

# The Role of the Academic Library in the People's Republic of China

Richard Ellis

*This paper examines the role of the university library in China. Three major components of this role are identified. First, the university library is seen as a participant in the educational work of the university. Second, it is seen to be a provider of information that enables researchers in the university to carry out their investigations. Last, the university library has a responsibility to society as a whole.*



etween September of 1988 and June of 1989, I was an exchange visitor in the Faculty of Library and Information Science of Wuhan University, People's Republic of China. During the latter half of that period, I carried out a study of the university library system in China. I read most of what was written in the Chinese library journals between 1987 and 1989 about Chinese university libraries, and a great deal of what was published prior to 1987. I spent a week as a guest in the library of Wuhan University, and periods varying from one half day to one full day in the libraries of eighteen other institutions of higher learning, both in Wuhan and in Nanjing. In each of these libraries, I was able to conduct an interview with either the library director or one or more of the associate directors.

One of the focal points of my investigation was the function of the university library in China. I wished to examine its institutional role, both within the confines of the university, and within society as a whole. I reasoned that the way in which the role of Chinese university libraries was perceived might be reflective of the dominant cultural, political, and economic real-

ities of China, and that, as these realities are vastly different from those of North America (where I had lived my life until now), so might the role of university libraries in China be much at variance with the perceived role of university libraries on this continent. In this paper, I will discuss my findings.

## THE PLACE OF LIBRARIES IN CHINA

China has four types of libraries: those in schools (including university libraries), public libraries, libraries associated with the Academia Sinica (a scientific research organization that has many branches throughout China), and union libraries (established in factories for the use of the employees and their families). Huang Zongzhong, in his book *Tu-shu guan xue dao-lun (An Introduction to Library Science)*, discusses the overall position of the Chinese library.<sup>1</sup> Huang sees societies as being comprised of a number of systems, among which are those of economics, politics, science, culture, and education. These systems, of which the library system is another, interact, enhancing and limiting each other. Each is discussed briefly below.

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### *The Library and the Economic System*

The materialistic concept of history has it that social progress is based on production. As productive ability increases, society advances. When the level of production increases, society develops and with it the library system. At the same time, technological development requires more education on the part of large segments of the population. And because libraries play an important role in education, more will be demanded of them in terms of service. Furthermore, it is obvious that the technological advancement of libraries is dependent upon the productive ability of a society, and upon its economic well-being.

### *The Library and the Political System*

In a socialist society, libraries have a responsibility to educate the populace in socialist and communist thought, and to disseminate the ideas of Karl Marx. Politics is but an expression of economic fact. Therefore, if economics influences libraries, politics must as well, since politics is a manifestation of economics.

### *The Library and Science, Culture, and Education*

Scientific and cultural advance is cumulative. Libraries retain and transmit records of this cumulative advance. It is estimated that 30 to 50 percent of time spent in scientific research is spent surveying what has already been done. This information is retained in libraries. As education comes to be seen as an ongoing, lifelong process, libraries become society's educational and study centers.

In 1956, the national Ministry of Culture in China called a meeting concerning libraries. An official statement emanating from this meeting asserted that libraries had two main functions: the first was to serve the masses, and the second was to serve scientific research. The latter was largely ignored between 1958 and 1962 and again during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), but was reasserted following the third plenum of the 11th congress of the Community Party of China in 1978. It was at this meeting that scientific, technological, and economic growth were pronounced to be Chi-

na's priorities, and, since 1978, the role of the library has been seen as complementary to these priorities.

In 1987, three government departments (State Commission for Education, Ministry of Culture, and the Academia Sinica) combined to issue an official statement concerning libraries.<sup>2</sup> The statement declares that libraries are representative of the educational, scientific, and cultural development of mankind and are an integral component of that development. They collect, arrange, and transmit information. In the interest of economic and scientific development, they carry out education, universalize cultural knowledge, and provide spiritual nourishment. At the present time, libraries serve the four modernizations (of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military). They serve the masses and socialism. They assist in the development of the new socialist person, that person being one who possesses ideals, morals, culture, and discipline. In order that economic, educational, and cultural work may be properly executed, the library must be more conscious of its educational and informational responsibilities.

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### **Benefit to society is the primary guiding principle for libraries.**

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In his commentary on the above statement, one of the drafters of the document, Bao Zhenxi, states that libraries must reform if they are to support the four modernizations. The thought of Deng Xiaoping concerning reform should be studied by libraries for its directing value. Passive service should be replaced by active service. The work of libraries should be more closely allied to economic development, scientific research, and socialist education. Benefit to society is the primary guiding principle for libraries. Bao says that social benefit is precisely the establishment of the material and spiritual civilization, the furthering of economic development, the spreading of knowledge, the advance-

