

Research on China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (Third Edition)

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How to cite this paper: Yi, L. (2023). Research on China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library (Third Edition). *Voice of the Publisher*, 9, 21-27.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/vp.2023.92003>

Received: April 11, 2023

Accepted: June 9, 2023

Published: June 12, 2023

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Abstract

One of the most spectacular aspects of the changes to University Library Alliances (ULAs) in China over recent years is the establishment of several large-scale alliances covering the entire country, among which CASHL is one. CASHL is the largest ULA in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), which has 900 member libraries now. CASHL has established China's largest and most comprehensive HSS document guarantee system. The value of CASHL lies in its ability to integrate literature resources in the HSS across China onto a common platform to serve readers. This is a case study on CASHL, aimed at introducing readers to China's literature resource guarantee in the fields of HSS.

Keywords

CASHL, HSS, ULA

1. Introduction

One of the most spectacular aspects of the changes to University Library Alliances in China over recent years is the establishment of several large-scale alliances covering the whole country, among which CASHL is one. More than eighteen years ago, when the Ministry of Education (ME) launched the project (China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library, CASHL), we were unaware of its road ahead. Currently, CASHL is already the largest ULA in the field of HSS (**Figure 1**), which has 900 member libraries (CASHL, 2020a). CASHL has integrated the humanities and social sciences literature resources of 900 member libraries in just 20 years, achieving resource sharing among its member libraries, which is a remarkable achievement in the development history of university libraries in China.



Figure 1. CASHL reader service platform. The information is from <http://www.cashl.edu.cn/>.

CASHL takes the “National HSS Information Resource Platform” as a construction goal now (CASHL, 2020a) and uses modern emerging information technology (including Big Data, Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, etc.) to serve readers. The goal of CASHL is very ambitious, and the key is whether it can be achieved. From a practical perspective, CASHL is still far from its goals, and it still has a long way to go to achieve its ideals. Of course, it is good that CASHL is trying to make many excellent liberal arts universities’ literature resources disclosed in HSS. Before the emergence of CASHL, Chinese universities purchased their own HSS literature resources, and it was difficult to share what resources they had with each other. After the emergence of CASHL, this situation has greatly improved, and the joint disclosure and sharing of literature resources in HSS have been achieved.

2. The Development Process

The establishment of CASHL is a result of China’s efforts to develop HSS. Before the 1980s, there was a long-term shortage of foreign language literature in Chinese universities. This is undoubtedly due to a lack of financial investment, but more importantly, it is due to long-term isolation from the outside world and a lack of emphasis on HSS research, without paying attention to the huge gap between China’s HSS research and foreign countries. With the continuous deepening of China’s reform and opening up in the 1980s, the demand for talent in HSS has become increasingly urgent, so strengthening the development of HSS has also been put on the agenda. To this end, the State Council established the “*Special Funds Project for Universities Purchasing Foreign Liberal Arts Books*” (SFP) in 1982 (CASHL, 2023b). The reason why the State Council implemented this project at that time was directly related to the suggestions of famous scholars such as Ji Xianlin and Ren Jiyu. In the early stages of China’s reform and opening up, scholars such as Ji Xianlin and Ren Jiyu keenly realized that China’s research in the field of HSS had fallen far behind Western countries. So they quickly proposed to the central government to allocate special funds to purchase books and materials related to HSS from abroad to meet the needs of cultivating

high-level talents (CASHL, 2023b). Later, the SFP provided the financial basis for the establishment of CASHL. So, from the beginning, CASHL was a national project.

To better utilize the funding, the National Education Commission (Later known as the Ministry of Education) set up 16 Liberal Arts Literature Information Centers in 1990 and 5 Stack Rooms of Liberal Arts in 1995 (CASHL, 2023b). The Information Centers and the Stack Rooms later laid the organizational foundation for CASHL. With financial support and organizational structure in 2002, to promote the prosperity and development of philosophy and social sciences, the ME began preparing the CASHL (CASHL, 2023b). So the construction of CASHL was not achieved overnight, and the Chinese government had already done a lot of work before that. That is to say, the establishment of CASHL is directly related to the development and prosperity of philosophy and social sciences in China. CASHL is part of the Program of Prosperity and Development of Philosophy and Social Sciences in China. The conditions and motivations for ME to establish CASHL are multiple: Firstly, with the development of China's social economy, it is necessary to develop HSS. Secondly, the continuous development of emerging information technologies has also provided technical conditions for the establishment of CASHL. Thirdly, the member libraries can also effectively share literature resources, which is also an important reason why they strongly support the creation of CASHL. In short, from the perspectives of the country, society, universities, and readers, the establishment of CASHL can benefit everyone.

