

The Development and the Present Condition of Medical Libraries in China and the Association of Libraries of Chinese Medical and Medicinal Colleges

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I. The Forming-up and Development of Chinese Library Enterprise

China is an ancient civilized country with a history of 5,000 years. Beginning from the Shang Dynasty of ancient China (about 16th-11th century B.C.), there appeared in China characters inscribed on bones or tortoise shells (a kind of characters inscriptions on bones of animals or tortoise shells; the contents are chiefly records of divination of the Yin People-later of the Shang dynasty modern Chinese characters are developed from these characters). Since then the development of Chinese characters and culture has had undergone a long long history, forming up history of magnificent culture and abundant written records.

In China, before Qin Dynasty there appeared special official historians who intentionally made collection, accumulation arrangement and preserving of literature and appeared various types of storerooms of books-these are the earliest "literatures". by the end of the Qin Dynasty, Emperor Qin Shihuang gave an order that except the Qin Ji (historical events in the Qin Dynasty) all the historical records in the War-

ring States as well as poems and classics were burned-preQin books and documents suffered heavy losses. At the beginning of the Han Dynasty, special pavilions were built in the palace to store books. After the Three Kingdoms, as the invention and improvement of paper-making, providing conditions for the production of paper literature, paper books were easier to circulate, the amount of books became immensely increasing; thereby promoting the amount of books became immensely increasing; there by promoting the establishment of various kinds of store-rooms for books. During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, owing to the flourishing of culture and the thriving of religions, appearance of huge amount of books and poems, the book-storing enterprise developed vastly and arose many places for cultural activities, for historians and academies of classical learning. Until Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Chinese Ancient book-enterprise reached the climax of its flourishing period. Zhu Li, emperor Cheng-Zu of the Ming Dynasty edited the encyclopedic work, "Yong Le Da Dian", being stored in Wen Yuan Ge (pavilion), now in The National Library of China (Beijing Library). Emperor Qina Long of Qing Dynasty edited "Si Ku Quan Shu" (Collec-

tion of Four Libraries), written into seven full series separately stored in seven pavilions, they are: Wen Jin Ge, Wen Yuan Ge, Wen Yuan Ge, Wen Zong Ge, Wen Lan Ge, Wen Hui Ge and Wen Shuo Ge (until now these seven whole collections existing in half and the other half having been destroyed; at present, The National Library of China, Library of Gansu Province, Library of Zhejiang Province and The Palace Museum of Taiwan Province still have the collections in stock). The editing of the above two ancient Chinese encyclopedias as well as the preservation of them reflect the development level of books-collecting standard of that time. Before this, Chinese libraries were chiefly of two types: private collecting of books and that of official collecting. The "libraries" of the Chinese feudal society had gone through its long course of progress into a flourishing developed state, really have had cumulated vast amount of literature and data for the human kind. According to statistics, literature inscribed on bones or tortoise shells, literature inscribed on bamboo slips and books copied on silk are still being unearthed, China has now preserved in various major libraries paper ancient books amounting to more than 100,000 kinds. This is really the contribution of the Chinese peoples to the cultural development of the whole human kind.

By the end of the 19th century, there arose various types of public libraries. In the initial stage many of them were developed from store-buildings for books, e.g. the St. Johns University Library set up in 1884; the Capital University Library established in 1902 (now the Beijing University Library); the Capital Library set up in 1912 (now the National Library of China-Beijing Library); they were all established consecutively during this period. In 1920, the Wen Hua University of Wu Chang initiated a department of

