

# Research on the Development and Evolution of Chinese and Foreign Exlibris Text Content

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## Abstract

The development of the text content in the exlibris has evolved with the functional transformation of the exlibris. In the early period, the exlibris was the mark of collecting books, which emphasized function and practicality. In the middle stage, the words such as dictum and epigram gradually appeared in the design of the exlibris, which increased the literariness and readers' interest. Modern exlibris presents diversified development, text design and image production are advancing with the time and constantly changing. In the process of the mutual integration of modern art, the exlibris bearing rich cultural accumulation reveal their unique charm.

## Keywords

Exlibris, Bookplate, Text content, Evolution, Artistic expression.

## 1. Introduction

Exlibris is a collection mark pasted on books by book lovers to express their love and treasure for books. The traditional Chinese seals for collecting books are handed down in the form of characters by means of calligraphy and seal cutting art. As an "imported product", the exlibris is presented by means of printmaking, which emphasizes "the combination of images and words, both practical and artistic".

Exlibris is a special mark specially designed and pasted on the book collection by the artist for the collector (including the collection organization). In addition to the internationally accepted "Exlibris", the bookplate must have the name of the ticket holder as well (or pen name, study name, etc.).

The text in the exlibris contains several aspects. One is to record the important information of the holder, such as the name (or the institution of the book collection), the collection time and so on. The necessary text description is an important feature of the bookplate and an important mark to distinguish it from the small print. The text in the bookplate also contains idioms, aphorisms and aphorisms related to reading. When making a bookplate, artists will design relevant idioms and epigrams with ingenuity to add interest and logo to the ticket. (Such as: reading broken ten thousand volumes, there is genuine taste in this, etc.) to encourage themselves or mutual encouragement.

Text, as readable content, has evolved with the development of exlibris. At the same time, the development of the characters in the exlibris is the epitome of the evolution of the function of the exlibris. In the early days, exlibris emphasized functionality and practicability, and marked the readers' collection. In the middle stage, the collection ticket not only satisfies the basic function, but also emphasizes literariness. The design of exlibris increases the pleasure of literati by associating famous sayings and epigrams with good habits such as love of books, reading and diligent study. With the development of modern exlibris, the majority of artists and collectors have discovered their artistry and collectivity. The diversified text forms and more creative layout design have greatly expanded the expression of artistic conception in the exlibris.

## 2. The text content is the unique form of the exlibris

As an important information to convey the exlibris and express the author's love for the book, the text in the exlibris is indispensable. Text is an important embodiment of the functional attributes of the exlibris and an important mark to distinguish it from print works. The words in the exlibris is supplementary to the information of the library holder and the library organization. In the early years of the West, before the spread of printing, books were prized as collectibles. For example, woodcut illustrations and texts in the earliest Bible in the West were made into books by artisans through manual plate making, manual printing and manual binding. Its precious value is reflected in the precipitation of the craftsman's spirit. The formation of the exlibris is greatly related to the book holder's preference for books. In order to show the ownership of the book, the book holder customized the exclusive exlibris belonging to his family.

Early exlibris was often decorated with heraldic motifs, floral motifs and text. Heraldry symbolizes the wealth and power of different families, and the heraldry style of the exlibris has its unique symbol in the image design and text content, with a strong recognition. The style is close to "Rococo" style, emphasizing fussy decoration, delicate and flashy. Messages representing different families are cleverly arranged on the coat of arms, which are either surrounded by seashell shapes or creatively decorated around the main character.

The text of the exlibris not only shows the information of the person who collected the books, but also tells the origin and use of the books. The bookplate War Service Library (Figure 1) depicts a soldier carrying books. The soldiers wore helmets, had guns slung over their shoulders and carried a pile of books high above their heads. On the right, the words "Book are provided by the people of the United States, through the American library association for the use of the soldiers and sailors." explains the source of the library books and the object of service. Through the words in the bookplate, readers can learn more about the books and the stories behind their owners.

