BOOK REVIEW

Academic Library Development and Administration in China

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ABSTRACT

China has a complex and expansive higher education environment. Within that environment are the academic libraries that serve the students and faculty at the many universities. This book attempts to provide a broad sweeping look at how these academic libraries have grown to be the institutions that they are. Providing a detailed picture of the collaborations in place, the physical buildings themselves, and the array of services available, the book provides a comprehensive review of academic libraries in China and how they are operating.

ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Readers will rarely find a book that provides a comprehensive overview of a nation's academic libraries. The fact that this book has done it for China is a great strength of this book. It represents an example of how to put together a book that can be used to make a clear comparison between one country's efforts to another. The title suggests that the book is about academic library development and administration. The book is true to its word and provides chapters about how physical libraries and various collaborations actually developed. Later chapters go into depth on how many different services within the libraries have changed and are being administered. It would have been logical to have had the section on digital libraries, which includes chapters on digital project collaborations, follow the first section of the book which deals with national platforms. The reader may find that changing up the sections will make the content flow much better.

Taken together, the chapters provide a comprehensive and cohesive look at a variety of facets around China's academic libraries. The reader will also discover that each chapter can stand on its own. Someone interested in only one kind of service or kind of project will find a chapter that is fully informative, provides detailed data, and identifies key challenges around that particular topic. The fact that the authors chose to include a wealth of data also gives each chapter a strong sense of authority. A reader will find the data practical, understandable, and strongly compliments the topic of the chapter. Figures, graphics, and photos also add to the chapters. In many chapters, the authors utilize case studies of different libraries around China. It is important to point out that the authors did not hesitate to outline the challenges that are currently being faced in developing their libraries and administering services. This is also reflected in the case studies.

Another strength of the book is that the authors primarily utilized research dealing with academic libraries in China. This kept the work in context and it allows to reader to better understand why the libraries have developed in the way that they have. At times, the authors of the chapters have included information about Western organizations and practices. When done, it is successfully utilized for purposes of clarity.

The biggest weakness of the book is the index at the end of the book. Considering the fact that the book is nearly 400 pages long, one would expect a more detailed index. At just over two pages and populated with many overly obvious index terms like "Uni-

versity" and "Library", it almost becomes useless. Although very well written, in some cases the reader will find the writing almost clinical and repetitive. Items in some of the conclusions at the end of the chapters are simply shortened versions of what is covered in the rest of the chapter. Chapter 15, a bibliometric study, is a good example of this.

SUMMARY

This book is highly recommended. The higher education landscape of China is very complex. This work does an excellent job of analyzing the academic library landscape, the relationships that exist between institutions, the services provided, and the challenges still being faced. Although each chapter is written by a different author, the book is cohesive. Grounded in research that is specific to China, the authors do not hesitate to consider Western research, theory, and practices and explains appropriate differences and valued similarities. This book opens the window on the academic libraries of China and successfully simplifies them and how they have developed in the way that they have.

READERSHIP

I see several target audiences for this book. Academic librarians and administrators from around the world would benefit from this book. Scholars and students of higher education in China will receive a detailed glimpse into how institutions, consortia, and government work together to provide this service. Likewise, higher education leaders and administrators would be another audience.

Mark Shelton has 20-plus years of academic library experience. He holds a Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Doctorate in Education from Johnson & Wales University. Mark came to Holy Cross in July of 2016 from Harvard University where he worked for eight years. At Harvard, he served as the lead assessment librarian and also as the head of collection development for the Graduate School of Education. He also held a variety of different leadership roles while working for the Brown University Library. Currently, Mark is also the book review editor for College and Research Libraries.