

## **Marginalized Population Service of Public Libraries of China in the Past 30 Years: A Survey of Public Libraries in Guangdong Province, China**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper describes the development of the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province, China, in the past 30 years through methodologies of literature review, survey and case study. Basing on analyzing the current situation of various marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province, the paper puts forward the suggestions for the promotion of public library service for disabled groups, migrant workers and left-behind children and elderly community.*

**Keywords:** Marginalized Populations, Public Library Service, Guangdong Province, China.

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The coinage of the concept of the marginalized population took place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and relevant research began after that. In 1908, Georg Simmel defined the term “stranger” based on which Robert Ezra Park put forward the concept of marginalized people for the first time, foreshadowing the gradual development of its studies<sup>[1]</sup>.

The marginalized population refers to people who are pushed to the social periphery, estranged from the social structure, and do not fit in society, due to physical defects or differences from the social mainstream in social mobility, culture, and ideas. They include paralyzed people, migrant workers, left-behind children, unattended elderly people, dropouts, the unemployed, the homeless, and prisoners. They are commonly characterized by impoverishment, low education level, low psychological endurance, and social marginalization. Nevertheless, these people do not essential gather as distinct groups, since they are not organized internally and have no group sense. The definition of the marginalized population is conditioned by local political, economic and cultural development levels. They may evolve with social integration and development and thus change the characteristics of marginalization. Therefore, they are characterized by relative stability and dynamic changes as well.

At the stage of social transition when major changes in China take place in social structure, values and ideas, and life styles, the marginalized population keeps swelling, causing increasingly salient problems in social economy, culture, life, etc. Public libraries should pay attention to the information need and other problems of the disadvantaged groups and help them get integrated into society via information empowerment, which can eventually reduce social inequality.

## **1 Research methodology**

This paper examines the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province by means of literature review, survey, and econometric analysis. By analyzing, researching, and summarizing its history and status quo, it explores the development strategies for the marginalized population service of Chinese public libraries, and makes suggestions for the development and reform of the public library service system.

The content of the research is the service condition, service facilities, collection development, special services, organization and activities, and the development planning for the marginalized population like the disabled, the elderly, migrant workers and their children, left-behind children in public libraries on various levels in Guangdong.

This survey has handed out questionnaires to 145 libraries above the county level in Guangdong Province and retrieved 120. With erroneous questionnaires filtered, there are 109 effective ones sent back by 5 provincial libraries, 16 municipal libraries, and 88 county/district libraries. The 109 questionnaires cover all levels of public libraries in Guangdong basically, among which are over 80% of libraries in the Pearl River Delta and northern Guangdong, 66.6% in the eastern part and 70% in the western area. Therefore, the survey results can objectively reflect the history and current condition of the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province.

## **2. History of the marginalized population service of libraries in Guangdong**

Guangdong is characterized by economic prosperity in China. While economic development ranks high among all the provinces, public library construction also leads the whole nation. By the end of 2017, 136 public libraries throughout this province on and above the county level had allowed free access to the public. The total construction area was 1.52 million square meters, with the area per 10000 people reaching 136.7 square meters<sup>[2]</sup>, and the marginalized population service experienced major advancement as well.

### **2.1 Starting stage (1980-2000)**

The marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province appeared with the reform and opening up around the 1980s. By 2000, 124 libraries on and above the county level had been built in Guangdong, with the total collection reaching 23.16 million items. By the end of 2001, there were 4885 libraries in towns and townships, on streets, and even in villages<sup>[3]</sup>, roughly establishing the four-level library network—the provincial, municipal, county, and town and township levels. The complete library network laid a concrete foundation for the marginalized population service of libraries, particularly in remote areas.

With the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province and other provincial, sub-provincial, and municipal libraries in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, and Foshan as the main force, Guangdong Province has developed book circulation outside the library and other extensions of services, expanding the library service network rigorously.

In 1982, Guangzhou Library attached the attention to mobile reading service of the disabled, sending books to teachers and students in Guangzhou School for Deaf-Mutes in the suburb with mobile reading vehicles<sup>[4]</sup>.

In April 1987, Guangzhou Library launched the service program—automobile library, touring 6 stops in Tianhe, Huangpu, Fangcun, and Haizhu districts of Guangzhou every day<sup>[5]</sup>. In 2000, laptops and the ILLASII system enabled book circulation management on luxury air-conditioned coaches, marking a benchmark in the history of Chinese automobile libraries<sup>[6]</sup>. City libraries in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Dongguan, Foshan, Nanhai, Conghua, etc. also provided similar services via automobile libraries to villages (sometimes even the farming fields and orchards), factories, military stations, and prisons<sup>[7]</sup>.

In May 1994, Guangzhou Disabled Persons' Federation founded Guangzhou Library for the Blind, the first in Guangdong Province and the third in the nation, providing services including reading by touching the braille books, audiobook, and weak-sight reading for visually impaired readers as well as copying audios and sending books to the door by phone reservation in the city<sup>[8]</sup>.

