

# **Create an Information Exchange Platform for the Mandarin Library: The Management Strategy of E-paper of SLIS Program Leadership Team**

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*In contrast with certain well developed areas in the world, the operating conditions of the senior high school libraries in the Chinese world still has much to improve. One of the feasible ways to strengthen cooperation is via digital networks, namely the e-papers, by incorporating both information and opinions marketplace. To enhance the cooperation functions among communities, resolve ~~the~~ insufficient professional knowledge among community operators issue, and improve overall service quality, the SLIS Program Leadership Team has issued an e-paper. Also, from the viewpoint of knowledge management, it has set up a homepage based community knowledge database for the e-paper. Furthermore, with a mutually-shared mind by initially providing it to the entire Chinese community for reference, with more and more library community members participate, consequently the goal is forming, that is, Make Chinese World the Exchange Platform. Finally, this report will cover four sections as: the e-paper's media functions, problems faced in Taiwan, solutions and strategies based on the experience of Lo-tung Senior School, and suggestions for further studies.*

## ***Prologue: The E-paper and Development of Communities Marketplace Functions and Community Development of e-Paper***

The e-paper is a media of 'open code', and with its two qualities of 'information marketplace' and 'opinion marketplace', it has become a new sharp tool for cooperation development of 'communities'.<sup>1</sup>

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### ***High School Library Communities in Taiwan***

According to the School Name List posted on the homepage of The Ministry of Education, the library staff has surpasses over 1,500 nationwide, substantially constituting a huge community. These workforces are distributed among the 481 senior middle school (361 of general-studies middle school and 165 of vocational school), excluding special schools, which would go beyond 500 if included.

### ***Hypothesis: Issuing e-Paper is Positive for Library Communities***

The issuing of e-papers would significantly elevate the overall quality of library service in terms of promoting information and opinions exchange, professional knowledge of librarians, library management, and administrative consensus.

## **Background of Issuing e–papers in SLIS in Taiwan**

### ***The Insufficient Professional Knowledge Faced in Library Communities***

Despite the management achievements appraisal in high school libraries is generally higher than that in university, primary, and public libraries, major problems such as insufficient professional knowledge and in-service training still long exist.

### ***Librarians' Insufficient Professional Knowledge***

According to the Article 16 of the Senior High School Law (Regulations?) amended on 14 July 1999, it clearly states that

Senior high schools shall establish a library to be headed by one director. The principal shall either appoint a full-time faculty member with specialized knowledge or capabilities to serve concurrently as library director, or shall hire a person with specialized knowledge or capabilities to fill the position.

As for the definition of “a person with specialized knowledge”, the High School Library Law (Regulations?) dated on 24 Jan, 2003 further defined as:

- for those who pass a national qualification exam in Library and Information Science

- College Graduates of Departments of Library and Information Science
- for those who possess B.A. and have taken courses related in Library and Information Science
- for those who possess B.A. and have published books or journals in Library and Information Science
- for qualified secondary school teachers who minor in Library and Information Science

In fact, the educational policy in Taiwan is more inclined to autonomy, and in most cases, principals have a significant influences on administrative personnel decision. However, some would prefer an acquaintance to a professional in spite of the fact he or she cannot acquire a legal status. Also, in some private schools a head or a staff is often substituted for the director status owing to a tight human resources budget. In this way, although it is possible to ~~de~~ dodge the library law (regulations?) limit, yet their insufficient professional knowledge might very well cause a bottleneck in the management development.

More so, by the effect of retirement wave, many senior directors have left their positions, resulting in a gap of experience inherence. This phenomenon can be further proved that the retirement rate soars up to 62.1 percent from 1999 to 2003<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, in spite of the fact that new directors might have a higher degree, we would lose the knowledge property of the whole community if the prior experience were not continuously accumulated.

### ***The Problems of On-job Training and Advanced Study in Taiwan***

Generally speaking, on-job training and advanced study are not substantially encouraged in Taiwan. And there are only limited quotas for on-job training at the level of M.A. in certain universities in the three major cities—Taipei, Kaohsiung, and Taichung. In the other areas, librarians can only attend some meetings for a fragmentary knowledge. Under this difficult situation, a senior librarian and a SLIS counselor in the neighborhood then become a best consultant.

