

Research on the Collaborative Development of Local Documentation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

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Abstract: *The local documentation of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area carries the cultural heritage of Lingnan and unique institutional memories under the “one country, two systems” framework, forming a crucial foundation for building a cultural community in the region. This article employs policy analysis and field research across the three regions to integrate local chronicles museums into the collaborative framework of local documentation in the Greater Bay Area. Drawing on the theory of cultural communities, it constructs an analytical framework for cross-institutional documentary governance, examining the current status and characteristics of local documentation development among libraries, local chronicles museums, archives, and university libraries in the Greater Bay Area. The study focuses on analyzing challenges such as institutional differences, lack of standards, redundant construction, and insufficient mechanisms in current joint initiatives. The study seeks to advance local document development from project-based collaboration toward institutionalized coordination, thereby providing a feasible document governance path for building a cross-institutional regional cultural community.*

Keywords: *Cultural community, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Local documentation, Local chronicles museums, Collaborative development*

1. Introduction

The construction of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area is not only a process of economic spatial reorganization but also a process of cultural spatial reorganization. The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area proposes “jointly building a humanistic Bay Area,” whose deeper implication extends beyond the co-organization of cultural activities and the interconnection of public services. It lies, rather, in how, under the conditions of “one country, two systems,” a regional cultural community with a stable foundation of identity can be cultivated on the basis of shared historical memory and common cultural resources. As comprehensive records of regional history, social life, institutional evolution, and cultural experience, local documentation naturally constitute an important fulcrum for the construction of this community. What they preserve is not merely local knowledge, but also the fundamental ways in which local society is remembered, narrated, and inherited.

However, compared with economic coordination, scientific and technological collaboration, and transportation integration in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, the joint development of local documentation remains markedly lagging. Existing academic research has mostly proceeded from perspectives such as library resource sharing, digital platform construction, and inter-library cooperation mechanisms, with insufficient attention paid to entities such as local chronicles museums and archives, and inadequate exploration of the cultural identity construction function and cross-institutional governance value carried by local documentation. As a result, the joint development of local documentation is often understood as a form of professional and technical cooperation, while its real difficulties and value—namely, how to transform scattered documentary resources into carriers of shared memory within a cross-institutional region, and how to transform fragmented project cooperation into stable institutional coordination—have not been fully revealed.

From a practical perspective, Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao differ significantly in their public cultural governance systems, document collection institutions, copyright rules, standards and norms, and boundaries of openness. Precisely for this reason, the joint development of local documentation in the Greater Bay Area is not simply a matter of merging like with like, but a typical problem of cross-institutional regional coordination. It faces at least three

questions: First, why must joint development be advanced under a cross-institutional configuration? Second, why does current cooperation often remain at a shallow state of "connection without depth"? Third, how can local document collaboration in the future be promoted from project-driven to rule-driven, and from mutual borrowing of resources to institutional co-governance? This paper analyzes these three questions.

The local documentation discussed in this paper encompasses the dual domains of library science and local chronicles studies. They include comprehensive local documentation such as local chronicles, genealogies, overseas Chinese publications, and newspapers and periodicals collected by the public library system, as well as thematic collections centered on local conditions materials, old chronicle documents, and family genealogies in the local chronicles museum system, and original administrative archives preserved by the archives system. The three differ in their emphases on collection objects, knowledge organization, and service functions, yet together they constitute the documentary foundation of local historical memory in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area. Examining them within a unified framework not only helps to more accurately grasp the actual structure of local document development in the Bay Area, but also helps to reinterpret the strategic significance of their joint development from the perspective of a cultural community.

2. Theoretical foundations and current characteristics

From a theoretical perspective, a cultural community is by no means merely a geographical community or an administrative community, but rather a cultural union formed through the bonds of shared memory, common values, and stable interaction. In *Community and Society*, Tönnies pointed out that community is an organic whole formed on the basis of ties of blood, locality, and spirit [1]; Jan Assmann, through his theory of "cultural memory," emphasized that the formation of group identity is inseparable from memory carriers that can be transmitted across generations [2]. For the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, local documentation is precisely the most concrete, most stable, and most operable material medium of such cultural memory. Without the systematic preservation and joint disclosure of documents, the so-called "humanistic Bay Area" would easily remain at the level of rhetoric; only when shared memory is organized into a resource system that can be retrieved, utilized, and disseminated can a cultural community possibly move from concept to practice.