After the opening of Guangzhou Children's Library in 1996, four branches in Huadu, Conghua, Zengcheng and Guangzhou Children's Activity Center were established and the service range was further expanded by setting book circulation stops in 28 schools including schools for migrant workers' children and houses of juvenile rehabilitation<sup>[9]</sup>.

## **2.2 The exploration stage (2000-2010)**

After 2000, the development of digital technology and network communication technology urged public libraries in Guangdong Province to search for changes of the traditional service mode. In October 2008, Library Society of China issued the Declaration of Library Service, ruling basic principles of “general openness, equal service, and focus on people” [10]. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Finance implemented the national cultural information resources sharing project jointly, alleviating the problem of difficult access to book for the grass-root mass.

Guided by the maxim of general and equal service, public libraries in Guangdong Province explored new modes for the development of libraries, creating projects including the Guangdong mobile library, Shenzhen library city, and Foshan joint-library, which laid a solid foundation for the supply of the marginalized population service.

### **(1) Service facilities**

The building of service facilities is the basis for the marginalized population service of public libraries. Since 2000, public libraries in Guangdong have striven to build basic service facilities for the marginalized population. Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province and Shenzhen Library have paved blind tracks, built barrier-free facilities including the wheelchair passage, the express lift, and the restroom reserved for the disabled, and made special notices, attempting to eliminate the economic and physical barriers for the marginalized population to access libraries. Reading rooms for the disabled, the elderly, and the blind, and electronic reading rooms for the blind are set up in libraries. The braille books, audio-visual materials, and other auxiliary equipment are provided. Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province has begun to offer special seats with customized computers for the visually disabled, use the Internet platform to provide the visually disabled with online consultation, material search, and document delivery, recommend barrier-free reading materials regularly, and customize barrier-free electronic books for readers.

### **(2) Community library**

The service targets of community libraries are often the elderly, women, and youths. These libraries tend to focus on the professional characters of the majority of the community, and they serve a variety of marginalized groups gathering together for regional reasons, such as migrant workers.

By the end of 2010, Guangzhou Library had set up an external community service network that consisted of 83 service stops on three levels. Among these stops, there were 37 branches, 6 circulation stops, 12 village libraries or reading rooms, and 28 mobile library service stops scattered in towns and townships, streets, communities, villages, military stations, residence blocks, reform centers, hospitals, etc.

Nanhai District of Foshan has established a system of reading posts called “libraries at the door,” incorporating 1 district library, 7 branches, and 137 reading posts. A multi-level, networking, and three-dimensional library service system that link the headquarters with numerous branches is thus built, providing one-stop service for the mass, including the migrant workers and young readers.

### **(3) Extended service**

Since 2000, public libraries in Guangdong have been promoting the mission to extend public cultural service to the disadvantaged groups. A full range of actions have been taken, including issuing preferential or free reading cards, establishing service stops in the neighborhoods of the marginalized population, delivering books to the door, and providing special services such as computer training and learning instruction for the marginalized groups.

In October 2001, Guangzhou Library and Guangzhou Disabled Persons' Federation founded the first electronic reading room for the blind, enabling the blind to borrow braille books and use computers as well as training the blind to use the specialized computers. In January 2004, Guangzhou Library expanded the electronic reading room for the blind, providing free Internet and relevant skill tutoring for the blind readers and other regular services—audio books, braille books, and audio-visual materials. It offered a good platform for the blind reader to share the outcomes of social civilization.

In May 2002, Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangzhou Province and Guangzhou Prison signed a contract to build a reading service base with the slogan “learning and reforming” for the prisoners. The former gave reading cards and over 10000 books to the later, issued library cards to people in the prison, provided services such as reading consultation, learning instruction, and librarian training. By 2005, Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangzhou Province had established 26 “learning and reforming” learning bases in the prison system of the province, with about 110000 books given away<sup>[11]</sup>.

In 2005, this library offered free calligraphy and art training courses to children from poor households in Guangzhou and children from low-income migrant households. From 2006 to 2007, it further provided a music popularization and education course for children from poor families<sup>[12]</sup>.

## **2.3 Development stage (2010—)**

In July 2010, Guangdong Province issued “the Planning Outline for the Construction of a Strong Cultural Province in Guangdong Province (2011-2020)”, intending to promote cultural advancement thoroughly, realize the transformation from a major cultural province to a strong cultural province, “establish an inclusive public cultural service system and guarantee people’s basic cultural rights.” In September 2011, “Regulations for Promoting Public Cultural Services in Guangdong Province” were issued, becoming the first local act about the construction of a public cultural service system. These policies formed a strong institutional guarantee system for the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong.

### **(1) Public cultural service system**

Guangdong Province has focused on the construction of facilities in local public libraries, strengthened integrated planning of the network of public libraries, and gradually realized full coverage of local libraries in accordance with the universal, equal, and inclusive construction principle. At present, a basically complete five-level (from provincial, municipal, county/district, town or township/street, to village/community levels) public library facility network is established.

