Chapter 3
The China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (CASHL)

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ABSTRACT

In 2004, the Ministry of Education of China started the construction of the China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (CASHL). CASHL is composed of 17 university libraries in mainland China, receiving its primary funding from government support. As the only collection with full subject coverage of the humanities and social sciences in China, CASHL's process of development was cause for wide scale interest, and many research articles were published on this topic nationally and internationally. Throughout a decade of development, CASHL has formed unique characteristics in resource sharing, collaborative acquisition, and more. This chapter gives a detailed introduction to the origin, structure, and primary services of CASHL, as well as the implementation of collaborative innovation within the service. It can be seen as an exploration of CASHL's more than ten years of development through a research perspective. Furthermore, the author also describes some obstacles and challenges CASHL is now facing, and shares some considerations about future development strategies.

ORIGIN OF THE CASHL PROJECT

There is a general saying in the academic community: "Science research level enhancement depends on equipment, while the research level of liberal arts depends on document resources." In another words, we can say the authoritative and complete data may determine the value of research results. However, at the beginning of the century, most university libraries in China faced two major challenges. First, print publications and electronic resources continued to increase in volume, while prices continued to rise. The limited funding and budget of library directly resulted in a severe shortage of literature resources;

libraries particularly lacked foreign literature resources, which are necessary for cultivating high-end talent and carrying out leading-edge studies. Second, according to the general guidelines of the vigorous national expansion of the humanities and social sciences, the university research conducted in these fields received unprecedented attention and developed rapidly. According to the data from the *2012 National Academic Social Statistics Compilation,* there were as many as 1,147 universities which offered the disciplines of social sciences and humanities in China in 2012. In addition, the university teaching and research staff of the social sciences and humanities disciplines reached 5.01 million, with 313,000 annual research projects. The patron's need for literature resources is urgent and constantly growing.

To meet these demands, the Ministry of Education set up the China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (CASHL) on March 15, 2004 after a series of preparations. The Administrative Center of the project was located at Peking University Library, which is famous for its long history and rich cultural heritage. At the beginning, there were only two National Centers: one at Peking University Library, and another at Fudan University Library. In October 2004, after approval by the Social Science Division of the Ministry of Education, the five libraries of Wuhan University, Jilin University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-Sen University, and Sichuan University joined the CASHL system and began to provide services as regional centers. The seven universities above are all key Project 985 and Project 211 universities[1], which have relatively abundant library collections on literary social sciences and humanities. With the support of CASHL "Liberal Arts Book Funding," each library divided the work of collecting overseas journals on humanities and social sciences according to their institution's individual focus, thus laying the foundation for a collaborative pattern of collection for humanities and social sciences resources. These seven academic libraries worked together through the CASHL platform to offer ILL and DDS services to the researchers of national research institutes, as well as teachers and graduates of universities and colleges in China.

In December 2006, in order to further expand resources and improve services, the Ministry of Education approved the addition of the ten academic libraries of Renmin University of China, Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Xiamen University, Nankai University, Zhejiang University, Tsinghua University, Lanzhou University, and Shandong University to the CASHL system to serve as discipline centers.

In the same year, the "Liberal Arts Book Funding" project merged into the CASHL system. "Liberal Arts Book Funding" was initiated by a number of well-known liberal arts scholars, including Xianlin Ji and Jiyu Ren. In 1982, the project was approved by the four lead governors of the State Council, and was supported by the Ministry of Finance as a special book fund. The funding was only to be used for the acquisition of foreign liberal arts books. Its purpose is to address the severe shortage of foreign liberal arts books as soon as possible, and to meet the needs of national development strategies and the demands of high-level graduate teaching and research. Over the course of thirty years, more than 70 university libraries in mainland China bought more than 1.3 million foreign books with the support of "Liberal Arts Book Funding." It has become the most important book funding revenue for university libraries in China, and the project has been referred to by scholars as the "life blood" of research on social sciences and humanities.

Design and Management of the CASHL Project

The ultimate goal of CASHL is to build a national social sciences and humanities information resource platform. As an important part of the "College Philosophy and Social Sciences Prosperity Plan"[2] of the

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