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## **Facing new challenges : trends & prospects of LISJ in China**

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### **Abstract:**

*With the rapid development of information technology, Library and Information Science Journals in China (LISJC) are playing an important role to the studies in library and information science and the development of librarianship in China, which are growing fast and are now entering a period of high productivity, excellence, and influence. The fast growth of IT, the rapid changes in publishing, licensing and copyright, pedagogy, and user expectations have had a tremendous impact on the roles of LISJC today. The editors and editorial board in this field are also facing new challenges. In this paper, we examine the current trends and major practices in the development of LISJC, with an emphasis on new forms and models which some major publications are trying. Also the ways that many LISJC experts and practitioners are exploring in the dynamic external environment while developing the guidelines “with professionals, teachers and students in library and information science as the major audience, with academic research and exchange in library and information science as the mission, and with users both in and outside library and information science as their service objects in accessing knowledge” for the purpose of promoting the development of Chinese librarianship, and strengthening the exchange of views and academic opinions with colleagues in the field of LISJ globally.*

### **I Introduction**

LIS journals are always considered to be a major medium for the transmission of new ideas and results of academic research among those engaged in library science and librarianship. Figures in *A Guide to the Core Journals of China* (3rd ed) show that 96 journals in LIS were published in mainland China in 1999, which cover the major areas of the country (Table 1), and 17 of them have been chosen as core magazines, most of which are sponsored and published co-operatively by libraries (or institutions) and societies at national or provincial level (Table 2). These

publications, with various features, are growing fast and are now entering a period of high productivity, excellence and influence.

**Table 1. Distribution of LISJC on Systems and Regions**

System	Number	Percent	Region	Number	Percent
National library	3	3.1%	Beijing	30	31.2%
Academic Library	26	27%	Shanghai	4	4.1%
Science of Academy	9	9.4%	Changchun	6	6.3%
Public library	35	36.6%	Guangzhou	3	3.1%
Specific library	23	23.9%	Xi'an	4	4.1%
			Others	49	51.2%

**Table 2. Chinese Core Journals of LIS**

TITLE	SPONSORS	START YEAR	LOCATION	ISSUE
The Journal of the Library Science in China	China Society for Library Science & NLC	1957	BEIJING	BIMONTHLY
Library and Information Service	Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences	1980	BEIJING	MONTHLY
Journal of Academic Libraries	Peking University & Steering Committee for Academic Libraries of China	1983	BEIJING	MONTHLY
Journal of the China Society for Scientific & Technological Information	China Society for Scientific & Technological Information & ISTI	1982	BEIJING	BIMONTHLY
Library Journal	Shanghai Society for Library Science & SL	1982	SHANGHAI	MONTHLY
Knowledge of Library & Information	Library & Information Institute of Wuhan University	1980	WUHAN, HUBEI PROVINCE	QUARTERLY
Information Science: Theory & Application	Association of Scientific & Technological Information of China National Defence	1964	BEIJING	BIMONTHLY
New Technology of Library & Information Service	Library of Chinese Academy of Sciences	1985	BEIJING	BIMONTHLY
Information & documentation Work	Renmin University of China, China Society for Social Science Information	1980	BEIJING	BIMONTHLY
Library	Hunan Library & Hunan Society for Library Science	1980	CHANGSHA	BIMONTHLY
Library Tribune	Guangdong Zhongshan Library & Guangdong Society for Library Science, etc.	1981	GUANGZHOU	BIMONTHLY
Library and Information	Gansu Library & Institute of Scientific & Technical Information of Gansu Province	1981	LANZHOU	QUARTERLY
Library Theory and Practice	Ningxia Society for Library Science, etc.	1986	YINCHUAN	QUARTERLY
Information Science	China Society for Scientific & Technological Information, etc.	1980	CHUANGCHUN	BIMONTHLY
Library Works and Study	Tianjin Library, etc.	1979	TIANJIN	BIMONTHLY
Library Development	Heilongjiang Society for Library Science, etc.	1978	HAERBIN	BIMONTHLY
Journal of Information	Society for Scientific & Technological Information, Shanxi etc.	1982	XI'AN	QUARTERLY

### 1.1 Large number of LISJC across the country

The number of LISJC in 1982 and 1995 were 38 and 94 respectively, a few of which were founded in the 1950s. Most of the newly started journals were set up in the mid 1980s, the years when China began its policy of transformation and opening to the outside and also the early period of the revolution in worldwide information provision. The increase in the number of LISJC reflects the development of library science and librarianship in China.