By the end of 2017, Guangdong had set up 90 mobile library branches, basically covering all the underdeveloped areas in the province, with the service and construction areas reaching 1.52 million square meters<sup>[13]</sup>, approximately 2.668 million books invested, and 79.339 million person-times visiting these branches in total. Meanwhile, county branches have been encouraged to establish extended 1905 service stops, namely, 1161 village stops, 350 town stops, 308 school stops, 174 stops for support for the army, 104 enterprise stops, 300 community stops, 27 prison stops, and 71 others, realizing remarkable social efficiency.

In 2016 and 2017, Department of Culture in Guangdong Province launched “the Piloting Construction of the Headquarters and Branches of County-level Libraries in Guangdong Province” . By early 2018, piloting areas had generally established a three-level system with headquarters on the county level, branches in towns and townships (streets) and service stops in villages (communities), which activates the local public cultural resources and realizes exchange and sharing of resources.

## **(2) Free open service**

Guangdong Province follows the national basic public cultural service standards and the local implementation standards and urges public libraries on all levels to establish free open programs. From July 1, 2011 on, Guangzhou Library has been leading the comprehensive free open service and removed the fees to make a reading card, verify the identity, use the study hall, use the Internet in the electronic reading rooms, etc. In 2017, 100% of the public libraries above the county level provided free open service and the basic service programs were complete.

## **(3) Diversified services**

Public libraries in Guangdong undertake diversified reading promotion services. For instance, Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province established an elderly club in 2012. Foshan Library was responsible for the reading summer camp program for children of migrant workers from 2010 to 2017, recruiting children of migrant workers and children from families that relied on the lowest life insurance and organizing diversified activities like happy reading, reciting, etiquette coaching, and practice.

With regard to Internet information service, Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province has launched the construction of online information navigation stop, which develops and makes use of collection resources and Internet information resources to providing the marginalized population with services including legal consultation, employment consultation, policy consultation, and health and medical care consultation.

In the aspect of service for the visually disabled, Sun Yat-sen Library established a visually disabled reader service center in 2012, providing regular borrowing of braille books and audio materials and holding “Listen and Love” story sharing sessions, barrier-free movie sharing activities, and blind people’s poem reciting and prose creating competitions in Guangdong Province. Since 2013, Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province and Guangdong Association of the Blind have held the blind people’s poem and prose reciting competition in Guangdong province and undertaken training of reciting skills, which become star activities of the mass reading series activities called “the more (more is a homonym of “yue”, short of Guangdong Province) reading, the more wonderful life.”

#### **(4) Social cooperation**

The marginalized population service of public libraries should be placed in the whole social cultural system. With the support of social forces and joint efforts to build the service platform can the service advantages be exploited so as to reach more marginalized people.

In February 2010, “the STARS Library Project” for primary and middle schools in remote mountainous areas of Guangdong Province was launched by civil public welfare organizations and Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, and 1000 libraries or reading rooms were planned to be built in the following 10 years. Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province often collaborates with social organizations to hold various cultural activities to support the disabled, including the first national hearing-impaired speech contest, sign language training classes, coaching classes for visually disabled children’s parents, and barrier-free information seminars in the south of Guangdong Province. In addition, it cooperates with the Penitentiary for Juvenile Delinquents of Guangdong Province to educate juvenile delinquents, and the activities include giving away books, holding lectures, organizing essay writing contests, orienteering quality development, etc.

In 2013, Shenzhen Library and Shenzhen Museum established a base of cultural activities for the visually impaired people in Shenzhen jointly, starting long-term cooperation with Shenzhen Volunteer, Shenzhen Tourism College of Jinan University, and Shenzhen Tencent to set up a volunteer mechanism to help the visually impaired people<sup>[14]</sup>.

### **3 Status quo of the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province**

#### **3.1 Service types**

The survey shows that in the 109 surveyed libraries, those undertaking the marginalized population service represent a large proportion. Over 60% of public libraries provide service for the following groups: the elderly (95, 87.2%), the disabled (86, 78.9%), migrant workers and their children (81, 74.3%), and left-behind children (69, 63.3%). They pay less attention to the service for other groups: urban residents depending on the lowest life insurance, the unemployed, and the homeless (46, 42.2%), prisoners (40, 36.7%), social loafers (21, 19.3%), and other types of marginalized people (18, 16.5%).

As for regional differences, libraries in the Pearl River Delta that provide services for the disabled, migrant workers and their children, and prisoners represent a relatively high proportion in all the libraries, but their proportion is smaller than the proportion of libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province in terms of providing services for the elderly, left-behind children, network addicted youths and dropouts.

Regarding the levels of libraries, the disabled, the elderly, migrant workers, urban residents depending on the lowest life insurance, and prisoners are the major service targets of municipal and provincial libraries, which is related to the regional agglomeration feature of these groups. In contrast, county libraries tend to focus more on the services for left-behind children, since left-behind children, the elderly, and the youths are generally located in remote areas and on

local levels. These situations correspond to the conditions of different types of marginalized people.

### **3.2 Service for the disabled**

The national sampling survey report of the disabled people in 2006 shows 5.399 million disabled people in Guangdong Province, representing 5.86% of the total national population. Throughout the country, the total disabled population in Guangdong ranked the fourth in all the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government. Among all the disabled people in Guangdong, 3.0907 million were over 60 years old, taking up 57.25%.<sup>[15]</sup> Serving the disabled is the substantial content of the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province.

