

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION IN AUSTRALIA

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First of all, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Yasuko Uchida, Assistant Director of the Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney. I came from Japan two years ago, and I am in charge of the Library of the Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney as an administrator.

As you may already know, one of the main activities of the Japan Foundation since its establishment in 1972 has been the promotion of Japanese studies and Japanese language abroad. To realize this aim, we are coordinating several grant programs such as the "Staff Expansion Grant Program for Japanese Studies", the "Research/Conference/Seminar Grant Program for Japanese Studies", the "Training Programs for Teachers of the Japanese Language", the "Japanese Speech Contest Support Program" and the "Library Support Program". If you are interested in our grant programs, please contact our office for more details.

Today, I would like to inform you of the current circumstances and focus of the Japan Foundation, firstly with a brief talk on the "Library Support Program". This program is designed to promote an understanding of and research on Japan through donations of books and other materials, such as videocassette tapes and compact disks.

Although we believe that we have contributed to enriching Japanese studies materials in Australian universities through this program, the actual amount of grant money given to each successful university is only about A\$4,615 and that is obviously not enough. In addition, the number of universities successful in receiving the grants has drastically decreased over the past ten years. For example, there were 25 universities that received grants in 1992, but there are only 4 universities that were successful in 2001.

This is mainly due to the economic downturn in Japan, the annual decrease in the budget that is derived from the profit of our capital funds and the currency exchange loss between Japanese Yen and Australian Dollars.

Because of this continuing decrease in our budget, we have to admit that it is almost impossible for the Japan Foundation to increase the number of grantees from Australia, sadly to say.

At the same time, I am aware that Australian universities are also suffering from serious setbacks such as the cutting of governmental subsidies, the soaring price of academic books in Japan, and the weakness of the Australian dollar. These factors make it increasingly difficult for Australian universities to maintain a respectable library holding in Japanese studies.

With these things in mind, the Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney has decided to invest its energies into improving our own library. Originally, we had two libraries. One was operated by the Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney, and the other by the Language Centre. In 1998, we combined the two libraries into one partly for saving on the rent costs of the building. However we still have two types of memberships, as before. One is for General Members, of which there are around 1,882 people, the other is for our Japanese Language Teachers Members of around 848 people.

We feel that we are making a worthwhile contribution in supporting members of the library who are Japanese Language Teachers Members through the wide range of Japanese teaching materials in our library, as well as assistance of three Advisory lecturers in Japanese language education at the Language Centre.

On the other hand, our service to our general library members needs reconsideration. General Library Membership is completely open to members of the general public who are over 15 years old and interested in Japan. For our general members, including many Australian students who specialize in Japanese language and/or Japanese studies, we have focused on collecting mainly English materials related to Japan. Needless to say, we would like to keep this principle because we are one of the largest organizations in Australia helping members of the general public to deepen their interests in Japan.

However, considering the current difficulties involved in increasing Japanese studies materials in Australia as I mentioned before, and as a reflection of the Japan Foundation's aim to develop Japanese studies and Japanese language abroad, we realize that it is time for us to look for the ways of broadening our services. This includes the possibility of supporting academics and/or researchers in Japanese studies and Japanese language, and also the possibility of cooperating with Australian university libraries, even if our budget is limited.

As a first step, we joined the ANCJK Service this month and we are planning to open our library catalog on our web site very soon. We are considering of joining KINETICA and becoming a member of Inter Library Loan System as well. Through these networks, we hope to increase awareness of the resources offered through our library. They will also enable us to share the information and materials with other Australian libraries.

In our Japanese collections, there are some characteristic materials such as textbooks used in primary and high schools in Japan. In addition, we sometime receive some very unusual and rare materials from headquarters or other institutions in Japan. For example, Art Catalog Library in Japan donated to us 332 art exhibition catalogs that were published in accordance with the exhibitions held in Japan. They are very precious collections and we really would like people to be able to access these holdings easily.

We are also considering connecting to web site resources services such as

"Digital News Archive of Asahi Newspaper Articles", "Nacsis IR" by the National Institute of Information and "Magazine Plus" by Nichigai Associates. In this computerized era, it is very important not only to collect many real materials in the library but also to link up with huge data bases distributed worldwide through the internet. These data bases will benefit not only academics/ researchers who are keen to find out the latest original articles and/or academic thesis quickly by searching key words, but also Japanese language teachers and others who use our services.

Lastly, I would like to add that the Japan Foundation headquarters is thinking of establishing a corner for "Contemporary Japanese Pop Culture" in each Japan Foundation overseas library, that includes comics, music CDs, DVD and LD for films and so on. This will no doubt, attract many more people to our library.

We have just started to innovate our library to meet the real needs of the people. So it would be much appreciated if you could give us your suggestions and opinions. Thank you very much.