In this sense, the research by Duan Lijie and Wen Zhaoxia on the cultural community of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area provides important inspiration. They pointed out that the culture of the Greater Bay Area possesses the dialectical characteristics of "common origin" and "diversity," and that the construction of a cultural community should be advanced by creating a cultural governance system with "flexible boundaries," building a "Bay Area memory community," and innovating mechanisms for broad social participation so as to cultivate a "Bay Area person" identity [3]. This judgment is especially explanatory for the development of local documentation: Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao share the Lingnan cultural tradition while being respectively embedded in different institutional systems and modes of knowledge organization. Therefore, the joint development of local documentation is neither an elimination of differences nor an evasion of differences, but rather, on the basis of acknowledging differences, the construction of a coordination mechanism capable of crossing institutional boundaries and activating shared memory.

Viewed in this light, the joint development of local documentation has at least threefold value. First, it is the material foundation of the "Bay Area memory community." Local chronicles, genealogies, overseas Chinese publications, archives, local newspapers and periodicals, and oral historical materials constitute a composite record of the Bay Area's historical geography, commercial trade, migratory flows, social life, and cultural traditions. For example, the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Local Chronicles Compendium project, jointly undertaken since 2022 by the Guangdong Provincial Local Chronicles Office and the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, solicited 290 kinds of old chronicle documents from home and abroad, including 14 Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao thematic items such as *A Brief Record of Chinese Macao*, *A Concise Gazetteer of Chinese Macao*, *A Brief Record of Chinese Hong Kong*, and *A Survey of Chinese Hong Kong Municipal Administration*, which were compiled into 45 volumes and published by Guangdong People's Publishing House in September 2024. Its value lies not only in preserving documents, but also in reintegrating historical materials originally scattered across different times, spaces, and institutional boundaries into a unified Bay Area narrative framework. Second, it is an important medium for the construction of cultural identity. Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao are geographically close, closely connected by kinship, and linked by a common cultural lineage; family migration, overseas hometown

networks, maritime trade, and the history of Chinese–Western exchange are all sedimented in local documentation. Cantonese opera was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 through a joint nomination by Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao, and the joint compilation of the Comprehensive Catalogue of Cantonese Opera Documents strengthened this shared cultural memory through documentary means. Third, it is a practical carrier of cross-institutional regional cultural governance. The joint development of local documentation involves not only technical issues such as collection, cataloging, digitization, and utilization, but also governance issues such as copyright, access permissions, resource allocation, institutional linkage, and service equalization. Its significance therefore far exceeds ordinary resource cooperation and constitutes a concrete experiment in the modernization of cultural governance under the conditions of "one country, two systems."

From the perspective of practical foundations, the development of local documentation in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area has already formed a pattern in which multiple entities coexist. Public libraries remain the main force in local document collection. By the end of 2025, the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province had a collection of approximately 10.09 million volumes, including more than 700,000 volumes of ancient books and local documentation, with 178 rare books included in the National Catalogue of Precious Ancient Books; the Guangzhou Library has a collection of 11.852 million volumes (items), among which the Guangzhou Compendium includes 4,064 kinds of local documentation from the fourteen counties of Guangzhou Prefecture before 1911 (including the Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao regions and the two directly administered subprefectures of Fogang and Chixi), compiled into 520 volumes; by the end of 2024, the Shenzhen Library had accumulated a collection of 14.2818 million volumes (items), including more than 10,000 volumes of documents on reform and opening up; the Chinese Hong Kong Central Library has a collection of more than 2.3 million items, houses the Chinese Hong Kong Literature Resource Room and the Map Library, and performs the statutory deposit function for government publications; the Chinese Macao Central Library has a main collection of approximately 106,778 volumes, and its Portuguese-language documents possess irreplaceable value for research on the history of Chinese–Western exchange.

At the same time, local chronicles museums have become important entities that must be reintegrated into the overall vision of Bay Area local documentation. The Regulations on the Promotion of Public Cultural Services of Guangdong Province, revised in 2024 and effective from January 1, 2025, explicitly designate local chronicles museums as public cultural facilities through local legislation. This means that local chronicles museums are no longer merely ancillary facilities of chronicle-compilation institutions in the traditional sense, but have entered the public cultural coordination system as new nodes. The Guangdong Provincial Local Chronicles Museum has a collection of 124,700 volumes of local documentation, including more than 20,000 volumes of family genealogies; the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Branch of the National Local Chronicles Museum, as the seventh national local chronicles museum branch nationwide and the first in South China, has a collection of 30,000 kinds of books and materials, totaling more than 50,000 volumes, and 378 sets and 599 items of physical collections; 45 local chronicles museums at various levels have been announced across the province. Compared with libraries, local chronicles museums place greater emphasis on the solicitation of local conditions materials, the organization of old chronicles, the collection of family genealogies, and regional historical research. Their thematic focus, systematic nature, and depth of historical materials can precisely compensate for the structural shortcomings of public libraries, which feature "broad coverage and strong circulation" but not necessarily "strong thematic depth."

