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# Research on the “City’s Study” of Urban Library Service Mode in China

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**Abstract:** Under the background of urbanization and networking along with the trend of digital reading, the urban library service model needs to be transformed and the service function needs to be enriched. “City’s Study” refers to the city’s 24-hour self-service entity reading space jointly created by the urban libraries and partners. It is a new type of service mode for urban libraries in China. The emergence of the “City’s Study” has greatly reduced the service radius of public libraries. Yangzhou City in Jiangsu Province has been building the “City’s Study” since 2015. Yangzhou City has built 20 “City’s Study” till now and achieved good results. It is an advantageous demonstration of the transformation of urban library service models in China and has certain research value. This article uses literature research, field investigations, field interviews and other methods to conduct an in-depth investigation of the Yangzhou “City’s Study”. The “City’s Study” in Yangzhou is taken as an example to introduce the construction situation, service effectiveness and existing problems of the “City’s study”. Finally, combined with the development trend of libraries and the concrete practice of Yangzhou “City’s Study”, the future development tendency of “City’s Study” service is summarized. Credit services and WeChat services should be popularized in the “City’s Study” service which should be developed in the direction of intelligence, convenience and diversification.

**Keywords:** Urban Library, “City’s Study”, Service Mode

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## 1. Introduction

The 2018 IFLA Global Vision Report emphasizes that the library must continue to advance with the times, improve its services and upgrade its collections to meet constantly changing needs of users in order to continue to fulfill its core mission of supporting learning, literacy and reading [1]. Chinese “National Public Library Career Development Plan during the 13th Five-Year Plan” includes improving the service network of public library facilities [2]. The implementation of Chinese “Public Library Law” in this year has also brought many expectations for library integration development and innovation services. Under the external environment, related policy and legal background, the transformation of Chinese library service model has become inevitable.

In the process of urbanization and networking in China, the emergence of the new urban service model — “City’s Study” has changed the construction pattern of the city library and adapted to people’s pursuit of quality life and

elegant reading environment. At the same time, the service efficiency of the urban library has been significantly improved and the “last mile” of the library service has been realized with this kind of modern service and convenient conditions of use. The “City’s Study” service mode has led the development direction of the public reading space in China and has become a key link of improving the urban library service system.

In the digital age, libraries must update their traditional roles. We must strengthen the connection between the library and the society. The main body of libraries should change from borrowing to taking activities, from saving to communicating [3]. Libraries develop from library 1.0 that initially focused on document services to library 2.0 with user interaction and now library 3.0 with knowledge services [4]. The library is not only a communication center for static knowledge but also a more important center for dynamic knowledge. In other words, it should become a communication center for people [5]. The “City’s Study” developed advantages of libraries as the largest offline

education and communicating platform. In the “City’s Study” people can relax, exchange readings, participate in activities and generate social behaviors through books as media. Therefore, the construction of the “City’s Study” enriches and enhances the service function and service level of urban libraries, promotes the transformation of libraries and gives full play to the functions of library’s public space and social participation.

“City’s Study” aims at building urban classrooms and residents’ study rooms, which is an innovative service model of urban libraries. “City’s Study” is conducive to realize equalization, facilitation and socialization of public reading services thus carrying out the goal of libraries to promote reading and enhance the literacy of citizens.

The author uses the “City’s Study” and “24-hour reading space” as keywords to search the relevant documents in the three databases of CNKI, Wanfang, Weipuand obtains the following results. From the domestic research, because the establishment of the “City’s Study” was started around 2014, there was almost no related publications before 2014. From 2014 to 2017, the number of related documents has increased significantly but the total number is not large. In the past four years, a total of 75 related documents have been published. The types of document resources are mainly newspapers while the number of journal articles is small. The related research focuses on service systems, management models, reading promotion models and service effectiveness. Most of the literatures will select a specific case such as the Wenzhou Public Library “City’s Study” as the research object and then collect the service data of the research object. Finally, the literatures summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the “City’s Study” by analyzing the service effectiveness and then propose specific strategies to solve the problems [6]. Through the service data in the related papers, the service model of “City’s Study” has achieved good service results in practice and has been recognized by the society and the public. Only one journal article is closely related to this topic which is devoted to the investigation and research of the development situation and service mode of the Yangzhou “City’s Study”. The rest closely related literatures are news reports. In terms of research methods, the paper related to Yangzhou “City’s Study” mainly uses general theoretical discussion focusing on the service effectiveness and construction significance but it does not have empirical research.

