Journal of Education, Teaching and Social Studies
ISSN 2642-2336 (Print) ISSN 2642-2328 (Online)
Vol. 8, No. 4, 2026
www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/jetss

Original Paper

From "Reading" to "Music-Integrated Reading": A Practical Exploration of Music Cultural Services in University Libraries

Jing Meng[1*]

[1] University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Library, China

[*] E-mail: 2890638707@qq.com

Received: September 15, 2026 Accepted: October 19, 2026 Online Published: November 2, 2026

doi:10.22158/jetss.v8n4p29 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jetss.v8n4p29

Abstract

University libraries serve as the core front of campus cultural development, the cultural heart and spiritual high ground of the university. They bear the important mission of disseminating scientific knowledge and cultivating sound personality. With the rapid development of the new era, the functionality of libraries is no longer confined to physical spaces for collection and reading. Against this background, this paper adopts the perspective of cultural immersion and explores the possibility of achieving a deep integration of music and reading through environmental design, the provision of music resources, and the organization of distinctive cultural activities, thereby embedding the educational functions of the library into rich cultural experiences. Driven by the educational mission of universities, this exploration not only helps enhance university students' comprehensive competence by providing accessible knowledge and aesthetic nourishment, but also further unlocks the spatial value and educational potential of university libraries while meeting the diverse needs of readers.

Keywords

university library, reading, music-integrated reading, music culture

1. Introduction

The phonetic similarity between the Chinese characters "阅" (yuè, reading) and "乐" (yuè, music / lè, joy) suggests an intrinsic connection between reading and music in Chinese culture. In ancient times, scholars regarded "qin, qi, calligraphy, and painting" as the four arts, with "qin" (music) ranking first and being inseparable from "calligraphy" (writing/reading). "Reading" is a dynamic, reader-initiated cognitive activity—rational and logical, involving mental processing of written symbols. "Music" is both a static culture and a 流动 (flowing) emotion—perceptual and intuitive. The proposition of moving from "reading" to "music-integrated reading" (or "joyful reading") can be interpreted in the context of

university libraries along the following trajectory: “Reading” is the starting point of a reader’s entry into the library; “music” represents the objective environment and cultural resources provided by the library, ultimately leading to a relaxed and joyful emotional experience. The transition from “reading” to “music-integrated reading” signifies a leap forward in the service philosophy of university libraries—allowing rich musical resources and active reading behaviors to merge and coexist within the library space, where joy is felt in the acquisition of knowledge and the soul is nourished through artistic experience.

2. Practical Approaches to Music Culture in University Library Services

2.1 Using Background Music to Regulate the Library’s Learning Atmosphere

So-called background music, also known as ambient music, is primarily intended to guide listeners toward a certain activity without being distracted by other factors. Background music is not meant to attract the audience’s purposeful attention to listen to or appreciate the music, but rather to create an environment that is relaxed and lively, cozy and warm, elegant and tranquil, or intimate and welcoming. Under the influence of such an atmosphere, people unconsciously immerse themselves in a given state of activity. Through the representational and emotional characteristics of music, it adjusts and assimilates the listener’s mental state to achieve a desired effect.

Playing background music in the library serves several purposes. First, it can mask unavoidable environmental noises, such as the sound of turning pages, footsteps coming and going, equipment operation, occasional conversations or questions, and so on. Second, beautiful, soothing music can regulate breathing and emotions, relieve academic stress among university students, and improve their learning efficiency. Third, appropriate background music can create a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere in the library, helping students relax their minds, expand their thinking, and enhance their creativity. Therefore, playing suitable background music plays an important and invaluable role in enhancing the library’s humanistic qualities and strengthening its implicit service capabilities.

The library is a dignified, serious space for cultural learning; thus the selection of background music tracks requires careful consideration of multiple factors. It is necessary to take advantage of music’s benefits while also aligning with the library’s character. In terms of musical expression, instrumental music should be given priority. Instrumental music includes various performance forms such as solos, ensembles, and chamber music. Compared with vocal music, instrumental music offers a wider range, more abstract musical thinking, freer and more varied artistic styles, and the advantage of not interfering with thought through lyrics when played. Instrumental music comes in rich and diverse types with different timbres. As background music in a library, it must be considered that most of the audience has little or only basic knowledge of music. Therefore, relatively familiar instrumental pieces with gentle melodic contours should be chosen—for example, works for piano, violin, guzheng, pipa, etc.