### 1.2 Rich and colourful contents of LISJC

Most of the above LISJC include such columns as "**Theories & Practices**", "**Development & Modernization**", "**Research & Exchange**", "**Information and News**", etc. With "Theories and Practices" as one of the major columns, the objectives of which are the theorization of practices and the practical application of theories, reflecting scholarship and theoretical characteristics. Because of strict selection, papers published in core journals reflect the highest level of the studies in library science in China, and include many on the results of national or ministerial research projects. According to statistics, since the mid 1990s, citation and reprint rates of papers, especially those in core journals, are increased year after year. Some are even listed in international indexes and directories, such as *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory*, *Library Literature and New Serial Titles*.

### 1.3 Utility of Modern Technology

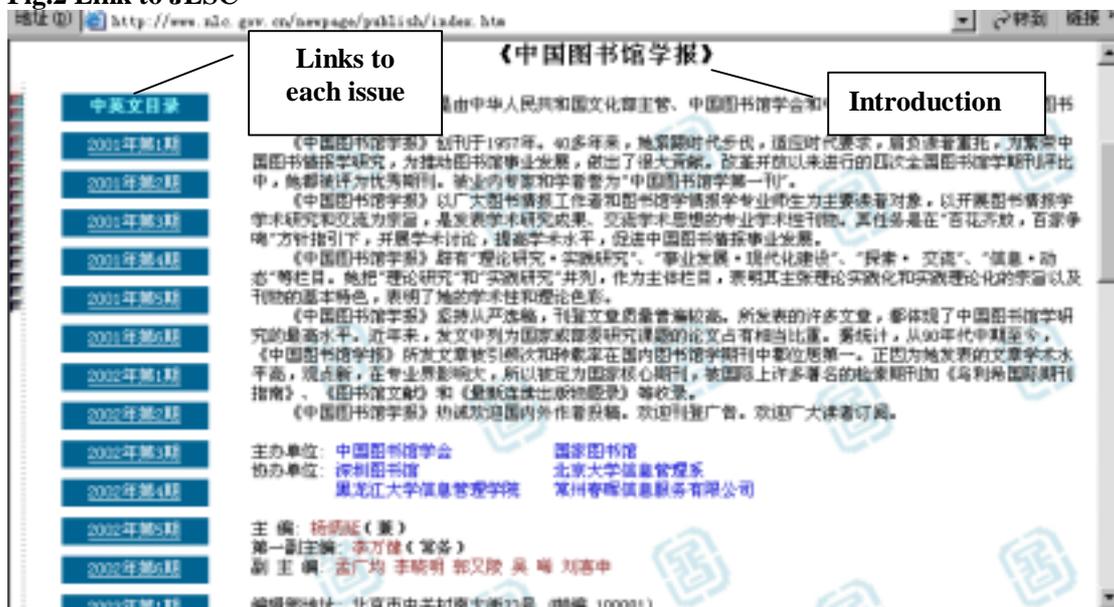
To provide users with information in more convenient ways, most of the editorial board, especially for top journals, are using the Web to promote their journals and making them more widely available.