Papers devoted to the study of relevant service models haven’t been found in the retrieval of foreign publications. Some of the literatures explore the spatial planning of city libraries and propose a new functional orientation that should be applied to city libraries in the new era [7].

The innovation of this article is to make an empirical study on the “City’s Study” of Yangzhou through the method of field investigation and combine results of the empirical research and literature research to look forward to the future development trend of “City’s Study” service mode from the perspective of professionalism.

## 2. Analysis of the “City’s Study” Mode

### 2.1. The Connotation of the “City’s Study”

The “City’s Study” is a 24-hour self-service physical library that uses information technology and RFID technology to realize unattended self-management services. It is a high-quality 24-hour physical library. The “City’s Study” insists on equality, openness and sharing. The concept is to build a unified technology platform, integrate the literature resources of city libraries and realize the unified retrieval, loan and return of books and periodicals. The “City’s Study” adopts the construction mode of cooperation between the library and the government, the community, enterprises and institutions. It revitalizes the social resources. Through centralized and unified management and chain operation, the standardized and normalized development has been realized. The effectiveness of public cultural services in libraries has been improved [8]. In recent years, many cities in China are building urban reading spaces similar to “City’s Study”. For example, the “City’s Study” of Wenzhou Public Library and the “Sanwei Book Coffee” reading service space project in Jiangyin City are two early and representative city’s reading space projects in China.

### 2.2. Performance Characteristics of the “City’s Study” Service

Compared with the traditional urban library, the services provided by the “City’s Study” show uninterrupted, self-help and humanized features.

The uninterruptedness is reflected in the “City’s Study” to provide the public with 24-hour uninterrupted library services which make up for the service gaps for readers’ reading needs when the library is closed [8].

Self-help is reflected in the unattended service for readers. The access control system and the high-definition monitoring realize linkage with the city library control center to monitor the “City’s Study” in real time. Readers’ self-services include “one-stop” service for self-service certification, reading, book disinfection, loan repayment, database search and digital resource downloading etc.

Humanization is reflected in the site selection, environmental decoration and collection structure of the “City’s Study”.

The “City’s Study” collected opinions on the site selection from the public insisting on building the “City’s Study” in prosperity places and close to residential areas for the convenience of citizens. The decoration of the “City’s Study” has created a warm family atmosphere from the shape to the lighting and other details. It also provides drinking water machine, coffee machine and other service facilities. It reflects humanized thinking in comprehensive types of book collection and fitting the needs of citizens.

### 2.3. The Innovation of the “City’s Study” Service

Library service innovation includes three characteristic factors: information resources, space resources and cultural resources. Information resources are the most important

resources of libraries because they are the core and foundation of library services. Space resources are the important means to realize the innovation of library services. Cultural resources determine the positive energy of library services and point out the direction of efforts for library service innovation which providing an inexhaustible motive force [9].

In terms of information resources the resources in the "City's Study" combine electronic resources and paper resources. The "City's Study" not only has classic masterpieces and best-selling books but also provides many practical books for the general public. At the same time, in order to avoid the homogenization of information resources, the construction of information resources is different in each "City's Study".

In terms of space resources, the construction area of the "City's Study" is no less than 200 square meters, usually between 200 square meters and 500 square meters. The "City's Study" can maximize its spatial value in a limited space. It is not only a public knowledge space but also a public information space and a public cultural space [9]. The service integrates reading, education, leisure, communication including sales of cultural and creative products, which fully reflects the diversity and inclusiveness of library services.

In terms of cultural resources, the "City's Study" fully incorporates urban cultural characteristics in architectural style, book resources and lecture activities. The "City's Study" service attaches importance to the promotion of Chinese traditional culture and urban culture. It aims at enhancing the cultural literacy of the citizens and promoting the cultural confidence and belonging of the citizens.

