
New Styles of “Reading Space” as a way to expand public library service in China and Japan

Xiaofang Zhang

Department of Information Management, Peking University, Beijing, China.

E-mail address: zhangxiaofang@pku.edu.cn

Takashi Nagatsuka

Tsurumi University, Yokohama, Japan.

E-mail address: nagatsuka-t@tsurumi-u.ac.jp



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Abstract:

The development of Public Reading Space (PRS) in China and Japan is a new way for public libraries to meet readers' needs in the digital and smart society by space transformation. The PRS is a physical public place with reading resources that opens free to the public. Different styles of PRSs are emerging in China and Japan in recent years, which can be divided into three types. Type I refers to those established by government sectors, while Type II is established jointly by government and non-government sectors, and Type III is established by non-government sectors. This paper introduces the current status about the new styles of PRSs as a way to expand public library service in China and Japan, and describes about typical cases of PRSs which were established by government sector and/or non-government sector to fulfil the needs of different communities.

Keywords: public library, library service, public reading space, space transformation

1 Introduction

Libraries are expected to play an important role as parts of the digital and smart infrastructures of modern society. Their social significance is considered a steadily increase in the two spaces of physical and digital environments. At the same time, libraries are required to achieve effective organizational transformation in a changing information environment (Braun et., 2018), and also expected to be able to support collaboration, improve communication, foster community outreach and facilitate partnerships within and across libraries and vendors (Farrell et., 2017).

Library services have changed in different ways throughout several decades (Wiegand, 2011). Among them, as emphasized “Library as Place: rethinking roles, rethinking space” (Bennett, 2005), expanding the space for public library is of major concern in the world. For instance, a public library in the US targets teens to create spaces where they can thrive and conduct creative activities (Velasquez, 2016). The public library to know the new needs of citizens becomes more and more important. A number of attempts to know the needs of citizens have been made to improve the existing library services. Recently, machine learning algorithms and predictive analytics were introduced to know what the patron wants (Litsey et., 2018).

The new concept known as “Public Reading Space (PRS)” as a physical public place with reading resources came into use several years ago in China, which is a way to meet readers’ needs by space transformation. The PRS is characterized by the transboundary combination between reading spaces and public spaces (Wang, 2017). If bookshops, cafés, train stations and supermarkets add a space for reading books free, we can regard these places as the PRSs.

Although the same term of “Reading Space” is not usually used in Japan, reading being important for enriching life has been believed. In 1947, Book Week was resumed by publishing companies, bookstores, libraries and the mass media to promote Japan's redevelopment as a peaceful, cultured nation (Japan Public Interest Incorporated Association for Promotion of Book Reading, 2018). The PRS is defined as reading place being opened to the public such as public libraries in Japan.

Public libraries have played a major role in developing PRSs. It can be seen in two ways. One is that public libraries bring about an enlargement of PRSs themselves, upgrading their space by relocation and redesigning. The other is that public libraries develop partnerships with other organizations to build or improve new PRSs, sometimes public libraries even act as leading sectors. The increasing numbers of PRSs in China and Japan are both rapidly changing and expanding their features and services to adapt the digital society.

This paper introduces the current status about the new styles of PRSs as a way to expand public library service in China and Japan, and describes about typical cases of PRSs which were established by government sector and/or non-government sector to fulfill the needs of different communities.

2 Current status and styles of Public Reading Spaces (PRSs) in China

The PRSs in China developed in recent years are considered to be caused by the following matters. Firstly, the rapid urbanization is gradually drawing people’s attention to public spaces of local communities. Secondly, the National Reading Promotion is driving the developing of reading spaces. Thirdly, with the purpose of building the Modern System of Public Culture Service, supportive laws and regulations are issued to encourage government to buy services from social organizations and private companies.

Many government sectors are seeking ways to cooperate with non-government sectors to build PRSs for the growing society needs in China. The social significance of the PRS was officially recognised by the public in 2014 (Wang, 2017). For better understanding, the PRSs are divided into three types established by different sectors (Fig.1).