### ***The Issuing Experience of Lo-tung Senior School***

### ***E-papers of the High School Library Alliance in Taiwan***

Back in May, 2001, the Ministry of Education required every high school to carry out the inter-institutional cooperation project. Among the 13 high schools and vocational schools in I-lan county, Lo-tung senior high was designated to lead this team, therefore, I organized a library alliance to elevate the library service.

Via a democratic consultation, 6 schools agreed to join this preliminary project. Each is responsible for two issues of e-papers and may choose their own topics. All the articles were e-mailed to for an universal editing format. The e-paper is issued weekly, 12 issues were issued from 5, Oct. 2001 to 3 Jan. 2002. Most subscribers are alliance librarians, village or town libraries, librarians outside the county, the library association, and some professors associated with this project. An evaluation meeting was held three months later and also a decision was reached that each school takes two issues per year.

### ***E-papers of the National High School Library Director Conference***

In 2003, The Ministry of Education assigned us to hold a national conference for the library directors, and to facilitate information exchange. I then distributed 9 e-papers from April 4 to Oct. 21 2004. <[http://wwwlib.ltsh.ilc.edu.tw/wwwlib/lib\\_conference/epaper.htm](http://wwwlib.ltsh.ilc.edu.tw/wwwlib/lib_conference/epaper.htm)> The e-papers were also forwarded to the Homepage Library Directors Associations in Hong Kong, and they responded this immediately by putting on a link for reference <<http://hktla.school.net.hk/>>. This experience deeply encourages me to create an information exchange platform for the Mandarin Libraries.

### ***The Issuing of e-papers for SLIS Program Leadership Team in Taiwan***

Early in 1988, the Ministry of Education invited 9 experts as the guidance counselor for the Senior High School Counseling and Guidance Committee. Their aim is was to help improve the management and the learning function of the library. After a series of interviews and visits to nationwide schools, they invited several senior directors with significant management achievements as the counselors. The SLIS Program Leadership Team was then set up. Those counselors are mainly responsible for a constant policy formulation, research and publication, educational

training, assessment and evaluation. After decades of efforts, the library management has finally step on a the right track to become the focused attention in campus.

On Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001, after the announcement of the first Library Law (Regulations?) in Taiwan, the newly reorganized counseling group sincerely anticipated a shift from an authoritative leadership to a public-involved and mutual-shared democratic system. Thus, under this atmosphere, the e-paper of SLIS is then issued, biweekly, 25 issues per year. To be mentioned, there is no official budget, and every member is voluntary.

### **Structures of E-papers**

#### ***Personnel***

The e-paper is an official newspaper (publication?) issued by Lo-tung Senior School, with the Taiwan province education director as the issuer, professors of SLIS as the consultants, librarians as the editing members, and I myself as the chief-editor. Also, extensive works of columnists include inviting the manuscript, the examination, the edition, readers' opinions, and even designing questionnaire for improvement. Other positions are a head, responsible for the soft and hard ware management maintenance work, a director, planning the development of the whole e-paper.

#### ***Contents***

The e-paper can be divided into 9 columns, further classified into information marketing and opinion marketing.

#### ***Information marketing***

#### ***Dynamic reports***

Besides covering activities held in middle schools in Taiwan, this category also includes news from the Library Association of R.O.C. <http://lac.ncl.edu.tw/>, policies of the Ministry of Education, and some international library organizations like IFLA, ALA, and IALA.

#### ***The experience sharing***

This column encourages all the community members to offer their experience in library affairs in terms of a pragmatic level; for example, in the training of library circulation, what details should be emphasized?

## **Research**

Research papers, hot topics and current events are welcome here. For example, when the Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA) invaded Taiwan, I wrote a topic named “Hot Issues and Library Management—A Case Study of the RIFA,” which was edited into Power Point later. It elaborated how and what the library should do to promote on-campus reading atmosphere via a marketing strategy.

### ***New Discovery***

A featured website is introduced as the fifth issue covers the CIA Website “The World Factbook 2004”

<<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>.>

### ***Library Terminology***

A library terminology is introduced in each issue. For instance, “knowledge management” was well elaborated in the sixth issue with references of the Chinese and English comparative table, bibliography, seminar collection, periodical paper, dissertation, multimedia, and some other network resources.

### ***Panorama***

A panoramic camera is used to present every school’s library, displaying its architecture, equipment, figures, and promotion activities.

