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Innovation Strategies of the University Archives in the Post-epidemic Era

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Abstract: Corona-virus epidemic situation has changed the normal working mode of university Archives and how to carry out the work innovation in the university archives in the post-epidemic era mostly rely on the emphasis on the physical archives and the Archival Informatization, the fusion of online and offline working mode, the innovation of archival business process and the fully display of the functions of archives. Moreover, building a solid team with subject knowledge is also a strategy that future university archives need to introduce in terms of innovation.

Keywords: Post-epidemic Era; University Archives; Innovation.

1. Introduction

In 2020, a sudden corona-virus epidemic made us realize that violating the laws of nature will be punished by nature. The epidemic has not only changed our daily life style, but also changed the working patterns of the university archives. Compared with the former working mode, it seems unlikely that the university archives in the post-epidemic era will fully recover to the pre-epidemic mode. Affected by the corona-virus epidemic, the way of the college students and other university archive users is gradually changing, making the work of university archives, which mainly focuses on physical files in the former days, to change and to adapt to the more diverse needs of the students and teachers in the post-epidemic era.

2. The Necessity of the Innovation in University Archives in the Post-epidemic Era

Post-epidemic era does not mean that the epidemic has completely disappeared, but rather that the epidemic still exists, with occasional fluctuations or small-scale outbreaks [1]. It means that we can no longer return to the past. Due to this epidemic, the working mode of the university archives cannot be completely restored to the previous times. In the post-epidemic era, there is a strong necessity for the innovation in university archives.

2.1. The Necessity of Users' Need

During the epidemic prevention and control period, in order to avoid personnel gatherings and reduce the unnecessary personnel contact, the university archives make full use of modern communication technology, using appropriate methods such as telephone, office network, SMS, WeChat to communicate the professional archival work, to do the general archival search, and to provide the public information services. After the epidemic, people in the whole country are getting used to isolating and online working, especially the college students and teachers who are the main users of the university archives. They have been through the online teaching and online learning at home for months. They are gradually adapting to the online resources and online services which the university archives provide. After experiencing the convenience and the fast of online working and online service, the users are not adaptive to the corresponding offline learning and offline knowledge acquisition. In the post-epidemic era, it is necessary for the university archives to guide the users to adapt to the former offline working mode. And taking into account of the user's needs of online resources and services can also not be ignored. The changes in the needs of teachers and students are particularly necessary for the innovation of university archives work centered on serving teachers and students.

2.2. The Necessity of the University Archives' Development

The arrival of the post-epidemic era has had a huge impact on the development of university archives. During this period, with the implementation of national development strategies, the rapid development of information technology and the acceleration of social informatization, there has been a strong influence on the work of the university archives in China. The work of university archives has gradually been liberated from the traditional ideological concepts, with significant changes in methods formulation, management improvement, technical improvement, equipment configuration, personnel structure, and other aspects. And it is constantly progressing and improving. However, with the arrival of the post-epidemic era, the quantity and types of archival information in universities are completely incomparable to those in the past. With the continuous increase in the number of archives, the difficulty of physical and digital management of archival resources has sharply increased. The search, utilization and service work are also difficult to meet the diversified, efficient and the personalized needs of different archival users. Therefore, in the face of the trend of the new era, it is necessary to delve into the changes that have occurred in the work of university archives in the new era. At the same time, it is also necessary to understand the current situation of archive work in universities. Recognizing the various challenges, the university archives has now faced, identify the problems in archival work, innovating the way of thinking and applying new technology to university archives work is the first step of the development in university archives.

