

LIBRARY FORUM, JULY 10TH, 1997
AT THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE JAPANESE STUDIES
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I attended the lunchtime Forum on Library Resources for Japanese Studies which was held at the Baillieu Library of the University of Melbourne on the 10th of July 1997. This Forum was affiliated with the 1997 Japanese Studies Association of Australia Biennial Conference (6-10 July). At first, because of other arrangements, I could not attend the conference. However, I discovered that the date of the library forum coincided with part of my family holiday in Australia. I therefore decided that I would go to Melbourne to attend the forum.

The focus of the Forum was "Accessing Japanese information on the Internet and traditional resources". I noted that two of the speakers at the Forum had participated in the first Training Program for Senior Librarians in Japanese Studies which was held in Tokyo early this year. So, it was with high expectations of what I would learn at the Forum that I arrived at Melbourne Airport, despite the fact that it was cold and windy with occasional rain.

The reasons why I particularly wanted to attend the Forum were:

- a) to make contact with colleagues and counterparts in Australian libraries; and,
- b) to attend the demonstration of the Australian National CJK system.

One of my purposes was fulfilled on the night of my arrival in Melbourne when I was kindly invited to dinner with some of the librarians involved in the Forum. Because of our common ground as Japanese subject specialists, I felt as though I had known them for a long time. Through our contact and information exchange, New Zealand has become part of the Japanese studies network in this region.

Although the Library Forum took place on the final day of the conference and took place during lunchtime, the session was well attended. The Reader Education Room of the Library, where the Forum was held, was full of academic staff, showing that they were very concerned about the availability of library resources. The high level of staff attendance also indicated the importance they attached to these issues. It was therefore timely and appropriate to organise the Forum to coincide with the Biennial Conference.

The Forum was chaired by Michelle Hall, Japanese Studies Librarian at the University of Melbourne. Eiko Sakaguchi's paper "Accessing information

from Japan: reference and user services" was delivered using real inquiries which she had received recently as examples, and it was interesting and informative. "Issues in the delivery of specialist information service" by Chooi-hon Ho was delivered professionally and concerned management issues involved in supporting Japanese academic programs by Australian libraries.

After giving an introduction to, and outline of, the development of the Australian National CJK system, Yumiko Tsuji demonstrated the system to the audience. The Japanese characters which appeared on the screen were clear, and the searching method or procedure, it seems to me, was fairly straightforward. Since the aim of the demonstration was only to show academics (users) how to access items available in Australian libraries, I felt it would be beneficial for me to attend a technical services demonstration (eg, inputting bibliographical description) in the near future.

Throughout the sessions, I couldn't stop thinking that 15 minutes was not long enough for most speakers to provide substantial information on their topics. For example, when Toshio Takagi finished the introductory part of his paper "Japanese Internet development since 1995", there was not enough time left to finish the main part of his presentation. This was partly due to his time mismanagement, but the 15 minute time allocation was definitely too short to cover any topic sufficiently. Fortunately, he handed out copies of his paper, so I was able to understand what he intended to say.

I enjoyed the Forum in general and, since it was so successful in attracting large audiences, I felt that it would be worthwhile maintaining the Library Forum as a regular feature of feature Japanese studies conferences.

I have been thinking about the possibility of improving the organisation of the forum. The following are my suggestions:

- a) the forum should be treated as a regular session of the conference, not as a lunchtime session, so that the time allocated to each paper could be at least 30 minutes;
- b) if the forum continues to be a lunchtime session and the time allocation per paper is 15 minutes, each presenter should provide some kind of hand-out which covers practical, technical and useful information on his/her speech so that the participants can refer to and utilise the information afterwards.

My experiences at the Forum and subsequent discussions with the participants made me envious of the efficiency of library resources (including human resources) for Japanese studies in Australia.

The state of library resources in New Zealand was well illustrated in a paper written by K. H. Lun, Asian Languages Librarian at the University of Auckland Library, entitled "A brief survey of the teaching of East Asian studies and supporting resources in New Zealand" (in *EALRGA*

Newsletter, No. 28, February 1995). However, as far as human resources in Japanese studies are concerned, it will take some time to improve the current shortcomings in our libraries.

The primary requirements for library staff members are a professional library qualification together with competency in the Japanese language. However, as far as I know, only two university libraries in New Zealand (the University of Auckland and the University of Canterbury) have a full-time Japanese specialist who, since the establishment of the collections in the late sixties and early seventies, has been responsible for acquisitions, cataloguing and reference works. The other universities employ either part-time staff or Japanese people, some of whom have little library experience with cataloguing, on a temporary basis.

Before concluding this article, I would like to congratulate the organisers on the success of the Library Forum. I also wish to thank my Australian colleagues for their very warm welcome. I am very pleased to have attended the Forum, not only was because I able to gain access to information about Japanese library resources in Australia but also because I now have a strong feeling that I belong to a network of people with whom I share the same interest and concerns.