Archives and university libraries provide dual support in terms of originality and academic depth. The Chinese Hong Kong Public Records Office preserves more than 1.9 million archival records, the earliest dating back to the mid-nineteenth century; the Chinese Macao Archives has a collection of more than 70,000 files, the earliest dating back to 1630; the Sun Yat-sen University Library has a special collection of more than 1.5 million volumes (items), including more than 130,000 volumes of newly published ancient books, more than 28,000 volumes of new local chronicles, more than 20,000 volumes of various university history documents, and more than 77,000 volumes of various documents from Chinese Hong Kong, Chinese Macao, and Chinese Taiwan, while its Chinese Hong Kong, Chinese Macao, and Pearl River Delta Resource Room holds nearly 20,000 volumes; the World Overseas Chinese Documentation Center of Jinan University has a collection of nearly 50,000 volumes (items) of paper documents; the Fung Ping Shan Library of the University of Chinese Hong Kong has a collection of more than 400 kinds of genealogies from Guangdong and Chinese Hong Kong and more than 10,000 kinds of local chronicles; the University of Chinese Macao Library has a Chinese Macao

Special Collection, preserving a large number of precious ancient books and documents. It can be said that local documentation in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area already possesses the resource foundation, entity foundation, and preliminary platform foundation for joint development.

In terms of collaborative exploration, the Greater Bay Area has also produced considerable practice. On November 5, 2019, the Guangzhou Library, together with the Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong Province, the Shenzhen Library, and 12 other public libraries and document institutions, initiated the establishment of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Public Library Alliance [4]. Since then, the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Local Chronicles Compendium has been published; the Comprehensive Catalogue of Cantonese Opera Documents was jointly compiled by 127 document collection institutions in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, including 2,118 kinds of historical documents, 6,654 kinds of modern documents, 5,449 kinds of audiovisual documents, and 18,891 pieces of article data; the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Library Joint Service Platform integrates more than 200 digital resource databases of member libraries, including 55 local characteristic resource databases, and readers can share most of the alliance's digital resources through "Yue Du Tong"; in 2024, public libraries in Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao jointly launched the exhibition "Inheritance and Integration: Treasures of Bay Area Documents." These practices show that the joint development of Bay Area local documentation is not without a starting point, but has already moved from scattered collaboration into a stage of preliminary linkage. The problem lies precisely in this: the thicker the resource foundation and the more cooperation projects there are, the more it becomes necessary to answer the truly institutional question of "how to achieve deep coordination."

3. Problem diagnosis and path construction

The core contradiction in the joint development of local documentation in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area does not lie in whether the three regions possess common cultural resources, but in the fact that these resources are situated within a cross-institutional region characterized by "shared origins but multiple systems." If viewed solely from the logic of resources, joint development would seem a natural course; yet once it enters the level of practical operation, institutional arrangements, standards and rules, interest structures, and governance boundaries quickly become manifest. The reason why current Bay Area local document cooperation often manifests as having alliances, platforms, and projects but insufficient depth of coordination lies precisely in the fact that the structural constraints of a cross-institutional region have not yet been truly overcome.

First, institutional differences constitute deep-seated barriers to coordination. Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao each have their own institutional traditions and operational logics in public cultural services, archives management, publication deposit, copyright protection, and data openness. Guangdong places greater emphasis on administrative promotion and policy coordination, and possesses relatively strong capacity for resource integration; Chinese Hong Kong relies more on mature professional norms and statutory procedures; Chinese Macao has formed its own path in statutory collection and cultural heritage preservation. The institutional structures of the three regions are not simply different; rather, they are respectively embedded in different governance cultures and logics of authority and responsibility. This makes it difficult to directly transplant the mainland's common model of "unified deployment—unified standards—unified implementation" into the Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao contexts. Particularly in areas such as digital resource reproduction, re-dissemination, database openness, and cross-library sharing, copyright boundaries in Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao are often stricter, and many collaborations therefore remain at the level of mutual catalog visibility, in-library access, or project-based exhibitions, making it difficult to penetrate into full-text sharing, joint processing, and continuous updating. Institutional differences thus become not only technical obstacles but also shape cooperation expectations and boundaries of action, making joint development often regarded as additional work that may or may not be done, rather than an institutional task that must be continuously advanced.

