

# **Quality Control on Interlibrary Loan & Document Delivery Services of Academic Library Consortia in China**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - The purpose of this paper is to review the quality control methods on ILL & DDS providing services by academic library Consortia in China, and examine the effect and summarize the essential factors on coalition service quality control in member libraries.

**Design/methodology/approach** - This paper uses a case study approach.

**Findings** - Library consortia can improve and enhance member libraries' interlibrary loan and document delivery services by developing unified and standardized service standards, providing a necessary prerequisite and guarantee for the joint service, multi-level personnel development models, creating the teams of professional services librarians, promoting construction through evaluation and establishing a set of performance evaluation incentives, reveal and provide data of library holdings from multiple channels, and construction of the consortium culture of cohesion and centripetal force.

**Originality/value** – Library consortia are a relatively recent phenomenon in China. This paper examines the questions and shares the experiences of Chinese academic library consortia on organizing ILL/DDS provided by member libraries.

**Keywords** ILL/DDS, Service quality control, Library consortium; Resource sharing, Interlibrary loan, China

**Paper type** Case study

## 1. Introduction

Information resource sharing is the ideal and target that libraries pursue. It has been proved by many practices in the world that library consortia can effectively improve cooperation among member libraries, and help them expand the information resources rapidly and provide better services for users. The most welcome cooperative fields are e-content group purchasing and Inter-Library Loan/Document Delivery Service. However, the member library of consortium is usually very different, such as different on library management method, software and hardware conditions, service capability and the expertise and skills of librarians, etc. Therefore, the great challenge for most library consortium is how to guarantee high-quality ILL/DDS services provided by member libraries under the guidance of unified regulations and standards.

Library consortia emerged in the 1980s in China. Though the history

of library consortia is not as long as it in the USA, in China they have developed quickly. According to Dong and Zou (2009), large-scale regional consortia among Chinese academic libraries were achieved in the 1990s, while cross-regional consortia and national consortia began to gain popularity after 2000. Among them, CALIS (China Academic Library and Information System) and CASHL (China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library) are the two most influential and successful nationwide academic library consortium projects in China.

This article will introduce development of ILL/DDS of CALIS and CASHL, and will take CASHL as an example, through investigating on its service quality control methods on organizing university libraries in China to provide nationwide services during 2004-2016, some essential factors on the coalition service quality control have been observed and summarized.

## **2. A brief introduction to CALIS and CASHL**

### *2.1 The structure of management of CALIS and CASHL*

Both CALIS and CASHL are national academic library consortia of China (Table 1).

**Table 1. Basic information on CALIS and CASHL**

| <b>Comparative category</b> | <b>CALIS</b>                                      | <b>CASHL</b>                                      |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Set up Year                 | 1998  | 2003  |
| Organizer                   | Chinese Ministry of Education                     | Chinese Ministry of Education                     |
| Sources of funds            | Chinese Ministry of Education and central members | Chinese Ministry of Education and central members |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Organisational model                     | National and intra-system consortium  | National and intra-system consortium   |
| Management model                         | Virtual and realistic management  | Virtual and realistic management   |
| Cooperative collection development model | Existing collection resource cooperation and coordinated purchasing cooperation | Existing collection resource cooperation and coordinated purchasing division |
| Sharing and service system               | Three-tier structure system   | Three-tier structure system  |
| Consortium function type                 | Multifunction consortium  | Multifunction consortium   |
| Serving objects                          | National university teachers and students                                       | National university teachers and students                                    |
| Number of Member libraries               | About 1800  | 800+   |

Both of CASHL and CALIS administrative centers are located at Peking University Library, which makes cooperation between the two projects very convenient. CALIS undertakes CASHL database construction and maintenance, including development of software and hardware and maintenance, as well as other background technical support and service system upgrades. The cooperation can be divided into three stages:

(1) First stage: Journal document delivery service (2004). This includes construction of the directory journal database, and the establishment of document delivery business processes and the document delivery system.

(2) Second stage: "Liberal Arts Book Funding" library service (2009). Coordinate to order system development, construction of the bibliographic database, and establishment of the focused cataloging system on "Liberal Arts Book Funding".

(3) Third stage: Campus one card solution services (2013). These services are supported by the CALIS unified authentication system.

With the support of the collaborative platform, the advantage of the league expand through the powerful combination of assets, thereby achieving complementary services, reducing duplication, and seizing the opportunity for rapid development.

### 2.2 The ILL/DDS services of CALIS and CASHL

The document supply service of CALIS was started in 2003.