library Science, in 1925 the Zhong Guo Guo Min University of Shanghai set up a department of Library Science as well as the Chinese Library Association set up in April of the same year. In 1927, Jinling University of Nanking also set up a Department of Library Science. These had actively played a promotive role in the development of modern Chinese Library enterprise. To the year 1936 various types of libraries had developed to about 5,000 in whole China. After the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, since warfare had destroyed many libraries, the development of library career therefore, suffered severe setbacks.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the central People's Government thought highly of the library career, promulgated a series of policy and set up a special administrative organ; thus making the library career enter into a new developing period. In 1955, the Central Ministry of Culture issued the "Instructions of Strengthening and Improving the Undertakings of Public Libraries". In 1956, The Ministry of Higher Education promulgated "Trial Regulations Regarding University and College Libraries of the People's Republic of China". In 1957, the state Council approved the "Coordinating Plan of Libraries in Whole Nation", which stipulated that under the guidance of the Scientific Planning Committee of the State Council (now the National Science and Technology Committee), a "Group" has been organized by the representative of The Ministry of Culture, The Ministry of Higher Education, Academia Sinica, The Ministry of Public Health, The Beijing Library and some library experts, holding responsibility for the overall planning and overall arrangement that serve scientific research for the library circles in the whole country; the Group has also determined national and regional centre libraries and

formed up the First National Central Library Committee taking Beijing as the core and the Second National Central Library Committee taking Shanghai as the core. Our library is the First Central Medical Library. The tasks of the Central Library Committee are as follows:

1) To assist the Scientific Planning Committee or the administrative leading department in conducting overall arrangement and whole country planning; 2) to investigate and solve the issues of professional work regarding division of labour and cooperation between central libraries, including acquisition of books, blending, exchange, interlibrary loan etc.; 3) to investigate issues concerning the editing or union catalogs and new books bulletin and work out a plan; 4) to study the issue of elevating the professional level of cadres. After the scheme has been put into practice, libraries of various systems in the whole nation have strengthened crosswise contact and cooperation in books acquisition coordinating, unified cataloging, union catalog, interlibrary loan, personnel training, having done great amount of work, thus putting forward the development of nationwide library career. In 1979, The China Society of the Library Science established, and in 1981, our seat in the IFLA got resumed; this has widely developed cooperation and exchange with the library circles of the whole world. At present, Chinese libraries are chiefly divided into several large categories: public libraries, libraries of institutes of higher learning, specific libraries, trade union libraries, army libraries and middle and primary school libraries. Except those of under-county level and middle and primary schools, there are about 280,000 libraries among which public libraries above county level amount to about 2,500; with collection of books about 270,000,000 volumes; libraries of higher learning institutes with collection approximately 400,000,00 vol-

umes; specific libraries numbered to more than 4,500 with collections of 40,000,000 volumes (according to incomplete statistics). In recent ten years, Chinese libraries both in function and means of services have made significant development. National libraries, provincial or municipal libraries as well as those of numerous scientific research organs, institutes of higher learning all have made progresses in computerized management, machine retrieval and modernized communication, striving to draw closer to the advanced level of the world.

II. General Condition of Chinese Medical Libraries and the Association of Libraries of Chinese Medical and Medicinal Colleges (ALCMMC)

Medical libraries in the Chinese library circle are occupying an important standing and a greater proportion. According to incomplete statistics, China has more than 20,000 medical libraries. Among them there are libraries of scientific research units about one hundred, the others are those of hospitals. The Library of CAMS, the Library of Chinese Medical Association, the Library of PLA and key medical libraries, they all assume the duty to serve the whole nation. In the next place, there is one main medical library in various provinces, they all have the task to serve for the whole nation, such as the Library of Beijing Medical University, the Library of Shanghai Medical University, the Library of Zhongshan Medical University, the Library of China Medical University, the Library of Tongji Medical University, the Library of Hunan Medical University, the Library of Xi'an Medical University, the Library of West China Medical University, etc. are all having had a long history and rich collection and having given full play to their respective ef-

fects. All the above mentioned libraries, though each owns its own superiority, yet they are in an isolated state-small scoped and 'complete' traditional pattern; so their functions are mainly confined to individual unit or local location. As time goes on, socialization and network-adaptation has already become an inexorable trend. After entering into the eighties, the China Society of Library Science, the National Library and Information Committee for Universities and Colleges, PRC as well as some national and regional library coordinating organizations have been consecutively set up. This, in making the prosperity and development of the Chinese library career, surely has played a promotive role. As libraries of medical and medicinal universities and colleges occupy a greater proportion in libraries of higher institutes of higher learning in the whole nation, unanimity of their specialty there exists a necessary connection between these libraries; mutual cooperation, academic exchange, especially resources sharing has become common desire of all the libraries. In 1978 the First National Conference of Medical Library was held under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health. The after 6 years of preparation and great efforts made, finally in 1985 the Association of Libraries of Chinese Medical and Medicinal Colleges was established under the support of the Ministry of Public Health. The Association is a civil academic cooperation organization in the medical library circles, supported by the Educational Bureau of the Ministry of Public Health and directed by the National Library and Information Committee for Universities and Colleges, PRC. At Present, there are 125 member libraries in this Association, constituting 89.3% of the total of medical and medicinal universities and colleges libraries in whole China. The main tasks are: 1) to develop aca-