### ***Arts***

As some readers reflect the content are too professional and rigid, an art column is added to offer a more pleasant environment. All the community members can freely publish their poetry, prose, novels, plays, thoughts, and even the riddles. And I myself created the noun riddles of libraries in the seventh issue.

## **Opinions marketing**

### ***Issue Discussion***

To reach a mutual consensus, issues on library management or policies of the Ministry of Education will be posted on the e-paper for panel discussion and opinion survey.

### ***Work handbook***

The library handbook is the universal reference book of library management for librarians national wide, it's also a basis for annual official evaluation. But the current edition was edited back in 1999, thus some of the regulations are out-of-date and needs further revision. In this way, those rules are posted for open discussion until a final decision is reached. The opinions will be classified and sent to SLIS Program Leadership Team and the Ministry of Education as a basis for revision. This act is a significant achievement of de-authorization in education in Taiwan.

### ***Content Structure of the E-paper's Homepage***

The homepage is the "Management Reservoir of SLIS Leadership Team." And the texts include 12 icons : Understanding SLIS, E-paper, Library Laws and Regulations, Work Handbook, Special Study, Subject Discussion, Dynamic Report, Experience Sharing, Present Situation Investigation, Network Resources, Member Registration, and Contact US.

## **Management Principles of the E-paper**

### ***Public Involvement Principle***

To guarantee a continuous management, the following managing principles have to be set up.

#### ***Topics Offering***

Questions from library regulations, management, to editing are welcome for discussion. More so, readers are strongly encouraged to become agenda-setters by posting issues feedbacks.

#### ***Voluntary Columns***

Every member can automatically become a columnist by just clicking the icon 'volunteer' on the homepage, with the authorization of deciding the contents

#### ***Article Contribution***

For publications, presenters only need to click columnists' names and send an email.

#### ***Discussion Forum***

For discussions, readers can directly send their opinions to columnists or enter the 'Forum Discussion.'

### ***Poll Survey***

A poll survey is set under every topic and readers can vote for issues they are interested in.

### ***Cooperation and Sharing Principle***

The spirit of issuing e-paper is to supplement the insufficient inter-library cooperation, therefore, all the articles are expected to be cited or quoted without authors' authorization.

### ***Practical and Flexible Principle***

The primary goal of e-paper is to solve the current library management problems. The following measures are taken to fit this expectation.

### ***Collaborate with the Educational Policy***

In October, 2004, the Ministry of Education was planning to open the high school resources to the neighboring community. Without the specific details, it caused uncertainty among library communities. Nevertheless, via an opening discussion and questionnaire survey, a final consensus was surprisingly reached and therefore became part of the foundation for the regulation.

### ***Grasp Hot Issues***

Hot issues always catch readers' attention and may inspire them for further studying or even research. Thus, in this way, libraries will have the duty to offer related bibliography, web sites, theses, or journals for reference. With this service, passively, libraries can temporarily solve the problem of insufficient collection; on the other hand, a professional image of knowledge management can also be established.

### ***Emphasize Practical Experience***

In December 2004, a member of the e-paper, who is also a high school library director, encountered a difficult task of not knowing how to hold activities for celebrating a new library construction. His problem was later passed to me via the e-paper, and, as an instructor, I soon offered some concrete suggestions, which worked out pretty well.

### ***Conform to Profession Needs***



Self-study is one the best ways to strengthen librarians' profession. With the aid of library terminology and work handbook, the library service is then expected to be elevated.

### ***Article Shelf Time***

From a marketing viewpoint, products all have their own Product Life Cycle. It is an inevitable process of introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Therefore, via a Product Portfolio, we might be able to create an opportunity for Product Relaunch. E-paper is an interactive network media among authors, editors, and readers. With virtually no limitation of article length and layout, reader expectations can then be fulfilled. The two columns, New Discovery and Library Terminology, in the fifth issue, and Special Study in the seventh are products of this flexibility.

## **Profession Role Principle**

### ***Constructing a Knowledge Exchange Channel***

The role of a library should be defined as the 7-Eleven—to circulate the knowledge in stead of manufacturing it. That is, all the library needs to do is to offer a list of functions, product catalogue, and operating methods. Based upon this concept, we hope to establish a model: Summary of topic knowledge, and references of it. The former covers definition, background, and applications, etc., while the latter includes theses, journals, multimedia, and Internet resources.