In 2004, CASHL began to serve readers by Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery (DD) (Figure 2). In China, ULAs mainly serve readers through the ILL and DD, without ILL and DD, the member libraries of CASHL would not be able to share literature resources at all. Based on the number of member libraries and literature provided by CASHL, it can be said that CASHL has established China's largest and most comprehensive HSS document guarantee system (Yi, 2020).

In 2006, the SFP is organized and coordinated by the CASHL management center (CASHL, 2023b). CASHL currently mainly provides humanities and social science information and knowledge services. The original intention of CASHL was indeed to integrate foreign language resources in the field of HSS in



Figure 2. CASHL's interlibrary loan information management system. The information is from <http://ill.cashl.edu.cn/main/Libmain.asp>.

China. However, in practice, CASHL was able to provide not only foreign language literature resources but also a large number of Chinese literature. So CASHL has grown into the largest platform for sharing HSS resources in the past 20 years.

3. The Resources

It is not difficult to see from the previous text that the value of CASHL lies in its ability to integrate literature resources in the HSS across China onto a common platform to serve readers. Firstly, on this platform, CASHL can provide 3.45 million kinds of printed books and 175,000 types of e-books (CASHL, 2023a). All of these resources come from CASHL's member libraries, and CASHL serves its readers by integrating these resources into one platform, which has a unified catalog that describes the contents of the CASHL member libraries. Secondly, CASHL also provides 62,000 kinds of the printed journals and 200,000 kinds of electronic journals from 17 universities (CASHL, 2023c). These resources are also sourced from CASHL member libraries.

Thirdly, CASHL integrates more than 900 databases of HSS (CASHL, 2020e), of which 28 databases were purchased at CASHL's own expense, and the rest came from either Open Access Resources or its member libraries (Figure 3). Fourth, CASHL also has a large-scale special collection of literature (CASHL, 2020f). Fifth, at the same time, by CASHL, readers can use more than 1000 excellent academic journals and 500 core journals from the *National Academic Journal Database of HSS* (CASHL, 2020h). Sixth, CASHL also provides 7000 periodicals during the Republic of China (CASHL, 2020d; Zhang & Chen, 2015), which compiles the research results of scholars from 1911 to 1949. Seventh, through CASHL, readers can also use the "University Ancient Literature Resource Database", which has nearly 700,000 ancient books bibliographic metadata and nearly 100,000 e-books (CASHL, 2020b), which are characteristic literature resources provided by CASHL. It is not difficult to see from the above

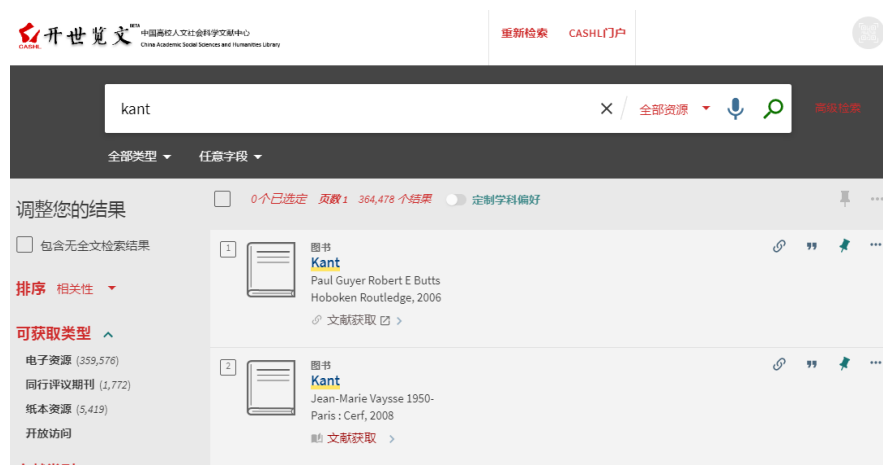


Figure 3. CASHL retrieval system. The information is from http://s.cashl.edu.cn:1701/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,kant&tab=default_tab&search_scope=default_scope&vid=CASHL&lang=zh_CN&offset=0.

seven aspects that CASHL mainly serves readers by integrating the resources of its member libraries and its partners.

