

## **Inheritance and Innovation: Local History Collections in Academy Library**

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### **Abstract:**

*Library of Fudan University is currently trying to preserve the local history and make the special collections actively used by schools and communities at the same time. Through two case studies, we try to discuss 1) help the community to collect and inherit local culture, 2) make full use of the 100 kinds of materials about social life from over 20 different provinces and cities we've collected, to carry out more academic research through the Coalition for the scholars all over the world. And Fudan will further upgrade the contents and multilingual pages, as well as digital database construction. It will contribute to the development of history, sociology, politics, anthropology and other disciplines.*

**Keywords:** digital database, local culture, coalition

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## **Introduction**

The humanities have an essential role to play in helping us understand and engage with our increasingly digital-oriented culture. We need the new preservation strategies to preserve the elements which speak most directly to humanities concerns. And we need more universities to join the Coalition, to cooperate and share the archives together. The Coalition General Assembly decided to set up different working groups to support the development of Coalition, including the Resource Construction Group, Platform Technology Group, Standard Specification Group and Academic Promotion Group. The "Contemporary Chinese Social Life Data Platform" has been basically completed and has about 28,000 data metadata and 130,000 data pictures, time span from 1949 to 2005, and all metadata will be desensitized according to the specifications.

Now in China, most of Academic Libraries still focuses on assisting the teaching and research work for teachers and students. But Library of Fudan University is currently trying to explore a new way to preserve the local history and make the special collections actively used by schools and communities at the same time.

### **1. Whose history is being preserved?**

Shanghai is an active immigrant city which has the largest population in China. Every year, countless people from all over the world come to Shanghai and settle down. After years of integration and interaction, the cultural genes carried by those immigrants and Shanghai's local culture have formed unique characteristics: Shanghai-style culture, it means "be tolerant to diversity, be excellence and humble". The special collection of Fudan Library is very rich, which sketches the historical features of contemporary China from different levels. At present, there are not only donations from the family members of Chen Yi, the first mayor of Shanghai, but also manuscripts and poems of Fudan celebrities. More importantly, there are a large number of letters and diaries from ordinary citizens. To date, Fudan library has collected over 200,000 private letters that together constitute an important source of information on individuals and families and really make our archive unique in many respects.

Talking about the most important historical collection, it should be the first-hand archives of ordinary people in contemporary China. Fudan Library has saved, collected and classified more than 100 kinds of materials about "Contemporary

Chinese social life” from over 20 different provinces and cities, especially in Shanghai. The materials refer to all related papery documents about Chinese people’s social life after 1949 in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao as well as other places all over the world. The sources have collected and will continue to collect will reveal the contemporary China that is far more diverse, dynamic, and full of personal details than what scholars have thus far experienced and known. Compared to memoirs and interviews, the materials we have are unique. First, the information we collected from the normal citizens was about the individuals’ lives, work, and social worlds, they were more realistic, reliable, holistic, and detailed. Secondly, since they were written during specific time periods and under particular circumstances, they are valuable to our understanding of their historical contexts. We paid particular attention to the importance of private correspondence between individuals and among family members. These documents have a large span of time, vast quantity, which enhance their research value, and these values will increase with its scale.

## **2. How to Promote the Service Related to Historical Collections**

### **2.1 Serving the Community and the Citizens**

Helping the community to make personalized genealogy for each family is an innovative service for Academy Library, it helps the family members especially children understand the local culture while not forgetting their hometowns’. Fudan Library calls for “every family should have a genealogy” and promotes this activity in the communities. Fudan Library started to provide training for community families during the summer vacation from last year. With the advantage of GIS and Demographic & Social Statistics Database which Fudan has, the library guided the families how to collect individual archives and related information from database, and how to organize the materials. Experts were also invited by the library to demonstrate how to make a wonderful genealogy. All the participating grandparents and grandchildren enjoyed the process of searching for family memories, and every family produced a unique genealogy finally. The events were welcomed, and then had been reported by traditional newspapers such as People's Daily and new media such as Tencent News.



### The Case: Promoting Family Genealogy for Community

From the academic point of view, the boom of revising genealogy has its special significance. Some people might think that the kinship power is declining continuously, and will be replaced by the individualistic and civic new type of social contract. But more and more clans began to emphasize the cultural connotation of clan and try to “revive the kinship”, hence they would pay special attention to the compilation of “clan tree”. While the young people in the clan mainly regard the kinship ties as individualizing social resources, so they are also interested in the big names of the clan and pay more attention to the members’ “address book”, in order to get help or advice through consanguinity.

