HOW HAS THE VIETNAMESE LIBRARY DEVELOPED TOWARDS STANDARDIZATION IN ORDER TO INTEGRATE

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ABSTRACT:

Vietnamese Library has been considerably developed, however, this is the unusual development. Vietnamese library, under the influence of the former Soviet Union, used to be developed towards Socialist Library Science. In the last two decades, the old value system has formed the inertia which stood in the way of innovation. Fortunately, in 1998 in the Southern part of Vietnam, the Library Club was founded to group most of Southern academic libraries. Together, these Southern libraries have been developed towards standardization of their services under the motto “STANDARDIZATION – INTEGRATION – DEVELOPMENT”. With time, the Library Club activities have exerted a great influence on the development of libraries of the whole country. Today, while the libraries in the southern of Vietnam following the tradition of Library Club are striving for developing quickly towards standardization, the most libraries in the North show little interest in standardization and resign themselves to old value. It is the reason why this development towards standardization in order to integrate of Vietnamese library has been carrying out slowly and not synchronously.

KEYWORDS: Vietnamese Library, Library Club (Vietnam), Library Development

The Vietnamese Library has been striving for developing towards standardization in order to integrate. However, this is the unusual development because of having been under the objective and subjective influences.

1. The Influence of the Former Soviet Union Library.

According to V.V. Skovortxov, a Russian library science expert, the library science of the world has developed in five stages (fig. 1).

- The stages of librarianship thought.
  (1) The thought of Ancient time.
  (2) The thought of Medieval.

- The stages of library science.
  (3) Bourgeois library science: Uniting all the world (19th century).
  (4) Dividing into two: Socialist library science and Capitalist library science (20th century).
  (5) Unifying (21st century).
The fourth stage was in 20th century – the library science of the world had divided into two systems:

- Socialist Library Science, which based on the rules and categories of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, at the same time on the works on library tasks of Lenin and Krupskaya, tending theory;
- Capitalist Library Science, which tended to practice, has made great advance during the second half of 20th century. It has made the connection of foundations of information science and principles of library science. Since then, library science has named “Library and Information Science”.

The fifth stage was in the 21st century – the library science has unified, basing on the sole and new methodology. As a result, the theories and postulates that used to be undying truths have to be re-evaluated with the countries developed on the Socialist Library Science. Futhermore, today the fifth stage has associated in building the union science connected closely with information technology. Thus, librarianship is considered the interface of three faces of information, information technology, and patrons. Many countries in the world have taught library and information science in technology or information technology medium, such as the Faculty of Computer Science of Brighton University, UK or the School of Information and Telecommunication of Nanyang Technology University, Singapore.

The Vietnamese library, under the influence of the former Soviet Union, used to be developed towards Socialist Library Science. In the last two decades, the old value system has formed the inertia which stood in the way of innovation. This has expressed in the library and information science curriculum of the Vietnamese library schools.

2. The Paradox of Vietnamese Library.

As the matter of fact, there are differences between the library of the South and the library of the North. The libraries in the South, used to be built under the influence of capitalist library science, were better than the ones in the North. Some libraries used to be very good, such as the former National Library (Republic Vietnam), the Hue University Central Library, Van Hanh University Library, and Da Lat University Library. However, they were “transformed” according to the “method” that was backward and non-standard. In the last two decades, you have been trying to do as before.
There is an article in the book “Những người giữ lửa tình yêu với sách, Tập 6 – The men who hold the flame of loving books, Vol. 6” by Department of Library, Ministry of Information and Culture, published by National Culture publisher that said: “... According to the appreciation then, the Hue University Central Library arranged the open stacks with books classified with DDC and a fully worked-out subject heading catalog. Right after 1975, General Vo Nguyen Giap was one of the first people having visited it and he was full of library’s praise about the arrangement which looks different from the one in the libraries of the North. But afterwards, being considered “non-method”, the Hue University Central Library was the first one having been “re-transformed” so that the open stacks became closed stacks, books re-arranged with languages and sizes, the subject heading catalog was broken in order to be replaced by classified catalog! More than 25 years later, it has been doing as before according to the innovation process of Vietnamese library!...” (p. 93-94)

This is the paradox that exists till now. Most of library schools still teach CDS/ISIS, Classified Catalog, etc… but don’t teach Reference Services, Subject Headings, etc…

3. The Role of Library Club.

Twenty years after the North and South unification, some librarians in the South recognized the risk of lagging behind of Vietnamese library. On the occasion of coming back after having studied in the United States, we put forward the idea of building a “modern library model”. It was the Graduate Library of Ho Chi Minh University, which was built in May 1995, adapted to the arrangement of Hue University Central Library before 1975 and the updated knowledge on bibliographic standards and new technology. We used the method of “spreading oil stain” in order to popularize this model. Many academic libraries in the South found this the familiar image of their libraries themselves which either had been destroyed or looked like their old collection before 1975.

