

Library's East Branch resumes trial run

Ke Jiayun

This summer, local residents can enjoy reading at one of the smartest libraries in Shanghai as the test operation of the Shanghai Library's East Branch, which was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic resurgence, resumed this week.

With 12 mobile robot "librarians" and various intelligent systems, it's much easier for readers to find the book they need, and borrow or return books while experiencing the latest technologies.

Located near the intersection of Yingchun Road and Hehuan Road in the Pudong New Area, the new branch has the largest individual library building in China, whose size is 115,000 square meters. It has nearly 6,000 seats inside and is expected to receive 4 million visitors a year.

It offers some 400,000 volumes of books as well as more than 600 kinds of magazines in Chinese and foreign languages, which can be located with its artificial intelligent facilities and Big Data system.

The test operation will last through August 27 and the library will be open from 9:30am to 11:30am in the morning and 2pm to 4pm in the afternoon with an interval of two and a half hours for disinfection. During this period, people can apply for a morning or afternoon entry via the library's WeChat account.

The special robot "librarians" can also guide visitors to different areas, answer their questions, search or recommend books and provide broadcasting service while patrolling.

The robot can help readers borrow books with the scanning device on its top and return books with the space in its "belly."

After the books are returned, a 24-hour smart sorting line



A view of the Shanghai Library's East Branch, one of the smartest local libraries. The branch resumed test operation this week after a COVID-19 hiatus. — Jiang Xiaowei

will allow them to be back on the shelves quickly.

To serve those with impairments, the library has set aside a non-barrier reading room on the ground floor with reading resources like books in Braille, audio books, as well as special reading tools for the visually impaired. It will host reading and training events for people with different impairments.

The children's area on the ground floor is hosting an exhibition called "Alice in Wonderland: Down the Rabbit Hole" for children to explore the adventures of the fictional Alice with interactive facilities and little games. The exhibition is being held in cooperation with the British Library.

There's a shelf exhibiting different Chinese versions of the book "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" translated by renowned translators, various illustrated editions and books from the Victorian era.

"This year is the 100th anniversary of the publication of



Visitors read books at the Shanghai Library's new branch. — Jiang Xiaowei

the Chinese version of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' so we are working with the British Library to provide such an exhibition," said Liu Yexin, a librarian in the children's area.

"We hope, through these interesting exhibits and facilities, the exhibition can attract more kids to learn this story and the things behind it."

Jiang, a 25-year-old postgraduate, said he had been waiting for a long time for the library's test operation.

"The sections are all commodious with advanced facilities. It seems that the book resources here are richer than the one on Huaihai Road M. The two hours of test run in the afternoon is too short for me

to enjoy reading at the library," he told Shanghai Daily.

"Hope I can spend more time here, reading and studying, after the pandemic ends."

Jiang liked the reading event on the seventh floor and said it gave him a new understanding about the library's functions.

"I'm a frequent visitor to Shanghai Library but find it's a bit difficult to borrow books there because they go out quickly. My major is science and engineering and some relevant books are not often available there," he said. "After this new branch was set up, I searched online and found that I can borrow some books I need. So I've been waiting for it to open."

According to Liu, mother of a 14-year-old girl, they live near the new branch and have tried to stay up-to-date with information about the library. "We have been looking forward to its opening and on news about its test run, we applied at once."