

NCC 3-D Conference: Topical Discussion Summary for Best Practices # 3 **How can faculty and librarians better collaborate to the benefit of undergraduates?**

A large number—possibly even the majority—of undergraduate students with an interest in Japan have limited or no Japanese language skills. This session focused on two principal questions:

- 1) How to help students with limited Japanese abilities to overcome the intimidation they feel about engaging with Japanese books, and
- 2) How to help these students, and others with no Japanese language abilities, to find information in languages other than Japanese to deepen their knowledge of Japan and allow them to carry out research projects of some depth and sophistication.

The goals of this session were to:

- 1) To identify exemplary resources, both print and online, that students can use for English-language research on Japan
- 2) To share successful examples that will help to develop methods of bibliographic instruction that engage students with Japanese books and assist them in finding and evaluating non-Japanese language resources on Japan

Haruko Nakamura, Librarian of the Japanese Collection at Yale University, presented the working draft of *Primary Sources in English Language Website*:
<http://guides.library.yale.edu/content.php?pid=42236>

This site, currently being built on the Yale Library pages, presents resources for the non-specialist who rely primarily on English language materials to learn about Japan. She noted that the recent increase in multi-lingual and interdisciplinary publications and projects brings about a continual improvement in the quality of materials available outside of the Japanese language, and even outside of “Japanese studies” per se. For example, the bibliography sections of *Blackwell Reference Online* and the *ALA Reference Guide* greatly enhance the outdated references in the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Electronic resources such as *Empire Online* or *Ethnographic Video Online* offer detailed and scholarly materials that students can safely rely on for research projects. *Library Press Display* and other aggregators offer Japanese language and Japanese English language newspapers for their users.

To more efficiently reach current students and make them aware of this rich wealth of resources available on Japan, this site is organized to make materials accessible by a single click from the homepage, organized with tab headings such as “Newspapers,” “Visual Materials,” “Travel Accounts,” “Government Documents,” “Films,” “Maps,” “Statistics,” “Translations” and “Secondary Materials.” Many of these materials are direct translations of Japanese primary resources or multi-lingual editions that provide students with exactly the same information a Japanese language user would be able to access. Each section of the site has a description of the type of material covered and a list of databases and print resources, with emphasis on materials locally available at Yale.

Another example noted was that of a course taught at the University of Chicago that serves as an excellent example of how professors can include primary sources in their undergraduate classes. Professor Michael Bourdaghs reported on the course previously taught by Professor Norma Field in her class on Japanese atomic bomb literatures. Using the papers of Dr. Enrico Fermi one of the creators of the atomic bomb from the University of Chicago manuscripts and archives collection, Professor Field’s students were able to gain new perspectives on the atomic bomb in Japan using

sources entirely in English from a collection of “so called” rare and unique materials,

In closing, Haruko Nakamura noted the extreme difficulty each individual librarian or faculty member faces in keeping up to date on developing resources. There are so many sources that there is a need for all to work together to make one another aware of missing and newly developed resources. Ideally, there should be some coordination and collaboration among libraries to avoid the duplication of efforts and to comprehensively uncover all appropriate resources, many of which are not explicitly aimed at a Japanese studies audience. By finding ways to share the burden we can then learn from each other.

Professor Susanna Fessler, from the East Asian Studies Department of the State University of New York at Albany, who has taught Japanese bibliographic courses for undergraduates, began by introducing some classroom challenges she has encountered:

- 1) Undergraduates are generally terrified of Japanese,
- 2) Faculty do not always cooperate with library staff to offer a seamless experience,
- 3) Students don't see the library as a place to find knowledge (but as a place for studying),
- 4) Students are increasingly unaware of printed materials and may not even understand the difference between an index and a table of contents, for example. [Follow-up note: in her spring 2010 bibliography course, Professor Fessler had one student comment in an annotated bibliography that a book was “unusual” because it had footnotes at the end of every chapter, “unlike most books.” This shows an increasing unawareness of print formats that we can probably expect to continue.]

To respond to these challenges, Professor Fessler suggests that librarians 1) collaborate with faculty to structure bibliography courses, 2) get known as *the* Japanese reference person among students, 3) pull a parlor trick or two to make them respect you and come back for more, 4) walk a fine line between pandering and slave driving, and if the librarian is not a non-native speaker, 5) find a non-native speaker to serve as a role model to help students overcome the language barrier.