ment of technology, and the creation of the well-rounded citizen.<sup>3</sup>

### THE FUNCTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

In the post-1978 era, there have been two major documents that have defined the functions of the university library in China. The first of these was promulgated in 1981 by the Ministry of Education following the second national meeting concerning university libraries (the first had been held in 1956). This document was titled *Zhong-hua ren-min gong he guo gao-deng xue-xiao tu-shu guan gong-zuo tiao-li* (*People's Republic of China Regulations Governing the Work of University Libraries*). It states that the university library is the center of the university. It is an academic unit that serves teaching and scientific research. It must fully observe the educational policies of the Communist Party, further the development of the individual for the betterment of socialism, develop education, science, and culture, and sacrifice toward the building of the material socialist culture and of the spiritual socialist culture. Nine duties of the university library are enumerated. Some of these are duties which we in the western world would expect any university library to perform, namely: collect materials, circulate them, provide readers' assistance to patrons, instruct users in use of the library, and engage in cooperative activities with other libraries. One of the nine is, however, unfamiliar to librarians in the western world. This duty is to assist in the ideological education and the political education (*si-xiang zheng-zhi jiao-yu*) of the university of which the library is a part and to disseminate the ideas of Marx and Lenin, the thought of Mao Zedong, and the policies of the government and Party.

The second of the two major documents was announced in 1987 following a third national meeting concerning university libraries. It is called *Pu-tong gao-deng xue-xiao tu-shu guan gui-cheng* (*Regulations Pertaining to University Libraries*).<sup>4</sup> (It should be pointed out that, although this document and that discussed briefly above are 'Regulations', neither has the force of law. They are guidelines only and do not pre-

scribe.) This second set of regulations also states that the university library is an academic unit that serves teaching and research, and that it must fully observe the educational policies of the Communist Party and government, further individual development for the betterment of socialism, and sacrifice toward the building of the material socialist and spiritual socialist cultures. In addition to disseminating the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and the thought of Mao Zedong, the university library is enjoined to disseminate the fruits of scientific and cultural progress and to carry out educational and informational functions.

The clauses "assist in the ideological education and political education of the university of which the library is a part" and "disseminate the policies of the government and Party" that appear in the 1981 document have been deleted from the 1987 revision. Part of the former has been watered down to read, "University libraries must, according to the needs of ideological and political education, teaching, and science . . . acquire materials."

According to the 1987 document, then, the university library is "to carry out educational and informational functions." Extensive reading and interviews with directors of university libraries indicate a consensus that these are, in fact, agreed upon to be the functions of the university library. A third function is sometimes mentioned, that is, the university library as a servant of society beyond the walls of the campus. However, considerable discussion as to what the functions mean in practice exists. In fact, a conference was held in Wuhan in late 1988 on the educational function of the university library, and another in Shanghai in late 1989 on the information function. I devote most of the remainder of this paper to a discussion of these functions.

### THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Zhang Xuzhi states that the third national meeting concerning university libraries in China announced four ways in which those libraries can carry out the educational function: (1) assist in the educa-



tion of students in their respective areas of specialization, (2) broaden the scope of student knowledge, (3) increase the ability of patrons to use the library, and (4) engage in ideological and political education.<sup>5</sup> Several writers more or less echo this. Zhao Dianqin, for example, states that the educational function includes three elements: thought and moral education, bibliographic education, and professional education.<sup>6</sup> Song and Zhang believe the university library fulfills its educational function through provision of ideological education, general education, and education specific to students' curricular needs.<sup>7</sup> Jilin University addresses the educational function by carrying out political and ideological education, professional education, and instruction in library use.<sup>8</sup>

Using the four ways of addressing the educational function enunciated above by Zhang Xuzhi as my frame of reference, I will, in the following paragraphs, examine how the university library implements them.

#### *Assist Student Education in Specialized Areas*

I found little written on how the university library renders assistance of this type. The Jilin University Library claims that it does so simply by acquiring material and making it available to patrons either in library reading rooms or through circulation.<sup>9</sup> There is a move afoot in China to open university libraries for a greater number of hours weekly. Seventy hours per week is now seen as a desirable minimum. The Jilin University Library thinks the very fact that it is open seventy hours weekly constitutes educational service. The director of the library of Nanjing Aeronautical College informed me that his library fulfills its educational role via, among other things, loan of material.

#### *Broaden the Scope of Student Knowledge*

Materials complementary to student classroom study must be made available by the university library. In addition to material of that sort, write Song and Zhang, the library is responsible for introducing students to knowledge in areas

outside their own particular spheres of academic specialization.<sup>10</sup> As new fields of knowledge are developed, and are found to overlap traditional fields, it becomes necessary for students to consult materials in these new fields. Presumably the university library can fulfill this obligation simply by acquiring and making available appropriate books, journals, and so on.