Knowing knowledge management is the foundation of a library community, we are going to make it as the homepage of the e-paper, a knowledge reservoir of the SLIS Program Leadership Team.

## **Management Strategies of E-papers**

### ***Article Sources***

Article resources are always essential to the success of a journal. Besides 'paper wanted,' 'appointed articles,' and passively accepting readers' commentary, a more crucial part lies in the electronic files. That is, contracted libraries are bound to transmit the chief-editor the speeches, discussions, or photos of activities in electronic files. Also, papers

published in international conferences are in this category for the purpose of elevate the whole academic level. This strategy has been recognized by the Central Regional Affairs, MOE, and if it can become an administration rule, then the article resources shouldn't be very difficult.

### ***Marketing Strategies***

To attract more readers and be known among Mandarin libraries global-wide, an effective marketing is strongly needed as stated below:

In order to catch readers' attention, we need to know 'what they need.' At least four aspects should be noticed here: first, reporting important messages as graduate school admission message in the sixth issue, second, internal issues as in what community service we should provide in 2005, third, profession opinion offered, and fourth, experience sharing as in the principles of training student-librarians.

Both a public strategy such as administrative demands and a private approach as personal relationship are applied here.

The Central Regional Office, MOE, can directly declare that the e-paper is the official newsletter and all related libraries have the obligation to subscribe.

Via regional conferences, the e-paper's organization, contents, and subscription can then be introduced to readers.

Members of SLIS program leadership team can introduce the e-paper to the neighboring librarians.

Besides the library communities, other channels are also applied to promote the e-paper. They are institutes (The Library Association, R.O.C.), key-person (professors in Depts. of Library Information and Science), the Library Almanac of R.O.C., and media promotion.

## **Cooperation and Development**

Cooperation and development are the two inevitable tendencies towards globalization. Some concrete measures are narrated as follows:

Reports on different levels of libraries (primary and senior high schools, and eventually the community libraries) will be included in the e-paper.

### ***Hong Kong Library Directors' Association***

The e-paper has been forwarded to the Hong Kong Library Directors' Association and a link already established. More so, in June, I will be invited to Malaysia to address on library science; therefore, a bridge with the Mandarin schools in Malaysia can then be set up. Finally, during the IASL annual meeting in 2005, the e-paper will be open to subscription of global-wide Chinese.

In the later development of e-paper, gradually, the right of planning, editing, and issuing will be open to the global Mandarin library communities, making it a corporate asset of all mandarin libraries.

This paper has ~~found~~ some significant discoveries since Nov. 2004 as narrated below:

According to the Register of Names of the National Library Directors' Meeting, among the 830 subscribers, 138 mails were rejected for unknown reasons. Possible reasons are auto-activation of firewall of subscriber's PCs because e-paper is a mass-mailing mail, and the retirement of librarians that lead to cancellation of their email accounts.

Some subscribers declared they are too busy to read the e-papers or they don't have the habit of using emails. A relatively minority even showed a repelling attitude on using computers.

Based on our database, there are only a few people expressing their opinions via this platform, though they have quite a few opinions through phone survey. This phenomenon could be contributed by Chinese generally hold an indifferent attitude toward public affairs.

Library director, Mr. Chuang, of Malaysia once wrote to me saying that the e-paper's homepage is inaccessible, while it works out well from Germany. Therefore, the international internet environment still needs improvement.

### **Challenge and Perspectives**

With limited budget and human resources, the information indexing function and firewall protection are still fairly weak.

An auto-editing format software is needed to cope with the diverse formats of received mails.

Currently, the personnel organization of the e-paper is still quite laxly and unstable owing to a lack of regular budget. Thus, an official institutionalization is badly needed for a permanent management.

Mr Kirl Min Kun, the president of Interlibrary Cooperation Association , R.O.C. <<http://www.ilca.org.tw/>> argues that Library civilization is a part of human civilizations in his article The Four Civilization on the History of Librarianship Development They are (1) Knowledge memory on the media storage, (2) Knowledge media circulations and delivery, (3) Knowledge content reference and referral service, and (4) Knowledge content and context management.

Today, the knowledge spreading is without boundaries with the rapid growth of Internet,. I personally consider the e-paper is deeply involved in this ripple effect. Compare to the vast booming library industry (business?) in the west, the Mandarin libraries still have a long way to go, and issuing the e-paper is one of this meaningful tasks.

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