

■ Public Library On-site Observation and Learning

In an effort to expand the vision of librarians and promote exchange library nationally, National Central Library designed the event Public Library On-site Observation and Learning 2021. This was done through visiting important and unique libraries in Taiwan, providing librarians firsthand experience and the opportunity to learn from other successful libraries. The itinerary included professional presentations and tours. In addition to being able to spur county and city libraries to improve their operations and services, this event also gives librarians new and creative ideas on library services and operations, thus effecting a new wave of development in libraries across the island. The on-site observation and learning events were planned for the southern region and the central region:

Southern region

On January 11 and 12, 2021 a tour of the new main Tainan Public Library was arranged, as well as the Hsu Shi Library, Yen Cheng Library, Pingtung County Library, and Victorystar in Pingtung. A total of 38 librarians from various county and municipal libraries attended this event. On January 11, the first stop was the main branch of the Tainan Public Library, which opened in the beginning of January. Director of the library, Yu-chen Hong, gave a presentation to the group on the new main library's construction, service space, resources, and unique features. She emphasized the fact that the main library's aim is to provide patrons a public library that is both comprehensive in its services and strong in its research capabilities. It incorporates local Tainan culture and establishes the core values and a trustworthy brand for public libraries, including life-long learning, information for all, and knowledge inheritance. The hope is that this unique space will provide patrons with unlimited possibilities for development and that those who visit the library will experience the fact that libraries are not just libraries, but places for reading, learning, interacting, living, researching, engaging in cultural arts, and

culture making. Through an on-site tour, participants personally experienced the variety in and felt the new lifeblood of each unique service area and resource. For example, the children's five senses exploration area lets children have sensory experiences that increase their literacy through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and playing. Famous People from Tainan is a part of the library that profiles in diverse ways the lives and creations of renowned individuals from Tainan. There is a strong emphasis on aesthetics in the library. Through artistic design and display of the spaces in the library, it is not only a library but more so an important place for increasing one's aesthetic energy and literacy. The second stop was a visit to the Hsu Shih Music Library, which is one of the libraries with the most incredible literary feel. The building was originally Tainan's earliest cultural arts exhibition space, the Yu-le Hall, but after renovations has become a music library. The reading room on the first floor has a Black Box Theater and movable furniture, instilling the space with high functionality for musical performances and reading. There are also rehearsal rooms, a digital music listening area, and a long-term exhibition of famed musician Hsu Shih. The library is a multifunctional, bringing together reading, music, and exhibitions. The last stop was to the Yan Cheng Library. This is the second public library in the southern region. This library is not only a shared study for patrons of all ages, but also a center of learning and life for local residence.



Group photo of Public Library On-site Observation and Learning group at the main branch of the Tainan Public Library.

On January 12, the group visited the main branch of the Ping-tung County Library, which finished renovations at the end of August 2020. Renovation on the 37-year-old facilities took two years. The original building was kept intact, as well as the many camphor trees and greenery on its exterior. The inside, however, was given a facelift that brings together the natural environment, new spacing, a great reading atmosphere, and revamped services. It effectively jumped out of the traditional library model and into a reading environment suitable for all ages and events. The interior design is tangible and diverse. Ms. Chang, a section chief from the Cultural Affairs Department of Pingtung County pointed out during the group's tour of the facilities that after a comprehensive community analysis and a thorough discussion of the public's needs, they discovered the community wanted the library to be an ideal place for reading. Consequently, the design concept of the new library was to help people create many more future possibilities. The focus was on reading. With new facilities and ideas, the library became the best and most natural reading space for people, and through reading lessens the distance between people. During the discussion, many issues were talked about, including funding for the renovations, difficulties encountered, services provided in the new space, the plan for transitioning from the old to the new library, and policies during the library's closure.



Section Chief Zhang explains the design concept of the lobby in the main branch of the Ping-tung County Library.

