Educational Reform and the Emergence of Modern Libraries in China
With Special Reference to the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1909–1937

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Jinhong Tang  
(Signature)  
(Date)
Abstract

This thesis examines the rise of modern Chinese libraries between the 1840s and the 1930s in the context of educational reform, intellectual development, national regeneration, and state building. It focuses on how educational reform and other factors influenced the way in which modern libraries came into being in China. It argues that the establishment of modern libraries in China was a complicated and long process, as China followed neither the “industrialisation and democracy” model of the United States nor the “modernisation” model of Meiji Japan. Rather, modern libraries were introduced into China in the closing years of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) to facilitate educational reform and national regeneration. The Nationalist government, established in 1928, further stimulated the expansion of Chinese libraries as part of the government’s state building efforts. Therefore, this thesis examines the Chinese case in the emergence of modern libraries: the case of “underdevelopment” with distinctive Chinese characteristics. To explore the factors that contributed to the underdevelopment of modern Chinese libraries as they emerged, this thesis employs a case study of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing—the predecessor of the National Library of China—between 1909 and 1937 in terms of its formation, early development, and problems. This analysis reveals that both the macro and micro factors conducive to library development were not present in China before the 1920s. Even when the conditions improved during the 1920s and the 1930s, especially during the Nanjing Decade, the development of modern Chinese libraries was far from satisfactory for various reasons, with low library consciousness being an important one. The Conclusion of this thesis outlines the continuing impediment of low library consciousness in China today.
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Introduction

Industrialisation and democracy formed the basis upon which modern libraries developed in the West in the nineteenth century. Although the institution of the modern library began in Europe, the emergence of modern American librarianship was a typical representative. In the nineteenth century, a number of positive forces contributed to the emergence of modern libraries in the young but vigorous United States, industrialisation and democracy being of paramount importance. Industrialisation required a sophisticated level of knowledge among workers. Democracy encouraged the free flow of information and depended on the informed citizen as the foundation. In this setting was born the modern library in the United States.\(^1\) A leader in the world for a century, modern American librarianship has been transfused to other countries, benefiting the creation of modern libraries there.\(^2\) Another model characterised the emergence of modern libraries elsewhere, namely the “modernisation” model of Meiji Japan, which showed the inextricable links between the founding of modern libraries and the modernisation movement launched by the Meiji government in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.\(^3\) The Chinese case, however, is different from those in the United States and Japan. It is a case of “underdevelopment” with a distinctive Chinese flavour.

The discourse of modern Chinese libraries was located in the area of educational reform and intellectual development. Reform was seen as the key to the survival of China in the last decades of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), which was threatened by foreign aggressions and internal challenges. Education was viewed as an important part of the reform movement. The emergence of modern Chinese libraries was, in large part, the result of educational reform, and in this sense, it was different from library development in the United States and Japan, although modern Chinese librarianship was influenced by, and benefited from, American librarianship.


Although librarians and library historians have developed an impressive body of scholarship over the last several decades, the library, as an area of research, has remained largely neglected by the traditional academic disciplines. As far as China is concerned, modern libraries were slow to develop, even though China boasted of its long tradition of book repositories (cangshulou). It was not until the nineteenth century, especially the mid-nineteenth century, that they were introduced into China. The modern libraries introduced into China was a distinct and decisive break from those traditional book collections. Despite the existence of numerous studies on Chinese librarianship, there are few systematic and comprehensive studies of the emergence of modern Chinese libraries, especially in terms of the transition from book repositories to modern libraries. Further, little has been written about the contributions of Chinese libraries to Chinese society during China’s transition to modernity between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when China experienced drastic changes in political, social, and intellectual circles. To fill the gap in the literature, this thesis, for the first time, makes a critical analysis of the circumstances under which modern libraries were established in China. Since the emergence of modern Chinese libraries exhibited salient characteristics, this thesis is an investigation into those characteristics. By locating modern libraries in the context of educational reform and intellectual development of early modern China, this research offers an exciting and challenging thesis which will generate and stimulate future studies on modern Chinese history and Chinese libraries.

This thesis examines the transformation of China’s traditional book repositories to modern libraries and explores the problems that occurred in their underdevelopment from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. It traces the emergence and early development of modern Chinese libraries, with special reference to the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB, Jingshi tushuguan), the predecessor of the National Library of China. It aims to begin to address the deficiency in the literature on the emergence of modern Chinese libraries. It should also be of interest to scholars of library studies in other countries.

National survival, educational reform, New Culture, and state building all acted as the driving forces that contributed to the emergence and initial development of modern Chinese libraries. They were founded at a time when China was engulfed in imperial decline and foreign aggressions. This thesis investigates the rise of modern libraries in China from the 1840s to the 1930s, a period during which enormous
changes took place in the political, economic, cultural, and intellectual domains of the
country. The issue of national salvation confronted China in the late Qing. A series of
reforms was launched, with educational reform being an important part of them.
Despite different political viewpoints, a number of reformist Chinese emphasised the
educational functions of modern libraries introduced from the West. Further, they
advocated modern libraries as part of their search for modernity and an educated
nation. Therefore, modern libraries were regarded as an essential facilitator to
educational reform in China from the start. However, as modern Chinese libraries
were not a natural outgrowth of increasing industrialisation and democracy, Chinese
society was not adequately prepared for them. As a consequence, it took almost a
century for them to develop. And they were not established in the real sense until the
1920s and the 1930s, when the New Library Movement (1917–1927) strengthened
their image as a new social institution and when the Nationalist government engaged
in state building.

The peculiar conditions of modern China determined the way in which modern
Chinese libraries came into being. In other words, their emergence had Chinese
features. Modern Chinese libraries rose in the last years of China’s last dynasty, and
the whole process was long, slow, and torturous, involving “enlightened” Chinese
scholars, reformist Chinese government officials, and foreign missionaries.
Furthermore, the emerging libraries inherited a wide range of Chinese classics from
the traditional book repositories, as the preservation functions of libraries were
advocated as well. Such inheritance contributed to the accumulation and preservation
of Chinese cultural heritage.

To help understand the emergence of modern Chinese libraries, a case study of the
MLB is provided, focusing on the period 1909–1937. In particular, this case study
illustrates the underdevelopment of modern Chinese libraries, which were confronted
with a host of problems from the beginning. The problems were associated with a
number of factors, including China’s political instability and social disorders, a lack
of financial support from an almost non-existent industrial economy, low library
consciousness on the part of the general public, a largely uneducated population that
was not attracted to libraries, and underdeveloped library science research and
education which led to a lack of qualified library professionals. Some of these
problems were solved during the Nationalist period, prior to the outbreak of the
Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The Nationalists, working as state builders,
seemed to have a better appreciation of the value of modern libraries. Therefore, they
developed modern Chinese libraries as part of their state building project. In many
ways, the history of modern Chinese libraries can be compared with those in other
countries. Thus, a comparative perspective is adopted at the end of the thesis,
highlighting the important characteristics of the rise of modern libraries in China.

The principal argument of this thesis is that modern library development in China
was a long and difficult process, unable to follow the “industrialisation and
democracy” model of the United States. Nor did it follow the “modernisation” model
of Meiji Japan due to China’s different political, social, and economic conditions. The
Chinese case had its own peculiarities, reflecting those conditions. Thereafter, this
thesis advances the Chinese case in the emergence of modern libraries: the
“underdevelopment” case. This thesis also argues that the MLB strove to function as a
modern library at the outset, but the conditions conducive to Chinese library
development were not present in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was not
until the Nationalist period, especially the period 1928–1937, that the MLB made
some achievements in reader services and solved some of its previous problems. But
the development of modern Chinese libraries was far from satisfactory by 1937 due to
many persistent problems. Some of them, such as low library consciousness, can still
be seen in Chinese libraries today.

The creation of modern libraries in China is an important development in modern
China’s history. It reveals a great deal about the diffusion of ideas, the formation of
institutions, and the relations between intellectuals and their authorities. It also
demonstrates how the Chinese elite and their government contributed to China’s
modernisation and transformation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
Thus, this thesis is intended to enrich the research on the history of modern China by
drawing attention to the social forces connected with modern library development in
China’s transition to a modern nation-state more than a century ago. It will add to the
scholarship on the New Culture Movement by examining the New Library
Movement; it will supplement the study of Western missionaries in modern China
with a discussion of their influence on modern Chinese libraries. It will also
contribute to the research on biographies of historical figures in China from the late
Qing to the early Nationalist period by linking important historical figures with the
development of Chinese libraries, notably Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Zhang Zhidong
(1837–1909), Zheng Guanying (1842–1922), Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Luo
Zhenyu (1866–1940), Wang Guowei (1877–1927), Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), Lu Xun (1881–1936), Hu Shi (1891–1962), and Li Dazhao (1889–1927). These were distinguished figures in their own fields. This thesis will illustrate the oft-neglected aspect of their contributions to modern library development in China.

In addition, this thesis will make a contribution to Western scholarship on modern Chinese librarianship. Although China had a long and splendid history of books, libraries, and librarianship, Chinese libraries have received relatively little attention from Western scholars, possibly due to a lack of English language sources in this field. One of the exciting prospects of this thesis is that few of the existing works, either in English or in Chinese, have produced a sophisticated history of the rise of modern Chinese libraries. This thesis draws on Western library theories and adopts a comparative framework to highlight the emergence of modern libraries in China against the experiences of Japan and the United States. In this sense, this research will also contribute to the development of comparative librarianship.

The present thesis follows my previous study of library science. My interest in library history inspired me to draw on the broad social context in which libraries existed and developed more than a century ago. My study and work prior to this doctoral research encouraged me to further my research, albeit in a somewhat different direction. As early as 1994, when I was a postgraduate at the School of Library Science, Nankai University, China, I published an academic article in Chinese, entitled “Discussions on the Changing Roles of Librarians”. In it, I traced the evolution of the role of librarians, namely from a keeper to a facilitator and an educator. Also in that article, I touched on the problem of the transition from book repositories to modern libraries in China by stating that the increasing public need for education and knowledge drove this transition. Although my publications in the English language deal mainly with Chinese librarianship in recent years, my interest in the emergence of modern Chinese libraries is undiminished. Working from the perspective of modern Chinese history, I am able to interpret the forces contributing to the emergence of modern libraries in China and identify those responsible for their slow development. I hope to offer some insights into comparative studies in librarianship through my analysis of library development in China, Japan, and the United States.

SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

From the outset, some basic concepts need to be clarified, including the library in general and the library in China in particular.

The library institution

Derived from the Latin liber, the term library refers to the book. As a social agency, the library is a growing organism. Since the library is responsible for accumulating and delivering human knowledge, it has been influenced by a multitude of social forces and has managed to respond to social challenges. Consequently, the term library is a developing concept. By definition, the library is “a body of recorded information brought together for a specific purpose, organised for use and made available to readers.” Those responsible for acquiring, storing, organising, and delivering these records are usually known as librarians. To put it in another way, acquisition, organisation, and utilisation are the three essential tasks of libraries. It should be noted that different tasks were emphasised during different periods in history. In ancient times throughout the world, libraries were almost synonymous with archives, and the preservation of materials was central to libraries. As a consequence, librarians were a custodian or a janitor, with slight responsibility for the organisation of stored materials. In modern times, libraries are more than a place, books, and other records. They are a gathering of knowledge and information put in order and shared among the general public. As a result, librarians have assumed new roles, becoming simultaneously a facilitator, an educator, and a knowledge manager. Without people, libraries would be a mere place or a repository. It is people who make use of libraries and who work for them.

Notably, there were remarkable similarities between China and the West in the origins of ancient libraries. First, ancient libraries originated in the wealthy areas before the times of Christ. Ancient libraries in China began to be established in the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 BC), noted for its well developed writing system and expertise in bronze casting. In the West, relatively early ancient libraries were founded by Greeks in the fourth century BC. Second, crude and natural materials were adopted as media of recording in those libraries; a limited number of records, mostly handwritten, were stored there. As early as the Shang Dynasty, characters were inscribed on oracle bones, tortoise shells, ox scapulae, stones, and bronze; they were replaced gradually by bamboo and silk, and eventually by paper in the second century. In the West, the media comprised clay tablets, papyrus scrolls, and parchments. No doubt, the adoption of natural materials as media of writing was closely related to the low levels of productivity and scientific research. Third, those libraries were integrated with royal archives where records on politics, commerce, religion, history, and science were held.

Step by step, libraries of the modern type came into being in the West in the nineteenth century, and in China between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. A variety of them has come into existence, including national libraries, public libraries, academic libraries, special libraries, and school libraries. Different types of libraries serve different user groups and may have different priorities, but they all share one common feature, that is, modern libraries are an integrated system of three interrelated and interdependent functions held together by an administrative authority. These functions are acquisition, organisation, and service or utilisation, with

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10 Zhong Shouzheng, “Zhongxi tushuguan qiyuan de bijiao” (The comparison in the origins of libraries between China and the West), in her Bijiao tushuguan xue gailun (Introduction to comparative librarianship) (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1993), pp. 275-287.


13 Xu, “Zhongguo tushuguan qiyuan yanjiu,” pp. 72-78.


15 Xu, “Zhongguo tushuguan qiyuan yanjiu,” pp. 72-78; Johnson and Harris, History of Libraries in the Western World, pp. 57-59.


utilisation being the goal and rationale of modern libraries.\textsuperscript{18} It is in modern libraries that the utilisation of library collections is reinforced from time to time. Consequently, modern librarians are concerned with the acquisition and organisation of publications for their effective and efficient utilisation; the role of modern librarians has evolved from a janitor in ancient times to a mediator between resources and users in modern times.\textsuperscript{19}

The emergence of modern libraries in the West was a natural outcome of a combination of diverse social forces. The invention of printing with the movable type by Johann Gutenberg (1397–1468) in the fifteenth century was the harbinger of a change in the magnitude of communication. One direct consequence was the mass production of books at a relatively low cost. On this rising tide of print were born the Renaissance, the precursor of science, and the Age of Enlightenment, followed by the Industrial Revolution. The Enlightenment provided the ideological basis for the new faith in universal education and the endless pursuit of knowledge. The growth of mercantilism and the Industrial Revolution demonstrated the necessity for a large body of literate workers. The enthusiasm for universal education was eventually reinforced, and the modern type of library came into being.\textsuperscript{20}

The growth of modern libraries necessitated library science education and research. Library science is the body of techniques that underlies the practice of that profession.\textsuperscript{21} It includes the knowledge and skills concerned with the administration of libraries and their contents. The establishment and development of library science helped to enhance the social status of librarians and the standing of the library profession. Librarianship for the librarian is like scholarship for the scholar. It is a profession concerned with preserving the records of society and providing access to libraries and their contents.\textsuperscript{22} Similar to the disciplines in social and behavioural sciences, library science is an enterprise with a long past but a brief history.

\textsuperscript{20} Olle, Library History, pp. 19-20.
Library science education and research have improved significantly since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The first library school, the School of Library Economy, was founded in 1887 at Columbia University. In 1926, the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago became a legal reality and recruited its first students in 1928. A Doctorate was awarded in library science for the first time in 1953 at Columbia University, followed by Chicago, Illinois, and Michigan.\(^2^3\) There is little doubt that library science has become an independent discipline, which has benefited the pioneers in this field. The Five Laws of Library Science and the Theory of Epistemology have laid the theoretical foundations for library science, both of which place a premium on the utilisation of library collections. It was Shiyali Ranganathan (1892–1972), a distinguished Indian librarian, who developed the Five Laws of Library Science in 1931. These were: books are for use; every book has its readers; every reader has his books; save the time of the reader; and the library is a growing organism.\(^2^4\) The Five Laws of Library Science underscored the equality of human beings in the pursuit of knowledge and has been driving library services ever since. Furthermore, Jesse Shera (1903–1982), a renowned American librarian, insisted that the Theory of Epistemology act as the basis of library science. According to Shera, the library is a link in the communication system in society, and it is created by society as a response to social needs.\(^2^5\) His theory places libraries in the broad social context, broadening the horizon of this profession and expanding library science research.

Information Society and the Internet are two catchwords nowadays. Consequently, librarians are urged to seek new methods to bring stored knowledge to the attention of readers in competition with other information providers, such as information brokers, database corporations, and Internet service providers. The development of digital libraries is such a strategy.\(^2^6\) It is not surprising that Peter Young puts forward the term post-modern library. In his view, the post-modern library is as much a reality for

habitual Internet users as the card catalogue was for modern library patrons. Therefore, most library staff have to be available and trained to provide resources in both traditional print and digital formats. Many have integrated technology into their jobs without any change in their job descriptions or titles.

As stated above, in the broadest and richest sense, the library is a body of accumulated human knowledge for the purpose of effective utilisation by the members of society. An assembly of books is not a library. Rather, the library is an organisation designed to conserve and facilitate the use of records. It is a social instrument created to form a link in the communication system that is crucial to any society. A diversity of functions of the library has been stressed in different historical phases. Royal archives in ancient times can be regarded only as the antecedent of modern libraries. The modern library is a comprehensive and mature institution, aimed at disseminating knowledge and civilisation in society at large. The digital library or the post-modern library in the current Information Society is an experiment in the digital or virtual world.

The library institution in China

In ancient China, royal archives assumed the role of libraries. As mentioned earlier, the collection of oracle bones was the progenitor of libraries as early as the Shang Dynasty. Remarkably, Chinese cultural continuity and social order allowed China to maintain a unique, centralised state that held absolute authority through the rise and fall of dynasties. During the long dynastic periods, libraries took the form of book repositories or storage buildings for books. The word library (tushuguan) did not exist in imperial China until it was translated and introduced in 1896. Likewise, the term library science (tushuguan xue) was not brought to China until 1897. In imperial China, book collections or book repositories performed the functions of

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29 Jing Haiyan, “Cong tushuguan xue yizuo kan ershi shiji xifang tushuguan xue dui Zhongguo de yingxiang” (The influence of Western library science on China through translation in the twentieth century), Tushu yu qingbao (Library and information) 2 (2001): 2-7; esp. p. 3.
30 Ibid., p. 6.
libraries. There were four main types: government book repositories, private book repositories, academy (shuyuan) book repositories, and temple book repositories.\textsuperscript{31}

Book repositories in imperial China were based upon the self-sufficient agricultural economy and supported by the traditional culture for centuries. The centralised political regime contributed to the closed nature of book collections. While the privileged class had access to an education, knowledge, and book collections, the poor did not. Although paper and printing of the movable type were invented in China in ancient times, the open type of book collections failed to develop there early. Rather, the closure of book collections and the preservation of cultural heritage persisted throughout imperial times. Therefore, a library in imperial China was nothing more than a place where written records were kept; library science research was scattered among the literature on classification, bibliography, compilation, and evidential research (kaozheng).\textsuperscript{32} This is not to say that the preservation of book collections was unnecessary. As a matter of fact, book repositories contributed to the accumulation and spread of Chinese culture to a large degree by means of tireless acquisition and conservation of book collections for centuries. The point here, however, is that the excessive conservation of books proved to be a hindrance to modern service-based library development.

Modern libraries were introduced into late imperial China due to a number of social factors, eventually replacing book repositories early in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{33} For the purpose of this research, the term library refers to both the book repository and the modern library in China in its broadest sense, as this study investigates the emergence of modern Chinese libraries from the earlier book repositories. The adoption of this concept in its broadest sense is the key to the understanding of the inextricable connections between these two social institutions, even though in the strict sense, the term library only means the library of the modern type.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Chinese libraries is now a well established and internationally represented branch of inquiry with an enormous corpus of literature. The relevant

\textsuperscript{31} Lai, Zhongguo gudai tushu shiyeshi, ch. 1.
\textsuperscript{32} Wang Youmei, Zhongguo tushuguan fazhanshi (History of the development of Chinese libraries) (Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), ch. 6.
\textsuperscript{33} Wu, Cong cangshulou dao tushuguan, pp. 7-12.
literature usually deals with the history of book repositories and the development of modern libraries. Surprisingly, little systematic research has been done on the transition from book repositories to modern libraries. Book repositories were a unique cultural phenomenon in imperial China, their transition to modern libraries being determined by a combination of forces during China’s modern transformation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The history of this transition deserves scholarly attention, because it will contribute to the research on library science as well as to the research on the history of modern China itself. In addition, the research on national libraries has focused on conceptual discussions and functional analysis. The systematic study of their origins has not received adequate attention, especially the national libraries in developing countries, such as the National Library of China. Thereafter, the study of the origins of the National Library of China will benefit library science research in general and Chinese library studies in particular. The aim of this literature review is to find ways of formulating the research questions to be explored in this thesis.

**Libraries in China**

Generally speaking, the topic on libraries in China started to attract considerable attention, immediately after the Open Door policy was adopted by the Chinese government in late 1978. Many Western librarians visited China, and also a growing number of Chinese librarians started to introduce Chinese libraries to the outside world. But the literature produced in the following decade was superficial, short, and descriptive for a variety of reasons. First, China had been cut off from the outside world for ten years or so during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), and the insufficient knowledge available about Chinese libraries prevented Western scholars from making in-depth investigations. Even before the Cultural Revolution, contacts between China and other countries had been rather limited, except with the former Soviet Union during the 1950s. Second, Western librarians, most of whom relied on interpreters and translators, visited China only briefly and were unable to provide clear insights into Chinese libraries. Third, a lack of sufficient library science research and education hampered Chinese librarians in developing their professionalism. It was not until the 1990s that the research on Chinese libraries improved through the efforts of both Chinese and Western scholars, with increased contacts between them. As a consequence, some intensive and in-depth studies on Chinese libraries have been
conducted. Two particular themes have received scholarly attention, namely the history of book repositories and the development of modern Chinese libraries.

The history of book repositories

One major theme running through the literature on Chinese libraries is the history of book repositories in imperial times. The research on book repositories not only introduces their history but also illuminates the relationship between book repositories and their broad social environment. As early as 1935, Cheuk-woon Taam carried out systematic research on book repositories in the Qing Dynasty.\(^\text{34}\) Attributing the growth of book repositories to the printing of books, Taam argues that Qing scholars had benefited from their devotion to the production and preservation of books.\(^\text{35}\) He also argues that the compilation of catalogues served as an essential means through which the literary treasure once possessed by Qing China might be located and recovered at a later time.\(^\text{36}\) While summarising the achievements of book repositories in the Qing, Taam points out their weaknesses as well. In his opinion, the insufficient support from the Qing Court led to their destruction at the turn of the twentieth century when China experienced profound social transformation.\(^\text{37}\)

In recent years, Chinese scholars have conducted more thorough investigations into book repositories, most notably Lai Xinxia’s *History of Book Collections in Ancient China* (1990), Fu Xuanzong and Xie Zhuohua’s *History of Book Collecting in China* (2001), and Ren Jiuy’s *Chinese Book Repositories* (2001). Lai’s study concentrates on the history of book collecting activities throughout imperial China in terms of acquisition and conservation, cataloguing and organisation, translation and cataloguing of the classics on Buddhism, and compilation and circulation. His work offers a vivid account of the historical development of book collecting activities in ancient China.\(^\text{38}\) Likewise, Fu and Xie’s *History of Book Collecting in China* provides detailed descriptions and analyses of China’s book collecting activities.\(^\text{39}\) They explore the reasons for the decline of book repositories in the late Qing, arguing that


\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 90.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 91.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 93.

\(^{38}\) Lai, *Zhongguo gudai tushu shiyishi*.

the emergence of modern libraries and improvement in modern education accelerated the decline of book repositories. They also point out that the basis on which book repositories rested disintegrated gradually, such as adequate economic support, maintenance of storage buildings, and purchase of books.40 Their arguments will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Ren’s Chinese Book Repositories delineates the development of four main types of book repositories as well as the laws pertaining to them.41 According to Ren, book repositories emphasised collection and preservation at the expense of utilisation. There were four main types of book repositories in imperial China: government book repositories, private book repositories, academy book repositories, and temple book repositories. Throughout China’s history, several laws governed the development of these repositories. A secure regime and a prosperous economy were conducive to the growth of book collections; at the same time, dynastic demise brought disasters to them; the invention of paper and the printing press promoted cultural production and information dissemination, from which book collections benefited. Also beneficial were the tireless endeavours of Chinese scholars in academic research and book collecting activities.42 Ren’s viewpoints will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

The development of modern libraries
The other major theme running through the literature on libraries in China is the development of modern Chinese libraries from the 1920s until the present day. This theme is expounded in the light of American contributions to modern Chinese libraries, the expansion of modern Chinese libraries, and the issues on library automation and information technology.

In the case of American influence, the work of Priscilla Yu and Donald Davis underscores the dedications of American librarians to Chinese library development between the 1920s and the 1940s. They have demonstrated that Mary Elizabeth Wood (1861–1931), an American missionary librarian, made a determined effort to gain support among the US Congressmen for the remission of the balance of the Boxer Indemnity for educating young Chinese in library science in the 1920s. They go on to

40 Ibid., vol 1, pp. 9-10.
42 Ibid., vol 1, ch. 1.
argue that Arthur E. Bostwick (1860–1942), a distinguished American librarian, augmented the work of Mary Elizabeth Wood and promoted the extension of American library practice in China.\(^{43}\) Yu and Davis are not alone. Ming-yueh Tsay provides detailed descriptions about the cause, nature, extent, and influence of the Americans on the early development of modern Chinese libraries from 1920 to 1949. Tsay believes that modern libraries have developed significantly in China since the 1920s by constantly borrowing from the United States in numerous ways.\(^{44}\)

Chu Jingli builds on Tsay’s work, pointing out four basic channels through which American influence has been felt in China, namely bilateral exchange, Chinese students returning from the United States, international conferences, and translation of American texts on library science.\(^{45}\) Likewise, in a 1991 article, Cheng Huanwen wrote: “By the 1920s American librarianship began to enjoy the privilege of being the only type of librarianship introduced to China.”\(^{46}\) He further stated that American librarians provided a much-needed model for Chinese libraries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, asserting that American influence was “inestimable”.\(^{47}\) In another article published ten years later, in 2001, Cheng maintained that the development of modern Chinese libraries bore the influence of library development in Western countries, and that the most profound influence came from the most advanced American libraries from the 1920s until 1949. Specifically, Cheng claimed that all the modern Chinese classification systems were modelled on the Dewey Decimal Classification, that cataloguing rules were based on those of the Library of Congress, and that most courses in library science imitated those taught in the United States.\(^{48}\)

Chinese and Western scholars alike agree that Chinese libraries began to develop extensively in the 1920s. However, the greatest attention has been given to library


\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 386.

development in contemporary China. Accounts of their development in the 1920s and the 1930s are brief. Luo Xingyun, for example, states that a large number of modern libraries began to emerge in China in the 1920s and the 1930s, marking a new phase of library history in China. He fails to explain the factors contributing to the phenomenal expansion of Chinese libraries during those two decades. Instead, he offers a comprehensive introduction of the development of modern libraries in China after the People’s Republic was founded in 1949.

Sharon Lin is strong in depicting the expansion of a range of types of modern Chinese libraries from the 1920s to the 1990s, covering the national library, public libraries, special libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries. Her work is most informative and useful. But much attention is given to library development in contemporary China, lacking adequate analysis of the situation in the 1920s and the 1930s. Douglas Foskett, a renowned Western scholar in Chinese libraries, provides an overview of different types of modern libraries in China by surveying the National Library of China, public libraries, research libraries, university and college libraries, and school libraries. He concludes by claiming that Chinese librarians are making use of the Open Door policy to increase cooperation with their international counterparts. Like Lin, he neglects sufficient analysis of the expansion of Chinese libraries during those two decades.

Employing a historical approach, John Barclay studies modern Chinese libraries, highlighting their connections with the Chinese government. His research is not confined to the growth of modern libraries in China. Rather, it attempts to uncover the intrinsic inter-dependence between modern libraries and politics, economy, ideology,

and education in China during a period of seventy years, from 1919 to the late 1980s. Barclay divides his work into two parts. Part one concentrates on China’s Marxist library tradition between the 1920s and 1976, neglecting to examine the forces that contributed to library development during the 1920s and the 1930s. Instead, he focuses on the development after 1949, explaining in detail the relations between library expansion and the policy of the Chinese Communist Party. Part two traces the development in the post-Mao era from 1977 to the late 1980s. Throughout his book, Barclay argues that Chinese libraries have been linked inextricably with Chinese civilisation.53

It is worth noting that some scholars have paid attention to the suffering and development of Chinese libraries during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Yuan Zhou and Calvin Elliker state that Chinese libraries suffered serious attacks during the War. They also point out the strenuous efforts of the Chinese people to reconstruct their libraries during and after the War.54 One outstanding example of this was the Oriental Library, a special library affiliated with the Commercial Press. After its five-storey building was bombed to ashes by the Japanese troops in the 1930s, the Chongqing Branch of the Oriental Library was opened in the South-West of China in 1944, with the aim of “Sacrifice for the Chinese Nation and Struggle for the Chinese Culture”.55

Recently, a growing number of studies have concentrated on library automation and digital libraries in China. As China is a large developing country whose information industry is just beginning, many scholars are keen to suggest relevant strategies for developing China’s Internet-based industry and on-line information services, highlighting information policy and information technology.56


The emergence of modern libraries

Although the study of libraries in China has been receiving increasing attention in recent years, there has been little in-depth and systematic research into the way in which modern libraries came into being in China. So much has happened in the history of Chinese libraries that one cannot help but ask what had pushed modern libraries to replace traditional book repositories in China. To date, the research on this topic has been scattered and superficial. Yet the emergence of modern libraries in China was an innovative and complex development, part of the transformation of China into a modern state during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The influence of the Hundred Days Reform of 1898 on the introduction of modern libraries in China is often stressed to the neglect of other historical forces. For example, Wu Xi holds that the great reformer and thinker Liang Qichao contributed fundamentally to the establishment of modern libraries by advocating educational reform and the “renovation of the people” (xinmin). He further argues that society libraries founded by the reformers in 1898 were pioneers in modern Chinese libraries.\(^57\) Wu’s view is shared by others who observe that libraries attached to study societies, modern-style schools, and the Translation Bureau of the Qing Government (Yishuju) emerged first in the late Qing, followed by provincial public libraries and the national library.\(^58\) These scholarly views will be further discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Lai Xinxia, a historian, is more thorough in dealing with a variety of social forces relating to the transformation of the publishing industry in the late Qing and early Republic, including the introduction of advanced printing technologies, the reform in

\(^{57}\) Wu, Cong changshulou dao tushuguan, pp. 7-12.  
book binding system, and the growth in new types of publications.\textsuperscript{59} He points out that the New Library Movement, as an element of the New Culture Movement, played a role in the modernisation of Chinese libraries. But he is concerned with the radical changes in printed materials, not with the book repositories or libraries as a social institution. Although printed materials constituted a fundamental part of libraries or book repositories, Lai’s work offers little insight into how modern libraries were introduced into China.

Quite different from Lai’s work, P. Herbert is concerned with the transition from book repositories to modern libraries. She recognises the importance of mass education in China’s regeneration as well as in the establishment of modern libraries in the late Qing. She distinguishes between modern libraries and book repositories, expressing the view that book repositories were merely a place for storing books, whereas modern libraries are concerned with the dissemination of knowledge and education. She also compares modern libraries and book repositories in terms of staffing and cataloguing.\textsuperscript{60} Herbert criticises the limitations of book repositories, recognising the contributions of mass education to the establishment of modern libraries in China. But she fails to examine the other factors that combined to contribute to the emergence of modern libraries, such as the reform movement led by Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, the efforts of Western missionaries, and the New Administration (\textit{xinzheng})\textsuperscript{61} launched by the Qing government in the 1900s.

Similarly, Tang Jinhong points out that the increasing public need for education and knowledge promoted the transition from book repositories to modern libraries in China at the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{62} But she does not go on to investigate the social circumstances under which such demands arose. Donald Davis and Cheng Huanwen, in a 1997 article, drew attention to the destruction of the Qing government’s book collections, during the siege of Beijing, by the joint forces of eight foreign powers in 1900, and perceived the destruction as an explosive phenomenon of

\textsuperscript{59} Lai Xinxia, \textit{Zhongguo jindai tushu shiyeshi} (History of book collections in early modern China) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2000).


\textsuperscript{61} The New Administration was launched by the Qing government in its last decade of existence with a view to national salvation. For more information on this topic, see Douglas Robertson Reynolds, \textit{China, 1898–1912: The Xin Zheng Revolution and Japan} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

\textsuperscript{62} Tang, “Tushuguan yuan juese bianqian tantao,” pp. 31-33.
East-West encounters and “the threat of modernity to China” in the cultural domain.\textsuperscript{63} However, they did not investigate the links between the destruction of traditional book collections and the emergence of modern libraries.

\textbf{The idea of the national library}

The research on national libraries has focused on conceptual discussions and functional analysis, with inadequate and unbalanced literature on their historical origins.

\textit{Conceptual discussions}

The concept of national libraries has been a much-debated topic, as national libraries comprise a wide range of institutions peculiar to each nation. Nevertheless, researchers agree that they are modern libraries with national characteristics.\textsuperscript{64} Arundell Esdaile stresses that they are products of a modern society.\textsuperscript{65} David Kaser also asserts that they are of recent origins and did not exist in antiquity, adding that royal archives in ancient times can probably be viewed as early precursors to national libraries in the most embryonic form.\textsuperscript{66}

Since national libraries in the modern sense encompass various libraries that differ from one another in many aspects, it is difficult to come to an agreement concerning the standard concept of national libraries. Moreover, national libraries of the world came into existence in a diversity of ways and over a long period of time, which makes it difficult to define their concept precisely. Natalia Tyulina argues that a library can be called “national” when it is the official depository of published works, a general access library, a bibliographical information centre, and a centre for the coordination, organisation, and promotion of the entire library system of the nation.\textsuperscript{67} National libraries, therefore, can be understood both as an integral part of the whole library system in one country and as an element in the international library domain. At

\textsuperscript{67} Tyulina, “National Libraries,” p. 95.
a 1979 symposium on national libraries in Europe, it was agreed that it was pointless to try to define the term *national library* because of the diversity of those libraries represented at the symposium.\(^6^8\) This viewpoint is further expanded by Kenneth Humphreys, who maintains that the diverse origins and nature of national libraries throughout the world make it difficult to develop a unified concept of them.\(^6^9\)

Consequently, it is reasonable to say that royal archives in ancient times were not national libraries. National libraries came into existence in modern times by efforts as well as by evolution. In the meantime, national libraries in each country have their own characteristics, shaped by the political and social conditions in those countries.

*Functional analysis*

The functions of national libraries have been a research focus for decades,\(^7^0\) because national libraries have been changing constantly in terms of functions since their inception. Strikingly, the research on the functions of national libraries has centred on the works of Kenneth Humphreys, who, in 1966, suggested that the functions of national libraries be divided into three categories: essential, desirable, and non-essential. He holds that the essential functions include the following major elements: the central collection of a nation’s literature, legal deposit, coverage of foreign literature, publication of national bibliography, national bibliographical information centre, publication of catalogues, and exhibition. The collection of a nation’s literature is a basic function, although the collections in national libraries vary due to each nation’s unique situation. For example, engravings, coins, and medals are collected in some European national libraries, but they were collected in museums or art galleries in other countries.\(^7^1\) Natalia Tyulina echoes Humphreys’ idea that the storage of national publications is the function that takes precedence over all others, and that this function alone can justify the existence of national libraries.\(^7^2\) This view was further strengthened at a 1979 symposium on national libraries held in Europe, which maintained that “the national library of a country is the one responsible for collecting

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\(^7^2\) Tyulina, “National Libraries,” p. 95.
and conserving the whole of that country’s book production for the benefit of future generations.” F. Francis expands the collection functions of national libraries by including foreign literature and materials, citing the examples of the Library of Congress and the British Library.

Besides the essential functions, Humphreys argues that the desirable functions include inter-library lending, manuscripts, and research on library techniques. National libraries are responsible for collecting and preserving the nation’s publications. National libraries take responsibility for inter-library lending thanks to their large stocks of literature and their focal position in bibliographical information services. The advantageous position of national libraries also enables them to attract valuable manuscripts. Since national libraries have some advantages over other types of libraries, Humphreys suggests that they take the lead in the research on library techniques. He further states that the non-essential functions comprise international exchange service, distribution of duplicates, books for the blind, and professional training.

Inspired by Humphreys, Adoration Bolos finds that many essential functions of national libraries can be put to the following irreducible minimum: national collections, national bibliographical services, conservation, and leadership. Unlike Humphreys, Bolos places more emphasis on the leadership of national libraries, as he thinks that national libraries should take the lead in providing services and facilities for bibliographic work, carrying out training and education programs for library personnel, applying information technology, serving the handicapped clientele, and sharing resources. He concludes that national libraries can make a significant contribution to the educational, social, and cultural developments of their nations and their people by providing high quality library services.

Humphreys makes a detailed analysis of the functions of national libraries and categorises these functions into three groups: essential, desirable, and non-essential. But he fails to explain why he categorises in this way. Instead, he bases his research on the statements of the functions of the Library of Congress, the British Library, and

the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. He is concerned with large national libraries in developed countries, not with national libraries in developing countries.

The situation in developing countries has been taken into consideration by others. Paul Xuereb argues that the fundamental role of national libraries in developing countries is to lead the entire nation’s libraries, together with some other functions regarded as more or less essential. He bases his argument on the centralised administration in developing countries. According to him, most developing countries are located in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which gained political independence after World War Two; many of them are led by communist parties whose political spirit is centralisation at top level, such as the People’s Republic of China and Vietnam; this centralised administration is reflected in almost every aspect of the nation’s life, national libraries being no exception; by means of centralised leadership, national libraries can make full use of the existing resources to set an example to other types of libraries within those countries.77

The research on functional analysis relates to the social background in which national libraries exist. Since World War Two, great progress has been made in science, technology, culture, and education, hastening the accumulation of knowledge and dissemination of information. The 1960s saw the first wave of information explosion, and the 1980s began to witness the growth of heterogeneous information due to the rapid development of information technology. The unprecedented increase in information resources created new problems to libraries in terms of acquisition, organisation, and circulation. Accordingly, the research on national libraries has focused on ways of finding a solution to these new problems. It has been hoped that national libraries will be able to solve all these problems, as they are endowed with huge collections, well-trained personnel, and adequate funds. The global information environment has changed profoundly since Humphreys expounded his views. Against that background, Maurice Line, in the 1980s, argued for a reassessment of the functions of national libraries, emphasising, instead, the importance of bibliographical access to the world’s literature, access to documents, exchange of publications, and information supply and analysis.78 Information-related issues started to be included in

the functions of national libraries, as information began to be considered a crucial human resource.

Many share Line’s emphasis on the reassessment of the role of national libraries. Wim Van Drimmelen identifies two new roles: safeguarding authenticity and maintaining integrity of publications. In his opinion, the increase in information brings about both high quality and low quality information. As a result, the differences in the quality and utility of information need to be taken into consideration when it is collected and utilized. For this reason, he stresses the functions of safeguarding authenticity and maintaining integrity of publications for national libraries.79 In addition, Marina Mihalic points out that national libraries are mainly thought of as the symbol of national pride. She suggests that national libraries should be capable of meeting their nations’ information needs. Although Mihalic agrees that the maintenance of nations’ book collections was in the past, and still remains, the principal task of national libraries, she argues that more information services need to be organised in national libraries because more information is needed for industrial growth, economic expansion, and social development. That is, national libraries should be providers of information and reference services.80 Furthermore, Khondkar Karim emphasises the importance of the function of national libraries as an international exchange centre in the global information system.81

The literature shows that the functions of national libraries fall into four categories: collection and preservation of publications on a large scale, bibliographical activities, service to the public, and coordination of library activities in one country and in the international arena. Collection and preservation are the basic functions, with bibliographical and coordination activities aimed at serving users. If collection is the starting point, user service is the final goal. The literature suggests that these functions justify the existence of national libraries.

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Historical origins of national libraries

It is clear from the literature that national libraries have been responding to social change by fulfilling different functions in different historical phases. It is also clear that the research on national libraries has been carried out in response to practical needs and “still awaits serious theoretical summarisation.” Since the growth of publications and the impact of information technology have led researchers to focus on pragmatic issues, they have paid attention to consensual and factual works that are weak in analysis and interpretation. As a result, the historical analysis of national libraries is still inadequate. National libraries cannot be wholly understood without a historical analysis.

Arundell Esdaile studied the historical development of national libraries relatively early in 1934, but he only provided “a descriptive account of the historical beginnings and development of libraries that had emerged as the most comprehensive collections in their respective countries.” He did not look into the historical forces that contributed to the emergence of those libraries. Elsewhere, much has been written about the historical origins of national libraries in developed countries, for example, the British Library, the Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the National Library of Canada. This has led Natalia Tyulina to assert that “the development of the national library as a type of library was associated with the development of the bourgeois sovereign states as a result of their attempts at consolidating national science and culture.” By contrast, the historical analysis of national libraries in developing countries has not received the same attention.

It is well recognised that the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is the first national library in the modern sense. Both Natalia Tyulina and Etienne Denney contend that the process of establishing national libraries began with the French Revolution (1789–1795). Echoing their view, Elmer Johnson claims that the Bibliothèque Royale was declared the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as soon as the French Revolution began in 1789. In this way, the former royal book collections were made national property and granted the right to obtain deposit copies of all printed publications in

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the country. For Johnson, the French Revolution not only brought about the Bibliothèque Nationale de France but also generated the ideas of national library planning, national bibliographies, and library service for all the people. 86

Conversely, the establishment of the national library in Great Britain was not due to war or revolution. Stephen Green attributes the establishment of the British Museum, the predecessor of the British Library, to the appeal that the nation’s recorded sense of heritage and learning should receive national support in preservation and dissemination. 87 The British Museum was founded in 1753 to encompass all fields of knowledge, as Britain was thought to lag behind other countries in providing services to scholars and those members of the public, who wished to see objects of historical, scientific, or cultural interest. 88

It is not surprising that the research on American libraries has been abundant. On the establishment of the Library of Congress, it is unanimously agreed that democratic spirit contributed to its creation. Godfrey Burston observes that the Library of Congress was founded in 1800 to provide services to the US government and to assist Congressmen in preparing law. 89 John Cole also observes that the Library of Congress is a product of American cultural nationalism, founded as a legislative library to serve Congressmen. He attributes the founding of that library to President Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), who believed that a democratic legislature needed information and ideas in all subjects. 90

As for the establishment of the National Library of Canada, Francis Donnelly stresses the importance of the cultural environment. In her opinion, the search for nationhood in Canada was a long process, with the national identity finally achieved from the global struggle of World War Two. After the War came a period of national self-examination, analysis, and fruitful controversy in scholarship, education, and creative arts in Canada, which aroused national cultural consciousness. In the meantime, the Canadian government played a positive role in fostering a national

86 Johnson, History of Libraries in the Western World, pp. 165-166.
culture. The National Library of Canada emerged when the cultural atmosphere was ripe in the 1950s.91

By contrast, the research on the historical origins of national libraries in developing countries is inadequate. For example, the MLB, the predecessor of the National Library of China, now a leading national library in developing countries and the fifth largest in the world,92 is seldom included in the literature on national libraries.93 Although scholars have noticed the historic formation of the MLB, their writings are sporadic and brief. Some researchers have simply stated that the MLB was set up by the Qing government in 1909.94 Others have observed that provincial public libraries were the forerunners to the Chinese national library, without explaining its establishment in relation to those public libraries.95 Notably, Min-chih Chou argues that the founding of that library “was the result of an increasing realisation that libraries should be an important component in China’s modernisation drive.”96 His argument will be used in Chapter 4 of this thesis as a basis for understanding the early development of modern Chinese libraries. However, he fails to explain how the modernisation drive and reform movements in early modern China actually brought about the national library. He speaks of its early development in the light of collection acquisition, giving no attention to other aspects of its activities.

Even if there are works devoted to the early development of the MLB, they are primarily concerned with its achievements in the collection and preservation of Chinese classics,97 without looking into the interactions between the MLB and

95 Lin, Libraries and Librarianship in China, p. 78.
Chinese society and other aspects of the MLB’s existence as a modern library. In fact, the creation and early development the MLB were part of modern China’s state building project. By looking into the MLB’s early institutional history, one may appreciate the educational reforms of the late Qing and the state building efforts of the Nationalist government.

This literature review confirms that the research on the emergence of modern libraries in China is far from sufficient. Many questions remain unanswered (see below), and the cultural impact of modern libraries on early modern China is also incompletely understood. In sum, the historical origins and early development of the National Library of China warrants an in-depth investigation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
This thesis explores the forces that brought modern libraries into existence in China. Its time frame is between the 1840s, when China was opened to the outside world with increased introduction of Western learning, and the 1930s, when the newly founded Nationalist government engaged in state building. As is well known, the period from the 1840s to the 1930s was one of violence and radical change, which saw the decline of the Qing Dynasty, the 1911 Revolution, the birth of the Republic, and the establishment of the Nanjing regime. Although China was weakened and humiliated by the imperialist powers, this period saw the beginnings of industrialisation, the rise of nationalism, educational reform, and the intellectual transition from tradition to modernity. It was in this context that the imperial book repositories started to decline and modern librarianship from the West began to be introduced.

The centrepiece of this thesis is a case study of the MLB, the precursor of the National Library of China, from 1909 to 1937. Although the 1910s did not witness much growth of the MLB, its early activities during this period paved the way for its future development. This thesis makes an analysis of the social milieu in which the MLB came into being and contributed to Chinese society, exploring the reasons for its

lacklustre development in the 1910s and for its expansion under Nationalist rule in the
1920s and the 1930s.

