for the preservation and dissemination of knowledge; they have become centers for academic research, education, and innovation, evolving to better serve readers and society.

4.3. Core Position in Academic Support and Research Assistance

The influence of university libraries in the academic field has gradually expanded beyond traditional role definitions, moving towards academic support and research assistance. This transformation not only underscores libraries' deep engagement in academic research but also provides scholars and researchers with more comprehensive and efficient services.

Academic support from libraries is evident in the provision of specialized research tools and skill training for scholars. These tools and training encompass literature retrieval, data analysis, open access, academic publishing, and various other areas, assisting scholars in improving research efficiency and ensuring research quality and impact. Additionally, libraries provide scholars with research spaces and technical support, such as data labs, multimedia studios, and maker spaces, catering to their diverse needs throughout the research process.

The core position of research assistance is demonstrated by the full engagement of libraries in academic projects. From project planning, data collection, literature management to results dissemination and knowledge sharing, libraries can provide robust support to scholars. Libraries also establish close collaborations with academic institutions, publishers, and research teams, ensuring the smooth progress of academic research and the maximization of research output.

Furthermore, libraries play a significant role in advancing open science and knowledge sharing. Through open access platforms and knowledge repositories, libraries offer broader dissemination channels for academic achievements, promoting the free flow and reuse of knowledge.

5. Conclusion

In the post-pandemic era, university libraries not only continue to play their traditional roles but also need to leverage their core value in areas such as digitization, remote access, and academic support. Reevaluating their value system can better cater to the needs of the academic community and provide direction for future service and development.

Acknowledgement

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