In 1998, we founded the Library Club in the Southern part of Vietnam. It grouped most of Southern academic libraries. Together, these Southern libraries have been developed towards standardization of their services under the motto “STANDARDIZATION – INTEGRATION – DEVELOPMENT”. With time, the Library Club activities have exerted a great influence on the development of libraries of the whole country.

The Library Club, consisting of 162 librarian members, has provided the following professional activities on a regular basis:

- Seminars and round-tables meetings in order to popularize the model of the modern library (the Graduate Library of Ho Chi Minh City University) and to encourage building and improving libraries towards Standardization-Integration;
- Hundreds of workshops on the standardization of library services since 1998, which trained thousands of library workers (including librarians);
- The Electronic Newsletter began to be published in February, 1998.

Thanks to all its activities, the Library Club has helped Southern academic libraries in their efforts to achieve innovation, in particular in their application of internationally-recognized bibliographic standards, such as AACR2, DDC, LCSH, MARC 21, etc. Moreover, the Library Club activities led to the change in the thought of the colleagues in the Northern part of Vietnam,
and made them more susceptible on Standardization of library services. Finally, the Library Club movement reached out to all Vietnamese librarians.

On 17 March 2000, the first time our Library Club was invited to introduce Dewey Decimal Classification to the colleagues in the North at the seminar held by the Library Department of Ministry of Information and Culture. The thought of necessary standardization was just starting in this seminar.

In other words, the Library Club has created the new value system, which the library schools had failed to create for the Vietnamese library community.

Afterwards, The Library Club became FESAL (Federation of Southern Academic Libraries) and VILASAL (Vietnamese Library Association of Southern Academic Libraries) when the Vietnamese Library Association was founded.

4. The Development Process of Vietnamese Library.

Vietnamese libraries are now more and more highly appreciated. Most libraries have tried to automate and computerize their activities and services. Some have carried out big projects in order to build the large buildings. However, the real situation is:

- The libraries have not been developed synchronously. Naturally, they are better in the South because of the active work of former Library Club and the present VILASAL;
- Most buildings are large but not the library buildings;
- Some buildings are library buildings but lacking good librarians to manage them;
- Most of library management softwares are expensive but not standardized;
- The CPI of the General Science Library of Ho Chi Minh City, which conforms to the bibliographic standards is different from the non-standard CPI of the Vietnamese National Library.
- etc…

Vietnam was in need of library professionals who know how to manage and organize library activities in order to make the buildings become the study and knowledge centers but the Vietnamese library schools only met the unchanged needs of the old days. Their academic programs did not meet the needs of building modern libraries with the absolute information technology application. Basically, they failed to change of vision of Vietnamese librarians in the present information age. They also failed to shape the necessary new technology thinking in their students’ mind as well.

Ten years after the birth of the Library Club, the librarians, who founded the Library Club, assisted the Faculty of Library and Information Science of Saigon University in designing an absolutely innovative academic library and information program. This Library and Information Science curriculum, which not only met but also changed the needs of the Vietnamese library community, was already approved by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2007.

Being free from any pressure of the old value system, this academic program is currently based on the following fundamentals:

- Library and Information Science should be practical in:
Curriculum;
Textbooks;
Teaching method.

- Standardization of library activities and services
- Librarianship and Information Technology are closely associated

To move the Vietnamese library community towards integration successfully, we have to innovate the library and information science education as fast as we can. On February 20th, 2009, an international conference on "The Standardization of Library and Information Science Educating," attracting 200 international and Vietnamese librarians, was held at Saigon University. The innovative Library and Information Science curriculum of Saigon University was officially introduced in a big way to the librarians present at the conference.

5. Conclusion.

Vietnamese Library has been considerably developed, however still met with difficulties in many librarians’ awareness of librarianship standards, especially in most of the leaders of Vietnamese library, who have the right to decide the Vietnamese library policy. It is the reason why this developing towards standardization in order to integrate of Vietnamese library has been carrying out slowly and not synchronously.

While the libraries in the southern of Vietnam following the tradition of Library Club are striving for developing quickly towards standardization, the most libraries in the North show little interest in standardization and resign themselves to old value.

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