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#### **Other than in preparation for a graduating thesis required in their fourth year of study, undergraduate students rarely carry out independent library research.**

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It was of great interest to me that reference service as we in North America think of it was not mentioned as a vehicle for accomplishing the university library's educational goals. In fact, there does not seem to be a history in Chinese university libraries of providing in-depth reference assistance to student patrons. I spoke about this with a department head of the Wuhan University Library. He told me that questions raised by patrons of his library in the course of day-to-day use of the facility are usually fielded by staff of the circulation or reading room departments rather than by staff of the reference department (*can-kao zi-xun zu*). (A brief description of the setup of Chinese academic libraries would probably be helpful here. The public areas of libraries are invariably divided into a number of circulation rooms and reading rooms. For example, the Wuhan University Library has a total of six reading rooms that contain monographic material, five that contain journals, and five distinct circulation rooms. Books housed in the reading rooms may be used only in the library. Each of these rooms has its own staff, who belong to the reading room, periodicals, or circulation departments. The reference department does not staff these public areas.) Reference department staff are responsible only for assembling information about questions large in scope, and generally only for professors. Undergraduate,



and even graduate, students are not perceived as requiring the type of assistance that is rendered by the reference department. This reflects the reality of university education in China. Undergraduate students are generally required by their instructors to use the library only to examine texts specified by the instructors. Other than in preparation for a graduating thesis required in their fourth year of study, undergraduate students rarely carry out independent library research.

### *Increase the Ability of Patrons to Use the Library*

A number of university libraries offer some sort of instruction in library use to patrons. The South-Central University of Finance, for example, has prepared a library-use booklet that is given to freshman students. It has also prepared a video tape introducing the library. The library of Nanjing University gives a mandatory two-hour lecture to first-year students on library use.

It is about a much more rigorous form of library instruction, however, a formal course offered to students on document searching and usage, that I would like to write in some detail. In 1984, the State Education Commission promulgated the *Guan-yu zai gao-deng xue-xiao kai-she "Wen-xian jian-suo yu li-yong" ke de yi-jian* (*Opinion Concerning Universities Offering a Course in Document Retrieval and Usage*). In this directive, the Commission enjoined universities to offer such a course. If conditions permitted, the course was to be mandatory. If conditions were not suitable, the course could be optional or replaced by seminars. The course should be from twenty to forty hours in length and should include: basic knowledge of information and searching for information; content, structure, and usage of basic search tools and reference books; reading methodology; information arrangement and synthesis; information analysis; and report writing. Theoretical and practical (hands-on) components of the course should be in a ratio of one to one. It should be coordinated by the university library, but instructors could be drawn from the ranks of the younger pro-

fessorate, graduating students, library staff, staff of departmental libraries, or staff of the information office of the university.

The 1987 Regulations Pertaining to University Libraries specifies that academic libraries should educate students in location of and usage of information resources. The pertinent clause reads as follows: "Libraries of institutions of higher education should mobilize their forces and, utilizing a variety of methods, educate readers in location of and usage of information resources. The institutions should include courses in location of information resources and their use in their course offerings."<sup>11</sup>

I found that many, although not all, of the university libraries I visited are involved in delivering a course of a nature similar to that described in the 1984 directive discussed above. The Wuhan University Library has a staff member whose primary responsibility is organizing courses in document searching and use. The courses are offered by various academic departments within the university and are taught by library staff or by staff of the departmental reading rooms (these are administered by the departments, not by the university library). The courses are tailored to the departments in which they are offered. For example, the course given in the economics department emphasizes the literature and bibliographic tools of economics. The courses are optional, are for credit, and are of one semester duration. The library of the China University of Geology began to offer such courses in 1984. Of those students eligible to take the course, about one-half do so. The library of Nanjing Aeronautical College has assigned four people to teach courses in document searching and use. All graduate students take the course and about 70 percent of undergraduates. The courses have twenty hours of classroom lectures, and additional time for practice during which students work on a research topic of their own choosing.

Typically, courses such as the above are given to students in their third or fourth year of study. In the final semester of their fourth year of undergraduate studies, stu-

dents in universities in China are required to write a thesis. The course is seen as enabling them to carry out library research and prepare the thesis. The course is a popular one, I was told by many library directors, and, though usually optional, is selected by a large percentage of students.

### *Engage in Ideological and Political Education*

It is my impression that universities in North America are little concerned with the overall development of student character. They are, I believe, concerned almost exclusively with provision of knowledge. The university in China is, in theory, required to do much more than merely provide knowledge. It is to be concerned with the total personality and thought of the student. That the student be trained to assume a proper social role is a responsibility of the university. The Communist party determines the proper social role.

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### **The university in China is to be concerned with the total personality and thought of the student.**

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I think it would be of value to quote here from a directive announced in late 1987 by the Communist Party Central Committee.

Future undergraduate and graduate students in institutions of higher education should have a firm and correct political orientation, should love the nation and socialism, should support the leadership of the Communist Party, and should study the ideas of Karl Marx. Such students should ardently reform and be broad-minded, should have the spirit to struggle against adversity, should diligently serve the masses, and should devote themselves to the establishment of Chinese-style socialist modernization. These students should conscientiously observe discipline and should have good moral character. They should study diligently and master modern scientific and cultural knowledge. We wish to select from these students a group to cultivate in communist consciousness. The degree to which universities educate people who have the qualities previously mentioned, who have both ability and

political integrity, and who are able to meet the requirements of the establishment of socialism, is the most indicative sign of the efficacy of those universities. It is this direction that educational reform must take.<sup>12</sup>

In an address to librarians shortly after the announcement of this directive, Peng Peiyun, a high official in the State Commission for Education, asserted that the above quote formed the basis for university activity.<sup>13</sup> He reiterated that universities were to educate morally, as well as transfer knowledge, and were to strengthen their efforts at ideological and political work. University libraries, said Peng, had an important role in educating people to have both ability and political integrity. He exhorted academic librarians to familiarize themselves with the contents of the directive and to consider it their guiding principle.

