Development and Practice of Research Support Services in Peking University Library

Yong Tang, Peking University Library, Beijing Shi, China
Chunhong Zhang, Peking University Library, Beijing Shi, China

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the development and practice of research support services in university libraries. It is very important for the university library to gradually integrate into the core business of the university, and to continuously enhance its value and competitiveness in face of new academic environments. By restructuring agency teams,reshaping service strategies, and rebuilding services and evaluation systems, Peking University Library took full advantage of bibliometrics, information resource analysis, competitive intelligence, etc., and established a framework of research support services to provide strong support for the development of Peking University. Taking Peking University Library as an example, this article introduces some cases: the trend analysis of research hotspots project, the analysis report on patent competitiveness, a series of reports on subject competitiveness, and reports on research frontiers. The article discusses the difficulties, experiences, and benefits of these cases.

KEYWORDS

Academic Evaluation, Bibliometrics, Competitiveness Analysis, Peking University Library, Research Frontiers, Research Support Service, Subject Competitiveness, Trend Analysis of Research Hotspots

INTRODUCTION

With easier access to academic resources and more convenient academic exchanges, users are less dependent on libraries for traditional resources and services, so libraries are increasingly marginalized in universities. As a result, university libraries must identify a new focus of services, integrate into the core business of universities and increase their influence on university academic research. Research support services emerge in such a context.

University libraries have expertise in bibliometrics, resource sorting and analysis, and index system research and competitive intelligence, so they can provide research support services to expand their service boundaries and living spaces. Many university libraries have begun to plan for and launch research support services since 2012, including guidance for research resources, management of research data, research consultations, research tools, publication of research findings and intellectual
property services, subject assessment and evaluation, etc., with the emphasis, depth and effectiveness of such services varying greatly from university to university.

Research support services are supportive knowledge services offered to researchers and managers based on lifecycle of research activities (Xiao & Zhang, 2016). Emerging based on mass information resources, bibliometric analysis, tools and human resources of libraries, such services derive from user-side demands like subject development, talent evaluation, research management and decision support in universities. As user-oriented innovative information services of libraries, research support services mark the beginning of libraries’ transformation from providers of traditional consultation services to those of intelligence analysis services and even think tank services.

Peking University Library has successfully offered research support services since 2015 and accumulated a lot of experience. During 2016-2017, Peking University Library regularly completed and released multiple information products, including Reports on Subject Competitiveness of Peking University, Reports on Patent Competitiveness of Peking University, Reports on Research Frontiers of Peking University, and Weiming Academic Bulletin. These reports have won recognition and praise from teacher researchers, research management and decision-making bodies of Peking University as well as from other libraries.

There are many challenges to providing research support services, including normalization and deep cleansing of data; the reasonable establishment of an analysis and evaluation index system and acquisition of accurate index data; reasonable mapping relationships among subjects and specialties; and perspectives of analysis and professionalism of analysis conclusions/suggestions. These challenges should be effectively solved through continuous exploration and practice in combination with actual user demands. This paper introduces several actual cases of research support services and analyzes challenges and lessons from these cases.

Research support services will be an area of innovation and focus for libraries in the future, which poses high requirements on resources/tools and technical conditions of libraries, and on wisdom/skills and expertise of librarians. It is an uphill struggle for libraries to provide research support services, for which libraries will have to deepen communication and collaboration with subject specialists and research management personnel/bodies, enhance their capabilities of intelligence analysis and think tank services, and deliver high-level, professional and tailor-made support services based on lifecycle of research activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beginning earlier, research-oriented university libraries in the U.S.A., Europe and Australia are more mature in providing research support services. Representatives are Harvard Library, MIT Libraries, Stanford Libraries, Columbia University Libraries, King’s College London Library and the University of Sydney Library, all of which provide services corresponding to different stages of research lifecycles, such as research guides, research support tools, research data management services, publication, distribution and intellectual property services (Xue et al., 2016; E & Cai., 2015). According to the analysis of strategic objectives regarding research support services in 34 strategic planning documents of university libraries in America, academic libraries provide support for scientific research mainly through provision of research resources, tools and consultations, data management, publication and sharing of research results, training of researchers and other aspects (Jia et al., 2017; Li, 2017). University libraries in Australia deliver research support services mainly through research data management, research impact measurement, research ethics training and publication of research results, with such characteristics as highlighting research evaluation services, providing subject specialists, stressing research consultations and valuing research planning and practice (Huang & Han, 2016).

Shanghai Jiao Tong University Library formally created a pan-discipline service system in 2012 to support the development of universities and higher education. From the perspective of service
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