

## Practical Research on the Construction of Characteristic Resources in British University Libraries

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**Abstract:** Using the methods of network investigation and literature research, this paper makes an in-depth study on the construction of characteristic resources of the Sheffield University Library in the United Kingdom, and finds that it combines new media, digitalizes the characteristic resources, collects them by subject classification, opens online exhibitions and projects, and opens Twitter social network account, etc. Thus it can be seen that British university libraries attach great importance to the construction of characteristic resources, collecting and classifying characteristic resources scientifically, digitalizing characteristic resources integrating new media, re-exploiting and utilizing characteristic resources, and publicizing and communicating characteristic resources by using Library Blogs and social networks, so as to realize the magnificent transformation from the re-collection of library's characteristic resources to both collection and utilization. The successful construction experience of characteristic resources is worthy of reference for university libraries in China.

### 1. Analysis on the construction of characteristic resources in university libraries

Combining the characteristic collection of university libraries with the collection resources, we can form the unique characteristic resources that other libraries do not have or only a few libraries have. This is the unique cultural background of the library, an important support for the individualization of university libraries, and an important platform for cultural exchange with other libraries. In the network age, the construction of characteristic resources of university libraries can change the traditional propaganda channels, use the advantages and ways of new media to display the content of communication in an all-round and three-dimensional way<sup>[1]</sup>, to achieve the best communication effect, and also use the diversified means of new media to expand the audience, so as to meet the personalized needs of readers. Therefore, the construction of characteristic collection resources in university libraries, from collection to development, then to utilization and secondary development and utilization, needs to fully consider the individual needs of readers, so as to truly realize the reader-centered, enhance the utilization rate of characteristic collection, provide knowledge services, and display its utilization or research value<sup>[2]</sup>, in order to realize the magnificent transformation from the re-collection of library's characteristic resources to both collection and utilization.

### 2. Strategies for the construction of characteristic resources in the Sheffield University Library, UK

British university libraries attach great importance to the construction of characteristic resources. They exhibit on-line and set up blogs of characteristic resources. For example, Cambridge University Library has set up virtual exhibitions, set up blogs of characteristic collection, and set up @ULSpecColl social account on Twitter social networking platform.[3] The Special Collection Department of Southampton University Library has built virtual reading rooms, opened feature collection blogs, and found it on Facebook social networking platforms.[4] The Sheffield University Library in the United Kingdom has a characteristic collection blog for its characteristic collection resources and a @speccollshf characteristic collection account on Twitter's social network. [5] The Sheffield University Library in the United Kingdom characteristic resources are about 25,000 rare

books and more than 150 special collections, including archives, manuscripts, photographs, books, brochures and music scores. The Sheffield University Library considers these characteristic resources as unique resources to support research and teaching. The main methods of constructing these characteristic resources include five aspects:

### **2.1 Library homepage opens a column to introduce and publicize characteristic resources**

The home page of Sheffield University Library has a feature collection column, which includes nine modules: open time, visit rules, feature collection A-Z, subject list, contact us, digital collection, replication service, online exhibition and project, and policy. The main service contents of characteristic resources are listed in detail.

### **2.2 Committed to digitalizing characteristic resources**

From the special collection column of the Sheffield University Library homepage, it is clear that the special collection department has a large collection of rare professional books and academic archives, covering a wide range of topics and time periods. Digital Special Collections provides free access to many visual shock materials in the school library's characteristic resources series. There are more documents are digitized and added to resources, with detailed metadata to enhance search and browsing every week.

### **2.3 Opening online exhibitions and projects in the library home page column**

The characteristic resources of Sheffield University Library hold online exhibitions on different themes every year. From 2013 to 2017, six thematic exhibition projects have been launched, including Robert William Innes Smith: GP and Scholars from 2013 to 2014 and Projection of Victorian Age: Magic Lantern Rekindled from 2014 to 2015, Alphaeus Abbott Casey's Diary: "Preparing for War" from 2015 to 2016 and 2017's Art and Humanities Festival Exhibition, Sheffield University, etc.

### **2.4 Collecting characteristic resources by themes**

The characteristic resources of Sheffield University Library are classified into 33 categories according to thematic features, including Archaeology and prehistoric studies, poetry, Hispanic studies, Germanic studies and so on. Each thematic special collection has digital exhibits and detailed collection descriptions. For example, archaeological subject collections, mainly Waechter-Higgs series, show that the collection level is a special collection, which includes articles from the personal collections of archaeologists John Waechter and Eric Higgs, offprint, magazines, photographs and collections of on-site reports. The series mainly deals with Paleolithic archaeology, but its scope is extended to zoology, botany, ethnology, paleoanthropology and African archaeology, mainly from 1848 to 1976. There are 59 boxes of collections with biographical history, etc.