Since this fourth method of fulfilling the educational function of the university library is so foreign to librarians in North America, I will examine it in much more detail than I did the other three methods.

The 1987 document concerning university libraries states that these libraries are to assist in the building of material socialist and spiritual socialist cultures, to develop citizens who will contribute to socialism, to disseminate the ideas of Marx and Lenin and the thought of Mao Zedong, and to acquire materials according to the needs of (among other things) ideological and political education. My research indicates that university librarians perceive student reading as the vehicle by which university libraries address these goals. In fact, academic librarians seem to be quite concerned about the nature of student reading. I came across reports of six different surveys and analyses of student reading behavior in the year 1988 alone. These surveys, generally speaking, examine student borrowing records to determine what kind of books students read and question students regarding types of books they prefer to read and authors whose books they have read.

Here is a composite picture of these surveys and the manner in which their results are assessed. Articles that discuss these surveys generally express dismay of vary-

ing degrees at student reading habits. A survey conducted at a university of natural science and engineering found that, in 1983, 35.6 percent of books borrowed were in the humanities and social sciences rather than in the sciences.<sup>14</sup> This percentage increased gradually year by year until it stood at 46.1 percent in 1987. This finding indicated to those reporting on the survey that science students were spending an inordinate amount of time reading nonscientific material, material irrelevant to their courses of study. A second component of the same survey examined the humanities and social science reading habits of 407 students in seven science departments. The survey discovered that, of ten categories of books borrowed by these 407 students, by far the three most popular categories were: literature, philosophy (including fine arts, psychology, and logic), and history and biography. The works of Marx, Lenin, and Mao ranked a distant tenth. Of the philosophy books read, the vast majority were translations of the writings of western thinkers such as selected works of Freud and Karl Popper's *Conjectures and Refutations*. The surveyors found this disturbing. They conjecture that students read western books of philosophy rather than the marxist and communist classics because courses in communist theory offered by universities were of poor quality and did not generate student curiosity, whereas western philosophical books were fashionable among students and therefore attracted interest. A third component of the survey examined time spent by students of three science departments reading novels as a percentage of their total extra-curricular reading time. Thirty-four percent of the students spent more than one-third of their extracurricular reading time reading novels. For 15 percent of the students, the time was greater than 60 percent. The most popular novels were the Chinese classics, such as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and western classics in translation, such as *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *The Red and the Black*. However, some students (and the surveyors stressed the significance of this) immersed themselves in love stories, martial arts stories, or super-

natural tales. This type of literature has a corrupting effect, the surveyors felt. The students also, in the eyes of the surveyors, read an inordinate amount of biography. The reason for this, the authors conjecture, is that students want to learn how famous people have achieved success in life. This is disturbing, as communist theory does not concern itself with individual success.

The authors of the survey report concluded that university libraries should be more active in guiding the reading of students and suggested the formation of campus-wide committees to organize activities in this area. The committees would be composed of representatives of the library, the university teaching office, propaganda department, students' affairs office, and specialists in the social sciences and the humanities.

Another survey looked at the reading habits of students at South China Teachers' University.<sup>15</sup> The librarians who conducted this survey distributed questionnaires to students asking what books they felt had influenced them most during their university years, and what authors they most admired. Of the 649 students who completed the questionnaire, 277 listed western books as among those which had had an influence upon them. In fact, of all the books listed (both Chinese and foreign), the first, third, fifth, and fourteenth most named were from the West. Works of Marx, Lenin, and Mao were seldom mentioned. Of admired authors named by at least three students, thirty were western. The students listed a total of 1,208 names (some of which were, of course, listed by more than one respondent). Of these 1,208, 372 were western and 188 those of writers from Taiwan or Hong Kong. Some of the more admired authors included Dale Carnegie (No.6), Balzac (No.7), Shakespeare (No.8), Tolstoy (No.10), Mark Twain (No.14), and Hugo and Freud (tied at No.15).

A second component of the survey examined 6,200 books borrowed by patrons on April 3, 1988. Of these, 1,769 were novels (560 of them being translations of western novels), and 341 were philosophy (37 of these being by western thinkers).



Reporting on their survey, the authors concluded that students were very interested in, and influenced by, western culture. They postulate three reasons for this. First, since China opened its doors in 1978, the academic and publishing worlds had imported and translated many books. Second, China had been closed to foreign influence for many years and, consequently, things foreign had acquired an aura of mystery. Now that China had opened its doors, people had the desire to investigate these mysteries. Third, university students were inquisitive and eager to pursue knowledge.