Take the piano as an example. Known as the “king of instruments,” the piano is a finely constructed keyboard instrument with 108 black and white keys. It has a wide range and a soft timbre, and is loved by people of all ages. The earliest harpsichords were introduced to China by Italians, while the modern

piano we commonly see today was developed from the harpsichord that flourished in Europe from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Thus, the piano has a long history, during which countless world-renowned masters and masterpieces have emerged both in China and abroad. Consequently, there is a high degree of freedom in selecting background music pieces. For example, famous piano pieces that represent our national characteristics include The Butterfly Lovers, Jasmine Flower, Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon, Moonlit Night on the Spring River, and so on. Similarly, many famous foreign piano works can be considered, such as Polish composer Frédéric Chopin's *Nocturne in E-flat Major* and *Nocturne in B-flat Minor*, as well as Hungarian composer Franz Liszt's *Liebesträume and Romance in E Minor*. From a musical characteristics perspective, pieces with steady rhythm, moderate tempo, and gentle melodic undulations should be prioritized.

Considering the audience within the library—university students as young people-popular music is one of their favorite genres. Many widely sung pop songs have also been arranged as instrumental pieces. Among these, we can select pieces with suitable style as background music, such as works by the singer Jay Chou, including Far Away, Blue and White Porcelain, Common Jasmine Orange, and others that have positive themes and light, flowing melodies. Similarly, theme songs from outstanding films or television works can also be prioritized, such as the theme music composed by Japanese musician Joe Hisaishi for Hayao Miyazaki's animated films, including Castle in the Sky, Summer, My Neighbor Totoro, Always with Me, and so on.

2.2 Enriching Library Music Resources to Enhance Artistic Cultivation

As an effective supplement and extension of university classrooms, library collections need to prioritize comprehensiveness and diversity. Attention should not be focused solely on cultivating students' learning abilities and improving their professional skills; strengthening students' ideological and moral development, enhancing their cultural depth, and broadening their vision and perspective should all be given equal importance. Reading diverse knowledge and possessing diverse ways of thinking can help students better understand themselves and achieve well-rounded development. At the same time, abundant music resources can enhance and elevate the cultural and artistic atmosphere and appeal of the library, reduce the serious and tense learning atmosphere, and create a relaxed and pleasant spatial environment.

Generally speaking, students at comprehensive universities tend to have a relatively basic level of musical literacy and professional music knowledge and skills. Therefore, when selecting music materials, emphasis should be placed on interest, practicality, and accessibility, without overemphasizing the professional aspects of music culture. Students should be guided to perceive the social significance and cultural value behind music cultural activities.

2.3 Organizing Beneficial Music-Oriented Cultural Activities

As a hub of communication on campus, the library can fully leverage its own advantages, broaden its thinking, remain rooted in the university, and integrate rich social and cultural resources to create diverse

cultural dissemination activities for faculty and students, offering them unique musical experiences and opportunities for interaction—combining education with entertainment:

2.3.1 Offer music-themed lectures to introduce fundamental and specialized musical concepts and knowledge. This can help readers avoid indiscriminate learning, build a solid foundation for reading music-related books, and develop a deeper appreciation of the appeal of musical culture from a more professional perspective. Guided by musical knowledge, readers can learn to appreciate and explore a wider range of musical styles, broaden their knowledge, and expand their horizons.

2.3.2 Organize recommendation and guided-reading activities featuring high-quality music-related books, offering in-depth interpretations of musical works from diverse perspectives. For example, biographies of renowned musicians from different countries or world-famous classical works can serve as entry points for exploring the historical contexts and creative processes behind their production. Such activities can connect political transformations, social changes, their impact on culture, and the ways in which contemporary environments shape people's ideas, attitudes, and modes of thinking. They can encourage readers to examine a work, an individual, an event, a country, or a period of history from multiple perspectives; to appreciate the inner essence of musical works at different levels; and to understand the world through the modes of thought embodied in music.

