

## Original Paper

# The Social Technology of the Book Publishing in Modern Chinese Libraries: Taking the Laws and Regulations at That Time as an Example

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### Abstract

*The book publishing of modern Chinese libraries is a Socio-Technical Interaction Network (STIN), which, together with other STIN, forms a larger STIN. On the basis of describing the laws and regulations related to libraries and publishing in modern China, this paper constructs and analyzes the STIN of book publishing in modern Chinese libraries, and point out that these laws and regulations are a kind of “social technology”, that is, the social elements of this network; it, along with other social elements and various natural technological elements, constitutes the “broad technology” of book publishing in modern Chinese libraries.*

### Keywords

*modern Chinese libraries, social technology, broad technology, book publishing, Socio-Technical Interaction Network (STIN)*

## 1. Introduction

“Broad technology” refers to the collective of various methods that are effective in all human activities, including “natural technology” and “social technology” (Shen, 2015, p. 34). Natural technology, also known as narrow technology, is a technology that people usually understand; social technology involves fields such as politics, economy, law, management, military, discipline, and governance in human society (Yang & Wang, 2003; Leibetseder, 2011). “Library Publishing” is a new type of service launched by domestic and foreign libraries or intelligence agencies in recent years. It is an open access publishing model based on academic exchange, knowledge sharing, and innovative development as

philosophies, using relevant technological means and library network platforms. However, in the long history of human libraries, the publication of paper books in libraries has been around for a long time. For example, the Library of the British Museum (now the main predecessor of the British Library) has published a collection of books, news announcements, internal documents and other paper materials for over 420 years. The earliest publication of libraries in the United States can be traced back to the late 19th or early 20th century, when the earliest academic publishing departments were established in university libraries in the United States, and later, many of them developed into university publishers. Book publishing in the history of Chinese library industry is no exception, and there is also a tradition of paper book printing. Before modern times, some literati in China tried their best to publish their manuscripts or rare classics by spreading culture and preserving literature (Wang, 1991). In modern times, from the beginning of the 20th century to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, libraries not only provided conventional circulation, reading and other services, but also inherited the business of printing and publishing books from the past. That is to say, libraries also used their own advantages to carry out unique book publishing activities. The literature search results also confirmed that a considerable number of various books were published in modern Chinese libraries between 1900 and 1949, with at least 1700 records retrieved (excluding the records of the Hanfen Building/涵芬楼 attached to the Commercial Press). The book publishing of modern Chinese libraries and the digital publishing launched by libraries today are both services. Both publishing and service cannot do without broad technology: natural technology and social technology. After briefly introducing the laws and regulations at that time, based on the conceptual model of the Socio-Technical Interaction Network (STIN), we will construct and analyze the book publishing of modern Chinese libraries.

## 2. Laws and Regulations Related to Libraries in Modern China

In the second year of the Xuantong (宣统) reign (1910), the Qing government promulgated the first law of the Chinese library industry, "The Ministry of Education drafted the regulations for the circulation of libraries in the capital and various provinces" (《学部奏拟定京师及各省图书馆通行章程折》) (Article 19). Although this charter is far from the spirit of modern Western public libraries, its content almost covers all aspects of the library, such as book acquisition, book cataloging, reading management, library architecture, and publication of collection resources. Articles 8, 12, and 15 respectively stipulate that "if there is an invention that is worthy of academic qualification examination, it shall be photographed, printed, and recorded by the library"; "the Beijing and provincial libraries may have printing and printing offices attached. If there are isolated collections of secret books, they should be copied and distributed at any time"; "the testament and version... if the private owner refuses to sell it, it should also be lent out, printed, photographed, and recorded separately (Department of Library Science in Hebei University, 1985, pp. 3-4). The books publication of library in this regulation was the

main legal basis for the publishing books in library at that time.