Second, the lack of standards makes it difficult to achieve coherence in knowledge organization. The joint development of local documentation is not simply a matter of aggregating existing resources, but requires establishing basic consistency or mappability in classification systems, metadata standards, controlled vocabulary, digitization standards, long-term preservation rules, and cross-platform interfaces. However, at present, the three regions and different types of institutions differ markedly in these respects. Mainland libraries mostly adopt the Chinese Library Classification, while Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao libraries more often adopt international classification rules; local chronicles

museums, archives, and university libraries also have their own conventions in descriptive emphasis, retrieval granularity, and knowledge organization. The same local document often corresponds to different classification numbers, different subject terms, and different levels of disclosure in different systems, which directly affects cross-library retrieval and resource discovery. The lack of unified standards is also reflected at the digitization level: if scanning resolution, file formats, OCR quality, naming conventions, metadata fields, and long-term preservation strategies cannot achieve at least minimal coordination, then even if resources are put online, a situation of "visible but unusable, linked but not interconnected" is likely to emerge. At a deeper level, the lack of standards not only weakens technical interoperability but also hinders the knowledge presentation of the "Bay Area memory community." A community must be identifiable and visible in catalogs, indexes, databases, and knowledge graphs; otherwise, shared memory will find it difficult to form a stable structure of public knowledge.

Third, duplicated construction and resource misallocation weaken overall effectiveness. At present, Bay Area local document development does not lack projects; what it lacks is division of labor. Owing to the lack of region-level overall planning and division of labor in collection development, some institutions tend to prioritize general resources that are less costly, yield quicker results, and are more visible, while underinvesting in distinctive resources that are cross-lingual, cross-institutional, cross-regional, and difficult to organize. As a result, certain general Lingnan local chronicles, common genealogies, and ordinary local materials have been digitized by multiple parties and repeatedly collected, whereas documents that truly embody the Bay Area's unique historical layers—such as modern-era newspapers and periodicals of Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao, Portuguese-language documents of Chinese Macao, overseas Guangdong qiaokan, and historical materials on Chinese–Portuguese exchange—have long lacked systematic collection, unified planning, and sustained investment. Duplicated construction ostensibly expands the total volume of resources, but in fact raises institutional costs, disperses limited funding, talent, and technical capacity, and conceals "key gaps" amid overall abundance. For the construction of a cultural community, this imbalance is especially alarming, because what shared memory most needs to preserve is often precisely those types of documents that are highly mobile across regions, distinctly cross-institutional, and difficult to organize.

Finally, the insufficient institutionalization of working mechanisms makes it difficult for cooperation to move from project-based efforts to routine practice. The establishment of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Public Library Alliance is of landmark significance, but current cooperation remains mainly concentrated at the levels of jointly organized exhibitions, reading promotion, experience exchange, and platform access, and has not yet formed a routine working system covering joint solicitation, joint cataloging, joint digitization, joint reference and consultation, joint research, and joint evaluation. Particularly noteworthy is that the institutional linkage between libraries and local chronicles museums remains weak. In recent years, the status of local chronicles museums in the local document system has risen markedly, but they are still not fully embedded in the Bay Area's collaborative network; the participation of archives and university libraries also mostly remains at the level of case-by-case cooperation, lacking stable deliberative and task division mechanisms. In addition, although social forces have enormous potential in document donation, private collection, provision of overseas hometown materials, local history research, and oral history organization, they have not yet been incorporated into an institutionalized cooperation framework. Without stable mechanisms, an alliance easily becomes a symbolic cooperation platform rather than a substantive platform for co-governance.

Faced with the above problems, the future joint development of local documentation in the Greater Bay Area must shift from "project collaboration thinking" to "institutional coordination thinking." Its basic direction is not to pursue complete homogenization, but to seek rule linkage, standard mapping, and functional complementarity on the premise of respecting differences.