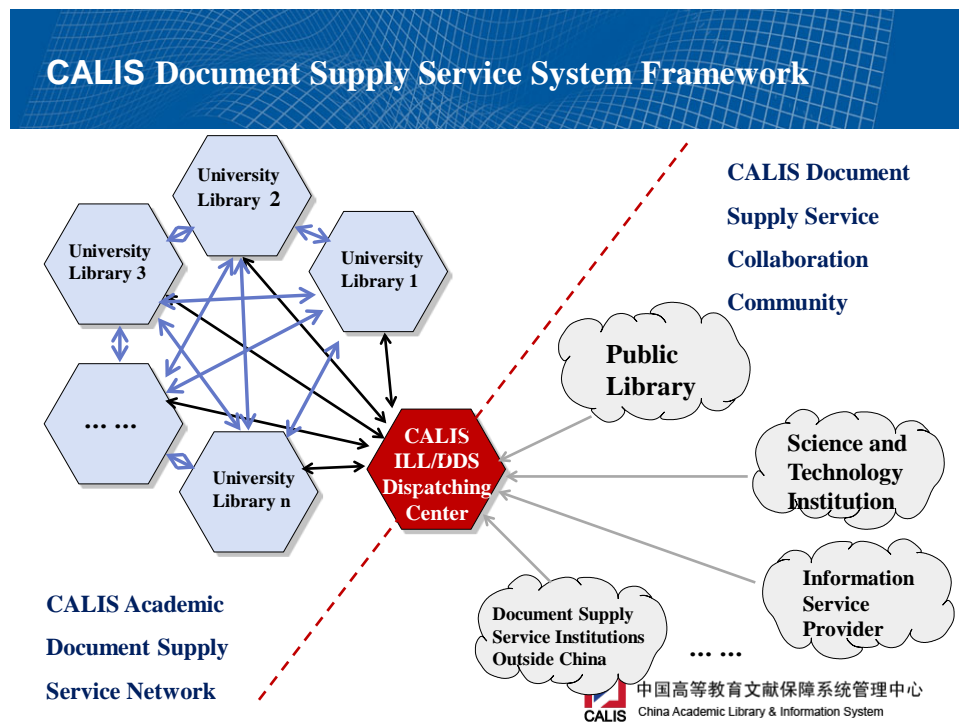


Figure 1 CALIS document supply service system framework

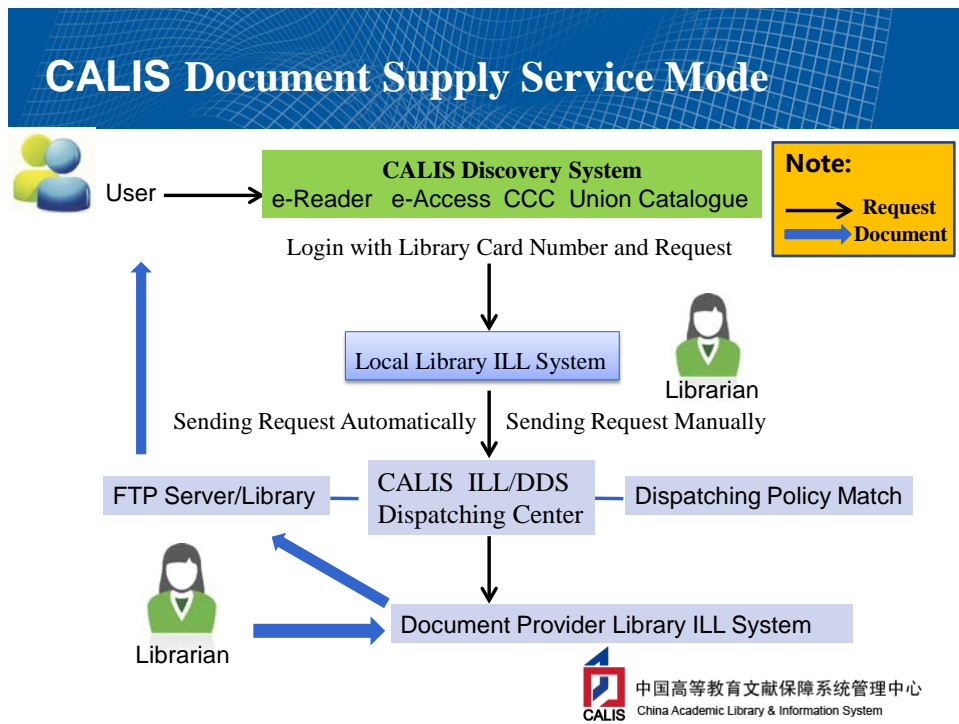


