

Globalization and Localization: On the Dual-track Strategy in Library Genealogy Services in Mainland China

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Abstract:

As the old saying goes, “great time of peace and prosperity, good opportunity to compile genealogy”, therefore, the Chinese who always think highly of blood lineage make a folk wave of genealogy research in recent years, and consequently many libraries seek to meet the demands. It has been a long-standing tradition for the Chinese libraries to collect family literature, while in the second decade of the 21st century, they present a new look by providing public oriented genealogy services. For example, in the north, the National Library of China launched ourroots.nlc.gov.cn in 2011, which is an integrated genealogy platform for the Chinese all over the world to query, compile, educate and research family trees; while in the south, cooperating with the Genealogical Society of Utah, the Guangzhou Library opened their Family Search Center to local people in 2013. The ourroots program, on the one hand, depends on the National Library’s own abundant genealogy collections, on the other hand, gathers local contributions from different parts of the earth in one place using the internet. Coincidentally, the Guangzhou Library program, for one thing, integrates local collections and outside resources of overseas professional institutions, for another, dedicates itself to fostering the genealogy culture of the Lingnan Area. In both cases, the old-time chains of collection and region that limit the genealogy services have been broken, and the same dual-track strategy of localizing as well as globalizing is shown in the users, the resources and the forms of services. Adopting the method of case study, this paper is going to structurally tackle, analyze and compare these two representative programs, and then make a summary and comment on the dual-track strategy, which demonstrates the innovation and exploratory nature of library genealogy services in Mainland China.

Keywords: Library Genealogy Services, ourroots.nlc.gov.cn of National Library of China, Family Search Center of Guangzhou Library, Strategy of Globalization, Strategy of Localization

Introduction

It seems that a surge of interest in genealogy research has been a global phenomenon. In the USA, genealogy is one of the most popular and fastest growing hobbies today. According to a survey, in 2000, sixty percent of Americans were researching their family history and heritage (Latham, 2003). The growth of interest in family history is also apparent in the UK (Joye & Baggs, 1997) and in Canada (Fellows, 1985). Recently the Chinese, who always think highly of blood lineage, are implementing the old adage of “great time of peace and prosperity, good opportunity to compile genealogy” superbly. There are two kinds of group in genealogy research, one is the folk group and the other is the academic group, and their needs, which are independent or cross over each other, are gradually being given value by public libraries and academic libraries.

Within many archives and library special collections, genealogical researchers make up the largest user group; in North America and Europe, they can account for fifty to ninety percent of all users (Tucker, 2006). In China, in order to meet the demand, many libraries seek to upgrade and expand their genealogy services, relying on their own abundant collections or drawing support from outside resources. Taking the ourroots.nlc.gov.cn web service of the National Library of China (hereafter Ourroots program of NLC) and the Family Search Center of the Guangzhou Library (hereafter FSC program of GZL) as examples, this paper is going to structurally tackle, analyze and compare these two representative programs, and then make a summary and comment on the dual-track strategy of localization and globalization, which demonstrates the innovation and exploratory nature of library genealogy services in Mainland China.

Literature Review

The following topics have been discussed in the Chinese and English literature on library genealogy services. **Firstly, library genealogy collection development.** Ding Xiaoming and Du Shujing summarized more than ten ways to collect genealogy, including strengthening propaganda, starting an initiative about genealogy collection, cooperating with the basic organizations and elderly associations, and including the local literature into the legal deposit system (Ding, 2007; Du, 2003). In addition, Dong Jie held the opinion that collection development should be supported by policies, and communication with genealogy holders should be valued (Dong, 2013). Wang Qixiang came up with the idea of constructing a local literature collection guarantee mechanism and depository management services to promote collection development (Wang, 2010). Wang Zhao discussed user oriented collection development through genealogy collecting, a digitized resource sharing platform for genealogy and genealogy websites construction. **Secondly, the development and utilization of library genealogy** (Wang, 2013). Zhang Junting concluded the compilation of *The Digest of Genealogy Collected in Shanghai Library* covered new ground in the layout of abstract, style and index; it was useful to further development and utilization of genealogy (Zhang,

