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DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the displays and exhibitions in university libraries. It was conducted by questionnaire survey on six theses: Frequency and purpose, Staffing, Funding, Space and safeguards, Subjects, materials and sources, and Marketing. The results reveal that most libraries held displays and exhibitions and thought displays and exhibitions as marketing and educational services to patrons. But supporting resources such as staffing, funding, space, security, and facilities were informal and scant. To improve the displays and exhibitions, this paper suggests that libraries should pay more resources and concerns on displays and exhibitions to achieve the marketing and educational goal. Besides, librarians play important roles in displays and exhibitions. To plan a professional and successful displays and exhibitions, librarians need more support on training, display knowledge and credits.

Over the decades, library displays have featured books or book jackets on bulletin boards or in display cases. What now constitutes a library exhibition varies greatly, from small exhibitions developed by librarians to huge blockbuster exhibitions employing third party. Library exhibitions cover a broad range of subjects and are presented in many different forms and styles. In some cases, libraries have borrowed techniques from commercial displays and museum exhibitions.

In the last decade, Taiwan's educational development has focused on higher education. Displays and exhibitions are regularly presented in the vast majority of university libraries in Taiwan. Many new university library buildings have been built with significant exhibition spaces and the original exhibition spaces in older library facilities have been remodeled in the last 10 to 15 years. Library exhibitions will play a greater role in libraries during the next decade.

The rationale for the increase of library exhibitions emphasizes the role of library exhibitions in making the library's collection accessible and making the library a stimulating place to learn. An interesting exhibition can act as a magnet for old and new users; it can also serve library visitors with a broad range of reading and learning skills. Exhibitions in university libraries are educational. They are organized around ideas and are intended to serve as a catalyst for further thought and they may seek to increase the use of the library and its resources. University Library Exhibits promote the educational mission of the university libraries, reflecting the intellectual quality of its collections and the library's role as a center for learning.

However, exhibitions are by no means ubiquitous in university libraries around the country. Limiting the full development of library exhibitions are challenges facing all libraries in general. Libraries are struggling with how to increase access to library collections for new and regular users, how to compete with other pastimes for the discretionary time of users, how to integrate new information resources and technologies, and most importantly, how to meet the ever present challenge of funding. In many library systems, budgets have been cut, and even the national university libraries, has recently had its funding dramatically cut. Libraries and exhibition programs are courting and contending for new sources of support.

Display and exhibitions have long been an established yet under-documented area for library work. The lack of documentation inhibits the development of library exhibitions. There are not many ways for librarians to share information about exhibition programs for mutual development. Throughout the country, as libraries have tried to expand their displays and exhibitions beyond book displays behind glass, they've waded into controversial waters with few guides to help them navigate and limited resources to call upon. Libraries want to be relevant and to provoke reading and thought,

but they are strapped for resources, limited by their own perspectives, and hesitant about how to respond to the public's contribution about exhibitions.

The theme of this paper is that library exhibitions can serve their institutions well. Effective library exhibitions are immensely varied. Exhibition programs need to share information for mutual development in order to survive and to serve as a vital tool for the library. To examine this topic, this project conducted a questionnaire survey to investigate the following thesis: (1) Frequency and purpose; (2) Staffing; (3) Funding; (4) Space and safeguards; (5) Subjects, materials, and sources; (6) Marketing. This paper provides current practices of relevance to display and exhibitions in university libraries in Taiwan. Goals will not only to describe a few of the problems facing library exhibitions and displays around the country, but also give suggestions on how university libraries can make the most of the experience of other libraries. Since exhibition-related publishing in library literature mostly focuses on North American, this survey intends to prompt audience to gain new perspectives when working with displays and exhibitions in Asia.

Survey Procedure

This paper conducted a questionnaire survey to the university libraries in Taiwan. Surveys were emailed to 60 university libraries in December 28, 2005 and returned by January 6, 2006. 43 libraries (71.7%) responded the survey. 60.5% of the respondents were public university libraries and 39.5% were private ones. The patrons of these libraries ranged from fewer than 8,500 persons to over 30,001 persons, and 10,0001-15,000 persons is the Mode (30.2%). The collection size varies from 100,000-200,000 to over 1,500,000 monograph titles and 200,000-300,000 is the Mode (25.6%).

Analysis of Survey Results

Frequency and purpose

86.0% respondent libraries had held the displays and exhibitions in 2001 to 2005. Among these libraries who had held displays and exhibitions before, most libraries (59.5%) didn't take it as routine. 81.1% libraries didn't present the displays and exhibitions regularly, and the most common length of time displays and exhibitions were shown was within one month (64.9%). Popular purposes for holding displays and exhibitions are: increase aesthetic sense and knowledge of patrons (75.7%), publicize and market library collections (73.0%), supplement activities in school (62.2%). The least purpose is supplement curriculum (10.8%). Educating patrons is a traditional function of universities libraries, and this survey reflects that the libraries pay more emphasis on marketing themselves and collections.

The other 14.0% libraries had never held the displays and exhibitions in 2001 to 2005, and they all responded that's because they didn't have suitable space. The second reason is they didn't have money support (33.3%) and staff support (33.3%). While asking the possibility of holding displays and exhibitions in 2006, three options: yes, no, and uncertain are equal of 33.3%.