Professor Fessler then encouraged the librarians to hold bibliography courses even at small institutions or for undergraduate students. She says even if a librarian does not have critical mass, s/he can make it interdisciplinary and recruit faculty to contribute. In addition, if the librarian involves some language exercises in the sessions, a bibliography courses may be totally applicable as a credit course at the undergraduate level. As an example, professor Fessler shared the course syllabus and materials she used for one of her bibliography courses (<http://www.albany.edu/eas/EAJ205/>).

Prior to the conference, participants were encouraged to give advance thoughts on the following issues regarding undergraduate teaching:

- Name problems you have run into in advising and mentoring undergraduate students through research in Japanese studies, and how you solved those problems (if you did).
- List the (relatively unknown) resources you'd like to see on an updated bibliographic resource web page/wiki/blog.
- Propose hands-on exercises you think would work for undergraduates who need to learn research skills in Japanese studies.

Before participants split up into small groups to discuss these items, Professor Fessler gave her own answers to the audience as follows.

- Problem: the student does not understand any search method beyond Google, and even then cannot find the right search terms.
- Sources I'd like to see on the NCC Website: an updated version of the Webb or Makino guides, or a combination of those two with internet resources
- Hands-on exercises: Specific search questions based on the students' interests, but channeled through available databases (such as JSTOR, BAS, Project Muse, etc.)

I. Problem sharing and problem solving

After professor Fessler's presentation, participants split up into groups and discussed commonly encountered problems regarding undergraduate teaching and came up with solutions for some of these problems as follows.

Problem 1: Students can't formulate research question. To make it worse students can't get librarian's help until faculty approves the question.

Solutions:

- a) Make available "model" essays by former students
- b) Assign book reviews to foster critical reading ability

Problem 2: Faculty-librarian collaboration and user-librarian relationship are weak

Solutions:

- In general { a) Recruit local staff/graduates students/community members to partner with non-specialist librarians
- b) Enhance virtual services (such as Ask a Librarian, Bridge to Japan by British Library, etc)
- c) Read newspapers and watch NHK to keep up with current events that can be used as a gateway to users
- With faculty { d) Collaborate with faculty and create a course guide
- e) Ask language teachers what they are teaching so that librarians can order background materials
- f) Get on the course management systems of individual classes
- With students { g) Get department buy-in for librarian access to students
- h) Have student assistants file Japanese serials
- i) Have students add to a Wiki – link to library page for courses
- j) Be an advisor for a student group (such as a *manga* club)

Problem 3: Students have fear of primary resources

Solutions:

- a) Show the students actual materials (microfilm, visuals, movies, flyers, scrolls, etc.)
- b) Have an archivist or rare books librarian do "show and tell" for the class

Problem 4: Student levels of background knowledge differ

Solutions:

- a) Provide individual face-to-face communication (i.e. office hours). Virtual communications will be helpful too
- b) Recognize areas in which undergrads are competent (Google, Books, Manga, etc.) and build on those

Problem 5: Students and teachers are extremely busy and there is no time for outside materials that librarians can bring in. In addition, the students do not have enough time to develop an argument into a complete research project.

---no specific suggestions were given for this problem

Problem 6: Students do not use reference books or print materials (they use the library for study), partly because professors provide course packs and don't require students to go and use the library

Solutions:

- a) If the librarians share "tips," they may attract more students
- b) Some popular materials may also attract students (for example, language CDs like "Rosetta Stone"). But of course students know how to get "free" stuff online, non-commercial documentaries are expensive but they may attract users, possible alternatives are less expensive movies and contemporary comedies
- c) Using what students use (like YouTube) is a good way to get connected to students
- d) To raise student's interest, librarians could participate with Language Tables/conversation partners to create an opportunity to promote the East Asian Library
- e) Promote particular sources (for example: JapanKnowledge)
- f) Librarians should offer "term-paper" clinics to help students plan and complete their projects
- g) Librarians should coordinate with faculty to make students physically encounter books in the stacks of the library, just standing in front of a bookshelf and reading spines often excites and inspires undergraduates

Problem 7: Students believe they know how to evaluate information online, but they don't

Solutions:

- a) Library's role should be to help evaluate information. This should be done in a positive, not negative manner. For example, instead of saying "Wikipedia is not reliable" one should say "Wikipedia is O.K. for some things, but JSTOR is a *fantastic* resource!"
- b) Students should be made aware of library-produced print and online aids
- c) Librarians need to better respond to student requests

Problem 8: Tricky Romanization and different input modes create difficulties for OPAC searching

Solutions:

- a) Train the users on IME's so that they can input *kanji* and *kana* even if they don't know the Romanization
- b) One of the librarian's roles is to fill in information gaps! Walk students through the search process, actively involving them so that they can do it themselves the next time