2002). As to the genealogical record, Feng Yiru thought it was necessary to construct a genealogy metadata standard applying to Chinese genealogical research and applications, through analyzing the characteristics of Chinese genealogy to clearly state lineage features (Feng, 2011). **Thirdly, the digitization of genealogical resources.** K. Brian Chater introduced the work of the Utah Genealogical Society, which had undertaken microfilming the genealogical record for many years, as having laid a foundation for people all over the world to access relevant services (Chater, 1984). Huang Xiangong pointed out that the work of digitizing Chinese genealogy could be traced back to the 1990s, and was propitious to the protection and restoration of old literature and the promotion of service capability (Huang, 2008). Wang Zhao analyzed the current situation as regards digitized genealogical resources in China, and suggested perfecting the digitized work through establishing coordinated agents, setting unified standards, integrating with other literature resources and establishing an open access platform (Wang, 2013). Xiao Yu took ourroots.nlc.gov.cn as an example and discussed the new theory and method of genealogical literature collection and arrangement in Library 2.0 (Xiao, 2010). **Fourthly, the importance of genealogical services.** Dong Jie was of the view that great attention should be paid to communication with the one who compiles genealogy, to providing genealogy paradigms for users and to constructing relevant archives to do tracking services (Dong, 2013). Kong Xiangnian thought genealogical services were useful to boost harmony among families and form ties between people at home and abroad (Kong, 2006). Rick J. Ashton considered that genealogical services not only could strengthen local researches, but also could attract researchers from the United States (Ashton, 1983).

Methodology

The NLC launched ourroots.nlc.gov.cn in 2011 as an integrated genealogy platform for the Chinese all over the world to query, compile, research and disseminate family trees. The GZL, cooperating with the Genealogical Society of Utah, opened their Family Search Center to local people in 2013. The Ourroots program of NLC on the one hand depends on the NLC's own abundant genealogy collections, but on the other hand, gathers local contributions from different parts of the earth in one place using the internet. Coincidentally, the FSC program of the GZL, for one thing, integrates local collections and outside resources of overseas professional institutions, for another, dedicates itself to fostering the local genealogy culture of the Lingnan Area. In both cases, the old-time chains of collection and region that limit the genealogy services have been broken and the same dual-track strategy of localizing as well as globalizing is shown in the users, the resources and the forms of services. Adopting the case study method of cases, focusing on the dual-track strategy, and referring to the important issues mentioned in the relevant literature (RUSA, 2007 A; RUSA, 2007 B; RUSA, 2012; Nichols, 2012; Peckham, 2012) on library genealogy services at home and abroad, the authors structurally tackle these two representative programs through information processing and expert interview. The structural research framework is shown in Table 1, based on which the coding table and expert interview outline are drawn up.

Table 1: Structural Analysis Framework for Cases Study

First Class Indicators	Second Class Indicator	Third Class Indicator
Administration	Background	Demand
		Prerequisite
	Chance	
	Host	
	Partner	
	Operation	
	Finance	
Organization	Services	Basic service
		Programs and activities
	Collection	Basic information
		Composition
		Development
	Personnel	
	User	Composition
		Purpose
Education		
Publicity		
Effect		

Besides the study of these cases, a comparative approach between similar library genealogy services at home and abroad is adopted to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Two Cases

The Ourroots Program of NLC

The idea of the Ourroots program was put forward by the NLC at the 7th Conference on Cooperative Development and Sharing of Chinese Resources in 2008 (NLC, 2012A). The NLC had had its own tradition of genealogy collection and services long before. At the turn of the century, compiling genealogy is becoming a rising trend and some new characteristics are presented. Firstly, the need for tracing origins of the overseas Chinese is growing with their increased number, stable life and family inheritance. Secondly, China hopes to strengthen the blood lineage between the overseas Chinese and their motherland through compiling genealogy. Furthermore, the inheritance of traditional culture which includes compiling genealogy is becoming urgent under the wave of globalization. The traditional genealogy services find it difficult to meet this new kind of need, which is scattered in geography and bidirectional in communication; therefore, information technology and network techniques are indispensable. The National Digital Library Project of China launched in 1998 by NLC provides a good foundation of infrastructure and experience in digital projects construction for providing web-based genealogy services.