Figure 2 CALIS document supply service mode

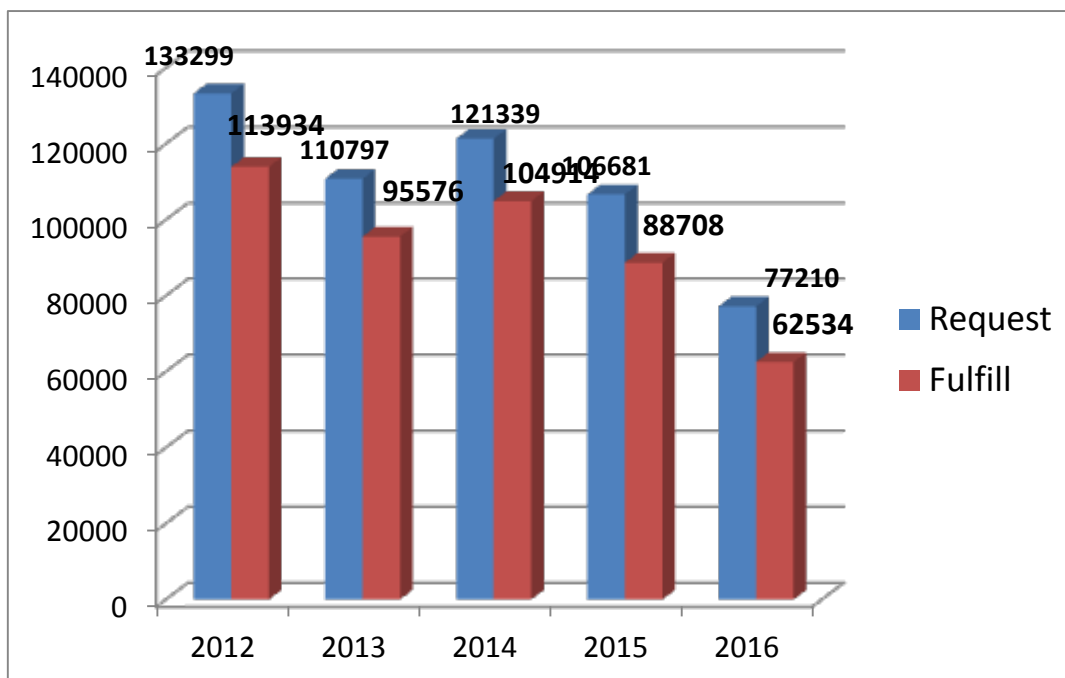
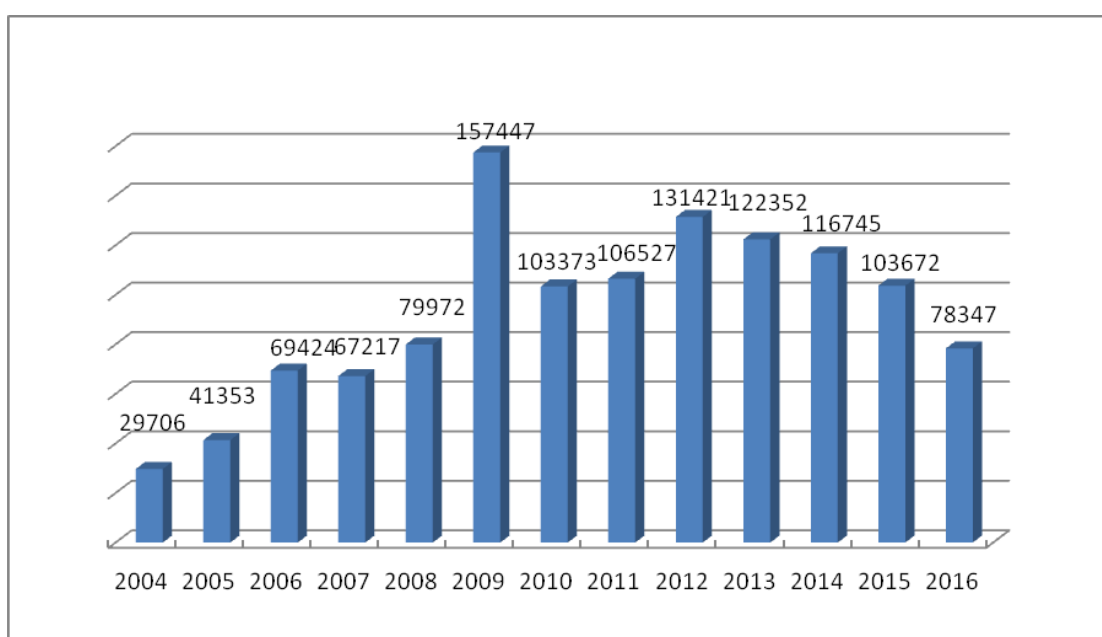