## 3. The text content of the exlibris is an expression of the good wishes of book lovers and book collectors

The proverbs in the exlibris are often seen from small to big, expressing the good wishes of the bookkeeper for books and knowledge through short words. The inscriptions on the exlibris can be roughly divided into three categories: to curse the book thief; to warn who destroy books; praise the benefits of reading.

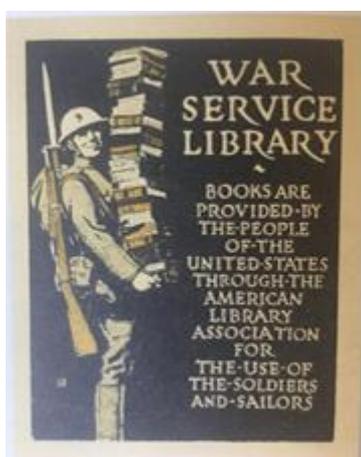


Figure 1 War Service Library



Figure 2 Hedgehog

In terms of the expression of the text content, the text expression of the exlibris in the West is more direct, warning the reader who destroy the books. In contrast, The Chinese exlibris is more reserved in the expression of words, which is mainly to convey the good habit of reading and learning.

The earliest exlibris (Figure 2) is from Germany and was made in 1450 by Johannes Knabensberg, with a hedgehog pattern. Above the picture of a hedgehog mouth holding a wildflower, feet on the fallen leaves, above the ribbon with a line of German, meaning: "Beware of hedgehogs kiss at any time ". The expression of words reflects the unique humor of the West, and even more reflects the book collectors' love for books. Warn who steal books and destroy them, Mr. Hedgehog will not hesitate to kiss them.

To persuade people to cherish books is the traditional concept of ancient and modern Chinese and foreign scholars. A bookplate in 18th-century Germany shows bees gathering nectar around lilies, with the inscription "Use books, don't let books be misused; the bee does not stain the lily, but only lightly touches it." The inscription, by means of symbolism, tactfully conveys the reader's ardent exhortation. Books are as sacred as lilies, be not to be despised; Knowledge is sweet as honey and gives strength.

In China, the development of exlibris is closely related to the good habit of reading, loving books and collecting books. Its text content is often associated with diligence, studious, good care for books and other good virtues. For example, in Mr. Hu Shi's exclusive bookplate, "Opening the book is beneficial", and in Mr. Jia Junxue's treasured bookplate, "Thinking of the source after drinking water", both praise people for their diligence and gratitude.

In the bookplate of The Book of Bai Ding (Figure 3) by Li Hua, a famous printing-plate artist, the words " To learn with constant perseverance and practice " reflect the contents of the song "Husband and Wife's Literacy" in Yan 'an Era. The characters are lively and interesting, full of the characteristics of The Times. The spinning wheel and the blackboard show the fact that the people in northern Shanxi stepped up production and worked hard to learn the culture. The picture has the life breath, the knife method has the paper-cut charm. The text in the bookplate explains the theme very well, and " To learn with constant perseverance and practice " shows the enthusiasm of the people in northern Shanxi in those days." what you have learned is a pleasure " is fully reflected in the image of the characters, people in the spare time for work, diligent happy study.



Figure 3 the Book of Bai Ding



Figure 4 the bookplate of three brothers of Xu

In the bookplate of three brothers of Xu (Figure 4), there are two paragraphs that give philosophy. The first one is "Learning without thinking leads to confusion; thinking without learning ends in danger." The second one is "Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgment difficult--Hippocrates".

The two paragraphs fully reflect the serious and rigorous attitude of the Xu family. This kind of homily style bookplate is engraved on the title page of each family collection. Admonish people to always be enthusiastic about knowledge, to study actively critical.

The characters bring the literariness to the exlibris, the appearance of famous sayings and aphorisms enhance the overall cultural connotation of the bookplate, and convey the book holder's good wish for knowledge.