The Chinese always think highly of blood lineage, and the concern may be stronger for the people who are or were away from their motherland and hometown. And this may be the most important reason for the Macao Foundation to choose the Ourroots program as their cooperation initiative with NLC at the 10th anniversary of Macao's return to China in 2009.

This first cooperation in culture and education aims to inherit the Chinese imperial clan culture, consolidate the clan sentiment and strengthen the national sense of belonging through the complementarity of professional strength and resource advantage. The Macao Foundation has provided \$3,500,000 Macao Patacas for the first phase construction (2008-2011) and \$4,000,000 Macao Patacas for the second phase construction (2012-2017) so far.

The Ourroots program is constructed and managed by the NLC, and the Ancient Books Branch is in charge of project planning, resource construction and data maintenance while the Department of Information Technology is responsible for technology support. The program adopts a staged construction plan lasting till 2024, and after six phases of construction it is expected to be a center of global Chinese roots, a center of genealogy documents, services and research. The first phase of the integrated digitized genealogy services system has been constructed in 2011, processing 500 articles of surname data, 30000 articles of genealogical biography data and more than 500 kinds of full text image (Lu, 2011). Ourroots is currently in its second phase of construction. The Ourroots program adopts the services model of Library 2.0, and the users play important roles in it. The diversity of users (including potential users), such as libraries, archives, academic agents and genealogy associations from all over the world, indicates the openness of the program.

The Ourroots program has offered the following services so far: firstly, retrieving genealogy and local literature; secondly, looking up the original image of genealogy and local literature; thirdly, guidance and consultation for those seeking their roots; fourthly, an encyclopedia of such topics as family roots, genealogy culture and surnames; fifthly, self-constructing genealogy on line. The users can log into “My Space” (Figure 1) after registering, where they can establish and compile their own genealogy (Figure 2 & 3).



Figure 1: “My Space” on Ourroots.nlc.gov.cn



Figure 2: “Personal Homepage” on Ourroots.nlc.gov.cn



Figure 3: “Family Memory” on Ourroots.nlc.gov.cn

The Vancouver Public Library developed a Chinese-Canadian Genealogy website in 2005, which provided a wide range of resources aimed at Chinese-Canadian genealogists or anyone with an interest in Chinese-Canadian history and culture. In this undertaking, it received partial support from Library and Archives Canada and also the Chinese-Canadian History Wiki: Profiles From a Community, which offered a forum for collecting and sharing stories about individuals born before 1901 to parents of Chinese origin. Similar to ourroots.nlc.gov.cn, the Vancouver program also adopted construction by stages. There are six major sections of the website so far, including Basics, Chinese Names, History and Pioneers, Family Sources, Documents and Records, and Back to China. (Vancouver Public Library, 2015)

The FSC Program of GZL

In fact, the GZL does not have a collection tradition and the advantage of possessing informal publications in genealogy, and did not pay attention to genealogy services until the recent turn of the century, with increased user demand, a renewed library services concept and strengthened national financial support. In 2007, due to the suggestion of Professor Luo Wei of Sun Yat-sen University, the man in charge at GZL got to know the Genealogical Society of Utah and tried to get into touch with Mr. Qian Zhengmin, the Asia area manager and researcher of its Asia research center. In 2010, when the GZL was preparing for the public opening of its brand-new building, the timing was good for carrying out its FSC program. After years of negotiation, in 2013, the two parties signed the *FamilySearch Agreement of International Cooperation Libraries Protocol*, and FSC was officially opened in June.