Figure 3 CALIS document delivery service volume (2012-2016)

By the end of 2016, the number of CASHL member was over 800

libraries. 37% of users are Ph.D. candidates. The accumulated download of electronic resources was more than 20 million, and the delivery services volume of printed documents was more than one million (Figure 4). In 2016, the amount of DDS is 78347, and Inter-Library Loan of books is 7448. The average services satisfaction rate was about 95% from 2009(Figure 4), and the average DDS completion time was in two days.

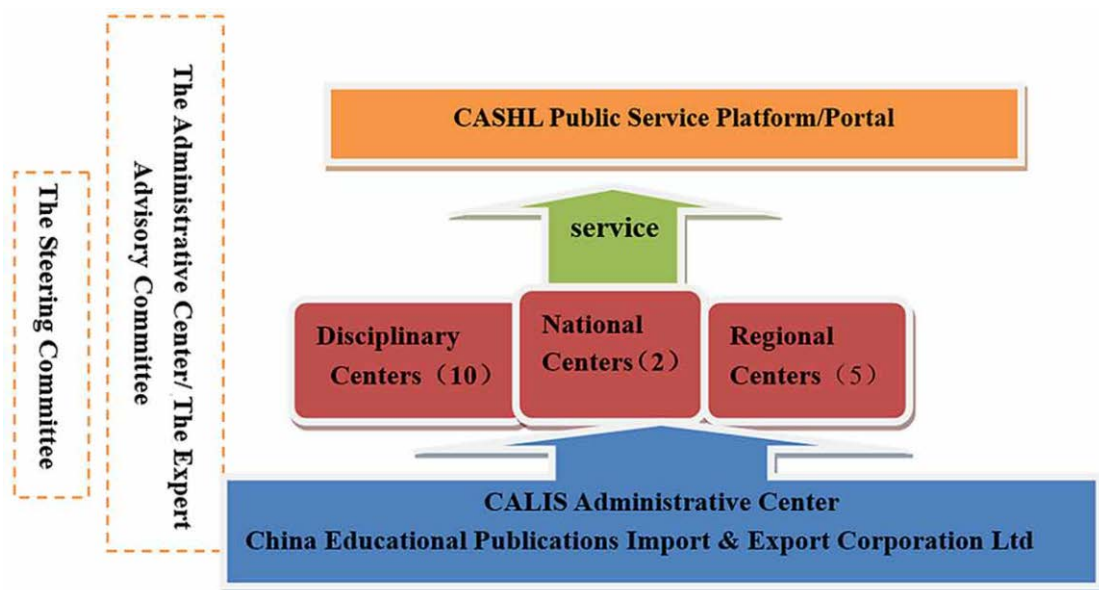


*Figure 4. 2004-2016 CASHL document delivery service volume*

CASHL is the acronym for the China Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Library, which is established on March 15, 2004 under the leadership of the Chinese Ministry of Education. As one of the key projects of the Ministry of Education’s “Philosophy and Social Sciences Prosperity Plan”, the mission of CASHL is to acquire, preserve and share cooperatively foreign and Chinese information resources in the

humanities and social sciences among member libraries, and to provide a unified online portal for users to retrieve and utilize these resources. The ultimate goal of CASHL is to become the “National Philosophy and Social Science Resources Platform”.

The CASHL management system is composed of several organizations, including the Steering Committee, the Administrative Center, an expert advisory group, the Academic Liberal Arts Collection Development Team, and the Academic Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Coordination Group. Its structure is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 5 CASHL management system structure diagram*

CASHL consists of two national centers, five regional centers, and ten disciplinary centers, which are collectively known as 17 CASHL Center Libraries. In 2015, two disciplinary centers were also granted as supplementary regional centers. The CASHL Center Libraries and some



member libraries of the “Liberal Arts Book Funding” project (70 academic member libraries) together build three classes of the CASHL collection and service system, offering externally unified services on behalf of CASHL. The duties of the Center Libraries are to collect resources systematically by subject and offer nationwide services covering all geographical regions (Table 1).

