



Full Length Review Article

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN VIETNAM

***Duong Thi Phuong Chi, M. A.**

Faculty of Library and Information Science, University of Social Sciences and Humanities
(Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City)

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 27th August, 2016
Received in revised form
22nd September, 2016
Accepted 19th October, 2016
Published online 30th November, 2016

Key Words:

Public libraries, Public library system,
Vietnam, National Library of Vietnam.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper aims to provide an overview of public library system in Vietnam. Responsibilities, operations of public libraries and sources of funding for them are given, especially the National Library of Vietnam.

Methodology/approach: An in-depth reading of the relevant documents and observation are applying to understand, describe and make inferences about public library system in Vietnam.

Practical implications: Detailed information on public libraries are provided; therefore, everybody is able to comprehend the characteristics of each kind of public libraries so that they can identify what they should do to contribute to the cause of building and developing Vietnamese libraries.

Copyright©2016, Duong Thi Phuong Chi. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, most of population in rural areas in Vietnam still think that public libraries are places for storing books, current magazines and do some simple activities such as check-out/check-in books or do book's exhibitions in few especial days. Because of those thinking, they don't often come and use libraries. However, the primary goals of public libraries are an institution providing basic and complementary services covering the full diversity and cultural, ethnic and social characteristics of every municipality and department of Vietnam. The tasks, rights, funding, and information sources etc. of public libraries have been defined in the law. As a result of that, public libraries have more things for everyone, such as diversity collections which include books, magazines, newspapers, eBooks, multimedia documents and database etc. Besides, public libraries also have comfortable spaces supporting a variety of work and leisure activities, such as studying, talking, and reading and children's department, including materials and programming for them.

DISCUSSION

Concept of the public libraries

At the June 2008 CPLA Certification Review Committee and Certification Program Committee meeting, the committees

agreed on the following definition from NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) definition, which is based on the FSCS definition (Federal-State Cooperative System State Data Coordinators), a public library is an entity that is established under state enabling laws or regulators to serve a community, district, or region, and that provides at least the following: 1) an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof; 2) paid staff; 3) an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public; 4) the facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule; and 5) is supported in whole or in part with public funds (<http://ala-apa.org/certification>). Public libraries are those having diversified collections of publications. Public libraries offer a variety of books, newspapers, magazines, audio-visual materials etc. in all branches of sciences and technologies that meet the needs of the branch community, at adult, teen and children's reading levels. According to the Government's regulations, ethnic minority people shall be given conditions to use documents in their own languages and blind people shall be given conditions to use library documents in Braille or special information carriers.

Nowadays, public library system in Vietnam includes (<http://www.ndl.go.jp/en>):

- The National Library of Vietnam
- 64 City and provincial libraries
- 582 District libraries

**Corresponding author: Duong Thi Phuong Chi, M. A.*

Faculty of Library and Information Science, University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City)

- Nearly 7,000 libraries and/or bookcases in communes, wards and villages

In Vietnam, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism shall be answerable to the Government for the performance of State management over libraries. Therefore, the National Library of Vietnam shall submit to the direct management by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; the City and provincial libraries, District libraries and other libraries and/or bookcases shall submit to the direct management by the culture, sports and tourism agencies of the same level. Besides, the Library Department is the advisory agency for the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to make policies and enforce the regulations on library.

Tasks of public libraries in Vietnam

All libraries in Vietnam operate under the Ordinance on Libraries, this is the highest legislation on library and information services passed by the National Assembly of Vietnam in December 2000. According to the Ordinance on Libraries, public library system has the following tasks (The Ordinance on Libraries No. 31/2000/PL-UBTVQH of the National Assembly, 2000):

- First, satisfy demands of and create favourable conditions for users to use library materials and to participate in library activities;
- Second, collect and catalogue for all library collections; preserve documents and sort out out-dated and ragged documents from their depositories;
- Third, organize the information and introduction of library materials, and take part in building and forming the reading habit among the population;
- Fourth, compile the scientific information publications;
- Fifth, push the interrelationship among domestic libraries; promote cooperation and exchange of documents with foreign libraries;
- Sixth, conduct researches in library field and apply advanced scientific and technological achievements to the library work;
- Seventh, organize the professional fostering courses for librarians;
- Eighth, preserve all materials and other assets of libraries.