#### **(1) Time distribution**

Services for the disabled in most libraries began in the late 1980's. 10 libraries started the mission before 1990, and the total number grew to 19 from 1991 to 2000, 47 from 2001 to 2010, and 86 from 2011 to the present. At the beginning, the service was mainly borrowing books for the disabled. Comprehensive services were launched around 2000.

With regard to regional distribution, libraries in the Pearl River Delta began the services earlier than the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province, and the latter generally started to pursue the cause after 2010. The difference between municipal libraries and county libraries was apparent too. While the municipal and provincial libraries began the service early, county/district-level libraries only touched this aspect after 2000. These facts conform to the development trend of public libraries in Guangdong Province.

#### **(2) Types of groups**

Among the 86 libraries that provide service for the disabled, 78 mainly serve the visually impaired, 67 the physically disabled, 50 the hearing-impaired, 39 those with language disability, 30 those with reading barriers, 22 those with psychogenia, 18 those with cognitive impairment, and 4 groups of other types of disability.

#### **(3) Facility development**

Development of barrier-free facilities is the basis of service for the disabled in libraries. The survey shows that 88.4% (76) of the 86 libraries provide the disabled with barrier-free facilities, 75.6% (65) have set up special reading zones for the disabled, 70.9% (61) have offered the disabled special computers with special softwares installed, and 60.5% (52) have built special seats for the disabled. With regard to the infrastructure building in the barrier-free environment and service development, the Pearl River Delta performs better than the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province in terms of complete facilities and professional service, and municipal libraries perform better than county/district libraries too. Regarding the auxiliary equipment installment and service such as wheelchairs and tactile sticks, the difference between the libraries in the Pearl River Delta and those in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province, and between the municipal and provincial libraries and county/district libraries are enormous. Generally, service for the hearing impaired people is inadequate, with only Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, Yantian Library and Bao'an Library in Shenzhen, and Shunde Library



in Foshan providing sign language service. All the four libraries are in the developed Pearl River Delta, while professional personnel and service are insufficient in other regions.

#### **(4) Resource development**

In the 86 libraries, 68 (about 79.1%) have developed braille book resources, 59 (68.6%) audio book resources, 18 (20.9%) video resources with subtitles or sign language, 13 (15.1%) large font books, 18 (20.9%) other types of collection for the disabled people. It shows that braille books and audio materials are the major collection that public libraries in Guangdong Province prepare for the disabled, satisfying the information demand of visually impaired readers to different degrees.

91.1% and 82.2% of libraries in the Pearl River Delta have developed braille books and audio materials respectively, and the corresponding percentages of libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province are only 39.7% and 53.6%. Despite of regional gaps, the collection resource development for the visually disabled in various libraries tend to be consistent and comprehensive, and it is the core of development. The development in municipal and provincial libraries is generally better than in county/district libraries, but the differences are not great. In fact, none of these libraries has strong collection resources development especially for the hearing-impaired people, people with language disability, people with reading barriers, people with cognitive disorder, and people with psychogenia.

In terms of the fund allocation for special collection, only 28 libraries (32.5%) have set special funds to develop resources including braille books, audio-visual materials, and audio books. It reflects that libraries' development of special collection resources for the disabled is restricted. The limitation applies to both the Pearl River Delta and the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province, and the available resources are scarce.

#### **(5) Demand investigation**

According to the survey, libraries in both the Pearl River Delta and the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province obtain data about the information demand of the disabled by regular book exhibition, phone recommendation, mail recommendation, face-to-face recommendation, online recommendation, and survey of readers' demand. 58 libraries (67.4%) accept face-to-face recommendation, 56 (65.1%) hand out questionnaires, 27 (31.4%) provides phone recommendation service, 21 (24.4%) undertakes online recommendation, and 16 (18.6%) offers mail recommendation service. Libraries on all levels tend to rely mainly on face-to-face recommendation and questionnaires, and they seldom use the modern network communication and data analysis to conduct the disabled information need survey and analysis. In the age of fast development of the Internet and digital technology, this is the direction that modern public libraries should follow.

#### **(6) Special service**

61 libraries (70.9%) are equipped with special computers and softwares for the disabled, 58 (67.4%) provide the disabled with consultation service, 56 (65.1%) cooperate with local disabled people's federations and special education schools to offer services and organize activities, 36 (41.9%) undertake reading tutoring and volunteer reciting services, and 32.6% of the 86 libraries organize audio-visual activities, sign language recreational activities, and

reciting contests. It means public libraries in Guangdong Province not only emphasize infrastructure development and exploit the traditional service advantages of libraries—information consultation—in order to offer services for the disabled, but also enhance their own service consciousness and cooperation consciousness to work with governments and social organizations and make use of the latter’s service and resource advantages to promote the popularization of information service for the disabled in libraries. However, there is still great space for county/district libraries and libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province to carry out audio-visual and sign language competitions and to cooperate with disabled people’s federations and special schools.