Informed by the literature review, this thesis seeks the answers to the following key
questions.
• Under what circumstances and influences was the modern library introduced into
China?
• What were the relations between the advocacy of modern libraries and intellectual
development in early modern China?
• In what ways did the New Culture Movement complete the transition from book
repositories to modern libraries?
• To what degree, and how, did the modern library contribute to the “enlightenment”
of Chinese society during its transition to modernity in the early decades of the
twentieth century? What factors contributed to the underdevelopment of modern
Chinese libraries in these decades?
• What influenced the establishment and early development of the MLB from 1909 to
1937? What were the problems facing it? How, and to what degree, had its problems
been solved by 1937? Under what conditions did the Nationalist government promote
its development?
• What were the salient characteristics of the rise of modern Chinese libraries?

METHODOLOGY

This thesis takes a historical approach, combined with a case study and supported by a
comparative analytical framework.

The eminent American library scientist Pierce Butler once said that “librarianship,
as we know it, can be fully appreciated only through an understanding of its historical
origins.”98 But history, wrote Herbert Goldhor, is more than the collection of
information about certain events. Historical inquiry into librarianship seeks to
understand it as it existed during a specific period of time.99 This research is historical
in that it discusses the rise and development of modern libraries in China in the mid-
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the framework of educational change.

In doing so, it will make an analysis of the broad context in relation to the development of modern libraries in China, including politics, economy, education, and culture. This thesis does not provide a narration of great historical events or a historical account of epoch-making heroes. Rather, it seeks to discover the historical forces that contributed to the emergence of modern libraries during China’s transitional period, especially educational reform, Western learning, New Culture, and state building. By placing modern libraries in the broad historical context of modern China, this thesis will explore the interactions between educational reforms, modern libraries and intellectual change.

Case studies are popular with researchers because they allow them to gain insights into a particular phenomenon in its particular setting. In other words, a case study enables a concentrated focus on a single phenomenon and the utilisation of a wide array of data gathering methods. It is usually used in library science research to discover and describe an entity, such as libraries or librarians.\(^\text{100}\) Given the complexity and dynamics of this thesis, the case of the MLB is intended to illustrate the establishment, early development, and problems associated with modern Chinese libraries generally. The areas to be examined include the MLB’s attempts to increase collections, endeavours to raise funding, improvements in organisational structure, and the ways in which it served public needs. Its aspirations and activities, its success and failure offer rare insights into the slow growth of modern Chinese libraries. This case study will show that the emphasis on the preservation of the national essence (guocui) helped the accumulation of rare books at the MLB, but prevented the collection and utilisation of modern publications. Only after the Nationalist government was founded in 1928 did the MLB begin to further function as a modern library. Hence, this case study argues that library development in China owed a great deal to the Nationalists’ state building project. Yet modern Chinese libraries, during the Nanjing Decade, were still underdeveloped as a whole for a variety of reasons, which will be explored in this thesis.

Another aspect of the methodology here is the comparative perspective, drawing on the different American and Japanese experiences. Comparative studies in library science started to develop in the United States after World War Two, producing some

important works of this type.\textsuperscript{101} By comparing libraries, library systems, some aspects of librarianship, or library problems in two or more different national, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts, some illuminating findings may be obtained.\textsuperscript{102} My previous study of library science prompts me to offer a comparative perspective at the end of the thesis by examining the emergence of modern libraries in China, Japan, and the United States in different historical situations and against different cultural backgrounds. Such a comparative analysis helps to illuminate the salient characteristics of the Chinese case, demonstrating a different path of early library development. These characteristics include the emergence of modern libraries in the declining years of China’s last dynasty, the close connection with educational reform for the purpose of national salvation and state building, the presence of strong missionary influence, the inheritance of a wealth of Chinese classics from traditional book repositories, and the long and painstaking process of library establishment that lasted nearly a century.

While this thesis builds on the existing literature, it makes use of the primary sources in Chinese, including memorials, diaries, government regulations, reports, and speeches between the late Qing and the early Nationalist period. Materials held at the First Historical Archives of Beijing and the National Library of China are particularly useful. In addition, this thesis draws on a range of secondary sources on the history of modern China as well as on library science.

A special word needs to be said about the transliteration of Chinese terms. The Pinyin system is adopted here. In addition, most of the English translations of Chinese terms are mine.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 169.
Chapter 1

Traditional Book Repositories in Imperial China and
Their Decline in the Late Qing

Book collecting was a continuous and phenomenal cultural activity in imperial China, following the invention of writing, paper, and printing technologies. But a “library” in imperial China was nothing more than a place where written records were preserved. Modern libraries did not grow out of such a long tradition. In contrast to the modern type of library whose chief concern is the diffusion of knowledge through logical organisation and arrangement of materials for the benefit of the general public, book repositories (cangshulou) did not become a modern type of public institution in China until the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this metamorphosis was laboured, slow, and painful. Taking into consideration the influence of politics, economy, technology, education, and culture in imperial China, this chapter outlines the development of traditional book repositories in terms of their establishment, growth, climax, and destruction. It acknowledges that the contributions of book repositories to modern libraries were significant in China, as book repositories were pivotal in the preservation of a wealth of Chinese classics and in the facilitation of academic research; some book repositories even served as temporary places for the newly established modern libraries. It also discusses the reasons for the decline of book repositories in the late Qing. To be specific, external wars and internal chaos contributed to their destruction; educational reform and the abolition of the civil service examination system accelerated their decline; and the depressed agricultural economy played a role in bringing an end to them. In addition, this chapter argues that modern libraries could not emerge in China before the mid-nineteenth century, because China lacked the economic, technological, and cultural conditions necessary for their rise. This situation was not helped by a rigid social hierarchy and the absence of a spirit of service to the public.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOOK REPOSITORIES
IN IMPERIAL CHINA

Government, private, academy (shuyuan), and temple book repositories were the four major types of book repositories in imperial China. The progenitor of government
book repositories could be found in oracle bones and tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty (1766–1122 BC); private book repositories originated with a few distinguished scholars, such as Confucius (551–479 BC), during the Spring and Autumn (770–476 BC) and Warring States (475–221 BC) periods; academy and temple book repositories were linked to the establishment of academies and temples in the Han (206 BC–220) and Tang (618–906) Dynasties, respectively. Based on the achievements during the Tang, Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) Dynasties, all types of book repositories reached their heights in the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) Dynasties. Those book repositories were usually called book collections due to their emphasis on the preservation rather than the utilisation of the collections.1 As a result, the staff in charge of those collections assumed the role of custodians.2 Accompanying the growth of book repositories were academic achievements in bibliography compilation and evidential research (kaozheng).3

**Government book repositories**

Government book repositories were the oldest type of book repositories in China’s history, and relevant administration positions for them, such as the Great Compiler (mishujian), had been appointed since the Han.4 Throughout China’s long history, the phenomenal increase in government book repositories was brought about by a number of factors, including the emperors’ ardent interest in building government book collections, the privileged position of the book repositories, a prosperous agricultural economy, and the hard work of talented scholars employed by those repositories.5

Oracle bones and tortoise shells served as the precursors of book collections in the Shang Dynasty, when they were writing media on which pictograph and ideographs were carved. Such records dealt mainly with natural events and human activities,

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3 Ibid.

4 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 1, p. 5.

especially divinations. Now these oracle bones and tortoise shells are seen as the earliest government book collections in imperial China.\(^6\) It is not surprising that government book collections should come into being in the Shang Dynasty. It was a prosperous era in ancient China, with agricultural and handicraft industries thriving to the benefit of cultural activities. Significantly, the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods experienced more economic and cultural expansion than the Shang. In particular, wooden and bamboo slips were employed as writing media, which were easier to carry, produce, and utilise than oracle bones and tortoise shells. As a result, government book collections increased substantially, managed by renowned scholars. For instance, Laozi (580–500 BC), founder of Daoism, once worked as a historian with particular responsibility for government book collections.\(^7\) The establishment of the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), the first centralised Chinese dynasty, saw the standardisation of Chinese characters, which accelerated the accumulation of book collections in the succeeding dynasties.\(^8\)

From the Han Dynasty on, regular and large-scale campaigns of book acquisition were launched by the imperial government, with grand buildings erected to hold the collections.\(^9\) It was also in the Han that the Great Compiler, an independent administrator, was appointed by the imperial government to supervise government book collections, and the succeeding dynasties followed suit.\(^10\) The establishment of this position marked the beginning of formal administration of government book collections, putting an end to their management by historians. In addition, the compilation of bibliographies was initiated in the Han. Scholar Liu Xiang (80–19 BC) and his son Liu Xin (46 BC–25) were employed by the Han Court to organise government book collections. Due to their pioneering efforts, the earliest definitive works on classification, *Separate Records* (*Bielu*) and *The Seven Epitomes* (*Qilue*), were completed, serving as the first national classified catalogues in China’s history. These two works, especially *The Seven Epitomes*, divided all subjects into seven classes, including the classics, philosophy, poetry, military works, divinations,

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\(^6\) Ren, *Zhongguo cangshulou*, vol 1, p. 4.  
\(^7\) Fu and Xie, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, vol 1, p. 37.  
\(^10\) Ibid., vol 1, p. 5.
medicine, and general summary. From then on, this classification scheme was adopted until it was replaced by the four-type classification system in the Qing Dynasty.11

The advances in government book collections owed much to the interest of the Han rulers in the pursuit of knowledge and culture. Without imperial patronage, cultural prosperity in the Han Dynasty would have been impossible, as would the increase in government book collections. At the same time, the invention of paper and improvement in its quality during the Han accelerated the production of books. The growth of government book collections was demonstrated by the compilation of The Record of the Grand Historian (Shiji), whose author, Sima Qian (145–86 BC), was once responsible for the management of government book collections, including the archives of the previous dynasties. This opportunity enabled him to access a broad range of historical records and guaranteed the authenticity of The Record of the Grand Historian.12

The Tang, Song, and Yuan Dynasties saw the rapid expansion of agriculture, commerce, and trade, especially the improved technologies of porcelain-making, paper-making, and woodblock printing. They also saw spectacular cultural prosperity, such as the popularity and maturity of poetry in the Tang and Song. Stimulated by the emperors’ attention to culture and scholarship, government book collections were consolidated in number and administration,13 thus laying a solid foundation for further expansion during the Ming and the Qing.

The rulers in the Ming and Qing sponsored the compilation of encyclopedias and serials. Yongle Canon (Yongle dadian), the largest encyclopedia in the Chinese language, was completed during the reign of Emperor Yongle (1403–1424), in 22,877 volumes. This work reproduced, in part or in full, much of the existing literature during the period, helping to preserve many ancient and rare classics, which could

11 The four-type classification system divided all knowledge into four categories: the classics, history, philosophy, and literature. For more information on the history of the classification system and bibliography research in imperial China, see Yao Mingda, Zhongguo mukue xue shi (History of the research on Chinese bibliographies) (Shanghai: Shanghai yinshuguan, 1956).
12 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 1, pp. 69-70. For more information on the development of government book collections in the Han, see Li Gengwang, “Xihan de tushu shouji huodong” (Records collecting efforts in the Western Han Dynasty), Tushuguan xue yanyu (Research in library science) 3 (1984): 153-158; for more information on Sima Qian and his academic achievements, see Grant Hardy, Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian’s Conquest of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
otherwise have been irretrievably lost to the world. Yongle Canon covers an impressive array of subjects, including agriculture, art, astronomy, drama, geology, history, literature, medicine, natural sciences, religion, technology, as well as descriptions of unusual natural events. Only hand copies were made because of the high costs of woodblock cutting, and only one copy remained in the Qing Dynasty. Of equal importance was A Collection of Books of Ancient and Modern Times (Gujin tushu jicheng), completed in 1706, comprising 10,000 volumes and a large number of fine pictures. Due to the partial loss of Yongle Canon, A Collection of Books of Ancient and Modern Times is now the largest extant Chinese encyclopedia.

The crest of government sponsored book collecting activities in the Qing was the compilation of The Complete Library of the Four Treasures (Siku quanshu), the largest collection in China. This work was accomplished in 1782, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736–1796), containing 79,337 volumes and covering 3,578 books in four categories: the classics, history, philosophy, and literature. The Complete Library of the Four Treasures marked the greatest achievement of government book repositories in the imperial era, for the following reasons.

First, the Qing Court launched book acquisition movements across the country in search of high quality works for this huge project, and government book collections were strengthened in this way. Second, book dealers were keen to offer their masterpieces to the Qing Court, thereby promoting the publishing industry. Third, the House of the Complete Library of the Four Treasures (Siku quanshu guan) was set up to supervise this important task, thus improving the administration of government book repositories. Fourth, a number of distinguished scholars were recruited to participate in bibliography compilation. As a result, a comprehensive bibliography, The General Bibliography of the Complete Library of the Four Treasures (Siku quanshu zongmu), was completed in addition to The Complete Library of the Four Treasures. It encouraged further bibliographic research by adding synopses of the

16 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
18 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 1, pp. 760-769.
19 Ibid.
works included and by consolidating the four-type classification system of the classics, history, philosophy, and literature.  

Finally, seven storage buildings were established across China to hold seven hand copies of *The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*. These were: the Wenyuan Pavilion in the Forbidden City (the centre of Beijing), the Wenyuan Pavilion in Yuanming Park (on the north-western outskirts of Beijing), the Wenjin Pavilion in Summer Mountain (Chengde, Hebei Province), the Wensu Pavilion in Shenyang (Liaoning Province), the Wenzong Pavilion in Zhenjiang (Jiangsu Province), the Wenhui Pavilion in Yangzhou (Jiangsu Province), and the Wenlan Pavilion in Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province). Emperor Qianlong ordered that the Wenzong Pavilion, the Wenhui Pavilion, and the Wenlan Pavilion be open to local scholars free of charge. In this way, the imperial government made a significant step towards opening its book collections.

Although government and academy book collections were open to scholars during specific periods of time in traditional China, they were quite limited in the scope of readership. Further, the limited opening of books was initiated from the top, and there was nothing like “mass movement” in the use of records. On the whole, all activities of book repositories were restricted to the basic activities of collecting, preserving and compiling. As the value of libraries to society depended on the provision of user services, those book repositories were storage buildings, serving to preserve cultural heritage.

In addition, the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlinyuan*) and The Imperial College (*Guozijian*) were two important government institutions charged with book production and collection. The government institution responsible for history compilation in the Qing Dynasty, the Hanlin Academy was equipped with a range of materials on Chinese history, producing many relevant works annually. The Imperial College assumed the dual role of the highest educational institution and the state agency of educational administration. As a result, its book collections focused on

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20 Yao, Zhongguo muluxue shi, ch. 4.
21 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 1, pp. 774-786.
22 Ibid., vol 1, pp. 781-782; see also Yong Rong et al., comp., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* (The synopsis of the general bibliography of the complete library of the four treasures) (Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), vol 1, pp. 7-8.
the Confucian classics that underpinned the civil service examinations. It was financed and administered strictly by the central government until its amalgamation with the Board of Education (Xuebu) in 1905.24

Economic growth helped the expansion of government book repositories in the Qing period, when agricultural and handicraft industries flourished and commerce expanded. Remarkably, paper making and the publishing industry were promoted; the movable type began to be adopted extensively, enabling books to be produced in large quantities.25 In addition, the Qing emperors’ attention to knowledge and learning contributed to the phenomenal expansion of government book collections.

Concurrent with the rapid growth of government book collections was the development in bibliography compilation, most notably The General Bibliography of the Complete Library of the Four Treasures. Under such favourable circumstances, government book collections contributed to academic research. Moreover, government book repositories offered temporary sites on which modern libraries were later to be located.26

Nevertheless, government book repositories had their inadequacies as well. The first was the closed nature and insufficient utilisation of the book collections. Government book collections were accessible only to the royal family, senior officials, and renowned scholars. As a result, book collections, both in the seven pavilions and in other government storage buildings, functioned as a reference tool for the rulers and the gentry, with no access granted to ordinary people; their utilisation was rather limited. Although Emperor Qianlong ordered that some government book collections be accessible to local scholars in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, it was far from sufficient to make full use of the treasures of government book collections. Another inadequacy was the centralised storage and vulnerability of government book collections. They were easily destroyed when the dynasty was threatened by internal and external wars, such as the intrusion of foreign troops and the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), as will be seen later. A third inadequacy was the restricted contents of government book collections, which were concerned mainly with Chinese classics,

24 Zhou Dechang and Chen Hancai, “Guozijian” (The Imperial College), in Ibid., vol 1, p. 118; Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 1, pp. 787-793.
26 Wang Daocheng, “Qingdai de guozijian” (The Imperial College in the Qing Dynasty), Wenshi zhishi (Culture and history) 11 (1983): 38-42.
history, philosophy, and literature to the neglect of scientific and technological subjects.

**Private book repositories**
Generally speaking, the spectacular increase in private book repositories was brought about by the combined forces of a prosperous agricultural economy, a stable society, a pervasive tendency toward evidential research, and the civil service examinations. Private book repositories originated with distinguished scholars in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Confucius, Laozi, and other eminent scholars were the earliest private book collectors.\(^{27}\) Confucius engaged himself in the expansion of education and dissemination of knowledge throughout his life. Out of the needs for teaching and research, he built up his personal book collections, which contributed to his compilation projects, such as *The Annals of Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu)*.\(^{28}\) Significantly, the appearance of private book collections was linked to economic growth and academic prosperity during those periods. Economic advances brought about increased productivity and improved technology in printing. Processed bamboo and wooden slips became the writing media, which had the advantages of being both light-weight and easy to handle over natural oracle bones and tortoise shells of the preceding Shang Dynasty.\(^{29}\) In addition, the free and favourable academic atmosphere in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods stimulated teaching and research, creating a great demand for books and other reading materials.

It was in the Tang Dynasty that private book collections started to flourish due to the establishment of the civil service examination system. To prepare for the examinations, candidates had to gather books by themselves.\(^{30}\) Of course, these book collections focused on the Confucian texts. Some renowned scholars, such as Han Yu (768–824) and Bai Juyi (772–846), who held the *jinshi* degree, boasted their

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\(^{28}\) Kuang Yaming, *Kongzi nianpu* (The chronology of Confucius) (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1985), chs. 7 and 8.


\(^{30}\) Ren, *Zhongguo cangshulou*, vol 1, p. 13. For more information on the civil service examinations, see Ping-ti Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).
impressive private collections. A bond between the civil service examinations and private collections was formed from the Tang on. In addition, a remarkable feature of private collections in the following Song Dynasty was the concentration of such collections in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, and this phenomenon was closely related to the economic expansion in these two provinces.

In addition, the invention of printing in China facilitated the production and circulation of books. It was from the Tang that the earliest known extant printed books were produced. The use of wooden blocks was still tedious and primitive in the Tang. It was not until the Song Dynasty that the movable type of printing was invented. Therefore, Gorman and Gong assert “It is less the invention of printing than its gradual evolution that has the most significance for the history of Chinese libraries.”

Private book collections climaxed in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, thanks to the civil service examinations and the prevalence of evidential research, which needed the support of a great number of records and materials. Thereafter, these collections grew significantly in number. In the Qing, there were four salient features of these collections. First, the Qing Dynasty claimed more than 500 eminent private collectors, the highest figure in China’s history; the scale of private collections also increased, with many private collectors boasting thousands, or even tens of thousands, of books; and magnificent buildings were constructed to hold them. For example, the Pavilion of Everything United under Heaven (Tianyige), set up by Fan Qin (1560–1595) in the Ming Dynasty, claimed to be the best in the Qing period. The Pavilion Reaching to the Ancients (Jiguge), founded by Mao Jin (1599–1659), and the Pavilion of Red Clouds (Jiangyunlou), founded by Qian Qianyi (1582–1664), were two outstanding

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31 Tan Jishan, Han Yu zhuannji (The biography of Han Yu) (Taipei: Wansheng chuban youxian gongsi, 1983), chs. 2 and 4; Tan Jishan, Bai Juyi zhuannji (The biography of Bai Juyi) (Taipei: Wansheng chuban youxian gongsi, 1983), chs. 3 and 4.
33 Gong and Gorman, Libraries and Information Services in China, p. 11.
34 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, pp. 819-823.
36 Ruan Yuan, “Ningbo fanshi tianyige shumuxu” (Preface to The Bibliography of the Pavilion of Everything United under Heaven), in Li Ximi and Zhang Shuhua, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chungqu zhi wusi qianhou (Primary sources on traditional book collections and modern libraries in China, the Spring and Autumn period until the May Fourth era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 39-40. The Pavilion of Everything United under Heaven is the oldest extant book repository in China, serving as a tourist attraction in Zhejiang Province today. For more information on this topic, see Cai Peiling, Fanshi tianyige yanjiu (Research on the Pavilion of
storage buildings. Second, the increase in private collections went hand in hand with the research on bibliography. As a consequence, a number of bibliographies were produced. Third, attracted by *The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*, many eminent private collectors moved from Jiangsu and Zhejiang to Beijing, forming a cultural centre there. Fourth, the growth of private collections depended, to a large degree, on the interest and capability of individual collectors. Some devoted almost all of their energies and wealth to book collecting activities; others sold their rare book collections for money.

Significantly, private book repositories were the largest type of book repositories, developed by the hard work of their owners. Their growth had much to do with the favourable economic conditions and strong personal interest. The contributions of private collectors were significant because of their authentic efforts in the preservation, dissemination, and production of books. Private book repositories benefited from the imperial government’s political, cultural, and educational policies, such as the civil service examinations and encouragement of evidential research. But as those collections were private, their utilisation was limited. They were a status symbol as far as their owners were concerned.

**Academy book repositories**

The development of academy book repositories was helped by the civil service examinations, especially in the Qing period. The earliest academy was established in Xi’an in 723 during the Tang Dynasty, when the examination system was being consolidated. The Song Dynasty saw remarkable growth in academies, which were centres of education and research in the provinces, with 400 or so in total. In subsequent dynasties, academies spread to all regions of China. Since academies

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37 The Pavilion of Red Clouds was burnt to ashes in 1650. It was thought that Red Clouds in its name stood for flames, indicating the doomed fate of this book repository from the beginning. The Pavilion Reaching to the Ancients was ignored after Mao Jin passed away. For more information on these two private book repositories, see Ren, *Zhongguo cangshilou*, vol 2, pp. 1121-1130.

38 Yao, *Zhongguo multexue shi*, ch. 6.


40 Ibid.

served as provincial colleges, part of government education in the country, their book collections were linked to the civil service examinations.\textsuperscript{42}

An academy usually consisted of an endowment of land, book collections, a well-known scholar as director (\textit{shanzhang}), and a number of students, who were given a small allowance to cover at least part of their expenses. The function of the director was to advise the students as to their reading and to criticise the results of their studies. Occasionally, the director or an outside scholar would lecture on some selected topics, but the academy as a whole was a self-study institute and centre of research under expert guidance.\textsuperscript{43} Therefore, a free academic atmosphere and encouragement of reading were the two basic characteristics of the academies, which encouraged the use of the academy book collections. For instance, Huang Zongxi (1610–1695), a distinguished Neo-Confucian scholar in the Ming-Qing period, once worked at an academy, the rich book collections of which benefited him in his evidential research.\textsuperscript{44}

Most of the early academies were situated in scenic surroundings outside the cities, often at secluded sites. The dominant mountain-recluse character of the academies reflected the distinctive anti-urban bias of the academies that depended solely on trusts of agricultural land. However, in late imperial times, the growth of academies reflected the steadily increasing prominence of the civil service examinations, and they began to be built near or in the cities to prepare students for provincial and metropolitan examinations.\textsuperscript{45}

Academies reached their heights in the Qing, when their number rose to 1,104 in the 1740s as a result of the Qing Court’s cultural policy to promote academic research. Book collections, lectures, and worship became the three major tasks of academies.\textsuperscript{46} Under such favourable cultural conditions, academy book collections were expanded greatly by virtue of the emperors’ gifts, donations, purchases, and academy’s publishing activities. Qing emperors frequently bestowed books as gifts on

\textsuperscript{42} Bai, \textit{Zhongguo gudai shuyuan fazhansi}, chs. 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{44} Chen Zuwu, “Huang Zongxi” (Huang Zongxi), in Zhongguo dabaike quanshu bianjibu, ed., \textit{Zhongguo dabaike quanshu: lishi}, vol 1, p. 411.
academies, which enhanced their social status and enabled them to receive donations on a large scale. Meanwhile, the development in academic research and compilation activities made it possible for those academies to produce a vast quantity of books. But it should be noted that academy book collections were associated with traditional education, with their contents focused on the Confucian classics and their utilisation restricted to students and researchers.

Although the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905 put an end to the development of academies, their contributions to modern education and modern libraries continued. One reason for this was that academies were changed into new-style schools of different levels, with academy book collections taken over by those new schools. Another reason was that a number of public libraries were founded on the old sites of academies or inherited the book collections previously stored there. For example, the Jiangnan Library (the predecessor of the Jiangsu Provincial Library) was founded on the old site of the Academy for the Love of Time (Xiyan shuyuan) in Jiangsu Province in 1907, before its new building was completed in 1909. The book collections of the Guangya Academy (Guangya shuyuan) went to the Zhongshan Library in Guangzhou, after the People’s Republic of China was founded.

**Temple book repositories**

Temple book repositories, particularly those attached to Buddhist temples, were the last major type of book repositories in imperial China. Buddhism was introduced in the Han Dynasty from India. With the popularity and expansion of Buddhism across the country, especially in the Tang, book repositories of Buddhist temples began to be established, where Buddhist materials were stored. Two main factors contributed to the increase in temple book collections. One was the enthusiasm among the Chinese

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about incarnation, and the other the interest of imperial emperors in Buddhism.51 Like academy book repositories, Buddhist temples played a role in the construction of modern libraries by offering temporary sites for them. For instance, a local Buddhist temple served as a temporary place for the Nantong Library, Jiangsu Province, when it was established in 1917.52 Even the Metropolitan Library of Beijing used Temple Guanghua (Guanghuasi) as a temporary site when it was inaugurated in August 1912 (see Chapter 4).

DECLINE OF BOOK REPOSITORIES IN THE LATE QING

In the late Qing, China began its long decline. Gradually, economic development was retarded; foreign intrusion and political weakness set in; and the growth of the traditional culture and book collections came to a standstill.

**Government book repositories**

Many government book repositories were destroyed or damaged in the late Qing by foreign and domestic forces. In 1860, the first destruction by foreign forces came under the Joint Forces of Great Britain and France during the Arrow War (1856–1860), when Yuanming Park in Beijing was set fire to. Large quantities of antiquities stored at the Wenyuan Pavilion in Yuanming Park, including *Yongle Canon* and *The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*, were either burned or looted. The remaining volumes of these two masterpieces were transferred to the Hanlin Academy afterwards.53 Worse, the remaining volumes could not escape the fate of a second disaster, which occurred during the siege of Beijing in 1900, when the Hanlin Academy was destroyed by the joint forces of eight foreign countries. Again, numerous irreplaceable works were lost, including the remaining *Yongle Canon* and *The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*.54 In addition to foreign intrusions, domestic rebellions, especially the Taiping Rebellion, caused severe destruction to the Qing government book collections. In 1851, when the Taiping Troops captured

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Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, local bandits looted the Wenlan Pavilion.\textsuperscript{55} Again in 1853 and 1854, the Taiping troops entered Zhenjiang and Yangzhou (both in Jiangsu Province) and fought with the Qing troops. During these battles, the Wenzong and Wenhui Pavilions were burnt to ashes.\textsuperscript{56} Four out of seven Qing government book pavilions were destroyed in addition to other book repositories. A considerable number of the traditional Qing government book collections, laboriously accumulated over the centuries, perished in a few hours during the wars and riots. No doubt, dynastic decline brought disasters to book collections in imperial China.

**Private book repositories**

Similarly, many private book repositories were destroyed. The first major destruction came with the Opium War (1839–1842), when British forces captured Zhejiang Province and robbed private book collectors of their rare books. The second major destruction came with the Taiping Rebellion that occupied Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces in the 1850s and the 1860s, when private collectors had to escape their homelands and left behind numerous books. Large numbers of the classics were lost or destroyed.\textsuperscript{57} Take the Pavilion of Everything United under Heaven as an example, many of its rare books were looted during the Opium War; during the Taiping Rebellion, local bandits broke into the Pavilion and stole many rare books.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to military robbery, the decline of the agrarian economy forced many gentry members in the countryside to sell their properties, including book collections.\textsuperscript{59} Families, whose fortunes were waning, were forced to liquidate their rare books to pay off mounting debts.\textsuperscript{60} Strikingly, along with the decline of traditional private book collections appeared some new features under such difficult circumstances. The first was that many wealthy industrialists, merchants, and bankers became private book collectors who resided in the coastal cities, like Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Tianjin.\textsuperscript{61} Many port cities became treaty ports from the 1840s. Some affluent industrialists, bankers, and merchants emerged in those cities, following the

\textsuperscript{55} Ren, *Zhongguo cangshulou*, vol 2, p. 1546.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{58} Ren, *Zhongguo cangshulou*, vol 2, pp. 1021-1024.

\textsuperscript{59} Fu and Xie, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, vol 2, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{60} Taam, *The Development of Chinese Libraries under the Ch’ing Dynasty, 1644–1911*, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{61} Fu and Xie, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, vol 3, pp. 1206-1218.
development of urbanisation and the industrial economy. Like the gentry members, they could afford to accumulate antiquities and the classics as a status symbol. Meanwhile, some wealthy gentry members moved from the countryside to the cities because of warfare and a declining agricultural economy.\(^62\) The scope of private collectors was enlarged when the emerging industrial economy enabled the creation of new social strata who could afford to accumulate rare books and antiquities. The shift of book collections from the countryside to the cities, and from the gentry to the industrialists should not be viewed as a negative development. If the declining fortunes of one social group resulted in the selling of books, the rising fortunes of other groups bought the books, and in time some even made them more widely available.

A second new feature of traditional private book collections was that, with the expanded introduction of Western learning, some new printed materials on Western learning started to be collected.\(^63\) A third new feature was that many private book collections found a home at last. That is, many far-sighted private collectors donated their collections to public book repositories or public libraries. Zhang Jian (1853–1926) and Sheng Xuanhuai (1844–1916) stood out in this regard. After receiving the first degree (zhuangyuan) in 1894 at the age of forty, Zhang Jian devoted the rest of his life to industrial undertakings in his home town, Nantong, Jiangsu Province.\(^64\) Realising the importance of libraries in the facilitation of education and politics in foreign countries, Zhang thought it necessary to establish libraries in China and open them to the public free of charge.\(^65\) Under his aegis, the Nantong Library in Jiangsu Province was finally established on the site of a local Buddhist temple in 1917. Shortly afterwards, he added a second building to the Library. All the costs were met by a donation from Zhang’s personal savings of 18,745 taels.\(^66\) He also contributed the bulk of his book collections to the Library, accounting for two thirds of the whole library collections. Interestingly, many of his donations were Western works, including Aristotle’s *Treatise on Government*, Bentham’s *Principles of Morals and

\(^{62}\) Lai, *Zhongguo jindai tushu shiyeshi*, p. 139.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) For a biography of Zhang Jian, see Chu, *Reformer in Modern China*.


Legislation, Blackstone’s Commentaries on Law of England, Malthus’ Principles of Population, and Veblen’s Theory of the Leisure Class.\textsuperscript{67}

Similarly, Sheng Xuanhuai paid particular attention to establishing modern education institutions and book collections.\textsuperscript{68} As the founder of the Beiyang University (Beiyang daxue) in Tianjin in 1895 and of Nanyang Public School (Nanyang gongxue) in Shanghai in 1897, Sheng put a premium on building book collections from the beginning. He stated in the Regulations of Nanyang Public School that a library was needed to collect publications in both Chinese and foreign languages with a view to assisting students in acquiring knowledge.\textsuperscript{69} Moreover, Sheng spent a considerable portion of his salary on establishing his personal book collections, which rose to more than 100,000 volumes in the 1910s. He differed from other traditional book collectors in that he did not regard his collections as private property. Instead, he donated money from his own savings to construct a building in 1910 to hold his collections, and he opened them to other scholars free of charge. Unfortunately, his failing health prevented him from doing more, and he died a disappointed man in 1916. Most of his collections are in the custody of East China Normal University Library in Shanghai today, serving scholars from China, Japan, and Korea.\textsuperscript{70}

No doubt, these early founders of public libraries were influenced by the increased introduction of Western learning. Moreover, they acknowledged the crisis threatening the existence of the Qing Court, regarding new-style education and modern libraries as a necessary means of regenerating China. They were pioneers in the modern library campaign in China, contributing to enhancing the awareness of philanthropy in library circles. However, their individual efforts alone were not sufficient to bring about modern libraries in their country.

\textsuperscript{67} Chu, Reformer in Modern China, pp. 169-170.
\textsuperscript{68} For a biography of Sheng Xuanhuai, see Albert Feuerwerker, China’s Early Industrialisation: Sheng Hsuan-Huai (1844–1916) and Mandarin Enterprise (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).
\textsuperscript{69} Sheng Xuanhuai, “Nanyang gongxue zhangcheng” (The regulations of Nanyang Public School), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai changshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhao, p. 107. The Beiyang University Library also received much attention from Sheng Xuanhuai, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{70} Wu Ping, “Sheng Xuanhuai yu yuzhai changshu” (Sheng Xuanhuai and his book collections), \textit{Tushuguan zazhi} (Library journal) 20:3 (2001): 55-56.
Academy and temple book repositories

The Taiping troops destroyed traditional academy and temple book collections in an effort to oppose Confucianism and to spread their political and religious ideas, especially in the south of the Yangtze River,\(^7^1\) for instance, the local temples in Hangzhou in 1861.\(^7^2\)

Shortly afterwards, the most influential event affecting traditional academy book collections was the promulgation of a series of educational reforms in the late Qing. During the Hundred Days Reform of 1898, Kang Youwei called for the change of academies into modern-style schools.\(^7^3\) Influenced by Kang, an imperial edict was issued to that effect.\(^7^4\) Unfortunately, the reform was suppressed immediately by Empress Dowager Cixi. But the promulgation of the Regulations on Education (Zouding xuetang zhangle) in 1903 and the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905 put an end to the old academies.\(^7^5\) Subsequently, the academies were transformed into new-style schools, with their book collections either given to these schools or dispersed gradually.\(^7^6\) In the meantime, due to warfare and through neglect, temple book collections were scattered or lost, with only a few preserved, in the late Qing and early Republic.\(^7^7\)

In sum, external intrusions and internal chaos caused the destruction of traditional book repositories. Educational reforms, especially the abolition of the civil service examinations, accelerated their decline. And the declining agricultural economy helped to complete their demise. However, their contributions to modern libraries should be acknowledged, as they were pivotal in the preservation of the Chinese classics and facilitation of academic research; some book repositories even served as temporary places for the newly established modern libraries. Concurrent with the decline of these traditional book repositories were the introduction and emergence of

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\(^7^2\) Fu and Xie, Zhongguo canshu tongshi, vol 2, p. 1011.
\(^7^3\) Kang Youwei, “Qingchi gesheng gai shuyuan yinsi wei xuetang zhe” (Memorial on the change of academies and temples into schools), in Shu, comp., Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyushi ziliao, pp. 80-82.
\(^7^4\) Emperor Guangxu, “Qingdi yu gesheng futing zhouxian gai shuyuan she xuetang” (Edict on the transformation of academies into schools), in Ibid., pp. 82-83.
\(^7^5\) Emperor Guangxu, “Qingdi yu liting keju yiguang xuexia,” in Ibid., pp. 62-66; Zhang Zhidong et al., Zouding xuetang zhangle (The regulations on education) (Beijing: The First Historical Archives of Beijing, box no. 360). The regulations will be discussed in Chapter 3.
\(^7^7\) Ren, Zhongguo canshushilou, vol 3, p. 1828.
new kinds of social institutions charged with the management of books. Yet modern libraries did not come into being until the mid-nineteenth century. Why?

ABSENCE OF MODERN LIBRARIES IN CHINA
BEFORE THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

The beginnings of modern libraries in the West coincided with the Industrial Revolution. Drawing on the Western experience, the following analysis of the Chinese case begins with the Chinese economy.

An underdeveloped agricultural economy

The Chinese economy was based on a self-sufficient agriculture until the twentieth century. In this economy, wealth was accumulated by four main means: by purchasing land with the profits from land products, by trade, by money lending, and by emoluments, both legal and illegal, of bureaucratic positions. Most of the wealth was owned by landlords and merchants. Family and villages were the basic economic units characterised by self-sufficiency. The handicraft industry, maintained by apprenticeships and serving as both homes and shops, was the only industry. Furthermore, traditionally, there was little sympathy for merchants, entrepreneurs, and practical inventions. All these factors limited the expansion of domestic markets and inhibited early industrialisation.

As a latecomer to industrialisation, China proved to be underdeveloped in the nineteenth century. By 1918, agricultural products still accounted for 65.9 percent of GDP in China, with only five to seven percent of the population of 400,000,000 residing in approximately 1,400 towns and cities, while the huge majority lived in about 700,000 villages across the country. The Chinese economy was still agriculture-based, with a low level of industrialisation and urbanisation.

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This is not the place to review the economic history of modern China. But it needs pointing out that low-level industrialisation and urbanisation generated low demand for a skilled labour force. There was no compulsory education, and education was the prerogative of the rich. In fact, the bulk of the population was illiterate. Ignorance was prevalent, democracy non-existent, the proletariat weak, and self-improvement difficult. Clearly, the backward agricultural economy could not generate sufficient readership for modern libraries. After all, it is readership that makes use of library collections and services. Without readership, a library would be a mere place, or a repository.

**Lack of breakthroughs in the publishing industry and printing technologies**

There existed three major types of publishing activities in imperial China: government publishing, commercial publishing, and private publishing.\(^\text{82}\) No doubt, a great number of important literary works and the classics had been preserved and passed on to posterity through these strenuous publishing activities. But they were limited in content and readership, not conducive to the spread of knowledge and the emergence of modern libraries.

For the imperial government, the key to ruling was control through decrees and regulations, and the control of knowledge and maintenance of social order were tightly linked. Accordingly, government publications focused on laws, regulations, and rituals in order to keep officials and the common people loyal to the Throne; on the Confucian classics to encourage young students to prepare for the civil service examinations; on Buddhist sutras and materials at the request of Buddhist monks; and on literary works to promote Confucian learning. Compared with government publications, commercial publications covered a wider range of subjects on the classics and histories, literary collections by eminent authors, Daoist and Buddhist texts, almanacs, morality books, medical manuals, and mountain gazetteers. Far from the profit-driven demands of commercial publishers, private publishers composed mainly of the literati who showed their literary and academic dedication by publishing academic works, such as collections and bibliographies.\(^\text{83}\)

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\(^\text{82}\) Lai, *Zhongguo gudai tushu shiyeshi*, chs. 7 and 8.

The expansion of publishing activities contributed to the creation of an intellectual milieu in which open and pluralistic interpretations of Chinese classics were encouraged. Large numbers of books were printed to meet the social, cultural, and religious needs of the educated elite. Yet the needs of the general public were ignored, as the publishing industry was not designed to target ordinary Chinese. In addition, there were no major technological breakthroughs in printing in imperial China, after Chinese printing had reached its height in the Ming Dynasty, with the widespread application of coloured printing and copper movable types.\(^4\) For this reason, it was impossible to produce huge numbers of books at relatively cheap prices, thus inhibiting the spread of knowledge. As publishing and printing usually function as a powerful mechanism for making books both less expensive and more widely accessible, the underdevelopment of the publishing industry and printing technologies did little to advance the pursuit of knowledge, the delivery of education, and the emergence of modern libraries in imperial China.

\textbf{Lack of openness in traditional culture}

The agricultural economy and the technologically underdeveloped publishing industry do not offer a complete picture. One needs to look at the lack of openness in traditional culture, which sustained the closed book repositories and resulted in the under-utilisation of the book collections for centuries.

Confucianism was the mainstream thought in imperial China, where the civil service examination system was the focal point in matters of education. The purpose of this system was to recruit government officials. Its narrowness and limitations restricted the demand for wider knowledge. Moreover, with its emphasis on literary skills and the classics, it gave little attention to matters of practical value. The literary language (\textit{wenyan}), which took students many years to master, was adopted in education and research. As this language was far remote from ordinary life, it caused a gap between the general public and the elite. The vernacular was not introduced as a medium of instruction until the 1910s.\(^5\) Owing to the literary orientation of the


traditional education system, book collections, too, focused on the classics, history, philosophy, and literature, lacking adequate concerns over science and technology.

In the early Qing, even more detrimental to the advancement of knowledge was literary inquisition (wenziyu), which prevented free academic research and made it impossible for subjects of a practical nature to be studied, including library science. Instead, scholars concentrated on the “scientific study of the classics.” Evidential research emerged in the early Qing as the dominant intellectual trend, showing a strong interest in philosophical and historical research on the classics. Evidential researchers demonstrated their veneration for the ancients by recovering their lost writings and removing distortions. The evaluation of texts, collation of different editions, and rectification and verification of errors were what evidential research was about. But its scholarship lacked curiosity about practical matters and inquiries that extended beyond the boundaries of textual scholarship.

Traditionally, Chinese culture was based on obedience and deference to authority, lacking a spirit of critical questioning. The Three Bonds and Five Relationships illustrate the hierarchy and loyalty in Chinese traditions. In the arena of book collecting activities, a premium was put on the accumulation of the Confucian classics and rare books, which could only be viewed as quantitative accumulation. Even The Complete Library of the Four Treasures had its dark side. Over 2,000 works, a large proportion of them Ming writings, were destroyed as part of Emperor Qianlong’s efforts to weed out anti-Manchu sentiments in books and manuscripts. After The Complete Library of the Four Treasures was completed in 1782, no further efforts were made. The Complete Library remained the same for the following two centuries until it declined in the late Qing. The qualitative transformation in book collecting activities, or the systematic and widespread criticism of book repositories, was not effected until the New Library Movement was launched in the 1910s, when the new intellectuals began to re-evaluate critically the Confucian-based institutions and beliefs that had underpinned Chinese traditions for two millennia (see Chapter 5).

The closed nature of traditional book repositories was a cultural phenomenon, reflecting a Chinese imperial tradition. Carried over from ancient times and established on the basis of an agricultural economy, traditional book repositories were

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87 Ibid.
88 Lai, Zhonguo jindai tushu shiyeshi, pp. 149-151.
of a conservative nature, in contrast to modern libraries developing in the West. Private book collections were private property. As stated earlier in this chapter, Fan Qin was an eminent book collector in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, in the Ming Dynasty. His book collections, stored at the specially designed Pavilion of Everything United under Heaven, were the best in the Qing times. But he laid down strict regulations that books should not be taken out of the Pavilion, threatening his children with punishment if they lent his books to other people.\(^8^9\)

The closed nature of the book repositories reflected the traditional culture, featuring a rigid social hierarchy. Private book collections were inaccessible to outsiders, only to be inherited by descendants. For this reason, these collections lacked a spirit of public service. Since many of the wealthy had their collections as personal assets, the needs of the general public were ignored. There was simply no public library consciousness among private collectors. Government book collections were, of course, the assets of the royal and noble classes, with readership restricted to selected scholars. Meanwhile, academy book collections were open only to the scholarly community. The Qing government followed a policy of leaving the academies to pursue their own courses of study.\(^9^0\) This led to the decline of their book collections, especially after the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1905.

**CONCLUSION**

The creation of traditional book repositories was the result of the cultural development of imperial China, and, in turn, they ensured the perpetuation of the traditional culture. Imperial China saw the succession of many dynasties, social changes, and natural disasters. Although books were lost due to wars and disasters, there were large-scale movements of book collection and compilation from time to time. Imperial government book repositories played a role in political life, cultural growth, academic pursuit, and official training. Compilation projects, evidential research, and the publishing of historical works depended on government book repositories. Private book repositories, too, were beneficial to scholars. They were not only a symbol of wealth but also a necessity for academic research. Compared with other types of book repositories, academy book collections placed more emphasis on

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\(^8^9\) Ruan, “Ningbo fanshi tianyige shumuxu,” in Li and Zhang, comps., *Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqi zhi wusi qianhou*, pp. 39-40.

\(^9^0\) Taam, *The Development of Chinese Libraries under the Ch’ing Dynasty, 1644–1911*, p. 68.
the circulation and utilisation of books, although they were accessible only to the scholarly community. To be sure, cultural heritage was preserved, and academic research assisted by different kinds of book repositories in traditional China. But all types of traditional book repositories were destroyed to varying degrees by civil strife and foreign wars.

The tradition of Chinese book repositories reveals the tension between the modern Western and traditional Chinese concepts of what a library should be. For thousands of years, libraries in China functioned as book repositories. The majority of book collectors believed that book collections were private property and should not be shared with the public. Although some government, private and academy book collections were accessible to the concerned outsiders, serving the public was never a clearly articulated goal in traditional China. It was not until the Chinese intelligentsia changed their ideas about Western and traditional Chinese librarianship that modern, open libraries began to be created in China, as will be seen in the following chapters.

