

Thoughts on Teaching Japanese Bibliography/Research Methods Courses

Ellen H. Hammond

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[This suggested outline for a Japan bibliography course was prepared after I taught a course for doctoral students at the University of Iowa in the spring of 2000. The students in this class were from a variety of fields, most outside traditional area studies disciplines. Half were American and half were Japanese.]

Part One

Unit 1

What does it mean to study “Japan” in an American university?

Historicizing the study of Japan outside Japan (Covering pre-war Japanology, wartime studies, the agenda behind modernization theory, post-Said challenges to the field: Orientalism; post-modern, post-colonial, cultural studies approaches, current academic trends as they relate to area studies)

Unit 2

What is the scholarly apparatus for the study of Japan outside Japan?

Current awareness – how to keep up with scholarship in Japan study
Organization of the field of Japan study

Unit 3

How are both scholarly and “popular” information produced in Japan?

State involvement in information production
University system
Government agencies and “quasi-public” agencies
Research institutes
Media
Publishing
Business
Other (i.e local historians, societies, etc.)

Unit 4

How is information organized and regulated in Japan?

Libraries (including status of librarians in various types of libraries)
Bookstores (including used bookstores)
How researching in Japan might be different than researching at home institution.
How can Japan’s visual culture be accessed (finding photographs,

documentary and feature films, works of art, etc.)

Copyright law vis á vis print, electronic, and visual sources of information

Part Two

Unit 5

What are the **strategies** one could use for finding out the structure of a “field” (traditional or non-traditional discipline) of study in Japan?

How to identify major scholars

How to find out trends in scholarship (historically, current)

How to identify primary journals

How to find bibliographies and reference works (print or electronic).

How to use other information sources (i.e. people: scholars, librarians)

Unit 6

How can I do a subject search on a Japan-relevant topic in all languages

Finding books

Finding articles

Finding information sources not subject to bibliographic control (including thinking about what might these be)

Thinking of people as information sources (importance of tapping the knowledge bases of colleagues, faculty, librarians, etc.)

Unit 7

How can the value of information sources found in a search be assessed in terms of both quality and relevance to one’s research.

Finding descriptions of book contents

Finding review articles and book reviews.

Evaluating sources

Part Three

Unit 8

How can I formulate a strategy for doing an annotated bibliography or literature review?

Planning a research strategy to find sources in all languages.

Maintaining a research journal to allow replication and extension.

How can I obtain the sources I have identified?

Locating items in North America. (books, journals, films, etc.)

Inter-library loan and document delivery

Locating items in Japan

How do I communicate the results of my research?

Content of annotated bibliographies & literature reviews

Scholarly conventions to follow in preparing such a document (style for Japanese, etc., general style sheets)

Unit 9

How do “real scholars” pursue their research?

Faculty guest lectures.