- Current practices involve using Web sites to issue general information, list recent tables of

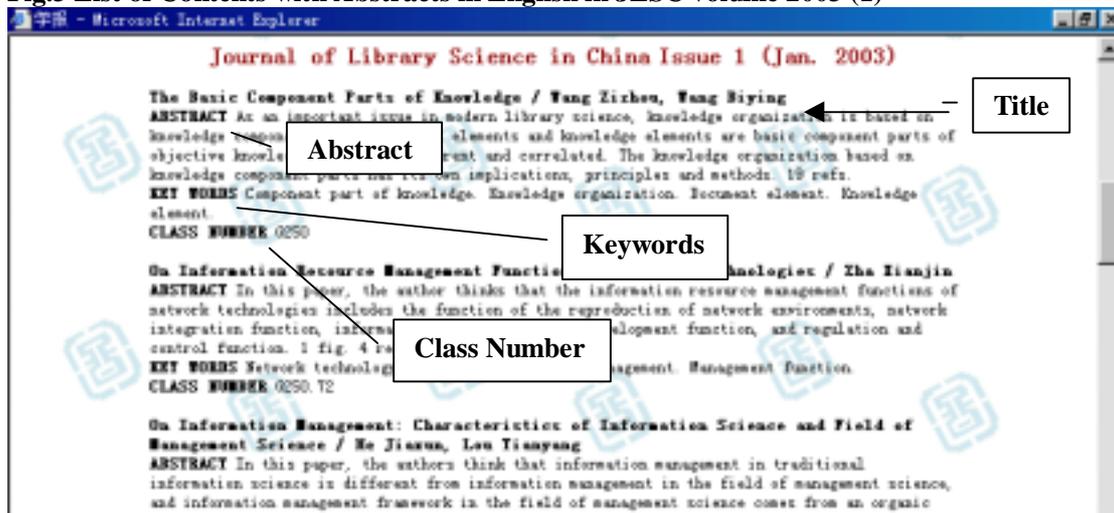
contents or even give abstracts of the articles published in their journals, for example (Fig.1--3):  
**Fig.1 Homepage on Web of National library of China, where you can find JLSC**



**Fig.2 Link to JLSC**



**Fig.3 List of Contents with Abstracts in English in JLSC volume 2003 (1)**



•Some are utilizing networks for compiling papers, communicating with authors, listening to comments, proposals or suggestions from readers.

- Several top journals plan to put Newsletter, Editor & Reader's Salon, Forum or BBS, or provide resources on specific themes or topics outside the printed edition on networks in order to meet the needs and interests of audiences at different levels.

In China today, most of the LISJs have been covered in CNKI and WANGFANG DATA, both are the largest databases for indexing professional journals on networks and CD-ROM. The former is a consortium runs by Tsinghua University, Tsinghua Tongfang CD-ROM Inc.Ltd., etc, while the latter supplies information products and services in order that users can easily access these resources.

#### 1.4 Unusual and lively styles & forms of LISJC

Compared with old journals published a few years ago, many changes are found in the current issues. Appearances are more attractive, the paper used is of better quality, and the monotonous covers are now replaced by attractive designs. These all have a strong visual impact on the readers and leave deep impressions on them. For instance, *Library and Information*, a national core journal sponsored by Gansu Society for Library Science and Gansu Provincial Library, set up a column named "**Highlights of Rare Literatures**", through which they introduce rare documents as well as the collectors or their masters to the readers and use their fine pictures in cover design. With its unique characteristic, it attracts more and more readers and scholars around the country.

#### 1.5 Highly qualified authors of LISJC

A team of high-qualified authors and writers is considered to be one of the essential factors to ensure the quality of journals. So, almost all journals try their best to find and establish good relationship with authors, such as organizing professional forums or seminars to discuss hot issues at different periods of time, taking every possible opportunity to keep close contact with authors. For years, a large team of writers and compilers has been formed gradually. Among them there is no lack of veteran scholars with high reputation in the field, experienced professionals of the younger generation, as well as some promising youngsters still learning at universities or colleges for their Master or Doctor Degrees. They are all active, creative and enthusiastic in the development of LIS, both able and quick thinking. Most of the excellent articles that reflect new ideas and useful viewpoints on the discipline are coming from them.