### **3.3 Service for the elderly**

With fast social development, demographic structure in Guangdong Province has gone through major changes. This province has been an aging society since 2000. In 2015, the number of the elderly over 60 years old with household registration in the province reached 12.7834 million, taking up 14.65% of total provincial population. There were 9.2028 million elderly over 65 years old with household registration in the province, representing 8.48%.<sup>[16]</sup>

#### **(1) Time distribution**

The elderly service of public libraries in Guangdong Province began almost with the establishment of the libraries, but the development of the elderly service accelerated after 2000. County/district libraries take the lead in providing service for the elderly and the popularity rate is high. The elderly service of libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province thrived after 1991. According to the survey, there were 16 libraries providing service for the elderly before 1980, 32 from 1981 to 1990, 49 from 1991 to 2000, 72 from 2001 to 2010, and 95 from 2011 to the present.

#### **(2) Facility construction**

Among the 95 libraries, 69 (72.6%) have installed barrier-free facilities and restrooms, 66 (69.5%) provide auxiliary devices for reading such as magnifiers, and 45 (47.4%) reserve special reading rooms for the elderly. Thus, there is a certain degree of achievement in the infrastructure and facility construction for the service of the elderly in public libraries of Guangdong Province. With the swelling elderly population, public libraries are faced with greater challenges in building basic facilities for the elderly.

#### **(3) Demand investigation**

Public libraries in Guangdong Province obtain data about the information demand of the elderly mainly by regular book exhibition, phone recommendation, mail recommendation, face-to-face recommendation, online recommendation, and survey of readers’ demand, with face-to-face recommendation and questionnaires for readers as the main methods. 81 libraries (85.3%) accept elderly people’s face-to-face recommendation, and 77 (81.1%) investigate readers’ demands. A small number of libraries depend on online recommendation (27.4%) and phone recommendation (25.3%) to understand the needs of the elderly. However, most of these libraries are located in the Pearl River Delta or municipal or provincial ones, while libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province have low penetration.

#### **(4) Common service**

Services for the elderly provided by public libraries in Guangdong Province are mainly traditional book borrowing and reading, supplemented by book borrowing over the phone, free Internet coaching, reduced fee or zero fee, book delivery to the door, reciting books and newspaper, etc. 45 libraries (47.4%) provide free Internet coaching for the elderly, trying to popularize basic Internet knowledge and expand the channels for the elderly to obtain information. 34 libraries (35.8%) issue preferential policies to reduce to exempt fees, guaranteeing the information need of the elderly to the largest extent. 27 libraries (28.4%) allow elderly readers to borrow books over the phone and deliver books to the door, solving the difficulties to borrow books in the library caused by physical reasons, which embodies the humanitarian service consciousness of libraries. 16 libraries (16.8%) read books and newspapers to the elderly, as a response to their visual impairment, in order to inspire their interests in making use of the libraries. Nevertheless, the popularization of these special services is low. Libraries in the Pearl River Delta and no lower than the municipal level only perform better than those in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province and on the county/district level in the aspect of free Internet coaching. County/district libraries tend to perform better than municipal and provincial libraries in terms of book borrowing over the phone and book and newspaper reading, which is related to the fact that the elderly are the major service targets of these libraries.

#### **(5) Special service**

Apart from reading and borrowing services, public libraries in Guangdong Province undertake a diversity of special services to enrich the cultural and spiritual life of the elderly. Among the 95 libraries, 69 (72.6%) hold lectures and forums, 59 (62.1%) hold a variety of calligraphy and painting activities to activate and enrich the artistic life of the elderly, 53 (55.8%) provide reading tutoring for the elderly, helping them enhance the ability to search information resources, and 45 (47.4%) promote online reading for the elderly, helping them understand online information resources and relevant searching and reading methods and adding to their channels of information acquisition. In addition, 41 libraries (43.2%) offer knowledge and skills training courses to the elderly, attempting to inspire their enthusiasm for reading and further studies. In general, these services are popular in the Pearl River Delta, while the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province lag behind. As for holding lectures and forums and providing reading tutoring, libraries on all levels do not differ greatly from each other. However, there is a gap between municipal and provincial libraries and county/district libraries in terms of knowledge and skills training and online reading promotion, which is caused by regional differences in the demands, interests, and education levels of the elderly and the qualification of personnel in the libraries.

#### **(6) Service planning**

In order to boost the development of the elderly service, public libraries in Guangdong Province have made active attempts in the planning of the elderly service. 56 (58.9%) of the 95 libraries, via planning, intend to encourage the elderly to participate in library activities, for instance lectures about how to keep healthy, computer, smartphone, and Wechat use training, calligraphy and painting contests, exhibition of photographs, etc. 46 libraries (48.4%) conduct regular survey of the elderly's suggestions in order to update the comments of the elderly on

the service of the library and thus adjust the collection resource development and improve the service system correspondingly. 25 of them (26.3%) make a plan and feasible measures to offer the elderly service. For instance, Foshan Library has established the System of Services for Elderly Readers, stressing customized and caring services. 14 libraries (14.7%) have set special funds for purchasing books and newspapers for the elderly.