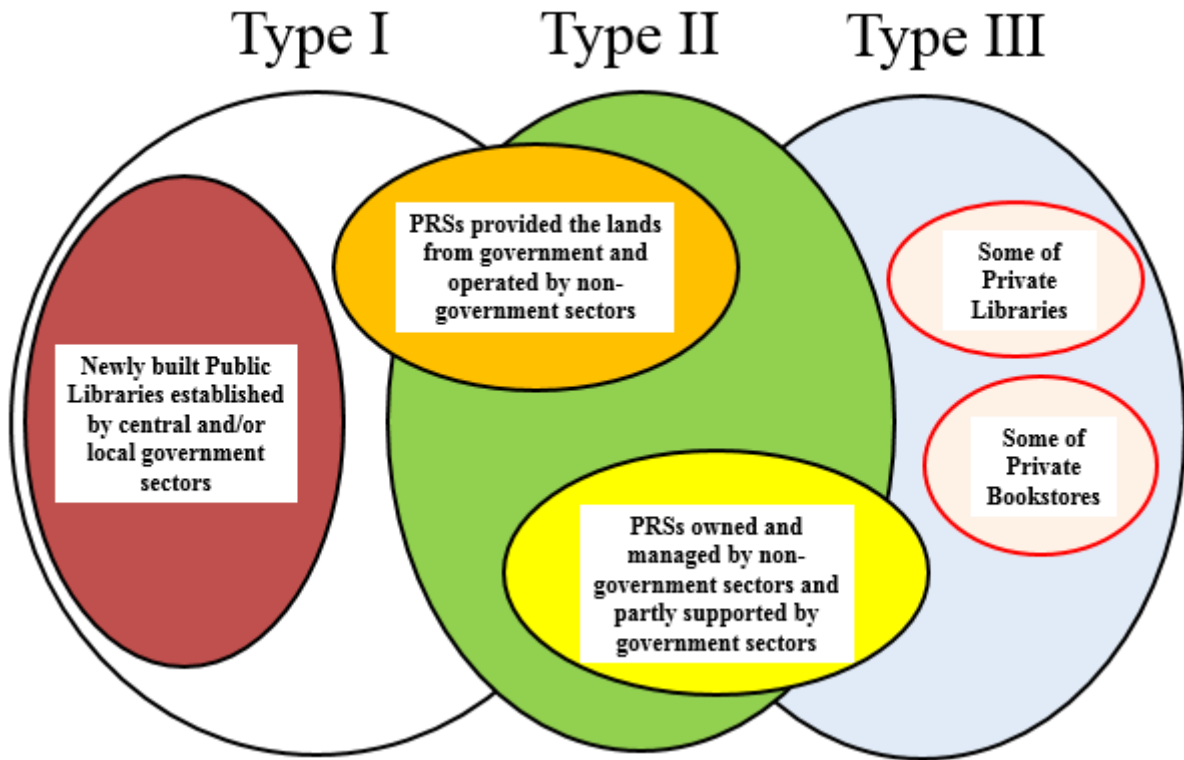


Fig.1 Three types of PRSs in China

(Type I: PRSs established by government sectors, Type II: PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors, Type III: PRSs established by non-government sectors)

Type I: PRSs established by government sectors

Type I mainly consists of public libraries which were newly built by central and/or local government in large city areas since 2000s. Like Haidian Library in Beijing, Guangzhou Library in Guangdong, Pudong Library in Shanghai, a large number of new central public libraries have been built to expand floor space and reading services over the past decade. Most of them locate in a cultural district of large city and provide new reading services for local citizens. These newly built public libraries are redesigned as new styles of PRSs to achieve the requests from citizens in a digital and smart society.