#### 1.6 large groups of readers for LISJC

Since we manage and develop the guidelines for running magazines, "with professionals, teachers and students in library and information science as the major audience, with academic research and exchange in library and information science as the mission, and with users in and outside library and information science as the service objects in accessing knowledge", both the content and style of LISJC attract the interest of scholars, professionals, practitioners and teachers and students at all levels. Figures in *Comparative Study on Chinese Librarianship with Foreign Countries* show that there were 400,000 librarians and staff in 350,000 libraries in 1998, not including teachers and students in nearly 50 universities and colleges.

We cannot avoid mentioning a famous secondary document in social science—*Library Science, Information and Data Collection (ISSN 1005-4189)*, a journal published by China Renda Social Sciences Information Center of Renmin University of China. This publication, compiled with the full-text of papers and articles published in current major professional journals in LIS and some other academic journals in social science in China. It reflects the current status of studies and represents the level of research in the field and has a wide circulation. It features:

- a wide range of collections: Papers and articles in each volume are selected from the most popular core journals. From 2000 to 2001, over 100 LIS journals have been chosen for paper collection;
- a high level in science and scholarship: Papers published have been examined and selected strictly by a group of high-qualified and authorized experts to ensure that articles have a high value in science and are original;
- full coverage of topics and discussions: The basic columns include: **Theories & Ideology, Studies on Practice, Organization & Management, Legislation for Information, Information for Contest, Comments on Books & Papers, Comparative Study, International Information, Classification & Cataloging, Construction on Information Resources, Education of LIS,**

**Digital Library**, etc.;

- a circulation of over 5000, in and outside China, with printed edition and CD-ROM.

## **II. The Role & Function of LISJ in the Development of Librarianship in China**

In recent years, with the emphasis on information at all levels of society, LISJC play an important role and has been making great contributions to studies in LIS and the development of librarianship in China.

### **2.1 Orientation to Science and Scholarship**

As mentioned above, LIS journals are considered to be a major medium for the transmission of new ideas and results of academic research among those engaged in library science and librarianship. To strengthen the role in academic research in LIS, in recent years, editors for some leading journals organized discussions on the following themes:

- “New Perspectives on the Library of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”;
- “Research on Strategies to Develop Librarianship”;
- “Trends on Development of Library & Information Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”;
- “Changing the Direction of Study on Library Science”;

These topics led to scholars and researchers examining the theory in LIS from a new angle, which brought about a series of impacts on traditional theories of LIS and gave a new orientation in academic research in LIS.

### **2.2 Exploration of key issues**

In the past few years, the LISJC have been keeping close-track of key issues on:

- Value of the existence and survival of libraries today;
- Changing the focus on practice, profession and services;
- WTO and libraries
- About VRD (Virtual Reference Desk);
- On digital library and resource description;
- Library Consortia;
- Continuing education of library staff;
- On establishing “Library Law”;

Papers on these topics are published in some major journals and have a strong impact on the progress of librarianship in China. For instance, in the mid 1980s, some core journals like *Library*, *Knowledge of Library & Information*, *Library Theory and Practice*, started special columns for discussing the above topics and issued a series of excellent and influential articles.

### **2.3 Facing actual working areas**

Most LISJC have columns that deal with practical working areas. These aim to identify ways of improving real problems in ordinary work. The most popular columns are: “**Organization & Management**”, “**Information Legislation**”, “**Information Request & Service**”, “**Information for Contest**”, “**Digital Library**”, “**Construction on Information Resources**”, “**Education on LIS**”, “**Comments on Literature & Papers**”, “**Research & Exchange**”, “**Information and News**”, “**Global Information**”, which provide the professionals, scholars, researchers and practitioners in LIS with a wide range of topics. For instance, in the processes of modernization, many libraries met with problems of organization and restructuring. Through deep discussions and exchange of views and successful experiences among libraries, these problems have been solved in a timely and effective manner.

### **2.4 Educating staff through LISJC**

Although the level of education achieved by library staff is improving, many older library staff do not have a first degree. Education for these staff is another important role for LISJC. Statistics show that many librarians and staffs absorb knowledge and information to enrich themselves and strengthen their professional skills from LISJC.