## 2.2 Serving the Academic Research

### 2.2.1 Provide the Primary Sources to study

The materials we collected are extremely valuable. The scholars have been working hard to study the primary sources on social life to understand contemporary China. They will reveal a new China that is far more diverse, dynamic, and full of personal details and these rich data make it possible to conduct quantitative analysis. For example, we have preserved dozens of divorce files in some counties of Jiangxi Province dating back to the 1950s, these files may prompt scholars to rethink issues related to women’s liberation and marriage. And from a businessman’s diaries, scholars could learn how the social changes after 1949 had created enormous challenges in the traditional business thinking. Comparing the changes in one

person's life, communication, and concepts, the scholars could look at the specific process of the disappearance of Huizhou merchants.

Talking about the letters, one of the most salient characteristics of the private correspondence is that it focuses on relatively stable and constant social relations. The 53,581 letters we have scanned come from 516 individuals who, on average, received 84 letters per person. One couple from Shanghai started their romantic relationship in childhood. In 1971, the man was sent to a rural village in Anhui Province, and the woman was assigned a service job in Shanghai Plaza. Subsequently, they began more than two decades of correspondence. Altogether, they wrote to each other 789 letters, which exceed 800,000 Chinese characters. Every case was a personal story and could illustrate how a new social order and new moral norms were constructed in the past 50 years. Private letters are uniquely valuable which reveal the depth of individuals' inner worlds. Although letters written during the Mao Years are full of political jargon, compared with other types of written materials, they are still more genuine in reflecting what people truly thought and felt. Thus, private correspondence has research value in two regards. One, since all individuals identify with and are part of particular social groups (for example, rural cadres, urban workers, or students), their value systems and emotive conditioning are inseparable from their group identity. So private letters can help us gain insight into the particular social group, and understand how the individuals' value systems and emotive conditioning were influenced and shaped by the time period during their lives. Therefore, if scholars read a large quantity of private letters in chronological order, they stand a good chance of peeking into the evolution of individuals' private lives and gaining insights into the changes in Chinese notions of romance and happiness.

### 2.2.2 Form the Coalition to construct the Shared Mechanism

Last year Fudan established the "Coalition of Contemporary Chinese Society Life Archives", 24 well-known universities (including Columbia University, Stanford University, Keio University, etc.) signed to join the Alliance for construction and sharing the Contemporary Chinese society life archives. The Coalition General Assembly decided to set up different working groups to support the development of Coalition, including the Resource Construction Group, Platform Technology Group, Standard Specification Group and Academic Promotion Group. Resource Construction Group is to plan and collect the information, status and digital construction of social life in contemporary China of each member unit, and put forward the phased direction of building the database. Platform Construction Group is to build the Coalition's

information network, and the cyber-infrastructure of the Contemporary Chinese Social Life Archives Database, such as data transmission, storage, access and backup. Data Specification Group is to develop and implement the standards or specification for metadata, content formats, etc. Academic Promotion Group is to promote the protection work of contemporary Chinese social life archives and academic research. And the Coalition Secretariat is established in the Fudan University Library, acting as the daily executing agency.

At present, the " Contemporary Chinese Social Life Data Platform " has been basically completed. By the time of May 2019, the database website has access to about 28,000 data metadata and 130,000 data pictures, and all metadata will be desensitized according to the specifications. Now nearly 500,000 data have been digitized, time span from 1949 to 2005, which may involve directory types, including but not limited to:

- a) Private letters
- b) Private diary and work notes
- c) Divorce cases and other cases in the 1950s
- d) Communist party organization construction in the 1950s
- e) Detailed animal husbandry records of more than 50 peasant family for 20 years continuous
- f) Letters from the people
- g) other



The Contemporary Chinese Social Life Data Platform established by Fudan

### DATA RESOURCES / 数据资源



The Contemporary Chinese Social Life Resources collected by Fudan

Next the coalition will focus on sharing private letters whose owners had been marginalized for a long period of time. Fudan library will further upgrade the contents and multilingual pages, as well as digital database construction so as to serve scholars all over the world. It will contribute to the development of history, sociology, politics, anthropology and other disciplines. Of course, we are also equipped with legal experts to deal with correspondence-related issues with the relevant laws of China and the international community.

