

**NCC Year 2000 Conference in San Diego
Next Decade Planning Meeting**

Defining the Issues:

Serving the Research Needs of Individuals at Institutions without Adequate Japanese Studies Library Support

Position Paper Developed by:

Sally Hastings, *Purdue University*

Sharon Domier, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

January 2000

I. Review of achievements since Hoover

In the ten years since the Hoover Conference, the possibility of access to Japanese information resources has improved immeasurably for Japanese Studies scholars and librarians. It is now possible to check library holdings online through NACSIS Webcat, search databases such as Zasshi Kiji Sakuin, retrieve full-text newspaper articles, and order books online using Japanese characters. Even within the past two years, access has become easier for individuals as database providers in Japan have begun to switch from direct modem connections and insistence on bank transfer payments to Internet connections and acceptance of credit card payments. Database providers such as G-Search offer over 160 Japanese databases, including *Zasshi Kiji Sakuin* and *Asahi Shinbun*, accept overseas clients and bill designated credit cards.

II. Current Challenges

The work of the National Coordinating Committee for Japanese Library Resources, on matters such as improving international interlibrary loan and providing funds for multi-volume set purchases, has indirectly improved access to Japanese language materials for individuals at institutions without adequate Japanese Studies library support, but a considerable amount of proactive intervention will be necessary to increase the direct benefits. The greatest challenge to individual scholars and librarians isn't the lack of access to Japanese library resources, it is a lack of awareness of the possibilities and a need for guidance and support from Japanese Studies librarians.

The national trend of smaller institutions recruiting Japanese Studies scholars is not being matched with an equivalent number of positions for Japanese Studies librarians. It is not uncommon for new scholars at smaller institutions to find that there isn't a single staff member in the library able to read or write Japanese. Having been trained at large institutions with excellent library collections, most scholars are used to relying on their librarians for support and advice. Despite the best intentions of everyone concerned, the same relationship cannot be maintained in libraries without staff able to read Japanese or knowledgeable about the flow of Japanese information.

The lack of inhouse Japanese expertise affects all realms of library support for scholars, from acquisitions, to cataloging, to reference. This means that many institutions are attempting to build and support East Asian collections without a specialist and without the necessary language ability needed to order and catalog the materials. Beyond the simple mechanics of ordering books or fulfilling interlibrary loan requests, librarians and faculty need to know more about the support and opportunities available from organizations such as U.S.-Japan Friendship Commission, Japan Foundation, and NCC.

Outsourcing of cataloging (and to a very limited extent, book ordering) exists for Japanese language materials, but relying on outsourcing instead of hiring inhouse staff means that there is no one to work with the faculty on identifying and obtaining materials. There are a few examples of consortial hiring, such as the Five Colleges in Massachusetts, where the salary and expertise of one specialist is shared among participating institutions. The concept of insourcing or sharing expertise needs to be examined more fully in the next few years.

III. Issues and Recommendations --

Is there anything that the NCC can do to help support the needs of both faculty and their libraries and to encourage the growth and development of Japanese Studies?

1. The NCC needs to reach out to library directors and senior library administrators across North America to explain the types of support available for Japanese Studies. One possible avenue is to make presentations at the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and Oberlin Group (77 highly selective liberal arts colleges) meetings, conferences. Publications in the various ACRL titles or in the bimonthly report of the Association of Research Libraries are yet other avenues.
2. Supporting the needs of faculty (and students?) would be facilitated by maintaining a web presence and electronic help desk (ask a Japanese Studies librarian?) to answer questions such as "which book vendors will accept payment in U.S. dollars?" or providing support for someone who needs to set up a workstation for access to *Zasshi Kiji Sakuin*.
3. Finally, librarians and directors would benefit from accessing samples of successful grant applications in Japanese Studies to the Japan Foundation, NCC, and Department of Education. These samples, available on the web, could provide inspiration and support for new applicants.
4. The training workshops that the NCC sponsored on using NACSIS databases in 1997 were successful and well-attended. The NCC should make an effort to provide workshops at the regional AAS meetings as a way to keep faculty up to date with new tools and information. Perhaps Japanese Studies faculty could convince their librarian counterparts to attend an AAS regional meeting, which usually requires shorter driving distances, perhaps only a day trip. Internet discussion lists such as H-Japan and J-Lit as well as the AAS Newsletters are perfect vehicles for sharing information about new publications and grant possibilities. Many librarians monitor the list and respond to questions, but the work could be undertaken more systematically.
5. The NCC might also consider keeping a referral list of Japanese Studies librarians who are interested/capable of providing consulting services in areas of collection development, cataloging, and reference. Institutions are more likely to arrange funding lines for

outsourcing than for new personnel, so a compromise of so many hours a week of library support by a professional Japanese Studies librarian is a possibility for most institutions if the faculty will support the concept.

Please note: ACRL 10th National Conference: Crossing the Divide, Denver Colorado, March 15-18, 2001. Deadline for submissions is May 2000.