The new Guangzhou Library is a good example of public libraries which were newly built in large city areas since 2000s. Guangzhou Library locates in a cultural district of the city, along with Guangzhou Tower, Guangdong Provincial Museum, Guangzhou Opera House, Guangzhou 2nd Children's Palace, and serves over 20 million citizens. Guangzhou Library holds 7.90 million books and provides 4,000 seats in the reading rooms for encouraging people to read and enjoy reading. Guangzhou Library which has a floor space of about 98,000 square meters is divided into different functional spaces for particular readers such as a picture book space and a toy space for kids. In 2016, the library started two makerspaces for adults and teens respectively, in which 3D printers and other tools serve for innovative activities (Xu et., 2016). The new Guangzhou Library which gains an open and flexible new design of spaces and offers diversified services transforms to an inclusive and innovative PRS as the place of reading, sharing and bonding for citizens.

Type II: PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors

Type II refers to PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors, which share the features of cooperation, diversification, non-profitability and sustainability and also make an active contribution to the promotion of the reading habit and the improvement in a local community. The PRSs of Type II are divided into two subtypes: the ones provided the lands from government and operated by non-government sectors such as Zhuandu Space in Xicheng District, Beijing (Table 1, No.7); and the other owned and managed by non-government sectors and partly supported by government sectors such as Wanke City Experience Center in Guangzhou (Guangzhou Library, 2018) and City Studies in Chaoyang District, Beijing (Chaoyang District Library, 2018). The second subtype is the mainstream in the PRSs established by the cooperation between government and non-government sectors, which also practically act as branch libraries of the public libraries established by local government.

The Special Reading Space (SRS) in Xicheng District of Beijing which is a regional name of PRSs is one of the best cases to describe the styles of PRSs in Type II. The SRS was started in 2014 for building a diversified reading service system in Xicheng District which was organized by the Culture Committee (Yan, 2015). The government sectors provide financial support and sometimes spaces, and non-government sectors, on the other hand, run the SRS or sometimes provide spaces. The Library Management Association (an NGO) evaluates the activities of each SRS annually (Fig.2).

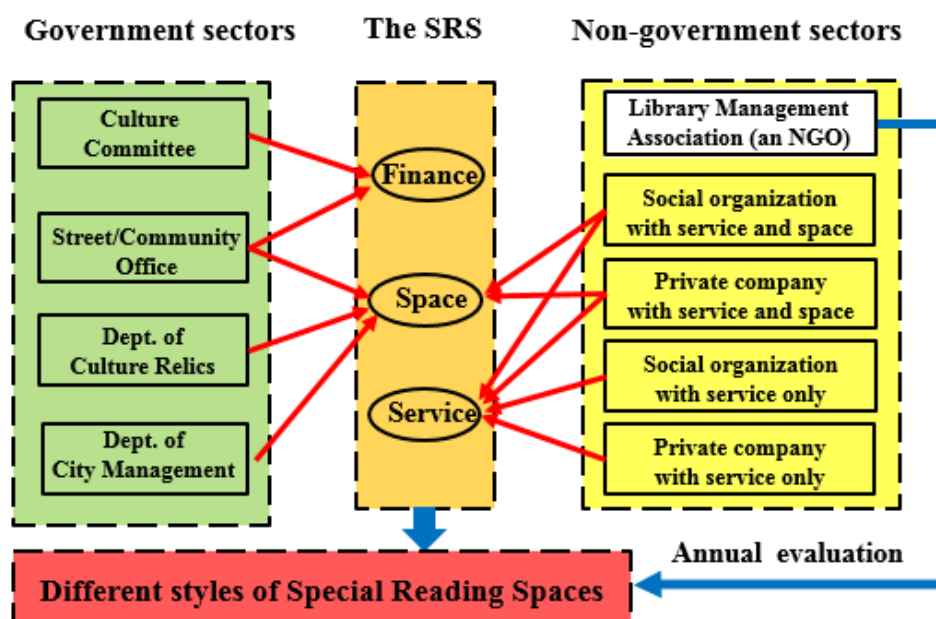


Fig.2 The relationship among the sectors associated with SRS in Xicheng District, Beijing

