

Chinese Library Field Active in Fight against COVID-19

In January 2020, the sudden COVID-19 epidemic swept through China, arousing concern across the country and even the world. Under the leadership of the central government and local governments at all levels, Chinese people from all walks of life have devoted to the fight against the epidemic, including medical workers, police, journalists, community workers, builders, takeout workers, etc.

Headed by the Library Society of China (LSC) and the National Library of China (NLC), libraries across China continue their services online during the closing period and have made a positive contribution to the common goal of winning the fight against the epidemic. For instance, library workers in Wuhan and other regions went into communities and built book corners for makeshift hospital patients and medical workers.

I Perform due functions and provide information support for decision-making

With focus on the prevention and control of the epidemic, NLC actively performs its statutory function of “serving national legislation and decision-making” by compiling special reports and conducting special research with in-depth analysis, thus providing comprehensive, accurate and timely information references and support for national policy-making organs.

Among them, the “*Special Report of COVID-19 Prevention and Control*” is made and submitted twice or three times a week to the related national policy-making organs. Meanwhile, entrusted by the National People’s Congress, the State Council and other relevant agencies, NLC collects all kinds of epidemic-related information on a daily basis, forming review reports on topics such as measures taken by governments at all levels, medical waste treatment, epidemic prevention of public transport and communities, supplies, production recovery, online diagnosis, epidemic development research, international experience, and the response of local people’s congresses and their deputies. In addition, literature reviews and special studies are carried out on topics such as the construction of public safety system, emergency response capabilities of public health institutions, national strategic material reserve system, construction of emergency system of civil-military integrated disease control, boosting economic development, and international cooperation in response to the epidemic.

II Take advantage of resources and expertise to extend library services online

After the outbreak of COVID-19, in order to effectively avoid the possible risk of infection caused by crowd gathering, NLC and libraries at various levels have

successively suspended the in-library activities like on-site readers services, exhibitions, lectures, and other related activities. However, the mission of “Finding Books for People and Finding People for Books” continues with even more considerate and in-depth online services in the nationwide fight against the epidemic.

Besides digital libraries in operation as usual, libraries across China provide services via their official websites, microblogs, mobile portal websites and related applications where various push information can be found such as resource services, content summaries and usage guides. NLC has launched the "Special Topic on the Resources of Fighting against COVID-19 Epidemic" to spread prevention knowledge and provide domestic and overseas professional literature on COVID-19 epidemic. The National Science and Technology Library has launched the "COVID-19 Emergency Literature Information Column", which contains about 3.5 million related foreign scientific literature including journal articles, books, reports, patents, standards, etc. to support epidemic prevention and control. The Institute of Medical Information/Library, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences (IMICAMS) has established the "Service Platform of COVID-19 Prevention and Control", which integrates and displays in category the related news reports, academic papers, professional guides as well as policies and regulations issued by domestic and foreign authorities. In addition, IMICAMS collects daily epidemic data regularly to show the trend of the epidemic in multiple dimensions via data analysis and visualization techniques.

Library workers in Wuhan went into makeshift hospitals and hotels where medical workers aiding Wuhan live and set up more than 50 book corners. The Hubei Provincial Library specially launched the "Window of Digital Culture" for makeshift hospital patients and medical workers. Libraries in Hubei province all focused on providing online courses on psychological counseling or gathering relevant resources for readers, thus bringing both warm and valuable spiritual nourishment for people fighting the epidemic. They also offered “exemption from late fees for overdue books during the library closing period due to the epidemic”. As the number of confirmed cases began to drop gradually, Ningbo Library partially resumed the book delivery service of “Tianyi Credit Reading” with no contact, satisfying the needs of readers and the requirements for strict control of the epidemic.