The FSC is constructed and managed by the GZL, and the Department of Acquisition and Cataloging is in charge of the collecting and processing of genealogy resources, while the Section of Local Literature and Ancient Books of the Department of Reference is responsible for FSC's daily operation and services. The resources of the FSC program consist of two parts, one is the collection of the GZL itself, while the other is the digital resources of Guangdong genealogy provided by the Genealogical Society of Utah. There are about 20,000 copies of physical genealogy collections in the GZL, developed by purchasing from booksellers, by acquisition and by donation from private holders. The earlier focus of the collection development was on the local genealogy resources of Guangzhou, and later the resources of other areas came to be covered, which enabled the FSC services to be diversified and attract different groups of users. On the other hand, besides the digital resources of Guangdong genealogy provided by the Genealogical Society of Utah, the GZL is digitizing its own collections step by step in order to provide web-based services in the future.

The FSC program provides a worldwide genealogy service. Currently, the main services include receiving readers' consultation requests, genealogy retrieval, full text reading and supplying genealogy clues. Consulting archives are recorded and maintained for analysis to ensure a better service.



Figure 4: Family Search Genealogy Center of Guangzhou Library

Discussion

The Background of the Dual-Track Strategy

In traditional Chinese society, a person had a hard time to survive only with his self-identity; therefore the group identity was a breath of life. The clans symbolized by the ancestral temple and genealogy are such a kind of group identity. This tradition has had a profound influence. Modern Chinese, who are educated to ‘set oneself free and seek oneself’, no matter if they are city intellectuals who left their hometown when they were young or overseas Chinese who are scattered around the world, still tend to start with the history of their family when looking for their self-identity. And genealogy compilation in the digital age makes such self-identity seeking less resource and labor dependent. Although the civilian shift in genealogy compilation goes back to the Ming dynasty, it was still a traditional, collective and rural ceremonial support for a very long time; while the emergence of digital genealogy not only quickens the civilian shift of genealogy, but also brings an utter transformation of it into a modern, individual, urban and ceremonially independent activity based on cyberspace (Cheng, 2001). This transformation calls for a transition in library genealogy services.

Digital genealogy and on-line genealogy can be traced to 1980s. An early example is Ancestry.com, established in 1983. Commercial behavior mostly appeared in the early period, with libraries and archives seldom participating in on-line genealogy. In fact, the emergence of commercial digital and on-line genealogy was to meet folk needs which were hard to satisfy through traditional public genealogical organizations (Jia & Bao, 2014). The traditional library genealogy services focused on the development and arrangement of collections and were aimed mostly at scholars, they were limited by their physical locations and the scale was kind of small. But digital genealogy, for one thing, meets the demands of folk researches, for another, gradually changes the way of compiling genealogy and arouses a surge of interest in genealogical research. Under this circumstance, it becomes much harder for the traditional services to meet the new demands. The characteristics of the digital world -- no frontiers in geography, ubiquitous location, the variety of subjects and private circumstances of genealogical compilation -- all together call for library genealogy services to change over from collection-oriented to user-oriented, from independent and closed to cooperative and open. And there the dual-track strategy of globalization and localization comes out.

The Strategy of Globalization

Global Cooperation Partners. This strategy is at first incarnated in cooperation partners. The programs of NLC and GZL are both dependent on libraries, while the overseas support shows up during the period of implementation. Among global partners, the Genealogical Society of Utah is most active. Cooperation in genealogy between the Genealogical Society of Utah and Chinese librarianship began at the dawn of 21st century. In 2000, the project of the *Chinese Genealogy Catalogue* led by the Shanghai Library was established, while the Genealogical Society of Utah, serving as a subeditor, not only assisted the *Catalogue* in fund raising, but also was responsible for the collection and compilation of Chinese genealogy in North American and Europe (Wang, 2008). In 2011, a delegation of the Genealogical Society of Utah visited the NLC and donated a batch of digital genealogical resources to it, including 210,000 leaf images of 54 surnames and 185 kinds of genealogy. Among these, there were 35 kinds of genealogy from Qing dynasty, 99 kinds from the Republic of China, and 51 kinds of new-compiled genealogy. Five kinds of them are manuscript transcriptions, 145 are movable type editions, eight are stereotype editions, one is a lithographed edition, and there are 26