#### 2.2.3 Organize the Open Data Competition

How to make the rare historical collections more active? This year Fudan library and other academic institutions jointly sponsored the open data competition for teachers and students in Shanghai universities, to promote the study of Chinese social history by encouraging innovative research based on data mining. For example, there are letters datasets (nine groups and 105 letters) which were written by Shanghainese from 1950s to 1980s. The communication mainly happened between relatives,

friends, classmates, colleagues, talking about shopping, entering school, employment, love and marriage. Teachers and students could be able to use those letters to study that particular group of people and to understand the social order of a given time. Following this reasoning, as long as we have a sufficient mass of materials in one category, scholars should be able to use them to analyze a particular time period, a specific political campaign, or a real event in a given region. As of now, the collection of private letters is concentrated in the Shanghai area, once we accumulate a sufficient quantity of these materials, scholars could be able to construct a different and alternative story about Shanghai and produce original analysis of the city.

We provide metadata in Excel format. Fields include: time, place of sending, place of receiving, gender of the recipient, occupation of the recipient, introduction, keywords. The participants can do the following research from these data: to analyze the Change of Family Relations before and after the Reform & Opening; people's living standard from the description of clothing, food, housing and transportation in letters; to analyze the concept of marriage and love of Chinese people before and after the Reform & Opening, etc.

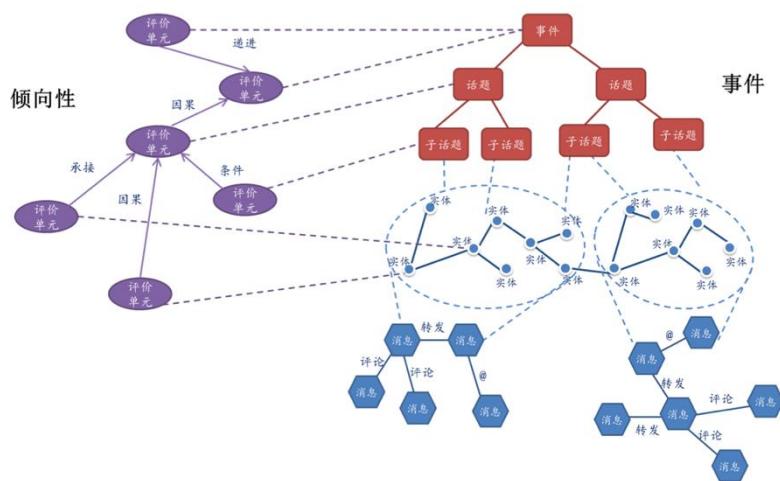
### **3. Strengthen the Application of Text Sentiment Analysis for today's collections**

We will continue to collect the traditional letters of Shanghai citizens, and at the same time, we should pay attention to the current text exchange based on social media. Social Media in China have been massively growing over the last few years. Everyday more than 117 million messages are generated on Wechat or Weibo. Social media has penetrated into all aspects of real life and has become an important channel for information transmission and maintenance of social relations.

For traditional documents such as letters, we often use the method of text sentiment analysis, which mainly focuses on the subjective emotional expression in language, and analyses the emotions, comments and attitudes expressed in text information. For sentiment is the main influencing factor of human behavior. Our beliefs, perceptions of reality, and choices are related to how we view and evaluate the history and real world. The method of text sentiment analysis focuses on the content level of words, sentences, paragraphs or documents, and works around the expression, classification and extraction of sentiment orientation.



Nowadays in the era of social media, the text is the main carrier in social media communication. The massive social life data makes it impossible to analyze them manually. Unlike the traditional artificial method of affective analysis, scholars now prefer to use natural language processing technology to analyze relevant topics and emotional tendencies in texts. Even to deal with the satirical sentences which are very difficult to deal with in political topics, there might be no emotional words in a sentence but it still implies the author's point of view. Sentiment analysis related research content and key technologies: sentiment classification, sentiment reasons detection, sentiment establishment, opinion summarization, intention mining, rumor detection and analysis of authentic assessment, Stance detection, Sentiment element extraction, Cross-domain sentiment analysis, etc.



### Hierarchy of Text Sentiment Analysis based on Social Media

The traditional sentiment tendency analysis is only for a single message content, and cannot fully and accurately reflect the semantic content of the text. Therefore, it is necessary to consider multi-source dynamic information such as social network, user node and social relationships. It would be quite helpful for the researchers to mine opinions on social media under text intensive processing framework. How to analyze and process the sentiment content quickly and effectively, and analyze the information flowing through the complex social network, has become an important problem. We need to learn from network science, complex systems, communication and other multi-disciplinary knowledge, combined with social network relations, user nodes, topic dissemination, context, information credibility and other dynamic information, to better serve various academic research.

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