ademic activities, to organize exchange of experiences and to promote interlibrary cooperation; 2) to edit union catalogs of periodicals of the member libraries of the Association, to coordinate collection development and to practise resources sharing; 3) to organize and devise various activities of the Association; 4) to assist the leading organ and departments concerned in working out the developing plan for the medical library career; 5) to actively set up connection with medical library associations of other countries or related organizations in the world, attempting to develop international academic exchange and cooperation; 6) to receive tasks assigned by the Ministry of Public Health. This Association is working under the guidance of the Committee of the Association that has been elected the Congress of all the member libraries. Under the Association, there are six regional activity groups: north China group, east China group, middle and south China group, northwest China group, southwest China group and northeast China group, being in charge of daily work of their regions respectively. In addition, there also seven national special topic activity groups, they are: qualified personnel training group, collection development group, users' education group, information service group, spreading of new technic application group, international cooperation group and the Research Society of Medical Literature Retrieval and Utilization Course. The funds of this Association come chiefly from membership dues of the member libraries as well as social assistance. The annual activity funds amount to 20,000 yuan RMB, a greater part of the activities are proceeded by obligatory actions of the member libraries. The Association, after its founding, has played an important role in personnel training, academic exchange, interlibrary cooperation, international exchange, application

of new library technic and resources sharing. According to incomplete statistics, since its establishment, the Association has organized more than 80 times of various activities, being attended by more than 1,500 person times, the scope spreading the whole country except Tibet. Since 1955, Bethune Medical University, Tongji Medical University, Hunan Medical university and China Medical University have consecutively set up 5-year system department of library science and information, trained lots of professionals improving basically the structure of the medical information personnel ranks together with the enhancement of their professional quality. For several years, member libraries have widely developed cooperation and exchange with international colleagues; we have and contacts with the medical library circles, with the United States, Japan, Canada, Australia, Germany, Denmark, Russia & Republic of Korea, having set up wide cooperation. In 1986 and 1989, we have had sent representatives to take part in the Fifth and Sixth International Congress on Medical Librarianship and introduced the general condition of Chinese medical library career and that of the Association, attracting the attention of the attending representatives. In January 1992 the WHO headquarter formally designated the Institute of medical Information of the CAMS and Library of CAMS & PUMC as "WHO Collaborating Centre for Health and Biomedical Information". The National Cooperative Acquisition Group of Foreign Medical Periodicals was established in 1991, beginning to direct and coordinate the acquisition of foreign journals in the whole nation. The new technic application spreading group has played an important role in the application of computers, CD-ROM, application of fax etc. in the library. The founding of the Research Society of Medical Literature Re-

trieval and Utilization Course, elevating the medical literature Retrieval and Utilization Course, elevating the medical literature teaching to a new level. The formation of the six main activity groups and their efficient work have laid a sound foundation the 3-level resources sharing network of national, regional and provincial scopes.

The widely developed substantive activities has promoted the development of Chinese library career. As Chinese medical library career appears a good developing trend, we would like to march on arms by arms with our international colleagues to contribute to the cause of the development of library career.