We can't simply understand the "City's Study" model as the branch-library system. There are connections and differences between the two. The branch-library system emphasizes the extension of the branch's services to the central city library. For example, county-level libraries and community libraries belong to the branch-libraries. The services of these branch-libraries have strong dependence on the central library and the service innovation is poor. However, the service of "City's Study" is positioned as city residents. It is not only an extended service like services of branch-libraries but also a flexible and innovative service mode. The "City's Study" service model is a kind of library extension service. The 24-hour uninterrupted service reflects the extension of time. The increasing number of construction and decentralized services reflect the spatial extension. However, compared with other branch-libraries, "City's Study" has obvious advantages in terms of cooperating objects, quantity construction and geographical location. Meanwhile, the innovation of its services fully reflects in the construction of information, space and cultural resources. Therefore, the "City's Study" is a new service model of the urban library.

#### **2.4. The Functional Orientation of Citizen's Cultural Rights in "City's Study" - The "Third Cultural Space" of the City**

In 2009, the international library community solemnly

proposed a proposition that the library is a "Third Space". American sociologist Ray Odenberg defined that the first space: the family environment; the second space: the workplace environment; the third space is outside the first space and the second space which provides convenience, learning and communication for people and they can relax, rejuvenate and eliminate inner pressures in it [10].

The biggest feature of the "City's Study" is to provide a home-based reading experience for the surrounding residents and create a humanized and intelligent warm environment. The author believes that the function of the "City's Study" can be positioned as the "Third Space" of the city. However, the concept of "Third Space" is too broad for the "City's Study" and does not reflect its cultural characteristics. To differ from other public spaces, its functional positioning can be embodied as a "Third Cultural Space" [10].

The "City's Study" can be built into a "Third Cultural Space" integrating learning spaces, communication spaces, creative spaces, exhibition spaces and entertainment spaces [11] to make it the most popular place for citizens except families and working units.

### **3. Empirical Analysis of the "City's Study" in Yangzhou as an Example**

Yangzhou is located in the central part of Jiangsu Province. It is one of the first national historical and cultural cities. Yangzhou is a city with profound historical and cultural heritage. Yangzhou Public Library has the advanced service concept of urban libraries. The construction of the "City's Study" in Yangzhou is not the earliest in China but the construction management level and actual operation results of it take the leading position in China. The "City's Study" in Yangzhou is built with the goal of urban classroom and citizen's study. Yangzhou insists on building the "City's Study" in the most prosperous district and the place closest to citizens in order to build a 15-minute reading cultural circle. The "City's Study" has become the spiritual landmark of Yangzhou City [12].

#### **3.1. Construction and Development Process**

The "City's Study" of Yangzhou was jointly created by Yangzhou Public Library and partners. The partners are responsible for providing hardware facilities such as venues. Yangzhou Public Library is responsible for providing book resources and organizing various activities.

The principle of the layout of the "City's Study" in Yangzhou City is to facilitate the masses to borrow books and choose public places such as tourist attractions, sports leisure parks, large commercial centers (shopping malls, supermarkets), large communities and other public places with convenient transportation and open management. Yangzhou Public Library also built some "City's Study" in the center of the park. It truly integrates reading into leisure life of the citizens so that the surrounding residents can not only work out in the park but also do some reading. The

“City’s Study” will also focus on creating a public welfare reading complex that integrates functions such as book collection, coffee selling and cultural creative product sales. These ever-expanding service functions will further mobilize citizens enthusiasm to go to the “City’s Study” and truly make the “City’s Study” a perfect place for the citizens to relax.

The “City’s Study” built in the early days is small, generally between 200 square meters and 500 square meters. The area of newly built “City’s Study” increases obviously and on this basis, the future multi-functional space planning is feasible. For example, the “Vanke 24-hour City’s Study” opened for trial run on March 31 this year. The total area is more than 700 square meters. It is divided into the first floor and the second floor. The interior decoration adopts large area and low saturation blue and gray. The overall decoration is elegant. It has been the largest “City’s Study” in Yangzhou till now.