In 2017, the SRS made up of 18 different places, each of which is “special” in the way of getting finances and spaces, and organizing its own mixture of various services for the nearby communities (Table 1). For example, the first place of SRS is established in 2014 named Zhuandu Space (Table 1, No.7). A private bookshop named Zhengyang Bookstore moved into a well-protected national culture relic site called Wansong Tower, thus establishing a new PRS. Zhuandu Space is special in a collection of books written by and writing about People in Beijing. It opens 12 hours per day and gives exhibitions about Beijing culture. There were almost 4,000 people applying for library cards in its first year of operation.

Table 1. The 18 different places of Special Reading Spaces (SRS)

No.	Name	Non-government sectors	Specialty of service	Owned by
1	Baiyun Station	Beijing Shiji Linghui Meeting Service Co.	Green & environmental lifestyle	Government sectors
2	Haitang Shuzhai	Beijing Ziyang Traditional Culture Development Co.	For retired and aged reader	
3	Jiaguwen Yuedu Space	Beijing Jiaguwen Yuedu Culture Diffusion Co.	Reading for leisure time	
4	Xihua Shufang	Beijing National Library Bookstore Co.	Beijing Siheyuan & traditional culture	
5	Xuanyang Station	Beijing Shangpin Sunshine Culture Co.	For children and their parents	
6	Yanchilou Bookstore	China Bookstore	Traditional culture, 24-hour opening time	
7	Zhuandu Space	Beijing Zhengyang Shuju Co.	Beijing culture & history	
1	Bo Space	Beijing Jingdian Bowen Culture Co.	Classic reading	Non-government sectors
2	Fanxing Shuba	Beijing Tianyi Tongge Culture & Art Co.	Play culture	
3	Gulouxi Theater	Beijing Gulouxi Culture Co.	Theater culture and environment	
4	Hua Bao Zhai	Beijing Hua Bao Zhai Culture Co.	Traditional culture	
5	Jincai Art Library	Beijing Jincai Art Library	Art exhibition and activity	
6	Man Tang Xiang	Beijing Man Tang Xiang International Tea Culture Co.	Tea culture	
7	Rong Bao Zhai	Beijing Rong Bao Zhai Café House	Traditional culture and rare collection	
8	Tianqiao Juchang Ballet	Beijing Zhongba Yanchu Co.	Theater culture	
9	Xinmu Library	Beijing Hongdandan Dysopia Service Center	For visually disabled reader	
10	Yuelai Yuemei Space	Beijing Yafu Education Consulting Co.	Pleasant reading environment	
11	Yutaoyuan Shuxiang Station	Society of Community Civilization Promotion in Xicheng, Beijing	Community construction and bonding	

Subsequent places of SRS were quickly established after the first attempt. Jiaguwen Yuedu Space (Table 1, No.3) is a combination of a street library and a private bookstore. The street library being also called community library is a small-scale public library established by local government which locates within the building of community center in many cases. The SRS locates in a government office building and is operated by 7 employees of the bookstore and 2 of the street library. Jiaguwen Yuedu Space have held a total number of 257 reading activities, issued 208 library cards and 400 member cards in its first year of operation. The success of Jiaguwen Yuedu Space as a SRS suggests the possibility of activating a street library by the cooperation with non-government sectors.

Most of these SRSs in Xicheng District have already been or are ready to be in cooperation with public libraries established by government. In some cases, the SRSs were integrated with a street library or connected to the OPAC system of the public library in the same area, while in other cases, the SRSs provide distinctive collections and services to extend an existing public library service. If various styles and types of PRSs establish in each community, an existing public library service will surely have the opportunity to expand to more citizens.

Type III: PRSs established by non-government sectors

Non-government sectors refer to social organizations such as NPOs, NGOs and Foundations etc., private companies and individuals. Type III mainly consists of two subtypes that is non-government libraries and non-government bookstores. Some of them can be regarded as PRSs if they open to the public and provide spaces and books for free reading.