other editions. All of them are new for the NLC's collection, and the NLC issued them on ouroots.nlc.gov.cn (NLC, 2012B). In 2012, the partners went on to discuss further cooperation possibilities based on the Ourroots program.(NLC, 2012C)

Global Service Resources. The strategy of globalization is also reflected in resources for service. Whether the NLC, which has rich genealogy collections, or the GZL which has no collection foundation, both make full use of the Internet to access global service resources. For the FSG program of the GZL, the cooperation with the Genealogical Society of Utah provides abundant external resources. Users of the GZL can query the film catalogue and digital full text collected by the Society and look up a full text database. They can also access the resources undocumented on the Internet through interlibrary loan. And a batch of local digital genealogy resources of Guangdong Province has been presented as a gift to the GZL to provide convenient services to local people.

Global Chinese Users. The strategy of globalization still embodies the user groups served by the two programs. ouroots.nlc.gov.cn is a cross-regional, cross-border, and worldwide website which has since its establishment had the additional objective of spreading Chinese genealogical culture and strengthening the blood lineage between the overseas Chinese and their motherland. And its target of becoming the chief platform for Chinese tracing their roots decides that, different from other library genealogy services, the local population are not its primary users. Records of the IP addresses visiting ouroots.nlc.gov.cn reveal that there are many foreign users. The FSC program of the GZL still focuses on in-library services and has mostly local users, but it has also received a number of queries from immigrants, minorities and international users since its opening in 2013.

Global Cultural Radiation. Since 2006, under the strategy of promoting Chinese culture developed by the People's Republic of China Ministry of Culture, Chinese librarianship has actively planned and implemented a series of international cooperation programs, and ouroots.nlc.gov.cn is among these. Similar to other genealogy websites, ouroots.nlc.gov.cn can help the ethnic Chinese scattered in every corner of the world, by means of the Internet, to establish their own genealogy, to preserve their genealogical records and even to find lost family members in order to establish closer family relationships. The status and collection of the NLC decide that it has an incomparable advantage, different from other genealogy websites, in spreading Chinese traditional culture, promoting the development of family relationships and information communication, and creating a private environment of close relationship among Chinese members which is unaffected by location.

The Strategy of Localization

Localization in Collection Development. This has two meanings. On one hand, under the strategy of globalization, library genealogy services not only rely on their own collections, but also on the cooperative development and sharing of digital resources, which can save a lot of money and guarantee more funds to establish one's special genealogy collections, where local materials are always the choice. Since the start of FSC program, the GZL has focused on the collection development of local genealogy in the Guangzhou area. On the other hand, there is a principle of reciprocity in the cooperative development and sharing of information resources (Cheng & Pan, 2004); therefore, every partner should have the resources needed by others to realize fruitful long-term cooperation. To most libraries, local genealogy resources are the biggest advantage in this respect.

Localization in Founding Genealogical Culture Circles. If open cooperation means global cooperation partners, it also represents more links between libraries and local clans and genealogy associations. For example, at the end of 2014, cooperating with Museum of Modern Canton, the GZL hosted an Exhibition of Rare Guangdong Genealogy in which tens of representative Guangdong genealogy originals of the Qing dynasty and the Republic of China, cherished by Museum of Modern Canton, were displayed (GZL, 2014). Besides, the GZL has established a relationship with the Clan of Su in Gunagzhou Tianhe Chebei; the librarians visited the ancestral hall of the clan and collected genealogies from them. Combined with the development of local genealogical collections, different kinds of relationship and cooperation have been established, and a local genealogical culture circle is gradually growing up.

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