

Current Situation and Countermeasure of Health Information Service in the Library of Medical Colleges

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Abstract: There is an increasing demand for public health information service in China where public health literacy is generally low. Therefore, to improve the public health literacy, medical college libraries should seize the opportunity to sufficiently provide health information, serving the public. By analysis of the current situation of health information providing service in libraries at home and abroad, this paper discusses the measures that are taken by medical college libraries to provide public health information service. Firstly, the health information socialization services of 100 medical college libraries were investigated taking the following into consideration: concentration, open mechanism, service items, required materials, reader types and charging situation, of which the current situation is analyzed, and some measures are put forward to improve the level of health information socialization service in libraries, such as renewing service philosophy, innovating service and standardizing management.

Introduction

With the rapid development of social economy and the great improvement of people's living standards, the public has become increasingly concerned about health issues. The people's attention has shifted from disease treatment to disease prevention. The public's concern about health information is increasingly mounted year by year. As early as 2010, the Scientific Literacy Survey of Chinese Citizens published by the Chinese Association of Science and Technology pointed out that "82.7% of the public are most interested in medical and health information" [1]. However, the level of public health literacy is very low. The fourth national health literacy monitoring carried out by the National Health and Family Planning Commission in 2014 showed that the level of health literacy of Chinese residents is 9.79% [2], which means that at this level, it is estimated that less than 10 out of 100 people have health literacy. There is a strong contrast between the public's great demand for health information and its low level of health literacy. The public expects to get health information, but unfortunately have little access.

As the information center of the college, the library of medical colleges has abundant medical information resources, proffering interlibrary lending and document delivery services, which lays a solid material foundation for providing health information services to the public. In addition, it has a professional team of medical librarians and information professionals who have long been engaged in medical literature information, not only being able to search and develop literature information and apply new technology, but also being capable of identifying, sorting and posting vast knowledge information texts, and played a role of information navigator. Meanwhile, medical colleges gather experts, professors and other human resources of various disciplines in the medical field, who grasp the cutting-edge medical information and knowledge of various disciplines, and authoritative guidance and consultation can be provided for readers in the health information service. In addition, the library has widely adopted advanced technology and equipment and built a relatively perfect network system. Information service has changed from passive service forms and contents such as internal reading, external borrowing and bibliographic inquiry to active service forms and contents based on digitalization and network, which provides a more powerful technical

support for and public health information services of medical college libraries. Therefore, libraries should fully play their advantages and provide health information services for the public, hence to improve public health literacy.

In order to better reflect the situation and differences of health information socialization services in medical college libraries, a large number of Medical college libraries' websites will be introduced and their health information socialization services in detail will be investigated. Afterwards, this paper puts forward some measures to improve the health information socialization service, and provide reference for the medical college libraries in China to carry out the socialization service.

Research Methods

Based on the list of medical colleges published by the Ministry of Education and the available data, 100 libraries of medical colleges were investigated. In light of the research of relevant literature [3-5], the survey content includes the emphasis, accessibility of this service, service items, required materials, types of readers, and fees of health information socialization service. The survey results were quantitatively and comparatively analyzed by Excel software.

Research Results

Concentration. The emphasis medical college libraries place on socialized services is expressed by the way that service items are displayed on the web. The survey found that only a few libraries in China [6-7] explained it in the form of "off-campus readers" and "social services" under the secondary columns of "library guide" and "service items". Readers need further browsing to find it, which is not convenient for off-campus readers. Nearly half of the college libraries abroad present the social service content in obvious places on the homepage, such as setting columns such as "visitors", "alumni" and "friends of the library". After clicking, there are clear service regulations, which are convenient for readers to further check.

Open Mechanism. Among the 100 medical college libraries surveys, 45 granted loan cards to off-campus readers and allow them to enter, and 28 allowed off-campus readers to enter libraries through valid documents, introductory letters and other materials, or contact with librarians. However, 27 allow no access for off-campus readers (Table 1).

Table 1. Accessibility Status of Medical College Libraries

Opening Service	Number / PCS	Percentage of the total number of surveys /%
Enjoy the library service by processing the loan card	48	45
Can't handle the loan card to enter the library	28	28
Enjoy service only outside the library	27	27

Table 1 shows that the open rate of medical libraries reached 73%, within the scope of the survey. Medical colleges have realized opening to the public and providing health information services within a limited range.