With the advancement of digital and smart society, offline bookstores are seriously hard to get profit only by selling books. Many of them began to reposition themselves by providing extra services, as the case of Man Shufang in Suzhou. The situation is quite similar in non-government libraries. The non-government library is also called “independent library” or “private library”, which plays a significant and indispensable role in providing public reading service.

In 2018, there are at least 412 non-government libraries in China, many of which spread around rural areas (Dept. of Information Management in Peking University, 2018). These non-government libraries are serving as PRSs to provide books and reading activities especially for villagers in rural areas. For instance, Ziqiang Tushucheng as a non-government library locates in a village of Hunan Province which was established by a retired government director, run by a volunteer team of old villagers, and supports many young people and primary students in reading and studying (Wang et., 2018). The non-government library is not only a space of book collections what someone needs but also a public place for communicating and connecting with each other. The PRSs in rural areas have regional differences by a difference of local culture, each of which contributes to the rural communities.

3 Current status and styles of Public Reading Spaces (PRSs) in Japan

In 2003, a part of the Local Government Act was performed revision about management administration of “public facility” where the Designated Manager System (DMS) can implement. The DMS is able to entrust public facilities which have been managed by public groups conventionally to wide group where private business person as a manager of public facility is included.

In the 2000s, the government stated the promotion of compound facilities in the White Paper, where multiple social education facilities, for example a library and lifelong learning center, etc. are combined into a complex building or an appointed place (White paper, 2005). In 2016, the government pointed to promote social education implemented by both the private and public sectors for creating a lifelong learning society (White paper, 2016). Public libraries in Japan were rapidly transformed by the progress of digital and smart society in quality and quantity. Here, we looked at the government policies which promoted the transformation of public libraries established by government sectors to the new styles of PRSs(Fig. 3).

Type I: PRSs established by government sectors

Here, we look at the PRSs side of public libraries established by government sectors. The typical examples of public libraries in Japan were analyzed to figure out new styles of PRS as a way to expand public library service. The public libraries of Type I were divided into three subtypes (Table 2). When public libraries established by government sectors transform for the future society, the number of I-B subtype could project to increase in the future.

The I-A subtype is a public library as represented by Chiyoda Library in Chiyoda District, Tokyo which transformed by adding a new service for business persons working at the business center in Tokyo. The management of the library was changed from a local

government directly to private companies. Chiyoda Library was remodeled and reopened in 2007 and has been managed by VIAX Co. Ltd. and Suntory Publicity Service (SPS) Ltd as a designated manager named by Chiyoda Ward Office until now. Chiyoda Library started Wifi service, Chiyoda Web library, business support service and concierge service, etc in 2007. The number of visitors increased over 1 million per year.