III Actively donate urgently needed materials to Wuhan

NLC, on February 15th, immediately sent a letter to extend solicitude for all library workers in Wuhan, and at the same time did its best to allocate a batch of protective equipment to support Wuhan, after knowing that library workers in Wuhan faced difficulties in the purchase of epidemic prevention materials due to inadequate reserves when going into

communities for important duties such as guarding the gate, disinfecting and sterilizing, measuring body temperature, delivering green groceries for residents, and establishing book corners for makeshift hospitals. The Library Society of China issued a "Proposal on Donating Urgently Needed Materials for Epidemic Prevention and Control for Libraries in Wuhan", calling on the national library field to help fight the epidemic through donation, and urgently sent a batch of gloves and protective clothing to Wuhan. Immediately afterwards, all branches, provincial library societies and provincial libraries responded actively to the call, which initiated the action of "Support Wuhan and Overcome the Hardships: National Library Field Donates Urgently Needed Materials for Epidemic Prevention and Control".

Until March 31, more than 200 libraries and related institutions nationwide had actively participated in this action, and donated a large amount of materials for library colleagues in Wuhan and other regions of Hubei Province, including 120,000-plus face masks, nearly 390,000 pairs of gloves, nearly 37,000 raincoats, 21,000-plus pairs of shoe covers, 3,000-plus sets of protective clothing, 8000-plus pairs of goggles, nearly 5,000 bottles (barrels) of disinfectant, 30 tons of seasonal vegetables, and more than 30,000 items of wipes, hand sanitizer, medicine soaps and other materials.

IV Hold public welfare activities to spread love

Taiyuan Library held the reader's card-making activity of "Not Alone" via Douyin, the Chinese version of Tik Tok, which involved 471 libraries and received a warm response. Ankang City Library held a letter-writing contest to invite librarians nationwide to express their solicitude for library workers in Wuhan and 886 letters were received in just ten days. "A Letter to the Heroic Wuhan" from Jinling Library was really touching with profound cultural background. Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province launched the activity of "Fight Together, You and I", where 146 public libraries in the province wrote their names on the heart-shape card and recorded original videos expressing "Wuhan, Jiayou (Stay strong) in different and warming dialects of the province. The Children's Library of Changchun City held the activity of "Children Fight the Epidemic- Little Painters in Action" in which the children showed their admiration, encouragement and appreciation to all the people fighting in the front line through their paintings.

On the evening of March 5, "My Fight against the Epidemic" - a competition of reading marathon online - was jointly held by 338 libraries in the city of Shanghai, four provinces of Hubei, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui as well as other regions. A total of 15,545 readers at home and abroad participated in the competition. They showed the beauty of reading in a more popular way and expressed the determination of ordinary people to fight the epidemic and their roles and responsibilities.

V Support librarians' online learning for professional development

The epidemic prevention and control entered a critical period in early February. In order to meet the learning needs of library workers and further improve their professional capabilities and service levels during the fight against the epidemic, the Library Society of China (LSC) selected more than 100 popular professional courses given by well-known experts in recent years which were made available free to library workers via the official website and application of "Member Learning Center". The courses cover 11 major categories, such as basic theory of library science, library and modern technology, library and industry policy, library and social forces, library and evaluation & rating, and "Reading Promoters" training. In order to get more library workers informed of such information in time, LSC pushed articles via its WeChat public account, which gained widespread attention and received more than 10,000 clicks in a short time.

Since mid-February, in order to further encourage different kinds of libraries at all levels to innovative reading promotion services via the Internet, LSC has collaborated with enterprise council members and relevant digital resource providers to offer different learning resources to its members, library workers and readers free of charge via the "Digital Reading Service Sharing Platform of Reading Union". At the beginning of its launch, the platform has about 3000 types of digital resources such as e-books, audiobooks, videos, periodicals, and pictures, with a total storage of about 10TB, and the resources will be continuously updated.

Until March 31, nearly 5,000 users were registered on the platform of "Member Learning Center" with more than 1,780,000 visits. The "Reading Union Platform" has covered 2,148 libraries across China, including 42 libraries at the sub-provincial level and above (including children's libraries), 376 city-level libraries, and 1,730 district and county-level libraries. The Column of the Library Society of China on the "Reading Union Platform" features quality course resources provided by LSC, with approximately 59,000 counts of usage and a total service duration of nearly 169,000 hours.