In sum, China was an agricultural and closed society before the mid-nineteenth century, and there was no demand for a skilled work force for its economic growth. Thus, the provision of library services was inconceivable because the small scale of industrialisation could not generate a large readership. The underdeveloped publishing industry and printing technologies made it impossible to produce large numbers of books at relatively low prices, hindering the dissemination of knowledge. Moreover, the dominance of Confucianism and the civil service examination system limited the scope of knowledge pursued and the production of non-traditional books. General illiteracy and a strict social hierarchy were barriers for ordinary Chinese in accessing knowledge and education. Book collecting activities centred around the excessive preservation of the classics and rare books. As a result, traditional book collections benefited mainly the privileged who were able to supplement their reading from government, private, and academy institutions. The lower classes were deprived of reading opportunities, being provided with neither libraries nor alternative means of accessing reading materials. In the final analysis, imperial China lacked the economic, technological, and cultural conditions for the emergence of modern libraries before the mid-nineteenth century. Only after the mid-nineteenth century, with the transformation of Chinese society, could modern libraries be founded in the country. The pace of educational reform hastened this process.
Chapter 2

Advocacy of Modern Libraries in the Late Qing

Western learning influenced China in terms of politics, economy, trade, education, and culture, especially through the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. In consequence, some new institutions and professions came into existence, including new-style schools, libraries, museums, hospitals, journalism, and Western medicine.\(^1\) Liu Guojun, an eminent Chinese library scholar, commented in 1921: “The modern library [in China] came into being in the nineteenth century, especially in the middle of the nineteenth century. The library has become a phenomenon that educators and sociologists can no longer ignore.”\(^2\)

This chapter investigates the advocacy of modern libraries in China during the final decades of the Qing Dynasty, in the midst of Western learning. It places the emergence of modern libraries in the larger historical context of educational reform, where appropriate, relating it to wider Chinese intellectual development. The emergence of modern libraries took place at a time when the survival of China was at stake. In the name of national survival, education became a means of national strengthening and modernisation. Educational change along Western lines was necessary, because Chinese traditional education could not foster talents capable of regenerating their country. With the development of educational reform in the late Qing, a limited number of reformist Chinese viewed modern libraries as a facilitator to new-style education. The educational functions of modern libraries were reiterated, and libraries of the modern type began to be founded across the country.

This chapter argues that the creation of modern libraries in China owed much to both far-sighted Western missionaries and reform-minded Chinese who recognised the necessity of modern education and modern libraries. However, they advocated modern libraries for different reasons. The missionaries attached libraries of the modern type to their new-style schools and societies so that library activities could help to promote their religious and secular causes. For them, the introduction of


modern libraries to China was part of their missionary zeal. The Chinese, on the other hand, saw a link between educational reform and the future of China. Reform-minded Chinese scholars and officials raised the awareness of modern libraries in the hope that modern libraries could benefit educational reform and thus help to regenerate their country.

MISSIONARY INFLUENCE
In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, foreign missionaries played an important role in the dissemination of Western learning in China by translating Western works, publishing newspapers and magazines, and establishing modern-style schools. From the outset, they played a pioneering role in transforming Chinese book repositories by founding new-style libraries and by adopting modern library practice to serve their evangelistic and secular causes. As they concerned themselves more and more with political, social, and educational matters in the late Qing, they began to spread ideas about modern libraries, such as the educational functions of libraries. Missionary libraries were more or less open to the public; regulations were issued concerning their utilisation; and cataloguing and classification technologies were adopted for the effective use of their collections. For these reasons, those libraries can be seen as the antecedent in the modern library campaign of the late Qing.

Educational institution libraries founded by the missionaries
Western missionaries attached libraries to their new-style educational institutions, which were totally different from those of imperial China. John Fryer’s (1839–1928) Shanghai Polytechnic Institution (Shanghai gézhì shuyuán) was an outstanding educational institution founded by the missionaries. Fryer was born to a deeply religious family in the United States in 1839. An usual feature of his family was the interest they took in China. Fryer came to Hong Kong in 1860 as a headmaster of a small missionary school. He also worked as an English teacher at the Qing

Government Language School (Jingshi tongwenguan) in Beijing for some time. He was credited with the introduction of Western science and technology into China at the Jiangnan Arsenal from 1868 to 1896, when he translated 129 different Western scientific works into Chinese. He also published scientific magazines in Chinese, including The Chinese Scientific Magazine and later The Chinese Scientific and Industrial Magazine (Gezhi huibian), The Essential Series (Xuzhi), and The Illustrations (Tushuo), from 1876 to 1892. These magazines were lucid and concise, with illustrations to impart scientific knowledge.

The Shanghai Polytechnic Institution was founded in 1875, with the object of bringing science, arts, and manufactured products of Western nations in the most practical manner to the notice of the educated Chinese. This institution had a permanent exhibition of scientific and mechanical apparatus and held lectures and classes on Western knowledge. It was influential during its heyday in the 1880s, when Wang Tao (1828–1898), a pioneering Chinese journalist, was its director. A library (book repository) was gradually built up for the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution, where Chinese classics and Chinese versions of translated scientific materials were held.

From the outset, this book repository was open to the public free of charge. It was intended as the first book repository to benefit the Chinese people in scientific knowledge instruction. Particular attention was given to acquiring books for the

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5 The Qing Government Language School was a relatively early modern school established by the Qing government in the early 1860s. For more information on this school, see Knight Biggerstaff, The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1961), ch. 2.

6 The Jiangnan Arsenal was founded in Shanghai in 1865 to produce guns, cannons, and ships in order to break the Western monopoly of power. Moreover, the Arsenal maintained a translation bureau, which was designed to introduce Western science and technology to China. See Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, The Rise of Modern China, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 279.


8 On Wang Tao’s life and his reform activities, see Paul A. Cohen, Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang Tao and Reform in Late Qing China (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974). On the development of the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution, see Wang Erh-min, Shanghai gezhi shuyuan zhilue (Brief history of the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980).


Shanghai Polytechnic Institution. The Regulations Pertaining to the Shanghai
Polytechnic Institution emphasised that relevant scientific materials be put on display,
including translated works on science by the Jiangnan Arsenal, newspapers, scientific
apparatus, and Chinese classics. Furthermore, a two-storey building was erected in
1901 to be the site of the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution Book Repository (Shanghai
gezhi shuyuan cangshulou). In this new building, a variety of newspapers was held
downstairs to assist readers and other printed materials upstairs.11 In 1906, The
Bibliography of the Shanghai Polytechnic Institution Book Repository was printed in
six volumes, detailing regulations on the circulation of book collections and
classifying those collections into six categories: the classics, history, philosophy,
literature, collection, and bibliography.12

Several points emerge from the narrative above. First, the name book repository
was adopted at Fryer’s Shanghai Polytechnic Institution, but it was totally different
from traditional book repositories in that it was open to the public free of charge.
Second, it reformed the traditional Chinese four-type classification system by adding
collection and bibliography. Third, a variety of printed materials was collected in the
interest of readers, and the separation of newspapers from books marked the
beginning of newspaper reading rooms in China. In all, the Shanghai Polytechnic
Institution Book Repository could claim to be a modern library that offered a model to
the emerging modern libraries in China in terms of modern management.

Another missionary who made significant contributions to the cause of modern
libraries in China was Mary Elizabeth Wood, an American missionary librarian.13
Wood began her modern library campaign with the initiation of the Boone Library in
Wuchang as early as 1901. In 1899, Wood arrived in Wuchang where her brother
Robert (1872–1952) was an Episcopalian missionary. Since the Episcopalian-operated
Boone School was in urgent need of teaching staff, Wood became an English teacher
there as soon as she arrived.14 Shortly afterwards, she was appointed a lay missionary

11 Ibid.
12 Chen Zhu, “Shanghai gezhi shuyuan cangshulou shumuxu” (Preface to The Bibliography of the
Shanghai Polytechnic Institution Book Repository), in Li Ximi and Zhang Shuhua, comps., Zhongguo
guodai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chuqu zhi wusi qianhou (Primary sources on traditional
book collections and modern libraries in China, the Spring and Autumn period until the May Fourth
era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 503-504.
13 George W. Huang, “Miss Mary Elizabeth Wood: Pioneer of the Library Movement in China,”
14 The Boone School was founded in Wuchang in 1871 by the American Episcopalian Mission to train
Chinese clergymen and church leaders. College-level courses were added in 1903, and the Boone
in Wuchang by the American Church Mission.\textsuperscript{15} Her ten years’ experience in library work in the United States made her see the necessity of modern libraries in the reform of China. She was further inspired by the nexus between librarianship and missionary enterprises. As early as 1901, Wood set up the Boone Library on the campus of the Boone School.\textsuperscript{16} She thought that it was God’s call to introduce modern libraries to China, which prompted her to make her first announcement of the Chinese library movement at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association in North Carolina in 1907. Her impressive presentation garnered $100,000 and 3,000 books for the Boone Library, and a new library building was completed in 1910.\textsuperscript{17}

In the 1910s, the Dewey Decimal Classification, the card catalogue, and the open shelf system were introduced to assist readers in accessing the Boone Library.\textsuperscript{18} Wood also urged that the Boone Library be opened to both the Boone community and residents in the neighbouring cities, comprising Wuchang, Hankou, and Hanyang. Accordingly, it was referred to as the Public Forest of Books (Gongshulin) in Chinese parlance.\textsuperscript{19} The local people, however, were not interested in the Boone Library due to a lack of knowledge about modern libraries. Undaunted, Wood initiated a series of measures designed to enhance the social position of the Library. She called on the principals of all the leading government schools in Wuhan to offer free lectures on public health, good governance, and natural sciences. She set up additional reading rooms at St. Michael Church and Trinity Church to serve the local residents. Also, she

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp. 275-276.
\textsuperscript{18} Cheng, “The Impact of American Librarianship on Chinese Librarianship in Modern Times (1840–1919),” pp. 384-386. The Dewey Decimal Classification, the card catalogue and the open shelf system were advanced library technologies originated from the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Mary Liu Kao, \textit{Cataloguing and Classification for Library Technicians} (New York: Haworth Press, 1995). In particular, the Dewey Decimal Classification was influential. It was first published in 1876, with its twenty-first edition produced in 1996. It is the most widely used classification scheme in the world and has been translated into thirty languages. Its author, Melvil Dewey (1851–1931), was a leading figure in modern American librarianship. He divided all human knowledge into ten categories, including general works, philosophy, religion, social sciences, language, pure sciences, technology, fine arts, literature, and general geography and history. For more information on the Dewey Decimal Classification, see Wayne A. Wiegand, “The ‘Amherst Method’: The Origins of \textit{The Dewey Decimal Classification},” \textit{Libraries & Culture} 33:2 (Spring 1998): 175-194. Melvil Dewey and his contributions to American librarianship will be examined in Chapter 7.
sent books to other schools and institutes, such as the Hanyang Iron and Steel Works. In this way, she established the travelling library, or the mobile library, for the first time in China’s history.\textsuperscript{20} Under her leadership, the Boone Library took the lead in the development of modern libraries in China by adopting the term \textit{library} in its name as early as 1901. It served as a public library as well as a college library.

St. John University in Shanghai was another higher education institution managed by the missionaries and it also boasted of rich book collections of the modern type. Established in 1879 by American missionaries, St. John College was enlarged, restructured, and became St. John University in 1906. In the beginning, only a small room was dedicated to book collections in the Chinese language at St. John College. In 1904, Low Library was founded to store both Chinese and Western language materials, including newspapers; it became St. John University Library in 1906.\textsuperscript{21} In 1917, the advanced library theory and practice of the United States were applied to the Library, including the Dewey Decimal Classification and the card catalogue, aimed at promoting the scientific organisation of collections and improving reader services. Moreover, St. John University was successful in attracting donations from across the world, which included registration with the Carnegie Institute of Washington and the entitlement to the publications of that institute. From 1909, it was open to students and staff, seven days a week. In 1913, an impressive building was completed for it.\textsuperscript{22}

St. John University Library also adopted the name \textit{library}. In addition, its modern status was marked by its opening to the university community, its endeavours in attracting donations, its collections of a range of printed materials, and its use of modern library technologies. It is in this sense that it was unlike the academy book collections in traditional China. Given the prestige of St. John University and its privileged location in Shanghai, its library was well placed to exert a considerable influence on the modern library movement in China.

\textsuperscript{20} Huang, “Miss Mary Elizabeth Wood: Pioneer of the Library Movement in China,” pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{22} Huang Weilian, “Yuehan daxue tushuguan yange” (The development of St. John University Library), in Li and Zhang, comps., \textit{Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chuqiu zhi wusi qianhou}, pp. 504-511.
Missionary society libraries

The Morrison Library was a relatively early library of this kind, dating back to 1806, when members of the English Factory in Guangzhou unanimously decided to establish a library by subscription. In 1832, it contained a collection of 1,600 different kinds of works in about 4,000 volumes, with a catalogue published in the same year. On 1 August, 1834, Robert Morrison (1782–1834), the first Protestant missionary in China, died in Guangzhou. Two years later, the Morrison Education Society (MES) was founded in memory of him. After the English Factory was dissolved in 1834, its whole collections were transferred to the MES, and a constitution was drawn up for a library, which stated that the books belonging to the Society should form a public library called the Library of the MES (The Morrison Library). The Regulations of the Library of the MES were promulgated in 1839, allowing any person access to the Library on payment of $10 per annum. Shortly afterwards, the Library was moved to Hong Kong. The Morrison Library’s alphabetical catalogue was a relatively new method of organisation at the time. In addition, the Library worked out its classification system. Even though this system was cursory and some of the categories overlapped, it represented the trend toward scientific organisation of knowledge. The provision of magazines and newspapers helped to attract a considerable number of readers. All these features illustrate the Morrison Library as a model for the emerging modern libraries in China.

Likewise, the Shanghai Literary and Scientific Society, founded by the English missionaries, had a modern library attached to it as soon as it was set up on 24 September, 1857. Remarkably, the Society Library managed to attract donations from the outset. In 1871, the Society became the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. As Shanghai was an emerging commercial city, the purpose of the Society Library was to increase the understanding

between China and the West and to “enlighten” the Chinese. Aided by the Shanghai Municipal Council, 718 volumes of Chinese language books and books in Western languages concerning China were purchased, forming the nucleus of the Society Library collections. The Shanghai Municipal Council stipulated that suitable space and a librarian be appointed. In 1872, a catalogue for the Western language books was compiled, showing 1,300 titles. In addition, the Library collections were built up by arranging the exchange of publications with other societies around the world, and local foreign residents were also regularly canvassed for donations. Eventually, British government publications were obtained, including *British Parliament Papers on China*. In 1887, the first catalogue of the Chinese language books was completed, with 1,497 volumes. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Library entered a second phase of growth. It established exchanges with over sixty societies in Hong Kong, Holland, Portugal, France, Germany, Britain, and the United States. Catalogue compilation continued with the introduction of the alphabetically arranged card catalogue. The Dewey Decimal Classification, a worldwide library classification system, was adopted in 1907. As the collections grew, the Library opened seven days a week by 1910. Until 1949, it was regarded as the best reference library on China in the Far East.28

Opening to the public was the salient feature of the Shanghai Literary and Scientific Society Library. Further, its modern status was recognised by the application of modern library technologies. It is worth noting that those missionary society libraries contributed indirectly to the spread of Western learning and the progress of China’s reforms. Kang Youwei, for example, when he was in Guangzhou in 1891, paid frequent visits to the library of the nearby Episcopal Mission to read books on the constitutional monarchy of the West.29

It is also worth noting that some missionary book collections were named libraries, others were still known as book repositories. This was because the term *library* was alien to Chinese society in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the missionaries used a name familiar to the Chinese. It would take considerable education and advocacy before the new concept—the library—gained wide currency. Nevertheless, those

missionary society and educational institution libraries can be regarded as modern libraries in terms of their open collections, their emphasis on providing new types of printed materials, their attention to attracting donations, and their adoption of modern library technologies. Moreover, the missionaries were instrumental in spreading modern library ideas in the late Qing.

**Attention to modern libraries in the missionary publications**

With the spread of Western learning, the missionaries began to take an active interest in social reforms in China, in addition to the diffusion of religious and scientific knowledge. William A. P. Martin (1827–1916), Timothy Richard (1845–1919), Alexander Wylie (1815–1887), and Young J. Allen (1836–1907), to name just a few, stood out in this respect. They articulated ideas about political, social, economic, and educational reforms in China. Not only did they found new-style educational institutions, but they also translated and published materials to popularise their proposals and to influence reformist Chinese.30 Not surprisingly, attention was given to library matters in their publications, as the missionaries viewed education as a means of awakening the Chinese, and modern libraries as an essential facilitator of education. Through their efforts, the latest viewpoints on Western libraries were brought to China, which helped to raise library awareness in the country.31

It was Young J. Allen who made significant contributions to educational reform by expounding modern libraries in his newspaper.32 Allen arrived in China in 1864 as an American missionary and began to teach English at the Shanghai Language School (*Shanghai tongwenguan*).33 He also taught subjects on sciences. Like Fryer, Allen assumed that if the Chinese studied scientific and technological subjects, they could discover the merits of Christianity with less difficulty and resistance. Throughout his life, he pursued a variety of undertakings in China, founding schools, editing and

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31 See, for example, *The Chinese Repository* (1832–1851), 20 vols. (Reprint, Tokyo: Maruzen, Co., Ltd., no date).


33 The Shanghai Language School was a relatively early modern school established by the Qing government in the early 1860s. For more information on this school, see Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China*, ch. 3.
publishing Chinese language periodicals, teaching at the Shanghai Language School, and translating for the Jiangnan Arsenal. When employed as a translator at the Arsenal from 1871 to 1881, he translated twenty-six Western items into Chinese, covering a range of topics on history, current affairs, geography, and science.  

For Allen, educational programs were pivotal in converting the Chinese, and journalism was a major means of awakening them. He started with The Church News (Jiaohui xinbao), a weekly newspaper on religion in the Chinese language in 1868; in 1874, it changed into a general magazine: The Globe Magazine (Wanguo gongbao); in 1889, it adopted a new English title, The Review of the Times, and became a daily. The original purpose of The Church News was not only to serve as a vehicle of communication among the churches in China but also to increase the available information about the West and to inform readers of the current affairs in China and the West. Allen’s magazine covered a wide variety of topics, including Western educational systems, Western medicine, international relations, scientific and technological information, and political reform. It also proposed some reform measures to the Qing government in the spheres of education, economy, and administration. The wide range of topics attracted a considerable readership, with Allen’s magazine serving as a forum for debates on spiritual and social reforms among the Chinese.

Educational reform was a popular topic in The Church News. What was striking about Allen was that he undauntedly focused very early on one controversial topic: the necessity of educational facilities for the Chinese people. Keen on reading and collecting books, he brought to China his own personal library of hundreds of volumes. In November 1868, out of personal interest and enthusiasm, he published an article, pleading for the establishment of public libraries in China to meet the needs of the poor people who sought knowledge. He stated that public libraries, equipped with books in many languages, were popular in the West. He also stated that in the biggest public library in Paris, there were 1,400,000 printed books; 125,000 written books; 300,000 maps; and 200,000 military works. In addition, there were small and

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34 For a detailed biography of Allen, see Bennett, Missionary Journalist in China.
36 Bennett, Missionary Journalist in China, p. 10.
medium-sized public libraries. Since public libraries were common in Europe, where they were designed for the benefit of the people, Allen urged that the wealthy people donate funds to establish public libraries of different sizes in Chinese cities, and that those libraries make books available to all for a very small fee. His idea of modern libraries was so new in the 1860s that it proved unacceptable to the Qing government.

**Significance of the missionaries’ introduction of modern libraries**

The missionary libraries were the earliest modern libraries that emerged in nineteenth-century China. They educated reform-minded Chinese, as the missionaries acted as the progenitor in the library history of modern China. Most of those libraries were open to the public. Some held precious literature in both Chinese and foreign languages, for example, the early translated works on Western learning at Fryer’s Shanghai Polytechnic Institution Book Repository. Furthermore, many had advanced equipment and imposing buildings, compared with traditional book repositories, for example, the new buildings erected for the Boone Library in 1910 and St. John University Library in 1913, respectively, which encouraged the development of modern library architecture later on. Last but not least, many had specific regulations on the circulation of library materials; they adopted the new library management and organisation technologies of the West, including the alphabetical card catalogue, the Dewey Decimal Classification, and the open shelf system. All in all, those libraries generated the new library concept derived from the West and helped the Chinese to establish modern libraries, aimed at effective utilisation of library collections instead of excessive preservation. Some missionaries also showed concern for China’s future, promoting the view that education should be placed in the vanguard of change. They insisted that the establishment of modern libraries be part of China’s educational reforms. In this sense, they exerted considerable influence on Chinese advocates of modern libraries.

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37 Allen, “Ying xiaoying waiguoyishuyuan yi yiren,” p. 91.
CHINESE ADVOCACY

Chinese efforts paralleled those of the missionaries in the introduction of Western learning in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For our purpose, it is significant that they were attracted to modern Western libraries from the beginning. Their introduction and advocacy of modern libraries was hastened partly out of a desire to strengthen China against external threats, especially after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). A few “enlightened” members of the Chinese gentry class had provided superficial descriptions of Western libraries in their translation projects immediately after the Opium War. Later on, Western libraries attracted the attention of early Chinese diplomats who had direct knowledge of the West. They “discovered” the public functions of libraries, as they were struck by the differences between Western libraries and Chinese book repositories. However, they could offer only limited insights in this regard. The task of systematically introducing and propagating modern libraries fell to the reformist officials and scholars in the closing years of the Qing Dynasty, out of the need for thorough change in China’s educational system.

Introduction of modern libraries in early translated works

The earliest descriptions of modern libraries could be found in early translated works on Western geography sponsored by Lin Zexu (1785–1850) and Wei Yuan (1794–1856). Completed in the 1840s, these works were translated from foreign language materials, providing brief and superficial information on modern libraries, for example, the location of the major ones in Western countries. Yet none of the translators had personal experience of those libraries. Nevertheless, the second-hand information opened a window to the Chinese mind. These early translated works pointed to the existence of modern libraries as a social institution in the West in sharp contrast to the traditional book repositories of imperial China.

Lin Zexu, a senior Qing official distinguished for the prohibition of opium in China in 1839, proposed translating Western books, adopting military technology, building arsenals and shipyards, reforming China’s military forces, and training Chinese

39 Xiong Yuezhi, “1842 zhi 1860nian xixue zai Zhongguo de chuanbo” (The dissemination of Western learning in China between 1842 and 1860), Zhongguo jindaishi (History of early modern China) 11 (1994): 16-34; see also her “Degree of Familiarity with the West in the Late Qing Society,” in Pollard, ed., Translation and Creation, pp. 25-36.

personnel for foreign affairs. During the Opium War, Lin’s personal experience with the West led him to begin the government project of translating Western works. Patronised by Lin, information concerning Western countries was compiled and translated, presenting the Chinese with an understanding of Western countries. In 1841, *The Gazetteer of the Four Continents* (*Sizhouzhi*) appeared, translated from Murray’s *Encyclopedia of Geography*, providing information on the geography, politics, economics, and culture of over thirty countries in the world.

In *The Gazetteer of the Four Continents*, Lin wrote: “There is a great library in Britain and another one in North Ireland,” adding that “There are many large libraries in the United States.” His translation project was carried on by Wei Yuan, a distinguished scholar. Based on *The Gazetteer of the Four Continents*, Wei, in the late 1840s, completed a famous geography book—*The Maritime Countries* (*Haiguo tuzhi*)—in fifty volumes, and managed to expand it to one hundred volumes, which became the most authoritative work on foreign countries in the late Qing. Like Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan had no overseas experience and knew no English, but he was able to present more systematic knowledge about the West than Lin. He argued that “Western weaponry has its strength; so do Western schools, newspapers, and libraries.” In *The Maritime Countries*, Wei stated: “There are libraries in France, Britain, Austria, Spain, and the United States.” He was impressed by the government sponsorship of the Massachusetts Public Library in the United States. But his idea of government sponsorship of public libraries was too advanced for the Qing government in the mid-nineteenth century. At any rate, these early translated works were aimed at introducing Western geography to the Chinese. They served as a cultural guide to the West, with information on modern libraries relatively early. Unfortunately, there was no first-hand information on Western libraries until the 1860s, when diplomats were sent to the West for the first time in China’s history.

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46 Ibid., p. 15.
“Discovery” of modern libraries by early Chinese diplomats

It was not until the 1860s that Chinese diplomats were sent to Europe and North America. The first-hand investigations into modern libraries by these pioneering diplomats provided more detailed information than the early translated works stated above.\(^47\) Not only were their collections and locations dealt with, but the accessibility of libraries and the equality of male and female readers also received attention. Significantly, Chinese diplomats began to realise the differences between Chinese book repositories and Western libraries. Impressed by what they saw in the West, they recorded their experiences in their diaries.

Zhang Deyi (1847–1918) was the first Chinese ever to investigate modern libraries in the West. In 1866, Zhang was on the team of the first Qing foreign mission, spending four months visiting European countries. A graduate from the Qing Government Language School, Zhang’s knowledge of English and the West enabled him to make relatively detailed observations of Western countries. He took notice of Western libraries, especially the British Museum Library, with its huge collections of Chinese and other Asian language materials. He noticed more than 800,000 volumes of books in a variety of languages in the British Museum Library.\(^48\) What struck him was that “the British people can enter the Library, read books, and take notes regardless of their social status.”\(^49\) His description of the British Museum Library revealed not only the magnificent collections of Britain’s national library but also the fact that modern libraries were open to the public regardless of sex, social status, and wealth. In addition to European libraries, Zhang paid visits to American libraries in 1867, when he worked as an interpreter for Chinese diplomats to the United States. This time, he visited the public libraries in New York and was surprised to find that wealthy Americans founded libraries that became accessible to the public.\(^50\)

No doubt, Zhang Deyi’s personal observations of Western libraries illuminated the public functions of those libraries, helping to raise modern library awareness in China. Similarly, other Chinese diplomats were impressed. They started to make a contrast

\(^{47}\) Zhou Jie and Bai Mu, “Wanqing waijiao shichen yu woguo tushuguan shiye de fazhan” (Chinese diplomats and library development in late Qing China), Tushuguan zazhi (Library journal) 20:9 (2001): 51-53. For more information on the foreign relations of the Qing period, see Gao Shihua, Zhongguo waijiao yanyi: wanqing shiqi (The foreign relations of China: the late Qing period) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1995).


\(^{49}\) Quoted in Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 52.
between Chinese book repositories and open Western libraries, paving the way for the critique of these repositories during the New Library period (see Chapter 5).

A reading of Guo Songtao’s (1818–1891) biography sheds some light on this. Appointed the first Chinese Minister to Great Britain in 1875 and then Minister to France in 1877, Guo took a great interest in Western learning as early as the 1850s, when he visited the London Missionary Press (Mohai shuguan) in Shanghai and was amazed at the speed of the printing press. From then on, he was a propagator of Western learning, thinking highly of Western weaponry, commerce, as well as education.51

While in England and France, Guo keenly observed their political, economic, and educational systems. His interest was not limited to the military field, but extended to English political and legal institutions. He looked into the cultural aspects of the British way of life. Schools and universities were his favourite places; other attractions were museums, printing offices, and libraries. In London, he paid frequent visits to courts, prisons, industrial enterprises, as well as banks. He also visited the printing press of The Times and witnessed the importance of the telegraph in news transmission. The Telegraph Bureau, the Royal College of Physicians, and the Royal Observatory all attracted his attention. A shrewd observer and a clear-minded thinker, he appreciated that all types of institutional and scientific reforms were urgently needed in China. In his opinion, the prosperity and strength of Western countries derived from the energies and efforts of their people.52

Thereafter, through his first-hand experience and information obtained in the West, Guo made a thorough analysis of the cultural and historical backgrounds of China and Western countries. He started criticising the deficiency of the Self-Strengthening Movement, insisting that political, legal, commercial, and educational reforms be introduced immediately.53 To the young scholars of his time, he was the guide in the discovery of the West. To his successors as Chinese ministers overseas, he became the elder statesman from whom they sought advice. In the eyes of the legal reformers,

51 For more information on Guo’s life and career, see Owen H. Wang, A New Profile in Sino-Western Diplomacy: The First Chinese Minister to Great Britain (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Co., 1987).
52 Ibid., p. 226.
he was the forerunner of their bold scheme to build up a new China on a constitutional basis.\(^{54}\)

Guo’s inspection of Western libraries showed a picture of modern libraries in the light of collections, services, readers, and buildings. He found that many Chinese classics were held in Western libraries, and became concerned about the loss of Chinese culture. Eventually, this concern contributed to the founding of modern libraries for China (see Chapter 3). While in Great Britain, he paid frequent visits to libraries, including the British Museum Library and the Oxford University Library. He was amazed at the grandeur of the Round Reading Room in the British Museum Library, which had “a capacity for more than 1,000 readers, with 700 readers there every day.”\(^{55}\) He noticed that “Readers can get access to some books by themselves, but for other books, a person in charge will find the books for them.”\(^{56}\) He was surprised at the Chinese antiquities and the large number of Chinese books held by the British Museum Library.\(^{57}\) In France, he visited the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, noticing that “the collections are divided into four parts: ancient coins, paintings, handwritten books, and printed books.”\(^{58}\) He was surprised to find 24,000 Chinese books and many ancient Chinese coins there.\(^{59}\) Moreover, he was struck to learn that there were “more than 2,000,000 books in the Reading Room of the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, all accessible to the public.”\(^{60}\) In short, Guo became aware of the fundamental differences between Western libraries and Chinese book repositories.

Similarly, Xue Fucheng (1838–1894) gave considerable attention to Western education and libraries. In 1890, Xue went to Europe as Chinese Minister to England, France, Italy, and Belgium, returning to China in 1894. Not only did he visit schools and prisons, but he also experienced the application of science and technology in everyday life, such as railways, steamships, telegraphs, and telephones. His four years’ stay in Europe convinced him that industry and commerce should be promoted to develop the economy, thus strengthening the state.\(^{61}\)


\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 225.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 377.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 652.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p. 653.

\(^{61}\) For information on Xue Fucheng’s viewpoints, see Xue Fucheng, *Chushi ying fa yi bi siguo riji* (Diaries in England, France, Italy, and Belgium) (Shanghai: Tushu jicheng yinshuju, 1896) (Reprint, Changsha: Yuelu chubanshe, 1985).
In the case of Western libraries, Xue noticed the existence of large book collections, which covered many subjects, arranged in line with a strict classification system. The British Museum Library, in his view, was “the largest library, boasting about rare books from China and other countries and claiming the largest repository of Chinese books in the West.”62 Another important library, according to Xue, was the Cambridge University Library, with “many rare books in the Chinese language that cannot be seen even in China!”63 He noticed that there were 500 libraries in France, with 2,079,000 books in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France alone. He found 2,872,000 books in 200 libraries in Great Britain; 953,000 books in 145 libraries in Russia; and 4,350,000 books in 493 libraries in Italy.64 His visits to the printing press in London brought him to a realisation that the printing technology in the West was more advanced than that in China, because the movable type was in widespread use across Europe.65

Like other Chinese diplomats of his time, Xue became aware of the disparities between Chinese book repositories and Western libraries in terms of book collections, management, and services. He was impressed by the fact that Western countries placed great emphasis on national collections, whereas China was proud of the private collections possessed by renowned book collectors.66 His recognition of this difference may seem superficial today, but it indicated that the Chinese were beginning to re-evaluate the tradition of their book repositories. Xue’s information on Western libraries led his countrymen to acknowledge that Chinese book repositories lagged far behind Western libraries, and that it was necessary to build libraries on Western models.

These investigations into Western libraries were sporadic and unsystematic, but they presented the first on-the-spot observations that helped to raise the awareness of modern libraries in Chinese society. These early Chinese diplomats emphasised some features of Western libraries, such as public functions, government sponsorship, and equal access. They were not alone. Reformist Chinese scholars at home were also active in their attempts to introduce modern libraries to China.

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62 Ibid., p. 382.
63 Ibid., p. 383.
64 Ibid., pp. 384-385.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., p. 382.
Advocacy of modern libraries by reformist Chinese scholars

The ideas of the early diplomats did not gain popularity until educational reform was advocated by reformist scholars, notably Zheng Guanying, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao. Their dedication to modern Chinese libraries has been largely neglected in the existing literature on modern China. They all saw the importance of modern libraries to talent cultivation and national regeneration and the need to adopt modern library management. Based on their efforts, the concept of modern libraries was eventually accepted by the Chinese elite, and library practice on a small scale was carried out, paving the way for the establishment of modern libraries in the early twentieth century. In particular, Liang Qichao was an influential advocate of both new-style education and modern libraries. From a macro-historical perspective, his advocacy of modern libraries was an important element in his notion of the “renovation of the people” (xinmin). This puts him in the mainstream of the modern library movement in China.

Zheng Guanying was a forerunner in the systematic introduction of modern libraries in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Born into an intellectual family of gentry background, Zheng studied the Confucian classics and prepared for the civil service examinations. After he failed in his first attempt at the examinations at the age of seventeen, he went to Shanghai to make a living. There he took a great interest in Western learning and began to learn English. He became a comprador, taking an active part in public affairs. China’s defeat in the Sino-French War (1884–1885) propelled him to ponder China’s social crisis and to understand the political and economical systems of the West. It was under such circumstances that Zheng began to work on The Alarmist Talks in Times of Peace and Prosperity (Shengshi weiyan), published in 1892. In this book, he urged that the transformation of Chinese education be based on Western ideas and experiences. He devoted Volume Four of his work to

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67 For more information on this notion, see Liang Qichao, “Xinmin shuo” (The renovation of the people), in his Yinhingshi heji: zhuangji (Collected works and essays from the ice-drinker’s studio: collected works) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1925) (Reprint, Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1940), vol 4.
book collections and his concern with the systematic knowledge of modern libraries. His ideas on modern libraries can be summarised as follows.

First of all, he acknowledged the close connections between the public library system and the cultivation of talents in the West. He cited Great Britain as an example, maintaining that its prosperity owed much to its educational system and the public library system. He was profoundly impressed that “There are libraries and museums in every Western country, and Great Britain leads in the number of collections.”

Next, he criticised the closed nature of China’s traditional book repositories, advocating the public functions of Western libraries. He suggested that public book repositories be established across the country for the benefit of the whole nation and the young people in particular. Significantly, he related the establishment of public book repositories to the strengthening and rejuvenation of China. He became the first scholar in his time to propagate the educational functions of modern libraries. Finally, he was struck by the state support for libraries in England, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy. In his opinion, Chinese governments of different levels should take major responsibility for the founding of public book repositories or public libraries, which should be open to the public without discrimination. He also suggested that both government and the gentry share the funding. His interest in Western learning and success in industry and commerce made him a pioneer in the modern library movement in China. He perceived a link between educational reform, the regeneration of China, and the necessity of public libraries.

Zheng’s ideas, however, were not implemented until Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao launched an all-out reform movement in 1895. For Kang, Liang, and their generation of scholars, educational reform was critical to China’s future in the face of a crisis that threatened the survival of the whole nation, following the disastrous war with Japan in 1895.

Liang Qichao’s first experiment in modern libraries was the book collections attached to the Grass Hut amid a Myriad of Trees (Wanmu caotang), a modern education institution established in Guangdong Province in 1891 by Kang Youwei. At this new-style school, Kang adopted new methods of teaching by encouraging students to make critical analyses and comparisons, rather than by memorising the classics, as in the past. The private collections of Kang formed the nucleus of the

book collections at the Grass Hut. When Liang Qichao was studying under Kang there, he built up the first “library” in his life by pooling together more than 7,000 books owned by the students. These collections grew to 10,000 volumes shortly afterwards, as translated works on Western learning were purchased. Although this educational institution did not last long, it marked the transition from an old-style academy to a new-style school. A distinguishing feature of its book collections was that they were created by the books owned individually; people, who contributed books to this “library”, were entitled to borrowing rights. The first “library” established by Liang, therefore, can be viewed as marking the transition from traditional book repositories to modern libraries.

Liang’s second library experiment was the book collections attached to the Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening (Qiangxuehui). Realising the importance of education in social change and taking a great interest in the educational systems in Western countries, Kang and Liang insisted that libraries be open to the public and offer services to the wider community. Accordingly, they continued founding libraries themselves as well as advocating modern libraries and Western education. When the Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening was founded in Beijing in August 1895 and in Shanghai in November 1895, respectively, Kang had four major tasks planned, namely translating foreign language works, publishing newspapers, enlarging book collections, and establishing museums, the first three of which were integrated with book collections. Concerned about the paucity of printed materials in Beijing, Kang further proposed that both Chinese and foreign language materials of different types be acquired in support of scientific research, including translated works, newspapers, and maps. The Society’s book collections were established by donations from its

71 Liang Qichao, “Wanmu caotang zhengjuan tushu qi” (Request for donations of books at the Grass Hut amid a Myriad of Trees), in his Yinbingshi heji: wenji (Collected works and essays from the ice-drinker’s studio: collected essays) (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1925) (Reprint, Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1940), vol 2, p. 24.
members. The English and French Ministers to China contributed books. Zhang Zhidong, an eminent Qing official and later founder of the national library for China in 1909, also donated 5,000 taels.\textsuperscript{76} These book collections were open to the public from the start, even though the community did not yet understand their public functions.\textsuperscript{77}

In November 1895, the Society in Beijing was closed down by the Qing Court because of the radical proposals of Kang and Liang on political reforms.\textsuperscript{78} Though short-lived, the Society was important in terms of the reform movement that followed. In the case of modern libraries, its book collections cannot be ignored. They were not lost, but transferred to the newly established Central Government Book Bureau (\textit{Guanshuju}).\textsuperscript{79} Since the collections touched upon many topics on Western learning and included different types of printed materials, such as translated works, newspapers, and maps, they enriched the Qing government book collections. Moreover, the Society promoted the establishment of learning societies, the translation of foreign language materials, and the publishing of newspapers all over China. This trend was developed further by Liang in his article “On Societies” (\textit{Lun xuehui}), published in \textit{Current Affairs (Shiwubao)} in 1896. In that article, Liang listed sixteen functions of societies, five of which dealt with book collections and libraries. These were storing government publications, purchasing translated Western works, translating Western works, acquiring Chinese and foreign maps, and compiling books.\textsuperscript{80} As a consequence, eighty-seven similar societies, nine publishing presses, and 133 new-style schools were established between 1896 and 1898. Many societies had rich book collections.\textsuperscript{81}

More society book collections sprang up in the following years. Generally speaking, these collections had specific regulations on the acquisition, organisation, and utilisation of books. For instance, the Society of Jiangsu Province required that purchase of books be approved by its organising committee; that books of six

\textsuperscript{76} Wu Xi, \textit{Congcangshulou dao tushuguan} (From book repositories to libraries) (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1996), p. 12.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Liang Qichao, “Qiangxuehui ji qita xuehui” (The Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening and other societies), in Jian Bozan et al., comps., \textit{Wuxu bianfa} (The Hundred Days Reform of 1898) (Shanghai: Shenzhou guo guang she, 1953), vol 4, pp. 373-377.
\textsuperscript{79} See the relevant section below in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{81} Wu, \textit{Congcangshulou dao tushuguan}, p. 12; Lu Xingsu, “Zhongguo xiandai tushuguan yu xuehui” (Modern Chinese libraries and study societies), \textit{Tushuguan zazhi} (Library Journal) 4 (1995): 7-12.
categories be acquired in history, geography, mathematics, agriculture, commerce, and science and technology; and that all the books be classified and checked every month in case of damage or loss.\textsuperscript{82} Apparently, the emphasis was put on the management and utilisation, instead of preservation, of books.

Although many society book collections were still named book repositories, they were no longer government or private property. Instead, they had new functions and characteristics, which distinguished them from traditional book repositories. Those collections were mainly about Western learning and other aspects of new knowledge from the West, instead of being confined to the classics and rare books. They were also open to the public. Finally, there were regulations regarding the acquisition, cataloguing, and circulation of books. In other words, scientific management methods were employed. Not surprisingly, book collections attached to societies in the late 1890s were superior to those of traditional book repositories in terms of the contents of collections, reader services, and management. In this sense, the society book collections were modern libraries in an embryonic form. Gradually, they became a kind of social and cultural institution, something that could only be achieved through more educational and other social transformations.

Kang and Liang were tireless in propagating ideas about modern education and libraries. As early as 1895, Kang, along with Liang and the other 1,300 candidates for the metropolitan examination, submitted “Gongche Submitting Statement” (Gongche shangshu), an important memorial, to Emperor Guangxu, urging for a variety of reforms to save their country.\textsuperscript{83} In that statement, Kang held that the strength of the West did not lie in weaponry, but in education.” He supported his view by saying: “The literacy rate in United States is seventy percent. There are more than 10,000 students studying at universities in Great Britain. Both of those two countries boast their public libraries.”\textsuperscript{84} Kang was worried about the low literacy rate of only two percent in China and thought that the slim funding of education in China would lead to an inadequate supply of talents.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{82} “Suxuehui jianming zhanguemeng” (Brief regulations on the Society of Jiangsu Province), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiiliao, chunqiu zhi wasi qianhou, pp. 101-103.


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 918.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 919.
Between 1895 and 1898, Kang submitted a series of memorials to Emperor Guangxu, making a number of reform proposals that centred around education, finance, industry, and military defence, the construction of libraries being one of them. In these memorials, Kang articulated that the West was wealthy and powerful because the people were regarded as the basis of the national culture there. He urged Emperor Guangxu to “encourage the Chinese people to pursue knowledge for the sake of national wealth and power.” He reiterated that “every Western library has collected tens of thousands of books in all languages, and herein lies the key to a strong and prosperous China.” Significantly, Kang called for new methods of cultivating talents through popular education. Traditional education was a family investment made in the hope of benefiting the past, present, and future generations of the family in imperial China. The decline of the Dynasty was pushing educational reform to the forefront of changes in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in the closing decades of the Qing. It was under such circumstances that Kang strongly advocated establishing modern libraries, or public book repositories, to educate talented individuals capable of rejuvenating their country.

Liang echoed his master’s view by saying that the strength of a nation lay in its talents instead of its armies, and that public book repositories were pivotal in fostering these talents. He further stated that the regeneration of a country must begin with “the rejuvenation of its people”. The leading intellectual spokesman for reforms, Liang reiterated the views on the connections between education and national strength. For him, the aim of education was to create a new citizenry, and the educational system must target the children of the whole country. Modern libraries, schools, and study societies were useful tools to attain this end. Otherwise, China would face not only the collapse of a dynasty but also the possible extinction of the

whole nation.\textsuperscript{93} To support his argument, Liang produced memorials and proposals on educational reform from different perspectives, and published articles on a wide range of topics in the journal \textit{Current Affairs}, for which he was editor-in-chief, between 1896 and 1898. In these writings, Liang underscored the importance of the inculcation of new subjects and the establishment of new-style schools in China.\textsuperscript{94}

Liang viewed modern libraries as an important element in his notion of the “renovation of the people”.\textsuperscript{95} In this view, China’s traditional education could not inculcate in the people a sense of rights, duties, and national consciousness. Western learning was needed to foster a citizenry capable of saving China from foreign aggressions and building up a new nation-state.\textsuperscript{96} Through “renovation”, not only did the Chinese have obligations to their government, but they must also enjoy political rights.\textsuperscript{97} Democracy, constitutionalism, and national consciousness could only develop in China on the foundation of a “renovation” of the Chinese people through education.\textsuperscript{98}

Clearly, the issue of modern libraries was part of Kang and Liang’s reform movement in the 1890s. For them, modern libraries were fundamental in introducing new learning, awakening the people, nurturing talents, and regenerating the nation. The key to this was modern education, which entailed the pursuit of new knowledge through the establishment of schools, study societies, and modern libraries. In this sense, modern libraries were an indispensable tool for the salvation of China. Their advocacy reflected the changing political and intellectual landscape in the declining Qing.

\textit{Current Affairs} served as a major forum in which the knowledge of modern libraries was introduced. The term \textit{library} in the Chinese language (tushuguan) made its first appearance there in 1896.\textsuperscript{99} Liang’s contribution to the library discourse also lay in his innovation of the Chinese classification system. In the eighth issue of \textit{Current Affairs} in 1896, Liang introduced his own work, \textit{The Bibliography of

\textsuperscript{93} Liang Qichao, “Lun xuexiao: II” (On schools: II), \textit{Shiwubao} 7 (1896): 413-420.
\textsuperscript{95} Liang, “Xinmin shuo,” in his \textit{Yinbingshi heji: zhaanjji}, vol 4.
\textsuperscript{97} Chang, \textit{Liang Qichao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890–1907}, p. 165.
\textsuperscript{98} Liang, “Lun xuexiao: I,” p. 274.
\textsuperscript{99} “Gubadao shulue” (Brief introduction to Island Guba), \textit{Shiwubao} 6 (1896): 393.
Translated Works on Western Learning (Xixue shumubiao). With more translated works on Western learning becoming available, it became a serious problem on how to classify and organise them. The Bibliography of Translated Works on Western Learning was intended as the answer. Liang classified the translated works into three broad categories: Western science, Western politics, and others.100 Though cursory, The Bibliography broke with the traditional Chinese classification system, taking into account the emergence of new types of printed materials. It also acted as a bridge between traditional learning and new learning, paving the way for the introduction of new classification systems from the West.

In the Regulations on the Imperial University of Beijing, drafted by him in 1898,101 Liang stressed the necessity of book collections for the University. He also listed several specific ideas of developing book collections. “It is impossible to gather all the books scholars need. But since many other new-style schools have their own book collections, it is necessary for the Imperial University of Beijing to have its own, which should cover both Chinese and foreign language materials.”102 He thought that one person needed to be appointed to take charge of the books, aided by ten assistants, and that 20,000 taels were needed to build a modern building for the books and to purchase new publications.103

During the Hundred Days Reform of 1898, the ideas of modern libraries, as distinct from book repositories, were introduced by the reformers, paving the way for the founding of modern libraries in the country in the years to come.104 Liang Qichao was particularly influential in the late Qing intellectual movement, of which his advocacy of modern libraries was part.