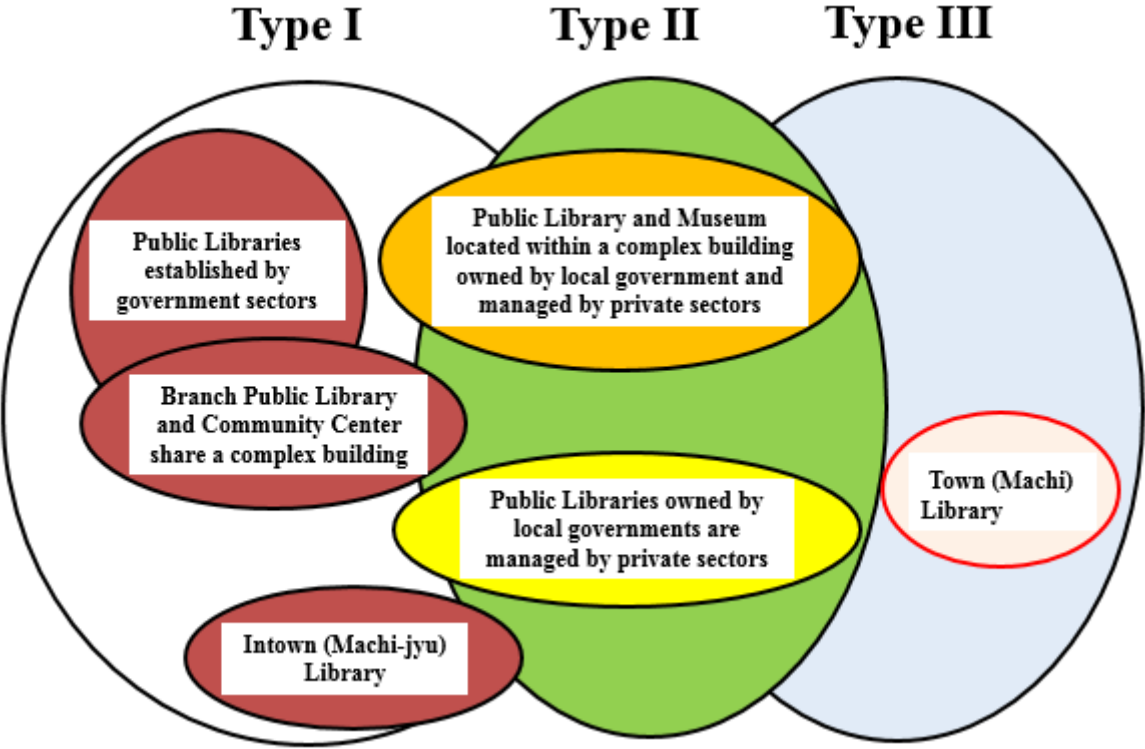


Fig.3 Three types of the PRSs in Japan

(Type I: PRSs established by government sectors, Type II: PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors, Type III: PRSs established by non-government sectors)

The I-B subtype is a public library as represented by Chiyoda City’s Hibiya Library & Museum in Chiyoda District, Tokyo, Kamitoda Branch Library in Toda City, Saitama Prefecture, Takeo City Library and Kids’ Library in Nagasaki Prefecture, Tsugaru City Library in Aomori Prefecture and Yachiyo City Central Library & Public Gallery in Chiba Prefecture. These libraries transformed by cooperating with other organizations such as museum, gallery, café, book store, supermarket, etc. The management of these libraries changed from a local government directly to private companies. Chiyoda City’s Hibiya Library & Museum was transferred from Tokyo Metropolitan Government to Chiyoda Ward in 2008 and was remodeled and reopened in 2011 as the Chiyoda Ward Hibiya Library & Museum. Takeo City Library and Kids’ Library was rebuilt and opened as a complex facility composed of library, historical museum, bookstore, café in 2013. The complex facility is managed by Culture Convenience Club Co., Ltd. as a designated manager named by Takeo city government. Culture Convenience Club Co., Ltd. operates the shops known as Tsutaya Books. Tsugaru City Library in Aomori Prefecture opened in a part of the building of AEONMALL Tsugaru Kashiwa (a supermarket). Tsugaru City Library is managed by TRC Library Service Inc. named as a designated manager by Tsugaru city government. Where the

key industries in Tsugaru City are agriculture, the collections of library improve on agriculture and job assistance.

The I-C subtype is a public library as represented by Anjo City Library in Anforet in Aichi Prefecture and Art Museum & Library in Ota City, Gunma Prefecture. The library transformed by cooperating with other organizations such as art museum, café. The libraries are managed by local government directly. The librarians employed by local government manage these libraries. Anjo City Library in Anforet was opened a complex facility composed of public and private facilities. The complex facility named as Anforet was built through the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) in urban renewal at Anjo City. The public facilities are composed of Anjo City Library and Information Center, Hall, Park. The private facilities are composed of Supermarket, culture school, multilevel parking garage. Anforet locates close to Anjo railway station in the center of Anjo City where becomes deserted.