2.3.3 Regularly organize music-related display and exchange activities, such as concerts and recitals. Music has an inherently social dimension: it uses sound as a medium for conveying emotions. When people are in unfamiliar surroundings and feel guarded, using music in place of language can be an effective way to open channels of communication. By creating a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, music can encourage appropriate emotional expression. Such activities can inspire and motivate readers, while an appropriate sense of participation can foster greater interest. Practical engagement can, to some extent, stimulate creativity and potential, promote innovative thinking, build self-confidence, and facilitate interpersonal communication.

2.3.4 Provide personalized music services during specific periods, such as the preparation period for postgraduate entrance examinations. Libraries can distribute questionnaires or establish a "wish wall" to collect readers' preferences and use the results to curate and play a background-music playlist specifically for exam preparation. By offering blessings to every student studying tirelessly day and night, this needs-oriented service can provide warmth and encouragement, strengthen the emotional connection between libraries and readers, and enhance readers' sense of identification with and belonging to the library.

2.3.5 Traditional Chinese festivals are important carriers of Chinese cultural heritage, embodying rich historical connotations and emotional value. As a direct medium for emotional expression, music can transform these abstract cultural elements into perceptible aesthetic experiences. During traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival, libraries can integrate musical elements into festival-themed services through initiatives such as "Music Delivers Blessings." Such activities can deepen cultural understanding, incorporate musical culture into library

reading environments in a more ceremonial manner, and achieve educational outcomes by conveying emotions through music and nurturing the mind through traditional festivals.

3. Conclusion

The Chinese character "乐" carries two pronunciations: when pronounced "yuè" (music), it shares the same sound as "阅" (yuè, reading), implying a symbiotic relationship between music and reading; when pronounced "lè" (joy/happiness), it signifies pleasure and delight, highlighting the emotional value of aesthetic education. From ancient times to the present, the pursuit of learning has often been accompanied by hardship. The concept of "joyful reading" (or "music-integrated reading") emerges precisely from the context of the new era, aiming to alleviate the tedium and pressure of the knowledge acquisition process through innovative concepts and diverse services, allowing readers to experience ease and joy amidst the fragrance of books and the rhythm of music.

As an important window for the dissemination of knowledge and culture on campus, and a core front for the construction of spiritual civilization, university libraries bear the dual mission of cultural inheritance and talent cultivation. Libraries should be grounded in the actual circumstances of their universities, integrate high-quality resources both on and off campus, fully leverage their spatial and resource advantages, and carry out diverse cultural and aesthetic education activities. In their service practice, they should not only help students improve their professional skills but also pay equal attention to the multidimensional development of their moral character, thinking abilities, and emotional literacy. Libraries should guide students to break through fixed thinking patterns, broaden their cognitive horizons, and view learning and life from a more comprehensive and macroscopic perspective. This practical process not only demonstrates the service value of the library and enriches its cultural connotation but also promotes the deep implementation of the library's educational functions, helping universities cultivate high-level talents with both professional competence and comprehensive qualities for society, and contributing to the nation's cultural construction and social development.

Fund Project

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Undergraduate Teaching Research and Reform Project.

References

Guan, X. Y. (2024). Innovative approaches for university libraries to promote outstanding traditional culture and enhance cultural confidence. *Inner Mongolia Science Technology & Economy*, *2024*(13), 146-149, 153.

Huang, R., Gong, C., Li, Q., et al. (2017). Research on background music in university libraries: A case study of a questionnaire survey on background music at the library of Nanjing Forestry University. *Journal of Academic Libraries*, *2017*(4), 56.

Huang, Y. Z., & Yao, T. H. (2020). The integration of musical elements into university library services: Reflections and considerations. *Think Tank Era*, *2020*(6), 71-72.

Pu, K. Y. (2007). *How Do People Appreciate Music*? Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2007: 226.

Rong, L. (2023). A discussion on educational models for university libraries in the information age. *Technology Wind*, *2023*(15), 67-69.

Shan, J. (2022). Aesthetic education empowers college students' ability to appreciate a better life. *China Higher Education*, *2022*(21), 51-52, 55.

Zheng, J., Yang, J., & Li, D. X. (2016). An analysis of introducing background music into university libraries. *Science & Technology Information*, *14*(31), 132-134.