

**Knowledge on contemporary Japan learnt from Japan  
Specialists Workshop 2011**

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The environment surrounding Japan Studies in recent years has changed greatly. However, it is uneasy for librarians working away from Japan to continuously keep up to date on the latest development.

To meet the needs of overseas information specialists, the Japan Specialists Workshop was jointly launched by the National Diet Library of Japan (NDL), International House of Japan (I-House) and Japan Foundation. This year subjects were focused on the social sciences (politics, economics and law).



National Diet Library



International House of Japan

Photos: Courtesy of Chie Emslie

The workshop was held from 13 to 22 February and participants took lectures for 5 days and were given 2 days to study by themselves. Lectures were given by academic staff from Tokyo University and Tsukuba University, specialist librarians from the National Diet Library Japan, and

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one independent information company named Academic Resource Guide.

The total of nine attendees was selected by the organising committee. They were from Switzerland, Norway, U.S., France, Korea, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. Five participants are lecturers and PhD students, four are librarians.

In my report, I'll focus on the seminars conducted during the workshop and I'll summarise the main points of each seminar. Ms Michelle Hall will discuss the useful electronic resources in her **report** available in this issue of the newsletter.

#### 1. Trends of research topics in Social Science Japan Journal

Trends of research topics were analysed by the numbers that articles were cited and accessed from Social Science Japan Journal published by the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo. Top cited articles between 2007 and 2010 are researches on Japanese family relationships, employment conditions of jobless youth, social classes and Japanese corporate groups. During the same period, top accessed articles are related to Japanese gender, yakuza gangs, Japan's foreign aid policy, national identity, whaling, popular culture and globalization. Contemporary social issues are reflected on recent research topics.

#### 2. Research tools for Social Sciences

National Diet Library offers useful tools such as Digital Archive Portal, Research Navi and Kindai Digital Library. In addition to these useful tools, they are developing "NDL Search" (<http://iss.ndl.go.jp/>) which is a prototype system aiming to be an access point to knowledge contained in not only NDL but also public libraries, National Archives, art galleries, academic institutions. It is planned to be formally launched in early 2012.

CiNii offered by the National Institute of Informatics is a well-known journal citation database. It includes for example, institutional repositories, Zasshi Kiji Sakuin and J-STAGE. Japan Science and Technology (JST) which hosts J-STAGE also offers Journal@rchive. It mainly contains science journals but recently an increasing number of journals in humanities has been added such as Gengo Kenkyū, Kokusai Keizai, Kokusai Josei and Kokusai Seiji.

#### 3. Legal research tools

Law resources can be divided into two categories, one is laws and ordinances, and the other is

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judicial precedents.

In many printed resources, collected laws and ordinances are listed chronologically or grouped by categories. Chronological resources are useful to find latest revised laws, for example, Kanpō and Hōrei zensho. On the other hand, when laws and ordinances are grouped by categories, it is easy to find currently effective laws, for example Roppō and Genkō Nihon hōki.

It is difficult to find judicial precedents because approximately only 1500 court cases are published yearly. The Courts in Japan provide the open access database, “Saibanrei jōhō” which contains selected precedents after 1947

(<http://www.courts.go.jp/search/jhsp0010?hanreiSrchKbn=02>).

#### 4. Statistics tools

There are two types of statistics, government and non government. Official statistics are published by the government agencies or public bodies. They are large scale and cover various topics. They are trustworthy and often available on the Internet. Non-government statistics are data collected by private corporate and industry sectors. They are often detailed but usually inaccessible from the Internet. The basic rule is to start from generic official statistics to specific industrial data.

Historical statistics between 1868 and 1985 can be found “Historical statistics of Japan” edited by Japan Statistical Association. There are both print and free internet versions. Before Meiji era, no data were collected systematically. Research papers and monographs are main sources of statistics before 1868.

#### 5. Government publications

Under the article 24 of the National Library Law, government publications must be deposited to NDL. In 2005, almost all government publications on the market are deposited to the National Diet Library. However, the deposit rate of non-commercial materials, such as discussion papers by advisory groups is very low. This may be because there is no centralised system to manage their documents.

Records of advisory committees and councils are important to obtain background knowledge how laws and policies are established. Although records are not deposited to NDL, recent documents are often available on ministerial websites. Monthly journal “New policy” edited by Kenkosha is

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one of the useful items. Unfortunately, article titles in the journal are not indexed in Zasshi Kiji Sakuin.

White papers are published yearly and current issues are available on the government web site. When users refer to white papers, they have to be aware that there are two versions. One is commercial versions which are on the market, and the other is original versions which are submitted to the Diet or cabinet meetings. Although the contents are the same, there are differences between these two versions such as, titles, date of publications and editors. The number of examples is listed at <http://rnavi.ndl.go.jp/politics/entry/JGOV-hakusyo.php>.

6. Social networks and academic resources

In recent years, social media have been used to deliver academic communications. USTREAM is frequently used to disseminate the content of conferences on the web. Also, USTREAM in conjunction with Twitter has been used in the conference for presenters and online audiences to communicate each other.

The numbers of slides and handouts from the workshop are available at [http://www.ndl.go.jp/jp/library/training/material/1191503\\_1486.html](http://www.ndl.go.jp/jp/library/training/material/1191503_1486.html)

The workshop provided me with the latest development and knowledge in the fields. I would like to thank all the organisers, lecturers and people supported us during the workshop.