Table 2. The subtypes of Type I: PRSs established by government sectors

Subtype	Library Names	Cooperate with	Managed by
I-A	Chiyoda Library	New service targeting to business persons	Companies
I-B	Chiyoda City's Hibiya Library & Museum	Complex facility with historical museum, café	Companies
	Kamitoda Branch Library in Toda City	Complex facility with Community Center	Company
	Takeo City Library and Kids' Library	Complex facility with historical museum, bookstore, café	Company
	Tsugaru City Library in Aomori Pref.	Complex facility within supermarket	Company
	Yachiyo City Central Library & Public Gallery	Complex facility with Public Gallery, café	Companies
I-C	Anjo City Library in Anforet	The complex facility built through the PFI(Private Finance Initiative)	Local Government
	Art Museum & Library, Ota City	Complex facility with Art Museum, café	Local Government

Type II: PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors

There are two aspects of Type II of which PRSs were established jointly by government and non-government sectors in Japan. The first one is that a public library as PRS acts for establishing new PRSs in cooperation with social organizations such as NPOs, NGOs and foundations etc., private companies or individuals throughout a region of the library.

For example, Art Museum & Library in Ota City, Gunma Prefecture sets up small libraries operated by a person or groups such as Japanese sake brewery, branch office of Bank, café, restaurant and bookstore which locate throughout the city named the Intown (Private) Library. The total number of the Intown (Private) Libraries is 44 in 2018. Art Museum & Library in Ota City contributes positively to the operation of the small libraries named as the Intown (Private) Library. As the other example, Obuse Town Library in Nagano Prefecture started a similar project named as the Intown (Private) Library in 2013. The Intown (Private) Library started with 10 places in 2013, of which the number expands to 14 places in 2018.

Shimanouchi Library in Chuo Ward of Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture provides a map of the Intown (Private) Library. Eniwa city library operates the Intown (Private) Library over 40 places which are similar as the places in Ota City and other cities.

The second one is that a manager and management system in some public libraries as PRSs has been changed from local governments to NPOs, private companies, foundations etc. We have already explained in the part of Type I. Many of public libraries shown in Type I are managed by private companies. The private companies who manage public libraries introduced new services into their managed public libraries. This is the positive side of public libraries as PRSs established jointly by government and non-government sectors. However, we have much to do with the improvement of services and working conditions in public libraries as PRSs for promoting better relations of the citizens within the community.

Type III: PRSs established by non-government sectors

Town (Machi) Library as a private library was started by a person for hoping to expand the PRS and increase the number of PRSs in 2012 (Town (Machi) Library, 2018). They held the conference of “Micro Library Summit” and invited a guest who is the founder of Little Free Library in the US in 2014. Many individuals and groups opened the Town (Machi) Library. As the places were opened the Machi-Library, a person’s home, café, restaurant, temple, dental clinic, hospital, university, shop, etc. are registered on the webpage of Town (Machi) Library. The total number of Town (Machi) Library is over 400 places. Town (Machi) Library is a typical example of PRSs established by non-government sectors.

The NPO Information Station established for supporting the initiation and operation of community-based private library in 2004 (NPO Information Station, 2018). The number of community-based private libraries which join as a member of the NPO Information Station is over 70 places.

4 Comparative analysis of PRSs in China and Japan

The differences of PRSs in China and Japan might be caused by a different process in social modernization. In China, the “Public Reading Space(PRS)” contributes not only to make more people available to use the public library service, but also to build the society for people enjoying reading. Concretely speaking, the new city public libraries and cooperative reading spaces in urban areas aim to build the “Reading City (A city in which all citizens can enjoy reading at the PRSs all around)”, while the non-government libraries in rural areas help to build the “Reading Village (A village in which all villagers can enjoy reading at the PRSs all around)”, thus working together to build the whole image of “Reading China (A country in which all citizens can enjoy reading at the PRSs all around)”.