Influence of foreign cultures could be both good and bad, argued the authors. On the one hand, study of western culture enabled one to better one's 'four have's' (ideals, morals, learning, discipline). On the other hand, western attitudes to such things as sex were much more liberal than were Chinese attitudes. Books from the west with sexual or erotic content were liable disproportionately to attract student attention. The authors claim that depictions of the naked human figure in western books were often found by librarians to be torn from the books, as were discussions or descriptions of sex. Western ideas of democracy and freedom could, at a certain level, provoke an undesirable reaction in students. Unfortunately, criticism of books only made them sought after all the more.

The authors recommended that university libraries should adopt several measures. They should purchase fewer foreign books (including those from Hong Kong or Taiwan) that were of questionable value. They should evaluate western books for students and direct their selection of reading material. They could hold seminars dealing with books that have controversial content. They could hold seminars or mount exhibits concerning western topics of interest, such as philosophy, psychology, public relations, and ethics. The library, in conjunction with the Party office of the university and other university bodies, could intensify its ideological work. Study of Marx, Lenin, and Mao should be increased, and examination of western books should be incorpo-

rated into ideological education.

Yet another survey carried out at Guangxi Agricultural University revealed that, between 1982 and 1987 inclusive, 48.4 percent of borrowed books were classified in the literature classification schedule.<sup>16</sup> Of these, most were novels. Books about agriculture numbered only 13 percent. Relatively few students read the communist classics. Less than one-half of one percent of borrowed books were of this category. A fourth survey, at Wuhan University, asked 654 students what books had influenced them the most.<sup>17</sup> Ninety-five percent of books named were in areas other than the areas in which the respondents were studying and the types of books named most frequently were novels, philosophy, and biography.

Authors of both studies concluded that student interest in their own disciplines was declining. The author of the first study speculated that students read novels merely to pass the time and for stimulation, and that these were poor reasons. He concluded that students lacked restraint, that they lacked faith in politics, and that they lacked interest in their courses of study. The authors of the second of these studies were, on the contrary, inclined to be satisfied with student reading. They cautioned against attempting to prevent students from reading western books or those from Taiwan or Hong Kong. Censorship was not an answer, they felt. It would only create an adverse student reaction. As well, they argued, many books criticized in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s had been re-evaluated and declared to be acceptable and even truthful in the 1980s.

Authors of the report on the Wuhan survey recommended increasing the variety of books available to students in the university library and guiding them in an appropriate direction. Purchase of martial arts or so-called 'yellow' books (that is, those with sexual content) should be restricted. Guidance of students could be undertaken by preparation of bibliographies on topics of interest to students, or of critiques of popular books, authors, or representative works on various subjects. Seminars could be held on topics of student interest and a notice board could be

constructed for announcements of new books and publishing activities, introductions to authors, and notices of reading activities.

In the libraries visited, I often saw written introductions to, or evaluations of, new library acquisitions. These were usually mounted on bulletin boards in areas of the libraries adjacent to card catalogs, at the entrances to the libraries, or in heavily-travelled hallways. They were usually written by library staff, although sometimes by students or professors. I occasionally saw billboards on which were mounted newspaper clippings about political events in China. Presumably the intention was to raise the political consciousness of library patrons.

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### **The library watches over the thought and attitude of its own staff.**

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It was of great interest to me that Chinese librarians perceive their own attitude to their work and to their clientele as being a potentially benign influence on the overall development of student character. As the director of the library of the Wuhan College of Physical Education told me, the educational function of the university library addresses both the intellectual knowledge students require and their moral and ideological development. The library watches over the thought and attitude of its own staff. Staff, in the manner in which they serve the clientele of the library, educate by example. This sentiment is reiterated by Li Jilin.<sup>18</sup> He claims that library staff, by their attitude to their jobs, educate students. Library staff, admonishes Li, must be both knowledgeable and red.

How can libraries ensure that their employees have the correct attitudes? Some university libraries have a written code of behavior to which employees are supposed to adhere. The code of Huanggang College of Education, for example, asks that employees: neither arrive for work late nor leave early, neither read books nor newspapers on the job, provide quick ser-

vice to library users, treat patrons with courtesy and humility, and use polite language when talking with patrons, the polite language to include such phraseology as 'please,' 'thank you,' 'I'm sorry,' 'comrade,' and 'please come again.'

Sun Xuanyin maintains that academic libraries must educate their own employees to undertake service to clientele with enthusiasm, to be mannerly to patrons, and to create an atmosphere in which study can take place.<sup>19</sup> Employees' knowledge of the thought of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, and of library work, should be increased. He feels all employees should wear a standard form of dress and be supplied with a badge indicating who they are. Of these I saw no evidence in any of the libraries I visited. At Jiangnan University in Wuhan, the library organized a course of study for library department heads. They perused pertinent works of Mao to rectify their thinking and improve their job performance. They also studied the relevant statements of current Party leaders. The reaction of the department heads was reportedly, "This course increased our knowledge of the importance of lower level staff in the library, increased our sense of duty, and enabled us to perceive our responsibility to our work."<sup>20</sup> At Jishou University, library employees who are members of the Communist Party are inculcated with the Party philosophy and with the library philosophy of service to users.<sup>21</sup> Presumably this would be done at weekly political meetings in which employees of most work units in China are encouraged, if not required, to participate.