#### 4. The text content is the sublimation of the artistic conception in the creation of the exlibris

It is often seen references of the classics in western exlibris, and the contents of it is based on passages from the Bible, Greek Mythology, Don Quixote and other classics. Therefore, in terms of text design, necessary interpretations are often added according to specific scenes. The bookplate of American artist W. F. Hopson (1910) contains this description: Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. They are from the classical poems of Shakespeare.

Through words and pictures, the artist wants to express an artistic conception. "Books can give us a different kind of life. They can make us quiet and away from the world." As shown in the bookplate, "Trees whisper in the forest, and streams flow like thousands of books. There is knowledge in everything."

The text in the exlibris quotes Shakespeare's classic lines, giving it a profound cultural connotation. Text design embedded in the "Rococo" pattern, appears solemn, formal. The words and pictures echo each other, which enhances the artistic realm of the bookplate. Readers can feel the admiration for books and knowledge by collecting the bookplate. The bookplate serves as a bridge between the book and the reader, the reader and the collector.

Chinese exlibris pays great attention to the expression of artistic conception. The pictures in the bookplate do not pursue the fine and realistic expression, but emphasize the "vivid atmosphere". The words and pictures echo each other, which is the sublimation of the artistic conception of the whole bookplate.



Figure 5 MAO Zedong



Figure 6 Books in Fu Xian Zhai

In "MAO Zedong's One to the Five" (Figure 5), a bookplate created by Zhan Guochao. Illustrated, elegant style. The images in the ticket are portraits of MAO Zedong from different periods. The words in the bookplate are excerpted from MAO Zedong's poems and quotations and used in calligraphy. The bookplate combines portrait with calligraphy art, and the writing strength of

the text greatly enhances the expressiveness of the bookplate. The difficulty of making the entire bookplate is that there is no grey transition. It is only through the black and white graphics to show MAO's grace and divine color. Black and white graphics constitute the positive and negative patterns, accurate performance of light and shadow effect. The appropriateness of the knife carving brings the portrait of the leader to life.

The ingenious character design in the bookplate is the concentrated embodiment of the artist's accomplishment. Artist Wang Rong has high attainments in calligraphy and seal cutting. In the bookplate he made, "Books in Fu Xian Zhai"(Figure 6), He applied the unique Oriental stone carving art to the making of the bookplate. "Seven Poems of Sorrow" engraved on the note is a famous work by Wang Can, a writer in the late Han Dynasty, which reflects the social dislocation and people's suffering in the late Han Dynasty. The characters in the bookplate use the seal-cutting technique of seal-cutting, so that the bookplate presents a unique three-dimensional sense and strength of beauty. The beauty of seal cutting calligraphy and the classic "Seven Poems of Sorrow" present a kind of ancient and fragrant scholarly atmosphere and cultural atmosphere. Bookplate that embodies more national characteristics.

The development and evolution of the content of Chinese and foreign exlibris are important representations of different cultural connotations in the art of exlibris. Characters not only have the attribute of belonging and identity in the exlibris; from the artistic point of view, the appearance of text content has endowed the exlibris with profound cultural accumulation. The combination of text and image is helpful to enhance the artistic realm of the exlibris.

The text is the monologue of the picture of the exlibris, so that the audience can clearly understand the book and the story of the collector; the picture is the deepening of the words in the exlibris, which explains the artistic conception of "the words are full but the meaning is endless". The characters and pictures coordinate with each other to form the unique scenery line of the exlibris.

As a kind of reading carrier, text has witnessed the evolution of different styles of exlibris collection. Exlibris are a comprehensive art. It not only has the engraving image production way, has the text content correlation narration, has the text echo layout design and so on. In the context of the new era and the continuous innovation and development of new technologies, the art of exlibris collection, whether in text design or image production, is advancing with the time and constantly deepening the reform. Known as "the gem on paper", the exlibris carries rich cultural accumulation and reveals its unique charm in the process of mutual integration with modern art.

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