

Discussion about the Value of University Library

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Abstract. Library has its unique value in University. Firstly, its value of knowledge is embodied in the accumulation and inheritance of knowledge. Secondly, its value of education is reflected in enriching students' inner world and cultivating their self-learning ability. Thirdly, as a public third space, university library nurtures people's belief of freedom, equality and humanism. That shows the social value of libraries. With the development of our society, there is no doubt that university library will continue to exist and succeed in a four dimensional space with knowledge, learning, culture and Internet.

Introduction

“The Outline of University Library” issued in 2015 gave specific ideas and targets about the development of university library. Fortunately, with the benefit of this outline, we have already made great progress. However, confronted with the ubiquity of information resources and relevant service, university library is losing its place, which is supposed to be the center of literature and information on campus. Under this circumstance, How should we view the value of university library?

As a term of philosophy and social ideology, value can be seen as an impact of individuals on society. Likewise, the value of university library can be regarded as the relationship between owners of resources and students who need them. In 2004, IFLA announced “the Declaration of Core Value at Library”. They believed that the following four parts---preservation of human memory and cultural inheritance, social service, freedom of knowledge and equal access to it, education and learning---constitute the core value of libraries. University library has different values in terms of culture, education, society, which means exploring and thinking them from different perspectives could make great help for understanding its inherent and extended meanings.

Knowledge Value of Libraries

Libraries are changing. However, the functions of libraries would never change. Those are collecting, sorting out, preserving and utilizing human cultural heritage, which are also the mission and duty of libraries and given by our society. After generations' efforts, libraries have already accumulated abundant literature and information. Therefore, knowledge and culture contained in them are the source of knowledge value of libraries.

Literature and information are indispensable resources at libraries. Only by using a large amount of those can we see problems, finding regularities and in the end, forming knowledge. As a result, libraries play an important role in finding, accumulating and passing down knowledge, thereby becoming a platform for spreading knowledge.

Scholar Karlstein said, “The responsibility of libraries is making it possible to innovate and pass down culture”. As a collector and a spreader, the library is a center of knowledge. Meanwhile, information printed on traditional paper and that stored in electronics are knowledge. Hence, the development of Internet and IT will only help libraries develop and transform but not exert negative effect on the value of libraries.

In summary, the knowledge value of libraries is embodied in accumulating and passing down knowledge. It is an essential feature that does not depend on which era it is or who is the reader.

Educational Value of Libraries

So called “the educational value” refers to the fact that as a platform for spreading knowledge and the center of information, the library has a direct influence on broadening readers’ horizons and shaping their personalities when they are self-learning. In other words, the library acts as an educational institution which gives guidance on learning. Most people’s deepest impression of their university is the library. Besides, most movies about school-days revolve around libraries.

We can view the educational value of libraries from two perspectives. Firstly, the library is a college without fence. Everyone can receive the education he needs. No matter which field he has interests in or how old he is, every reader could get what he wants. By reading books, readers can expand knowledge and, in the same time, enhance their ability of acquiring knowledge and searching information independently. Secondly, when it comes to university education, the library is ‘the second classroom’ which acts as a useful supplement to university courses. At libraries, students could find new territories in order to meet their spiritual needs and eventually, shape their personalities.

In this information era, the educational value of libraries does not only consist in the virtually online learning space, but also appears in the offline real learning space they provide. This kind of learning space is unique and non-substitutable because it combines virtuality and reality. Therefore, the educational value of libraries changes its form and extends its meaning as our times changes.

The educational value of libraries is also reflected in its idea of life-long learning. Everyone could come here constantly to read books and acquire knowledge, thereby keeping up with the times. So a library is a college without diploma and a campus accompanying a man in his lifetime.

In summary, the educational value of libraries is embodied in building students’ spiritual world and improving their self-learning ability.

Social Value of Libraries

Professor Huanwen Cheng teaching at Sun Yat-sen University once said, ‘In this times when information resources and corresponding service are everywhere, the reason why libraries are still flourishing and not replaced by Google is that they have unique and non-substitutable resources of scholarship, culture, space and society’. [4] In recent decade, the construction of Chinese libraries was faster than any time before, which embodies that our society has deeply understood the significance of libraries.

University Library is a place which offers freedom of expression, multi-culture and a public space for chatting. Spatial resources are indispensable for libraries to exist and develop. It is not only a learning space gathering information resources, but also a social space for communication. The more libraries are made use of, the more various and vigorous schools are. When students come to libraries, sometimes they are not for reading certain book or searching certain article, but for seeking peace and relax in order to get rid of the stress coming from daily work or study. In online survey ‘the 10 reasons why you go to libraries’, the third reason is ‘libraries are the best place to take a load off’. That is the social value of libraries when they are places providing public service.

Another important aspect of the social value of university library is the humanism which conveys the spirit of ‘freedom, equality, opening and inclusion’. As an educational institution, the library emphasizes that ‘Anyone, at any place, is supposed to get equal access to library service in a reasonable way.’ It also advocates that ‘every person has his right to utilize libraries equally and freely.’ Those mean that the library offers a cultural environment and corresponding atmosphere where people are able to acquire different knowledge equally and openly. Above is the humanism of university library and its social value, which also shows the level of education at this university.

Conclusion

The times are changing, so is university library. It will continue to exist and develop in this four dimensional space with knowledge, learning, culture and Internet. The space of knowledge gives

birth to civilization. The space of learning aids education. The space of culture develops society. The space of Internet accelerates the fusion of information. Those four makes a combination of reality and virtuality, which embodies the value of university library and dictates the mission of it.

From now on, how valuable university library is depends on the capacity of it and the commitment it makes. In his work “Building Socially Sustainable Library: Participation of Citizens in Designing Libraries”, Judith hale pointed that the existence of the library depended on whether it had a close connection with people’s lives. Likewise, the importance of university library does not only depend on the amount of literature and information it stores, but also consists in whether it is incorporated into teaching and researching, whether it serves as a place for cultural communication, whether it provides enough space for students, whether it becomes the power of developing university.

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