In terms of making special personal profiles and reading profiles for the elderly, only 8 libraries (8.4%) analyze the elderly readers' reading preferences on the basis of documents and photos about their basic information, borrowing records, and participation in activities in order to better customize services for the elderly. As for the level of libraries, only a municipal library has set up personal profiles and reading profiles for the elderly.

### **3.4 Service for migrant workers and their children**

Since 2000, the proportion of migrant population and the proportion of migrant workers in the total provincial population lead the whole country. In 2010, the total number of migrant workers in Guangdong Province was 26.3589 million, representing 10.9% of the number of migrant workers throughout the country and 25.3% of the number of permanent residents in Guangdong Province<sup>[17]</sup>. The migrant worker group is dominated by youths and the new generation of migrant workers represents 49.5%. Accompanying children make another batch of migrant population. It is reported that the number of urban migrant children in the country is 35.81 million, with the largest number in Guangdong Province. The fast growth of the number of migrant children, however, is accompanied by economic, social education, cultural, and welfare institution problems<sup>[18]</sup>. Thus, public libraries in Guangdong Province have gradually initiated services for migrant workers and their children.

#### **(1) Time distribution**

Different from the service for the disabled and the elderly, public libraries in Guangdong began their service for migrant workers and their children after 2000. Libraries in the Pearl River Delta began earlier than those in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province, and the number of the former is larger than the number of the latter. This situation reflects the development feature that migrant workers tend to gather in the Pearl River Delta. According to the survey, there were 16 libraries providing service for migrant workers and their children before 1990, 28 from 1991 to 2000, 52 from 2001 to 2010, and 81 from 2011 to the present.

#### **(2) Basic service**

In the 81 libraries, a number of them provide basic reading service for migrant workers. 69.1% of them set up reading rooms for employees in companies, mobile library/book vans, automobile libraries, etc., to extend service outside the library. 63% of the libraries offer free Internet training, 51.9% promote library services in their gathering places or the factories, and 48.1% provide convenience consultation and employment consultation. In addition, 25 libraries (30.9%) have set special libraries or reading rooms for migrant workers. For instance, Guangzhou Library plan to open a course of "modern citizens" for people with household registration in other areas coming to Guangzhou, which is aimed at popularizing public services in the city, welfare policies, the culture and history of the city, etc., cultivating qualities of modern citizens, and promoting social integration. Shenzhen Library promotes reading tutoring according to different categories, different reading levels, and different readers and pay special

attention to reading service for the youths, the elderly, the visually disabled, and migrant workers, trying to promote reading in a specific, accurate, and exquisite way. Since the Pearl River Delta and developed cities are the first choices of migrant workers, libraries in these places tend to provide better services including free training and consultation for migrant workers than libraries in the east, west, north of Guangdong Province and those on the county/district level.

### **(3) Demand investigation**

In the 81 libraries, 81.5% adopt face-to-face recommendation and 72.8% questionnaires to understand the reading needs of migrant workers. Other methods include regular book exhibition, online recommendation, phone recommendation, and mail recommendation, each taking place in about 30% of these libraries. It shows that the majority of public libraries still rely on traditional means to learn about migrant workers' reading demands and fail to make use of Internet and information technology to conduct comprehensive investigation.

### **(4) Special service**

Public libraries in Guangdong Province often organize activities such as lectures, forums, reading tutoring, knowledge and skill training, online reading promotion, parent-children reading, and other recreational activities (Table 18). In the 81 libraries, 71 of them (87.7%) hold parent-children reading activities, which is connected to children reading service and service for children of migrant workers. 63 (77.8%) organize reading tutoring events, 52 (64.2%) lectures specially for migrant workers, and 46 (56.8%) online reading promotion activities. 38 libraries (46.9%) conduct knowledge and skill training of migrant workers, intending to improve migrant workers' knowledge and cultural qualities. In example, Shunde Library in Foshan organize a reading summer camp every year and give children of migrant workers preferential opportunities to receive reading promotion education. Kaiping Library open over 10 public welfare courses each year, including the *guqin* (a traditional Chinese musical instrument with seven strings) training course, the English picture book training course, and the summer holiday public-welfare training course, attracting a large number of migrant workers' children to participate and producing good social effects.

### **(5) Service planning**

Some public libraries have a basic guarantee for the service for migrant workers and their children, including a certain degree of planning and funds. 35 libraries (43.2%) collect migrant workers' suggestions regularly as a reference for the designing and development planning of service for them. 22 libraries (27.2%) have made a plan and plausible measures for the service for migrant workers and their children. 13 libraries (16%) have set special funds to purchase books and newspapers for migrant workers, including professional books about youth mental health, education training, labor skill training, and employment laws and regulations.

## **3.5 Service for left-behind children**

In September 2012, the Ministry of Education announced that there were over 12.60 million accompanying children and 22.00 million left-behind children during the period of compulsory education. Guangdong is the frontline of reform and opening up, and the tide of leaving home and working in cities make the left-behind children a special group. According to the household

survey and registered statistics, there were nearly 0.25 million registered rural left-behind children in Guangdong Province by July 2016<sup>[19]</sup>. They were scattered in remote and impoverished areas in the west and north of Guangdong Province that mainly rely on agriculture, and the number was still huge.

