JACAR Online Digital Materials

Tad Suzuki, University of Victoria, and Yunshan Ye, Macalester College
April 2005

NOTE: This is an instruction plan for an 80 minute library instruction / discussion seminar.

CLASS: This plan is designed for a small group or class of upper year undergraduate students, graduate students, and/or researchers interested in Japanese / Asian history.

AUDIENCE: It is preferable that some of the participants in the class have some Japanese language skills, so that students with Japanese skills and those without would help each other in class exercise.

TITLE OF THE SESSION: Searching the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (National Archives of Japan) Online Digital Materials (JACAR): Keyword Search, in English or Japanese? **Database URL: http://www.jacar.go.jp/**

SUBJECT OF THE LESSON: Familiarize students with the concept of digital library; learn basic search features; learn keyword searches; identify "equivalent" keywords in English and Japanese; compare and evaluate search results in English and Japanese.

PURPOSE: Digitization and online provision of rare and/or out-of-print books and one-of-kind manuscripts is a growing area of service in archives and library special collections throughout the world. Online access to digitized materials is not only essential for original research in senior undergraduate and graduate levels, but also provides unique opportunities for students in small or medium size colleges and universities, where Japanese language collections are limited or yet to be fully developed, to access primary sources.

While multi-lingual (English and Japanese) search interface options in such digital collections are common and convenient especially with researchers with limited Japanese language skills, search results may be inconsistent between English keyword searches and Japanese "equivalent" keyword searches. Keyword searches in Japanese typically yield more results (or "hits"). This does not necessarily mean that a Japanese search is always better. Sometimes an English search with less number of hits provides records not yielded in Japanese search with its larger number of hits.

Thus, advanced researchers should learn not only of the availability of important digital databases in the Internet, but also study search features (English and Japanese search capability in this case) available in databases and take advantage of them.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: At the end of this instructional / discussion seminar, the students will gain knowledge and skills in the following areas, using JACAR as a primary example:

- Learn existence of and accessibility to primary historical sources in online digital format, expanding students' skills and knowledge in identifying types and formats of potential information sources (ACRL *Standards*, One-2).
- Learn keyword and controlled vocabulary search features in both English and Japanese, developing sense of effective construction, designing, and performing search strategies (ACRL *Standards*, Two-2), by identifying keywords, synonyms, and related terms, and by identifying appropriate search strategies unique to retrieval system.
- Examine the search results in their quantity, quality, and relevance, and if necessary, refine the search strategy (ACRL *Standards*, Two-4).
- Lean how to correctly cite the primary source information found in online digital format (ACRL *Standards*, Two-5).

CONTENT OUTLINE
I.   Introduction to Digitized Primary Sources
II.   JACAR Database Structure and Search Features
III.   Controlled Vocabulary vs. Keywords: Group Exercise
        - Synonyms
        - English and Japanese Searches
IV.   Evaluating the Search Results: Discussion
V.   Citing Digital Sources in Your Thesis/Paper
VI.   Wrap-up: Quick Assessment of What We Learned and Content Review

METHODS
Part I. Brief lecture and Web tour of major digital libraries, highlighting the importance of digitized collections and what types of digital libraries are currently available. (10 min.)

Part II. Quick demonstration of JACAR search, with students following the procedure hands-on, including a short introductory lecture / demonstration of keyword vs. controlled vocabulary. (15 min.)

Part III. Experiments / exercise in pairs or in a group of three. Write out search terms in Japanese and English equivalents, based on research themes brought by students themselves or exercise themes prepared by instructors. (15 min.)

Part IV. Classroom sharing and discussion. (15 min.)

Part V. Lecture and demonstration using hand-outs, and PowerPoint/Website/overhead. (10 min.)

Part VI. Final questions-and-answer period. Later the instructors also pose some "quiz" type of questions to general class to remind the major points. Ask what was new and important for students (In their own words, what did they learn?). Closing remarks. (15 min.)