Staffing

The responsibilities for managing displays and exhibitions has been mostly assigned to specific department in library (37.8%, $n=37$). These departments most are user service departments such as circulation and collection department, reference and extension services department. Only 3 libraries responded the responsibility was assigned to technical service departments such as information system department, acquisition and cataloging department, and administration department. 32.4% libraries responded that this was teamwork, and it was assigned to librarians from some departments in library. 18.9% libraries responded that it depended on the property of displays and exhibitions, that is, it may be assigned to specific department or a team. It is notable that there is one library has a specific department, art center, to manage displays and exhibitions responsibilities.

The full-time librarian amount of planning displays and exhibitions ranged from 0 to 10, and M is 1.96, SD is 2.082, Mode is 1 ($n=33$). The full-time librarian amount of implementing displays and exhibitions ranged from 1 to 21, and M is 3.70, SD is 4.151, Mode is 1 ($n=30$). Additional to full-time librarian, libraries relied on part-time worker to plan or implement displays and exhibitions. The amount of planning displays and exhibitions ranged from 0 to 3, and M is 0.76, SD is 0.903, Mode is 1 and 2 ($n=21$). The amount of implementing displays and exhibitions ranged from 0 to 6, and M is 1.79, SD is 1.525, Mode is 2 ($n=24$). The librarians in charge of displays and exhibitions still have another works to do.

Funding

Funds for displays and exhibitions were mostly supported by libraries, and $M=3.53$, $SD=1.777$ (Never=1 to Always=5). Funds from other units were far from the libraries. 64.9% libraries responded they had no difficulty in funding. The most difficulty of other libraries is that supporting organizations had no more funds, it accounted for 13.5%. 35 libraries reported their cost of each display and exhibition. 94.3% libraries is within NTD\$50,000 and the others is NTD\$50,000-100,000. Most libraries (64.9%) thought their funds for displays and exhibitions are enough.

Space and safeguards

Most libraries (59.5%) hold displays and exhibitions in library's lobby or passageway, and only 24.3% libraries had specific display room. 48.7% libraries used original facilities to display the works, and 40.5% libraries bought professional display facilities. Probably because most libraries rely upon main library security as a default for displays or exhibitions security, 48.6% libraries indicated that they did nothing on security. Major security ways libraries adopted were: employ some workers to oversee the entrances (27.0%) and install video monitor system (24.3%). Most libraries (78.4%) didn't control displays and exhibitions environment (such as lighting, humidity, temperature). This may indicate the poor support from libraries, and even the lack of display knowledge.

Subjects, materials, and sources

Displays and exhibitions tend to focus on three major subject areas: works of art (paintings or sculptures) (46.9%), academic disciplines (34.3%), and famous individuals (22.6%). These results somewhat corroborate the results of purposes survey. Major types of materials exhibited are: books-regular collection (57.1%), works of art (paintings or sculptures) (39.4%), and books-alumni authors (20.0%). Most materials were from library collection (56.8%), and only 14.5% were from off-campus. The popular materials from off-campus were: works of art (paintings or sculptures) (25.0%), books-regular collection (16.7%), and posters (13.8%). The most off-campus channel which libraries borrowed materials from was individuals, and it accounted for 21.9%.

Marketing

Publicity of displays and exhibitions are major utilized in following ways: announcement in library website (97.3%), announcement in campus electronic news (96.9%), announcement in campus newsletter (96.3%), email to library patrons (93.1%), posters (85.7%), exhibitions websites (85.3%), and brochures or flyers (81.2%). Articles for newspapers and magazines, radio publicity and television publicity are least means to announce displays and exhibitions news. As Internet grows rapidly, libraries adopted its convenience to market their displays and exhibitions more and more. Libraries accounted for the most publicity (82.6%), only 13.3% publicity done by other on-campus units. To market the displays and exhibitions, libraries also held some activities on the same time. The major activities held are: opening ceremony (34.4%) and lectures (18.2%).

Considering the necessity, librarians thought following means are the major ways to improve the displays and exhibitions: increase on-campus publicity ($M=4.17$ $SD=0.891$), plan displays with more diversity ($M=4.11$ $SD=0.854$), improve environmental controls ($M=4.03$ $SD=0.810$), and give scholarly/professional credit and encouragement to displays planners ($M=4.03$ $SD=0.857$). The least means is increase displays periods ($M=3.15$ $SD=0.857$).

Conclusion

While 71.7% libraries responded to this survey, the evidence indicates that these responsibilities were informally handled in most libraries. Most libraries hold displays and exhibitions, and think them as marketing and educational services to patrons. But supporting resources such as staffing, funding, space, equipment, and security were scant and informal. To improve the displays and exhibitions, this paper suggests that libraries should spend more resources and concerns on displays and exhibitions achieving the marketing goal. Internet is a good chance for libraries to development their displays and exhibitions. Accounting to different types of materials, libraries can built a static or multimedia website to display the materials. A becoming and active website can attract more attention. Internet tools such as email newsletter, blogs, RSS can help libraries market the displays and exhibitions more actively and energetically.

Librarians play important roles in displays and exhibitions. Librarians have paid more emphasis on displays materials and users needs, but they know less about display knowledge. To plan professional and successful displays and exhibitions, librarians need more support on training, display knowledge, credits and encouragement. Besides, museums, art galleries and commercial companies have more experience on exhibiting. Libraries may ask for their corporation and help.

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