Services Available. In general, the research on information service is mainly distinguished by service items. The author surveyed the following 13 services (Table 2) such as recommendation of health subject books, publication of health subject materials and database services. The first-ranking service that Medical college libraries offers first is in-library reading and information services. Networked services follow, and information posts services and mobile library services are seldom provided. There are significant differences in the way that libraries provide health information services. That is, some are interactive, some are self-help inquiries, where the quantity distribution of service items is unbalanced. Libraries are more inclined to render readers in to enjoy services (traditional services), but few go out to provide services for the public.

Table 2. Health Information Socialization Service Projects of Medical College Library

Project content	Number / PCS	Percentage of the total number of surveys /%
Library reading	73	73
Information service (science and technology novelty search, original text transmission, topic-setting service, etc.)	61	61
Virtual Reference Service	51	51
Website Recommendation of Health Subject Books	48	48
Database Services	45	45
Borrowing medical and health books and materials	45	45
Medical health librarians face-to-face service	33	33
Copying, printing, scanning and other services	31	31
Links to Recommended Health Information Websites,	30	30
Doctors and Hospitals		
Mobile Library Service	27	27
Information post service	15	15
Issuance of health theme materials	9	9
Lectures/seminars on medicine and health	9	9

Material Requirements.Language.The survey found that the 27 libraries only need readers to visit their websites to enjoy the online services they provide without any additional materials. Of the 73 libraries surveyed, 42 clearly stated that relevant materials must be needed to go through formalities before they could enjoy services (if more than one kind of materials is required by libraries, they will be categorized into various categories), accounting for 40.3% of the total number of libraries surveyed. The majority of libraries required valid certificates, followed by libraries that required introductory letters (Table 3).

Table 3. Material Required for Health Information Socialization Services

Required materials	Number / PCS
Letter of introduction	27
Valid certificate	35
General Reading Card, Wage Number, Examination Certificate, etc.	5
No clear explanation	33

Reader Types.The survey results show that if a library classifies its readers in different ways, they will be included into different classification respectively. The classification of readers in libraries is generally based on three criteria: the relationship between readers and libraries, the identity of readers and the reader organization. In fact, the criteria of reader-library relationship are most commonly classified by affiliated institutions or departments, and 17 libraries adopt this method. Among the libraries surveyed, there are only 35 libraries bear general criteria (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of Readers of Health Information Socialization Service

Relations between Readers and Libraries	Number / PCS	According to Reader Identity	Number / PCS	Reader Organization	Number / PCS
Alumnus	2	College Students	3	Government-affiliated institutions	5
Visitor	2	Teacher	3	Scientific research institutes	3
Retired workers	8	Pharmaceutical practitioners	2	College system	3

Refresher personnel	9	Soldier	2
Agreement deparment	3		
Affiliated institutions	17		

Note: 66 libraries only describe social readers or off-campus readers, without subdividing their types.

Fees.63 out of 100 medical college libraries have formulated fee standards for off-campus readers. The fee-charging service or items mainly include library card processing, borrowing service, information service, photocopying, printing, scanning and so on.

The charging standards of off-campus readers are different, and the charging items of information services are very complex [8].

Problems

Lack of Public Service Awareness.The experience of developed countries shows that in order to improve health information literacy, medical college libraries must provide health information to the public[9]. In the 1990s, about 97% of college libraries were open to the public [10], and Australian libraries (including college libraries) were completely open to the public [11]. For a long time, college libraries in China have formed their own systems. The consciousness of university administrators, to some extent, decides whether or not to carry out this work and to what extent it should be carried out [12]. Many college administrators, teachers and students believe that their college libraries is to serve the teaching and scientific personnel of their own college. Although many medical college libraries in China have been opened to the public in different degrees, they lack enthusiasm and initiative to open to social readers. The constraints of traditional ideas have greatly affected resource allocation and service performance.

Insufficient Service Innovation.The libraries in western developed countries have a long history of opening to the society. They have a strong sense, a wide range and many types of services [13]. The service mode of medical college libraries in China is more traditional, and most of them integrate health information service into the daily service of libraries, and seldom take social health information service as a characteristic service.

Imperfect Management.Firstly, the requirements for admission are not clear. College libraries provide health information socialization services to the public, but not everyone is free to enter the library to borrow books. The certain acess policy to the public is convenient for the management of the library and avoids confusion and book breakage. However, according to the survey, about 59.70% of colleges have not set the entry permission or defined the requirement. In order to maintain the order of the campus and meet the needs of social researchers, a certain entry permission should be set and limited opening should be implemented.