### **2.5 Training users**

Rapid development in information technology has had a tremendous impact on traditional libraries. The development of computer networks and the protocols that link them together has led

to new ways of collecting and organizing information for retrieval by library users.

### **III. New challenges LISJC faces today**

Rapid changes in publishing, IT, licensing and copyright, pedagogy, and user expectations are having a major impact on the roles of LISJC today. The editors and editorial board in this field are facing new challenges that come from these areas below and need to be dealt with, so as to respond to the dynamic external environment.

#### **3.1 IT and networking**

Information technology and networking provide users with more convenient ways to access information and knowledge worldwide through the Internet. At the same time, the Internet is changing the way we work and do business and offers a tremendous opportunity for us to deliver the contents and services better and interact with the major constituents of LISJ authors and readers directly. In addition to providing printed journals, CD-ROM, or on-line journals, more exciting and innovative transformations are sure to occur in the field of LISJ with the new technologies and practices.

#### **3.2 Marketing**

Running periodicals well in a market-based economy not only depends on scientific management and administration, but also on market-based mechanisms. Practice shows that it is difficult for a journal to exist and survive, let alone develop, without improving the manners and skills of its management appropriate to the new economic environment.

#### **3.3 Copyright**

Facing new types of issuing and publishing of journals, the intellectual property issues surrounding such diverse publications as electronic journals and magazines need to be carefully addressed in LISJ circles.

#### **3.4 Internationalization**

Globalization implies that the world is starting to become a cultural consortium. Culture has been strengthened by sharing. In this sense, the impact of different cultures means exchanging or facilitating the flow of culture and finally to speeding up the development of librarianship. Being the forum of LIS and librarianship, LISJC should reflect these global changes, particularly insofar as they find expression in world LIS.

#### **3.5 Modernization in editing**

Traditional editing is not appropriate for the new conditions in technology and the information environment. Editors with networking knowledge, information literacy and practical capability in handling modern equipment are vital in order to keep up with the development of modernization.

### **IV. Future trends and suggestions for further development**

It is no doubt that both challenges and opportunities exist for developing LISJ for all countries of the world. To take the challenges mentioned above and to respond to the dynamic external environment, the following suggestions are put forward for further development:

#### **4.1 To improve the quality of journals**

In China, scholarship quality is the critical survival factor for LIS journals and also the decisive factor for their circulation. To improve the quality of journals, the following points are worth considering:

- To keep the strict standards in selecting manuscripts or contributions. The criteria for evaluating journal quality include: originality and innovativeness, theoretical implications, building on or relevance to the body of knowledge, clarity of writing, research design and the structure of paper.
- To keep close contact with authors, especially those with a high reputation. Their suggestions on new topics and issues are very important for this purpose. Professors and researchers in higher educational institutions are also sources for offering theoretical explanations of new ideas.
- Editors' knowledge, working experiences and professional skills need to be stressed and improved all the time, since it is they who have the power to accept or reject submitted papers.

The limitation of their knowledge will lead to imbalances in journal content. So to raise the educational level of editors should be considered for LIS journals.

#### **4.2 To protect the author's copyright**

How to protect the author's copyright in the new environment is the common issue for LIS journals today. In our view, protecting the author's copyright, keeping the information on network open and accessible, sharing the research results for the public are the essential aspects that need to be dealt with for libraries and librarians. For this purpose, the following measures need to be taken into consideration:

- To strengthen the implementation of "the Copyright Law". In China, the 24<sup>th</sup> conference of National People's Congress Standing Committee decided to amend the copyright law for the demands of digital and Internet technology application in 2001. In publishing circles, the implementation of "the Copyright Law" has been involved in annual censorship on news and periodicals. Editorial boards, they have the responsibility to educate readers and authors on legal issues.
- To stop an act of plagiarism. It is reported that there still exists the behavior of plagiarism which some one acts for publishing papers. This not only violates the author's copyright, but also infringes upon the honour and the image of journals. To avoid this, journals should take concrete measures to prevent it, such as checking manuscripts to find such an unethical behavior promptly, and investigate and identify the responsibility for the plagiarism.