The “City’s Study” in Yangzhou is based on the principle of co-construction and integration. It actively cooperates with all sectors of the society such as the government, street offices, enterprises and businesses. The responsibility of the partner is to provide space which is no less than 200 square meters; complete the decoration project and facilities according to the design requirements of the “City’s Study” such as strong and weak electricity, air conditioning, sockets, toilets, parking spaces, etc.; provide 2 people responsible for the daily management of the “City’s Study”; equip with a security to handle the “City’s Study” security affairs and a telecommunications network dedicated line of no less than 20 meters; undertake the “City’s Study” operation of water and electricity costs; offer a good management and reader service as the central library requested

In the construction of book resources, the book category of the “City’s Study” in Yangzhou is relatively rich with a large number of literary books. There will be topical books based on current events and hot topics such as the “Nineteenth National Congress” and the “Provincial Games” etc. The local literature, classic masterpieces and youth reading materials are arranged separately to show their prominence. In general, the collections of the “City’s Study” in Yangzhou City are more comprehensive and fit the needs of the citizens.

### 3.2. Service Features

#### (1) Low threshold

The “City’s Study” has an access control system that requires a credit card to enter. The citizens who have the library card can directly access the “City’s Study”. If there is no library card, the citizen should use the ID card to achieve one on the self-service permit machine outside the “City’s Study” and pay the card fee of 100 yuan. The card and the card fee can be returned at any time.

#### (2) “One-stop”

The “City’s Study” service provides “one-stop” reading experience services such as self-service certificate handling, reading, borrowing, database retrieval and digital resource downloading of QR code books.

#### (3) Harmonious environment

There are self-service water dispensers and self-service vending machines. At the same time, it is also equipped with a book self-disinfecting machine to meet the individual needs of readers. The environment of the “City’s Study” provides readers with a home-based reading experience to create a harmonious, intelligent and warm environment [13].

### 3.3. Service Effectiveness

Yangzhou City has built 20 “City’s Study” in the past three years and currently has an average of 100,000 person-times per month to enter the “City’s Study” reading. Until the end of October 2017, since the implementation of the “City’s Study” project, it has received totally 1.678 million readers. The book circulation reached 1.432 million and the number of readers was increased by 50,000. The 24-hour “City’s Study” has become the spiritual landmark of Yangzhou [14].

The “City’s Study” of Yangzhou City is gradually getting on the right track in terms of activities. In order to celebrate the “March 8 Women’s Day”, Yangzhou Public Library successfully carried out the activities of learning flower arrangements in the “City’s Study”. The senior flower arranging staff gave lectures and invited female readers to participate in the lectures. The enthusiasm of the citizens was very high and the activity got very good effectiveness. In mid-April, the 4th “Zhu Ziqing Reading Festival” and the 120th anniversary of Zhu Ziqing’s birthday were held in the “STARRY City’s Study”. “STARRY City’s Study” is located under the Millennium Tang Cheng scenic spot. The activity made use of the natural geographical advantages of the “City’s Study” to maximize the use of green vegetables in the Tang Cheng scenic spot. Readers can use second-hand books to exchange goods with daily fresh vegetables or brand-new books in the “City’s Study”. The two exchange modes of book-for-book and book-for-vegetable are for readers to choose freely. This form of activity is novel and the exchange mode of book-for-vegetable made the activities carried out by the library down to earth. “City’s Study” is obviously more suitable for such activities than the traditional urban libraries because of its location and space. It is also more attractive to people to participate in reading promotion activities. The successful organization of the activities has shown the good service results of the “City’s Study”.

### 3.4. Problems

Although the “City’s Study” of Yangzhou has achieved good service results, it still finds some problems in its service survey. For example, the propaganda channel is relatively simple and it is not effective enough; the space of the “City’s Study” constructed early is relatively small; the size of the space is not compatible with the number of people served; the current number of constructions does not meet the public expectations and the feedback mechanism is still not perfect.

The “City’s Study” of Yangzhou City is still in the early stage of development so these issues should be taken seriously in the future development. Relevant departments

should also formulate standards and norms of “City’s Study” as soon as possible to guarantee the “City’s Study” of Yangzhou to develop sustainably.

## 4. Future Development Tendency of “City’s Study” Service

### 4.1. Wisdom

With the process of informatization, the degree of intelligence of the library services, business and management is also advancing with the times. When the big data and technologies are applied, the service of “City’s Study” will also develop with the trend of wisdom. At present, you can enter some of the “City’s Study” in Yangzhou and borrow books from it using face recognition so that even readers who do not have a library card can enjoy the service of “City’s Study”. This practice greatly enhances the convenience of service. We can imagine that in the future more emerging technologies and big data technologies will be introduced in the “City’s Study” services such as robots, smart devices and smart reading promotion etc. The trend of smart service will truly realize the “reader-centric” service model [15] and provides readers with all-round comfort and precise personalized services.