**Advocacy of modern libraries by reform-minded Chinese officials**

China’s humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War provided a greater urgency to educational reforms on a large scale in the hope of national regeneration. Many

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100 Liang Qichao, “Xixue shumubiao” (The bibliography of translated works on Western learning), Shiwubao 8 (1896): 489-494.
101 Created during the Hundred Days Reform of 1898, the Imperial University of Beijing (Jingshi daxuetang) was transformed into Beijing University (Beida) in 1912. See Timothy Bergmann Weston, “Beijing University and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1920,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1995).
102 Liang, “Jingshi daxuetang zhengcheng,” in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cargshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhau, p. 88.
103 Ibid., p. 89.
writings, including memorials, proposals, and newspaper articles, were produced by senior court officials to highlight the need for educational change, with the educational functions of modern libraries being emphasised as an important part of new-style education.

Sun Jianai (1827–1909) was a relatively early senior court official who recognised the importance of book collections to educational reform and to China’s regeneration. In 1896, he proposed the establishment of the Central Government Book Bureau, complete with a book repository, with funding from the Qing Court. He submitted a couple of memorials in which he urged that both government publications and translated works be stored in the Book Repository of the Central Government Book Bureau.\(^\text{105}\) He also drafted and submitted to the Qing Court the Regulations on the Central Government Book Bureau, wherein he requested 1,000 taels for book acquisition and strongly recommended that the book collections of the Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening be given to the Bureau.\(^\text{106}\) When the Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening in Beijing was closed down by the Qing Court in November 1895, Sun reacted by stating that the book collections of the Society were aimed at circulating books and promoting scientific research, maintaining that “there will be one more patriot tomorrow if there is one more reader today.”\(^\text{107}\)

The Chinese elite viewed Western learning as essential in the search for wealth and power. The disaster of the Sino-Japanese War lay bare the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement. More extensive educational reforms became imperative. Sun’s arguments on opening book collections represented the views of the educated elite. Eventually, the Qing government founded the Central Government Book Bureau on the basis of the former Society for the Study of Self-Strengthening in Beijing in 1896. In 1902, the Bureau was incorporated into the Imperial University of Beijing.\(^\text{108}\)

Li Duanfen (1833–1907) was another senior court official concerned with reforming education and founding new-style book collections. Liang Qichao’s brother-in-law, Li was influenced by Liang’s reformist ideas on education to some


\(^{107}\) Ibid., p. 219.

\(^{108}\) Wu, *Cong cangshulou dao tushuguan*, pp. 102-103.
degree.\textsuperscript{109} In 1896, his “Memorial on the Promotion of Schools” underlined the importance of modern libraries to modern education. This memorial was published in *Current Affairs*, of which Liang was editor-in-chief.\textsuperscript{110}

In this memorial, Li Duanfen summarised the critical situation in China and went on to point out five measures that needed to be taken seriously. These were the establishment of book repositories, founding of laboratories, erection of translation departments, opening of newspaper publishing houses, and dispatching of students overseas. All of these measures were aimed at the dissemination of Western learning on a large scale through the establishment of new-style schools across the country. These new schools were to replace the old traditional ones, assisting ordinary Chinese in becoming educated citizens, who were competent enough to restore wealth and power to China. Therefore, the book repositories mentioned in his memorial differed from traditional book collections, as Li suggested that they be equipped with both Chinese books and translated materials of Western science and politics. In addition, Li urged that they be open to the poor people and take charge of diffusing knowledge and education among ordinary Chinese.

Similarly, Ma Jianzhong (1844–1900) saw close connections between modern education and the future of China, recognising the necessity of books in the dissemination of Western knowledge and in the facilitation of educational reform.\textsuperscript{111} A native of Dantu, Jiangsu Province, Ma was from a Christian merchant family and received a Catholic education in Shanghai, learning French, English, Latin, and Greek. In 1877, Ma studied at Fuzhou Shipyard Naval School from which thirty young Chinese were selected to study in England, France, and Germany. Ma, among those selected, was sent to study at Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris. He graduated three years later with a degree in international law and diplomacy. Returning to China in 1880, he worked in *ad hoc* foreign affair assignments.

\textsuperscript{109} Li Duanfen thought highly of Liang Qichao’s learning and married his sister to Liang. For detailed information on their relations, see Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing, *Liang Qichao zhuan* (The biography of Liang Qichao) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), ch. 1; see also Wu Liming, *Liang Qichao he tade ermen men* (Liang Qichao and his children) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), ch. 1.

\textsuperscript{110} Li Duanfen, “Qing tuiguang xuexiao zhe” (Memorial on the promotion of schools), *Shiwubao* 6 (1896): 350-356.

\textsuperscript{111} For Ma Jianzhong’s biography and career, see Wang Haifen, *Mashi wengong yu Zhongguo yufaxue* (*The Ma Grammar* and the research on Chinese grammar) (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991). See also Ma Jianzhong, *Mashi wengong* (*The Ma grammar*) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1898) (Reprint, Beijing: Beijing Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983).
In 1898, Ma proposed that a book repository be attached to the newly founded Translation Bureau of the Qing Government (Yishuju). He suggested that newly published books, either in Chinese or foreign languages, be acquired quickly, personnel be appointed to manage those materials, and funds be allocated by the Qing government. His suggestion, though simple, hit upon the basic ideas of modern libraries in terms of acquisition of foreign language materials, appointment of staff, and allocation of funds.

The status of modern education in China at the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War was by no means established or efficient. Modern education was narrow and conservative, focusing mainly on the Self-Strengthening Movement. Nonetheless, since the end of the War, considerable progress had been made in modern education, culminating in the abolition of the civil service examinations and the initiation of a national school system. The primary motivation for these fundamental changes lay, to a large degree, in the realisation on the part of the reform-minded officials that the very existence of a nation depended on modern education among other things. Importantly, these government officials impressed the Qing Court with the urgency of making innovations for the nation’s survival. Due to the privileged status and prestige of these officials, the advocacy of modern libraries spread to the wider gentry class, promoting the concept of the modern library among the educated Chinese.

CONCLUSION

Western learning, educational reform, national regeneration, and missionary influence were the factors that contributed to the emergence of modern libraries in the late Qing. The notion of the modern library was brought to China both by far-sighted Western missionaries and by “enlightened” Chinese gentry members from the mid-nineteenth century. The formative period of modern libraries coincided with those important decades in China’s response to the challenges of the outside world.

112 The Translation Bureau of the Qing Government was founded during the Hundred Days Reform of 1898 to spread Western learning, with Liang Qichao in charge. See “Wuxu bianfa shiqi de jiaoyu cuoshi” (The educational measures taken during the Hundred Days Reform of 1898), in Shu, comp., Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyushi ziliao, vol 1, pp. 43-47.
113 Ma Jianzhong, “Nishe fanyi shuyuan yi” (Discussions on the establishment of the Translation Bureau), in Feng Guifen and his, Cai xixue yi (Discussions on the adoption of Western learning), Zheng Dahua, anno. (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 162-166.
114 Cyrus H. Peake, Nationalism and Education in Modern China (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 63-70.
including Western learning. The educational reform advocated by reformist Chinese scholars and officials gave considerable impetus to the founding of modern libraries. Modern libraries were a new institution introduced from the West that had undergone the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. There are many differences between Western libraries and Chinese book repositories in acquisition, management, organisation, and utilisation of collections, the essential difference being in the open collections, accessible to every reader regardless of sex, wealth, and social status.

The emergence of modern Chinese libraries owed a debt to the 1890s generation. During the educational and intellectual transition in the 1890s, reformist Chinese realised that their country needed sweeping social and institutional changes to modernise agriculture, industry, military defence, and education. In sum, the reformist elite regarded modern libraries as an indispensable tool for learning, maintaining that modern education was essential to the cultivation of talents that were to save China from decline. In other words, the founding of modern libraries would play a role in the survival of China, confronted with foreign aggressions and domestic chaos. In a sense, the emergence of modern libraries symbolised China’s quest for and transition to modernity. The elite insisted that libraries be open to the public and offer services to the whole community. They also realised that the functions of modern libraries were to awaken the people, to impart knowledge, and to revitalise the country. The limited use of book collections in imperial China could not meet the demands of Chinese society in the modern era. In this sense, modern libraries were advocated as a means of educating the general public. Finally, the reformist elite introduced Western library services and management technologies, which found their way into library regulations. The Qing government, too, began to concern itself with the establishment of modern libraries and transformation of its book collections, which led to the founding of a national library in the late Qing.
Chapter 3
Founding of Modern Libraries in the Late Qing

The founding of modern libraries was inextricably linked with the Qing government’s educational reform. In the closing years of the Qing Dynasty, a series of reform programs was launched to regenerate the country, educational reform among them. Accompanying the educational change were the Qing Court’s endeavours in developing a variety of new book collections and modern libraries. Three types of modern libraries were founded by the Qing Court: language school libraries, university libraries, and public libraries. Eventually, these efforts led to the establishment of a national library. In addition to the educational, or public, functions of modern libraries, their preservation functions were highlighted, as the decline of the Dynasty prompted the Chinese to rethink preserving Chinese traditions and culture by means of libraries. In this way, it was hoped that a wealth of Chinese classics could be passed on to posterity.

In the process of the founding of modern libraries in the late Qing, a number of progressive government officials made significant contributions. They all saw the links between modern libraries and new-style education, recognising the necessity of modern libraries to the cultivation of talents that were to save China from decline. In particular, the establishment of modern libraries owed much to Zhang Zhidong, who devoted his energy to developing education and book collections throughout his long career in government. As an influential official in the late Qing, Zhang has attracted the attention of both Chinese and Western scholars. However, to date, his interest in the establishment and advocacy of modern libraries has been overlooked. Therefore, this chapter will shed some light on his tireless efforts in library development.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE FOUNDING OF MODERN LIBRARIES
Missionaries introduced and helped the Chinese establish modern libraries. Meanwhile, the nation-wide establishment of modern libraries owed a debt to educational reform launched by the Qing government. In the complex process of educational reform, the Qing Court simultaneously sought to transform its traditional government book collections and to build modern libraries. A modern national school system of different levels was coming into being, with traditional schools changed into
modern education institutions. The expansion of educational reform paved the way for the substantial increase in the book collections of the modern type, which, in turn, contributed to the further development of modern-style education to some degree.

**Early modern education institutions and their book collections**

China’s door was forced to open in the 1840s, with its civilisation threatened by the technological superiority of the Western powers. Traditional Chinese self-sufficiency and the small-scale agricultural economy were shattered. The conservative civil service examination system was questioned and shaken. Grudgingly, the Qing Court re-evaluated its educational system, perceiving an opportunity for a balanced approach to education, where the Confucian classics would continue to form the focus, augmented by a component of Western science and technology. Accordingly, educational reform began with the founding of technical schools for the study of foreign languages, military science, shipbuilding, and navigation between the 1860s and the 1890s. These three decades can be viewed as a transitional period in the educational history of modern China, during which the aim of education was to learn about ways of dealing with foreign affairs in the so-called Self-Strengthening Movement.¹

The first institution of this kind was the Qing Government Language School, founded in 1862 to train interpreters and diplomatic officers. Its curriculum was gradually expanded to include French, German, Russian, and Japanese in addition to English. Subjects other than languages were also taught, such as mathematics, astronomy, international law, chemistry, geology, and physics.² This school was significant, because it assumed more than one role, being the first government body for the translation of Western works.³ As a new type of educational institution, it also

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put a high premium on teaching facilities, including laboratories, museums, and book collections. These collections had 3,000 volumes of reference books in Chinese and foreign languages on a wide range of subjects, such as physics, chemistry, history, politics, as well as foreign language studies. In addition, a reading room was equipped with newspapers and magazines in foreign languages, and students were entitled to borrowing and reading rights.\(^4\) The book collections of the Language School had some features of a modern library, including the addition of foreign language materials and newspaper and magazine reading rooms. In 1902, its book collections were given to the Imperial University of Beijing, forming the basis of the book collections at that university.\(^5\)

Two more similar language schools were founded in Shanghai in 1863 and in Guangzhou in 1864, respectively, under the auspices of Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), Governor-General of Zhili.\(^6\) In 1869, the Shanghai Language School amalgamated with the language school of the Jiangnan Arsenal’s Translation Department. In 1870, new regulations stipulated the construction of book collections in Chinese and foreign languages for use by the School and the Jiangnan Arsenal’s Translation Department.\(^7\)

As early modern government schools, these language schools were criticised for their unorthodox approach, in other words, divergence from the instruction of the Confucian classics.\(^8\) Nevertheless, they contributed to the translation of foreign language materials and the cultivation of diplomatic talents for the Qing government. In addition, they set examples for the new-style schools that emerged in later years. Their book collections can be viewed as the Qing government’s first attempt to initiate modern-style book collections.


\(^5\) Zheng, “Jingshi tongwenguan.” p. 192. The Qing Government Language School was incorporated into the Imperial University of Beijing in 1902; the latter was changed into Beijing University in 1912. For more information on this university and its library, see Wu Xi, *Beijing daxue tushuguan jiushilin ji* (History of Beijing University Library in the last ninety years) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1992).

\(^6\) Li Hongzhang, “Qing zou she waiguo yuyan wenzi xueguan zhe” (Memorial on the establishment of foreign language schools), in Shu, comp., *Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyushi ziliao*, vol 1, pp. 128-130. For a biography of Li Hongzhang, see Zhu Chuanyu, *Li Hongzhang zhuanji ziliao* (The biographical materials on Li Hongzhang) (Taipei: Tianyi chubanshe, 1979).


\(^8\) Zheng, “Jingshi tongwenguan,” p. 192.
Higher education institutions and their book collections
At the turn of the twentieth century, as higher education institutions of the modern type came into being, modern libraries were attached to them. The Beiyang University Library (Beiyang daxue tushuguan) and the Imperial University of Beijing Library (Jingshi daxuetang tushuguan) were two outstanding examples of modern libraries founded and financed by the Qing government. The Beiyang University originated from the Sino-Foreign School, founded in Tianjin in 1895 by Sheng Xuanhuai, an eminent industrialist-official in the late Qing. The first university in China, Beiyang aimed at fostering industrial talents instead of producing candidates for the civil service examinations.9 As seen in Chapter 1, Sheng Xuanhuai was an early advocate of public book collections, and his personal experience in Self-Strengthening made him realise the necessity of transforming traditional education. For Sheng, cultivating talents was the key to self-strengthening, and founding educational institutions the prerequisite to cultivating talents. Meiji Japan had shown that its success was due to the establishment of schools and universities to a considerable degree; China, therefore, needed to put a high premium on instruction in engineering subjects upon which weaponry, railways, and the mining industry were based.10 As early as 1896, Sheng began to build up the Beiyang University Book Repository, appealing to the Qing Court for financial support.11

Beiyang was modelled on American lines in terms of curriculum and library management. The book collections at Beiyang focused on applied technology and natural sciences. For example, its cataloguing and classification systems did not adopt the traditional Chinese scheme of four categories. Instead, the American Library Association Subject Headings, Charles A. Cutter’s Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue, and the Dewey Decimal Classification were employed from the outset.12 Clearly, the Beiyang University Book Repository showed some characteristics of a

11 Ibid.
12 Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, p. 1560. The American Library Association Subject Headings, Charles A. Cutter’s Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue, and the Dewey Decimal Classification were advanced organisation technologies originated from American libraries. For detailed information on them, see Mary Liu Kao, Cataloguing and Classification for Library Technicians (New York: Haworth Press, 1995).
modern library, even though the name library was not adopted until the 1920s. In
the meantime, the financial support from the Qing Court guaranteed the smooth
operation of the University, including the building and maintaining of its book
collections.

On 4 July, 1898, Emperor Guangxu ordered the founding of the Imperial University
of Beijing, the first modern university set up by the Chinese authorities. Its Book
Repository, set up in October 1902, became the University Library in 1903, when the
Regulations on Universities (Daxuetang zhangcheng) were issued by the Qing Court,
stipulating that libraries be established on university campuses.

The rapid growth of the University Library owned much to Zhang Baixi (1847–
1907), who was appointed to take charge of the University early in 1902. Under his
leadership, the Library collections were enlarged and enriched significantly. The Qing
Government Language School was incorporated into the University in 1902, the
School’s book collections given to the University Book Repository. The University
Library also asked for books from government book bureaus from the central to local
levels. Consequently, a broad range of books was obtained. Further, the University
Library purchased books from the community, spending a sum of 25,000 taels
between 1905 and 1911. It also attracted considerable amounts of donations from
individuals from the outset. In this way, the University Library took the lead in
Chinese library development at the beginning of the twentieth century. And the
Imperial University of Beijing became the first Chinese higher education institution to
adopt the name library.

The founding of public libraries
Repeated humiliations at hands of foreigners, internal uprisings, and economic
incursions finally compelled the Qing Court to start reform in the last decade of its
existence. The New Administration (xinzheng) launched by the Qing Court in 1901

13 Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, p. 1560.
14 “Wuxu bianfa shiqi de jiaoyu cuoshi” (The educational measures taken during the Hundred Days
15 Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, p. 1564. The Regulations on Universities will be discussed later in
this chapter.
17 Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, pp. 1561-1564; Wu Xi, Cong cangshulou dao tushuguan (From
18 Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, pp. 1561-1564.
saw the roots of China’s modern state, as it was a decisive turn in Chinese political institutions away from the late imperial bureaucratic monarchy to the ministerial system. And this became part of the Qing Dynasty’s legacy to twentieth-century China in state building. The short-lived New Administration dismantled the civil service examinations in 1905. Although it was too late for the Qing government to restore its power, educational reform gave birth to a new national school system, under which public libraries were included.

There were three waves in the establishment of public libraries during the last decade of the Qing Dynasty. The first was brought about by the promulgation of the Regulations on Education (Zouding xuetang zhangcheng) in 1903 and the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905. The abolition marked a sharp break with the out-dated scheme of traditional education, and the Regulations the beginning of a national education system of the modern style. Such modern education featured spreading knowledge to the general public, emphasising neither classical instruction nor instruction of limited military science and ship building, as during the Self-Strengthening period. Instead, it was in the nature of general education, aimed at helping the Chinese people to become modern citizens who could contribute to a modern nation-state. Not surprisingly, public libraries were established to facilitate such a transition in China’s educational history. Between 1901 and 1906, public libraries were built in Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, and Fujian Provinces. Unlike traditional book collections of the past, they were called libraries and were open to the public. The Hubei Provincial Public Library and the Hunan Provincial Public Library stood out during this period.

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20 Cyrus H. Peake, Nationalism and Education in Modern China (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), chs. 2 and 3; Hiroshi Abe, “Borrowing from Japan: China’s First Educational System,” in Hayhoe and Bastid, eds., China’s Education and the Industrialised World, pp. 57-80. See also Wu Chunmei, Yict shikong de jindaihua gaijie: guanyu qingmo xinzheng de lixing sikao (One out of control modernisation movement in the late Qing) (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 1998).

21 Xie Zhuohua, “Lun ershi shiji qianban ye de Zhongguo tushuguan” (Chinese libraries in the first half of the twentieth century), Daxue tushuguan xuebao (Journal of academic libraries) 6 (1999): 22-28. See also Emperor Guangxu, “Qingdi yu liting keju yiguan xuexia” (Edict on the abolition of the civil service examinations and the promotion of schools), in Shu, comp., Jindai Zhongguo jiaoyushi ziliao, vol 1, pp. 62-66. The Regulations on Education will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Hubei Provincial Public Library was established in August 1904, under the aegis of Zhang Zhidiong, Governor-General of Huguang, and Duanfang (1861–1911), the Manchu Governor of Hubei Province, both of whom were renowned scholars and educational reform advocates. The collections of the Hubei Provincial Public Library consisted of books purchased from Japan and Shanghai, the classics obtained from the Government Book Bureau of Hubei, and some rare books purchased from private collectors. The collections covered a wide variety of subjects in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages. In addition to the materials on traditional Chinese classics, history, philosophy, and literature, some books on sciences and other modern Western subjects were included.\(^{23}\) This library set an example to early public libraries in China at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Hunan Provincial Public Library originated from the Hunan Library and Educational Museum, established in 1904. Two Governors of Hunan contributed greatly to its establishment. One was Duanfang, the other Pang Hongshu. In 1905, Duanfang appropriated a fund of more than 10,000 taels and employed scholars for the Hunan Library and Educational Museum. In 1905, his successor Governor Pang Hongshu continued the efforts in collecting materials, some of which were purchased from Japan.\(^{24}\) In 1906, Pang’s “Memorial on the Establishment of the Library” was published in *The Journal of the Board of Education* (*Xuebu guanbao*). In it, Pang stated that libraries were a social institution common in Western countries, and that they contributed significantly to the promotion of learning, the cultivation of talents, and social advancement. Pang proceeded to argue that although new schools had been founded in Hunan and a considerable number of new school textbooks and translated works on Western learning had been in existence, public libraries were underdeveloped in the province.\(^{25}\)

As a result of Pang’s appeal, a sum of 5,000 taels was obtained from the Qing Court to build a new building for the Hunan Library and Educational Museum, now renamed the Hunan Provincial Public Library, in 1906. The Temporary Regulations Pertaining to the Hunan Provincial Public Library covered many aspects in relation to the operation of the Library, including opening hours, borrowing and reading rules,

\(^{23}\) Ibid., vol 2, p. 1089.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., vol 2, p. 1090.
\(^{25}\) Pang Hongshu, “Xiangfu Pang Hongshu zou jianshe tushuguan zhe” (Memorial on the establishment of the library), *Xuebu guanbao* (The journal of the Board of Education) 9 (1906): 11-12. (Beijing: The First Historical Archives of Beijing, box no. 356).
purchases and donations of books, encouragement of donators, arrangement of books on shelves, and cataloguing methods. The Library was first open to the public in 1906.26

The second wave of library development followed on the heels of the overseas investigation into constitutionalism by five senior officials from 1905 to 1906. In September 1905, five officials, headed by Prince Zaize (1868–1930) and Duanfang, visited Japan, the United States, and some European countries in the Qing Court’s preparation for constitutional government.27 Their initial aim was to inspect Western countries under constitutional rule. Many aspects of Western society drew their attention, including educational and cultural institutions. They visited the Library of Congress, and Columbia, Yale, Stanford, and Cornell University Libraries.28 They were surprised to find that “the Reading Room of the Library of Congress held 15,000 books, with 2,000 readers visiting it every day.”29 They were impressed by the modern operation and management technologies of the Library of Congress, especially the easy and equal access to library holdings, for example, “it took a reader only one minute and a half to get a book on average.”30 Upon return to China in July 1906, they submitted to the Qing Court a report with reform proposals, among them the establishment of libraries. The report produced its desired effects, with more than ten public libraries built across China between 1907 and 1909.31 Of these five officials, Duanfang was the most zealous propagator of public libraries. The Jiangnan Library, which he founded on the old site of the Academy for the Love of Time, Jiangsu Province, in 1907,32 was probably the best public library during this period. Based upon his Hunan experience and overseas investigation, he maintained that “education was conducive to the wealth and power of a nation, with

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26 “Hunan tushuguan zanding zhangcheng” (The temporary regulations pertaining to the Hunan Provincial Public Library), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chuang zhi wai si qianhou, pp. 152-157.

27 The other three officials were Dai Hongci, Xu Shichang, and Shaoying. For more details, see Zaize, Kaocha zhengzhi riji (Diary of investigations into politics) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1909).


29 Ibid., p. 348.

30 Ibid., p. 356.


libraries being the mother of education.” Thanks to his efforts, the Jiangnan Library was guaranteed an annual funding of more than 1,000 taels until 1911; a new building was erected in Jinling for it in 1909, with rare books, foreign language materials, and new textbooks. As the Jiangnan Library was established by a senior Qing official, its influence was far-reaching, accelerating the establishment of public libraries across the country.

Duanfang’s view on public libraries was inextricably related to his advocacy of general education. The emphasis of education shifted from nurturing of military and diplomatic talents to instruction in general and practical subjects, stimulating the extension of knowledge to the general public. The civil service examinations gave way to new-style education and modern education institutions after 1905. As a consequence, public libraries were needed to meet the increasing demand for knowledge and education.

The third wave came in April 1909, when the Board of Education announced a program of preparation for constitutionalism. During the third wave, the Board of Education played a major part. Set up in December 1905 to administer modern-style education in the final days of the Qing Court, the Board, from the beginning, placed a great emphasis on library development. In its Beijing head office, there were five departments, namely general supervision, professional education, general education, technical education, and finance. The establishment and administration of libraries in Beijing were the responsibilities of these departments. For example, the Bureau of Buildings was placed under the Department of Finance and took charge of the buildings of all schools, including libraries; the Bureau of Administration under the Department of Professional Education took responsibility for libraries of professional schools. In each province, there was a board of education (xuewu gongsuo), headed by a commissioner (tixueshi). At county levels, there were educational promotion offices

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33 Quoted in Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, p. 1046.
34 “Nanjing tushuguan linian jingfei tongji” (Statistics of the funding of Nanjing Library), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chapu zhi wasi qianhou, pp. 305-306.
The provincial boards of education and educational promotion offices were responsible for the establishment and supervision of libraries at local levels.  

The Board’s program of preparation for constitutionalism included the formation of library regulations in 1909, and the establishment of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB, Jingshi tushuguan) in 1909 and public libraries in every province in 1910. Encouraged by this program, public libraries were founded in almost every province, except in such remote areas as Xinjiang and Tibet. There existed some twenty provincial public libraries before the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. A network of public libraries was taking shape, benefiting the urban Chinese by opening their collections. Particularly, the Regulations on the Metropolitan Library of Beijing and Provincial Libraries, issued by the Board in 1909, constituted the first set of laws on libraries in China. Their main points are presented as follows.

First, the Regulations stipulated that the mission of Chinese public libraries be the preservation of Chinese classics, dissemination of knowledge, provision of research facilities, and collection of materials for free use by the public. Second, a national library was to be established in Beijing, with provincial public libraries in each provincial capital. In choosing the location and architecture for libraries, quietness, simplicity, compactness, natural light, and good ventilation were important considerations. There were also to be a stack room for books, a number of reading rooms, and offices. Third, directors, assistant directors, and other assistants were to be appointed depending on the needs of each library. Fourth, the national library was to be financed by the Board of Education, and provincial libraries by their provincial boards of education. Fifth, materials were to be collected through purchase, donation, and reprinting. Sixth, libraries were to hold two kinds of materials. One kind was rare books published in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, which should be kept in a separate

38 Zhang Zhidong, “Xuebu zou fennian choubei shiyi zhe” (Memorial on the preparation for constitutionalism by the Board of Education), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliu, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 125-126.
40 “Jingshi tushuguan ji gesheng tushuguan tongxing zhangcheng” (The regulations on the Metropolitan Library of Beijing and provincial libraries), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliu, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 129-131.
room accessible to the public provided that they complied with the library regulations. The other kind was general reading materials, also accessible to the public, but not to be borrowed out of the library. Seventh, the national library and provincial public libraries might each have a publishing office to reproduce rare books, which could be classified as general reading.

The Regulations underscored the importance of establishing the national library and provincial libraries and the need for collecting materials. The provision of collections and services for free use by the public was taken as the ultimate goal of libraries, indicating the determination of the Qing Court to revolutionise its traditional book collecting activities. But the main purpose of founding Chinese public libraries was, from the outset, to preserve the classics and the national culture, neglecting the acquisition of new publications. While the Regulations emphasised founding public libraries, borrowing rights were not allowed. The tradition of book repositories died hard in government circles.

ZHANG ZHIDONG AND MODERN LIBRARIES

Zhang Zhidong’s lifelong concern with educational reforms has been well documented.⁴¹ Here, my concern is with the link between these reforms and library development, especially after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. To foster talents for China’s regeneration, Zhang initiated educational reforms step by step, leading to the establishment of an array of old-style academies, new-style schools, different types of book collections, and eventually the national library.⁴²

Zhang Zhidong’s early achievements in building up book collections

Whatever Zhang Zhidong did to carry out educational reforms and found different types of educational ventures, his commitment to book collections was strong. While


⁴² For a biography of Zhang Zhidong, see Xu Tongxin, Zhang Zhidong nianpu (The chronology of Zhang Zhidong) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1946). See also Feng Tianyu and He Xiaoming, Zhang Zhidong pingzhuan (Review and Biography of Zhang Zhidong) (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1991).
a provincial director of education in Sichuan Province between 1873 and 1876, he enlarged and expanded the activities of a local publishing house to print classical, historical, and philosophical works. In addition, he established the Zunjing Academy (Zunjing shuyuan) in Sichuan Province in 1875, encouraging the rich merchants and gentry of Sichuan to contribute land to and to subscribe money to buy several thousand volumes of the classics for the Academy. Zhang dedicated his own savings to purchasing books for it. Under his patronage, the Zunjing Pavilion (Zunjingge) was built to hold these book collections. He also formulated the Regulations on the Zunjing Academy, stipulating that two people take charge of the book collections, but that books not be borrowed out of the Academy.

In 1888, while serving as Governor-General of Liangguang, Zhang established the famous Guangya Academy (Guangya shuyuan), devoting considerable energy to book collections from the outset. Even when he was choosing the site for Guangya, he thought that the location should not be far from commercial centres so as to purchase new books. In his “Memorial on the Establishment of the Guangya Academy”, Zhang emphasised that large numbers of books be collected. Under his auspices, in 1889, the Building of the Crest (Guanmianlou), an imposing mansion, was completed for the Guangya collections, which were purchased from Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces. To guarantee the steady increase in book collections, he set up the Guangya Printing Office in 1888, donating his own savings of 10,000 taels to this endeavour. It remained in operation until 1908, with a total output of 176 kinds of works on classical commentaries, history, and Western learning. For his extraordinary achievements in the Guangya Academy and Printing Office, he was often referred to as Zhang Guangya with respect.

In 1890, while Governor-General of Huguang, Zhang established the Lianghu Academy (Lianghu shuyuan) in Wuchang, the last academy that he founded during his life. He had two magnificent storage buildings constructed to store book

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44 Ibid., p. 140. Zunjing means the reverence of the classics in the Chinese language.
45 Ibid., p. 308. Guangya stands for the refinement of research in the Chinese language.
49 Zhou, Zhang Zhidong yu guangya shuyuan, p. 345.
collections at Lianghu, including newspapers and publications on Western learning.\textsuperscript{50} As for specialised technical schools, Zhang insisted that publications on Western learning and textbooks on modern subjects be acquired. Indeed, he acquired them for the Hubei Industrial School and the Hubei Agricultural School.\textsuperscript{51}

Gradually, Zhang’s interest in educational reform led him to an appreciation of modern libraries. Some of his early establishments are still in operation today. The book collections of the Self-Strengthening School, founded in 1893, are held at Wuhan University Library;\textsuperscript{52} the book collections of the Guangya Academy are stored at the Zhongshan Library in Guangzhou.\textsuperscript{53} Zhang Zhidong viewed Western learning as a means of national wealth and power and was keen on acquiring new publications, such as newspapers, textbooks, and printed materials on Western learning. Yet he was still not progressive enough to allow books to be borrowed or taken out of storage buildings. He did not make a fundamental contribution to modern library development until he began to advocate general education and show great concerns over the national essence (guocui) in the last decade of his life.

**Zhang Zhidong’s advocacy of general education and the preservation of the national heritage**

*General education and Zhang Zhidong’s increasing interest in modern libraries*

Zhang’s educational ideas were embodied in his *The Exhortation to Learning (Quanxuepian)*, published in 1898, in which he expounded the *zhongti xiyong* dictum (Chinese learning for the foundation and Western learning for practical use).\textsuperscript{54} The idea of preserving Chinese traditions and culture was deeply embedded in the minds of late Qing officials. Although some senior officials were determined to bring new life into the antiquated educational system, they showed an undiminished faith in Chinese traditional values, adopting Western learning only in science and technology. Most of the upper class did not give up the Confucian mentality. Zhang Zhidong’s *zhongti xiyong* dictum underscored the Chinese desire for the preservation of the

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 148; 150.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 160.


\textsuperscript{53} Zhou, *Zhang Zhidong yu guangya shuyuan*, p. 344.

\textsuperscript{54} Zhang Zhidong, “Quanxuepian” (The exhortation to learning), in his *Zhang Wenxiang gong (Zhidong) quanj*, vols 202-203.
national essence. While sponsoring programs to modernise the military, industrial, and commercial enterprises, he simultaneously endorsed the view that the Confucian faith should be preserved as the spiritual bedrock of Chinese civilisation.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the thrust of Zhang’s reformist proposals in the educational sphere, accordingly, was to urge the gradual widening of curricula at every level of schooling with the aim of introducing students, once they were versed in the classics, to practical knowledge of the West. Students should not be encouraged to study Western philosophy and politics, however. According to him, scholars must master the classics so that they could understand the ancient Chinese sages and their teachings; they must study dynastic histories so that they could be informed about the rise and fall of the dynasties and the customs of the land; they must peruse works of philosophy and belles lettres so that they could become familiar with Chinese scholarship and literature. Only after the mastery of Chinese classics were they allowed to select for use those aspects of Western knowledge that could rectify their shortcomings and to select for adoption Western governmental methods of practical use.55

In the meantime, Zhang put forward proposals for a new educational system, stressing the importance of studying abroad and pushing for the abolition of the civil service examinations.56 During the early 1900s, he rose from provincial to national prominence, producing a series of reform proposals. From 1901 to 1905, he submitted an array of memorials, emphasising “people’s education”.57 Partly as a result of his efforts, the eight-legged essay and the civil service examination system were abolished in 1901 and 1905, respectively.58 The first regulations on the national school system, the Regulations on Education, entirely modelled on the educational system of Japan, were issued in 1903.59 And the Board of Education was created for the first time in Chinese history in December 1905.60

55 Zhang Zhidong, “Quanxuepian xu” (Preface to The Exhortation to Learning), in Ibid., vol 202, pp. 14433-14439.
56 Zhang, “Quanxuepian,” in Ibid., vol 203, pp. 14531-14534.
57 Zhang Zhidong, “Biantong zhengzhhi rencai weixian zunzhi chouy i zhe” (Memorial on the priority to talent cultivation in political reforms), in Ibid., vol 52, p. 3666.
59 See footnote 61.
Zhang, along with other late Qing officials, was credited with the introduction of the term *library* in Chinese government publications. In 1903, the Regulations on Universities were framed by Zhang and others, as part of the Regulations on Education, China’s national education system of the modern type. The Regulations on Universities required that each university build a library, and that a person be in charge of book and equipment purchase. These regulations were eventually approved by the Qing Court. From then on, the term *library* replaced *book repository* in Chinese government publications. In 1907, Zhang submitted “An Appeal to the Board of Education for the Founding of Schools and Libraries”, in which he urged that libraries be built at new-style schools. His use of the term *library* reflected the profound change in his thoughts on new-style education and modern libraries. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, he set up the Hubei Provincial Public Library in 1904. In spite of his deteriorating health, he proceeded to draw up plans for a national library that would house old books, manuscripts, bronze and stone inscriptions of early generations, as well as modern publications. Zhang’s lifelong interest in education culminated in the founding of what later became the National Library of China in 1909 (see next chapter).

*The national essence and the founding of modern libraries*

Western learning was introduced into the late Qing at an increasing rate from the 1840s. At the same time, a series of foreign intrusions and domestic rebellions presented the Chinese with a national crisis. The idea of preserving the national essence grew out of this background, making the Chinese rethink their traditions and culture in the hope of national salvation. Revolutionaries and reformers alike were concerned with the preservation of the national essence. The former advocated the study of the national essence in support of overthrowing the Manchus; the latter did so for the sake of rejuvenating Chinese culture and for the love of their nation. The Qing

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61 For the full text of these regulations, see Zhang Zhidong et al., *Daxuetang zhangcheng* (The regulations on universities) and *Zouding xuetang zhangcheng* (The regulations on education) (Beijing: The First Historical Archives of Beijing, box no. 360).
62 Zhang Zhidong, “Zha xuewuchu li xuetang yingyong tushuguan” (An appeal to the Board of Education for the establishment of schools and libraries), in his *Zhang Wenshu qingli (Zhidong) quanji*, vol 205, pp. 7483-7485.
63 Zhang Zhidong, “Xuebu zou choujian jingshi tushuguan zhe” (Memorial on the establishment of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing), in Li and Zhang, comps., *Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zi wusi qianhou*, pp. 132-134.
64 Fu and Xie, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshi*, vol 2, pp. 1062-1066.
Court, too, emphasised the importance of Chinese classics in order to stay in power. Despite different viewpoints about the national essence, they all agreed that the national essence was the spiritual foundation on which a nation depended; if a nation’s traditions and culture disappeared, the nation would perish. If the power of the West was derived from the Renaissance, the Chinese elite believed that the rejuvenation of Chinese classics could save China. In the process of the founding of modern libraries in China, some emphasised their preservation functions in order to protect Chinese traditions, whereas others like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao placed a premium on their open functions for the benefit of the Chinese people. Despite these differences, they all advocated founding public book repositories or public libraries.

Zhang Zhidong was not the first Chinese to propose the integration of the preservation of the national essence with the establishment of a national library in China. It was Luo Zhenyu, a scholar renowned for his contributions to the research on the Dunhuang characters and inscriptions on oracle bones and tortoise shells, who took the lead. Noted for his achievements in the field of agricultural studies, Luo founded the Society for the Study of Agriculture and published The Journal of Agricultural Studies in 1901, which drew attention from Zhang Zhidong. In 1901, Luo was appointed General Manager of the Hubei Agricultural Bureau and Director of the Agricultural School in Wuchang, both founded during Zhang’s tenure as Governor-General of Huguang. In addition, Luo founded several new-style schools, most notably the Eastern Language Institute in Shanghai in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Modern subjects were taught at this institute, including chemistry, physics, mathematics, geography, English, and Japanese. In 1906, Luo was appointed Assistant Secretary at the Board of Education.

A combination of personal interest in Chinese classics and experience in educational circles enabled Luo to view the problem of how to preserve the national essence from a new perspective. In 1907, he published an article entitled “Private Discussions on the Establishment of Libraries in Beijing”. In it, he argued that

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65 Ding Wenjiang, Liang Qichao nianpu changbian (The expanded chronology of Liang Qichao) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 338.
libraries contributed to the preservation of the national essence and the assimilation of new knowledge from the outside world. In his opinion, the development of libraries in Europe, the United States, and Japan represented the progress of civilisation. The Board of Education, he argued, should take the lead in promoting the library cause in China, and a national library should be established in Beijing, followed by provincial libraries. He proposed some specific ideas on the national library for China. Among other things, he emphasised its function of protecting the national heritage, even although he suggested that foreign language materials be acquired, too.

In 1907, Zhang Zhidong took up Luo’s ideas and further encouraged the preservation of the national essence by establishing the Academy of Classics Preservation (Cungu xuetang) in Hubei Province. His “Memorial on the Establishment of the Academy of Classics Preservation” clearly stated that patriotism was the key to the strengthening of the nation; that the Academy was designed to preserve the national essence based on loyalty and filial piety; that the classics of ancient sages served as the media through which the national essence could be disseminated; and that book repositories were needed to store and protect Chinese classics and inscriptions on bronze and stones. Influenced by Zhang’s academy, many other similar academies were set up in China before the Revolution of 1911. Not surprisingly, when the MLB was established, its first mission was to collect a large variety of materials relating to the cultural heritage.

Although many traditional book collections in imperial China were destroyed by both foreign intrusions and domestic rebellions, the Qing government found new ways of building up book collections, realising that the modern library was an important element in the modernisation and salvation of China. Remarkably, both the public and preservation functions of libraries were advocated to benefit educational reforms as well as to prevent the decline of the national culture in the late Qing. One of its eminent officials, Zhang Zhidong called for a system of general education based on a network of new schools, the reorganisation of old-style academies, and the abolition of the civil service examination system. He made clear that the success of

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68 Zhang Zhidong, “Chuangli cungu xuetang zhe” (Memorial on the establishment of the Academy of Classics Preservation), in his Zhang Wenxiang gong (Zhidong) quanji, vol 68, pp. 4675-4688.
69 Cai, Zhang zhidong jiaoyu sixiang yanjiu, p. 268.
70 Zhang, “Xuebu zou choujian jingshi tushuguan zhe,” in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 132-134.
the West was due to the nationwide school system to a large degree.⁷¹ During the last decade of the Qing, educational matters remained close to his heart when he took charge of the Board of Education until his death in 1909.⁷² His continuing emphasis on transforming traditional education illustrates his interest in establishing modern libraries in the last days of his life.

**INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE MODERN LIBRARY**

At the turn of the twentieth century, library awareness was enhancing, due to the advocacy of modern libraries by reformist Chinese, examined in the previous chapter, and the rising tide of educational reforms launched by the Qing Court, described in this chapter. Many Chinese became sympathetic to reforms and wished to see modern libraries established. A number of newspapers, including *Learn the New* (Zhixinbao), *The National News* (Guowenbao), *Hunan Journal* (Xiangxuebao), and *The Educational World* (Jiaoyu shijie), carried news and articles on both Chinese and Western libraries.⁷³ For example, *The Educational World* usually had articles introducing American librarianship, such as the Dewey Decimal Classification.⁷⁴ The notion of modern libraries was gaining acceptance in reformist circles.

Conservative scholars also contributed to the enhancing of library awareness by presenting systematic knowledge of Western libraries. Wang Guowei is a case in point. A talented, prolific, and pioneering translator, Wang brought into the Chinese language many Western works on philosophy, logic, law, sociology, psychology, education, ethics, aesthetics, as well as on mathematics and agriculture during his short fifty years of life. He was also a celebrated poet, historian, and literary and drama critic.⁷⁵ His career focused on educational matters. His mastery of the English language enabled him to translate and introduce Western libraries to the educated Chinese in a logical and systematic way. Moreover, he began to work as a counsellor at the Board of Education in 1908. His translated essays, “History of the World

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⁷³ Wu, *Cong cangshulou dao tushuguan*, pp. 213-216.
⁷⁴ Fu and Xie, *Zhongguo cangshu tongshe*, vol 2, pp. 1045-1046.
Libraries” (Shijie tushuguan xiaoshi), were published in The Journal of the Board of Education from 1909 to 1910. His translations comprised two parts. The first part dealt with the history and development of libraries in Western countries, including national libraries, public libraries, and university libraries in Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. The second part was concerned with library management in terms of library architecture, circulation of books, classification and arrangement of books on shelves, catalogue and its compilation, library administration, librarians, acquisition, and copyright issues. His translations provided the Chinese with a comprehensive introduction to Western libraries.

It took a long time for the modern term library to be used, however. The concept of the library did not develop naturally out of Chinese society and culture. Rather, it came to China via Western learning. In the nineteenth century, book repositories were still used to house the missionary and Chinese book collections, although they were more accessible to the public. As seen in the previous chapter, the term library in Chinese made its first appearance in Current Affairs in 1896. The first Chinese institute to adopt the name library was the United Learning School (Tongyi xuetang), a modern high school established in 1897 by Zhang Yuanji, an eminent Chinese publisher and scholar. But the term library did not appear in Chinese government publications until 1903, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is worth noting that librarianship was almost synonymous with bibliography in imperial China; librarianship and archival custodianship were the same thing. In the late Qing, the urge for educational reform led to the emergence of modern libraries and promoted the application of new library technologies. The emergence of modern libraries demonstrated that knowledge and books were no longer the exclusive domain of the privileged class, as in the past. In addition to the preservation of the national culture, modern libraries began to serve the needs of an increasingly diverse readership by way of collecting and offering a broad range of printed materials and reader services.

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78 Wu, Cong cangshulou dao tushuguan, p. 6. For detailed information on Zhang Yuanji’s life and his achievements in education and the publishing industry, see Wang Shaozeng, Jindai chubanjia Zhang Yuanji (Publisher in modern China: Zhang Yuanji) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1995).
79 Huang Zongzhong, “Zhongguo tushuguan xue shiji ping” (Review of librarianship in China in the last century), Tushu yu qingbao (Library and information) 1 (2001): 2-8; 14.
CONCLUSION

In its last troubled years, the Qing Dynasty belatedly put into effect some reform measures for the nation’s survival. As far as education was concerned, the Qing Court sought to overhaul the traditional education system by establishing modern education institutions, which included a range of technical schools and higher education institutions of the modern type. Such unprecedented educational reforms irreversibly changed the structure of the reading population. Whereas only a small proportion of the Chinese previously enjoyed the privilege of education, the abolition of the civil service examinations broadened the scope of education for a greater proportion of the urban population. New educational institutions emerged, which offered curricula that went beyond the teachings of Confucianism. With the founding of language schools and universities, language school libraries and university libraries were established to facilitate new-style education and serve the school or university community. Further, public libraries were founded to facilitate general education. By 1911, some twenty provincial public libraries had been founded across the country. In sharp contrast to the traditional book repositories, they were all open to the public, helping educating a modern citizenry. Not only did these libraries have Chinese classics in their collections, but there were also modern publications in foreign languages, reflecting the transition from traditional book repositories to modern libraries. Meanwhile, the preservation functions of libraries received considerable attention for the protection of the national heritage, which would otherwise have been lost in the face of a national crisis. The advocacy of the public and preservation functions of modern libraries was a characteristic peculiar to the emergence of modern libraries in China. It was in such a context that the MLB was founded in 1909, just two years before the Qing Dynasty was toppled.
Chapter 1
Early Development of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1909–1919

The founding of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB) was the result of an increasing realisation that modern libraries were an important component in educational reform and national regeneration in the late Qing. Meanwhile, the call for the preservation of the national essence not only helped to bring the MLB into being but also influenced its early activities. The collection of the classics and other rare books was a high priority of the MLB, with reader services and library management being conducted in the traditional fashion. The MLB could only claim to be a modern library to a limited extent, as it was confronted with a host of problems.