CASHL currently has a collection of foreign language resources with full coverage of social sciences and humanities subjects, such as law, literature, education, economy, and so on. The collection consists of the following:

(1) Journals: There are as many as 26,000 foreign printed journals on social science and humanities, including the complete collection of the core journals Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). These journals are collected and distributed in the 17 CASHL center libraries on the basis of subject coordination. All journal directory information has been uploaded to CASHL and for document delivery services.

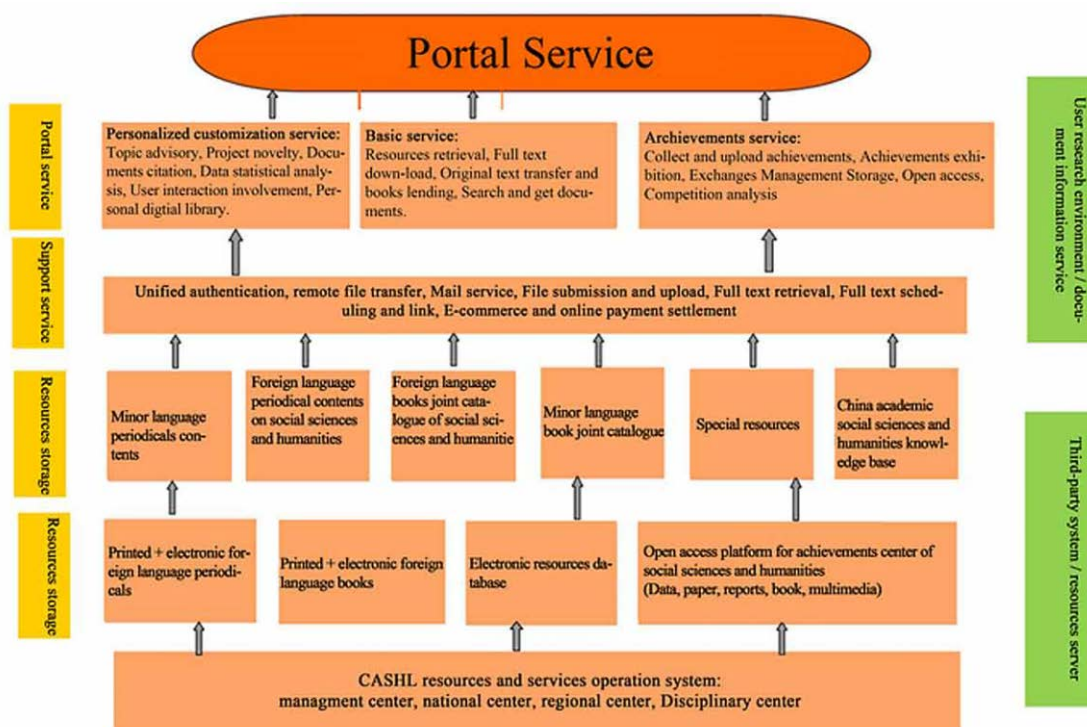
(2) Books: There are as many as 1.42 million foreign printed books on social sciences and humanities, which are collected and distributed in 70 academic libraries supported by Liberal Arts Book Funding. All directory information has been uploaded to CASHL and for interlibrary loan.

(3) Electronic Resources: There are more than 2,860 electronic

journals, and 410,000 electronic books. The users of CASHL center libraries can access the electronic resources through IP and download full texts.

(4) Secondary Literature Databases: CASHL itself has built two secondary literature databases: the Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Foreign Periodicals Directory Database, and the Academic Social Sciences and Humanities Union Catalog of Foreign Books. The Periodicals Directory Database has a collection of about 38 million records, while the Union Catalog of Foreign Books has a collection of more than 160 million records. These two databases are open and free to use.

(5) Large Special Collections: Since 2008, CASHL has begun to use special funds to develop special collections in a planned and systematic way in accordance with the principle of coordinated construction. The overall construction of large special collections with relatively high prices, complete features, and unique value to the country, is difficult to support with only daily funds from individual libraries. These primary document sources are especially required by researchers.



