

## NATIONAL DIET LIBRARY STUDY TOUR, 1 - 18 March 1994

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By a stroke of good fortune together with the generosity of the National Library of Australia, I was invited to participate in a study tour (or training course) of two weeks' duration in March 1994 at the National Diet Library (NDL) in Tokyo.

This study tour was the first of what could become a continuing event, depending on the conclusions reached by the staff of the NDL as to its success on this occasion. The official title of the study tour was "Japanese Language Materials Arrangement and Library Mechanization", although it became known as the "training course for overseas librarians" for the sake of convenience.

Notwithstanding the speed with which the course was organised (it was still a proposal in mid-December 1993!), the schedule drawn up by NDL staff was comprehensive without being taxing for the participants, and was very smoothly conducted.

The target region for participants was the Asia and Pacific region, resulting in a group of three persons, being: a representative from the National Library of China in Beijing - Mr Wang; a representative from the Central Library of Korea in Seoul - Mrs Kim; and myself from Macquarie University Library in Sydney. Each of us in our home libraries is charged with the responsibility of cataloguing and processing Japanese library materials and with being a liaison officer for the Japanese collection.

In addition to offering the study tour without cost to the participants, the NDL provided the cost of our accommodation at the International House of Japan in Roppongi, a few subway stations from the Library. The only cost funded by our home libraries was the return airfare to Japan. International House is a private hotel sponsored by various companies, institutes and individual members' subscriptions and is a little old-fashioned by modern standards, but is designed for foreign researchers, academics and those conducting or taking part in scholarly conferences. It also has a very useable small library of titles relating to Japan, mainly in English for the foreign guests. From this library I was able to access the Internet and send a message to Macquarie University Library, as well as receive any pertinent Asialib messages, since the Librarian is a subscriber to this list - the only subscriber in the whole of Japan! The Librarian and Assistant Librarian are also regular participants at IFLA conferences.

## Schedule of the Study Tour

Our schedule for the fortnight was set out as follows:

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M	7	Orientation (Study tour supervisor)	NDL quick tour (Study tour supervisor)
T	8	NDL mechanization (Information Management)	Japanese language materials workflow (Domestic Materials)
W	9	Japanese language materials description (Domestic Materials)	Japanese language materials description (Domestic Materials)
Th	10	Subject analysis (Collection Arrangement)	
F	11	Authors and authorities (Collection Arrangement)	Requests from overseas (International Cooperation Division)
M	14	Future of JAPAN-MARC (Collection Arrangement)	
T	15	Use of J-BISC (NDL's OPAC on CD-ROM) (Information Management)	Association organisations study tour (Tokyo Toritsu Toshokan)
W	16		Cultural exchange meeting with NDL staff (short presentation by participants)
Th	17	Ancient Materials book stack (Ancient Materials)	Field trip (to BRAIN-TECH - software co.)
F	18	Study tour participants round- table discussion (International Cooperation Division, Library Research Group)	Western language materials processing (Collection Arrangement)

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This schedule shows that the emphasis of the study tour was on the processes in place to deal with Japanese language materials which, of course, form the major part of the NDL's collection.

For the duration of the two week period, NDL staff went to great lengths to ensure that our stay was interesting and comfortable. Special mention must go to the staff of the Library Research Group (Kenkyujo) and the International Cooperation Division of the Library Cooperation Department, who provided us with space in their offices, organised our schedule, took time to chat with us on many topics, and treated us to delicious lunches and dinners outside the Library.

I should point out at this stage that the study tour was conducted wholly in the Japanese language, including introductions and arrangements as to the structure of the schedule for the course. This was, for me, a little taxing, especially in coming to grips with the processing *minutiae* of library materials, but there was also light relief during our casual chats with the staff when travelling on the transport network, and when dining with the two other participants who had almost no English. It was a splendid way to build up acquaintances.

### Outline of study tour activities

After a brief history of the development of the NDL's online computer system conducted by Mr Sugiyama (Information Processing Section), outlining also various aspects of the programming the computer and which programs were used by whom, we three participants spent a morning and two afternoons with Ms Ushikoshi (Domestic Materials Section) looking at the accession and preliminary sorting of newly received materials. This involved an explanation of the use of BACCAS (the database of cataloguing information compiled by publishers) from which basic descriptive cataloguing information is available. Upon this information being received, materials are sorted into Categories A, B, C, D and E, which determines the level of cataloguing treatment they will receive; for example, Category A materials receive full cataloguing according to the cataloguing rules, with call number and subject entries, and can be retrieved on all access points on the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), whereas Category E material is not keyed into the computer. This is actually more work than it sounds, due to the large number of acquisitions in any one week (about 2,000? articles).

Some hands-on experience was had in writing descriptive cataloguing information onto cards which were then attached to the catalogue input worksheet. This travels with the item on its fairly lengthy journey through the various stages of processing.

Following this, Ms Sato (of the Materials Arrangement Section) guided us through the process of creating subject access points and the use of the NDL Classification System.