III. Chinese Medical Literature Resources Sharing Network: Its formation and the present condition

Social messages transaction is the important symbol of modern culture and social progress. In the Society of messages, message is an uttermost important resource. In the present world, to acquire needed messages in time is of great importance. However, "messages explosion" and relative backwardness of the means to acquire messages, the increasing demands of messages and the incoordination of the distribution of messages, together with the fact that funds to acquire books and journals cannot catch up the increase of their prices; all these contradictions become the great impediment to acquire messages. Practice has proved that the effective way to solve this, contradiction is to realize modernization of the means to get messages, to organize nationwide network of messages, then try to link with international information network online and finally to realize nationwide and even worldwide information resources sharing. To carry out resources sharing the fol-

lowing conditions are indispensable: 1) perfect network organization; 2) abundant and coordinate literature resources; 3) rapid retrieval means and 4) prompt communications conditions. In China, after the approval and realizing "Nationwide Library Coordination Scheme" by the State Council in 1957, interlibrary loans, inter-coordination of surplus books and journals, to develop literature duplicating, to organize and edit various union catalogs of books and journals. These measures firstly solve the difficult situation of the closed and self-regarding state between libraries. But owing to no network setting-up and backward medium, real resources sharing, therefore, has not been formed up. Since the eighties, the idea of resources sharing has attracted wide attention of the library circle in China. Beginning from 1984, the Institute of Medical Information of the CAMS, the Library of CAMS & PUMC started establishing network organization and resources sharing in nationwide medical information system and in the nationwide medical library system. The founding of the Association of Libraries of Chinese Medical and Medicinal Colleges in laid an organization basis to carry out this plan. Through efforts for many years, under the support of the Ministry of Public Health, by the response of libraries and information units of nationwide medical and medicinal systems as well as international aid, at present the information resources sharing network system of Chinese medical libraries has come to be of some scope, standing in a stage to continue developing soundly, aside by serving the users in the whole country. At present, this system of all nation medical literature resources sharing system based on the ALCMMC which is headed by Library/CAMS & PUMC that assumes the chief committee member library and backed by Chinese MEDLARS Cen-

tre and Chinese medical literature online network in building by possessing the means of computerized management, electronic communication, CD-ROM and high efficiency literature duplicating.

Now briefly introduce the related conditions of the above network system

A. Chinese MEDLARS network centre of the Institute of Medical Information of the CAMS is the 16th, international retrieval centre of the famous medical literature analysis and retrieval system of the US National Library of Medicine. In 1978, it formally began to provide literature retrieval for users in the whole nation. At present, China MEDLARS has already been connected by online with NLM of the USA; so users at home are able to directly utilize all the database of the NLM. Entrusted by the NLM, Chinese MEDLARS centre now holds responsibility for the development and management of MEDLARS online users. China has now more than 30 units realized online retrieval with US MEDLARS database. At present Chinese MEDLARS centre is still actively perfecting online with domestic users and the connecting with other computerized literature retrieval systems as well in order to widen the retrieval scope.

B. Online network of Chinese medical literature

The Institute of Medical Information of CAMS is going to set up a larger type and overall biomedical literature database including "Biomedical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System of China (CNMEDLARS)" and "medical Science and Technology Achievements and Ongoing Topics Analysis and Retrieval System of China". The former has totally collected more than 400 titles of biomedical journals published in China proper and those in Hongkong and

Taiwan, the annual amount of literature collected amounting to about 50,000 items. The latter collects medical scientific and technological achievements and on-going research topics of all the provinces, municipalities and districts. Their setting-up will surely provide greater convenience for the users to consult domestic literature more promptly.

C. Medical Literature Resources Sharing Network of China

Medical Literature Resources Sharing Network of China taken the Library of CAMS & PUMC and the core began to establish in 1990, comprising one national central library(1st level), six regional central libraries(2nd level) and 28 provincial and municipal central libraries(3rd level). National and regional central libraries are responsibility for the organizing work of national and local district medical literature resources sharing, to solve the issues of

domestic collection and to undertake online retrieval business both at home and abroad. The provincial centre libraries are responsible for the organizing work of local provincial medical literature resources sharing, to meet the demands of local provincial medical literature and to take on the task of domestic and foreign online retrieval through the regional libraries. At present, the network is actively trying to install computers of greater capacity, to further perfecting the function of computerized network.

The Medical Literature Resources Sharing Network of China, though starts a little late, yet preliminary effects have been obtained through strenuous efforts. As for the support of Ministry of Public Health and efforts made by all the member units, this enterprise will certainly advance to a further developing stage.