This chapter examines the founding of the MLB in 1909 and its early activities until 1919, focusing on its endeavours of collection acquisition, bibliography compilation, regulations promulgation, inauguration, restructuring, and the establishment of an organisational structure and a branch. The decade 1909–1919 was a significant one in China’s modern history, a period of cataclysmic change. China was at the crossroads between monarchism and republicanism, and between tradition and modernity. The MLB, during this period, was not immune from the problems that beset the country. This chapter argues that its directors saw acquiring and preserving Chinese classics as a primary objective. This contributed significantly to the preservation of the national heritage but did not help the MLB to function as a modern library. As a matter of fact, the MLB was slow to develop following its inception, because the objective conditions conducive to library development were largely absent in China. An examination of the founding and early development of the MLB will promote a better understanding of not only the history of libraries in China but also the concerns of the time.

From the outset, it should be noted that the statistics used for the figures in this chapter do not claim to be comprehensive. This is because statistics pertaining to the MLB during the early decades of its existence are often scanty and far from reliable. Nevertheless, they offer a general picture of the situation.
FOUNDING OF THE MLB

As seen in the previous chapter, Zhang Zhidong brought the dream of a national library into reality for China. In April 1909, he listed the founding of MLB as one of the reform programs to be completed in that year, which received approval from Emperor Guangxu.1 Early in September of that year, on behalf of the Board of Education, Zhang submitted a memorial concerning the establishment of the MLB and recommended the appointment of Miao Quansun (1844–1919), one of his disciples and a distinguished scholar in his own right, as the first director of the MLB.2 Zhang stated in the memorial: “The library is the source of learning, and Beijing the centre of China. Therefore, a national library needs to be established in Beijing in the hope of collecting Chinese classics and other language books. In doing so, this library can help preserve Chinese culture and traditions.”3 The situation in China was such that many rare books had fallen into the hands of foreigners. Zhang and others viewed this as an indication of cultural decline. A national library, Zhang thought, might help arrest the outward flow of Chinese classics and the cultural heritage. In late September, his memorial was approved by the Qing Court. But Zhang did not live to see the opening of the MLB by the Republican government in August 1912.4

The MLB was officially founded, in September 1909, at a time of political turbulence, economic underdevelopment, and cultural transformation. And it was not opened to the public until the Qing Dynasty was overthrown three years later. Several points emerge from the slow birth of the MLB. First, modern libraries were advocated by the Qing government in the hope of preserving the national heritage and as a means of national regeneration. This contrasted sharply with the emergence of modern libraries as a natural outgrowth of industrialisation and democracy in the West (see Chapter 7). Second, the Qing Court was in no position to develop libraries

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1 Zhang Zhidong, “Xuebu zou fennian choubei shiyi zhe” (Memorial on the preparation for constitutionalism by the Board of Education), in Li Ximi and Zhang Shuhua, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou (Primary sources on traditional book collections and modern libraries in China, the Spring and Autumn period until the May Fourth era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 125-126.
2 Zhang Zhidong, “Xuebu zou choujian jingshi tushuguan zhe” (Memorial on the establishment of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing), in Ibid., pp. 132-134.
3 Ibid., p. 132
because of the social turbulence and political instability in the last few years of the
Dynasty. A nation preoccupied with survival could have little energy left for things
not related immediately to its physical existence. Third, the slow birth of the MLB
demonstrated the low library consciousness of the Chinese people, the vast majority
of whom were illiterate.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE MLB, 1909–1919

Preparation for the inauguration of the MLB, 1909–1911
During the period from 1909 to 1911, Miao Quansun, the first director of the MLB,
contributed significantly to the preparation for its inauguration. Born in 1844, Miao
was instructed in traditional education and awarded the jinshi degree at the age of
thirty-three. As a distinguished historian and educator, he showed remarkable interest
in book collecting, book printing, and book and bibliography compilation throughout
his life. He had engaged in collecting books for himself for more than fifty years,
accumulating more than 1,740 books of different kinds. Social instability at the time
made him worried about the possibility of losing his collections. Thereafter, he put
forward the idea of “books lost with bibliographies preserved” (shuqu mucun), as he
thought that bibliographies contributed to the preservation and accumulation of
cultural legacy even after books were lost or destroyed by natural disasters and wars.
He compiled and printed the first bibliography of his collections of 635 books of
various types in eight volumes right after the Boxer Rebellion and the Siege of
Beijing in 1900. The 1911 Revolution prompted him to print his second bibliography
of private collections of more than 700 books of different categories, also in eight
volumes. Miao lived in recluse after the Qing Dynasty was overthrown. His financial
difficulties forced him to work as a collator and sell his book collections to scrabble
for a living. Nevertheless, he managed to compile his third bibliography, covering
only one hundred or so books. In it, he stated that his intention was to open to the
public his own book collections and thought that this would distinguish him from

5 Zhang Bihui, Wanqing cangshujia Miao Quansun yanjiu (Research on book collector Miao Quansun
6 Ibid., p. 160.
7 Ibid., pp. 129; 159-160.
8 Ibid., pp. 158-159.
other private collectors.\textsuperscript{9} His idea had shifted from that of “books lost with bibliographies preserved” to that of opening his collections to the public. In other words, he thought highly of the public functions of libraries in the preservation and utilisation of their collections.

Moreover, his career had focused on developing government and public book collections. In 1868, he worked at Chengdu Book Bureau, the government book bureau in Sichuan Province, which was responsible for publishing the classics.\textsuperscript{10} He was the first director of the Jiangnan Library, an influential public library established in 1907. His major contribution to that library lay in his purchase of the entire collections of the Ding Brothers and donation of some of his own woodblocks.\textsuperscript{11}

Miao’s academic expertise impressed Zhang Zhidong, and he finally became Zhang’s disciple, working with Zhang on \textit{Answering Questions on Bibliography (Shumu dawen)} in 1875 and on \textit{The Local Chronicle of Shuntian (Shuntian fuzhi)} in 1880, respectively. In addition to working at Zhang’s Guangya Printing Office in 1888 and Jiangchu Translation Bureau in 1901, Miao worked at other educational ventures set up by Zhang, including the Guangya Academy in 1888, the Self-Strengthening School in 1893, and others.\textsuperscript{12} His academic achievements and close relationship with Zhang Zhidong convinced Zhang that he was the best candidate for the directorship.

During Miao’s short tenure between 1909 and 1911, he made preparations for the inauguration of the MLB by building collections, compiling bibliographies, securing funds, procuring the site, and setting up an organisational structure. Even before he arrived in Beijing to take office in September 1910, he had started to work on the acquisition of collections for the MLB by persuading the Qu Family to donate some of their private collections.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, he appealed to different government

\begin{itemize}
\item[9] Ibid., pp. 160-161.
\item[10] Ibid., pp. 102-103.
\item[11] Ibid., pp. 120-122. The private book collections of the Ding Brothers were created and owned by Ding Shen (7–1880) and Ding Bing (1832–1899) in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. Their book collections, noted for the classics of the Song and Yuan Dynasties, were of high quality in the late Qing, see Fu Xuanzong and Xie Zhuohua, \textit{Zhongguo cangshu tongshi} (History of book collecting in China) (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 2001), vol 2, pp. 868-869.
\item[12] Zhang, \textit{Wangqing cangshujia Miao Quansun yanjiu}, ch. 4.
\item[13] “1911ian 6yue 28ri xueba zisong jingshi tushuguan qushi shuji pian” (On the delivery of the private collections of the Qu Family to the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 28 June, 1911), in Beijing tushuguan yewu yanjiu weiyuanhui (Research Committee of the Beijing Library), comp., \textit{Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huijian, 1909–1949} (A collection of primary sources on the history of the Beijing Library, 1909–1949) (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1992), vol 1, pp. 17-22. The private collections of the Qu Family were located in Changshu, Zhejiang Province; they were influential in the
\end{itemize}
organisations for books, for example, the Hanlin Academy’s *Yongle Cannon*, the Dunhuang Cave Manuscripts, the collections of the Imperial Cabinet Repository (*Neige daku*) and the Imperial College, and some other collections. Some of these classics were handed over to the MLB after the Republic of China was founded. No doubt, the acquisition of such materials contributed to the preservation of national culture.

The accumulation of collections created demands for bibliography compilation. Taking the lead, Miao compiled two bibliographies based on the MLB collections from 1909 to 1911. The first was *The Bibliography of Rare Books Stored at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing*, which contained more than 700 rare books of the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Each bibliographical item offered information on authors, editions, publishers, preludes, and epilogues. It marked the beginning of the compilation of rare books by public libraries in China. The second was *The Bibliography of Local Chronicles Held at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing*. It covered bibliographical information on more than 1,600 local chronicles, initiating the compilation of local chronicles by the MLB and serving as an indicator of its enriched services. The compilation of rare books and local chronicles contributed to the preservation of the classics while improving the MLB reference services.

To ensure the smooth operation of the MLB, Miao tried his best to secure funding. Under his aegis, the Qing Court appropriated more than 20,000 taels between 1909 and 1911. Miao also selected a proper site for the MLB. According to Zhang Zhidong’s memorial on the establishment of the MLB in September 1909, a new

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late Qing. Fortunately, most of these collections were donated to public libraries in the 1940s. For more information, see Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, pp. 861-864.
17 Ibid., p. 85.
18 Ibid.
building should be constructed in the vicinity of Gate Desheng (Deshengmen). But Miao urged that a temporary site be chosen so that the MLB could be opened as soon as possible. As a result, Temple Guanghua (Guanghuasi) was used as a temporary site in 1910. Miao went on to deal with the problem of organisational structure. In his design, the Head Office of the MLB comprised Director, Deputy Director, Compiler-in-Chief, Collator-in-Chief, Manager, General Manager, and five Compilers. There were four departments administered by the Head Office, namely Book Preservation, Book Inspection, Official Documents, and General Affairs. In each department, there were a Head and a Deputy Head. In addition, there were ten office staff and eighteen copyists distributed among these four departments. In total, there was a personnel of forty-seven.

In preparing for the inauguration of the MLB, Miao displayed a traditional style of management. First, he was interested in the acquisition of the classics, ignoring modern publications. Second, Temple Guanghua as a temporary site was an inappropriate choice, for it was remote from the city centre. Third, the organisational structure he established was old-fashioned, consisting of the Departments of Book Preservation and Book Inspection. He also kept compilation, collation, and copying related staff. This structure reflected traditional book collecting activities, with an emphasis on the preservation, instead of circulation or utilisation, of collections. Obviously, he failed to appreciate modern library services and management. The objective of modern libraries was to attract readers to them, and the department of circulation was a necessary unit, aimed at providing readers with collections. Unfortunately, such functions were not recognised by Miao. A traditional scholar, he lacked the knowledge and skills necessary to manage modern libraries. This problem was not peculiar to the MLB. There were no library professionals in China until the 1920s.

20 Zhang, “Xuebu zou choujian jingshi tushuguan zhe,” in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 132-134. Gate Desheng is located on the far western part of Beijing.
22 Jiao, “Jingshi tushuguan zaoqi de sanwei guanzhang,” p. 84.
Inauguration of the MLB, 1912–1913

Jiang Han (1853–1931) succeeded Miao Quansun as Director of the MLB from May 1912 to February 1913. Jiang’s career had been in the field of education. He had worked as a director at several academies in the late Qing. He had also worked at new-style educational institutes, including Jiangsu High School, Jansu Normal School, Beijing Girls’ Normal School, and the Imperial University of Beijing. He began to work for the Ministry of Education as soon as the Republic was founded. Moreover, he was a proponent of compulsory education in the early years of the Republic. And his overseas investigations into the educational system of Japan convinced him of the importance of education in national as well as in social developments. During his short tenure as Director of the MLB, he wanted to open the collections to the public. He also put forward ideas about further developing the MLB, attaching great importance to bibliography compilation, with special reference to the utilisation of library collections.

Under his administration, the existing collections were organised for circulation and utilisation. Since Temple Guanghua was damp and remote from the city centre, it was unsuitable for the preservation of books and unattractive to readers. He had plans for a more suitable permanent location for the MLB. Further, he pleaded for funding, requesting that 4,608 silver dollars be allocated between July and December 1912, in addition to the initial allocation of 2,600 silver dollars. Again in January 1913, he appealed to the Ministry of Education for 35,000 silver dollars for the renovation of the MLB buildings and for the purchase of both Chinese and foreign language books, and 25,000 silver dollars were spent on purchasing new books.

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25 Jiang Han, Yiwu jiaoyu (Compulsory education) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1929).
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid. Silver dollars started to be issued after the Republic of China was founded in 1912 to standardise and strengthen the Chinese currency, and one American dollar equalled two or so silver dollars in the 1910s, see Hu Shi, Hu Shi liuxue riji (Hu Shi’s diary of overseas study) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), p. 579.
Another task Jiang Han undertook was to ratify and revise the Temporary Regulations on the Circulation of Collections at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing in July 1912. In fourteen items, the Regulations covered a range of aspects pertaining to the management of the MLB in terms of opening hours, acquisition of collections, and access to the MLB. According to the Regulations, the MLB was to open eight hours every day on average except public holidays. But access to the MLB was not free, with reading tickets costing two to four bronze coins each.  

31 Coupons were available to students and donators. Readers, however, were not entitled to borrowing rights; they could only read inside the library.  

The MLB was inaugurated on 27 August, 1912, serving as a modern library with collections in both Chinese and foreign languages, which were accessible to the public. At its inception, there existed some 100,000 volumes of different kinds of materials.  

33 But its remote location and inconvenient transport did not help to attract readers.  

Jiang Han wanted to distinguish the MLB from other public libraries, conceiving of it as a reference library in the service of academic research. Drawing on his investigations into education in Japan and Europe, he suggested that branches of the MLB be built in order to serve the general public more widely, and that newly published books and periodicals play a major role in branch libraries to arouse popular interest and to promote social education.  

35 He further suggested reducing staff at the MLB. There were only seventeen staff at the Imperial Library of Japan (the predecessor to the National Diet Library of Japan). Therefore, he thought that the forty-seven staff at the MLB ought to be downsized.  

31 One silver dollar was worth 134 or so bronze coins in early Republican China, see “Jingshi tushu fenguai si wu liu qi ba niandu nianzhong gongzuo baogao” (Annual reports of the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1915–1919), in Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chuqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 237-252; esp. p. 238.  


34 Ibid., p. 119.  


36 Jiang, “1912nian 6yue 22ri cheng jiaiyu zhiqbo jingshi tushuguan kaiban jingfei,” in Ibid., vol 1, pp. 27-29.
Jiang thought highly of the function of bibliographies in the circulation of library materials. Under his patronage, *The Bibliography of Rare Books Stored at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing*, compiled first by Miao Quansun, was revised. Although Jiang only worked for a relatively short time at the MLB and did not implement all his ideas on further improving the MLB, he laid the groundwork for the MLB future expansion.

Both Jiang Han and Miao Quansun were scholars of the traditional type, and both had experiences in educational circles before working at the MLB. But Jiang was more exposed to Western learning and modern education than Miao. His profound knowledge of Chinese classics did not prevent him from advocating modern librarianship, and he had more new ideas on the further development of the MLB. Yet neither of them was able to make the MLB collections free to readers and available for borrowing. For this reason, the utilisation of collections was rather restricted. The limited functions of the MLB were due to a number of reasons, including insufficient funding, inadequate attention from the Republican government, and the underdevelopment of librarianship, especially a lack of professional librarians.

**Restructuring of the MLB, 1913–1917**

The MLB was closed temporarily by an order of the Ministry of Education in October 1913 because of its remote location, inconvenient transport, and a small readership. It was then restructured, but not reopened until January 1917. Early in 1913, Xia Zengyou (1863–1924), an eminent historian, was appointed Acting Director and then Director, a position he retained until January 1918. Born in 1863, Xia was awarded the *jinshi* degree in 1890 and assumed the role of Director of the Department of Social Education in the Ministry of Education in 1912, at the invitation of Cai Yuanpei.

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38 “1913nian 10yue 29ri jiaoyubu xunling shehui jiaoyusi pai Zhou Shuren deng zai tingzhi yuelan qijian chadian fengcun tushu” (The order to dispatch Zhou Shuren to check books when the Metropolitan Library of Beijing was closed temporarily by the Ministry of Education, 29 October, 1913), in Beijing tushuguan yewu yanjiu weiyuanhui, comp., *Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huibian, 1909–1949*, vol 1, pp. 54-55.
39 “1913nian 2yue 21ri jiaoyubu xunling shehui jiaoyusi zai guanzhang Jiang Han diaolihou you sizhang zhijie guanli ” (The appointment of Director of the Department of Social Education to Directorship of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 21 February, 1913), in Ibid., vol 1, p. 48. See also Jiao, “jingshi tushuguan zaoqi de sanwei guanzhang,” pp. 86-87.
40 For more information on Xia Zengyou’s life and career, see Xia Lilian, comp., *Qiantang Xia Zengyou suiqing xiansheng jinian wenji* (A collection of essays in memory of Xia Zengyou) (Taipei: Wenjing shuju, 1998).
When Xia was in charge of the MLB, he dealt mainly with restructuring, focusing on
acquisition of collections, compilation of bibliographies, promulgation of regulations,
and the search for a suitable site.41

From the outset, Xia managed to acquire publications by a variety of means. Under
his patronage, in June 1913, the Ministry of Education called on provincial
government book bureaus to deposit copies of their publications. In this way,
acquisition of government publications was ensured.42 In addition, he worked
laboriously on the promulgation and final approval of the Deposit Law in 1916.43
From then on, the MLB was officially recognised as a national library. Its acquisition
of depository copies of publications accelerated its collections of modern materials.
The importance of copyright deposit in collection building cannot be over-
emphasised. It was among the most decisive factors that laid the foundation for
national libraries in various countries.44 Xia then set about revising The Bibliography
of Rare Books Stored at the Metropolitan of Beijing, sanctioned by the Ministry of
Education for circulation in August 1916.45 It became a standard text and is still in use
today.46

The dual position of Director of the Department of Social Education and that of the
MLB enabled Xia to issue and revise a series of regulations pertaining to libraries in
general and the MLB in particular. These included the Regulations Pertaining to
Libraries (November 1915), the Regulations Pertaining to Popular Libraries
(November 1915), the Temporary Regulations on the Administration of the
Metropolitan Library of Beijing (December 1916), and the Revised Temporary

42 “1913nian 6yue 25ri jiaoyubu cuidiao ge shengju guanshu” (The urge for provincial government
book collections by the Ministry of Education, 25 June, 1913), in Beijing tushuguan yewu yanjiu
43 “1916nian 4yue 1ri jiaoyu shengzhun neiwubu li’an zhi chuban tushu fensong jingshi tushuguan
shoucang” (The approval of sending the publications registered with the Ministry of Interior Affairs to
the Metropolitan Library of Beijing by the Ministry of Education, 1 April, 1916), in Ibid., vol 1, pp. 76-
77.
45 “1916nian 8yue 21ri jiaoyu shuzi tongyi jingshi tushuguan shanben shumu gao bing yinxing
chuanbo” (The approval in publishing and circulating The Bibliography of Rare Books Stored at the
Metropolitan Library of Beijing by the Ministry of Education, 21 August, 1916), in Beijing tushuguan
yewu yanjiu weiyuanhui, comp., Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huijian, 1909–1949, vol 1, pp. 78-
79.
46 Jiao, “Jingshi tushuguan zaoqi de sanwei guanzhang,” p. 86.
Regulations on the Circulation of Collections at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (February 1917), based on Jiang Han’s regulations in 1912.\(^47\)

In particular, the Revised Temporary Regulations on the Circulation of Collections at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing provided guidelines for the administration of the MLB and access to its holdings. There were to be three departments: Bibliography, Collection, and General Affairs. Bibliography compilation and collection development were prioritised over the circulation and utilisation of collections. The MLB was to be open eight hours every day on average and closed on public holidays. No books should be borrowed out of the MLB, but the special references issued by the Ministry of Education could grant borrowing privileges. And there were to be six types of reading tickets, including general reading tickets, magazine tickets, general reading tickets for students, magazine tickets for students, rare book tickets, and the tickets of The Complete Library of the Four Treasures. Only the magazine tickets for students were to be free of charge. But the public school community was entitled to free reading coupons.\(^48\)

Gradual and slow progress was made in library management, but services remained grossly inadequate, as the emphasis was on collection development and bibliography production. Xia Zengyou’s background in historical research may help explain this emphasis. In terms of access to collections, he had undertaken more progressive measures than had Jiang Han. Some collections were free of charge to the public, certain readers were entitled to borrowing rights, and library holdings were enriched by the inclusion of magazines. The charging of fees, however, prevented extensive utilisation of the MLB by the general public.

As director, Xia Zengyou was assisted by Lu Xun, who would become a prominent figure in the New Culture Movement. Lu Xun embraced Western learning at an early age and studied medicine at Sendai Medical College, Japan, from 1904 to 1906. In his view, the poor health of the Chinese was the reason for the poverty and backwardness of China, after his father died of illness. But he quickly came to realise that the most important thing to save China was to change the spirit of the Chinese people. He also thought that literature was the best means to this end, and he decided to promote a

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\(^47\) For the full texts of these regulations, see Beijing tushuguan yewu yanjiu weiyuanhui, comp., Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huijian, 1909–1949, vol 2, pp. 958-967.

\(^48\) “Jingshi tushuguan xiuzheng zuanxing tushu yuelan guize” (The revised temporary regulations on the circulation of collections at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing), in Ibid., vol 2, pp. 963-967.
literary movement. Returning to China in 1909, he worked at Zhejiang Normal School and then Shaoxing Middle School, both in Zhejiang Province. During his spare time, he often visited Zhejiang Library to collect and copy old Chinese fictions and antiquities.

Early in 1912, Lu Xun began to work at the Ministry of Education in Beijing when Cai Yuanpei was Minister of Education. He paid frequent visits to Beijing’s Majolica (Liulichang), a well-known local book market specialising in traditional works. There he browsed through old books and found stone rubbings and examples of famous calligraphic art, immersing himself in anthologies and glossaries on ancient Chinese literature and art. He studied ancient works and researched stone rubbings of old inscriptions in his spare time, appreciating the importance and necessity of book collections to education and research.

His first task at the MLB was to supervise the checking and organisation of its collections when it was temporarily closed in October 1913. During the period from 1913 to 1916, he tried to increase the MLB collections while working as a councillor at the Department of Social Education in the Ministry of Education. Partly because of his strenuous efforts, a number of the classics, some of which were once requested by Miao Quansun, were finally handed over to the MLB. These included A Collection of Books of Ancient and Modern Times and The Complete Library of the Four Treasures.

In the meantime, he joined the search for a suitable site for the MLB. Finally, the old site of the Southern School of the Imperial College (Guozijian nanxue) was

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49 For a detailed biography of Lu Xun, see Ruth F. Weiss, Lu Xun: A Chinese Writer for All Times (Beijing: New World Press, 1985). See also Huang Sung-k’ang, Lu Xun and the New Culture Movement of Modern China (Amsterdam: Djambaton, 1957). Lu Xun’s real name is Zhou Shuren.


51 Bao Chang and Qiu Wenzhi, Lu Xun nianpu (The chronology of Lu Xun) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1979), p. 90. For more information on Lu Xun’s life and work in the 1910s, when he worked at the Ministry of Education, see Sun Ying, Lu Xun zai jiaoyubu (Lu Xun at the Ministry of Education) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1979).

52 Zhou, “Lu Xun yu tushuguan,” pp. 50-56; see also Lu Xun, Lu Xun riji (Lu Xun’s diary) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1959).


54 “1913nian 9yue 11ri jiaoyubu ling zhaozhun bogei gujin tuhus jicheng yibu” (The allocation of A Collection of Books of Ancient and Modern Times to the Metropolitan Library of Beijing by the Ministry of Education, 11 September, 1913), in Ibid., vol 1, pp. 52-53; “1915nian 9yue 4ri jiaoyubu ling jingshi tushuguan paiyuans jieshou siku quanshu” (The order for the Metropolitan Library of Beijing to take over The Complete Library of the Four Treasures by the Ministry of Education, 4 September, 1915), in Ibid., vol 1, pp. 60-61; Lu Xun, Lu Xun riji, p. 173.
used. This site had an area of 2,962 square meters, with 119 rooms. The MLB funding was secured with a receipt of 16,315 silver dollars in 1916. But no attempts were made to offer more wide-ranging reader services at the MLB. The lack of professionally-trained librarians certainly accounted for the inadequate attention given to offering library services at the MLB during that time.

**The MLB, 1917–1919**

The MLB reopened on 26 January, 1917. The following period 1917–1919 witnessed an increase in collections, a rise in funding, and the application of modern library technologies. To improve the management of the MLB, the Ministry of Education, in 1918, ordered that Deputy Minister of Education assume the role of Director of the MLB.

*Collections and services*

The collections increased substantially at the MLB. By 1917, 223 local chronicles had been submitted by the local governments to the MLB in addition to 224 kinds of inscriptions on ancient bronze and stone tablets, especially the Forest of Steles in Xi’an, which boasted 445 sorts of inscriptions. The MLB also called on private Chinese collectors to donate their collections. To attract rare books from private collectors, an acquisition campaign was launched on 21 January, 1919.

Attention was given to the acquisition of modern publications, too. “The Contract between the Metropolitan Library of Beijing and the Commercial Press on the Free Printing of Publications”, signed on 27 January, 1919, empowered the Commercial

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55 Lu Xun, *Lu Xun riji*, pp. 77; 96; 117: 263. Located on Fangjia Alley (Fangjia hutong), Gate Anding (Andingmen), the Southern School of the Imperial College was formed eventually during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1723–1735). For more information on this school, see Wang Daocheng, “Qingdai de guozijian” (The Imperial College in the Qing Dynasty), *Wenshi zhishi* (Culture and history) 11 (1983): 38–42. Gate Anding is in the centre of Beijing.


57 “Jingshi tushuguan minguo banian tongji” (Statistics of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1919) (Beijing: The Archives of the National Library of China, box no. 4).

58 Lu Xun, *Lu Xun riji*, p. 263.


60 Li, “Jingshi tushuguan de changshu jichu ji qi ju yuan yuan,” pp. 113-119.

Press to print the MLB collections that were in demand; in return, one copy of each of the publications of the Commercial Press was to be presented to the MLB. Since the Commercial Press was an influential publishing house at the time and its publications were concerned mainly with new learning and new thoughts, its assistance was expected to speed up the acquisition of modern publications at the MLB.

When the MLB reopened in 1917, it held 6,144 books from The Complete Library of the Four Treasures, 12,067 rare books, and 79,836 general books. In 1918, its rare books increased by 2,323 volumes and general books by 12,315 volumes. Furthermore, foreign language materials began to be collected, with 600 Japanese language books and 400 Western language books acquired in 1918. As shown in Figure 1, rare books increased steadily during this period, contributing significantly to the preservation of the national heritage. In 1918, the number of general reading books was more than double that in 1913, underlining the growth of modern publications.

Figure 1. Survey of Collections at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1913, 1917, and 1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1918</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rare books (volumes)</td>
<td>10,822</td>
<td>12,067</td>
<td>14,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reading books (volumes)</td>
<td>41,504</td>
<td>79,836</td>
<td>92,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dunhuang Cave Manuscripts (items)</td>
<td>8,662</td>
<td>8,662</td>
<td>8,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Complete Library* (volumes)</td>
<td>6,144</td>
<td>6,144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language books (volumes)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Complete Library refers to The Complete Library of the Four Treasures.


63 “Jingshi tushuguan minguo banian tongji” (Beijing: The Archives of the National Library of China, box no. 4).
Aided by the increasingly diversified collections, the MLB began to attract readers, although gradually and unstably. In 1917, 3,273 patrons accessed the MLB collections, averaging 272 readers every month. For obscure reasons, in 1918, the readership dropped, with an average of 180 users every month. Unfortunately, no statistics for the following years are available.

**Funding**

Funding of the MLB increased. Take 1917 and 1918 for example, 26,458 silver dollars were allocated and 26,055 silver dollars spent in 1917; in 1918, 35,586 silver dollars were appropriated and 29,577 silver dollars spent (see Figure 2). The increased funding underlined the recognition of this institution as a national library by the Chinese government. Given the total funding of a little more than 80,000 silver dollars for all Chinese libraries in 1918, the MLB received forty-three percent of the entire library funding in the country, demonstrating the important and privileged standing of this library. But it is worth noting that no annual budget had been established by 1919, and funding was allocated at each director’s request. Most of the funding was spent on daily management, such as staff salary and maintenance of buildings; only a small proportion was devoted to purchasing new books, even though there was a small surplus.

It appeared that the leaders of the MLB had been preoccupied with inauguration and restructuring; as a result, purchasing new books became a lower priority. The budget surplus also suggests that some important tasks of a national library were neglected. The lack of a budget scheme demonstrates the underdevelopment of the MLB management. Under such circumstances, the increase in collections relied primarily on taking over the former Qing government book collections, recruiting private collections, and the entitlement to free depository copies under the Deposit Law and the contractual agreement with the Commercial Press. The inadequate acquisition of new publications prevented the MLB from providing satisfactory

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64 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
services to the public. Again, these problems reflect a lack of professional librarians, which hampered the MLB development in its early stage.

Figure 2. Statistics of Funding at the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1916–1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>16,315</td>
<td>15,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>26,458</td>
<td>26,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>35,586</td>
<td>29,577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: “Jingshi tushuguan minguo banian tongji” (Statistics of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1919) (Beijing: The Archives of the National Library of China, box no. 4).

Modern library technologies
The expansion of collections necessitated the application of modern library technologies. In 1918, the Dewey Decimal Classification was employed to organise foreign language books; but Chinese language books still depended on the traditional four-type classification scheme of the classics, history, philosophy, and literature.68 Also, in 1918, card catalogues were introduced to replace book-format catalogues, facilitating the addition and deletion of bibliographical entries.69 Administration had improved by 1918, with the four departments: Registration, Acquisition, Cataloguing, and Preservation.70 An emphasis was put on both acquisition and conservation of collections as well as on cataloguing. But no such department as circulation or reference services had been set up, as reader services were not a high priority.

Establishment of the MLB Branch
As seen earlier in this chapter, Director Jiang Han recognised the need to establish branches of the MLB in 1912. In June 1913, a branch was finally opened at a site on

70 Ibid.
Qianqingchang Road, with Guan Weizhen, a historian and educator, as its director.\textsuperscript{71} In 1914, it moved to Yongguangsi Road. In 1916, it was relocated to a bigger building on Xiangluying Road, remaining there until 1919.\textsuperscript{72} These sites were all close to the city centre of Beijing. It was hoped that the convenient transport would help to attract a larger readership. In the early 1920s, the MLB Branch was renamed the Popular Library of Beijing (Jingshi tongsu tushuguan).\textsuperscript{73}

Collections and services
The collections of the Branch were built up by three major means: allocation by the MLB, purchase, and donation.\textsuperscript{74} For instance, Lu Xun donated his own books and other new publications, such as \textit{A Collection of Ancient Books at Huijij County (Huijijju gushu zaji)}, compiled by himself, in June 1915 and the \textit{New Youth} magazine (\textit{Xingqingnian}) in March 1918.\textsuperscript{75} To organise the diversity of collections, a temporary five-type classification system was employed, which divided collections into five types: old learning (including the classics), new learning (including foreign language books and translated materials), religions, pictures and drawings, and newspapers and magazines. Although this classification system broke with the traditional four-type scheme of imperial China, it was still cursory and needed discreet revisions to meet the demand for scientific classification. No other modern library technologies were adopted before 1919, such as the open shelf system and card catalogues. Instead, catalogues were paper-formatted and displayed in mirrors hung on the walls. Although the Branch tried to organise its holdings in a new way, its limited technologies hampered the effective and efficient utilisation of its collections and provision of services. Moreover, access to the Branch was not free, although students were entitled to a concession rate.\textsuperscript{76}

Unlike the MLB, the Branch focused on the circulation of general books and periodicals. A newspaper reading room and a women’s reading room were set up in 1915. In 1916, magazines in English and Japanese languages were added. In 1917, the

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp. 120; 134; 156.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., ch. 6.
\textsuperscript{74} Li, “Jingshi tushuguan de cangshu jichu jiqi yuanyuan,” pp. 117-119.
\textsuperscript{75} Lu Xun, \textit{Lu Xun riji}, pp. 106; 309.
\textsuperscript{76} “Jingshi tushu fenguan minguo si wu liu qi ba niandu nianzhong gongzuo baogao,” in Li and Zhang, comps., \textit{Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chuangji zhi wusi qianhou}, pp. 239-240.
Branch held twenty or so kinds of newspapers and over forty kinds of magazines in Chinese and foreign languages. From October 1917 on, all the foreign language magazines were shared between the MLB and the Branch. To attract more potential readers, information boards were set up in more than ten traffic hubs across Beijing.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 243-246.}

The year 1919 witnessed phenomenal growth at the Branch in the collections of new types of publications, reflecting the impact of the New Culture Movement. As shown in Figure 3, books on new learning, pictures and drawings, and newspapers and magazines grew rapidly in 1919; works of fictions began to be collected also in 1919. Equipped with these new collections, the Branch played a role in the promotion of New Culture by offering them to readers.

![Figure 3. Statistics of Collections at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1915, 1916, and 1919](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old learning (volumes)</td>
<td>21,963</td>
<td>22,038</td>
<td>23,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New learning# (volumes)</td>
<td>1,227</td>
<td>1,539</td>
<td>2,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions (volumes)</td>
<td></td>
<td>347</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures and drawings (items)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and magazines (volumes)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>3,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fictions (volumes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Old learning includes the classics.

#New learning includes foreign language books and translated materials.


In addition, the number of newspaper and magazine readers was growing rapidly, as shown in Figure 4. In this way, the modern status of the Branch was enhanced, as it became more accessible to the general public.
Figure 4. Distribution of Readers at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1917–1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of book readers</td>
<td>2,826</td>
<td>2,968</td>
<td>3,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of newspaper and magazine readers</td>
<td>7,814</td>
<td>12,739</td>
<td>15,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: “Jingshi tushu fenguan minguo si wu liu qi ba niandu nianzhong gongzuo baogao” (Annual reports of the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1915–1919), in Li Ximi and Zhang Shuhua, comps., Zhongguo gudai congshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunjiu zhi wusi qianhau (Primary sources on traditional book collections and modern libraries in China, the Spring and Autumn period until the May Fourth era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 237-252.

When the MLB was temporarily closed between 1913 and 1916, the Branch remained open. As seen in Figure 5, the Branch was open for 271 days in 1914, increasing to 292 days in 1915, 278 days in 1916, 298 days in 1917, 299 days in 1918, and 300 days in 1919. No doubt, the Branch was becoming a public institution.

Figure 5. Statistics of Open Days at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1914–1919


Indeed, the readership had increased significantly. This increase was in contrast to the readership of the MLB. Only more intensive research itself could explain this case. As indicated in Figure 6, 1,355 patrons utilised the Branch in 1914; 3,443 in 1915; 7,386 in 1916; 10,640 in 1917; 15,707 in 1918; and 19,685 in 1919. The figure for 1919 was more than ten times that five years earlier. The Branch certainly played a role in the dissemination of knowledge, facilitating social education and the
“enlightenment” of urban Chinese. By serving the wide community of Beijing, the Branch had the effect of promoting a sense of equal opportunity.

Figure 6. Statistics of Readers at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1914–1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readers</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>3,443</td>
<td>7,386</td>
<td>10,640</td>
<td>15,707</td>
<td>19,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Funding

Funding for the Branch was allocated by the MLB. As seen in Figure 7, the allocated funds could not meet the actual expenditures, despite funding increases. The difference had to be met by the sale of reading tickets. Of course, without the admission fees, the readership would have grown larger.

Figure 7. Survey of Funding at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1915–1919*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocated funds (silver dollars)</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures (silver dollars)</td>
<td>2,147</td>
<td>5,155</td>
<td>6,039</td>
<td>6,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (silver dollars)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>-655</td>
<td>-189</td>
<td>-337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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78 Ibid., p. 248.

*The statistics of the year 1917 are not available.

The Branch funding was spent mainly on salary, book purchase, maintenance, rent, and other unidentified items.\(^7^9\) Figure 8 shows that salary constituted about one half of the total expenditures, and rent and maintenance also claimed a considerable proportion of the entire funding. The expenses on books grew substantially in the late 1910s. In 1919, expenses of this kind were nearly four times those in 1915. Also, in 1919, book acquisition accounted for eighteen percent of the annual expenditures because of an increasing emphasis on building up new collections and improving reader services.

Figure 8. Survey of Expenditures at the Branch of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, 1915–1919*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1915</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary (silver dollars)</td>
<td>1,199</td>
<td>2,516</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>2,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book purchase (silver dollars)</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>1,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance (silver dollars)</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1,106</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent (silver dollars)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>1,163</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (silver dollars)</td>
<td>316</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditures (silver dollars)</td>
<td>2,147</td>
<td>5,155</td>
<td>6,039</td>
<td>6,337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*The statistics of the year 1917 are not available.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF THE MLB IN ITS EARLY YEARS

As seen above, the MLB failed to function as a modern library in the full sense in the decade 1909–1919. Its successive directors were non-library professionals. Their traditional management style did little to contribute to its development. In addition, the lack of a budget scheme and a department concerned with circulation prevented it

\(^7^9\) Ibid.
from operating smoothly and improving reader services. Modern library technologies were not used extensively, and new publications inadequate. Access to the MLB was not free of charge, and borrowing rights not granted. A number of factors contributed to its underdevelopment, which can be analysed on a macro as well as micro level.

**Macro-level analysis**

The story of libraries reflects the social, economic, cultural, and educational needs to which libraries have responded. Libraries can survive only in societies of political and cultural maturity, which recognise the necessity of preserving, transmitting, and enlarging the body of knowledge. Relative peace and tranquillity afford time to plan and pursue cultural and intellectual activities. Only when individuals have both the leisure and the desire to cultivate themselves and to improve the common stock of knowledge can the need for libraries arise. In addition, library development depends, to a certain extent, on donations from individuals or corporations in a prosperous society. 80 Such a social context constitutes the macro environment conducive to the existence and growth of modern libraries. Needless to say, peace and prosperity are necessary for their maintenance and growth. War inevitably leads to their destruction. A lack of economic growth results in reductions in funding. In addition, libraries develop with the increasing demands for education and self-improvement. Libraries can flourish only in settled times. 81 However, this was not the case of Chinese library development in the early twentieth century.

For a start, Chinese library development was crippled by the decline and collapse of the Qing Court, the instability of the early years of the Republic, and the era of warlordism that ensued. Even after the 1911 Revolution, Chinese political thinking and culture were still rather traditional as a whole. Most people were still obedient to authority and to the traditional ethical and political dogma. Moreover, the new Republic proved to be a travesty of democracy. The chaos and political violence, especially after 1916, which characterised post-imperial Chinese society, was anything but beneficial to social, economic, and educational reforms. 82 In these

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82 Barry C. Keenan, “Educational Reform and Politics in Early Republican China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33.2 (February 1974): 225-237. See also David Bonavia, *China’s Warlords* (Hong Kong...
circumstances, of course, the new modern libraries in China did not receive sufficient support from the government, whoever was in power. This was not helped by a low level of industrialisation in China.

A latecomer in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China’s inadequate industrialisation meant limited urbanisation,\textsuperscript{83} and a large urban readership for modern libraries was slow to appear. Industrial development led to the growth of the industrial working class, but the growth of both was slow in China at the turn of the twentieth century. The overall size of the modern industrial work force reached 900,000 by 1913, with an estimated labour force of 955,000 workers in Chinese and foreign-owned ventures in 1919.\textsuperscript{84} Apparently, the work force increased by 55,000 within six years, or an average of less than 10,000 per year. Although the statistics are incomplete, they suffice to show the slow growth of the proletariat and the industrial economy in the early twentieth century. Moreover, the distribution of industrialisation was far from even. In Shanghai in 1919, twenty percent of its population were employed in the industrial sector, but this was not the case in the immense interior of China.\textsuperscript{85} Although light industry experienced remarkable growth in the 1910s, heavy industry was still either non-existent, dependent on Westerners, or backward.\textsuperscript{86} Consequently, the proletariat were not able to play a vigorous role in social transformation. Their class awareness was low and they did not have a sense of their own importance, although they would play a greater role later in Chinese politics under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. For example, Shanghai strikers merely regarded themselves as “rear-guard shield” of students and merchants during the May Fourth Incident.\textsuperscript{87}

Ordinary Chinese, generally, had little knowledge about what modern libraries could do for them. They felt inhibited about going to a library, where scholarly journals were the most frequently accessed materials.\textsuperscript{88} In other words, the educated

and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Wu Xiangxiang, \textit{Sun yixian xiansheng zhuan} (The biography of Sun Zhongshan) (Hong Kong: Yuandong tushu gongsi, 1984), chs. 43 and 44.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Chesneaux, Le Barbier, and Bergere, \textit{China from the 1911 Revolution to Liberation}, p. 69.
elite formed the majority of library users, with readership remaining extremely low at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Moreover, modern library development was not helped by the lack of a philanthropic tradition and low library consciousness. Peter Hoare has noted that libraries have been affected by many of the traditional forces that have shaped civilisation, and have played a part in them.\(^8^9\) The Chinese cultural tradition influenced the development of modern libraries from the outset, but not always in a positive way. The private nature of Chinese book repositories prevented philanthropy in book-related activities. It was not until the early twentieth century that a few “enlightened” Chinese donated their book collections to public libraries or set up public libraries, as has been noted in previous chapters. Many factors explain the lack of a philanthropic tradition in Chinese libraries. First, the necessity of libraries in society was not fully appreciated; library consciousness was almost non-existent. Only a few open-minded Chinese would donate to libraries. Second, few were rich or wealthy enough to make substantial contributions. Even Zhang Jian, a successful industrialist and reformer in modern China, could manage to donate funds for only one public library throughout his life (see Chapter 1). Although industrialists began to emerge as an active and vigorous social group, they could not be relied on to make large donations because the industrial economy was underdeveloped. Third, the tradition of closed book collections did not attract donations. Instead, the Chinese had the tradition of contributing to temples and ancestral tombs. Lastly, political chaos discouraged the Chinese from donating, as they did not have faith in their government of the day.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, China only experienced limited modernity, indicating that Chinese modernity was an urban phenomenon. Consequently, Chinese libraries were urban-based. Library consciousness was largely non-existent in the wide community. Not surprisingly, in the late Qing and early Republic, there existed only a library or two in each province, with none in remote provinces.\(^9^0\) The total number of Chinese libraries was less than that in a large


\(^9^0\) Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, p. 1071.
American city, with the entire collections of Chinese libraries less than those in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.\textsuperscript{91}

There was also the problem of low literacy rate. The relationship between literacy rate and libraries is strong. The higher the rate, the more the readers. In a non-literate society, modern libraries are inconceivable. On the other hand, without a library, communities may not maintain the literacy rate already acquired, let alone raise it. Indeed, modern libraries require high levels of literacy and sophisticated knowledge of the conventions of printed materials. Literacy level has become an indicator of the knowledge capital of communities and societies, serving as a necessary condition for innovation and modernisation and for equality between genders and among classes.\textsuperscript{92}

Literacy rate remained low in the early Republic. Western missionaries noticed that thirty to forty percent of Chinese males had learned basic simple reading skills, but the gap between male and female literacy was enormous, as no more than a few percentage of Chinese women had received an education by the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{93} Many reasons were given for such a low literacy rate, such as the political system, the underdeveloped agricultural economy, low living standards, educational policy, and gender inequality. As is well known, the classical education remained accessible only to the more leisureed class; ordinary Chinese, most of whom engaged in manual labour, could not indulge in the time-consuming pursuit of knowledge and did not have basic literacy, despite the tradition of learning.\textsuperscript{94} Furthermore, Chinese women were the underprivileged social group. Their low social status, lack of economic independence, and low level of literacy discouraged them from accessing knowledge and education, including libraries. Not until the 1920s were women allowed to enter higher education institutions in China.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Zhou Dechang, Chen Hancan, and Wang Jianju, \textit{Zhongguo jiaoyu shigang} (History of education in China) (Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), ch. 11.
Micro-level analysis

One of the problems for the MLB development was inadequate library science research. Traditionally, Chinese “librarianship” was a custodial occupation more concerned with the conservation of small and restricted collections than with the promotion of reading and scholarship. For the purpose of the preservation and limited utilisation of these collections, only simple organisation and management skills were required, such as classification and bibliography. “Library science” was distributed in such related subjects as bibliography, collation, evidential research, book history, and book organisation techniques. Hence, there existed no theoretical grounding in, or scientific approach to, “library science”, which was developing very slowly.\footnote{Wu Zhongqiang et al., Zhongguo tushuguan xuehi (History of library science in China) (Changsha: Hunan chubanshe, 1991), ch. 1.} There was no such subject as library science in China until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Modern Chinese libraries were inconceivable without library science and the professionalisation of librarians.

