Memo

Basic Guidelines and Requirements for Vendors of Japanese Digital Resources In the North American Library and the Scholarly Community

This guideline was prepared based on discussions among Digital Resource Committee (DRC) members and other interested parties involved in the acquisition or installation of Japanese digital resources in North American academic libraries. It summarizes the views of these specialists with regard to the legal and technical prerequisites and priorities for the successful acquisition and deployment of Japanese electronic resources in North America.

NCC established DRC in 2002 to continue the work of the Consortial Licensing Task Force that was established in 2000. DRC's initial focus on consortial licensing has now broadened to include most aspects of the acquisition and usage of Japanese digital resources in North America.

Following are the major issues and concerns identified by the DRC:

1. Small User Base of Japanese Readers

Vendors of Japanese online and CD-ROM resources have not tailored their products to North American Libraries. For example, the vendors should be aware that even at the Library of Congress, the total user base never exceeds about 100 users, since only a small number of users are capable of reading Japanese-only resources. Other North American institutions have even smaller numbers of potential Japanese-reading users. However, North American academic institutions share the view that research using Japanese language materials is essential. Japan Area Studies researchers constitute a small but very important community of scholars that require access to information on Japan in Japanese. Since each institution has such a small Japanese-reading user base, it is difficult for each of them to justify paying very large licensing fees for the deployment of Japanese digital resources.

One way to address this problem is for Japanese vendors to offer attractive terms for consortial licensing of networked versions of their products based on the relatively small

number of users at these institutions. This would potentially be very helpful to North American librarians.

2. Convenient and Safe Modes of Access

To satisfy the different needs of scholars and libraries, a variety of modes of access for Japanese digital resources is essential, including access by IP-range, IDs/passwords, flat rate charges and pay-per-search licenses.

In academic and federal government library settings, IP-range access to Japanese databases through public library terminals is preferable, since it eliminates many problems inherent in other modes, while at the same time eliminating vendor concerns about illegitimate access. Using IP-range access, only computers with specified IP addresses may access proprietary databases. In fact, this mode of access is now the standard for accessing digital resources in North American libraries.

3. Uses and Citation of Digital Resources

Accepted standards in most disciplines require scholars to give thorough attribution for any material quoted or paraphrased in their writing. However, some vendors of Japanese digital resources prohibit citation of information located within the digital resources they offer. This in effect makes it impossible for scholars to use materials found in these resources. Citation of sources is fundamental to academic research, and any restrictions on use of and citation to materials found in digital resources is unacceptable.

4. English Language Contracts

Since contract specialists and lawyers at government agencies and academic institutions in North America must approve contracts required for the use of digital resources, they must be in English or accompanied by English translations.

5. Unacceptable Contract Terms

Contracts need to be tailored to fit North American jurisdictions.

a. Unacceptable contract terms include any stipulations that require disputes to be litigated in Tokyo District Court. U.S. State and federal laws prohibit state universities and government institutions from signing contracts that would require them to be subservient to the laws of a foreign jurisdiction. Many private institutions in the U.S. also have similar concerns, since they lack attorneys who are knowledgeable about foreign jurisdictions, and are not able to certify contracts that require litigation in foreign courts. Each institution deals with such clauses individually. Normally they will be eliminated from the contracts.

b. Stipulations that require librarians to monitor the use of databases by individual patrons

would also be difficult to enforce and likely not to be approved.

6. Online Preferred

Most libraries in North America much prefer online resources to CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs for the following reasons.

a. The installation and maintenance of CD-ROM databases locally is very costly in equipment and staff time. This is particularly true of large titles that sometimes include 100 or more CDs.

b. Online access is particularly important for those databases that need constant updates, such as periodical indexes.

7. Aggregator a Possibility For Improved Online Access

Another approach is for product vendors to offer their database or other services through an online database aggregator such as JapanKnowledge or Nichigai Web Service. This would provide the desired online access to the product for North American libraries, while at the same time allowing the vendor to rely on the database aggregator company to ensure that the product is fully accessible to North American users. Also, consolidation of products by the vendor could potentially cut costs, making the product more affordable to users. Ideally, under this scenario, institutions could select databases on an "a la carte" basis from an array of offerings.

8. Bilingual Preferred

The availability of bilingual English-Japanese versions of online or CD-ROM databases would be the ideal way of securing a wide audience for these resources.

(English/Japanese translations of resources would not only be helpful for Japan Studies researchers, it would also allow non-specialists with some interest in Japan to analyze Japanese data.) The availability of such bilingual resources would make it much easier to justify purchases at institutions outside Japan.

9. Users Manuals in English

English language users' manuals for the setup and operation of Japanese digital resources would allow non-Japanese speaking computer systems staff to deal with routine issues much more easily.

10. Detailed Full-Text Keyword Indexing

Researchers and librarians agree that comprehensive full-text keyword indexing based on vocabulary commonly used in academic research is one of the most important features of digital resources, and it is essential that Japanese vendors and database producers provide

products with easy to use and effective indexes.   Since automated indexing software often does not provide such detailed full-text indexing, database producers should use human indexers as much as possible to improve the quality and coverage of their indexes.   These more detailed indexes will appeal strongly to academic institutions in North America.

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