3. Innovation Strategies of the University Archives

3.1. Based on Physical Archives

Archives, as a true record of human history and social life, have existed for thousands of years in the world and have played an important role in the development of human society due to its original characteristic and authenticity. Electronic archives are electronic documents generated with the rapid development of information technology and the widespread application of computers in recent years. Although university archives are facing the trend of archival informatization and the increasing demand for the use of electronic archives, it cannot be ignored that the public's preference for physical archives has not yet subsided. A clear archive and a vivid photo are often more likely to make people feel authentic and reliable than the archives on a computer. We should see that a common phenomenon among various universities is that most students and teachers are actually insensitive to digital resources and have low utilization rates of that. In fact, they still have a demand for physical archives. However, how to improve the utilization rate of physical archives and fully utilize physical archives are the direction that university archives in the post-epidemic era should strive for in physical archives. In the post-epidemic era, university archives should make greater efforts in physical archives, strengthen the daily inspection and security protection of physical archives to ensure the security. At the same time, university archives also need to work on archival compilation and archival research according to practical work needs to fully display the professional, cultural, and educational role of archives.

3.2. Emphasizing the Archival Informatization

Archival informatization is an indispensable and important component of national economy and social informatization in the post-epidemic era. On the basis of physical archives, university archives should actively promote the process of archival informatization. The main tasks of archival informatization construction include infrastructure construction, information resource construction and application system construction.

University archives should first increase the investment in software and hardware, adopt professional anti-virus software and vulnerability detection systems to ensure the security of the information and data and to reduce the security risks in archive management systems [2]. Secondly, after the processing of informatization, the physical resources can be stored in digital form, which can be a backup of the physical archives. And it also can ensure that the archives can be recognized and processed by computer equipment, and can be transmitted through the network in the form of digital images or text. The digitized electronic archives have achieved rapid information sharing and utilization. At the same time, “the archives department should strengthen the capacity of turning the digital collection into content data, promote the construction of the archives data resources, upgrade the archive management to the level of knowledge management, and lay a solid data foundation for the archive management and service in the era of Big data” [3]. University archives can use scanning technology, digital storage technology, and technological software to create archive information systems for digital processing of archives which is easy for archiving and preservation. While reducing workload, it also improves work efficiency. Sharing archival information resources among relevant departments is conducive to strengthen the cooperation between departments and to fully exert the value of archives. In the post-epidemic era, relying on the internet technology and utilizing information systems and platforms, we can achieve an organic combination of archive query and archive management.

3.3. Fusion of Online and Offline Working Mode

During the epidemic, due to the influence of space, university archives can only carry out online communication, resource utilization, and archives propaganda. Many universities have also added online services during the epidemic, receiving praise from teachers and students. But as the epidemic returns to normalized management, teachers and students gradually return to school and the work of archives gradually returns to normal. Whether online communication, resource utilization, and propaganda still meet the needs of the post-epidemic era, whether it is necessary to incorporate online activities into the daily work of university archives, and how to organically combine online and offline work to make university archives work innovative and adapt to the development of archive work in the post-epidemic era, these problems still trouble us. The online working system and working habits established during the epidemic still need to be adhered to by university archives. Continuously conducting online communication, utilizing online resources, and consulting and propagandizing online are the fundamental steps for the innovative development of archival work and the future development direction of university archives. However, no matter how online work develops, the fundamental position of the physical archives remains unshakable. Our job is still to effectively organize and classify various resources in the archives, ensuring that archive resources are easily utilized. Offline lectures and activities, as well as the popularization and propaganda of archival knowledge, will attract more users to actively enter archives, pay attention to archives, and attach importance to archives. Therefore, in the post-epidemic era, university archives should timely combine online and offline organically, allowing teachers and students to choose between online and offline activities. The content of online and offline activities can be integrated, and the diverse situation can also attract different groups. The development of internet technology requires archives to adapt to the trend of the times and carry out diverse online activities. However, offline activities are still worth recommending. Combining the two organically can bring twice the result with half the effort [4].