In Japan, the public libraries are transforming to new styles of “Public Reading Space(PRS)” as a way to expand their public library services, for examples, a new service for business persons working at the business center, a cooperative service with other organizations and the management change of libraries from a local government directly to private companies, etc. The self-transforming of public libraries to the PRSs is a feature of libraries established by government sectors. The number of I-B subtype within three subtypes of Type I could project to increase in the future. This is a special feature of Japan. The Intown (Private) Library of Type II which is established jointly by government and non-government sectors is a unique feature of Japan. Town (Machi) Library as a private library of Type III which is established by non-government sectors is another feature in Japan.

In developing the PRSs, we found the PRSs could be divided into three types in both China and Japan. The similarities and differences of the PRSs between China and Japan are as already described earlier. We suppose that the number of Type II will enlarge and that the cooperation between government and non-government sectors will expand the coverage of the PRSs in both countries (Fig. 4).

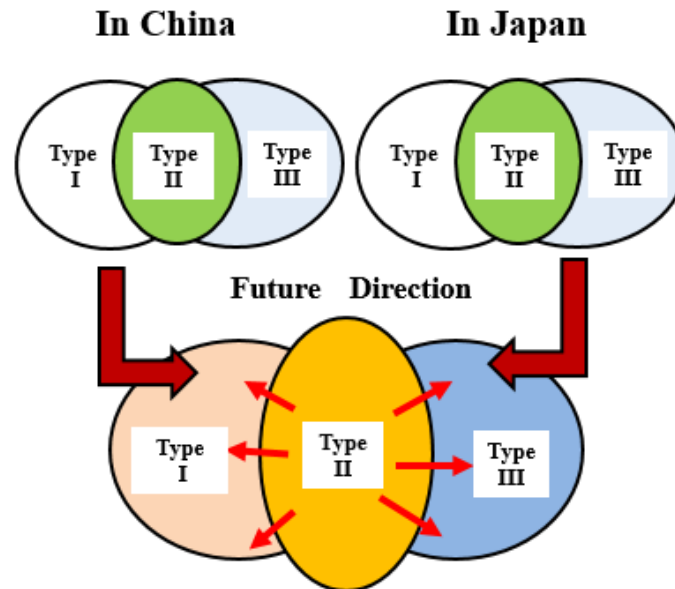


Fig.4 Similarities and differences of the PRSs between China and Japan

Besides, we found another similar trend that essential roles of readers are increasing in developing the PRSs in China and Japan. The PRSs value and focus on the readers' needs and readers' abilities to serve themselves and each other. For examples, there is a volunteered group of readers named "Library Facilitator" helping to hold reading events and training classes for Hikifune Library in Sumida Ward, Tokyo, and exhibition of readers' handworks to promote books in Kamitoda branch library in Toda City, Saitama Prefecture. In the case of Yutaoyuan Shuxiang Station in Beijing, books and supplies are donated by readers, reading activities are organized by readers and regular readers bring in new readers.

5 Discussion

The development of PRSs have shed new light on a new feature of public libraries in the future. The rising number of PRSs in China and Japan have transformed the reading environment for citizens in each community. Although the features of PRSs are highly dependent upon the region and also characteristics of the country, a concept of the PRS could be applied to other countries.

The next step for public libraries is believed to join in developing PRSs. There are some predictive views in developing PRSs: (1) community is a basis of public culture and a driving force of PRS; (2) PRSs of Type II established jointly by government and non-government sectors will increase in proportion; (3) readers will play a key role in developing PRSs.

The present study on the PRSs as a way to expand public library service is in an early stage of research. This paper only discussed the existing styles of PRSs and not to be an exhaustive search of the PRSs in China and Japan. An intense investigation into the PRSs would be needed in the future. An early-stage research in this paper is necessary to continue for finding

different types of PRSs that adapt the proper conditions in each region and meet the special needs of community.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Prof. Wang, Dept. of Information Management, Peking University, for his support in writing this paper, and to our friends from the PRSs mentioned in this paper for their cooperativeness during our interviews.

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