After entering the Republic of China, on October 23, 1915, the Ministry of Education requested the President of the Republic of China to publish the “Library Regulation” (《图书馆规程》) (11 articles) and the “Popular Library Regulation” (《通俗图书馆规程》) (11 articles). These two regulations were the guidelines for establishing libraries in various regions at that time and had a great impact on the modern library industry in China (Jin, 1928). After the Nanjing National Government came to power, it also successively promulgated laws and regulations related to libraries, including “Library Rule” (《图书馆条例》) (15 articles) and “Rule on the Submission of Newly Issued Books” (《新出图书呈缴条例》) (4 articles) announced by the University Institute (大学院) on December 20, 1927, “Regulation on the Submission of Newly Issued Books” (《新出图书呈缴规程》) (6 articles), “Library Regulation” (《图书馆规程》) (14 articles), and “Measures for the Registration of Private Libraries” (《私立图书馆立案办法》) (3 articles) announced by the Ministry of Education on March 28, May 10, and October 16, 1930, as well as the “Revised Library Regulation” (《修正图书馆规程》) (33 articles), “Outline of Library Work” (《图书馆工作大纲》) (18 articles) and “Outline of Measures for Library Guidance on Book Education in Local Social Education Institutions” (《图书馆辅导各地社会教育机关图书教育办法大纲》) (15 articles), announced by the Ministry of Education on July 22, July 24, and November 4, 1939, successively. “The Organizational Rule of the National Central Library” (《国立中央图书馆组织条例》) (14 articles, revised in October 1945) promulgated by the National Government on October 16, 1940, and On February 24, June 3 and December 15, 1941, the Ministry of Education successively issued the “Measures for Popularizing National Library Education” (《普及全国图书馆教育办法》) (15 articles, revised twice on December 21, 1943 and November 22, 1944), “Measures for Setting up Libraries (Rooms) for Public Reading in Schools and Organs at All Levels” (《各级学校及各机关设置图书馆(室)供应民众阅览办法》) (9 articles), “Measures for Setting up Patrol Libraries in County (City) Libraries” (《县(市)立图书馆设置巡回文库办法》) (16 articles), “Implementation Measures for Library Work” (《图书馆工作实施办法》) (11 articles) issued by the Ministry of Education on March 10, 1944, and “Library Regulations” (《图书馆规程》) (34 articles) announced by the Ministry of Education on April 1, 1947.

In addition, there are also some indirect laws related to the libraries. For example, in 1920, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Beijing Government instructed all county libraries to “search for all public and private collections, as well as old engraved books, plates, and printed materials...” The main purpose of this law by the Ministry of Internal Affairs was to revitalize China’s culture (Yang, 1923, pp. 464-465). During the period of the Republic of China, some local governments actively promoted legislation and promulgated some local laws and regulations on library, such as “Regulation on Popular Libraries” (《通俗图书馆章程》) formulated by Zhili Province, “Organizational Guidelines and Work Outline of Henan Provincial Libraries” (《河南省图书馆组织简则暨工作大纲》), “Regulation on Fujian

Provincial Library” (《福建省立图书馆规程》), “Measures for Setting up County Libraries in Guangxi” (《广西各县设置县立图书馆办法》), and “Organizational Regulation on Tianjin Municipal Library” (《天津市立图书馆组织规程》).

### 3. The Laws and Regulations Related to Publishing in Modern China

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, there were no separate laws and regulations for publication, only involving other laws and regulations. For example, in August 1902, “The Ordination of the Imperial Rule of the Imperial University of Peking” (《钦定京师大学堂章程》) were promulgated, which stipulated that each school should review, compile and print textbooks and lecture notes; “Special Law on Printing Objects of the Qing Dynasty” (《大清印刷物件专律》) promulgated in July 1906, and “Law on Newspapers of the Qing Dynasty” (《大清报律》) promulgated in March 1908 (revised and renamed as the “the Authorized Regulations for Newspaper”/《钦定报律》 in January 1911).

After entering the Republic of China, laws and regulations related to publishing emerged. On December 4, 1914, the Beijing Government promulgated a total of 23 articles of “Publishing Law” (《出版法》). This is the first official “Publishing Law” in Chinese history, which stipulates that textbooks of each school should be uniformly printed by the national publishing agency and implement a “centralized purchase and sales of books and periodicals” (书刊统购统销) system. This law greatly limits the development of the traditional book publishing industry. In addition, the essence of the content of the publication law is no different from the relevant laws and regulations formulated by the Qing Dynasty, which cannot be tolerated by the Chinese people. The call to abolish the law has never stopped. Finally, on January 27, 1926, the Beijing Government passed a resolution to abolish the publication law at the State Council.

On March 6, 1916, the Ministry of Education submitted a document in accordance with the requirements of Capital Library (then the National Library), requesting that a book registered for publication by the Ministry of Internal Affairs be submitted to Capital Library for collection. Two days later, the Beijing Government issued China’s first book submission law, which greatly benefited the collection construction of Capital Library. On November 20, 1916, the Ministry of Education of the Beijing Government issued a decree on “provincial and county libraries should pay attention to collecting local art and literature”, requiring them to “collect books, in addition to collecting domestic and foreign illustrations, especially pay attention to the writings of local people” (Ma, 2019, p. 124). In 1926, the Beijing Government revised the first law on the submission of books, stipulating that “all books published in stores and written by individuals should be sent in four copies to the provincial education bureaus for allocation by the departments. One copy should be forwarded to the National Capital Library, one copy should be directly sent to the National Compilation and Translation Library (国立编译馆), and the other copy should be stored in various provincial library and local library” (Jin,

