Xi’an Medical University Library and Its Services

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Xi’an, the capital of Shanxi province, is the centre of politics, economy and culture in the north western part of China, and it is one of the major national tourist cities in China.

Xi’an was called Chang’an in the Han dynasty, carrying the meaning of eternal peace. In the Tang dynasty, Chang’an was known as the most thriving metropolis of the world. Xi’an was the champion among the six ancient Chinese cities, and has the longest history in China. Xi’an served intermittently as the capital of eleven dynasties in China, and had been the capital for 1068 years, which found no parallel in the Chinese history. Among the numerous historical relics and ruins are the famous ancient architectures of the Big and Small Wild Goose Pogodas of the Tang, the magnificent Bell Tower and Drum Tower in the Ming, and the city wall of Xi’an which remains the most complete conservation in China today. The various mosques and temples include Xing Jiao Temple, Qing Long Temple, Cao Tang Temple, and the Great Mosque, all attracting thousands of visitors every years. The 6,000-year-old Banpo Village, a matriarchal clan community of the neolithie age and the most remarkable of all so far, Emperor Qin Shihuang’s terra-cotta warrior which enjoy the fame of the “Eighth Wonder” in the world.

Education and culture developments in Xi’an have enjoyed a constant boom over the past years. The number of institutions of higher learning has reached 40, and some of them are very famous in China.

Xi’an Medical University (XMU) is one of the key medical schools under the direct supervision of the Chinese Ministry of Public Health (Fig. 1). Also it is one of the member institutions of the Chinese Academy of Medical Science, designated as the Xi’an Branch of the Chinese Academy of Medical Science. The university was founded in 1937, stemming from Beiping University Medical School. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, it was renamed Northwest Medical College, and then Xi’an Medical College. In 1985
it adopted its present name, Xi’an Medical University. It is situated in the southern suburb of Xi’an. With its floor space of 355,702 square meters, the university covers 131.76 square acres.

Three clinical medical schools, ten faculties and one division of pre-clinical courses are set up in the university. They are the First Clinical Medical School, the Second Clinical Medical School, the School of Stomatology, and the Faculty of Clinical Medicine, the Faculty of Stomatology, the Faculty of Pharmacy, the Faculty of Forensic Medicine, the Faculty of Preventive Medicine, the Faculty of Nursing, the Faculty of Health Administration, the Faculty of Maternal and Child Care, the Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, the Faculty of Foreign Language and the Division of Pre-clinical Courses (Fig. 2).

In addition, a secondary health school is affiliated with the university. There are altogether 5188 faculty members working in the university, including 690 professors and associate professors, and great achievements have been made in the research work. Several institutes administered by Xi’an Medical University, such as Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, Department of Maxillofacial Surgery, Research Laboratory of Trace Elements and Endemic Diseases, Department of Brain and Nerve, Department of Neurophysiology and Institute of Immunopathology, etc., are currently undertaking national research projects.

The library system of Xi’an Medical University consists of main library, two branch libraries attached to two clinical medical schools, and five special libraries attached to different colleges and faculties. The main library serves as a major resource of biomedical field for the university to support the teaching, research, patient care and allied programs of its primary users: teachers, doctors, medical students and administrators. The two branch libraries are mainly for the users in the teaching hospitals.

Established in 1937, the library is the oldest and biggest medical library in Northwest China. It is also open to special user outside the university for reference, especially for those in Xi’an area, and provides interlibrary loan service to meet the needs for some libraries in the country. Recently, the library is rapidly advancing towards a modernized administration.

**Organization**

1. The university library committee, appointed by the president in 1984, consists of 27 members selected among professors, doctors and administrators. The Vice-president serves as the chairman. The library committee meets at regular intervals to study and to make recommendations regarding the enhancement of the library’s effectiveness in meeting the information and educational needs.
2. Library staff: 41.
3. Service departments:

There are five departments in the library: Acquisition and cataloging; Circulation (including interlibrary loan); Journal; Reference (including Internet and CD-ROM services, instruction of medical literature retrieval course); Information service (editing and translating, copy making, microform, computer, audiovisual services).

The budget

The library is supported by 5% of the university’s total budget, mainly used for:
1. Book purchases, 10000 volumes per year.
2. Journal subscription accounts to 70% of the total amount.
3. Audiovisual material, binding costs, library supplies, professional activities for the librarians.

Library equipment is supported by extra part from university’s budget.

The library building and book collection

1. The library building is located at the centre of the campus. For the past several years, the university has paid much attention to the development of the library, made some renovations to the development of its institute, added some new instruments and equipment, and set up an INTERNET Center.

2. The combined journal and book collections number 560,000 volumes in the life science, medicine and allied fields. More than 1,792 current medical and scientific journal titles are available, 70% of which are in foreign languages, mainly English, Japanese, Russian, German and French.

3. The library has five stories and its total area is 5600 square metres.

(1) On the first floor readers can get access to such services as acquisition and cataloging, copy-making, bound journals, indexes and abstracts, and general readings and newspapers in a students’ reading room.
(2) On the second floor are current journals, and reference services, including MEDLINE CD-ROM service and some Chinese CD-ROM database service.
(3) On the third floor there are catalog, reference collections, a circulation service, a foreign students’ reading-room, and a teachers’ reading-room.
(4) On the forth floor is a students’ reading-room with selected basic scientific and medical books, journals’ microform and audiovisual material.
(5) On the top floor, readers can find a students’ reading-room with general and social books and journals, the INTERNET Center, and a class-room for users’ education.

Services

1. Library hours: The library is open Monday through Sunday, 75 hours per week during the semester, and 36 hours per week during the vacation.

2. Loan policies: Materials from open-stacks collections may be borrowed by any staff, doctor, or medical student of the university.

Reading privileges are also extend to visiting physicians, scholars and students. Books may be kept for 4 weeks; and bound journals for 1 week. Current journals are non-circulating unless special arrangements are made. Limited fines are charged for overdue materials.

3. Card cataloging has been done with computers since 1988. The card catalog, located in the circulation department (on the 3rd floor), functions as index to the books in the library. It is divided into two sections — classification
section and title section. In 1988, another two sections — author and subject sections were added.

4. Arrangement for borrowing materials unavailable in the university may be made through interlibrary loan from libraries in this area or in the country. The library also provides the same services for other borrowing libraries. It is the coordinator of medical colleges in North-west China for cooperation programs.

5. Usually, tour of the library instruction in the uses of the library’s resources is available on an individual or group basis. For medical students of the university, 40 hours are arranged for the program of teaching medical literature retrieval.

6. The library has set up Internet service, and managed all the Internet service in the university.

7. There are two photocopying-machines and services are available in the library, Monday through Friday, charging 25 cents per exposure. Material Microforming was established in 1986. A/V equipment and materials have been developed, and it’s mainly for user education.

Higher education institutional effectiveness depends on the quality and delivery of their information resources. Traditionally, institutions have looked to their libraries and librarians for the expertise and capability to fulfill this responsibility. As institutions approach the twenty-first century, several agendas that change and challenge the traditional view of information resources are being developed.

Recent developments in information technology have had a greater impact on university libraries than any other single action. Practices, such as information organization, storage, and retrieval, have been transformed. The rapid increase in the information available in electronic formats and further implementation of information technology have initially allowed computing centers and Internet to take on new roles.

With the development of information technology, medical users will have more and easier accesses to international databases, and the delivery of information will be more efficient.