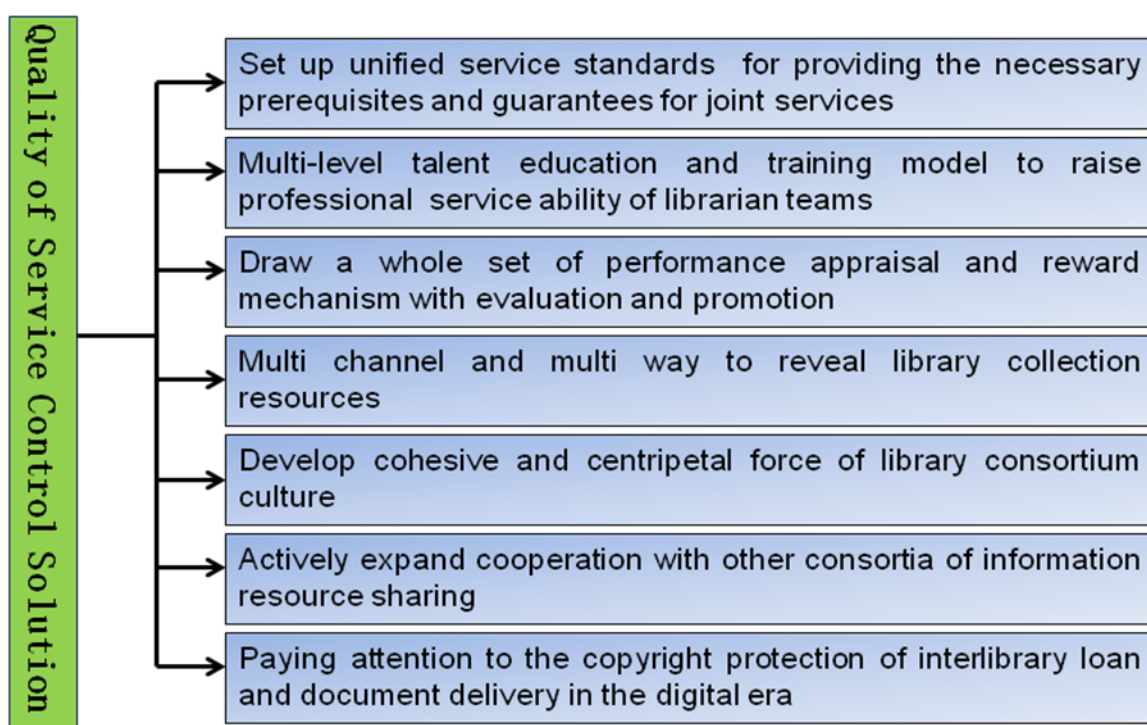
**Figure 6 CASHL Resources and service system design**

**Table 2 CASHL center libraries and its service geographical region**

| CASHL Center Library              | Area of Responsibility | Covered Province/Autonomous Region/Municipality |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Wuhan University Library          | Central China          | Hubei, Hunan, Henan, Jiangxi                    |
| Jilin University Library          | Northeast China        | Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang                   |
| Sun Yat-Sen University Library    | South China            | Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan                      |
| Nanjing University Library        | Northeast China        | Shandong, Jiangsu, Anhui                        |
| Sichuan University Library        | Southwest China        | Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Tibet, Chongqi        |
| Beijing Normal University Library | North China            | Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia |
| Lanzhou University Library        | Northwest China        | Ningxia, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Shanxi, Gansu       |

### 3. A case study on Service Quality Control of CASHL

Due to the great differences among the member libraries, such as library management level, service conditions, service capacity, and personnel quality, How to ensure member library can always provide high-quality services with a same standard? This has become one of the biggest challenges faced by library consortium in conducting joint services. The quality of service control solution frame of CASHL as shown in Figure 7.



*Figure 7 Quality of service control solution frame of CASHL*

### *3.1 Set up unified service standards for providing a necessary prerequisite and guarantee for the joint service.*

CASHL Document Delivery Service Specification is divided into thirteen parts and has standardized CASHL literature services, service clients and models, organizational and business management requirements, ILL workflows, ILL business requirements, service cycles and book maintenance frequency, fees, assessments and settlement methods, and intellectual property protection provisions, among other things. The Specification works together with College Interlibrary Lending Service Specifications, CASHL Document Delivery Services

Assessment Approach, and CASHL Document Delivery Funding Subsidy Program to guide CASHL interlibrary lending and document delivery services, providing a basis for carrying out the joint service. They also work to ensure standardization of the business process and service quality to help the league to effectively circumvent the collateral risk of reduced reputation or brand credibility brought by member libraries due to the uneven service quality of service members.