4. The Management and Service System

CASHL's Management and Service System includes two National Centers (NCs), seven Regional Centers (RCs), and eight Discipline Centers (DCs). The NCs are located at Peking University and Fudan University (CASHL, 2020c). The NCs are CASHL's brains in the service system, which are mainly responsible for the strategic planning and management of CASHL. The RCs are located at Wuhan University, Jilin University, Sun Yat-sen University, Nanjing University, Sichuan University, Beijing Normal University, and Lanzhou University (CASHL, 2020c). The RCs are CASHL's limbs in the service system, which are important strategic fulcrums that support the entire service system of CASHL, mainly responsible for the strategic execution of CASHL's target tasks. CASHL DCs are located at Northeast Normal University, East China Normal University, Nankai University, Shandong University, Tsinghua University, Xiamen University, Zhejiang University, and the Renmin University of China (CASHL, 2020c). The RCs are CASHL's hands and feet in the service system, which have woven the web of CASHL's services more finely. **Table 1** shows the characteristic disciplines of each subject center of CASHL.

CASHL has its own DD and ILL service system. The readers can obtain HSS literature resources through CASHL Document Delivery (CDD). CDD is a non-returnable document provision service (Yang, 2008), which mainly includes two methods—Email and an online CDD system. **Table 2** shows the top 5 CDD requests in 2018 (CASHL, 2018). At the same time, readers can also borrow foreign language books through CASHL Interlibrary Loan (CILL) (Niu et al., 2016). The DD and ILL are the primary means by which CASHL serves its readers.

So far, CASHL has provided services for more than 24,600 core HSS and important journals, and more than 2 million printed books (CASHL, 2020a). **Table 3** shows the top 5 CASHL original text delivery requests in 2019.

Table 1. Characteristic disciplines of CASHL discipline center (CASHL, 2020c).

Subject Center	Featured Subjects
Northeast Normal University Library	Basic Education and World History
East China Normal University Library	Human Geography, Principles of Education
Nankai University Library	European and American Studies
Shandong University Library	Literature and Art, Ancient Chinese Philosophy
Tsinghua University Library	Management
Xiamen University Library	Taiwan Studies, Southeast Asian Studies
Zhejiang University Library	Applied Psychology, Linguistics
Library of Renmin University of China	Economics and Law

Table 2. CASHL member libraries usage ranking (top 5) in 2018 (CASHL, 2018).

Member Hall Name	Number of Requests Issued (Items)
Yunnan Normal University Library	5210
Northeast Normal University Humanities College Library	2894
Zhengzhou University Library	1806
Nanjing University Library	1172
Wuhan University Library	1096

Table 3. CASHL member libraries usage ranking (top 5) in 2019 (CASHL, 2020g).

Member Hall Name	Number of Requests Issued (Items)
Yunnan Normal University Library	5940
Northeast Normal University Humanities College Library	1685
Nanjing University Library	1215
Wuhan University Library	1135
Yichun College Library	1061

5. Conclusion

CASHL has played a certain role in promoting the prosperity and development of the HSS in China. However, from the perspective of the depth and breadth of literature resource integration, CASHL still has a lot of room for development. In the future, CASHL can rely on Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to completely break down the numerous barriers between its member libraries, fully utilize limited literature resources, and truly achieve the sharing of literature resources between each other. From a technical perspective, emerging technologies such as AI are necessary conditions to support the continuous transformation and upgrading of CASHL. From the perspective of socialized services, CASHL needs to do more work. Any university library alliance in China should serve social and economic development, and CASHL is no exception. With current network technology conditions, CASHL can fully serve its member library readers while being open to the whole society, enterprises, and all readers with needs. On one hand, this can solve the problem of CASHL funding shortage, and on the other hand, it also better serves social and economic development. So, strengthening social services is the key to the development of CASHL.

Acknowledgements

This short introductory text about CASHL for international students of Beijing University of Chemical Technology, whose information mainly comes from the CASHL Official Website (COW), here I would like to thank my CASHL colleagues, for their support that I can complete the various publicity and promotion work

of CASHL every year. If readers want to know more about CASHL, they can log on to the COW for in-depth reading.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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