

Cultural Heritage Information--Cooperation between Japanese Libraries and Archives

Shohei Muta discussed the numerous obstacles to the management of Japanese archival materials. Due to the poor description of records, many researchers in Japan are hesitant to use Japanese archives. Another major difficulty lies in the fact that archivists in Japan are not trained in professional programs as they are in North America. There is no certification for archivists per se; much of their archival and archives management knowledge is acquired on the job.

The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records holds materials from modern Japan and surrounding countries. Currently, the collection is believed to hold about 10 million images, but not all of them have complete archival records.

By digitizing the entire collection, the center seeks to give scholars and researchers full access and improved searchability. One difficulty is that the various government departments and archives have different standards for archival records description; thus, the task of amalgamating all these records in one database becomes very difficult. Cultural differences and biases sometimes emerge in the description of records. For instance, we were told that searches on "Nankin Gyakusatsu" would not return any results due to the fact that the Japanese government does not use that term.

The center's most recent release is a database that makes available digital images of the official documents and correspondence between Japan and the United States from the period immediately before World War II, entitled [Kobunsho ni miru Nichi-Bei kosho: kaisen e no keiji](#).