That afternoon, the group visited the Victorystar in Pingtung Zone, which was planned and is managed by the Cultural Affairs Department. The manager personally took the group on a tour and explained the strategies and process of Victorystar's facilities and utilization of space.

Central region

On January 19-20, 2021, a visit to and tour of the Taichung Public Library JingWu Branch, the Lee Ke-yung Memorial Library, Siehe Branch Library, Fengyuan Branch Library, the Taichung Literature Museum, and Central Bookstore. On January 19, the first stop was at the JingWu Library, which is the best example of an old building renovated into something spectacular. The renovation started in 2015 and did not finish until 2018. In the process, many troublesome issues were resolved, a primary one of which was space. Large windows were installed to give the library more like and approachability. The grounds were landscaped and greenified. Through coordination and collaboration amongst offices, the facilities and resources were adjusted to be able to provide more robust service offerings. In addition, the library shared the steps and details of how they were able to renovate the library space with a limited budget, leading to the most possible renovations and a brand-new visual experience.



Group photo of Public Library On-site Observation and Learning group at the JingWu branch library in Taichung.

The second stop was to the Lee Ko-Yung Memorial Library, which was completed in 2018. The design was based on the Takeo City Library in Japan. The building fuses the natural landscape with a bright interior. It has a toddler and children reading area, a seniors' area, a parenting book area, and a youth area. The specially designed sofa reading area and its artistic soft lighting gives patrons the comfortable feeling that they are simultaneously in their own living room and in a park. The last stop of the day was to the Siehe Library. It was completed in 2018 and is the first library in Taichung that blends architecture and aesthetics. It is the only modern library that combines smart technology, comfortable atmosphere, and low-energy consumption. Its self-described identifying characteristic is "architectural life aesthetics." The library also signed a MOU with the Taichung Architects Association to combine efforts in creating an "architectural life aesthetics" area based on the concept "children & creativity." Actively collaborating with the library to hold promotion activities regarding architecture, such as Live Architect Library, urban sketch workshop, architect story house, and an exhibition on architecture. Creating a unique and fresh library holdings and resources on architectural aesthetics. More importantly, this is a great example of public and private collaboration.

On January 20, the group visited the Fengyuan Library, which was awarded the Model Library of Literary Excellence award in 2016. The library is divided into two sections: A wing and B wing. The A wing contains the children's library, providing reading resources and services for toddlers, children, and teenagers. The B wing is the main hub of the library's collection and is for adults and senior citizens. In this way, it provides comprehensive services for all potential patrons.

The Fengyuan branch is the first senior-citizen library in Taiwan. It boasts a reading space optimized for the elderly, with video magnifiers, age-appropriate board games, and a barrier-free design. It provides an environment that matches with modern reading trends, complete with tables, chairs, and sofas donated by the Yeong Jin Furniture Factory's retail store TWUCM. This creates an optimized reading environment and is a great example of joint effort between the public and private sectors. In addition, the library collaborated with the Feng-Yuan Hospital, under the Ministry of Health and Welfare, to set up a Literary Care Station so that local residence can check their health. This is a great example of inter-organizational collaboration in the public sector.

After the learning visit to the Fengyuan branch, the next stop was the Central Bookstore which reopened in 2020. It was formerly the largest Chinese bookstore in Taiwan and the place where many literati and authors were awoken to the world of words. More importantly, it is an important force in cultural trends. It was out of business for 22 years but started up again last year in all its former glory. The bookstore's opening exhibition "The Youth of Taiwan's Culture" tied together the creation story of the Central Bookstore, important people involved, and its aim and ideal. It was a salute to all who helped create this cultural icon. The newly renovated bookstore is a combination of reading, dining, and exhibitions, imbuing it with a brand-new reading charm and vitality. The last stop was a visit to the Taichung Literature Museum. The tour help group members understand how Taichung's Cultural Affairs Bureau took the old building the museum is now housed in, which was built during the Japanese occupation, and restored it into a lively usable space. Through many creative displays and interactive stations, it achieves the aim of literary education and cultural leisure.