#### **4.3 To speed up electronic and networked publishing**

As society relies more and more on network technologies, it is essential that LISJs make effective use of these improvements in electronic or network publishing. The digital age will make a great difference to digital as distinct from traditional periodicals in their creation, dissemination and utilization:

- in creating, because it is more convenient for periodicals to be published by using digital technology, creating periodicals rather than disseminating will take precedence;
- in disseminating, because digital journals can be created directly on the Internet, their dissemination normally done by distributors other than publishers will be replaced by others;
- in utilizing, because digital technology may provide a new approach to the management and charging of periodicals—by means of controlling the terminal of the end-user, that is to say, users will require authorization to access papers or articles.

#### **4.4 To strengthen the co-operation between publishers and database corporations**

The co-operation between publishers of LISJ and database corporations began in the late 1990s in China. The intention was to supply readers and researchers with value-added information and knowledge in more convenient ways. Principally, to enable users to access full-text electronic journals in a simple, direct, consistent, and accurate manner, This was to be accomplished by

- providing one-stop shopping for users to access electronic journals by having all the electronic journals fully searchable and integrated in the information chain. In other words, if an electronic journal is included in different aggregator databases, the different links to the title will be contained in a single record rather than in several different catalog records;
- saving the time of users and the reference staff of library when they help users to retrieve desired electronic journal titles, to have the links of all electronic journals point directly to the journal title page, not the aggregator database Web site;
- avoiding inconsistent handling of the records that often occurs when data elements are entered by staff in different sessions, consequently, a unified and consistent method for creating records for electronic journal title is required to facilitate data-sharing among different library sections;
- developing an efficient and timely method of record maintenance to ensure the accuracy of the records of electronic journal titles that are integrated into the information chain.

#### **4.5 To realize the goal of internationalization**

The level of internationalization for a journal reflects its capability to communicate with international academe in LIS circles. To our great regret, up to date, there is no issue to be listed in SCI or SSCI, the most authorized search tools in the world today. So, internationalization is the common goal for the leading journals currently. To accomplish this:

- most journals have their papers with English contents, abstracts, keywords and references for extensive searching by users both home and abroad
  - some publish articles written by foreign professionals or scholars which will bring the new idea and advanced experiences to Chinese readers;
  - establish long-term co-operation with foreign editorial boards, such as *Journal of Academic Libraries* run by Ministry of Education of China and Beijing University and *Academic & Research Libraries*, an American Journal, they issue one copy of paper for each other in their journals annually, and *Journal of Library Science in China* run by China Society of Library Science and National Library of China calls for papers both in and outside China;
  - some journals invite editing experts in their boards from foreign countries, etc.
- These measures taken at present will surely continue and be strengthened further in the future.

#### 4.6 To manage journals on the principles of a market-based economy

It has been proved that in a market-based economy, it is difficult to run journals following the old models of management. Funding is very important for keeping the quality both in content and appearance of a journal and is a common issue for most of LISJC. Inserting or adding advertisements in LISJC, inviting other institutes or organizations to run journals together, publishing additional issues of LISJ, are effective for expanding the circulation and getting better profits both on economic and social aspects.

#### 4.7 To fully utilize modern technology in editing

It is predicted that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new editing technology based on computer is going to come forth, which will bring great change in word processing, editing, typesetting, etc. Editors need both knowledge and skills to handle networked equipments and technology. So training editors for grasping new information skills and capabilities should be stressed now.

### V. Conclusion

Journals or periodicals have been and will be the major type of literature and documents for people to record and disseminate scientific and cultural knowledge. Surveys and investigations toward scientists on the habit of their utilizing literature and documents proved that of all the types of literature and documents, journals or periodicals are listed on the first rank, which shows that information containing in this kind of publication makes up 65% of total information. In China, over 70% of references used in specific works or publications come from journals or periodicals. In conclusion, it is predicted that, whatever changes the digital environment might bring, the prime mission of LISJC remains unchanged: to navigate in learning, to lead in practice, to serve the users, and to educate readers.

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