Modern libraries were recognised and began to be founded in China in the mid-nineteenth century, with respect to the diffusion of knowledge through logical organisation and management of materials for the benefit of the general public. Therefore, some basic principles and skills were called for that could facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of such kind. Without modern library science, a library building could not become a library in the real sense. It was against this background that modern library science began to be introduced into China in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

According to one Chinese source, there existed forty-seven works on library science from 1873 to 1911, dealing mainly with the following three subjects: the importance of modern libraries, the introduction of foreign libraries, and the solutions to problems facing Chinese libraries, such as classification and cataloguing.\footnote{Yan Wenyu, Zhongguo tushuguan fazhanshi: zi qingmo zhi kangzhan shengli (History of the development of Chinese libraries: from the late Qing until the aftermath of the Anti-Japanese War) (Xinzhu, Taiwan: Zhongguo tushuguan xuehui, 1983), pp. 198-200.} Between 1912 and 1919, there appeared seventy-six pieces on library science, but they were still concerned mainly with the above three topics.\footnote{Ibid.} It was not until 1917 that Chinese scholars introduced foreign libraries and advanced library technologies
from overseas, and provided some in-depth descriptions and analyses of Western libraries in terms of management and services.\textsuperscript{99}

There were several characteristics of library science research in China prior to 1919. First, most achievements in library science research originated in the translations from foreign language materials on practical issues, with theoretical research lagging far behind.\textsuperscript{100} As a result, library science research was informative and descriptive. This period can be seen as the embryonic stage of library science, which laid the foundations for future development. Second, no academic journals on library science existed. Instead, library science was introduced in education journals, such as \textit{The Educational Review (Jiaoyu zazhi)} and \textit{The Educational World (Jiaoyu shijie)}.\textsuperscript{101} Third, library science was not introduced by library professionals until 1917, when the New Library Movement was launched (see Chapter 5). It was the reformist Chinese scholars, such as Wang Guowei, Zheng Guanying, and Liang Qichao, who first introduced Western librarianship in the late nineteenth century (see Chapters 2 and 3). But they did not have the training and professional knowledge in library science. For these reasons, library science research was underdeveloped.

Added to this was the shortage of library science education and the low social status of library staff in the early Republican period, as library science was seen as a new discipline, esoteric and alien, but not gaining enough public recognition.\textsuperscript{102} In modern times, libraries are managed by librarians to whom the collection, preservation, utilisation, and transmission of knowledge are entrusted; it is librarians who devise activities and services to carry out these tasks. As modern libraries are no longer an assembly of books, nor are they a place where books are kept and preserved. Rather, they are an organisation, a system designed to preserve and facilitate the use of records. They may be seen as a social instrument created to form a link in the communication system that is essential to any society.\textsuperscript{103} Through this system of communication, the accumulated knowledge by cultural production can be

\textsuperscript{99} Wu et al., \textit{Zhongguo tushuguan xueshi}, ch. 2.
\textsuperscript{100} She Guanghe and He Meiying, “Jindai Zhongguo tushuguan xue xueshu sixiang qianxi” (Analysis of library science in modern China), \textit{Shanghai jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao} (Journal of Shanghai College of Education) 1 (1992): 127-129.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
transmitted and finally accessed by the general public regardless of sex, age, wealth, and social status. Therefore, librarians are required to be of positive and vigorous characters, creating among their readers a desire to read books and instructing readers how to read and make use of libraries. Such librarians can be competent to shape the reading of the whole community.

Unfortunately, the Chinese authorities gave little attention to carrying out library science education and to raising librarians’ status. No systematic education or training program was organised by the Ministry of Education and no library school existed in China before 1920. This was due partly to a shortage of funds in the early Republic and partly to a lack of appreciation of modern libraries as a social instrument. For centuries, library workers had been viewed as door keepers or janitors because of the nature of book repositories. Even the Regulations on Universities, issued by the Qing government in 1903, stipulated that library directors be taken up by teaching staff.\(^{104}\) The Regulations on the Metropolitan Library of Beijing and Provincial Libraries, promulgated by the Qing government in 1909, also stipulated that school directors assume the role of library directors.\(^{105}\) None of these regulations recognised the professional status of library workers. From this it is evident that the library profession and library science were hardly recognised in Chinese society, resulting in a shortage of library professionals. As a result, library positions were taken up by non-library professionals, those at the MLB being no exception. Although those early directors and leaders of the MLB acknowledged the necessity of libraries and tried their best to improve services, there were serious limitations to what they could do professionally.

In addition, a lack of adequate support from a library association hindered library development in the early Republic. The first library association in China—the Beijing Library Association—was inaugurated in December 1918, with representatives of twenty-one libraries from across the country attending the inaugural meeting. In February 1919, its mission was stated clearly: the coordination of libraries in Beijing with a view to mutual benefit. As a result, its activities focused on inter-library loans.

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104 Zhang Zhidong et al., *Daxuetang zhangcheng* (The regulations on universities) (Beijing: The First Historical Archives of Beijing, box no. 360).
105 “Jingshi tushuguan ji gesheng tushuguan tongxing zhangcheng” (The regulations on the Metropolitan Library of Beijing and provincial libraries), in Li and Zhang, comps., *Zhongguo gudai cangshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou*, pp. 268-269.
Unfortunately, it came to a premature end by the end of 1919 due to a shortage of funds and lack of support from the Ministry of Education.106

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MLB

An assessment of the MLB needs to take into account its attempt, at its inception, to preserve the national essence and the broad context in which it existed. Through the efforts of its directors, the MLB succeeded in the acquisition and preservation of the national heritage. To a limited degree, it managed to become a modern library, making its collections accessible to readers. The period 1909–1919 saw only small-scale application of modern library technologies and a limited range of reader services. Nevertheless, the MLB helped to spread education and deliver knowledge with the provision of library collections and services, catering to users regardless of social status. In this sense, the MLB removed the shackles of traditional book repositories, functioning as a modern library and helping on the principle of equal opportunity. Moreover, it played a part in the New Culture Movement by subscribing to such modern publications as the New Youth magazine. Hence, the MLB played a role in the “enlightenment” of the Beijing community, a role not immediately obvious, but significant all the same. At the same time, modern library technologies were applied to the MLB, including the card catalogue and the Dewey Decimal Classification, with special reference to improving services for the benefit of the users. In this way, it contributed, in a small way, to the advancement of modern librarianship in China. The foundation of the future expansion of the MLB was laid, as far as the decade 1909–1919 was concerned.

Yet modern librarianship was still underdeveloped in China in the 1910s. The MLB’s achievements as a modern library were limited for a number of reasons, both macro and micro. Consequently, the MLB was confronted with a multitude of problems, including insufficient funding, traditional-style management, inadequate collection of modern publications, poorly managed reader services, a lack of professional librarians, superficial application of modern library technologies, and admission fees. The situation of the period 1909–1919 was that the Qing Dynasty was disintegrating and the new Republic was far from being consolidated. China was ruled by an unstable government, who gave little priority to library development. It was not

106 Li Ying, “Zhongguo xiandai tushuguan zhifu: Li Dazhao” (Father of modern Chinese librarianship: Li Dazhao), Jintu xuekan (Tianjin library journal) 4 (1997): 140-146.
until the 1920s and the 1930s that Chinese libraries began to flourish and mature first due to the influence of the New Library Movement and then to the establishment of the Nationalist government.

CONCLUSION

Modern Chinese libraries were designed as a useful tool both for the facilitation of educational reform and for the preservation of the national heritage during a period of social and political upheaval. Given the emphasis in preserving the national culture, it may be argued that the MLB was less progressive than some other public libraries. No doubt, many rare books were protected, helping the conservation and utilisation of the cultural heritage in later years. However, the excessive preservation hindered the development of modern libraries from the outset. Although new libraries started to be founded across the country, the influence of traditional book repositories was still felt in terms of the old type of the classification system, inadequate provision of library services, and insufficient utilisation of library resources. Most libraries did not allow readers to borrow books out of them, and fees were charged even for reading library collections. Therefore, library management proved difficult; libraries grew in size, but their growth had been haphazard; administration was weak, standards of service almost non-existent; funds for acquisition tended to be inadequate; the post of librarians was neglected; and organisation of library holdings lacked proper methods. Specifically, the card catalogue and the open shelf system were not widespread, and modern classification schemes were not prevalent.

Worse, still overwhelmingly illiterate, ordinary Chinese were far from “enlightened”. Even among the late Qing officials, only a limited number of them acknowledged the educational functions of modern libraries. Under such circumstances, modern libraries were only in name and form, but not in essence and practice. It was in such a context that the New Library Movement was launched in the mid-1910s, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

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107 There were strict regulations concerning the utilisation of libraries in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. For these regulations and other aspects of the management of libraries, see Li and Zhang, comps., Zhongguo gudai càngshu yu jindai tushuguan shiliao, chunqiu zhi wusi qianhou, pp. 357-364; 378; 382-383.
Chapter 5
The New Library Movement

In the mid-1910s, the New Culture Movement provided a strong critique of traditional Chinese society by borrowing Western ideas. It marked an important watershed in the history of China’s intellectual break with tradition. Further, it moved from the questioning of core traditional values to their repudiation, symbolising the transition from tradition to modernity in China.\(^1\) Seeing the value of modern libraries to educational reform and the regeneration of China, New Culture leaders expressed enthusiasm for the development of Chinese libraries. Consequently, the New Culture Movement created an atmosphere conducive to the transition from book repositories to modern libraries. This brought about the New Library Movement (1917–1927).\(^2\)

This chapter investigates the development of the New Library Movement and its impact on the progress of modern Chinese libraries, including the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB). It argues that, as an important component of the New Culture Movement, the New Library Movement attacked the conservatism of imperial book repositories, seeking to adopt American methods of training librarians, to establish public libraries, and to form local and national library associations. The Movement achieved its goal in replacing traditional book repositories with modern libraries in terms of technology and management. Moreover, in the political and social context of the decade 1917–1927, it contributed to Chinese “enlightenment”\(^3\) by playing a role in the dissemination of New Culture among the educated Chinese. It also argues that Chinese libraries, however, were an urban phenomenon, far from

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\(^1\) The process of Chinese modernity is a complicated topic and is not the concern of this thesis. For more information on it, see Hung-yok Ip, Tze-ki Hon, and Chiu-chun Lee, “The Plurality of Chinese Modernity: A Review of Recent Scholarship on the May Fourth Movement,” *Modern China* 29:4 (October 2003): 490-509.


\(^3\) Here, “Enlightenment” was different from the intellectual movement in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, marked by a celebration of the powers of human beings, a keen interest in science, the promotion of religious toleration, and a desire to construct governments free of tyranny. See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003). In the early twentieth century, Chinese “enlightenment” stood for spreading modern-style education to the people from all walks of life to eradicate superstition, abandoning Chinese traditions, advocating science and democracy, smashing autocracy, and promoting Chinese nationalism. Chinese “enlightenment” is not the topic of this thesis, for more information on it, see Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
achieving the goal of benefiting the Chinese people from all walks of life, due to abject poverty, backwardness, low level of literacy, and, in short, insufficient modernity of Chinese society as a whole.

**INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE NEW LIBRARY MOVEMENT**

**The New Culture Movement**

The founding of the Republic of China opened the way both for economic growth and cultural expansion. The period between 1915 and 1920 witnessed the phenomenal growth of the Chinese industrial economy, due to the adoption of new economic measures taken by the Republican government, the slackening foreign competition caused by World War One, and the efforts of Chinese entrepreneurs. For this reason, this period has been seen as a golden age in Chinese economic history.\(^4\) The appearance of a modern economic sector and the development of large coastal cities accelerated social change. The new urban elite emerged, expanded, prospered, and became increasingly distinct from the old social leading strata. They comprised the compradors, merchants, and new intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century.\(^5\)

The new intellectuals, in the early days of the Republic, realised that China must be rescued from foreign subjugation. Spurred by the rise of Chinese nationalism, they were awakening to the perils facing their nation in the modern world, recognising that intellectual and cultural change was a precondition to solving China’s problems.\(^6\) They longed for a new China based on such new values as democracy and science. The founding of the Republic, in the view of the new intellectuals, hastened the disintegration of the traditional order, inspiring them to call for radical change.\(^7\)

It was in this milieu that they re-examined, re-evaluated, and re-modelled Chinese philosophy, ethics, social theories, and institutions along Western lines. The New Culture Movement came to life, consisting of a new literary movement, a new thought movement, the May Fourth Incident, and a new library movement.\(^8\) It began in 1915,


when the *New Youth* magazine was launched, culminating in the May Fourth Incident, when students demonstrated in Beijing on 4 May, 1919, in protest against China’s treatment at the Versailles Peace Conference. It became identified with the May Fourth Movement, which lasted until the middle of the 1920s.9

The New Culture Movement aimed to introduce to China Western values and concepts, such as liberalism, democracy, science, and equality; it also intended to bring to the Chinese a new style of writing in the vernacular. It was an intellectual campaign for a totally new culture, purged of all relics of China’s traditions, with attacks on the traditional moral and social orders. Indeed, it developed into an intellectual revolution, unprecedented in China’s history. It was in this intellectual atmosphere that the New Library Movement made its appearance, completing the transition form traditional book repositories to modern libraries.

**The influence of the New Culture Movement on modern libraries**

The effects of the New Culture Movement on the growth of modern libraries were tremendous. The Movement witnessed the unprecedented growth of printed materials in the vernacular,10 providing libraries with more modern publications than previously. Further, the new intellectuals re-evaluated Chinese traditions critically and were keen to adopt a broad range of Western ideas in order to solve China’s problems.11 They expressed concerns over the library issue in relation to educational change and national regeneration. Some New Culture leaders, such as Li Dazhao, advocated equal right to education among the masses.12 Others emphasised Western library technologies, criticising traditional book repositories and demanding truly modern libraries.

The New Culture Movement had a great impact on the growth of printed materials in the vernacular. The new intellectuals made use of printed materials to aid their reform movement. During this period, modern educational materials and periodicals

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12. Li Dazhao, “Pingmin zhuyi” (The ideas on the common people), in his *Li Dazhao xuanji* (Selected works of Li Dazhao) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1959), p. 427.
in the vernacular increased substantially. Not surprisingly, educational reform in early twentieth-century China required the supply of new-style textbooks on modern subjects. In response, many Chinese concerns about publishing educational materials were expressed. Between 1912 and 1916, the Commercial Press alone printed one hundred or so types of Chinese language textbooks, a variety of other books on education, and about twenty newspapers and magazines pertaining to educational matters. All these publications were in the vernacular.

The use of the vernacular as a medium of expression helped the popularisation of knowledge and increased the desire for education among the general public. Traditionally, the nature of the Chinese written word itself prevented works from being accessible to the public, primarily because the written language differed from the spoken language. Known as the literary speech (wenyan), the written language was quite terse compared with the Chinese spoken language, differing in vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation. Even scholars required years of hard work to master the written language. Relating themselves to the common people, New Culture intellectuals favoured the vernacular in literature, because it was a living language that could reach out to a larger readership in a way that the written language could not. They employed printed materials as an effective means of expressing and propagating their ideas about science and democracy. The use of the vernacular extended their publications to a broader readership than ever before in China’s history. Further, the May Fourth Incident aroused the Chinese people to a new awareness of the national crisis. They were alarmed by their corrupt government, prolonged civil wars, and repeated humilitating defeats by foreign countries. More and more Chinese, especially young students, relied on printed materials to promote patriotism, which, in turn, stimulated the growth of the publications in the

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The New Culture Movement has been seen as a thought revolution, as it criticised an array of old traditions and borrowed new ideas from the West, such as an awareness of participation, a sense of responsibility, equal opportunity of education, individual freedom, democracy, and science. It also promoted nationalism, seeking to use radical ideologies to reshape the Chinese state and society. Thus, the Movement helped the Chinese, especially urban Chinese, awake to the modern world, making them realise the relationship between individuals and society. Above all, the new intellectuals shared a common nationalistic concern for China’s salvation, which was helped by spreading education and knowledge to the general public. For them, the role of education in Chinese society was a vital issue; it served to “enlighten” ordinary Chinese. Remarkably, this intellectual movement facilitated by the vernacular made literacy much more desirable and obtainable by the public than ever before. The growth of educational opportunities and literacy would inevitably created enormous

18 Ibid; Huang, Zhongguo xinwen shiye fazhanshi, pp. 93-110.
20 Ji, Zhongguo chuban jianshi, p. 351.
22 Huang, Zhongguo xinwen shiye fazhanshi, pp. 117-119.
demands for library services. Modern libraries, incorporating the concept of open access and public services, enjoyed the chance to develop in an advantageous environment, which subsequently enhanced the quality of education.\textsuperscript{24}

In other words, the New Culture Movement saw the beginnings of a number of modern institutions that have persisted to this day, modern libraries included.\textsuperscript{25} As far as modern libraries were concerned, the Movement aroused the Chinese people, especially urban Chinese, to a new awareness of the benefits of education and the need for libraries. Modern libraries received attention from organisations of all political stripes as well as the leaders of the New Culture Movement, such as Hu Shi and Cai Yuanpei.

Hu Shi, while a student in the United States in 1915, wrote in his diary: “It is not a disgrace for a nation to lack a navy or an army! It is but a disgrace for a nation to lack public libraries, museums, and art galleries.”\textsuperscript{26} He went on to stress that public libraries be founded across China.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, he was interested in the development of a Chinese national library, desiring to see it grow into one as grand as the Library of Congress, the British Museum Library, or the Bibliotheque Nationale de France.\textsuperscript{28}

Hu Shi’s seven years of study in the United States were a time of wide-ranging intellectual and social experimentation. During this period, he was able to study the ways of the West and became “more appreciative of the appeal of American aspirations than were all but a handful of his Chinese contemporaries.”\textsuperscript{29} Although his affection for American culture was genuine, “he remained at heart a Chinese.”\textsuperscript{30} He had “an abiding concern for the problem which weighed so heavily on the spirit of his own generation.”\textsuperscript{31} Given his American education, one may understand his concern about the underdevelopment of modern Chinese libraries.

\textsuperscript{24} Tu Kuang-pei, “Transformation and Dissemination of Western Knowledge and Values: The Shaping of Library Services in Early Twentieth-Century China,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1996), pp. 8-10.
\textsuperscript{26} Hu Shi, \textit{Hu Shi liuxue riji} (Hu Shi’s diary of overseas study) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), p. 566.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 583.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
Another equally concerned New Culture intellectual was Cai Yuanpei. Previous studies of Cai have neglected his contributions to Chinese library development. Educated in traditional fashion and well versed in Chinese classics, Cai was successful in the civil service examinations and awarded a position in the Hanlin Academy at an early age. But he was not satisfied with the traditional mode of education. At the turn of the twentieth century, he worked for the Department of Translation at Nanyang Public School in Shanghai. In 1901, he set up the Patriotic Girls’ School in Shanghai. In 1902, he contributed to the founding of the Chinese Educational Association, which sought improvement in textbooks and educational methods.

In 1912, Cai was appointed Minister of Education in the provisional government, shortly after the new Republic was founded. During his short tenure as Minister, the early years of the Republic witnessed an expansion of schools throughout China; classical education was abolished in primary, secondary, and normal schools, with new textbooks and social education expanded. Cai’s educational reforms continued at Beijing University from 1917 to 1920, when he was the Chancellor. As is well known, the Imperial University of Beijing originated from the Hundred Days Reform of 1898 and was reorganised in 1902. But it was still a ladder for official seekers in the moribund Qing Dynasty until it became Beijing University in 1912. The transformation of Beijing University was further implemented by Cai Yuanpei, who observed that China’s weakness lay in its failure to develop modern sciences, as in the West. Under his leadership, Beijing University became a modern institution of higher education, serving as the cradle for the New Culture Movement and the New Library Movement.

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32 For more information on Cai’s biography and career, see William J. Duiker, Cai Yuanpei: Educator of Modern China (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977). See also Kang Zhenchang, Cai Yuanpei zhuo (The biography of Cai Yuanpei) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985).
34 Duiker, Cai Yuanpei, pp. 47-48; 87.
35 Gao, Cai Yuanpei nianpu, p. 37.
36 For more information on the transformation and contributions of this university at the turn of the twentieth century, see Timothy Bergmann Weston, “Beijing University and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1920,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1995); see also Liang Zhu, Cai Yuanpei yu Beijing daxue (Cai Yuanpei and Beijing University) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1996).
Appreciating the importance of modern libraries to modern education, Cai was quick to promote library development. 38 First of all, he insisted that the Department of Social Education be established in addition to the Departments of General Education and Specialised Education under the Ministry of Education, immediately after he took office. In his view, social education assisted in disseminating knowledge to the common people by means of libraries, museums, newspapers, and language reform. One major responsibility of the Department of Social Education was the establishment and supervision of libraries, museums, and art galleries. Cai believed that libraries could facilitate the promotion of mass education by the provision of accumulated knowledge, especially for those who had no access to formal schooling. 39 He invited Lu Xun and Xia Zengyou, an eminent historian, to work at the Department of Social Education and to administer library affairs in general and the MLB in particular. 40

Second, Cai paid particular attention to the MLB and appointed Jiang Han, an eminent educator and historian, to the position of its director in May 1912. 41 Third, he was keen to build up library collections. In January 1917, he made a speech at Beijing University, highlighting two problems that needed to be solved immediately. One was the improvement in textbooks, the other the building of library collections. He was concerned about the shortage of library materials at Beijing University and urged that newly published books be purchased as soon as possible. 42 Fourth, Cai endeavoured to secure funding for libraries. In December 1918, he issued “The Proposal on the Returning of the Boxer Indemnity and Its Utilisation in the Promotion of Education”. In this proposal, Cai strongly recommended that the returned Boxer Indemnity be given to libraries in Beijing, Nanjing, Sichuan, and Guangdong. 43 Finally, he pointed

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38 As early as February 1912, Cai expressed his opinion that he would promulgate regulations on libraries as soon as possible. See Cai Yuanpei, “Fu Miao Xiaoshan han” (Reply to Miao Quansun), in Ibid., vol 2, pp. 129-130.
40 Bao Chang and Qiu Wenzhi, Lu Xin nianpu (The chronology of Lu Xun) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1979), p. 90. See also Xi Ximi, “Lu Xin yu tushuguan” (Lu Xun and libraries), Beitu tongxue (Bulletin of the Beijing Library) 1 (1979): 92-100. The contributions of Lu Xun and Xia Zengyou to the MLB are presented in Chapter 4.
41 Cai Yuanpei, “Zhi Jiang Han han” (Letter to Jiang Han), in his Cai Yuanpei quanji, vol 2, p. 161. Jiang Han’s achievements in the MLB are examined in Chapter 4.
42 Cai Yuanpei, “Juiren Beijing daxue xiaozheng zhi yanshuo” (Inaugurating speech as Chancellor of Beijing University), in Ibid., vol 1, pp. 23-25.
43 Cai Yuanpei, “Qing geguo tuihuan gengkuan gong tuiguang jiaoyu yijianshu” (The proposal on the returning of the Boxer Indemnity and its utilisation in the promotion of education), in Ibid., vol 3, pp. 224-227.
out the necessity for educating professional librarians, suggesting, in 1922, that the Chinese learn from the Americans how to develop library science education and research.\textsuperscript{44} Given his positions at the Ministry of Education and Beijing University, his reform measures provided a guide to modern library development in China. As a matter of fact, he became a principal participant in the New Library Movement.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE NEW LIBRARY MOVEMENT AND THE NEW CULTURE MOVEMENT

The initiators of the two movements were new intellectuals who embraced modern education and Western values. They were Western-trained or Western-influenced. The active participants in the New Culture Movement were Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Cai Yuanpei, and Li Dazhao.\textsuperscript{45} The advocates of the New Library Movement, such as Samuel Seng (Shen Zurong, 1883–1976) and David Yu (Yu Rizhang, 1882–1936), graduated from American educational institutions.\textsuperscript{46} The leaders of the two movements shared an ardent interest in library development, as they all recognised the importance of modern libraries to educational reform and nation building. The New Library Movement owed much to both New Culture and New Library advocates, who cherished a common ideal: educating the masses for the salvation of the Chinese nation.

Both movements adopted the same methodology: the critical re-evaluation of Chinese traditions and the discreet adoption of Western learning. The New Culture Movement attempted to create a new culture for China, based on the adoption of Western learning as well as on the assimilation of Chinese traditions.\textsuperscript{47} Likewise, the New Library Movement launched an all-out attack on the limited nature and scope of

\textsuperscript{44} Cai Yuanpei, “Tushuguan xue xu” (Preface to Library Science), in Ibid., vol 2, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{45} For the biographical information on these figures, see Feigon, Chen Duxiu; Chou Min-chih, Hu Shi and Intellectual Choice in Modern China (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1987); Ruth F. Weiss, Lu Xin: A Chinese Writer for All Times (Beijing: New World Press, 1985); Duiker, Cai Yuanpei; Maurice Meisner, Li Tu-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).
\textsuperscript{46} Cheng Huanwen, Zhongguo tushuguan xue jiaoyu zhidu: Shen Zurong pingzhuan (Father of library science education in China: Shen Zurong) (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1997). Samuel Seng was Shen Zurong’s English name. Yu Rizhang was a patriotic Christian leader in China in the early twentieth century, see Yuan Fanglai, Yu Rizhang zhuan (The biography of Yu Rizhang) (Hong Kong: Jidujiao wenyi chubanshe, 1970); Peter Chen-main Wang, “A Patriotic Christian Leader in Changing China—Yu Rizhang and the Turbulent 1920s,” in C. X. George Wei and Liu Xiaoyuan, eds., Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 33-52. David Yu was Yu Rizhang’s English name.
\textsuperscript{47} Huang Sung-k’ang, Lu Xin and the New Culture Movement of Modern China (Amsterdam: Djjambaton, 1957), p. 81.
Chinese book repositories, but it did not intend simply to emulate the practice of American libraries. Instead, it emphasised the spirit of American public libraries and demanded attention to library development in China. An outstanding example was the modification and adjustment of the Dewey Decimal Classification when it was introduced to China by Chinese library scholars.48

The other method employed by both movements was to approach the general public. To “enlighten” ordinary Chinese, New Culture advocates organised street lectures to extend education and disseminate new ideas.49 Similarly, this strategy was adopted by New Library proponents. Although the discourse on modern libraries was introduced by a handful of reform-minded Chinese from the 1890s, they reiterated the importance of libraries from the top by promulgating regulations, submitting petitions, and issuing publications. This approach failed to produce sufficient results because of China’s vastness, its huge population, and low level of literacy. Instead, Samuel Seng and David Yu introduced modern libraries in person with the aid of projectors, slides, film, charts, and statistics; they travelled around the cities, making lively presentations on modern libraries to local Chinese.50

The two movements upheld the same slogan “Democracy and Science”. In the view of New Library proponents, democracy stood for the opening of libraries to the general public free of charge.51 In this sense, the privilege of any class or social stratum was eradicated, and everybody was equal in right and access to libraries. This helped to form a link between democracy and knowledge. For New Library proponents, science meant the application of scientific methods to libraries. These included scientific acquisition, organisation, and circulation methods, such as the classification scheme, the open shelf system, and the card catalogue.52 Only the use of new technologies could facilitate and ensure the full and effective utilisation of library materials and services.

48 The Dewey Decimal Classification has been a widely used classification scheme in the world for a century. In the early twentieth century, Chinese librarians made necessary adjustments to it to make it suit Chinese books. See Du Dingyou, “Tushu fenlei fa shihuo” (Brief history of the classification system in China), Tushuguan gongzuo (Library work) 8 (1957): 31-33.
The two movements cherished the same aim of the transformation of China, striving to overcome the hurdles in China’s quest for modernity. The New Culture Movement approached its target through a literary revolution and an intellectual “enlightenment”. The New Library Movement was concerned with the introduction of advanced library technologies and management skills for Chinese libraries, abandoning the traditional book repositories.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the New Library Movement, as part of the New Culture Movement, played a role in China’s transition to modernity. Chinese society was changing in the 1910s, with the old social equilibrium thrown off balance and the new urban elite gradually coming to the fore. Most important of all, there was an intellectual revolution. It was against this backdrop that the New Library Movement was launched to promote American librarianship in China, to advocate the creation of more public libraries, and to attack imperial book repositories in which book collections were restricted, in function, to the keeping of records, and, in readership, to the privileged few. In turn, it contributed to the New Culture Movement by supplying the necessary library resources and services.

**ORIGINS OF THE NEW LIBRARY MOVEMENT**

**Mary Elizabeth Wood: path maker in modern Chinese libraries**

Mary Elizabeth Wood sowed the seeds of the New Library Movement. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Wood founded the Boone Library, a relatively early public library in Wuchang in 1901, thus helping to introduce the spirit of American public libraries. She was influential in introducing advanced Western library technologies into Chinese libraries. The open shelf system was applied in the Boone Library as early as 1910. But Dr. James Jackson, President of the Boone University, was unconvinced that this new system was workable because many books were stolen. She argued with Jackson in support of the system and succeeded in extending its use to Chinese libraries.\(^{53}\) Further, she realised the importance of professional education in library science for China relatively early and succeeded in obtaining enough funds from the United States to send Samuel Seng and Thomas Hu (Hu Qingsheng, 1895–1968) to study library science in the United States in 1914 and 1916, respectively. Also, it was

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\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 386.
she who inspired Samuel Seng to launch the New Library Movement in 1917, introducing advanced librarianship from the United States. She asked the Chinese YMCA to assist in the Movement. In addition, she encouraged and helped Samuel Seng in founding the Boone Library School, the first professional institution of library science education in China, in 1920. Shortly afterwards, she succeeded in lobbying the US Congress for the passage of the remaining Boxer Indemnity to libraries in China in the 1920s. It is reasonable to regard Wood as a path maker in the development of modern Chinese libraries, as she devoted thirty years of her life to Chinese librarianship. This gave the Movement a strong religious characteristic as far as Wood was concerned, for she saw it as God’s call to help develop Chinese libraries.

The Chinese YMCA’s contributions to the New Library Movement

The Chinese YMCA was founded in 1895, as part of the Christian expansion that spread evangelistic Protestants and social gospel. Although its roots lay in evangelistic Christianity with meagre financial support, it soon built a self-supporting and secular constituency among the emerging new urban elite in China. The programs of the Chinese YMCA were fourfold: spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social. It organised a series of part-time classes on English, arithmetic, public health, and other modern subjects; it assisted young Chinese intending to study abroad in visa application; and it provided Chinese athletes with information on the Olympic Games. Significantly, it offered the ideas of self-improvement for the Chinese, following their humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

The Chinese YMCA inherited the YMCA’s tradition of providing library services. The faith in the educability of individuals and the cultivation of citizens led

56 Jun, Baptised in the Fire of Revolution, p. 44.
58 Ibid., p. 60.
the Chinese YMCA to work on educational programs and library matters. When the first association of the Chinese YMCA was opened in Tianjin in 1895, its plans included a library and a lecture hall for the benefit of its members.60 David Yu, General Secretary of the Chinese YMCA, combined his belief in Christianity with patriotism. Born into a Christian family, Yu was educated at the Boone School in Wuchang and St. John University in Shanghai early in the 1900s; he also worked as an English teacher at the Boone School upon graduation. Between 1908 and 1910, he was a student at Harvard University, graduating with an M.A. in Education. He took up a position at the Department of Speech of the Chinese YMCA in 1913. In the following three years, he gave a series of lectures on China’s need for an expansion of education. He lectured across Chinese cities, impressing his audiences with his visual equipment and materials, such as slides, projectors, and film. During his lectures, he maintained that the weakness of the Republic of China lay in the underdevelopment of education.61 His lectures were so successful that the Ministry of Education requested the duplicate of his visual equipment.62 After he was elected General Secretary of the Chinese YMCA in 1915, he continued to advocate mass education.63

Two major principles underlay his philosophy of life and work. One was that the Chinese YMCA was an instrument for the development and strengthening of China. The other was his belief that individual character was the key to the solution of national problems. He thought that individual integrity was the basis on which national salvation depended. Thus, he endeavoured to make the Chinese YMCA serve the national good of China by organising education and training programs for all age groups.64 And he exhibited keen interest in library matters. He had studied and worked at the educational institutions that boasted substantial library collections and advanced library services. This seems to have helped him experience in person the importance of libraries in education. Moreover, his religious belief may also have helped him understand and appreciate Wood’s connecting God with Chinese libraries.

60 Garrett, Social Reformers in Urban China, p. 88.
Thereafter, the Chinese YMCA was quick to respond to Wood’s request to participate in the New Library Movement.65

The Chinese YMCA’s contribution to the Movement lay in its innovative methodology, especially the practical demonstrations and the approach to the general public. Although influential officials and scholars had advocated the educational functions of modern libraries in the late Qing, they did not produce satisfactory results. The deep-rooted tradition of imperial book repositories tended to discourage the public from approaching the new libraries. As ordinary Chinese were not “enlightened” yet, they were unable to understand the elite’s advocacy, including modern libraries. New Library advocates addressed the general public by vivid demonstrations, drawing modern libraries closer to the public, and minimising the gap between libraries and ordinary Chinese who began to perceive modern libraries as an agent of educational change.

**Samuel Seng and the launch of the New Library Movement**

Born into a poor working class family in Wuchang in 1883, Seng graduated from the Boone School and Boone University in Wuchang in 1907 and in 1910, respectively. Seng was converted to Christianity when studying at Boone. His early activities there were associated with library matters. He assisted Mary Elizabeth Wood in the management of the Boone Library immediately after his graduation in 1910. In 1914, he went to study library science at the Library School of New York Public Library (later it evolved into the School of Library Service at Columbia University) under Wood’s patronage. He received an M.A. in Library Science in 1916, the first Chinese to receive such a degree. Returning to China in 1917, he launched the New Library Movement. Three years later, he established the first professional institution of library science education in China, the Boone Library School. He dedicated all his energy to this school and managed to keep it in operation until it merged with Wuhan University in the early 1950s, after the People’s Republic of China was founded.66

Seng developed his own theory on how libraries could benefit China. As early as 1916, in an article entitled “Can the American Library System Be Adopted in China?”, published in *The Library Journal*, he noted the grandeur of library buildings in the United States. But he thought that the magnificent architecture of American

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65 Cheng, Zhongguo tushuguan xue jiaoyu zifu, pp. 33-37.
66 For a biography of Seng, see Cheng, Zhongguo tushuguan xue jiaoyu zifu.
libraries would intimidate the Chinese people, given their low level of education. According to him, the most urgent task was the training of librarians, who were prepared to commit themselves to Chinese “enlightenment” through education. In other words, he advocated the social functions of modern libraries by infusing Wood’s missionary librarianship with Chinese nationalism. In that article, he also stressed that the civilisation of a nation lay in the number of universities, schools, libraries, and parks, not the amount and strength of the weaponry it possessed. He went on to argue that libraries were people’s universities where people took in spiritual nutrition. In his “National Survey of Chinese Libraries”, conducted in 1918, he continued to argue that libraries were another form of education, regardless of people’s age, sex, level of literacy, wealth, and social standing; libraries were aimed at the whole citizenry from scholars to the labouring class; they were designed to enable the people to share in accumulated knowledge and to encourage them to make use of the books on shelves through scientific management technologies. His poor family background pushed him to strengthen the educational functions of modern libraries in the spread of knowledge to the general public, and his notion of libraries was infused with patriotism and a sense of national salvation through education. Hence, he saw an urgent need to train professional librarians in the modernisation of Chinese libraries.

Though standing at the forefront of the introduction of American-style librarianship to China, Seng found it necessary to adjust and modify American librarianship before it could be applied to China. The traditional four-type classification system of China could not meet the rising needs of an increasing number of new publications in the early 1900s. The Dewey Decimal Classification had been introduced and employed in some libraries, but it did not suit all types of printed materials in the Chinese language. Instead of translating it directly, Seng made adjustments to the Dewey Decimal Classification to make it more suitable for Chinese books. In 1917, he published A System of Classification of Chinese Books Based on Dewey’s

68 Ibid.
Classification, the first modern classification system in China, which he updated and revised several times in later years.⁷⁰

Between 1917 and 1919, he and David Yu travelled across China, covering a number of cities in Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Henan, Shanxi, and Zhili, encouraging the transition from imperial book repositories to modern libraries.⁷¹ Both of them were interested in the practical and effective methods of approaching the public. To achieve effective results of the modern library campaign, they relied on practical methods associated with visual equipment, including slides, projectors, and film. They also made use of vivid and easy-to-follow materials, such as photos, models, charts, and statistics. Furthermore, they targeted a large audience by giving lectures to a range of people from scholars through students to the general public.⁷²

In these lectures, Seng made it clear that modern libraries were not book repositories; they were opened to the general public with scientific management skills. His lectures attracted a large number of audiences. He employed different speech styles to different audiences. In a speech to the Education Society of Jiangsu Province in May 1917, he emphasised the educational functions of modern libraries and introduced recent developments in the United States, Japan, and Great Britain. When he addressed the Newspaper Club, also in Jiangsu Province, in June 1917, he made a distinction between modern libraries and book repositories by stating that the former were people’s universities and the latter the repositories of the classics. He also emphasised the close relationship between modern libraries and the modern press, calling on journalists to contribute whatever they could to Chinese libraries.⁷³

Seng’s message was that book repositories had existed for centuries only for the benefit of the privileged few, which helped to explain why it took such a long time for modern libraries to develop in China. He also claimed that modern libraries were designed to spread popular education and to achieve the “enlightenment” of the people. Seng thought highly of the preservation of the national essence as well, believing the preservation of the classics would help to promote the national spirit in China.⁷⁴ He did not abandon the national heritage while acting as an advocate of American librarianship.

⁷⁰ Cheng, Zhongguo tushuguan xue jiaoyu zhilu, p. 326.
⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 26-32.
⁷² Ibid.
⁷³ Ibid., pp. 33-37.
⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 248-249.
For his pioneering work in the development of modern Chinese libraries, Seng was honoured as the leading figure in the modernisation of Chinese libraries, the “Father of Library Science Education in China”. The New Library Movement set off a new wave of interest in American librarianship in China, with an emphasis on free access to library holdings. Seng’s expertise and endeavours not only assisted in the launch of the New Library Movement but also contributed significantly to its development.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW LIBRARY MOVEMENT

Li Dazhao at Beijing University Library, 1917–1922
Li Dzhao, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, was a major leader of the New Culture Movement. During his short life of forty years, he was a pioneer in the modern library campaign, articulating his views on modern Chinese libraries, implementing reform measures at Beijing University Library, and assisting in establishing the Beijing Library Association. For these contributions, he is remembered as the “Father of Modern Chinese Librarianship”.

Li’s ideas on modern libraries were articulated in his “Speech at the Second Anniversary of Beijing Higher Normal School Library”, delivered in December 1919, which provided the first theoretical exposition of the nature and functions of modern libraries in China. Li began by pointing out the disparity between traditional book repositories and modern libraries. Traditional book repositories were concerned with the protection of the Confucian classics. In this sense, they were book repositories or storage buildings. By contrast, modern libraries served as research institutions in society. Library staff engaged not only in the preservation of books but also in making the fullest utilisation of them. In this way, modern libraries were educational institutions. Li went on to argue that there were two types of libraries, one

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76 For Li Daozhao’s biography, see Meisner, Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism.
78 For the full text of this speech, see Li Dazhao, “Zai Beijing guodeng shifang xue xiao er zhounian jinian hui yangshuoci” (Speech at the second anniversary of Beijing Higher Normal School Library), in his Li Daozhao wenji (Works by Li Dazhao) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984), vol 2, pp. 166-168.
serving society, the other schools. All libraries, he urged, should be accessible to users free of charge and more public libraries should be set up for the benefit of the proletariat. He saw the educational needs of the proletariat relatively early; the idea of free access to libraries was to disseminate knowledge to the masses.

Second, Li emphasised the open shelf system as an effective means of utilisation of library collections, insisting on the educational functions of modern libraries. His proposal for the open shelf system for the convenience of library users had a great impact on the newly emerging libraries in China. Third, Li viewed library science education as the key to the future of Chinese libraries as well as to education in China. He suggested that short courses on library science be initiated to train library staff and to better library services. Partly influenced by Li, different kinds of courses on library science started to be organised in 1920, supplying much-needed library professionals for Chinese libraries.\textsuperscript{79}

In addition to articulating these ideas, Li, working as a professor as well as Chief Librarian at Beijing University, transformed Beijing University Library into the cradle of New Culture and a facilitator to modern education between 1917 and 1922. He introduced scientific management technologies in the following areas: extending opening hours, improving regulations, introducing card catalogues and the open shelf system, adding reading rooms, acquiring a multitude of collections, and drawing on the experiences of other libraries.\textsuperscript{80}

Newspaper and periodical reading rooms were set up at Beijing University Library in 1919, equipped with such publications as \textit{New Youth} and some revolutionary materials on Marxism. The organisational structure of this library was improved with four new departments: acquisition, registration, cataloguing, and circulation. Card catalogues of title, author, and classification were established, and the open shelf system adopted.\textsuperscript{81} These reform measures were aimed at effective and scientific organisation of library collections and improvement in their utilisation. For example, the Department of Circulation, a relatively early department of such a kind in Chinese

\textsuperscript{79} Li Ying, “Zhongguo xiandai tushuguan zhifu: Li Dazhao” (Father of modern Chinese librarianship: Li Dazhao), \textit{Jintu xuekan} (Tianjin library journal) 4 (1997): 140-146. See also Sharon C. Lin, “Historical Development of Library Education in China,” \textit{Libraries & Culture} 20:4 (Fall 1985): 368-386.

\textsuperscript{80} Li, “Zhongguo xiandai tushuguan zhifu: Li Dazhao,” pp. 140-146.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid; Diane M. Nelson and Robert B. Nelson, “The Red Chamber: Li Ta-chao and the Sources of Radicalism in Modern Chinese Librarianship,” \textit{Journal of Library History} 14:2 (Spring 1979): 121-128.
libraries, strengthened the dissemination of library collections and enhanced the level of reader services. Li’s reforms concerned modern library technologies and management. Moreover, they facilitated the dissemination of New Culture by acquiring and opening the collections to the public. The contributions of Beijing University Library to the “enlightenment” of Beijing society was significant, if not immediately obvious. Furthermore, Li helped to found the first library association in China, the Beijing Library Association, in December 1918. The aim of the Association was to seek mutual benefits among libraries in Beijing, with an emphasis on the exchange of library collections. Unfortunately, it ceased operation in 1919 due to a lack of funds.  

Promotion of library science education and research

No formal library science education existed in China before 1920. With the increasing need for training librarians at the beginning of the twentieth century, a short course was begun in China by Harry Clemon, a reference librarian from Princeton University, who came to Nanjing University to teach English and assumed the role of Director of Nanjing University Library in 1913. He taught a short course in library science at Nanjing University in 1913. Although this short course did not bring about far-reaching results, it was evidence that library science education had arrived in China. The need for library science education was further underscored by the formation of the Library Education Section under the Chinese Association for the Advancement of Education. The Library Education Section held its first conference in 1919 and made recommendations concerning libraries and library training. One of these recommendations was that no library training be given without adequate facilities, and that normal schools teach a course in library science as part of their curricula when feasible.

It was during the New Library Movement that the first library school—the Boone Library School—was established in Wuchang by the joint efforts of Mary Elizabeth Wood, Samuel Seng, and Thomas Hu. Inspired by the rapid development of Chinese

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82 Li, “Zhongguo xiandai tushuguan zhifu: Li Dazhao,” p. 145.
84 Lin, “Historical Development of Library Education in China,” pp. 368-386.
libraries in the 1920s, a number of institutes concerned with short courses in library science came into being in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Beijing, and basic teaching materials began to be published. These institutes helped to train the first modern generation of professional librarians, who were to play a pivotal role in Chinese librarianship in later years.\textsuperscript{85} However, it is worth noting that the curricula of these early library schools were based on those of American institutes of library science, which emphasised solving practical problems, but lacked theoretical research. This feature had influenced Chinese librarianship for a quite a long time until 1949.\textsuperscript{86}

Similarly, authentic library science research began to develop in China during the New Library Movement, especially after 1920, partly because of the expansion of Chinese libraries and partly because of the introduction of library science education. Library science research was also hastened by the return of the first generation of American-trained librarians, such as Samuel Seng and Thomas Hu. Consequently, a wide range of works on library science was published, such as \textit{Introduction to Library Science (Tushuguan xue tonglun)} in 1925 and \textit{Library Organisation and Management (Tushuguan zuzhi yu guanli)} in 1926.\textsuperscript{87} These works not only dealt with such practical problems as classification and cataloguing but were also concerned with theoretical research in librarianship, including organisation and management. In 1935, Cheuk-woon Taam’s \textit{The Development of Chinese Libraries under the Ch’ing Dynasty, 1644–1911} was published in English.\textsuperscript{88} It was the first book on the history of Chinese libraries in a foreign language, explaining the development of book repositories and libraries in the Qing Dynasty and early Republican period and appraising the contributions of private book collectors to academic research in China. This book benefited Western scholars in studying Chinese libraries and improved the research on Chinese libraries in the English-speaking countries.

Professional periodicals in library science also came into being, such as \textit{The Bulletin of the Library Association of China (Zhongguo tushuguan xiehui tongxun)} (1925) and \textit{The Quarterly of the Library Association of China (Zhongguo tushuguan xiehui tongxun shibao).}

\textsuperscript{85} Zheng Zhangfei, \textit{Zhongguo tushuguan xue jiaoyu gaikuang} (Brief introduction to library science education in China) (Beijing: Guofang keji daxue chubanshe, 2001), ch. 2.
\textsuperscript{87} Huang Zongzhong, “Zhongguo tushuguan xue shijii ping” (Review of librarianship in China in the last century), \textit{Tushu yu qingbao} (Library and information) 1 (2001): 2-8; 14.
\textsuperscript{88} Cheuk-woon Taam, \textit{The Development of Chinese Libraries under the Ch’ing Dynasty, 1644–1911} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Libraries, 1935).
Accordingly, a growing number of academic articles were produced. During the New Library Movement, 582 professional articles were published. Notably, attention was given to adapting the advanced Western librarianship to Chinese conditions. In 1925, “Chinese library science” was advocated for the first time in China, indicating the achievements in library science research.