### *3.2 Multi-level personnel development mode, creating the teams of professional services librarians*

CASHL provides member libraries with a variety of librarian training services at multiple level, including librarian knowledge update and skills training, exchange programs, and one-on-one training. CASHL aims to build up a strong service capacity and dedicated team of staff specialized in interlibrary lending in order to lay a solid foundation to ensure the quality of CASHL services.

### *3.3 Promoting construction through evaluation and establishing a set of performance evaluation incentives*

*CASHL Document Delivery Services Assessment Approach* is designed with a four-level indicator and 17 secondary indicators, and the assessment of the quality and outcomes of service are the most important content (see table 3).

**Table 3 CASHL Document Delivery Services Assessment Approach**

| <b>Primary Indicator</b> | <b>score</b> | <b>Secondary Indicator</b>    | <b>score</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Service infrastructure   | 15           | network conditions            | 5            |
|                          |              | hardware and software         | 5            |
|                          |              | staff                         | 5            |
| Service capability       | 15           | resources availability        | 6            |
|                          |              | Library holdings data provide | 3            |
|                          |              | Reveal of resources           | 3            |
|                          |              | System operation              | 3            |
| Service quality          | 40           | volume of document delivery   | 20           |
|                          |              | Fulfill ratio                 | 10           |

|                       |    |                            |   |
|-----------------------|----|----------------------------|---|
|                       |    | Fulfill time               | 5 |
|                       |    | costing                    | 5 |
| Service effectiveness | 30 | Service navigation         | 5 |
|                       |    | Enrolled patrons           | 5 |
|                       |    | Request quantity           | 5 |
|                       |    | Member library development | 5 |
|                       |    | training                   | 5 |
|                       |    | User satisfaction          | 5 |

4.

- (1) Service infrastructure assessment includes network communication conditions, hardware and software investment, staffing, etc., in order to check whether they have a good service foundation.
- (2) Service capability assessment includes resources available for services and future resources, system operation etc., in order to assess whether the center libraries offer good services.
- (3) Service quality assessment includes the volume of document delivery, user's satisfaction, the response time for requests, cost, and other aspects of document delivery, thus comprehensively assessing the service quality.
- (4) Evaluation of service effectiveness which includes promotion and training conducted in the regional, as well as the assessment of user service perception.

Through overall consideration of the assessment results, task completion, work attitude, document delivery service specifications, system optimization, prospective study, promotion, assessment programs, resources construction, and participation in organizational work, among other criteria, the assessment may provide the center service personnel with rewards. Through the establishment of a series of performance evaluations and incentive mechanisms, CASHL has effectively promoted overall development of interlibrary lending and document delivery services among center libraries. Meanwhile, it has also improved the level of various member libraries in resources integration and development, system maintenance and use, and innovative service means, among other

improvements.

### *3.4 Reveal and provide data of library holdings from multiple channels*

CASHL assigned a professional position to be responsible for collecting and checking the bibliographic data of journals and books held by member libraries, thereby authorizing member libraries to update journal data. This service involves in-depth process on microforms in large special collections, revealing the contents of directory contained in each part. Each volume is visible, including a full scan of the book cover and table of contents. Effective and timely reveal of resources has offered a wealth of information for good judgment of the required literature, and it has become a prerequisite for interlibrary lending services.

### *3.5 Construction of the consortium culture of cohesion and centripetal force*

A good communication mechanism and a common vision are the foundations of the library league culture. CASHL has had a lot of useful attempts in building league culture; for example, through "Better CASHL, Better Library" and other slogans, CASHL has promoted co-building, co-sharing, and joint development among member libraries. In *CASHL Communication*, "CASHL family for dedication to you and me" is considered as the special topic, which is published with annual outstanding work life photos of interlibrary lending, sharing the work experience and perception of life. The above initiatives have greatly increased the sense of pride and responsibility for CASHL ILL staff for CASHL work, promoting mutual understanding between college librarians to help establish trust and partnership.

### *3.6 Cooperation with more library consortium and publisher*

In order to offer collaborative services, different consortia established strong and long-term cooperative relationship. For example, CALIS offers a multi-grade and multi-level service and technical support through the establishment of the digital library service network and cloud service platform. CASHL can take all technical advantages from CALIS through a deep cooperation with it.

On December 25, 2013, the CASHL and BALIS administrative centers formally signed a cooperation agreement. According to the agreement, BALIS added its member libraries into CASHL. Currently, the CASHL member libraries in Beijing have reached 88, including 46 newly added BALIS member libraries. Through campus custom union certificate system, new users can use CASHL services without registration; The cooperation between CASHL and BALIS has achieved integration from system to services.