Secondly, the classification of readers is not clear. The complexity of the social readers and the uncertainty of the social readership will lead to the problems of campus security and resource allocation of the readers inside and outside the school, so it is necessary to classify the types of readers. Medical college libraries do not pay attention to the classification of readers, even though 34.33% of libraries have been classified, the criteria and degree of classification are neither clear nor detailed.

Thirdly, charging standards are not normative. The charging operation for social readers can prevent the blowout of social readers and remedy funds shortage for opening libraries to the public. The original intention of charging a certain service fee to off-campus readers is favorable, but there are also some problems. For example, various charged services or the unfavorable service make an increasing number of citizens refuse to enter the library [14].

Countermeasures

Renewing Service Concept. It is a general trend for college libraries to develop social services. Zhang Donggang, deputy director of the Department of Social Sciences of the Ministry of Education, once said: "In the future, college libraries and museums are expected to gradually open to the public" [15]. The most important point to do a good job in the socialized service of university libraries is renewing the concept of service and establish the consciousness of socialized services actively. Only in this way can we actively promote the process of the socialized services of college libraries and reverse the situation of passive serving actively. Many college libraries are not enthusiastic enough to carry out socialized services and have many worries. In fact, learning from the experience of college libraries abroad can promote development, make contribution and get support for China's libraries.

Developing Social Network Services Actively. It will be more convenient to use the network to carry out social services. However, the operation of social network services are not that easy. For one thing, commercial interests of database vendors and intellectual property rights related to copyright issues are difficult to address. For another, the network bandwidth, servers and other hardware facilities are related to financial issues. The problem of funds can be solved by applying for government financial support, revenue from online advertising operation and joint development with enterprises or by seeking corporate sponsorship. For some technical, professional and applied academic resources, libraries can consult and cooperate with intellectual property owners to purchase periodic right of use, or share network resources through VPN technology to social readers, conducting a measuring and fees system. The digital resources, including network OA resources, popular type, public social welfare, etc., should open to the society for free.

Standardized Management. Medical college libraries should formulate appropriate regulations for admission management according to their actual conditions. Readers can obtain a license to enter the library based on introductory letters or valid documents, with bar codes corresponding to the materials provided by each individual. Scanning records of access to libraries and borrowed books can greatly improve the management of libraries. However, to guarantee the quality of services, more attention should be paid to properly expanding the scope and ability of services, broadening the scope of openness, simplifying the procedures and reducing the restrictions of access to libraries, and improving the enthusiasm of social readers.

College libraries abroad have a more detailed division of service objects, dividing special readers such as disabled readers, and attaching great importance to alumni groups. There are certain differences between alumni services and other off-campus reader services [16]. The college of Chicago Library classifies its users as teachers, employees and registered students, and its users outside the campus as alumni, teachers and family members of employees, registered students' relatives, etc. [17]. The libraries of medical colleges in China should learn from the readership operation system of their libraries, learn from their practices, subdividing readers according to appropriate criteria, promoting the development of personalized services, and ultimately improving the quality of social services.

At the same time, the charging standards should be standardized. It is suggested firstly to simplify the various charging regulations. For example, the Senate Library of college of London charges for readers from the two dimensions (reader type and usage time), which stipulates the related fees for members' and non-members' off-campus readers, respectively [18]. It is simple and clear, and it is displayed in the form of tables on the website to facilitate readers' browsing and inquiry. Second, the channels of funds should be broaden. The social services of libraries have a great demand for human resources and funds. More social funds and reasonable income of diversified services should be collected to ensure the development and perfection of the social services of health information. For example, 24% of the annual funding of American college Libraries comes from social donations and service income [19]. Local college libraries' socialized services also depend on the sound support from the government and relevant departments, such as

applying for the governmental funding support for social services, the examination and approval of the price departments for the implementation of paid service fees, etc. [20].

Conclusion

The development of socialized service of libraries in medical colleges should be tailored to local conditions, fully play their advantages and open appropriately. In the process of socialized service, resources, technology, management and service are interweaved, each playing its indispensable role. The process of medical information socialization service can only effectively be performed on the basis of abundant resources, professional technology and sound management and service, which will further open the door of medical information to the general public, eliminate the obstacles of medical information, and promote the vigorous development of medical and health undertakings.

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