Especially, the National Library of Vietnam is the central library of the whole country and has been storing the most complete collection of publications in Vietnam. Today the National Library of Vietnam has a monograph collection of over 2.5 million items and a digitized collection of almost 5 million pages created by The National Library of Vietnam (<http://nlv.gov.vn/ef>). Besides the tasks above, functions and tasks of the National Library of Vietnam were assigned in the Ordinance on Libraries as follow (The Ordinance on Libraries No. 31/2000/PL-UBTVQH of the National Assembly, 2000):

- To exploit documentary sources at home and abroad in order to meet user's needs;
- To receive copyright deposit publications at home according to the regulations, to build and preserve for a long term the stocks of ethnic minority publication. According to the Law on Publication, within 45 days from the date of publications are released, the

publishers, agencies and organizations with publishing permission must submit three copies to the National Library. In case the printing number is less than three hundred copies, two copies shall be submitted;

- To compile and publish the National Bibliography and the General Bibliography of Vietnam;
- To organize the service of readers of all kinds according to its regulations;
- To undertake the cooperation and exchange of documents with other libraries in the country and abroad;
- To conduct scientific and technological researches in the field of information- library;
- To organize professional fostering courses for people who work in libraries.

Moreover, according to Decree No.72/2002/NĐ-CP dated on August 06, 2002 of the Government on implement the Ordinance on Libraries, tasks of other libraries in public library system as the following (Decree No.72/2002/NĐ-CP):

Tasks of city and provincial libraries were assigned:

- To collect, preserve precious and ancient documents available in their localities; collect, store and preserve documents of their localities and about their localities; organize and supply of these documents for users in order to serve the developing process in the local;
- To take part in building district libraries and libraries, bookcases in communes, wards and villages; prepare materials for rotation, held the circulation of books and newspapers to smaller libraries; organize itinerant libraries to serve for all citizens in their localities;
- To organize training the professional capacity for people who work in district libraries; coordination of operations, exchange of documents with the libraries which were established by the agencies or organizations at the local.
- Tasks of district libraries were assigned:
- To build and organize the circulation of documents to libraries, bookcases in communes, wards and villages;
- To provide professional instructions for the libraries established by the agencies or organizations.
- Tasks of libraries, bookcases in communes, wards and villages were assigned to organize the introduction of documents to population and to form the reading habit among local population as well.

Sources of funding for public libraries

The financial of public libraries include

- The State budget's funding to ensure funding for libraries to develop their documents, built material-technical bases along the direction of modernization, develop digital library and expand library activities;
- Collected amounts being library service charges such as from library fees, selling of products and services;
- Other revenues as gifts, donations and other miscellaneous sources.
- However, the State budget's funding is the most important source. Because public library system is received the State budget so that there is no charge to library' users for the following activities:

- Use library materials on the spot or take home, as long as users return them at a certain time and in good condition. If a borrowed material is returned late or damaged, the library may charge a small library fine;
- Access or search information about library materials through information retrieval system and use general information services;
- Receive the assistance and consultancy for finding and selecting information resources;
- Request supplies documents at home in form of itinerant libraries or by mail to the elderly, disabled people who are unable to go to libraries.
- As I stated above, public libraries may collect charges for services of printing, photocopying, translating in accord with the law for the protection of copyright and neighbouring rights, compiling bibliographies, and some other services are requested by users.

Investment policies toward public library system

The Government makes intensive investments in the National Library of Vietnam in order to ensure that the library have enough favourable conditions to assert its position in the national information system and in international relations as well. On the other hand, the Government also makes priority investment in the building of libraries in districts with difficult socio-economic conditions or particularly difficult socio-economic conditions to eliminate the disparity in enjoyment of knowledge and information between different areas. The Government also gives preferential policies for the professional such as the regime of toxic and hazardous allowance, itinerant service allowance and other regimes suitable to the librarianship's particularities. In addition, The Government adopts the policy of socializing library activities,

encouraging to donate documents, money or contribute labour to the library development in order to solve financial problems in public library system.

Conclusion

Public libraries have a long history of providing services for local communities, reflecting the needs and the diversity of the populations that they have served. However, in the age of digital technologies, reassessments of their role due to technological development and widespread public use of the Internet are analyzed. Therefore, this is a challenging time for public libraries, they should know their responsibilities and what they are provided, then make decisions about what they should do to improve the evaluation and impact of public libraries in society.

REFERENCES

- 16th Conference of directors of National libraries in Asia and Oceania meeting: Vietnam country report. Available online at <http://www.ndl.go.jp/en>
- Bùi Loan Thùy 2009. *Giáo trình Pháp chế thư viện – thông tin*, TP. Hồ Chí Minh, Đại học Quốc gia TP. Hồ Chí Minh.
- Decree No.72/2002/NĐ-CP dated on August 06, 2002 of the Government on implement the Ordinance on Libraries Definition of a Public Library. Available online at <http://ala-apa.org/certification>
- Lê Văn Việt. *60 năm sự nghiệp thư viện Việt Nam*. Available online at <http://nlv.gov.vn>
- The Law on Publication No: 19/2012/QH13 of The National Assembly dated on 20 November 2012
- The Ordinance on Libraries No. 31/2000/PL-UBTVQH of the National Assembly dated on 28 December 2000
- Website of National Library of Vietnam // <http://nlv.gov.vn/ef>