### **(1) Time distribution**

Public libraries in Guangdong Province paid attention to the problem of left-behind children education at an early point. Before 1990, there were already 8 libraries providing special service for left-behind children, and then more libraries joined the cause. The number grew to 20 from 1991 to 2000, 40 from 2001 to 2010, and 69 from 2011 to the present. These libraries are mainly on the county/district level, and their number is far larger than the number of libraries on the city and provincial levels. They are generally located in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province. However, as left-behind children are part of young readers, some libraries do not differentiate left-behind children conspicuously from average children.

### **(2) Special service**

In the 69 libraries, 91.3% of them have established children reading room, 84.1% provide reading tutoring and reading promotion, 82.6% hold reading activities, 65.2% offer book delivery service to the door or the school, and 42% organize reading interest group activities.

### **(3) Demand investigation**

Similarly, the libraries mainly rely on face-to-face recommendation (75.5%) and survey of readers' needs (73.9%) to collect information demands of left-behind children, supplemented by regular book exhibition, online recommendation, phone recommendation, and mail recommendation. Modern information and network technologies are not fully exploited. However, children tend to have intense interests in new things and are ready to accept them, which indicates that relevant technologies and new media should be utilized to conduct surveys of their needs and encourage children to participate in the surveys.

### **(4) Specialized service**

In these libraries, geographical and economic advantages of libraries in the Pearl River Delta and libraries on the municipal and provincial levels are evident. They organize events including story speeches (81.2%), summer holiday reading plan (78.3%), reading tutoring courses (69.6%), puzzle games (66.7%), lectures on popularization of science (65.2%), promotion of reading media (65.2%) and artistic activities about calligraphy, painting, music, etc. (60.9%). Libraries in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province and libraries on the county/district level have been making great efforts, and thus their popularity rate and diversity of services do not lag far behind those in the Pearl River Delta and those on the municipal and provincial levels. It shows that these libraries have invested enormous energy and attention in the reading promotion activities for left-behind children in their corresponding districts, which should be acknowledged and praised.

### **(5) Service planning**

40.6% of the libraries collect left-behind children's suggestions about the library service on a regular basis, and they hope to increase collections and provide learning resources and training

activities. However, only 20 libraries (29%) have set special funds for the purchase of services and resources for left-behind children. 33.3% of the libraries have made plans about services for left-behind children, attempting to cooperate with schools, streets, and communities to construct branches and organize reading activities for these children. Merely 8 libraries (11.6%) have set left-behind children personal profiles and reading profiles, which is insufficient for conducting preference analysis and designing specific reading tutoring for these children in the long run. In the future, establishing a comprehensive reading profile for each reader is one of the keys of development in libraries on all levels.

### **3.6 Other marginalized population service**

Since other marginalized groups such as urban residents depending on the lowest life insurance, the unemployed, the homeless, prisoners, network addicted youths, and dropouts are not on a large scale or characterized by group particularity, and they are of high mobility, this paper has only obtained data about the general situation of service for them in libraries.

Among the 109 libraries, 24 do not provide service for these marginalized groups. As for whether to abolish the service barriers and identity definition, the other 85 libraries claim that they adhere to the principle of providing universal reading service, do not set limitations of the service targets, and deal with different social groups with the spirits of tolerance and openness. 17 libraries (20%) argue that they offer support for marginalized population such as psychological consultation, but the service is aimed at the whole public. Only 2 libraries provide specific psychological consultation and tutoring services. Conghua Library in Guangzhou invites volunteers of the sunshine and love youth hotline to provide psychological consultation and tutoring in the library every Saturday. Nanshan Library in Shenzhen and Qujiang Library and Yangshan Library in Shaoguan have set psychological tutoring/consultation rooms for the youths. In general, libraries are still exploring the psychological consultation for the marginalized population.

In terms of specific services, only 46 libraries have established service categories and service content, and 39 libraries have not yet provided specific services.

## **4 Development strategies for the marginalized population service of public libraries**

According to the survey, problems about the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province are as follows: insufficient infrastructure, incomplete service system, imbalanced regional development, low service capacity, etc. These problems are mainly caused by two factors.

The foremost factor is lack of sufficient financial support (75.2%) in libraries. In 2016, public library area per 10000 people in the Pearl River Delta was only 153.55 square meters, and the figure in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province was 73.53. The first-class library compliance rate in the Pearl River Delta was 82.76%, while the rate in the east, west, and north of Guangdong Province was 20.45%. Some libraries are constantly short of funds to purchase books, have a small collection, and update books and journals at a low speed. In 2016, there were still 14 libraries that depended on less than 50000 RMB to purchase books<sup>[20]</sup>. The

problem of funds is the decisive factor that leads to the imbalanced development between regions.