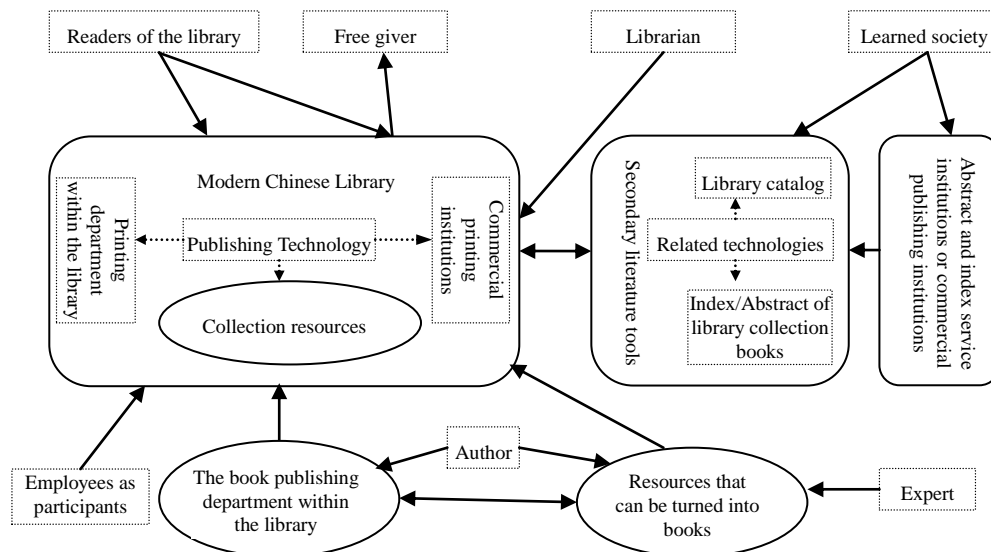
1928).

During the period of Nanjing National Government, three publishing laws were successively promulgated, namely the first “Publishing Law” (44 articles) promulgated in December 1930, the second revised version of the “Publishing Law” (54 articles, unimplemented) promulgated in July 1937, and the third “Draft Amendment to the Publishing Law” (《出版法修正草案》) (46 articles, Not actually implemented) passed in October 1947. The publication laws promulgated by Nanjing National Government aim to “safeguard freedom of publication and prevent the spread of inappropriate publications”, but in reality, it suppresses speech under the banner of safeguarding people’s freedom of speech and publication (Ding, 2014, p. 49). During the Anti Japanese War, the Japanese puppet government also promulgated several publishing laws in the occupied areas, such as the “Publishing Law” promulgated by Puppet Regime of Reform Government on July 15, 1938, the “Publishing Law” promulgated by Wang Puppet Government on January 24, 1941, and the “Revised War Time Publishing Law” (《修正战时出版法》) promulgated by the propaganda department of Wang Puppet Government in June 1942 (Wu, 2008, pp. 332-336).

Of course, in addition to the formulation of the “Publication Law” mentioned above, there were also other relevant publishing laws, regulations, and articles promulgated during various periods of the Republic of China. For example, “Newspaper Regulations” (《报纸条例》) promulgated by the Beijing Government in 1914, “Revised Newspaper Regulations” (《修正报纸条例》) in 1915, and “Management of Printing Business Rule” (《管理印刷营业规则》) in 1919; During the period of the Nanjing National Government, a considerable number of laws and regulations related to publishing were promulgated. According to *Compilation of Modern and Contemporary Laws & Regulations of Publishing & News* (《近现代出版新闻法规汇编》), from 1927 to 1949, there were a total of 26 publishing laws and their rules for implementation, 56 laws or regulations on book submission and review, and 24 laws or regulations on news censorship and ban (Wu, 2008, p. 336). Among them, some of the more important ones were the “Implementation Rules of the Publishing Law” (《出版法施行细则》) (25 articles) established by the Ministry of the Interior and the Central Propaganda Department of the Kuomintang in October 1931, “Measures for Prohibiting the Sales of Publications after Investigation” (《取缔发售业经查禁出版品办法》) announced by the Ministry of the Interior on July 17, 1934, and “Revised Measures for the Review of Books and Magazines” (《修正图书杂志审查办法》) formulated by the Central Propaganda Committee of the Kuomintang in June 1934, which were first implemented in Shanghai. On July 28, 1937, the Nanjing National Government promulgated “implementation Rules for the Revision of the Publishing Law” (《修正出版法实施细则》) (28 articles, not truly implemented), and on July 21, 1938, “Review Measures for Original Manuscripts of War Books and Magazines” (《战时图书杂志原稿审查办法》) passed at the 86th Executive Meeting of the Fifth Central Committee of the Kuomintang.