### **THE INFORMATIONAL FUNCTION OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**

Since the emergence of information science as a discipline in China, it has been seen as distinct from, and more prestigious than, library science. Government departments at various levels established information branches (*qing-bao suo*) and universities created information offices (*qing-bao shi*) that were administratively and physically independent of their libraries. In the last few years, however, it

has come to be seen that information science and library science do share common features, and the tendency within universities is now to incorporate their information offices into their libraries. According to Peng Peiyun, more than one-half the universities in China had established information centers by 1987 (according to the latest official statistic now available, China had 1,053 academic libraries in 1987) and, of these, most were in the libraries of these universities.<sup>22</sup>

Universities in China are perceived, as are universities in North America, to be centers for both teaching and research. Of the dual functions of the university library, that of educator is seen as serving the former, while that of information provider is seen as serving the latter. Wang Aiwu defines the informational function of the academic library to be ". . . utilization of documents to effect large scale, speedy, and systematic transmittal of scientific and technical information."<sup>23</sup> With the explosive development of science and technology, writes Wang, has come a corresponding explosion of documents. As higher education becomes more closely related to production and research and strengthens its ties to society as a whole, university education and research alter dramatically. A demand for information is created which challenges academic libraries to become disseminators of scientific information.

From my reading and visits to libraries, the following are methods by which academic librarians perceive that the informational function of the university library can be addressed:

1. Current material must be obtained. This can be done by the traditional purchase of books and journals. As well, larger academic libraries in China often operate very active exchange programs with other universities and research organizations both in China and abroad. These exchange programs generally involve direct transfer of free copies of documents or other publications from one institution to another without going through a formal order process. Jilin University, for example, claims to have acquired 28,000 books

via exchange with foreign sources between 1982 and 1987.<sup>24</sup> By 1988, the library had active exchange agreements with 102 institutions in seventeen countries. Academic libraries in China are particularly eager to initiate exchange agreements with institutions overseas. During my visits to libraries, I was asked on at least two occasions about the possibility of concluding some sort of agreement. Material obtained via exchange is often shelved separately from that obtained via the conventional order process.

2. Information can be made accessible via preparation of indexes, abstracts, and translations. There is no tradition in China of publication of bibliographic tools by commercial organizations. Information offices of a number of central government departments publish a variety of indexes to scientific literature and many university libraries subscribe to English-language indexes and abstracts such as *Engineering Index*, *Chemical Abstracts*, and *Biological Abstracts*. However, there is a dearth of bibliographic tools in the social sciences and humanities, and it is common for university libraries to take upon themselves the task of index or abstract preparation. This task is seen to address the library's information function.

To cite two examples, the library of Jilin University prepares lists of imported science books that it distributes to other libraries.<sup>25</sup> Lanzhou University library has published a total of twenty special indexes and bibliographies between 1978 and 1986 including such titles as *Bibliography of Japanese Journals in Gansu Province* and *The Study of Law*.<sup>26</sup>

3. Chinese language translations of foreign language articles can be prepared. China, in its drive to modernize, is hampered by a lack of Chinese language material and relies heavily on information from western countries such as the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, and countries of Asia such as the Soviet Union and Japan. Relatively few Chinese can read English or other foreign languages; so translation service is essential. Academic libraries usually employ graduates of foreign language departments



rather than graduates of library schools to undertake translation work. The library of Wuhan College of Physical Education has an information department staffed by three individuals whose responsibility it is to translate items from German, English, and Russian into Chinese. The translations are published in a journal. The information department of Wuhan College of Industry employs two English and Russian specialists who translate material for campus personnel.

4. Literature reviews, syntheses, evaluations, and bibliographies of current acquisitions can be written. State-of-the-art reports on certain topics in science and technology are of value to researchers in the academic community, while subject bibliographies can enable university researchers to keep abreast of new developments in their fields.

5. Books and journals can be published. The Beijing University of Agricultural Engineering has, since 1982, published ten books about mechanization in agriculture. Titles include *Agricultural Technology and Economics Information* and *The Development of Agricultural Machinery in China*. The information department of Wuhan College of Industry prints a monthly newsletter called *Libraries and Information*. The Nanjing College of Agriculture is in the process of setting up the Nanjing Agricultural Information Center which will, when on its feet, publish a quarterly journal on agricultural education.

6. In-depth responses to requests for detailed information from professors, and sometimes from the off-campus community can be provided. For example, the library of Wuhan Water Transport Engineering College prepares subject-specific bibliographies on demand for professors. The bibliographies are sent to the professors, who indicate which documents they wish to see and then return the bibliographies to the library which will attempt to obtain the desired documents. (Literature searches are still a manual procedure in almost all university libraries in China. China has no online databases of its own, and few organizations are equipped or authorized to access foreign database ven-

dors such as DIALOG or the European Space Agency.)

### THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AS A SERVANT OF SOCIETY

There are good arguments offered to substantiate the view that the university library has a third function, that of provision of service to society at large. Yang Xiaohua thinks that provision of such service is a pressing need. He argues that Chinese commerce has expanded dramatically since 1978 and requires current scientific and technical information to permit increased production. Results of scientific and technical research are available in academic libraries more so than in public libraries. Additionally, Yang asserts, social change has created a need for individuals in the workforce to undertake additional study in their leisure hours, and public libraries alone cannot meet the demand for study material.<sup>27</sup>

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**According to 1984 statistics, public libraries average only .25 books per person while university libraries average 130 books per student.**

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Further, Zhao Zhiwei states that only 570,000 of China's 1986 population of one billion had access to a public library.<sup>28</sup> (Access to public libraries in China is not a universal right as it is in North America. Obtaining a card to use a public library is not a simple matter. In Wuhan, for example, although the metropolitan population is 4,000,000, the city library has issued only 30,000 usage cards. It is thought that that library does not have the resources, facility, or personnel to serve a greater number of people.) According to 1984 statistics, public libraries average only .25 books per person while university libraries average 130 books per student.<sup>29</sup> University libraries are, therefore, superior to public libraries in terms of resources and in terms of staff quality and equipment quality as well. Thus, it can be ar-

gued, university libraries should open to the public.

Zhao Zhiwei thinks that, in a socialist state, university libraries have a public obligation.<sup>30</sup> Xia Xuming believes that, if university libraries in capitalist countries like the United States can offer public service, those in a socialist country should be even more willing to do so. Xia further argues that opening the university library to society as a whole will encourage resource sharing. It might appear to be an unequal exchange, admits Xia, but, since society will benefit from access to the university library and, as the university library is a part of society, then the university library will, *ipso facto*, also benefit.<sup>31</sup>

Yang Xiaohua and Muo Kaixin offer similar versions of yet another argument for service to the public by university libraries.<sup>32,33</sup> They claim that the resources of university libraries are underutilized, a theme in a number of articles. According to Yang, there are over two billion books in academic libraries in China, whereas average annual circulation is only 600 million. Opening the university library to more users would have the happy effect of increasing use of library materials.

Several articles suggest ways in which the academic library can open its doors to the public. Yang lists five possible methods: issue borrower cards to outsiders, offer information service to the public, hold seminars on topics of public interest, offer courses in library science, and offer photocopying, microfilming, and tape copying service to the public. Yang would not have academic libraries willy-nilly distribute library cards to everyone. Rather, he says, their distribution should be limited to those persons who have a demonstrable need to use the library. He mentions a hydroelectric college library that has granted borrowing privileges to people who live or work in the neighborhood of the college and are involved with hydroelectric power. He also mentions provincial associations that have issued cards to professors enabling them to use (though not to borrow from) any academic library in their province of issue. Yang would like to see issuance of such cards extended to high-ranking engineers and doctors and to

technical personnel of mid-rank and above.<sup>34</sup>

Zhang Weiqiang is of the opinion that academic libraries can provide user cards to off-campus enterprises and individuals engaged in scientific research, production, education, and management. They can set up public information search units within the library structure as was done at the Beijing University Library. They can offer additional training to those people already employed in libraries. This is already done at Anhui University. The library of that institution offers a three-year course leading to a diploma in librarianship.<sup>35</sup> To these ways in which academic libraries can offer public service, Muo adds an additional two: set up special reading rooms with special material for outside patrons, and present unwanted books to public libraries.<sup>36</sup>

At the present time, China has an economic campaign to develop business enterprise in small urban centers and in the countryside. University libraries, asserts Wang Licheng, should support this campaign via information supply. University libraries can survey local campaign activity, select a few enterprises to which they can supply information based on library holdings, and prepare bibliographies of their pertinent holdings for distribution to the enterprises. Personnel employed by these enterprises could be instructed by the library in information location, and the enterprises could be granted institutional borrower cards. Wang cautions, however, that service to outside enterprise is secondary to service to the university community. Perhaps service to the former could be limited to slack periods in the university year, such as student winter and summer vacations.<sup>37</sup>

In my talks with academic library directors, I found it generally accepted that the university library does have an obligation to offer service to all society. However, by North American standards, the extent to which such service is actually offered is limited. As of April 1989, the library of the South-Central University of Finance had issued some 300 borrowers' cards to correspondence students, students of the national television university, and local

businesses such as banks. Nanjing Aeronautical College permits personnel from research institutes and persons involved in factory management to use the library reading rooms and borrow books. The library of the Nanjing College of the Arts opens its doors to noncollege specialists in art every Saturday morning.