The second factor is the low cognition level of libraries among the marginalized population (73.4%) and insufficient publicity of libraries (55%), and the two are of a mutual causal relationship. To enhance the marginalized population's understanding of libraries, the libraries should take efforts to publicize and promote themselves rather than merely depend on the governmental organizations, the media, and relevant associations to do the publicity and guidance. Libraries' failing to provide specific services (64.2%) is related to library personnel's profession, capacity, and service consciousness (39.4%). To cope with these problems, libraries should complete the readers' profile (including basic information, needs, and interests) management mechanism and the long-term reader service and demand survey mechanism systematically. They should have the consciousness to respect readers' actual situations and needs and provide diverse services to meet the needs of readers of different groups, on different cultural levels, and of different qualities. Policy restrictions represent a small percentage (21.1%), which further illustrates the development of the marginalized population service of public libraries in Guangdong Province in terms of the policy and institutional guarantee system.

In the current social transition stage, Guangdong Province is the largest economic province in China, the pioneer of Chinese reform and opening up, and a key window for international society to learn about Chinese reform and opening up. The imbalanced development in Guangdong is in fact an epitome of the imbalanced development in China, and similarly the whole country can draw a lesson from Guangdong's experience. The marginalized population service of public libraries in China is still in the active exploration and promotion stage, and it could be ameliorated in the following aspects.

### **(1) Set a data base and reading profiles of the marginalized population**

The marginalized population is the special service targets of public libraries, and only with a thorough understanding of each group's features and information needs can libraries provide higher quality services for them. Public libraries can cooperate with local institutions such as the disabled people's federations, the elderly committee, communities, the elderly centers, migrant workers' unions, welfare institutions, and schools for migrant children to collect and record information about local marginalized population, and investigate how they make use of libraries and information needs, establish reading profiles. Based on that, libraries can execute knowledge assistance and information publicity and innovate on the service modes. However, to identify left-behind children is a hard work and thus to understand their reading needs and give proper humanitarian care cannot be effectively carried out. Libraries need the assistance of schools and street residents' committees to help and support left-behind children, set their reading profiles, and establish a special service mechanism for them.

### **(2) Establish a collection resources guarantee system for the marginalized population**

To provide the marginalized population with practical and special collection resources is the basis of service. Public libraries should understand local public cultural development policies, the economic plan, the industrial organization and development, the social insurance system, and employment needs and consider the cultural needs of the marginalized population in order



to adjust the collection structure and provide special services. Meanwhile, they should compile contents of special collections, form a regional sharing platform of special collection resources, and construct a complete special collection resources system so that they can meet the special collection needs of the marginalized population with open and efficient operation and a sharing mode.

### **(3) Strengthen the social cooperation and coordination mechanism**

To serve the marginalized population requires joint efforts of various social sectors. First, public libraries should initiate cooperation within the industry. Provincial and municipal libraries could take the lead to organize and guide local libraries to provide services and complete the hardware and resources development of the marginalized population service system. Second, public libraries should cooperate with other social organizations, e.g., the disabled people's federations, welfare organizations, community or street residents' committees, the elderly house, prisons, schools, enterprises, and factories, reach the marginalized population to understand their reading needs, reading psychology and reading interests, and provide specific services for them. Third, public libraries should organize cultural activities with charitable organizations and enterprises, call on social forces to donate books or reading facilities and volunteer groups to organize various reading activities, and provide services for the marginalized population in a full range and on various levels.

### **(4) Strengthen the construction of the marginalized population service equipment**

Public libraries should strengthen the communication with government organizations to win special support funds for the service for different groups of marginalized people and install basic service equipment. Meantime, they should change the passive service mode and enhance cooperation with governmental entities and social organizations to attract more marginalized people to learn about the library, walk into the library, and make use of the library.

### **(5) Provide diverse services for the marginalized population**

Public libraries should abide by the principles of public welfare, essentiality, equality, and convenience to stress cultural care of the marginalized population, extend services, expand special services based on basic services, advance service measures, and promote regulated and specific services and further turn them into star projects and brands.

In the aspect of the elderly service, libraries should adapt to the aging society and set up diverse elderly cultural service mechanisms. On the one hand, they could provide special services and cultural and artistic courses in libraries or communities to enrich the elderly's cultural and recreational life. On the other hand, they could visit communities and offer special services as well as set up service stops in the nursing homes and elderly service centers to extend their services.

In terms of services for migrant workers, libraries should help these people to adapt to the social development with informatization and enjoy convenient digital information resources based on enterprise and community libraries/service stops and the facilities of the cultural and information resources sharing project.

As for the left-behind children service, libraries should extend their services to communities, villages and towns where left-behind children gather. They can set up service stops, make use

of rural reading rooms, cultural projects and various charitable study support programs to provide reading education and cultural services for rural left-behind children. Libraries can employ educators, specialists, and scholars to hold public welfare lectures and training courses about education of the popularity of science, reading, cultivation of interests, and health knowledge for left-behind children. They can also work with schools and public welfare organizations to support left-behind children.

#### **(6) Emphasize the construction of the team for the marginalized population service**

To provide the marginalized population service, libraries need to construct a professional team. The staff should be equipped with rich knowledge and professional skills to conduct reading tutoring, skill training, and psychological consultation. Thus to develop a team with fine qualities, a strong sense of humanitarian care, and great service capacity is the direction of key development for public libraries. Meanwhile, volunteers, public welfare organizations, and experts can be invited to help libraries undertake communication with and support for the marginalized population.

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