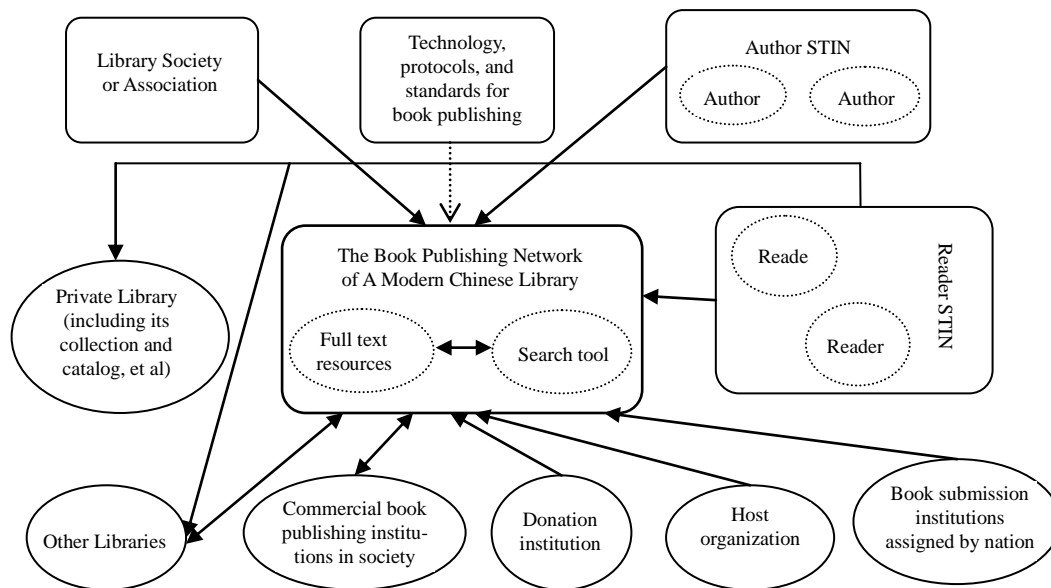
#### 4. The Construction and Analysis of the Socio-Technical Interaction Network for Book Publishing in Modern Chinese Libraries

The STIN model was proposed by Rob Kling et al, who are Americans and pioneers of social informatics. This model also provides a suitable tool for people to correctly construct and analyze the book publishing network of modern Chinese libraries. As the saying goes, “the use of the term ‘Socio-Technical Interaction Network’ is to understand the complex system of social technology, emphasizing the interactive characteristics that exist between people, people and devices, and even between technological structural units and political trends” (Wang, 2007). The book publishing network of modern Chinese libraries constructed based on the STIN model is easily understood as a socio-technical interaction network. This STIN includes heterogeneous social elements—social technology and technological components—natural technology. The STIN of modern Chinese libraries’ book publishing has connected authors, readers, libraries, librarians, commercial printing institutions or academic groups, and other relevant personnel through relevant natural and social technologies. According to the STIN model, the construction of the book publishing network in modern Chinese libraries can be represented by Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The Construction of Book Publishing Network in Modern Chinese Libraries Based on STIN Model**

At the same time, the network also forms a larger STIN with other STINs such as library societies or associations, private libraries, etc. The nodes and their relationships in this STIN are shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. A Large STIN that Includes Socio-Technical Interaction Network Nodes such as the Book Publishing Network of Modern Chinese Libraries**

Due to the fact that both STINs mentioned above contain heterogeneous social and natural technological elements, the book publishing network of modern Chinese libraries cannot be simplified into a separate social determinism or technological determinism. As long as people recognize this, the interaction of various elements in the book publishing network of modern Chinese libraries can truly exert its effects and achieve the expected effects of literature dissemination and knowledge exchange. If there is a lack of understanding of the STIN, the combination of natural technology and social technology in the book publishing network of modern Chinese libraries would be like a lack of appropriate lubricants or adhesives, which would not appear so harmonious and stable, achieving the expected effect of literature dissemination and knowledge exchange.

## 5. Conclusion

The laws and regulations on library & publication issued in modern China, especially the registration and filing system, only involved the publication access system and publication distribution system, and did not involve publishing units, providing legal basis for libraries to carry out book publishing at that time. In modern China, the admission targets, admission conditions, and admission procedures for publications, as well as the postal and international exchange systems for publications, were important standards for the management of the book industry at that time, and library book publishing naturally had to comply with them. These laws and regulations are a kind of “social technology” and a social element in the modern Chinese library book publishing STIN. It, along with other social elements and

various natural technological elements, constitutes the “broad technology” of the book publishing network in modern Chinese libraries. The publication of STIN in modern Chinese libraries, along with other STINs, constitutes a larger STIN.

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