Two of the directors stated that, since their universities were located somewhat distant from potential off-campus users, there was little call to serve that clientele. Another said that other university libraries were better able than his to do so. Two more were of the opinion that their libraries were inadequately equipped to serve the off-campus community. One of the directors told me that, although universalizing service was seen as a 'good' by university libraries, it was seldom carried out. He said a major reason for this was the financial situation of academic libraries. They had a great deal of difficulty satisfying university needs, let alone those of the non-university community.

### CONCLUSION

Academic libraries in North America and their Chinese counterparts have similar objectives. Both attempt to serve the teaching and research activities of their universities, although these activities are

not perceived to be identical. Both would agree that they have a responsibility to society beyond the university walls, though this perceived responsibility is put into practice more often in North America than it is in China. The fascinating difference is the perception or nonperception of the university library as a vehicle for developing the 'whole' person. In North America, the university library is satisfied if it can provide its patrons with knowledge. We pay at least lip service to the adage that the university teaches people to think. In China, the university library's responsibility extends beyond this to a concern for the ethical development and the very thought processes of its clientele. There is concern not only that the student be able to think, but also with what he or she thinks. This difference, of course, reflects a very different social, political, and even cultural ethic at work. In a society that values freedoms of the individual, it is quite easy to point an accusing, or even derisive, finger at countries where governments attempt blatant direction of cumulative thought and to whisper 'brainwashing.' However, since no scale exists to judge social, political, or cultural values objectively, the best that can be done is an attempt should be made to understand and accept.

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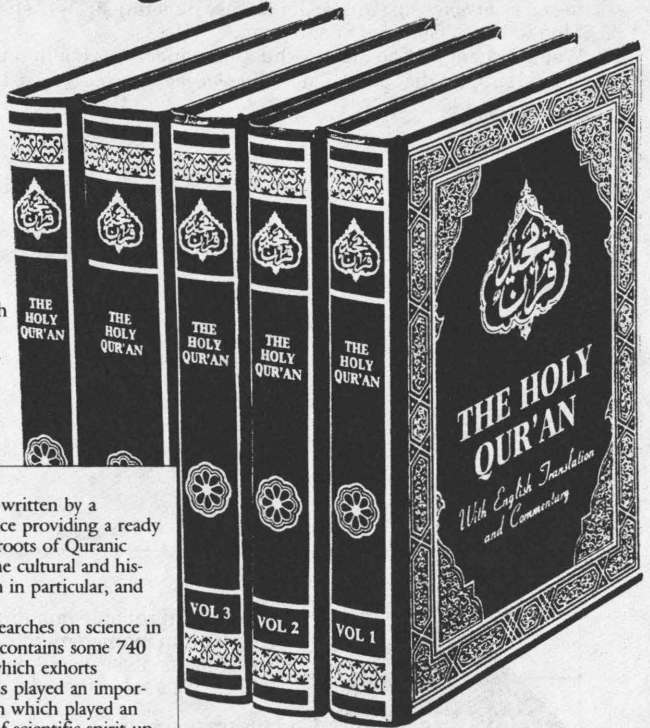
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# Clear and Functional Format

PT. 5

AL-NISA

CH. 4

122. These are they whose abode shall be Hell and \*they shall find no way of escape from it.<sup>122</sup>

أُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَخْرَجًا

123. But as to \*those who believe and do good works, We will admit them into gardens, beneath which streams flow, abiding therein for ever. It is Allah's unfailing promise; and who can be more truthful than Allah in word?

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا

124. It shall not be according to your desires, nor according to the desires of the People of the Book. Whoso does evil shall be rewarded for it; and \*he shall find for himself no friend or helper beside Allah.<sup>124</sup>

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا لَأَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ لَعَلَّ قَلْبًا يَفْجُرُ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدُ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

125. But \*whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such shall enter heaven, and shall not be wronged even as much as the little hollow in the back of a date-stone.<sup>125</sup>

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلْيُحْسَبْ لَهُ أَجْرُهُ كَقِيرٍ

<sup>122</sup>: 22. <sup>123</sup>: 26. <sup>124</sup>: 46; 33; 18, 66. <sup>125</sup>: 40; 41.

**588. Important Words:**

**عَمَسَ** (way of escape) is derived from **عاس**. They say **عاس عاس** i.e. he turned away from, and escaped it. **عَمَسَ** therefore means, a way or place of escape; a place of refuge; a place to which one turns or flees (Aqrab & Lane).

**588. Commentary:**

The expression, *It shall not be according to your desires*, does not mean that the desires of the Faithful will not materialize. The verse purports to lay down a general principle that it is only the will of God which prevails. As the desires of true believers must coincide with the will of God, they are bound to materialize.

**590. Commentary:**

The verse is important inasmuch as it clearly places men and women on the same level as far as works and their rewards are concerned. Both alike are servants of the Lord and both are equally entitled to a good reward, if they do good works. It is indeed strange that in

some Christian countries some Christian missionaries should have the hardihood to bring against Islam the charge that according to it women, unlike men, are devoid of souls.

It should also be noted that true belief is a necessary condition for **عَمَسَ** words, and is a **عَمَسَ**, clear

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