

NCC Year 2000 Conference in San Diego Next Decade Planning Meeting

Defining the Issues in Collection Development (Monographs)

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I. Recommendations of the Hoover Conference

Nine task forces were formed at the Hoover Conference in 1991 of which three dealt with collection development. They were: Task Force 1, Japanese Regional Documentation; Task Force 2, Sharing of Multi-Volume Sets; and Task Force 5, Future Areas of Cooperative Collection Development.

Task Force 1, Japanese Regional Documentation, recommended expanding the subject coverage collected for each region and inviting more libraries to participate in collection building. During the past ten years, the NCC has not pursued the issue of cooperation in the collection of local histories; previous agreements are still being followed, but there have been no new initiatives.

Task Force 2, Sharing of Multi-Volume Sets, aimed to identify major and expensive set titles and acquire them so that there would be no gaps in national resources. The Task Force recommended forming a committee to identify titles, to provide access and to oversee distribution. NCC formed a committee of Multi-Volume Sets. However, from the outset its original intention to identify expensive and important sets to be acquired became blurred. The program became a competition among libraries, and consequently many insignificant titles for Japanese studies were acquired. The major reason for failing the original intention was that those who served on this committee had little experience in collection development at their own institutions, and set inflexible guidelines for implementing the program.

Task Force 5, Future Areas of Cooperative Collection Development, recommended the following: a, hold regional and national meetings regularly in order to maintain communication among librarians; b, develop formal written resource sharing agreements while the task force develops guidelines; c, compile holdings information and cooperative acquisition plans; d, implement cooperative measures for improving bibliographic access; e, survey and designate collections of special strengths while maintaining a high level of humanities collections in major centers; f, assess strengths and weaknesses related to specialized collections; g, explore the acquisition and processing of grey literature and science and technology materials; h, develop a national plan for preservation. In spite of these recommendations nothing was addressed by NCC except the acquisition of grey literature. Unfortunately, the Japan Documentation Center established in 1994 will be closed in March of this year.

II. General Setting

There has been a great increase in the size, scale and scope of Japanese studies in the past decade. Japanese studies have become more interdisciplinary and specialization broadened. Library users have increased and become more diversified. As Prof. Pat Steinhoff has reported Japanese studies has greatly changed.¹ Japanese studies has spread into many academic institutions with little or no library resources. The number of researchers in traditional areas of Japanese studies has decreased, while the number of social scientists who require different types of resources has increased.

The number of new book titles published in Japan has also been on the rise. For humanities and social sciences titles alone, an increase between 1991 and 1998 was 153 per cent, and Japan now publishes over 60,000 new titles per year. On the other hand, out of 56 academic libraries that responded to the 1998 CEAL survey, only 20 per cent of libraries purchased over 1,500 titles, a figure which includes many standing order titles.

Even though the rapid development of technology enables access to electronic resources and information through the Internet, acquiring written materials is fundamental to humanities and social sciences collections such as those held in East Asian Libraries. Collecting books and making them available is an essential task for Japanese studies. Technological innovation has profoundly affected the work of librarians. Yet the function of the library is basically unchanged: providing users with needed materials and information.

III. Issues

1. Meet the challenge of rapidly changing and growing research material needs.
2. Make concerted efforts to develop a plan for national cooperative collection development.
3. Secure primary and indispensable research materials.
4. Assure access to government information, the so-called grey literature, upon the closure of JDC.
5. Provide access to collections housed in US libraries through online databases -- Conversion of old catalog cards at Stanford, Princeton, Yale, Chicago etc. is urgent.
6. Provide information nationwide about uncataloged unique materials such as rare books and special subject collections.
7. Increase national efforts in preserving brittle books and primary sources.
8. Train bibliographers and reference librarians.

IV. Recommendations

1. *Coordinate collection development among libraries:*
Identify strengths and weaknesses of collections nationwide and initiate a collection

¹ Japanese Studies in the United States: The 1990s. (Japanese Studies Series XXVI) The Japan Foundation, 1996.

development program by dividing subject responsibility between specific institutions. Subjects must be divided into specific fields and topics in order to attract libraries to participate in the program. A clearly outlined plan is essential for its success. NCC's support and coordination of the program are of utmost importance.

2. *Expensive publications*

Expensive materials indispensable for scholarly research should be acquired and made readily available to researchers. To do so, a concerted effort by bibliographers working with Japanese studies scholars on a daily basis is of vital importance. The failure of the MVS project should not be repeated. Monetary support by NCC is essential.

3. *Increase access to holdings in the United States through online records*

There are still numerous library materials inaccessible to researchers because of the lack of online data. Retrospective conversion of old catalog cards and uncataloged rare and special collections should be carried out so that these materials are available online in the national databases. Retrospective conversion was an issue at the Hoover conference, yet, hardly any action was taken. We urge the NCC to use its influence on this issue, so that everyone will know about the resources available in US libraries. Making known already owned resources is as important as acquiring new titles.

4. *JDC:*

It is unfortunate that the Japan Documentation Center is closing its doors in March 2000. We understand that LC's Asian Section is to continue JDC's services. NCC should make sure that the promise made by LC is genuine so that academic libraries can depend on services as in the past.