3.4. Innovation of Archival Business Process

The traditional archive management in universities is mainly based on manual organization and cataloging, while the collection of archives is mainly paper-based. In the post-epidemic era, paper documents and electronic archives co-exist. The archival work of universities will be to integrate, analyze, and excavate various valuable information resources of the university, forming a smart analysis library of archives, providing services for decision-making, and creating value for universities. In the archival business process, innovation can be achieved through the collection, organization, and utilization process of the archives. Firstly, in traditional archival work, “receiving” refers to the transfer of documents from various departments; “Management” refers to manual management and manual query; “Utilization” refers to

passive look-up services. In the post-epidemic era, “receiving” mainly involves a combination of departmental transfer and system push of electronic documents, “management” mainly involves replacing manual labor with computers, and “utilization” is the use of modern information technology for production, processing, dissemination, conversion, and secondary development. Secondly, traditional archival management mainly focuses on document management, and archives are basically passively utilized, without any analyzing and utilizing of the accumulated archives. At present, in addition to a large number of documents, there is also a massive amount of data in the archive system, and the effectiveness of data utilization is greater than that of document utilization. University archives can analyze the needs of various departments in the school, establish data models, cluster, classify, and analyze the correlation of massive data and find the relationships between the data to serve the school, to improve the decision-making level of the university and to make the archival work more efficient. Therefore, in the future, archivists can only turn the data stored in archives into valuable information, and the value of archival work will be well reflected.

3.5. Fully Display the Functions of Archives

With the continuous development of society and human recognition, the unique and irreplaceable social role of archives is still being developed. Therefore, in the post-epidemic era, how to fully leverage the role of archives will be an important part of the innovation strategy of university archives. Firstly, the archives formed in various business activities of the school can not only maintain the normal operation of the school’s activities, but also provide important reference and basis for the management and construction of the school. Moreover, university archives are authentic records of the functions and management activities of various departments and institutions in the school. These records are of great significance to the school and serve as indispensable and irreplaceable evidence and reference for maintaining the continuity and effectiveness of the policy and system, and the scientificity of the decision-making. University archives should focus on protecting and developing the resources of the school archive, continuously exploring the value of archives, and providing assistance for the development of the school. Secondly, archives are the foundation of cultural innovation. University archives are the concentrated reflection of school culture, the accumulation of school history and culture, and an important medium for the inheritance of school history and culture. At the same time, the unique historical, intuitive, and primitive nature of archives can make them vivid materials for propaganda and education. University archives can rely on archive resources, fully absorb the essence of university history and culture, and create new cultures based on existing cultural achievements. In addition, the promotion of school archives by university archives not only helps teachers and students to fully understand the school and its archives, but also enhances their sense of belonging, responsibility, and pride towards the school, thereby enhancing the cohesion of the school.

3.6. Starting From the Team of Archivists

The development of Big data, Internet and cloud computing in the new era is both a challenge and an opportunity for university archives. University archives can no longer go back to the traditional service model, and the needs of teachers and students are gradually increasing. This urgently requires the creation of a team of high-level archivists that adapt to the service model of the new era. Archivists should not only possess certain business knowledge and skills, but also have a good sense of service, work attitude, and high vigilance. In the future archival management, archivists should continuously develop the open and innovative internet thinking. In the context of the post-epidemic era, archive management will develop towards knowledge management and information services. Professional archival management personnel in universities should also possess certain data and information analysis abilities to meet the requirements of the information age. Only by continuously learning and updating professional knowledge, improving practical skills, focusing on the management work of universities, rethinking and understanding archive work, fully utilizing new technologies and applications, can university archivists meet the requirements of the new era, and can they create greater value in university archive work in the context of the post-epidemic era and further highlight the value of archive management in the development of universities.

4. Conclusion

The COVID-19 is not over yet, and the service of university archives has been transformed. In the post-epidemic era, how university archives help the development and construction of schools and provide services for all departments of the schools and the teachers and students need to change in many ways. The premise of all innovations and changes is actually the eternal truth about the development of the schools and the service of teachers and students. Only by organically integrating physical and digital archives, consolidating the service foundation and building an excellent service team can future university archives get the high-quality development.

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