No doubt, the New Library Movement promoted library science research and education in China, thus inspiring Chinese scholars to conceptualise this term. Furthermore, Chinese scholars began to investigate the differences between traditional book repositories and modern libraries from a professional perspective, maintaining that the educational and public functions of modern libraries helped the “enlightenment” of society in the West. Liu Guojun, who was awarded a B.A. in Library Science from the New York State Library School in the United States in 1924, was a renowned library scholar during this period, postulating a link between modern libraries and Chinese “enlightenment”. His viewpoint assisted in the establishment of a network of modern libraries in China.

**Founding of the Library Association of China**

The New Library Movement culminated in a seven-week investigation into Chinese libraries by American librarian Arthur E. Bostwick in 1925. Bostwick’s short trip was a milestone in the history of Chinese librarianship, as it promoted the establishment of nationwide public libraries and the application of modern library technologies, including the Dewey Decimal Classification, the card catalogue, and the open shelf system. It also acted as a catalyst for the founding of the Library Association of China in 1925, stimulating the development of library science research and strengthening the public functions of modern libraries.

With its headquarters located in Beijing, the Library Association of China sought to carry out research on library science, to develop librarianship, and to promote library

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89 Huang, “Zhongguo tushuguan xue shijii ping,” pp. 2-8.
91 Lai, Zhongguo jindai tushu shiyishi, p. 266.
coordination in China. Its first chairman was Liang Qichao, with Yuan Tongli (1895 – 1965) as Secretary. It had five sections, dealing with library science education, classification, cataloguing, indexing, and publications. It encouraged library science research and cooperation among Chinese libraries by publishing academic periodicals, including *The Bulletin of the Library Association of China* and *The Quarterly of the Library Association of China*. It also participated in international library meetings, helping to enhance the status of modern Chinese libraries across the world. In 1926, its members attended the Fiftieth Anniversary Conference of the American Library Association, held in Philadelphia, at which they exhibited pictures of Chinese library buildings and facilities, networking with overseas libraries. In 1927, the Association became one of the founders of the International Federation of Library Associations. Chinese librarians were keen to be involved in international activities in the field. Hence, the Association added to the New Library Movement, which was important in its actual achievements and in raising library awareness in Chinese society.

**IMPACT OF THE NEW LIBRARY MOVEMENT**

The impact of the New Library Movement was profound. First, it promoted the establishment and development of new libraries in China. After the 1911 Revolution, there only existed dozens of libraries in China; in 1916, there were 293 libraries of different types and sizes, the number rising to 502 in 1925. Second, the Movement augmented library readership, underlining the functions of social education. Libraries were to be made open to the public regardless of sex, wealth, and social status. In this way, they helped to spread the idea of equality in China in the early decades of the twentieth century; they replaced traditional book repositories which focused on collecting and preserving intellectual treasures; and they took on the responsibility of serving the newly educated public.

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95 Yuan Tongli was a distinguished librarian in China from the 1920s until 1949, and his major achievements will be examined in Chapter 6.
100 Beijing daxue tushuguan xuexi (School of Library Science, Beijing University), ed., *Zhongguo jindai xiandai tushuguan shiyeshi* (History of libraries in modern and contemporary China) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1960), pp. 36-39.
Third, the Movement accelerated the growth of library collections. As seen in Chapter 3, modern Chinese libraries were advocated for the preservation of Chinese classics and other rare books. The New Library Movement called on libraries to acquire a wider range of materials to meet public demands. A broad array of publications was collected, including modern literature, such as *New Youth*, the works of Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, and foreign language materials.\(^{101}\) As a consequence, the new libraries were able to act as an agent of social education, spreading knowledge and information at an unprecedented rate among the educated. In this sense, modern libraries contributed to Chinese “enlightenment”.

Fourth, the Movement accelerated the application of American librarianship, hastening the establishment of modern libraries in China. Since China’s door was suddenly opened in the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese libraries had experienced the influence of library development of foreign countries. As a result of the New Library Movement, the introduction of world librarianship changed into an emphasis on American librarianship. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, young Chinese went to the United States to study library science, and American librarians helped the launch and development of the New Library Movement. Mary Elizabeth Wood contributed significantly to the extensive use of the open shelf system in Chinese libraries. Samuel Seng introduced and adjusted the Dewey Decimal Classification. From then on, this classification system was recognised and applied in Chinese libraries.\(^{102}\) The card catalogue was introduced at Wood’s Boone Library in Wuchang, Beijing University Library, and the MLB, all in 1918.\(^{103}\) From 1920 on, it was accepted by an increasing number of Chinese libraries.\(^{104}\) Arthur E. Bostwick’s short trip in China, in 1925, expanded Wood’s work, facilitating the application of American librarianship to Chinese libraries and the establishment of the library profession in China.

Although some of these new library technologies were first applied in Western missionary libraries in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 2), it was the New Library

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Movement that brought about nationwide recognition and utilisation of them in Chinese libraries. In other words, almost all aspects of modern library management in China were patterned on those in the United States, and most courses in library science imitated those taught in the United States. Advanced American librarianship helped the modernisation of Chinese libraries. Further, it was established and developed across China until the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949.

Lastly, the Movement assisted in the formation of the library profession in China, contributing to the founding of the Library Association of China. Moreover, it promoted the development of library science research and helped to initiate professional library science education. It also spread library consciousness amongst the urban population. In consequence, it completed the transition from book repositories to modern libraries in terms of advanced technologies and modern management.

However, it has to be admitted that during the New Library Movement, China experienced warlordism. The warlord period (1916–1928) delayed China’s modernisation progress, retarded industrialisation, increased social suffering, and worsened political disorder. Instead of introducing real political and social reforms, the warlord period ushered in an era of chaos under the rule of a defunct government and powerful provincial warlords. No doubt, political and social chaos caused by the warlords during the New Library period consumed a great deal of energy and resources that could have been applied to library development. The regional militarism and political fragmentation of the era, for the most part, precluded effective cultural and educational expansion.

In the intellectual domain, although the new intellectuals and students embraced the New Culture Movement, with new social and political consciousness emerging, new intellectual winds swept only through the major urban centers. These new ideas and concepts were largely confined to scholarly circles, a lesser degree among the labouring class, and scarcely at all among the peasants. To put it in another way, the impact of the new intellectuals was confined to the educated class, and the influence of the New Culture Movement on society at large was rather limited. Barry Keenan

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106 David Bonavia, China’s Warlords (Hong Kong and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
studies that out of China’s 400,000,000 population, only three out of every thousand were influenced by New Culture periodicals.\textsuperscript{107}

Likewise, New Library advocates only visited the cities to spread the value of modern libraries. Compared with the late Qing scholars and officials who advocated the ideas of modern libraries from the top by memorials, these New Library advocates approached the people on a larger scale. But modern libraries were urban-based, not affecting the lives of the greater number. In sum, in the New Library period, limited modernity of Chinese society, coupled with warlord chaos, hindered the further development of the new modern libraries. Although truly modern libraries were coming into existence, their expansion must await China’s reunification in 1928 (see Chapter 6). This phenomenon again illustrates the long and difficult process of the rise of modern Chinese libraries.

CONCLUSION

It was against the background of China’s intellectual revolution in the early twentieth century that the New Library Movement was launched. As part of the New Culture Movement, it attracted attention from New Culture leaders, such as Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, and Li Dazhao, who saw a useful link between modern libraries and educational change in China. In turn, the New Library Movement facilitated the New Culture Movement by providing printed materials on New Culture and by offering library services, thus acting as an agent of change, and helping to spread knowledge and to disseminate new ideas, especially to urban Chinese. Significantly, the necessity of educating the masses to regenerate the Chinese nation lay behind this resort to modern libraries.

The launch of the New Library Movement owed a debt to Mary Elizabeth Wood, Samuel Seng, and David Yu, all of whom were associated with the Boone School in Wuchang and shared common religious beliefs. Wood thought that it was God who inspired her to promote the modernisation of Chinese libraries; Seng and Yu, steeped in Christianity, saw a connection between modern education and the future of China, committing themselves to advocating American librarianship for Chinese use. Seng and Li Dazhao acknowledged the educational functions of modern libraries in delivering knowledge to the general public. And Seng and Hu Shi advocated the

importance of educational institutions and modern libraries, instead of weaponry, in China’s search for wealth and power.

The New Library Movement completed the transition from imperial book repositories to modern libraries. Building on the previous efforts to encourage modern library development, New Library advocates travelled many cities across the country, promoting the advanced librarianship derived from the United States at a time when the democratic impulse was growing among the educated elite, with educational reforms under way. In this sense, truly modern Chinese librarianship was coming into being after nearly a century’s incubation from the 1840s to the 1920s. Modern libraries were essential for learning. They were viewed as a supplement to the formal system of public education, a source of information, an inspiration to the people of all ages, and a source of lifelong education. In this way, the New Library Movement played a role in the “enlightenment” of urban Chinese, even though the goal of educating the Chinese people, envisaged by New Culture and New Library leaders alike, was a long-term one.

The New Library Movement influenced modern Chinese libraries in terms of library collections, management, and services. It would redefine the mission of the MLB not only to preserve the national heritage but also to raise the quality of collections and the level of services. The following chapter will examine the development of the MLB in this light, during the Nanjing Decade under Nationalist rule.
Chapter 6
The Metropolitan Library of Beijing (the National Library of
Beiping) in the Nanjing Decade, 1928–1937

This chapter seeks to answer the following question: To what extent were the
problems facing the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB) in the 1910s solved in the
1920s and the 1930s? In other words, did the MLB function as a truly modern library
during those two decades? To answer this question, this chapter places the MLB in
the broader context of educational reform and the state building project of the
Nationalist government. The period 1928–1937 saw the Nationalist attempts at
political consolidation and economic and social reconstruction in China.¹ The
Nationalist government, established in 1928 by the Nationalist Party (Guomindang),
played a major role in shaping the history of modern China. Since its inception until
the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Nationalist government
was able to make some progress in modernisation, particularly in the spheres of
finance, light industry, education, transport and communications, and scientific
research. But little research has been conducted on the attention the Nationalist
government paid to library development. Therefore, this chapter is concerned with the
expansion of modern libraries as part of the Nationalist government’s state building
project until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.

The Nationalist government acknowledged the necessity of education in state
building. It further recognised that modern libraries could serve as an essential tool in
facilitating educational development and in fostering modern citizens. This chapter
will first look at how the Nationalist government promoted library development in the
challenges of constructing a modern Chinese nation-state and then see how the MLB
fared under the new regime. It will argue that library development reflected the
aspirations of a modernising regime that strove to produce a modern citizenry. In
other words, the Nationalist government’s state building efforts had been beneficial to
library development. It will also argue that just as the achievements of the Nationalists
were mixed, library development in early Nationalist China had its limitations. By

Fairbank and Denis Twitchett, eds., The Cambridge History of China (Cambridge, England:
examining the growth of the MLB in the 1920s and the 1930s, this chapter offers some insights into the little studied facet of the Nationalist government’s state building project: its attempt to develop a modern Chinese librarianship.

Before going further, it is necessary to take a brief look at the MLB during the period 1920–1927 to offer a whole picture of this case study. Unfortunately, only limited resources are available concerning the MLB during these several years in the 1920s. Based on the existing materials, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that, during this period, the MLB made limited progress in collection development partly due to the New Library Movement, with many of its problems it faced in the previous decade remaining unsolved.

Specifically, the collections of various types of modern publications increased substantially, serving various user groups. For instance, the theses of Chinese students with overseas degrees began to be acquired and open for circulation in 1921.  In 1925, 3,138 volumes of magazines and 896 volumes of newspapers were also provided to readers, and the MLB had a total of twelve reading rooms, receiving ninety-eight patrons every day. Also, in 1925, 8,000 silver dollars were spent on purchasing collections, accounting for one fourth of the total expenses that year. But modern library technologies were not applied extensively. Chinese books still relied on the traditional four-type classification scheme, despite the application of the Dewey Decimal Classification and the card catalogue. The MLB was administered by non-library professionals. Although some of them were renowned scholars in their fields, such as Liang Qichao, the lack of professional knowledge in librarianship prevented them from developing the MLB into a truly modern library. And constant changes in this position did not help in the consistent management of the MLB. Moreover, the

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3 “1925nian 2yue cheng jiaoyubu jingshi tushuguan kunnan qingxing” (Report to the Ministry of Education on the difficult conditions of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing, February 1925), in Ibid, vol 1, pp. 108-118; esp. p. 111.

4 Ibid., p. 110.


6 The list of the MLB’s directors is presented in Appendix of this thesis.
MLB’s funding was far from stable. Fees were still charged, preventing the general public from making use of the MLB. As examined in Chapter 5, political instability and warlordism, along with limited modernity of Chinese society, made it impossible for the new modern libraries to expand substantially in China, despite the influence of the New Library Movement. It may be concluded that the lack of a benign socio-political environment hindered the further expansion of the MLB as a modern library, even during the New Library period.

THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT’S EDUCATION CONCERNS AND LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

The period 1928–1937 has been viewed as one of mixed accomplishments, given the context and constraints of this period. On the positive side, the Nationalists unified the country, albeit nominally, and established a new government in Nanjing, the most modern government China had ever seen. Some of the harsh aspects of foreign concessions and privileges in China were either abolished or revised through diplomacy. The Nationalists worked energetically to modernise the legal system, stabilise prices, amortise debts, reform the banking and currency systems, build railways, improve public health facilities, and augment industrial and agricultural production. Even a critical scholar like Lloyd Eastman concedes that, despite many problems that remained unresolved, by 1937, China had been “integrated politically and territorially to a degree not known since at least 1915…And in numerous ways, China was taking on the attributes of a modern nation.”

Until recent years, Western historiography on the Nationalist government in China during the period 1928–1949 has focused on its political weaknesses, shortcomings, and failures. The period has been considered a negative and dismal one. Recent revisionist scholarship is much kinder to the Nationalists and is more interested in

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their state building efforts. The Nationalist state building project now seems quite promising until seriously undercut by the Japanese invasion in 1937. The revisionist works have re-appraised the Nationalists in terms of developing the industrial economy and modern finance, mobilising modern education, establishing foreign relations with other countries on an equal basis, and promoting scientific research.\textsuperscript{11} Julia Strauss, for example, has argued that Nationalist China, “as a weak state operating in hostile environment with external and internal sources of pressure,”\textsuperscript{12} attempted to carry out a monumental project: to turn China into a strong and powerful nation. The Nationalists, she goes on, had made considerable, although incomplete, progress towards their announced goal: state integration and national development.\textsuperscript{13}

Critical to this process was educational reform. During the Nationalist era, educational reform was viewed as a necessary preliminary step towards national unification and reconstruction. These efforts continued a process set in motion during the last decades of the Qing Dynasty: awakening the people and fostering a modern citizenry. From the beginning, the Nationalist government formulated and adopted new education aims and measures.

In March 1929, at the Third National Congress of the Nationalist Party, the Party’s education aims were promulgated as “replenishing the people’s life, fostering social existence, developing the livelihood of the people, and developing the life of the nation.”\textsuperscript{14} Throughout the Nanjing period, general education, compulsory education, and equal opportunity in education between male and female were strengthened, with illiteracy reduced to a certain degree.\textsuperscript{15} In contrast to the aim of national salvation in the late Qing, education now was aimed at improving the people’s livelihood and building the Chinese nation. National reconstruction and improvements in the


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 7-8.


people’s livelihood called for the application of scientific knowledge and scholarship to the solution of practical problems. In meeting this need, education was to be more practical, more professional, and more technical. Therefore, scientific and technological research was to be promoted, and vocational training emphasised. Although the late Qing officials and the new intellectuals had advocated general education and tried to extend it to the general public, it was not until the Nationalist period that compulsory education and women’s education were carried out, albeit slowly and to a limited degree. As a result, different levels of modern schools were established, and the Nationalist government started to regain the right of education over the educational institutes founded by the missionaries in China.\footnote{Zhou Dechang, Chen Hancai, and Wang Jianju, Zhongguo jiaoyu shigang (History of education in China) (Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), p. 389.}

Moreover, librarianship was brought to bear upon China’s state building efforts. Since social education was among the most noteworthy aspects of Chinese education during the Nationalist period, education was emphasised not only in schools but also through a variety of media outside schools, with libraries ranking first among them.\footnote{Mackerras, “Education in the Guomindang Period, 1928–1949,” p. 170; Li Caidong, Zhongguo jiaoyu guanli zhidushi (History of the education administration system in China) (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), pp. 636-652.}

It was believed that libraries could bring education to the masses and “enlighten” the entire population, encouraging them to become modern citizens.\footnote{Chen, “Education in China, 1927–1937,” p. 308.} Modern libraries were now recognised as a tool for spreading education, in spirit, if not altogether in practice.\footnote{P. A. Herbert, “From SHUKU to TUSHUGUAN: A Historical Overview of the Organisation and Function of Libraries in China,” Papers on Far Eastern History 22 (September 1980): 93-121; esp. p. 121.} Consequently, modern libraries were finally established in Chinese society. It behoved Chinese libraries to effect a transition from a traditional literary culture to a scientific one.

Education, according to the Nationalists, would serve as a conduit for teaching the Chinese about modernity and nation. They firmly maintained that the Chinese nation would be based on a modern and active citizenry, to which the modern library could contribute.\footnote{Li, Zhongguo jiaoyu guanli zhidushi, pp. 650-652.} The ultimate goal of library development, during the period, was not merely to reshape the library landscape but more importantly to cultivate the proper kind of citizen for a modern Chinese nation.
As soon as the new government was founded, the University Council (*Daxueyuan*) was set up, taking overall responsibility for the administration of education across the country. A separate unit in charge of library development was placed under the Council: the Department of Library Affairs.\(^{21}\) Shortly afterwards, it promulgated the Library Rules (*Tushuguan tiaoli*) in fifteen items, emphasising funding allocation and recruitment of library professionals. The Library Rules stipulated that libraries be founded in the capital city of every province and region, and that library funding should account for no less than five percent of the budget in that city. Moreover, the Rules underscored the importance of founding library branches at local levels, including the towns and counties, to assist the common people in acquiring knowledge. In addition, the Rules stipulated qualification requirements for library directors: three years’ study in library science either at home or abroad, library experience for three years and above, and proficient knowledge of library services.\(^{22}\) In particular, the Nationalist government was interested in employing Western-trained librarians.\(^{23}\) Clearly, the establishment of libraries and branches throughout China was aimed at facilitating compulsory education. The allocation of funding would certainly promote the acquisition of new collections and provision of reader services. Stipulating the qualification requirements for library directors for the first time in China, the idea was to see that libraries were managed more professionally than ever before.

When the Ministry of Education was reorganised and replaced the University Council in late 1928, the Department of Social Education was maintained to take charge of educational matters, developing libraries being one of the Department’s tasks.\(^{24}\) In 1930, The Library Regulations (*Tushuguan guicheng*) were issued in fourteen items, emphasising the establishment of public libraries in every province, town, and county. The Regulations also encouraged founding private libraries by

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 636; 652.


individuals, reiterating the need to acquire a variety of books to benefit the general public by both public and private libraries.25

The Nationalist government also gave attention to the development of the Library Association of China. As seen in Chapter 5, the Association was founded in 1925. Due to a lack of funds, its First Annual Conference was not held until 1929, when the Organisation Department (Zuzhibu) of the Nationalist Party began to subsidise the Association. From then on, Chen Lifu, the Nationalist ideologue, and his brother Chen Guofu took part in the Conference activities in person.26 Head of the Organisation Department, Chen Lifu insisted that education be spread to the masses.27 He had exerted so much influence on the Library Association of China that facilitating education became a theme at the Second Annual Conference of the Library Association of China in 1933.28 The links between the education of citizens and the expansion of libraries were established.

Influenced by the government’s policy, library science education and research grew significantly. Both formal library science institutes and short-term workshops provided instruction in library science to a wide range of audiences, including high school graduates and library workers. Graduates from formal library schools, such as the Boone Library School mentioned previously, would go to work in large-sized university and public libraries in China, while graduates from short-term workshops would engage in small libraries at county levels. In any case, the first generation of Chinese-trained librarians came into being, contributing to the substantial expansion of Chinese libraries in the years to come. Moreover, female students began to study library science, helping to promote the idea of women’s education.29 The Nanjing period also saw phenomenal growth in library science research. In addition to the problems of classification and cataloguing, reader service and theoretical research became two popular topics attracting library scholars. Compared with the focus on library materials organisation during the previous two decades, library science research was reaching a higher level, with flourishing academic journals in library

26 Ibid., p. 325.
28 Lai, Zhongguo jindai tushu shiyeshi, p. 324.
29 Ibid., pp. 317-321.
science. In 1928, there existed sixteen library journals, concentrated in a few cities and provinces, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang. By 1937, 103 new library journals had been launched in almost every region of China, except such remote areas as Xinjiang and Tibet.  

As a consequence, Chinese libraries now increased in large numbers and improved both in administration and in services. According to one author, by the 1930s, the system of modern libraries had been established. “Between 1925 and 1936, the number of libraries had shown an eightfold increase, from 502 to 4,041.” In addition to the national library, public libraries, university libraries, and private libraries served as the three major types of libraries in China, catering to the needs of both professionals and the general public. The level of library services was enhanced by the application of modern library technologies. Card catalogues and the open shelf system were applied nationwide; subject headings were used to aid in unifying terms; the Dewey Decimal Classification was widely adopted with modifications to suit the needs of Chinese books; and hard covers were used to make books more durable.  

Significantly, during this period, the ethos of Chinese libraries “changed from preservation and elite access to that of community education and more general access.” Truly modern libraries were established in China finally under the Nationalist regime. An examination of the expansion of the MLB during the Nanjing Decade will illustrate the Nationalists’ efforts to promote modern Chinese libraries.

EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BEIPING

DURING THE NANJING DECADE

The Nationalist government and the National Library of Beijing

In January 1929, the MLB was renamed the National Library of Beijing (NLB, Guoli Beiping tushuguan). In the following month, it was moved to the Juren Hall (Jurentang) on the banks of the Central Lake (Zhongnanhai). From the outset, the

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30 Ibid., p. 323.
newly restructured Ministry of Education helped to further develop the NLB as a modern national library, promoting it as part of state building and modernisation.\(^{35}\) The Nationalist government strove to make the fullest use of the NLB collections and services in order to help cultivate a citizenry responsive to and supportive of a modern state. Subsequently, the central goal of the NLB was shifted from classics preservation to reference services and academic research on library science. In doing so, it engaged in collecting new publications, opening collections free of charge, improving reader services, applying modern library technologies, establishing an organisational structure consistent with a modern library, recruiting professionally-trained librarians, exchanging with foreign libraries, publishing academic journals in library science, and compiling bibliographies and indexes. A series of steps was taken by the government to develop the NLB along these lines.

In May 1929, the Organising Principles of the National Library of Beiping were approved by the Ministry of Education. These principles regulated the administration and management of the NLB, providing guiding principles for its further development as a modern library. They governed the circulation of collections, helping to manage the NLB in a more scientific, professional, and efficient way than ever before. It was stipulated that the NLB be affiliated with the Ministry of Education and be managed by a Director and a Deputy Director, to be appointed by the Ministry. Further, the management of the NLB was to be divided into two departments: general affairs and books. The Department of General Affairs took charge of daily management of the NLB, such as accounting and general office duties. The Department of Books took responsibility for collection, circulation, and cataloguing of library materials.\(^{36}\) The affiliation with the Ministry of Education ensured funding supply and personnel appointment; the appointment of directors by the Ministry of Education avoided the constant change of directors, as in the period 1909–1919. The two departments, each responsible for their specific tasks, helped in the smooth daily running of this library.

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35 Liu Yingjie, “Zhongguo jinxiantai gonggong tushuguan fazhan shule” (A brief history of the development of public libraries in modern China), Tushuguan xuekan (Library science journal) 3 (2001): 56-58; esp. p. 57. Beijing was renamed Beiping after the Northern Expedition, which means peace of North. After the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, Beiping was changed back to Beijing, and the National Library of Beijing was changed to the Beijing Library, which was renamed the National Library of China in 1987. For more details, see Beijing tushuguan (The Beijing Library), ed., The National Library of China (Beijing: The National Library of China, 1987).

The Department of Books gave attention to the circulation of library collections for the first time at the NLB, signalling its growing focus on providing books to the public. The public or open functions of modern libraries had been advocated since the late Qing. But it took Chinese libraries several decades to carry out the circulation function of books for the benefit of ordinary Chinese. This long and arduous process reflected not only the inveterate tradition of book repositories but also the absence of conditions conducive to library development.

In order to attract funding and enhance the social standing of the NLB, the Ministry of Education, in September 1929, decided to work with the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture. Soon, the NLB Committee was formed, taking general responsibility for the NLB. In 1925, the China Foundation was founded to administer the returned former Boxer Indemnity by the US government, consisting of both Chinese and US experts. From the start, the Foundation showed its concern over the development of Chinese libraries by making grants to aid a number of Chinese libraries. In order to change the NLB to a modern library in the real sense, the NLB Committee immediately undertook the following tasks: setting up a strict and scientific budget system, amalgamating with the Beihai Library, establishing an organisational structure of the modern type, and recruiting professionals.

The NLB was administered and financed by both the Ministry of Education and the China Foundation, which ensured funding supply by establishing a budget system. Figure 9 shows the steady increase in the funding of the NLB between 1928 and 1937. The NLB Committee highlighted the acquisition of modern publications, with a designated amount of funds devoted to book purchase each year. Compared with the years prior to 1928, the funding for acquisitions was secured, which helped to collect new publications and to offer a wider range of reader services. As seen in Chapter 4, acquisition of new publications did not receive adequate attention in the period 1909–1919, and many factors contributed to this problem. In the early Nationalist period, however, this problem was lessened. The new budget system and secured funding helped the growth in new collections. At the same time, professional leadership of the NLB played a significant role in collection development, as will be examined below.

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37 Ding, Zhongguo jin qishinian jiaoyu jishi, p. 209.
It was hoped that modern collections would facilitate individual development and progressive education.

Figure 9. Survey of Funding at the National Library of Beiping, 1928–1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General management (silver dollars)</th>
<th>Book purchase (silver dollars)</th>
<th>Building renovation (silver dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>98,798</td>
<td>97,569</td>
<td>388,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>115,399</td>
<td>136,119</td>
<td>593,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>143,117</td>
<td>250,267</td>
<td>131,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>153,065</td>
<td>249,939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>161,096</td>
<td>193,639</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>149,561</td>
<td>159,317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>149,677</td>
<td>141,487</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>154,117</td>
<td>164,450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>152,466</td>
<td>57,342</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During the early Nationalist period, acquisition of new books was given a high priority, especially in the science and education areas. The NLB Committee strongly proposed combining the Beihai Library with the NLB to enhance its modern collections. The Beihai Library was a public library in Beijing, founded with a grant from the China Foundation. It could claim to be a modern public library in terms of funding, acquisition of modern publications, well-trained librarians, as well as a spirit of service to the public. In September 1929, the Committee proposed affiliating the Beihai Library with the NLB in order to strengthen the latter’s modern collections. As the Beihai Library was founded and financed by the China Foundation, which was dependent mostly on foreign experts, many officials at the Ministry of Education were against the proposal. Finally, the NLB Committee succeeded in amalgamating the Beihai Library with the NLB, attracting donations and raising its social standing.

In late 1929, the NLB Committee set up a scientific organisational structure, with an emphasis on circulation of library materials and facilitation in library science

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40 Ding, Zhongguo jin qishinian jiaoyu jishi, p. 129; Ren, Zhongguo cangshulou, vol 3, pp. 2111-2113.
41 Liu, “Zhongguo jinxiandai gonggong tushuguan fazhan shulue,” p. 57.
research. The services of the NLB’s eight departments were greatly improved. Importantly, circulation became an independent department to assist readers in the utilisation of the NLB collections. The new organisational structure shook off the founding principles of traditional book repositories and intended to give attention to the acquisition and utilisation of both rare books and modern collections. Foreign language collections were also emphasised. All these efforts were aimed at making use of the NLB collections and catering to a broad range of readers. Indeed, this structure promoted the NLB’s further progress towards a modern library. Moreover, the Committee underlined the importance of appointing qualified staff. The Committee was composed of the Director and Deputy Director of the NLB, and seven other members, all appointed by the Ministry of Education. Foreign-trained scholars were invited to serve on it, such as Hu Shi and the distinguished geologist Li Siguang, whose personal experiences of modern libraries in the West were valuable. The NLB positions were taken by Western-trained professionals, especially library school graduates from the United States. For example, Cai Yuanpei was the Director from 1929 until 1940; Yuan Tongli, B.A. in Library Science from the New York State Library School in the United States in 1923, served as Deputy Director from 1929 until 1940; Liu Guojun, B.A. in Library Science from the same institute in 1924, took responsibility for the compilation of the national union catalogue in the 1930s.

As seen in the previous chapter, Cai Yuanpei was an ardent promoter of the New Culture Movement and the New Library Movement alike, devoting much energy to library development in general and to the MLB in particular. He was appointed Minister of Education again in late 1929, after this ministry had been restructured by the Nationalist government. The dual position of Minister of Education and Director of the NLB enabled him to realise his plan of constructing a new building to alleviate the shortage of storage space for the NLB. In 1931, the building was completed on a

42 These eight departments were General Affairs, Acquisition, Compilation, Circulation, Rare books, Maps, Ancient Inscriptions, and Periodicals. See “Guoli Beijing tushuguan weiyuanhui zuzhi dagang” (The organising principles of the Committee of the National Library of Beijing), in Beijing tushuguan yewu yanjiu weiyuanhui, comp., Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huibian, 1909–1949, vol 2, pp. 1051-1053.

43 Ibid.


site in the Beihai Park, north of the Forbidden City. With a total area of 30,000 square metres, the NLB became the largest library in China, with its general reading rooms that could house 200 readers. It remained in that building until 1987.

Cai Yuanpei was assisted greatly by Deputy Director Yuan Tongli. Born into a government official family, Yuan was brought up in a scholarly environment, evincing an interest in books and knowledge at an early age. He studied English Literature at Beijing University between 1913 and 1916. Upon graduation, he was appointed Assistant Librarian at Qinghua School Library. Afterwards, he went to study Library Science at the New York State Library School in Albany. He returned to China to work in several libraries, as Chief Librarian of Lingnan University Library in Guangdong Province in 1924, Chief Librarian of Beijing University Library in 1925, and Chief Librarian of the Beihai Library in 1929. He also became Secretary of the Library Association of China in 1925. Yuan was an experienced librarian whose American experience led him to introduce advanced American librarianship to the NLB, including reference services, as will be seen below.

Yuan had clear ideas on developing Chinese libraries in general and the NLB in particular. In his view, education was linked inextricably with library development. He pointed out that the social education functions of libraries should be exploited to make them closer to the public. Thus, ordinary Chinese could feel the need for libraries. The public need, therefore, was the basis on which libraries existed. Furthermore, he proposed that libraries become a tool in mass education. As Chinese libraries were rich in the classics and poor in modern publications, he gave a high priority to acquiring new printed materials. He stressed the importance of establishing reference services to transform libraries from book repositories to service centres. He wanted to develop modern library science research and education. Systematic study of library science and sufficient work experience combined to make him the first

47 The National Library of China was moved into an imposing new building in 1987, and the old one houses its branch. For more information, see Beijing tushuguan, ed., The National Library of China.
professionally-trained director and librarian in the history of the National Library of China.

Under his auspices, many Chinese classics were obtained by hand copying and by photomechanical printing. He even despatched scholars overseas to photolithograph Yongle Cannon and the Dunhuang Cave Manuscripts. Thereafter, the NLB took the lead in the collection of rare books in China as well as in the world. At the same time, to enlarge the collections of foreign languages, he managed to set up the Acquisition Committee of the NLB and invited experts to serve on it. He even went overseas in person to collect foreign books, including the works of the British Philosopher Bertrand Russell and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Foreign periodicals on natural sciences increased as well, such as Chemical Abstracts and Nature. Through his efforts, the NLB foreign language collections ranked first in China at the time. With the collection of both Chinese classics and new publications, not only were Chinese cultural traditions preserved, but new Western ideas spread as well.

To facilitate reader services and academic research, Yuan endeavoured to compile indexes, bibliographies, and catalogues. He set up the Indexing Unit at the NLB and initiated a printed card catalogue service patterned on that of the Library of Congress. Many libraries, Chinese and abroad, subscribed to this service until it was forced to suspend operation by the outbreak of the war against Japan in 1937. He also introduced reference services from American libraries. For example, he organised different kinds of research groups, such as international studies and engineering studies, to assist experts in their research projects. Under his auspices, the Engineering Reference Library was set up in Nanjing as an administrative body of the NLB. He highlighted the necessity of modern organisation methods to offering effective services. Under his patronage, two relevant works, The Classification System for Chinese Books (Zhongguo tushu fenletfa) and The Cataloguing Rules for Chinese Books (Zhongwen bianmu tiaoli), were completed in 1929 and applied to the NLB immediately, promoting the application of modern library technologies nationwide.

51 “1923nian 10yue 13ri guoli Beiping tushuguan goushu weiyuanhui zuzhi dagang” (The organising principles of the Acquisition Committee of the National Library of Beijing), in Beijing tushuguan yewu yanju weiyuanhui, comp., Beijing tushuguan guanshi ziliao huihian, 1909–1949, vol 2, pp. 1073-1074.
Not least of all, Yuan sponsored library science research by publishing academic journals. He was the editor-in-chief for two journals, *The Journal of the National Library of Beiping* (Guoli Beiping tushuguan guankan) and *The Book Quarterly* (Tushu jikan), in the 1930s. Finally, not only did Yuan enlist the services of library professionals, but he also supported young scholars to study and work in overseas libraries. As a result, in the 1930s, the NLB was a galaxy of talents, also sending many young people to American, British, French, and German libraries for training. Upon return, they played a leading role in developing Chinese librarianship.\(^5\)

Under Yuan’s leadership, the NLB became a centre of library activities in China. Its collections were accessed by the general public as well as by researchers.\(^5\) Moreover, it realised the transition of Chinese libraries from preservation to circulation and utilisation of collections. In this way, readership increased substantially, enhancing the NLB’s social status. Significantly, the NLB contributed to the dissemination of scientific knowledge and promotion of educational reform, playing a role in the cultivation of a modern citizenry.

**The NLB as a modern library**

*Collections and services*

Not surprisingly, with secured funding and professional leadership, the book collections of the NLB were increased rapidly in the 1920s and the 1930s, especially after its amalgamation with the Beihai Library in 1929. In 1929, its rare books totalled 27,316 volumes; the number of general reading books amounted to 212,595, more than twice that in 1918. Also in 1929, the NLB boasted of 33,372 foreign language books, with 27,672 in Western languages and 5,700 in Japanese (see Figure 10). In addition, there were 1,400 different kinds of magazines and sixty various kinds of newspapers.\(^5\) General reading collections were increasing exponentially, both in


Chinese and foreign languages, in response to the increasing public needs. Much emphasis was put on the acquisition of materials on science and technology, including biology, medical science, and engineering. Between 1929 and 1933, the NLB acquired 59,647 Chinese language books, 31,489 Western language books, dealing mainly with natural sciences, and more than 7,000 Japanese language books. In addition, 8,387 items of pictures and 1,015 kinds of ancient inscriptions were added to the NLB.\(^6\) It may be argued that the Nationalists’ promotion of scientific research, scientific education, and a scientific approach to life influenced the acquisition policy of the NLB, which, in turn, played a role in benefiting scientific development.\(^7\)

Figure 10. Statistics of Collections at the National Library of Beiping, 1918 and 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rare books (volumes)</td>
<td>14,390</td>
<td>27,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reading books (volumes)</td>
<td>92,151</td>
<td>212,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language books (volumes)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>33,372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Many renowned private collectors left their books with the NLB, and special collections were formed, such as Liang Qichao’s private collections of 44,700 volumes of his Ice Drinker’s Studio (Yinlingshi) and the Buddhist Scripture in the Tibetan language deposited by the Commercial Press.\(^8\) Figure 11 below shows the increase of donated materials. During the 1930s, a growing number of distinguished private collectors bequeathed their rare books to public libraries.\(^9\) A tradition of philanthropy in library circles was emerging, indicating rising library consciousness among the educated and the wealthy class.

\(^{6}\) Ibid.  
\(^{9}\) Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, pp. 1117-1123.
Figure 11. Statistics of Donations at the National Library of Beiping, 1929–1934*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Donation (volumes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*The statistics of the years 1928, 1935, 1936, and 1937 are not available.

As the collections increased, reader services were greatly improved. In the new library building, different kinds of reading rooms were established, including general reading rooms and reading rooms of rare books, journals, maps, and newspapers. The NLB was open thirteen hours per day except during the Chinese New Year holiday. Moreover, from 1929 on, ordinary Chinese were admitted to the NLB for reading free of charge, rare books included.60 From 1930 on, readers were also granted borrowing rights, free of charge, to foreign language books and newly published Chinese language books, on production of a reference letter.61 The endorsement of borrowing rights and the abolition of admission fees represented a shift from preservation of collections to their utilisation and reader services. Consequently, the number of readers rose from 52,520 in 1929 to 497,018 in 1936, nearly ten times, as shown in Figure 12. The year 1937 experienced a sudden decrease in readership, which might be caused by the outbreak of the war against Japan. The increasing readership marked rising library awareness in Chinese society, helping to raise the status of libraries and librarians alike. In addition, improved reader services played a role in the dissemination of knowledge in the wider Beijing community. The public functions of

61 “1931nian guoli Beijing tushuguan jieshu zanxing guize” (The provisional regulations pertaining to the borrowing of books at the National Library of Beijing, 1931), in Ibid., vol 2, pp. 1071-1072.
modern libraries, advocated by Zheng Guanying, Liang Qichao, and Kang Youwei in the 1890s, began to be realised in the early Nationalist period. The traditional Chinese concept of libraries as the institution of preserving the classics was transformed into one of a dynamic, popular, and diversified institution.

Figure 12. Statistics of Readers at the National Library of Beiping, 1929–1937*

![Chart showing readership statistics](chart Image)


Statistics of the year 1928 are not available.

Modern library technologies and library science research

In 1930, the traditional four-type classification system was replaced by the Classification System of the Library of Congress for foreign language collections and the Classification System for Chinese Books for Chinese materials. Four types of card catalogues were established, namely title, author, classification, and shelf, aiding readers in information retrieval.62 Indeed, these modern methods assisted in the process of scientific and efficient organisation of library collections, facilitating their effective utilisation and circulation. In addition to academic journals, indexes, and bibliographies, the NLB began to compile the national union catalogue in the 1930s, fulfilling more functions of a national library and assisting in academic research.63

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62 Fu and Xie, Zhongguo cangshu tongshi, vol 2, p. 1109.
63 Ibid., vol 2, p. 1110.
The NLB began to take part in international activities. As well as sending young people overseas for training, the NLB signed exchange agreements with the libraries in the United States, Germany, France, and Great Britain. All these events helped to raise the status of Chinese libraries internationally as well as to introduce advanced librarianship to China from the West.

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NLB

The problems facing the NLB mentioned in Chapter 4 were solved during the Nanjing Decade to some extent. The sponsorship of the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture ensured funding provision, and the establishment of a budget system led to scientific management of funds. In addition, the amalgamation with the Beihai Library enhanced the NLB’s social standing, helping to attract donations. An organisational structure of the modern type was also established. As a consequence, acquisition of modern publications was strengthened, and circulation of different types of collections was emphasised, with borrowing rights granted and admission fees abolished. Moreover, reader services and academic research were improved, with new reference services. To facilitate reader services and utilisation of collections, library science research was carried out, and academic journals were published; compilation projects were strengthened, including the national union catalogue, indexes, and bibliographies. Modern organisation methods were also applied, such as new classification schemes. Last but not least, professional librarians were employed, managing the NLB in a more scientific, professional, and efficient way. With all these improvements, the NLB began to function as a modern library from the late 1920s.

Nevertheless, there still existed a gap between the NLB and the general public because its collections and services were not fully used. Most NLB patrons were from academic backgrounds, such as students and scholars, and academic publications were the most often accessed collections. On the one hand, this phenomenon may be attributed to the low level of education and library awareness in early Nationalist China. On the other hand, insufficient development of Chinese librarianship may have

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been a contributing factor. For instance, the lack of user education seems to have prevented the people from approaching the NLB. No library literacy program, or library tour, was organised. The potential users could not be encouraged to exploit library resources without effective user education. Although the NLB was prepared to offer some reader services, they were not made known to the public through any public relations programs, which could have helped to attract readers. In other words, the NLB was still in a passive state, waiting for users. It had yet to become a modern, active institution of information services, concerned with serving the community by a variety of methods, such as user education and public relations.66

As assessment of the NLB needs to take into consideration the context in which it existed. The Nationalist leaders were impressed by the scientific and industrial progress of the West, and they aspired to introduce Western science and technology to improve the economic well-being of the Chinese people. They also attempted to expand modern education to cultivate a modern citizenry, who would be able to build up an industrial and powerful nation. However, during the Nanjing Decade, the regime’s attention, for all its modernity and rhetoric, was focused much more on the Communists and the Japanese problems than on questions of development and modernisation. The large military expenditures cost the nation heavily, accounting for at least one half of the government budget in every year of Nationalist rule.67 At the same time, the Chinese economy, on the whole, remained “overwhelmingly agrarian and traditional.”68 Financial shortages had been a serious problem confronting the Nationalist government, and insufficient attention had been given to its reform programs.

Given a combination of domestic and external problems, the Nanjing Decade was too short a period for the Nationalist government to realise its ambitious reforms. Yet this decade saw a steady growth of Chinese libraries at a pace more or less consistent with that of educational reform. Instead of being satisfied with preserving books,

66 User education and public relations have been considered two important means of attracting readers by modern libraries. For detailed discussions on these two topics, see M. B. Stevenson, User Education Programmes: A Study of Their Development, Organisation, Methods, and Assessment (London: The British Library, 1977); Mona Garvey, Library Public Relations: A Practical Handbook (New York: Wilson, 1980).


68 Eastman et al., The Nationalist Era in China, p. 36.
Chinese library leaders considered their duties to include providing access to books to everyone seeking knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The NLB was a product of its time, a time when Nationalist China was seeking to industrialise, to expand modern education, to regain full sovereignty, and to enhance its international standing. The Nationalist government embarked on a program of national reconstruction with mixed results, as the entire nation was engulfed in internal and external difficulties. Committed to educational reform, the Nationalist government regarded Chinese libraries as part of the state building project. It was under such circumstances that Chinese libraries received considerable attention from the government and developed exponentially. As far as the NLB was concerned, it experienced remarkable progress in collection development, reader services, scientific management, and academic research. Secured funding and professional leadership ensured scientific and effective management of the NLB; the appointment of qualified librarians symbolised the gradual maturity of Chinese librarianship, which, in turn, contributed to the NLB’s expansion. In addition to preserving the classics, its central goal was to serve the public and to assist in academic research by acquiring and offering a wide range of modern publications. In other words, its goal had changed from preservation to utilisation of library resources. No doubt, during the Nanjing Decade, the NLB played a role in promoting educational reform, disseminating scientific knowledge, and educating modern citizens by augmented collections and improved services. The initiatives taken by the NLB to improve its accessibility and utilisation were important forward steps, as were its research projects, such as reference services and compilation activities.

Despite these accomplishments, the development of Chinese libraries as a whole was far from satisfactory, for the following reasons: the lack of financial support from the government (mentioned earlier in this chapter), inadequate supply of professional librarians, insufficient availability of new publications, and uneven development of libraries of different types.69

As far as education was concerned, the Nationalist government aimed to achieve compulsory and general education, and equality of educational opportunity between male and female. But none of these goals had been satisfactorily met by the 1930s for a number of reasons. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the educational achievements during the Nationalist period. However, David Pong and Edmund Fung have pointed out that “the small budget was biased in favour of university education, which benefited the urban-based elite at the expense of lower level schools outside the metropolises.”

Modern Chinese libraries were still urban-based during the Nanjing Decade. The mission of educating the Chinese people from all walks of life had not been realised. Even in the cities, the status of librarians remained low. In the view of the general public, library work, through the arrangement and circulation of materials, was trivial and menial. Library science as a new subject remained esoteric, and the library profession did not gain nationwide recognition. In other words, library consciousness was low, which did little to promote library development across China. Today, these problems are still the obstacles which confront the development of Chinese libraries.

In conclusion, the NLB was growing as a modern national library in the Nanjing Decade, with some of its previous problems solved to varying degrees. At the same time, the NLB still had its inadequacies as a modern library, and Chinese libraries were underdeveloped as a whole. The progress in library development has to be seen against the background of Nationalist China, which put state building missions in a fragile position. Whether Chinese libraries, when universally extended across the country, could effectively facilitate the education of a modern citizenry remained for the future to answer.