Subject access points in NDL's records are simpler than those of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and usually take the form of a string of one-word descriptors which appear sufficient to classify the work. The classification system is called National Diet Library Classification (NDLC) as opposed to Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC), widely used by most of Japan's libraries. These systems are basically Dewey look-alikes but, of course, the arrangement is determined from Japan's standpoint rather than the English or American order. In this we also had some hands-on practice in choosing classification numbers for a few titles.

Mr Yokoyama, a colleague of Ms Sato's, in the same Section, then spoke to us regarding the NDL's methods employed in performing authority control of authors and corporate bodies. The complexity of this task is exacerbated by the need for control of authors' names with respect to pronunciation in addition to control of the written form. This is because individual characters may have more than one reading. Although the computer is programmed to read characters in combination and to isolate the divisions between words, the authorities must still be checked for irregularities which always arise in the combination of *on* and *kun* readings of characters, and authors' names which have the same characters but different reading, or same reading but different characters. This was a fascinating part of the cataloguing process, in that added entries had to be inserted in the authority records in phonetic characters (*katakana*) to ensure that the computer had a link between pronunciation and characters. It also allowed library users to search for authors' names phonetically in addition to searching by *kanji* characters.

Similar procedures were required for titles too, and these were done at this stage along with authors' names. Occasionally lesser-used characters were encountered which could not be input to the computer because they were outside the basic character set (I was unsure of the character set in use). These characters were catered for by a numerical code; a special card file was kept with a record of the *kanji* character and its corresponding code number.

In the afternoon the members of the Library Cooperation Department, International Relations Division, gave us a quick exposé of their activities and who was responsible for which tasks. A number of readers of the Newsletter (particularly those in the National Library) must know these people by name through correspondence with them. It was good to be able to put faces to the names!

The second week of the study tour was quite different from the first, although it started similarly with a meeting with Mr Wanaka, also of the Materials Arrangement Section. Mr Wanaka spoke about developments in relation to JAPAN-MARC. This talk was somewhat technical, involving a number of printouts of MARC-coded computer screens depicting small additions to the screens. It also highlighted the computer programming required to incorporate

elements such the *katakana* pronunciation of authors and titles more accurately than was currently the case.

We also had another meeting with Mr Sugiyama, who demonstrated the use of the NDL's CD-ROM version of their catalogue (called J-BISC). The decision to purchase this product is reliant on obtaining the software required to run it. This is a CD-ROM copy of the NDL database which allows extremely efficient searching by all access points. It was a most useful introduction to the CD-ROM in preparation for a visit conducted by Mr Muraki (NDL Research Group) and Mr Toya (Japan Library Association) to the office of a software company called BRAIN-TECH, writers of software for all manner of applications including the software for J-BISC.

Other activities during the second week included a trip to Tokyo Metropolitan Public Library at Hiroo. The visit provided us with an interesting contrast to the NDL methods materials processing and with an idea of the different customer base and the types of materials acquired.

Mr Baba of the Ancient Materials Section showed us around the stack where the old and rare materials were kept, including the Paulownia timber-lined room housing the Class A rare materials. This room is kept in darkness and at a constant temperature and humidity in the interests of conservation.

For old materials as a whole, Mr Baba and his staff were kept extremely busy with the painstaking and expensive work of creating special containers for every artefact in this part of the NDL's collection, in addition to lining all the metal shelves with timber, also for conservation purposes.

On the Wednesday afternoon we were given the opportunity to say something about the situation in our home libraries in relation to the processing of Japanese materials. As naturally as possible to an assembly of twenty or so NDL staff, I gave a few words about our system in Australia of cooperative cataloguing onto the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN), methods employed in inputting records to the database and the subsequent downline loading procedure. I also mentioned the OZLINE databases and the information they can provide, in addition to a little about SOFI and Current Contents and the development of the direct ILL facility.

The final day of the study tour entailed a roundtable discussion with the Research Group and International Cooperation Division staff to hear and discuss our thoughts about the study tour as presented. Part of this discussion was recorded on videotape by a crew of about eight people in the manner of a television production - a little intimidating! We all felt that the tour was of value. NDL staff were heartened by this and appeared to be in favour of running it again the following year.

I certainly believe that the study tour was an interesting experience and assisted me in gaining useful background knowledge about Japanese materials processing through close observation of the Library's operations. Equally as important was the opportunity to observe the human side of the NDL's operations.

At all times, our hosts ensured that we were being shown those aspects that were of interest to us. Our hosts' hospitality extended also to very congenial meals at restaurants, followed on one occasion by karaoke. *AND ...* for fear of all this not being enough, we were presented with a day trip to Nikko. (This town is a famous tourist destination which includes a shrine built by the first shogun, Tokugawa Ieyase, to himself. The shrine, supposedly Shinto in style, is more like an elaborate Buddhist temple!)

Overall, participation in the study tour was a delight; it was a privilege to accept the role of representative of the National Library of Australia in addition to that of Macquarie University Library.