First, cultural identity should serve as the guide, and a sense of "shared memory infrastructure" should be established. The joint development of local documentation is first and foremost not a technical proposition but a value proposition. Only when local documentation are regarded as the infrastructure of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area cultural community, rather than as objects for expanding the proprietary resources of individual libraries, will joint development be transformed from a "matter that can be cooperated on" into a "matter that must be cooperated on." In the future, projects such as the "Bay Area Joint Catalogue of local documentation," the "Bay Area Joint Index of Genealogical Resources," and the "Bay Area Special Database of Overseas Chinese Publications" can be sustainably advanced to further strengthen the visibility and usability of "shared

memory"; at the same time, through exhibitions, lectures, digital humanities projects, and the development of basic education resources, local documentation can be guided from professional systems into public life, thereby transforming shared memory into shared cognition.

Second, institutional innovation should be used to break through the coordination barriers of a cross-institutional region. With regard to the institutional differences among the three regions, it is inadvisable to pursue complete unification in one step; instead, an approach of "tiered advancement, step-by-step coordination, and categorized measures" should be adopted. Priority may be given to building consensus on standards in low-sensitivity areas, such as technical specifications for digitization, core metadata fields, data exchange interfaces, and long-term preservation strategies; at the level of classification and cataloging, a concordance table between the Chinese Library Classification and international classification rules, a subject heading mapping table, and authority control rules should be established to form a transitional scheme of "cataloging by each institution, unified disclosure, and cross-database retrieval"; at the level of resource openness, a tiered sharing mechanism should be explored, distinguishing open resources, restricted resources, and rights-encumbered resources, and respectively adapting to the different copyright systems and openness boundaries of the mainland, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao. More critically, the textualization of collaboration rules should be promoted, with relevant competent authorities, alliance organizations, and key document institutions jointly developing regional collaboration guidelines and making clear arrangements for boundaries of responsibility, copyright handling, data exchange, attribution of results, and dispute resolution, so that cooperation may shift from being initiative-based and flexible to being rule-based and stable.

Third, a specialized coordination mechanism between libraries and local chronicles museums should be established to remedy the structural shortcomings of the Bay Area's local document system. Libraries excel at public services, platform development, and resource circulation, while local chronicles museums excel at the solicitation of local conditions materials, the organization of old chronicles, and thematic research. The two are not substitutes but complements. It is suggested that the Guangdong Provincial Local Chronicles Museum, the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Branch of the National Local Chronicles Museum, and the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area Public Library Alliance establish a regular joint meeting system, and set up special topics around genealogy solicitation, old chronicle organization, special database construction, and local history research services; establish a joint genealogy solicitation mechanism, implementing unified registration, division-based preservation, and joint disclosure for genealogies and clan genealogies; establish a joint digitization mechanism for old chronicles, giving priority to scarce documents and documents scattered across regions, and avoiding duplicate scanning of similar resources; establish a joint reference and consultation and talent training mechanism, promoting the transformation of local document service capacity from "each library working alone" to "cross-library collaborative support." The significance of this specialized mechanism lies in truly interlocking the comprehensive collection advantages of libraries with the local conditions research advantages of local chronicles museums, forming a foundational project for a Bay Area local document community with depth and vertical penetration.

Fourth, social forces should be guided to participate, expanding resource channels and activation methods. An important part of local documentation is by nature widely scattered throughout society; private book collections, clan genealogies, overseas Chinese remittance letters (qiaopi) and overseas Chinese publications, association materials, folk images, and oral historical materials often do not naturally enter the public cultural system. The Guangzhou Library has introduced celebrity book collections through a "donation plus deposit" model, and the Shenzhen Library received 185 kinds and 494 volumes (items) of local document donations in 2025, both indicating that social donations can become an important incremental source for local document development. In the future, mechanisms for donation incentives, deposit protection, digital feedback, named display, and results sharing should be further improved to enhance the willingness of social actors to participate; in Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao, efforts can focus on linking historical and cultural societies, clan organizations, overseas Chinese communities, and cultural foundations to broaden the solicitation network for documents with distinctive Chinese–Western convergence characteristics. Social participation should not be limited to donating documents; it should also extend to interpreting documents, using documents, and disseminating documents, attracting university faculty and students, local history enthusiasts, and research communities to participate in document organization, subject indexing, exhibition planning, and digital humanities transformation, so that local documentation moves from static collection to dynamic activation.