### **2.5 To carry out socialized services**

The Special Collections Department of Sheffield University Library provides socialized services, such as opening to the community, carrying out special exhibitions and activities for special objects, and providing paid reproduction services for some special resources that can be copied. It is open to readers with personalized needs. For reproduction services, the products provided are photocopies or digital images, of course any reproduction must comply with copyright law, and a copyright notice must be completed and signed for personal research purposes, and written permission from the copyright owner must be obtained for publications and commercial use.

## **3. Reference and inspiration from the construction of characteristic resources in the library of Sheffield University**

The characteristic resources construction of Sheffield University Library fully combines with new media technology, and realizes the mission of collection, preservation, development and utilization. This paper analyzes the successful experience of characteristic collection construction of

this university, which is worthy to be referenced by university library in China.

### **3.1 To pay attention to collection and scientific classification of characteristic resources in multiple varieties and ways**

The university library has about 25,000 rare books and more than 150 special collections, including archives, manuscripts, photographs, books, pamphlets and music scores, covering a wide range of subjects and time. Therefore, Sheffield University Library collections overall is complex and various with the characteristic resources that have the collection value. The concept of this library collection is that it receives any book as long as it has collection values, which makes a contrast to several Chinese universities' libraries that show indifference to those resources as long as they are inconsistent with the collection style, collection scope and construction concept of their university. They really should think it over about it. The Special Collections Department of Sheffield University Library divided all their collections into 33 categories according to the theme, and has established the special collection catalogue of A-Z list. It can be seen that the investment in the construction of featured resources requires a large number of human, material and financial resources, as well as the support from professionals and technical staff in the collection.

### **3.2 To attach importance to the digital construction of featured resources integrating all media**

The Special Collections Department of the Sheffield University Library has a large collection of rare professional books and academic archives, which are gradually digitized. According to an online survey, these rare professional books and academic archives are not simply scanned into electronic versions, but are integrated with media technology to make sound, color and painting together, integrating images, video, audio, text into other products. Audio, video, etc. can be seen from the "digital collection" in the special collection of the university's library, and digital exhibitions and special activities in media can be seen from the "online exhibition and project". A short video from Jesse Armstrong posted on social media, "Finding rare books and archives in Special Collections," showcases projects in their Special Collections Department and information on how to request access to Collections. At present, in the construction of university digital library, the digitization of characteristic collection is an important link. The digitization of characteristic collection needs to integrate new media technology and display its contents in an all-round and three-dimensional way, so as to keep up with the development and progress of the time and meet the needs of readers.

### **3.3 To attach importance to the second development and utilization of characteristic resources**

In Sheffield University Library characteristic collection resources construction, library attaches great importance to second development and utilization of characteristic resources. They make full use of the advantage of new media such as planning special exhibitions with the hands of multiple sectors and teams according to the project team activities scheme, in the hope that their collection project could be provided to the university and beyond. Such activities can not only improve the utilization rate of characteristic resources, but also the feeling of the social public, resulting in certain social benefits, like raise the social reputation. For example, in the exhibition activity of the Sheffield University Arts and Humanities Festival in 2017 <sup>[6]</sup>, it mainly shows their collected projects to audiences not from the universities. The activity exhibits various materials and rare books regarding academic research in the form of new media. In addition to put objects in the booth for visitors, the university also provides a plasma screen to highlight some of their digital collection, and use blogging and social account for publicity and interaction. The activity was welcomed by the public except the university. Therefore, the construction of characteristic resources in university libraries needs to be redeveloped and utilized so that the characteristic resources can be deeply explored, their utilization value can be shown, and the magnificent transformation from heavy collection to both collection and utilization can be realized.

### **3.4 To emphasize the use of library blogs and social networks to promote and communicate featured resources**

In the construction of characteristic collection resources of Sheffield University libraries, Special Collection Department makes full use of library blog and social network to publicize and communicate characteristic resources. For example, the short video “finding rare books and archives in Special Collections” was published on the library's Special Collections blog and twitter social network to promote the special resources; Feature resource “memory performers during world war I” was published in three columns: information and digital literacy, professional services, and featured collections, as well as featured collections blog and twitter social network. Under the new media environment, university libraries should study and attach importance to readers' reading tools, reading habits and reading methods, and cater to readers' reading preferences. Only in this way can the construction, publicity, communication and exchange of characteristic resources achieve certain effects and good benefits.

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