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Chapter 7
Emergence of Modern Librarianship in China:
A Comparative Perspective

By comparing the emergence of modern librarianship in China, Japan, and the United States, this chapter investigates three cases relating to the rise of modern libraries—the “industrialisation and democracy” case of the United States, the “modernisation” case of Meiji Japan, and the “underdevelopment” case of China—in an attempt to underscore the characteristics of the Chinese case. A comparison of the political, economic, and cultural situations of the three countries is the key to understanding their similarities and dissimilarities in the emergence of modern libraries. The United States is selected because it developed great libraries in modern times, and modern Chinese libraries were patterned along American lines for quite a long time in the early twentieth century as a result of the New Library Movement.¹ Japan was the only country in Asia, whose modern libraries were quick to flourish in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Japanese case is due to the successful modernisation of Japanese society since the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912).²

LIBRARIESHIP IN PRE-MODERN TIMES: AN OVERVIEW

The United States is a young country, created after the American Revolution (1776–1783) in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Therefore, American librarianship in pre-modern times is not dealt with in this comparative study. This section attempts to compare the similarities and dissimilarities in librarianship between China and Japan in pre-modern times, beginning with a brief introduction to pre-modern Japanese librarianship.

Libraries in pre-modern Japan were not open to the public, just like the Chinese case.³ There existed three major types of libraries, namely temple libraries,

government libraries, and family libraries. As early as the sixth century, Buddhist culture had been accepted by several influential clans and court nobles in Japan, who began to sponsor collections of the Buddhist Scripture. Temple collections, observes Michael Harris, "were perhaps the earliest formal libraries in Japan." Another kind of library-related activities in pre-modern Japan was the compilation of genealogical and other materials relating to regional histories and customs under the aegis of local clan leaders. In 701, official government archives were erected when the Bureau of Books (Zushoryo) was established, charged with storing and cataloguing government records and overseeing the compilation of official histories. In the Nara period (710–794), the Japanese Court sponsored compilations of mythical and historical narratives, indigenous poetry, and genealogies of powerful clans. Those materials were later housed in government libraries or government literary repositories (bunko).

Family libraries (kuge bunko) were a third kind of libraries, owned by the noble class, officials, and wealthy families. Usually, family libraries were founded as resources for the education of children and as repositories of family genealogies, the Buddhist Scripture, Chinese classics, and other documents. The family library set up by Hojo Sanetoki, a famous warrior, in 1275—Kanazawa Bunko—was unusual in that its owner opened this library to the samurai who were in need of books. Notably, among families libraries, warrior libraries (buke bunko) were instrumental in housing family, military, historical, and political documents.

There were similarities between Japanese and Chinese libraries in pre-modern times. First, they were both called literary or book repositories. In other words, those book collections were concerned with the preservation of books instead of diffusion and circulation, thus limiting the utilisation of the accumulated materials. Second, government book collections, temple book collections, and family or private book collections were the major types of book collections in both countries. Third, Chinese classics and Buddhist documents were collected in China as well as in Japan. Lastly, these book collections were private property, though a limited number of far-sighted private owners opened their collections to outsiders.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 317.
6 Ibid., p. 318.
7 Ibid.
Given the history of pre-modern Japan, it is not difficult to understand these similarities. Pre-modern Japanese culture was influenced by two major alien civilisations, namely Chinese culture and Buddhism originating from India. The written traditions of Japan were strongly influenced at first by the literary, bibliographical, and historical traditions of China. Chinese-style institutions introduced to Japan in the seventh century had produced a centralised government under the Emperor. Western thoughts and religions were excluded and the Japanese elite followed the Chinese cultural tradition and imported things Chinese. The Bakufu saw to it that the best of Chinese silks came into its land and that the best of Chinese books were available to its scholars. Translation was employed as an effective means of importing Chinese culture, especially between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, with many books on administration, education, and culture translated from Chinese into Japanese. In addition, the Tokugawa government (1603–1868) encouraged the development of private libraries. Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) himself was conscious of the importance of educating the samurai; he was keen to utilise the existing libraries to study the past, thinking it desirable to encourage the diffusion of literacy among his retainers. Consequently, many literary repositories, which held official documents, materials on Japanese histories, Chinese classics, and Buddhist texts, were attached to government bodies and wealthy or noble families.

In Japan, Buddhist texts appeared in the sixth century and began to be produced in large numbers during the Heian period (794–1192). The nationwide popularity of Buddhism accounted for the establishment of temple libraries in Japan, as in China. The early cultivation of reading, writing, and love for books fostered libraries in pre-modern Japan, but the collections were maintained for “a select group of users”.

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11 Ibid., p. 89.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 90.
17 Welch, Toshokan, p. 17.
in China, this attitude towards books inhibited the development of modern librarianship, as librarians were mainly responsible for the protection of holdings.

Yet there were also differences between Japanese and Chinese libraries in pre-modern times. Japan did not boast of academy libraries, but did possess warrior libraries. This phenomenon was due to the educational system, the social hierarchy, and the dominance of the warrior class. Official schools, private schools, and local schools were the three major types of schools in pre-modern Japan. As late as 1715, only a small number of official schools had been founded for the samurai class. Those schools experienced rapid expansion in the eighteenth century under the patronage of successive Japanese emperors who were interested in Confucianism. But instruction in military arts was usually rated more highly than that in book learning in those official schools. Education was, for the most part, provided by private schools in wealthy homes and local schools in village temples, with an emphasis on practical skills, not Confucianism. In addition, pre-modern Japan did not emulate the civil service examination system from imperial China, and the Confucian classics were not required by Japanese schools.

In addition, the social hierarchy of the samurai, peasants, artisans, and merchants had been a characteristic of pre-modern Japan for centuries. The warrior class that emerged in Japan in the tenth century dominated Japanese society between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries. Living on stipends in castle towns and without owning land, the samurai had fragile economic foundations, though they enjoyed high social standing, serving as bureaucrats and administrators. As Japan did not have the civil service examinations, scholarship was not a requirement for this upper class. In fact, the samurai status was hereditary and the samurai’s children were not encouraged to study and compete for officialdom, unlike those young Chinese who, from all walks of life, aspired to high social standing via the civil service examinations and competed for government appointments. Though Confucianism was esteemed by the learned men, as a status group, the samurai did not need to undertake scholastic and cultural

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pursuits. As Chie Nakane and Shinzaburo Oishi note, “pure scholarship has had difficulty finding a niche of importance in Japan.”

As most of the samurai lived in castle towns, villagers were able to read and write. Since the educated elite had no monopoly on intellectual activities, the common people had the opportunities to develop a vigorous popular culture. Intellectual activities were not the privilege of the upper class. Therefore, Japan had a stronger tradition of popular culture and a relatively higher literacy rate than China in pre-modern times. Unlike academy libraries in imperial China, educational institution libraries were not a major type of library in pre-modern Japan, though some schools had their book collections. As the ruling class shifted from the civilian nobility to the warrior in the early Kamakura period (1192–1333), warrior libraries were created in support of this institutional change.

EMERGENCE OF MODERN LIBRARIANSHIP

At this point, it is useful to take a quick look at the emergence of modern librarianship in Japan and the United States for comparative purposes. Modern Japanese librarianship was brought about after the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji Restoration generated radical changes in Japanese society. Japan was opened to the world, the feudal system abolished, conscription of military service introduced, and new land taxes assessed in 1873. Consequently, democracy was emerging, and the whole country needed new knowledge and information to prepare for the transition to the modern world. Drastic reforms were carried out to catch up with Western powers. The system of compulsory education was implemented with “widespread diffusion of basic education among the groups other than the elite.” Western-style industrialisation took place under the Meiji leadership and gave birth to modern enterprises. The new Japan was a unified and centralised state, achieving modernisation through the adoption of Western science and technology. A new library

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21 Nakane and Oishi, Tokugawa Japan, p. 228.
24 Welch, Toshokan, p. 15.
system modelled on American lines was introduced after the overseas tours by some leading Japanese educators during the 1870s and the 1890s. Therefore, the development of modern Japanese librarianship can be seen as a direct result of the Meiji Restoration, aimed at the modernisation of Japanese society. Modern libraries were thought of as a useful tool for achieving democracy and modernisation.

In the United States, modern librarianship began at the beginning of the nineteenth century with school district libraries, the forerunner of public libraries. In the mid-nineteenth century, state laws were issued to enable local governments to levy taxes for the establishment of public libraries, marking the beginning of the modern library movement. American public libraries developed as a natural outgrowth of social and political changes sweeping the country in the late antebellum period. Specifically, it was due to the happy combination of two important factors: industrialisation and the democratic system. The spectacular industrialisation of the United States required increasingly sophisticated information resources for its continued development and demanded a more sophisticated level of knowledge among the workers. In the meantime, the democratic system of the United States encouraged the free flow of information and depended, at least in theory, on the “informed citizen” as the very foundation of its existence. Needless to say, only a relatively stable society can provide a setting in which libraries can grow. The political independence after the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, the fertile natural resources, and the increasing population contributed to the growth and maturity of modern American libraries in the nineteenth century. Since the mid-1850s, American libraries have grown significantly in both number and scope.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the rise of modern libraries in China was a long and complicated process, a painstaking evolution from traditional book repositories. The process lasted almost a century from the 1840s, when the introduction of Western learning began on a large scale, to the 1920s and the 1930s, when the New Library Movement strengthened the status of modern Chinese libraries and when the

Nationalist government regarded them as an important element in improving education. In this process, Western learning, missionary influence, educational reform, the New Culture Movement, and state building combined to bring about modern librarianship in China. Reviewing the rise of modern libraries in China, Japan, and the United States, one can see some of their similarities and differences.

**Similarities**

When modern libraries were advocated in China, Japan, and the United States, the educational role of modern libraries was strengthened. In the United States in the mid-1850s, the Public Library Creed stated that “The future of a democratic republic is directly dependent on the education of its citizenry, and the library is an important element in the educational process.” Consequently, the educational role of modern libraries was emphasised, and those who were motivated for self-improvement became library users. Americans believed in the close connections between education and libraries. They also believed “books and libraries are among the bases of education.” American librarians began to work as scholars and educators who should know both books and the people in need of those books. Furthermore, the rise of democracy in this young country meant that libraries could no longer be reserved for the elite, as the spread of education required the intellectual sustenance that libraries needed to provide. Widespread reading was crucial to an industrialising society. The availability of books on science and technology increased the prosperity of this young nation by making its citizens more efficient at their careers. Therefore, the educational and social mission of modern public libraries was to enable men and women to rise within society as currently constituted in the United States in the nineteenth century. In such a social context, the educational functions of modern libraries were important.

Likewise, the educational functions of modern libraries were reiterated in the process of the establishment of modern libraries in China. As seen in Chapter 2, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao argued that educational reform was the prerequisite for national regeneration in China. Their advocacy of modern education was aimed at a

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more open and productive society where modern libraries would assist in fostering good citizens that could participate in the political community. The “enlightenment” functions of modern libraries were linked with Liang’s political, intellectual, and educational reforms. As stated in Chapter 5, in the early Republican period, the social education functions of modern libraries were emphasised by the new intellectuals, such as Cai Yuanpei, Li Dazhao, Hu Shi, and Samuel Seng, who committed themselves to the transformation of China through education. During the Nationalist period, the educational functions of modern libraries assisted the Nationalists in their efforts to cultivate an educated citizenry.

Similarly, modern education was introduced in Meiji Japan. In Japan, the Meiji period was one of nation building. In an attempt to build a modern state, the Meiji leaders saw modern education as an essential means of cultivating modern individuals, realising that as a latecomer to the modern world, Japan needed to achieve “civilisation and enlightenment” through education “for the sake of the country”. They appreciated a host of modern Western concepts, including democracy, national sovereignty, freedom of thought, equality of opportunity, and constitutional government. Understanding that education was the key to their modernisation strategy, they were receptive to the introduction of universal education. Schools and libraries were thought of as important vehicles in reform. As Yoshiie Yoda has written, “education was not just something needed in everyday life for immediate practical purpose, but also an expression of an aspiration towards raising the level of culture in a more general sense.” This attitude towards education encouraged the Japanese to avail themselves of all sorts of educational facilities, including libraries. Self-improvement was stressed, schools built, and newspapers and translated books multiplied. For the Japanese people, education and libraries served as means of self-realisation. In 1872, the Ministry of Education was set up to supervise and coordinate the modern education system in Japan, with an emphasis on

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34 Welch, Toshokan, p. 17.
37 Welch, Toshokan, p. 19.
38 Yoda, The Foundations of Japan’s Modernisations, p. 11.
39 Ibid., pp. 460-463.
compulsory education. At the same time, it was concerned with libraries, issuing regulations on the establishment of public as well as private libraries.40

In the establishment of modern libraries in Japan in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Meiji leaders, especially leading educators, played an important role. They travelled abroad to learn from the West, returning with first-hand knowledge and impressions.41 The influence of the overseas investigations of this type was far-reaching, bringing home the message of advanced librarianship. Mori Arinori, Minister of Education, was convinced of the role of education in nation building.42 Yukichi Fukuzawa, an influential educator, visited Western countries in the 1870s. In particular, he was impressed by the network of school district libraries in the United States. In his book entitled Things Western (Seiyo jijo), he included a chapter on libraries. In it, he stated that Western libraries were established by the will of the people and for the benefit of the people.43 He also emphasised that Western public libraries were open to all, irrespective of status, and that no fees were charged.44 Due to the efforts of Fukuzawa and others, the concept of modern libraries was gaining acceptance in Meiji Japan. Fujimaro Tanako, another educator who advocated Western librarianship, was revered as the fostering spirit of library studies in modern Japan, as he initiated a period of fifty years of concentrated studies of American librarianship.45 The Japan Library Association, founded in 1892, was another outcome of the study tours of Europe and the United States by Japanese leaders.46

Differences

Although the educational role of modern libraries was emphasised in these three countries in the course of the establishment of modern libraries, there were also differences, which fall into the following categories.

42 Ibid., pp. 402-410.
43 Welch, Toshokan, p. 67.
45 Welch, Toshokan, p. 67.
A response to industrialisation versus a facilitator to educational reform

The success of the American Revolution and the birth of the United States provided stability upon which library development depended. Modern librarianship followed the establishment of a new government in the United States. In the mid-nineteenth century, modern public libraries were established across the United States as a natural outcome of industrialisation and urbanisation, in other words, a response to economic expansion. Under these circumstances, modern libraries were strengthened and gradually grew into a social institution. The establishment of modern libraries demonstrated the vital connection between knowledge and democracy. The entire period from 1800 to 1850 teemed with the entrepreneur spirit in all aspects of political, industrial, and cultural life. The general prosperity, assisted by legislation, benefited libraries.

Industrialisation promised prosperity and continued economic growth, giving rise to large cities. However, industrialisation brought about many problems by luring millions of poorly educated immigrants to the large cities, who were not well equipped to function effectively as citizens of a democracy. Under such circumstances, educational institutions came to be viewed as the best means of securing the new nation in search of economic expansion. Americans believed that public libraries were an essential component of a civilised society as well as a solution to the pressing social problems, especially drinking, gambling, and prostitution. As skilled and literate workers were in urgent demand to fill the positions in the new but large-sized manufacturing, mining, and transport ventures, modern public libraries were advocated as a means for workers to gain the knowledge required by modern production. Further, they served as a means of improving the quality of life for the American people. Not only could modern public libraries help keep the working people away from taverns and brothels, but they could also provide mechanics and clerks with necessary tools to upgrade their skills.

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Consequently, modern public libraries were seen as an upholder of the established order. They were founded to help secure social stability, spread education, and ensure a well-ordered and well-governed society in the United States. Far from acting as a neutral social agent, modern public libraries were intended to diffuse necessary knowledge needed in the new industrial ventures and to cultivate skilled workers. Education, as an agent of social cohesion, was an important element in stabilising society and sustaining industrialisation. The idea of opening libraries to the public rested on the assumption that there was a strong link between self-improvement and libraries. They recognised libraries and books as the basis of education, which should be made available and useful to everyone. To put it in another way, modern American libraries were driven by the growing desire to educate the people, especially the industrial working class.

The introduction of modern libraries in China and Japan was not a natural result of industrialisation and economic development at all. Instead, the concept of modern libraries was advocated as an effective means of social transformation. In the late Qing, modern libraries, bound up with Chinese nationalism, sprang out of the need for the survival of China, functioning as a facilitator to educational reform. In the beginning, modern libraries were advocated by old gentry members, early diplomats, and reformers in the hope of assimilating Western learning to seek wealth and power. During the late Qing, a period of social and political upheaval, modern libraries were viewed as a means of better educating the public for the sake of national regeneration. Three decades later, a new citizenry and an educated nation were also advocated by the Nationalists who considered the development of modern libraries as an essential element in the state building project. Hence, the introduction

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of modern libraries into China was primarily based on social and political considerations, not economic factors. The level of industrialisation was too low to give rise to modern Chinese libraries.

Although Meiji Japan did not face a foreign threat to its very existence in the way that China did, it was engaged in another form of social transformation: modernisation which drove modern Japanese librarianship into being. In an attempt to Westernise and modernise Japan, the new Meiji government advocated democracy, promoted industrialisation, and spread education. Modern libraries were established to assist in this modernisation process. The Meiji leaders looked to the West for lessons about how to organise political institutions, create wealth, foster harmony, and realise “enlightenment”. With ample borrowing from the West, Japan took a major step into the modern age. The Japanese seemed to hold out an optimistic promise that their future could be better, the nation prosper, and individuals flourish. The Meiji government moved quickly to discard the feudal system and launch a series of reforms that changed Japan profoundly in the administrative, economic, social, legal, educational, and military areas. This helped to earn international respect for Japan, to build internal strength, and to foster national unity. Modern education was introduced to train a modern citizenry, as the Meiji leaders understood that education was central to the strategy of Meiji Japan: the paramount desire to modernise. Any account of the evolution of modern Japan must give prominence to education in that process. As a result, modern libraries received ample attention from the Meiji government.

*The process of founding modern libraries*

Quite different from the Chinese case, the establishment of modern libraries in the United States and Japan experienced a relatively smooth process. Modern librarianship emerged in the newly founded United States early in the nineteenth century. American libraries flourished under the strong and stable government that aimed to provide security, peace, and tranquillity. The success of the American Revolution ushered the young United States into an era of nation building. Thus, this ambitious and vigorous country had created an environment favourable to library

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58 Welch, *Toshokan*, p. 17.
development from the beginning. American libraries “have grown without the onus or blessing of tradition. The way has at times been stormy, not always free from error, but success has been won in many fields where older nations failed.”\(^59\) The value of education had been recognised in American society relatively early. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the phenomenal growth of school district libraries, the predecessor of modern public libraries. In the mid-nineteenth century, modern public libraries came into being in industrialised and commercial cities when public library acts were passed in a number of states, for example, New Hampshire in 1849, Massachusetts in 1851, and Maine in 1854.\(^60\) The library profession was strengthened in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by a range of positive events: a philanthropic tradition in library circles, the inauguration of library science education, the development of library science research, and the founding of the American Library Association.

From the outset, the US government required large amounts of knowledge and information for state building; the economic health and prosperity also needed the strong support of scientific research and information services; and the growth and availability of universal education demanded the collection, organisation, and diffusion of knowledge central to education.\(^61\) Specifically, the buoyant industrialisation and urbanisation brought with them a concomitant readership and sincere desire for making use of modern libraries among the public in the United States. By the early 1890s, the US literacy rate had reached seventy percent.\(^62\) The successful industrialisation also benefited American society by a series of philanthropic projects in the library sphere, most notably the huge donations from Andrew Carnegie, the “Steel King” in the United States.\(^63\) Throughout his life, Carnegie had spent US$333,000,000, or ninety percent of his fortune, on the improvement of humanity. His philanthropy was great, covering a wide variety of areas, including religion, education, culture, and peace. He listed seven fields that the wealthy should donate to, namely universities, libraries, medical centres, public parks,
meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. He had donated US$56,162,622 for the construction of 2,509 library buildings throughout the English-speaking countries, notably the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. For this reason, he was referred to as the “Patron Saint of Libraries”.

Carnegie’s donations in the library field occurred mostly in the 1890s, influencing the phenomenal growth of modern libraries and the library profession in the United States. It should be noted that his philanthropic activities were not accidental; his huge fortune accumulated through his businesses in the mid-nineteenth century provided the material basis upon which his donations rested. From personal experience, he realised the importance of education in personal as well as in national success. He wanted the labouring class to have access to books, through which the education and betterment of all citizens could be accomplished. The Carnegie phenomenon not only erected libraries but also expanded the rank of modern public libraries in the United States.

In the meantime, the maturity of library science research aided the development of American librarianship to a considerable degree. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Melvil Dewey, a leading figure in American librarianship in the nineteenth century when the library profession was established in his country. To promote library science research, he maintained, four agencies were needed: a national library association, an academic journal to record reports and plans on library development, a means of organising library materials, and a school for training librarians. Dewey devoted all his energy and time to those fours tasks. He published the first edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification in 1876 and managed to revise it on a regular basis. This classification scheme gained widespread acceptance and usage for its simplicity, ingenuity, and adaptability.

Dewey also contributed to the formation of the American Library Association and the Association’s journal—The Library Journal—in 1876. The Association’s primary aims were to promote international relations, organise conferences, set up professional

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standards, promulgate legislation, publish library science materials, recruit personnel, present awards, and patronise research projects. This organisation succeeded in drawing on three sources of financial support: membership dues and endowment income, publishing, and grants (foundation or government).68 In short, the American Library Association has been extremely successful in improving the quality of librarianship, promulgating regulations pertaining to libraries, training library professionals, enhancing the status of librarians and the library profession, and increasing library consciousness in American society. He was Secretary of the American Library Association between 1876 and 1890, becoming the Association’s President in 1890. In particular, he edited The Library Journal, the Association’s official publication, which became a prestigious international periodical, playing an important role in disseminating information and news in library circles worldwide.69

And in 1887, Dewey founded the first library school in the world, the School of Library Economy.70 In his view, librarians should be technically aware of the problems of library management and be fired with enthusiasm; thus, the training of librarians was of importance to the future of librarianship and the future of American society. He insisted on admitting women to library schools.71 Not only did he establish the first library education program, but he also promoted the formation of American librarianship. Under his influence, writes Lucile Morsch, “American librarians have such faith in education and the power of the printed word that as a class they can almost be said to believe that only books and reading are going to save the world.”72

Meiji Japan was quick to emulate American librarianship in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the modernisation process. Meiji Japan experienced the establishment of a unified state, and ordinary citizens became the possessors of a great treasure: the right to freedom and to an education.73 By 1912, Japan had nearly achieved equality with the great powers, strengthening its national security, developing industrialisation, and spreading compulsory education. Modern

librarianship in Japan was promoted by the Meiji leadership. In the process of modernisation, schools and libraries were seen as necessary vehicles for reform. Private and municipal libraries for the public came to be built widely throughout Japan in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1872, the first government-sponsored library—the Imperial Library (Shojakukan), the predecessor of the National Diet Library of Japan—was founded. In 1875, a copyright law was issued. In 1892, the Japan Library Association was founded. In 1899, the Library Statutes, the first set of laws on libraries, were promulgated. In 1907, The Library Journal (Toshokan) appeared. All these developments paved the way for the flourishing of Japanese libraries in the 1910s.

It is worth noting that Tokugawa Japan paved the way for the rise of modern Japan. The concentration of the samurai in castle towns helped the growth of urbanisation. In return, the growth of urban centres and the rise of commercial farming brought new opportunities and changes calling for skills and literacy. With the spread of literacy, pre-Meiji Japan became one of the most highly literate countries among agricultural societies. "Outward Japanese society seemed unchanged, but in fact it had been transformed." Thus, pre-modern conditions in Japanese society proved favourable to the subsequent success of Japan’s modernisation, and the establishment of modern librarianship in Japan was a smooth process, as in the United States.

That was not the case in China. It took the Chinese nearly a century to establish their modern libraries out of the need for national salvation and state building. Two factors help to explain the difference, in this regard, between China on the one hand and the United States and Japan on the other. One factor is the social and political backgrounds in which modern libraries emerged in those three countries, as described earlier. The other is their different cultural traditions. The United States was a young nation characterised by a strong commitment to democracy in the nineteenth century. The free flow of information and equal right to an education were favoured and widespread. Modern public libraries became public in reality, not only publicly-owned but also in general use by any citizen who desired to use them. Moreover, they remained open to all free of charge and regardless of social status. They finally

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74 Welch, Toshokan, p. 19.
77 Ibid., p. 187.
78 Johnson, History of Libraries in the Western World, p. 218.
became a social institution operating in a dynamic environment of aspirations, expectations, and freedom.  

In the late Qing, however, the tradition of imperial book repositories was deep-rooted, and educational reform just beginning. China was confronted with both external aggressions and internal decline. The concept of education for all as a government responsibility was alien to the ruling elite. China as a whole was reluctant to learn from the outside world, unlike Meiji Japan. Thus, it took generations of “enlightened” Chinese to eradicate the closed nature of traditional book repositories and to make book collections open to the general public free of charge. This process was not accomplished until the 1930s, when the New Library Movement completed the transition from book repositories to modern libraries and when the Nationalist government further consolidated them as a public institution.

Japan and China had many characteristics in common in pre-modern times, and they interacted with the West in similar ways: first hostility to the West, then a recognition of their weaknesses, and eventually a willingness to learn from the West. But the long-established Confucian order and the imperial culture slowed down the process of change in the late Qing. The vigilance, deeply ingrained in a sense of the originality and value of their civilisation, served as one reason why the Chinese were slower to borrow Western ideas than other countries, like Japan. In contrast, the successful Meiji reforms transformed Japan into an industrialised and democratising society, where there was a growing demand for modern libraries.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of modern libraries in China is a different case from the “industrialisation and democracy” model of the United States and the “modernisation” model of Meiji Japan. Modern libraries emerged in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, spurred by the urbanisation and the growth of the industrialised economy. The social security and democracy that grew out of the American

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79 Luckham, *The Library in Society*, p. 3.
Revolution provided a favourable milieu in which modern libraries could expand and mature quickly. Social advancement through education commensurate with economic growth and the benefits of the free provision of knowledge could assist in the move towards a more productive and open society. Subsequently, modern libraries were viewed by the American people as an effective educational means of developing the full potential of the young United States in its pursuit of industrialisation and democracy. The Meiji Restoration built a unified and centralised state in a modernisation process, based on large-scale Westernisation. Modern libraries were introduced into Meiji Japan in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, inspired by determined Meiji leaders who thought of libraries as necessary vehicles in the modernisation of Japanese society. Modern Japanese libraries finally became a social institution, serving as a symbol of democracy and a faith in the power of learning.

The Chinese case is a case of “underdevelopment”, with its own characteristics. From the 1840s, modern libraries were introduced into China in the midst of Western learning in the declining years of the Qing Dynasty; it took generations of reformist Chinese to advocate and to establish modern libraries during periods of political upheaval, economic underdevelopment, and educational and intellectual transformations. Reform-minded Chinese viewed modern libraries as a means of preserving Chinese culture and saving their nation. They then criticised their traditional book repositories and brought modern libraries, in the real sense, into being in the 1920s and the 1930s. These libraries were linked to educational reform in China’s struggle for survival and eventual quest for wealth and power.

Although modern libraries were introduced to China and Japan probably at the same time, the modernisation of Japanese society made it abandon its heavy historical baggage, creating a favourable political, cultural, and social atmosphere in which modern libraries could grow. In contrast, it took the Chinese almost a century to establish their modern libraries in the real sense because of a different culture, an underdeveloped agricultural economy, political instability, and a low level of literacy.
Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, modern Western libraries, based on the industrial economy, began to serve the general public regardless of social standing. The establishment of the democratic system gave an impetus to their growth and maturity, as in the United States. But this was not the case with the emergence of modern libraries in China. The rise of modern libraries was located in the context of educational reform and national salvation in the late Qing. Although China was a civilised country in ancient times, modern Chinese libraries did not appear until the nineteenth century, especially the mid-nineteenth century, when they were introduced in the midst of Western learning and educational reform. Traditional book repositories had existed in imperial China for two thousand years, concerned with organisation and preservation of books instead of utilisation. The contributions of these book repositories to traditional scholarship were significant, as they were vital to the preservation of a wealth of Chinese classics and the facilitation of classical research. Some even served as temporary sites for the newly founded modern libraries. Unfortunately, external intrusions and internal chaos contributed to the destruction of traditional book repositories in the moribund Qing Dynasty. Educational reform and the abolition of the civil service examination system accelerated their decline, and the deteriorating agricultural economy also helped to bring an end to them. Consequently, book repositories were replaced by modern libraries between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Modern libraries did not emerge in China before the mid-nineteenth century for a number of reasons, including the underdeveloped agricultural economy, insufficient breakthroughs in the publishing industry and printing technologies, and the lack of openness in traditional culture.

The emergence of modern Chinese libraries was a long and arduous process, lasting from the 1840s to the 1930s. Western learning, educational reform, missionary influence, foreign threat, and the New Culture Movement all contributed to their emergence. Modern libraries were introduced into the late Qing by both far-sighted Western missionaries and “enlightened” Chinese. Gradually, the intrusion of Western learning undermined the stability and coherence of traditional culture, influencing the direction of intellectual and cultural change in modern China. Western missionaries and educated Chinese were interested in modern libraries for different reasons. The
missionaries founded missionary society and educational institution libraries, regarding them as an effective means of disseminating Western learning and facilitating evangelisation. The Chinese embraced the ideas of modern libraries out of the need for the advancement of modern education in the context of national survival. Despite missionary influence and the advocacy of a few enlightened Chinese, the nation-wide modern library campaign failed to take hold. One reason might be the resentment toward missionaries among the Chinese. The other the obstacle of Chinese traditional book repositories. Indeed, the advocacy of modern libraries went hand in hand with educational reform and intellectual development in early modern China.

Superficial descriptions about modern libraries appeared in early translated works sponsored by Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan in the 1840s, followed by some in-depth observations in the overseas travel accounts of some early Chinese diplomats, such as Guo Songtao and Xue Fucheng. However, their limited foreign language ability and limited knowledge of the West prevented them from providing further insights into the functions of modern libraries. Fortunately, in the declining days of the Qing Dynasty, a number of reform-minded Chinese, with more advanced knowledge of the West than their predecessors, became ardent advocates of modern libraries. Not only did they criticise the limitations of traditional book repositories, but they also promoted the educational functions of modern libraries for the purpose of China’s regeneration. Zheng Guanying, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao were prominent among them. They appreciated the importance of modern libraries in educational reform and highlighted the need for modern library management. The issue of modern libraries was part of the reform movement in the 1890s, a period of drastic social transformation. Liang’s advocacy of modern libraries was linked with his idea of a new nation. He argued that a nation-state depended on the birth of an educated citizenry, and that modern education was a means by which new citizens could be cultivated. According to him, traditional Chinese education could not inculcate in the people a sense of rights and national consciousness. Democracy, constitutionalism, and national consciousness could only thrive in China on the foundation of the general “enlightenment” of Chinese society through education.

The advocacy of educational reform by the 1890s generation led to a recognition of the importance of modern libraries among the intellectual elite. This generation, as a social group, arose from the reform movement brought about by China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. They came to realise that a strong navy and national
defence could not be built on the simple and mechanical transplantation from the West, unless there was a transformation of Chinese institutions and the Chinese mind. The functions of Western education and modern libraries were emphasised.

Enthusiasm for modern libraries further increased in the last decade of the Qing Dynasty, when Zhang Zhidong assumed responsibility for the formulation of a new national education system. Zhang recognised the necessity of libraries in education relatively early through his own experience, working tirelessly to establish a variety of educational institutions and book collections during his life time. He searched for a way for China to survive in the modern world by accommodating Western learning while still preserving China’s traditional culture. He was credited with the founding of the Metropolitan Library of Beijing (MLB)—the predecessor of the National Library of China—a few days before he died in office in September 1909.

Despite differing political backgrounds, those who urged for educational reform were aware of the importance of modern libraries to the provision of reading materials for the entire population, not just for the elite. As far as the Qing government was concerned, the mission of Chinese libraries was to preserve the cultural heritage and to save the nation. Yet although modern libraries began to appear, the profound transformation of book repositories did not take place until the New Culture Movement in the mid-1910s, which brought with it the New Library Movement.

The New Culture Movement launched an all-out attack on Chinese traditions and imported a broad range of Western ideas, considered necessary to building up a new China. The Movement had a far-reaching impact on the development of modern Chinese libraries. It brought about the unprecedented growth of printed materials in the vernacular, which challenged the traditional management style of book repositories and made knowledge more accessible to the general public than ever before in Chinese history. New Culture leaders advocated such innovative ideas as mass education, individual freedom, science, democracy, liberty, and equality. In addition, they were keen to re-evaluate Chinese cultural traditions critically. Significantly, New Culture advocates, such as Hu Shi, Cai Yuanpei, Li Dazhao, and Lu Xun, were also concerned with modern libraries.

As part of the New Culture Movement, the New Library Movement criticised traditional book repositories and popularised advanced librarianship that originated from the West, especially from the United States. The launch and development of the New Library Movement, from 1917 to 1927, owed a debt to missionary influence.
Mary Elizabeth Wood, an American librarian, saw a firm link between librarianship and missionary enterprises in China, and she thought that it was God’s call for her to assist the Chinese people in modernising their libraries. She inspired Samuel Seng, a poor young Chinese and converted Christian who returned from the United States with an M.A. in library science, to launch the New Library Movement in 1917, aided by the Chinese YMCA. Li Dazhao, later a founder of the Chinese Communist Party, was also as an active participant in the Movement. He transformed Beijing University Library into a modern institution when working as its Chief Librarian. Chinese libraries now began to be modernised with new library technologies, including the open shelf system, the card catalogue, and the Dewey Decimal Classification. Moreover, they were open to the public, equipped with different kinds of publications. Hence, the New Library Movement completed the transition from book repositories to modern libraries as far as technology and management were concerned.

The new intellectuals embraced such new concepts as democracy, science, individual freedom, and the emancipation of women. These ideas might have found expression in positive education advances and intellectual growth, if there had been a stable government and competent political leadership in China prior to 1928. Unfortunately, a wealth of refreshing ideas on educational reform generated by the New Culture Movement remained as vague hopes and unfilled promises. And the unfavourable social conditions prevented Chinese libraries from developing quickly and smoothly, the new modern libraries remaining an urban phenomenon. It was not until the Nationalist period that education was given an important place in national reconstruction, with Chinese libraries acting as an agent of educational reform. It was against this background that Chinese libraries were able to develop more extensively than before.

The epoch-making event in China in the 1920s was the establishment of the Nationalist government in 1928. The Nationalist leaders were state builders, attempting to create a new modern state, to achieve economic growth, to restore national pride, and to maintain national security. Significantly, they thought of libraries as a useful tool for improving the livelihood of the people and for developing an educated nation. As a result, the Nanjing Decade saw a remarkable expansion of Chinese libraries. The newly founded modern libraries were no longer an assembly of books, nor a place where books were kept and preserved. Rather, they were an organisation, a system, designed to preserve and facilitate the use of records. Their
collections had increased spectacularly. In addition to the inheritance of Chinese classics, a broad array of modern publications, such as books in foreign languages, newspapers, and magazines, were acquired. Moreover, the aim of book collections was shifted from preservation to utilisation. Readership increased accordingly. In this way, modern libraries assisted in the spread of knowledge, helping to break the fetters of social hierarchy and to promote the idea of equality to some degree. With the existence of modern libraries, modern librarianship also developed, albeit gradually.

As an important element in the modern library system, the MLB was officially founded in 1909, just two years before the Qing Dynasty was toppled. In the last decade of the Qing, Qing rulers were forced to undertake new tasks that had confronted no pervious dynasties. They embarked on New Administration reforms, instituted a national system of modern education, and began to develop a modern economy. Accordingly, the MLB was brought into being in support of the preservation of the national heritage and the facilitation of educational reform at the same time. Unfortunately, political instability in the late Qing prevented the MLB from opening until 1912, when the Republic of China was founded.

The 1910s saw some growth of the MLB in terms of collection expansion, bibliography compilation, funding increase, organisational structure, regulations stipulation, and the establishment of a branch. Succeeding in the preservation of Chinese classics, the MLB strove to be a modern library. By the provision of the collections of both the classics and modern materials, the MLB helped to spread education and deliver knowledge among the educated. It also played a part in the New Culture Movement by subscribing to such modern publications as New Youth. It catered to users in the Beijing community regardless of social status, alleviating the restrictions of traditional book repositories, functioning as a modern library, and helping to spread the notion of equality in society. Consequently, the MLB contributed, to some extent, to the “enlightenment” of urban Chinese society as well as to the development of modern Chinese librarianship. At the same time, it was confronted with a host of problems, such as a traditional organisational structure, a lack of a budget scheme, insufficient funding for new collections, poorly managed reader services, out-of-date library technologies, and a shortage of library professionals. Both macro and micro factors contributed to its underdevelopment in the first decade of its existence, including political instability, low-level industrialisation, inadequate readership, a lack of a philanthropic tradition in library
circles, low library consciousness among the public, a low literacy rate, inadequate library science research, a shortage of library science education, and a lack of professional library associations. The MLB was slow to develop in its early phase, because the objective conditions conducive to library growth were largely absent. Its long-awaited expansion did not materialise until the 1920s and the 1930s, when both the social context and librarianship began to mature.

As soon as the Nationalist government was founded in 1928, the MLB was changed into the National Library of Beiping (NLB), and the government further developed it in many ways as part of the state building project. A modern organisational structure was finally established, with a budget system formed, which ensured funding allocation and scientific management. Professional librarians were recruited to manage the NLB in a professional, scientific, and efficient way. As a result, not only did new publications begin to be acquired on a large scale, but reader services were also improved. Admission fees were abolished, with borrowing rights granted, free of charge, for the public. Modern library technologies were applied to a greater extent, promoting the effective organisation and utilisation of the NLB collections. Moreover, reference services were initiated, and compilation projects expanded. In this way, readership was on the rise, helping to educate the general public as well as benefitting academic research. Further, the NLB participated in international conferences and other activities, thereby enhancing its standing both at home and abroad. In short, the NLB played a significant role in the Nationalist government’s state building project by helping cultivate modern citizens. However, the NLB was still confronted with the problem of how to make the fullest use of its collections and services in order to change from a passive institution to an active service centre. Modern Chinese libraries as a whole remained underdeveloped for many reasons. In particular, the Nanjing regime was not in a position to give a high priority to library development because of a host of other more important and more pressing issues. Consequently, modern Chinese libraries were confined to the cities, with low library awareness among ordinary Chinese.

The emergence of modern libraries in China had a distinctive Chinese flavour. They were introduced out of the need for educational reform and national survival in the declining days of China’s last dynasty. Their emergence had benefited from the contributions of both reform-minded Chinese and foreign missionaries. The preservation functions and public, or educational, functions were advocated at the
same time to preserve Chinese cultural traditions. The process of the rise of modern libraries in China, however, turned out to be relatively difficult and long, a period of almost a century, not hastened until the Nanjing Decade. A number of factors accounted for this. The vigilance, deeply ingrained in a sense of the originality and value of Chinese civilisation, was one reason why the Chinese were slow to borrow foreign experiences, including ideas about modern libraries. Another factor was the dynastic decline, marked by internal rebellions and external intrusions. Third, the early Republic was a period of political turbulence. And finally, the underdeveloped industrial economy was unable to provide sufficient support for the emerging modern libraries, as it failed to generate a large readership among the general public, unlike the cases in the industrialised or industrialising countries. In short, insufficient modernity of Chinese society determined the slow and difficult emergence of modern Chinese libraries.

In many ways, the emergence of modern Chinese libraries can be contrasted with those in the United States and Japan. Although the educational functions of modern libraries were advocated in all three countries, Americans, in the mid-nineteenth century, founded their libraries out of the growing desire to educate the industrial working class. The buoyant industrialisation and urbanisation brought with them a large enthusiastic readership and a strong desire to use modern libraries among the public. Encouraged by the advancement in library science research and education and sponsored by many philanthropic projects, American libraries had become a leader in the world by the end of the nineteenth century. China was similar to Japan in assimilating Western learning and in introducing modern libraries. However, the success of the Meiji modernisation led to a flourishing of Japan’s modern libraries by the early twentieth century. This thesis has argued that China’s underdevelopment, both socially and economically, hindered the expansion of modern libraries. In contrast to the “industrialisation and democracy” model of the United States and the “modernisation” model of Meiji Japan, the establishment of modern Chinese libraries is a case of its own kind, of “underdevelopment”. It is not a third model, but it does have Chinese characteristics.

Finally, it might be added that the expansion of Chinese libraries in the 1920s and the 1930s was hastily obliterated by the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. Unfortunately, thirty years later, another serious attack on Chinese libraries came under the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Today, China is developing in a peaceful
and stable environment, but Chinese librarianship is still far less developed than its Western counterparts. The concept of the national library is unfamiliar to many ordinary Chinese even today, and there are not enough public libraries at local levels.¹ By international standards, which stipulate a ratio of one public library for an average of every 20,000 people, China’s ratio of one library for every 459,000 people leaves much to be desired.² And library consciousness is still low, especially outside the metropolitan areas.³ Chinese libraries are still an urban phenomenon. The uneven development between the cities and the countryside cannot help to bring about high library consciousness across the country. The development of Chinese libraries still has a long way to go.

Glossary

Beiyang daxue  北洋大学  Shen Zurong  沈祖荣
Bielu  别录  Sheng Xuanhuai  盛宣怀
Cai Yuanpei  蔡元培  Shengshi weiyuan  盛世危言
Cangshilou  蔡书楼  Shijie tushuguan xiaoshi  世界图书馆小识
Cangxuetang  蔡学堂  Shiwubao  时务报
Daxiuetang zhangcheng  大学堂章程  Shuyuan  书院
Duan Fang  端方  Siku quanshu  四库全书
Guang Shouhuan  北洋大学  Sizhashi  四洲志
Guo An  国安  Sun Jianai  孙家鼐
Guo Weizhen  国之忱  tushuguan  图书馆
Gongshulun  公书林  tushuguan xue  图书馆学
Guangxian  广先  Wang Guowei  王国维
Guangyashuyuan  广雅书院  Wanma caotang  万木草堂
Guangmianlou  冠冕楼  Weiyan  魏源
Guanshujubu  官书局  Wenziyu  文字狱
Guo Songtang  国社堂  Xia Zengyou  夏曾佑
Guoci  国粹  Xinmin  新民
Guoli Beiping tushuguan  国立北平图书馆  Xinzheng  新政
Guozijian  国子监  Xixue shumubiao  西学书目表
Guozijian nanxue  国子监南学  Xiyin shuyuan  惜阴书院
Haihuang  海疆  Xueba  学部
Haiqiguaizhi  海国图志  Xuebu  学部文官
Hanlinyuan  阁林院  Xuebu guanbao  学部官报
Hu Qingsheng  胡庆生  Xue Fucheng  薛福成
Hu Shi  胡适  Yu Xian  余贤
Jian Han  江汉  Yishuju  译书局
Jiaohua xinhua  江南新报  Yongle dadian  永乐大典
Jingshidaxueta  京师大学堂  Yu Rizhang  余日章
Jingshitongwenmuseum  京师同文馆  Yuan Tongli  袁同礼
Jingshitushuguan  京师图书馆  Zhang Jian  张謇
Kang Youwei  康有为  Zhang Zhidong  张之洞
Kazheng  考证  Zheng Guanying  郑观应
Li Dazhao  李大钊  Zhongxi xiyong  中西学术
Li Duanfen  李端芬  Zhang Xue  张学
Liang Qichao  梁启超  Zhongxue zhan  师学馆
Liangshuyuan  两湖书院  Zongxuezhuanlun  师学专论
Lin Zexu  林则徐  Zongxuetang zhangcheng  奏定学堂章程
Lu Xun  鲁迅  Zunjing shuyuan  尊经书院
Luo Zhenyu  罗振玉  Zunjingge  尊经阁
Miao Quansun  缪荃孙  Mianzhehuan  山长
Mishujian  秘书监  Nanyang gongxue  南洋公学
Nanyang gongxue  南洋公学  Qiexue  强学会
Qiuxue  理学  Qianxuepian  理学篇
Shanghai gexiaohu shuyuan  上海格致书院  Shanghai wangguan  上海同文馆
Shanghai tongwenmuseum  上海同文馆  Shanzhang  山长
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**Unpublished Ph.D. Theses**


**Appendix: A List of Directors and Deputy Directors of the National Library of China**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Deputy Directors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Miao Quansun</td>
<td>Xu Fang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(September 1910–1911)</td>
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<td>Jiang Han</td>
<td>Li Siguang</td>
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<tr>
<td>(May 1912–February 1913)</td>
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<td>Xia Zengyou</td>
<td>Cheng Duolu</td>
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<td>(early 1913–January 1918)</td>
<td>成多禄 (August 1927–May 1928)</td>
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<td>Yuan Tongli</td>
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<tr>
<td>(January 1918–December 1918)</td>
<td>袁同礼 (June 1929–1940)</td>
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<td>Fu Yuefen</td>
<td>Wang Chongmin</td>
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<tr>
<td>(January 1919–May 1921)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wang Zhanghu</td>
<td>Zhang Quanxin</td>
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<tr>
<td>(August 1920–July 1927)</td>
<td>张全新 (April 1953–November 1963)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ma Linyi</td>
<td>Ding Zhiang</td>
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<tr>
<td>(July 1921–December 1921)</td>
<td>丁志刚 (July 1954–April 1984)</td>
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<td>Wang Yifei</td>
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<td>Zuo Gong</td>
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<td>Tang Shouyu</td>
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<td>Fu Yuefen</td>
<td>Liu Qiyun</td>
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