Fifth, a performance evaluation system should be established to promote the formation of a governance closed loop in joint development. Xiao Ximing and Li Zhuozhuo pointed out that the evaluation of regional resource co-construction and sharing should focus on resource guarantee capacity, shared service benefits, and user satisfaction [5]; Chang Hong emphasized that the performance evaluation of library consortia should cover dimensions such as reader satisfaction, service effectiveness, information access, consortium agility, member cooperation capacity, and consortium benefits [6]. In light of the actual situation of local document development in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, an evaluation system can be further constructed that includes four dimensions: resource development, shared services, governance effectiveness, and cultural impact. At the level of resource development, indicators may include the complete collection rate of distinctive documents, the digitization rate of scarce documents, the completeness rate of genealogy inclusion, and the rescue rate of old Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao chronicles; at the level of shared services, indicators may include the visit volume of the joint catalogue, the utilization rate of cross-regional resources, the response rate of joint reference services, and the utilization rate of special databases; at the level of governance effectiveness, indicators may include the implementation rate of joint meetings, the completion rate of joint projects, the implementation rate of standards, and the reduction rate of duplicated construction; at the level of cultural impact, indicators may include exhibition coverage, public participation, and the dissemination effect of shared cultural cognition in the Bay Area. The significance of evaluation should not be merely end-stage accountability, but should serve as the basis for front-end planning and mid-course correction, so that joint development truly forms a cycle of "goal setting—project advancement—effect feedback—mechanism optimization."

Ultimately, the key to the joint development of local documentation in the Greater Bay Area does not lie in whether several more cooperation projects are added, but in whether an institutional coordination framework adapted to the characteristics of a "cross-institutional region" can be established. Only when cooperation moves from the resource level to the rule level, from the project level to the governance level, and from the inter-library level to the social level can local documentation truly become deep-seated support for the construction of the Bay Area cultural community.

4. Conclusion

The joint development of local documentation in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area may appear to be a professional matter for libraries, local chronicles museums, and archives, but in fact it concerns the cultural foundation of the construction of a "humanistic Bay Area." The millennium-old accumulation of Lingnan culture, the cross-border flows of overseas hometown society, the urban memory since the opening of Guangzhou as a treaty port, the modern experience of Shenzhen's reform and opening up, and the history of Chinese–Western convergence in Chinese Hong Kong and Chinese Macao together determine that Bay Area local documentation possess not only historical material value and academic value, but also cultural governance value in the sense of institutional integration. What they record is not merely local affairs or items held in collections, but the fundamental textual basis for how a cross-institutional region understands its own historical continuity, constructs a shared narrative, and generates stable identity.

From the perspective of a cultural community, the essence of the joint development of local documentation is to promote the formation of a "Bay Area memory community" through document governance. It is both a resource integration project and an identity construction project; it is both a technical coordination project and, even more so, an institutional innovation project. At present, the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area already possesses a relatively solid resource foundation and a number of pioneering cooperation practices, but institutional differences, standard mismatches, duplicated construction, and insufficient mechanisms still leave cooperation largely at the level of project-based, phased, and display-oriented efforts. In other words, the problem is not whether there is "joint action," but whether "joint action has entered the depths of institutions."

Therefore, the focus of future Bay Area local document development should shift from "doing more projects" to "forming stronger institutional capacity." On the one hand, it is necessary to affirm at the value level that local documentation are infrastructure of the cultural community, and to govern coordination goals with shared memory; on the other hand, it is necessary to advance rule linkage, standard mapping, specialized coordination, social participation, and performance evaluation at the governance level, so that joint development gradually becomes a sustainable, replicable, and

optimizable institutional arrangement. Only in this way will local documentation does not remain merely "books of the locality" scattered in the stacks and databases of various institutions, but truly be transformed into "shared memory" jointly preserved, jointly disclosed, jointly utilized, and jointly interpreted by Guangdong, Chinese Hong Kong, and Chinese Macao.

When local documentation rise from resource collections to an institutionalized project of shared memory, the construction of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area cultural community will possess a deeper, more stable, and historically richer documentary foundation. Cultural coordination in a cross-institutional region ultimately cannot be consolidated by slogans alone, nor advanced by the mere accumulation of projects; it requires a document governance mechanism capable of crossing institutional boundaries, connecting knowledge systems, and organizing public identity. The significance of the joint development of local documentation lies precisely in providing a realistic entry point and practical sample for such a mechanism.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by research results of the 2023 Guangdong Library Association research project "Research on the Joint Development of local documentation by Libraries and Local Chronicles Museums in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area" (Project No.: GDTK23016).

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