In April 2008, to further increase the volume of resources and expand services, the CASHL administrative Center and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Library formed a strategic partnership to carry out a comprehensive and long-term cooperation. In December 2009, CASHL and the Macau University of Science and Technology Library signed the "Cooperation Agreement of Building a CASHL Service Station in Macao." And In May 2012, CASHL and the Shanghai Library signed a strategic cooperation agreement. In 2010, CASHL cooperated with Emerald Group Publishing and signed a memorandum of cooperation for three years. Emerald Group Publishing funded the joint establishment of the "Western Librarian Training and Exchanges Fund" and launched a "Western CASHL/Emerald Librarian Training and Exchanges Cooperation Projects."

### *3.7 Intellectual property protect solutions in the digital age*

CASHL is an information service system which offers document delivery and ILL services in the digital environment, aiming to prevent an adverse impact on league development due to the problem of intellectual property rights, while promoting the enhancement of core competitiveness. CASHL has adopted some specific intellectual property protect methods, such as service mode, usage amount limit, price guidance, resource control, and technical support (Figure 8). As a non-profit organization, CASHL only charge the basic document cost without labor fee, and limit usage amount within a reasonable range.



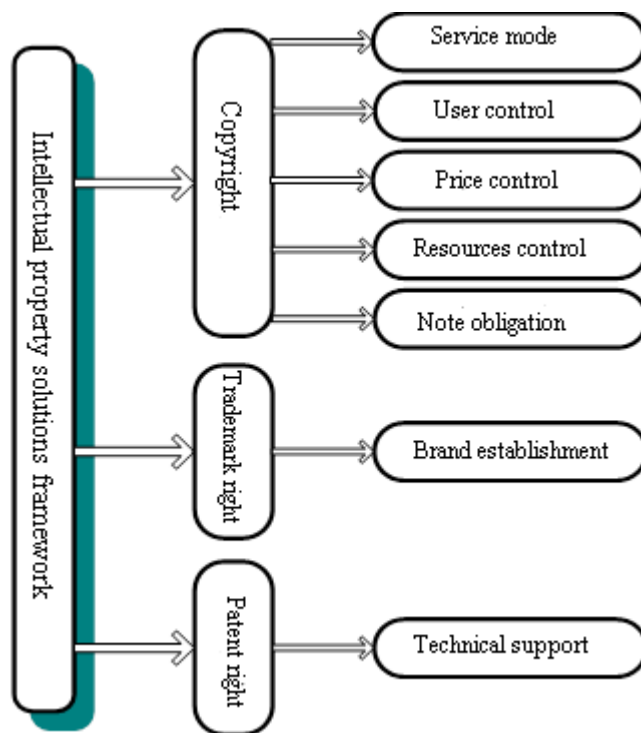


Figure 8 intellectual property protect solution framework of CASHL

#### 4. Problems and Challenges

Although the development of social sciences and humanities literature resources and services have greatly improved in this decade, but as the only nationwide social sciences and humanities collections and service center, and a national alliance literature collection and storage system, CASHL still faces many problems and are unable to meet patron's requirements, a huge gap existed between supply and demand. The main challenges are as follows:

(1) Shortage of funds. With the cost of literature resources increasing, there is not adequate funding to support the consecutive purchasing of print journals and electronic resources. As a result, it is impossible to meet patron's requirements.

(2) Inadequate scale of service capability. Due to staff limitations, lagging application of modern information technology, and other factors, the scale of service capabilities is inadequate. Not only cannot compare with Amazon, Google, or other commercial service agencies, but also can not provide fast and convenient service to users.

(3) Uneven development of libraries in eastern and western area in China. Due to social and economic development weaknesses in western area in China, such as restrict of budget in library, poor infrastructure, outdated service concept and lack of professional librarians. The library consortium in China has already taken some measures to support member libraries in western area in China to help them improve service levels. However, these efforts are far from enough. It is necessary to establish a long-term help and support mechanism by continued investment.

(4) Homogeneous competition between library consortia. Currently, a considerable number of libraries tend toward homogeneity in collection development, service model and many other aspects, so do library consortia. Users have increasingly diverse and need more and more personalized services; library consortia must break out on different paths to meet their consistently changing needs.

(5) Administrative mechanism must be improved. After decades of development, CASHL has established an effective administrative system. However, with current environment change, there is a significant amount of work that must be done to continually update and improve. Further opening in system and organization culture construction are getting more and more crucial.

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