

NDL Extending Library and Information Services in 2002

Sakae EDAMATSU
Director, Institute of Library and Information Science
National Diet Library

The National Diet Library (or NDL for short) was established in 1948 under the National Diet Library Law. As the sole national library of Japan, the NDL collects all publications issued in Japan under the legal deposit system, produces databases and offers a variety of library services utilizing such materials. The Library currently has 862 staff. Its collection consists of over 7 million volumes of books and 160,000 titles of periodicals as well as a large collection of maps and microforms, and amounts to 30 million items in total. It is the largest information resource on Japan.

The NDL intends to open the International Library of Children's Literature partially this coming May and the Kansai-kan (provisional name) in 2002. To make those two new libraries function effectively in tandem with the Tokyo main library and to provide services appropriate to the electronic library era, we are now restructuring our organization and systems extensively including our services and functions.

Kansai-kan

The Kansai-kan is to be a center for library cooperation. Its basic functions are: 1. Document supply service (DSS for short) and information supply through the electronic library system; 2. R&D and training in the field of library and information science; 3. Provision of Asian resource information.

We are now in the final stage of planning. Although some parts are still unclear, I would like to report on the Kansai-kan's functions centering on DSS and the training programs.

Document supply service (DSS)

After the opening of the Kansai-kan, the NDL will make it a basic policy to enhance remote access services, and aims to provide prompt services for users both inside and outside of Japan, with the Kansai-kan being a window for DSS.

To adapt DSS to an electronic environment, first of all we will offer access to the bibliographic databases of our collections via the Web. As a first step, two databases, Japanese books cataloged after 1948 and western books cataloged after 1986, will be available this May or earlier. As a second step, the following databases will be ready for use in 2002.

1. The whole of the Japanese and Western Book catalogs (data of about 2.4 million Japanese books published after Meiji period (1868-1912) and 0.5 million western books in the library will be available on the Internet.)
2. Japanese Periodicals Index (about 5 million data after 1948)
3. Japanese and foreign serials catalogs, and others

As the second way to adapt DSS to an electronic environment, we will systematize the service so that users can get information more easily and quickly. For example, we are planning a new remote photocopy service which will link the Web-OPAC of the Japanese Periodicals Index and online ordering for those who have registered. The data of the Japanese Periodicals Index will be taken from 10,000 titles of periodicals, increased from the 7,000 titles at present available.

To carry out DSS successfully, some problems have to be solved. The first problem is to create the necessary infrastructure system for the Tokyo main library and Kansai-kan to provide DSS in tandem, because the NDL's holdings will be split between these two libraries. The system is now being developed as part of the Electronic Library Infrastructure System. The second problem is the building of added copy collections for DSS, and the third is payment methods, especially from abroad.

Training programs on library and information science

Several of the main functions of the Kansai-kan, as a center for library cooperation, are: planning and implementation of a variety of programs for library cooperation, compiling the union catalog of public libraries, electronic library service, and support for library activities such as interlibrary loan. What we consider our most important new undertakings are the following activities: research and development of library and information science, dissemination of fruits of the research, and training and consulting for various kinds of domestic and international librarians.

I. Training programs for domestic librarians

We plan to engage ourselves in the programs dealing with the following issues for domestic librarians:

1. Programs for middle-grade librarians on specific themes, based on the NDL work, service and collections (e.g. preservation and conservation, bibliographic control and subject information such as statutes and parliamentary information)
2. Preparation of infrastructure for other libraries to operate training programs (e.g. provision of related information, development of training equipment and machinery, and training for planners and trainers)
3. Remote education and nationwide dispatch of lecturers
4. Introduction of internships, etc.

II. Training programs for librarians abroad

The training programs the NDL has conducted fall into the following three categories:

1. Library activities of the NDL in general, acquisition and processing of Japanese materials (e.g. processing of JAPAN/MARC), collections of the NDL
2. Preservation and conservation
3. Services for the Diet (Japanese parliament)/ research and legislative activities

The Training Program for Japanese Studies Librarians, the fourth of which was held this year, falls into category. This program has been held since 1997 as a cooperative undertaking of the Japan Foundation and the NDL, with the cooperation of the International House of Japan and the NACSIS. Forty-eight librarians from abroad have taken this training already, and it is creating a network of Japanese studies librarians worldwide.

The international training programs and cooperation activities we plan to conduct at the Kansai-kan are;

1. Enlargement of the existing training on specific themes, such as preservation and conservation,
2. Programs offering support for Japanese studies,
3. Partial sharing and opening of domestic training programs,
4. Programs which are based on the respective cooperative relationships with foreign governments or libraries (e.g. personnel exchange),
5. Dispatch of lecturers abroad, and
6. Dissemination of English training texts, including in the electronic form.

Electronic library service

The NDL has been working on its electronic library project as well as the Kansai-kan plan. In 1998, it drew up its final concept. The NDL electronic library aims to intensify its new role in an advanced information society, reinforce NDL's services for the Diet, acquire and preserve domestic electronic publications, compile bibliographic information of electronic publications, supply electronic publications to the public and provide navigation to the information resource, and coordinate and cooperate with domestic and foreign organizations through the digitization of materials and the electronic library.

A basic plan to carry out electronic library services was finalized recently, which showed the way to specify the electronic "collection" (contents) development, provision of service, creation of systems, and so on. The plan notes digitization of books published in the Meiji period and rare books and old materials owned by the NDL as part of the primary source contents. Though the regular operation of the electronic library service will be after the opening of the Kansai-kan, the days are approaching when we will be able to provide access to the source of Japanese information, which the NDL holds in plenty, for domestic and international researchers and users, with services appropriate to the Internet age.