### 4.2. Popularization of Credit Services and WeChat Services

Credit service is a new highlight of library innovation services, which has developed particularly rapidly in recent years. The service of “City’s Study” has the characteristics of self-help, which is especially suitable for the promotion and popularization of credit services. Yangzhou has already piloted the “Moon Lake City’s Study”. The readers who have more than 700 Zhima credit points in Alipay can scan the QR code to generate a credit loan certificate and can enter the “City’s Study” without paying the deposit for the library card. If the book is not returned or lost, the corresponding Zhima credit points will be deducted. This practice has received strong response from the public and greatly improved the service efficiency of the “City’s Study”.

In the era of network the “City’s Study” needs to rely on the mass platform such as Alipay and WeChat to provide services and enhance the connection with the public. This kind of practice makes it possible to open up the last mile of library services in both virtual space and physical space.

### 4.3. Facilitation

“City’s Study” continues to improve the convenience of its services with its quantitative, geographical and spatial advantages. Yangzhou Public Library provides the book delivery service by means of “City’s Study”. Readers only need to place orders on WeChat platform and the corresponding books will be distributed to the “City’s Study” closest to the reader within three days. Compared with the traditional similar service, the book delivery service through “City’s Study” can reduce costs, expand scope and improve

convenience.

At present the “City’s Study” of Yangzhou requires readers to pay 100 yuan for the library card to enter. Due to the cost and the use of the self-help machine, the convenience of the service is greatly reduced, which affects the number of readers of the “City’s Study” to a certain extent especially some elderly readers. Although the library has certain considerations in making this provision, for example it can guarantee the order and atmosphere of the “City’s Study”, this regulation has its unreasonable points from the perspective of public welfare and convenience. In the future, with the improvement of the quality of citizens and the mature development stage of the “City’s Study”, the free opening of the “City’s Study” will become inevitable.

### 4.4. Diversification

In the new era of wisdom, libraries must continue to enhance people’s cultural literacy, scientific literacy, artistic literacy and information literacy. The “City’s Study” as the “Third Cultural Space” which is closest to citizens will assume increasingly important cultural and educational functions. The “City’s Study” service should be diversified in the direction of improving citizenship and leading public cultural services.

In terms of activities, we must not only hold traditional reading-related activities but also focus on cross-border integration and actively cooperate with various cultural institutions [16] such as art galleries, museums, etc. to diversify these cultural activities. However, the cultural identity of the library itself shouldn’t be lost while learning the advantages of other public cultural spaces across borders [11]. The library should work with the government and various cultural institutions to create a comprehensive cultural and educational space for the “City’s Study” and make the “City’s Study” the first choice for citizens to improve their overall comprehensive quality in their daily lives.

## 5. Conclusion

At present, Yangzhou “City’s Study” service has achieved certain results but there are still many problems and it has not yet entered the stage of stable and standardized operation. The construction of Yangzhou “City’s Study” is very fast and the plan of this year will add another dozen “City’s Study”. In the future development, we can slow down the pace of new construction to solve existing problems and improve user satisfaction. We should pursue innovative development after achieving smooth operation. It is necessary to integrate the characteristics of Yangzhou City into the construction of the “City’s Study” and integrate with tourism to create the “City’s Study” with urban characteristics. Overall, the comprehensive survey and analysis results show that Yangzhou “City’s Study” has great development prospects. The author believes that under the relevant policies and the joint efforts of the Yangzhou Municipal Government together with the library, Yangzhou “City’s Study” will get better and

better.

The development of urban libraries plays an important role in the development of urban economy and the improvement of people's quality of life. In the new reading environment, libraries need to break through the traditional reading places. One of the ways of urban library transformation is to explore new service models. The 24-hour reading space represented by the "City's Study" has been promoted in many cities in China but the development does not mean blindly following the trend, blindly pursuing the increase in quantity and ignoring its service quality and innovation. The "City's Study" will only be short-lived and lack the potential for development if so. The "City's Study" is the "Third Cultural Space" of the city. It cannot be positioned as a city study room or a city reading room. It should be a multi-functional comprehensive center for cultural services, which enables citizens of all kinds of cultural needs to find their senses of belonging in it.

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