

A GLANCE AT JAPANESE COLLECTION USAGE IN VICTORIA: USER SURVEY AT A ONE DAY FORUM

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Introduction

The Japanese Studies Centre conducted a one day forum entitled "Japanese Language and Japanese Studies: tensions and commonalities" on Thursday July 15th 1999 at Monash University. Its focus was to provide an opportunity for those in the profession, in and around Melbourne, to share their experiences and views. It also aimed to explore issues such as the interface of Japanese language teaching and teaching about Japan in English, the small number of students pursuing postgraduate research from the large numbers of undergraduate language students, and so on. The forum attracted over 50 participants not only from Victorian institutions but also academics from interstate.

I took advantage of this opportunity to survey the participants in order to understand the current client needs of the Japanese studies community.

Respondents

There were 21 completed responses. The 21 respondents consisted of 10 teaching staff, 11 postgraduate students, one undergraduates, one from a government organisation and the other a visiting scholar. Three of the teaching staff are also currently enrolled in postgraduate studies, therefore total responses were 24. There were 14 students and staff from the language area, eight from the studies area and two were interested in the general study area. Nineteen respondents were Melbourne-based; only two respondents were from interstate. All of the respondents were proficient in Japanese and English.

Questions and responses

Do you require library resources for your research/project/study?

Nine staff and 11 postgraduates answered that they needed library resources. Two responded that they didn't (figure 1).

Do you require English, Japanese, or both English and Japanese language resources?

Seven staff and nine postgraduates said that they required both English and Japanese resources. Two staff and one postgraduate said that they needed more Japanese resources and one said more English materials (figure 2).

How often do you use the library of your institution?

Four staff and seven postgraduates indicated that they use the library very often and five staff and four postgraduates said often. Only two indicated that they didn't use the library often (figure 3).

How often do you use the library resources on Japan (including English) of your institution?

Resources on Japan were used very often by four staff and five postgraduates each. One each of staff and postgraduates indicated they didn't use the library very often. Comments included that there were not enough resources in the areas of their studies (figure 4).

Please explain the purposes of using these resources.

Resources were needed for research by 13 respondents. Six used the library resources for their teaching needs. Five used the library resources to fulfil their interests, and three required them for general study needs. One indicated a requirement to prepare seminar presentations for teachers.

How could we improve your library usage, if you don't currently use the library resources on Japan? eg. CD-Rom resources, Internet resources, research tools, reference materials, current publications

Ten people responded some with multiple answers. Four each expressed their interests in CD-ROM and Internet resources; three wanted more information on research tools; two on current publications; one on reference materials. One expressed a need for CD-ROM training.

How could we improve current library services, if you are a current regular user?

(eg. Cooperative resource purchases and its usage, would like to know library services for Japanese studies)

The advice of the ten respondents reflected the issues which Japanese collections faced: lack of resources. Six expressed the need for cooperative resource purchases and a system to utilise these resources, PhD theses and journals not held in any Australian University library. Other suggestions included: a list of recent Japanese publications for students to choose from, more up-to-date publications, a delivery service for distance students even at a cost, extension of the loan period of videos, and promotion of library services.

Other suggestions, advice

Eight respondents provided very honest and direct advice and suggestions. There were questions on collection development policies and the current status as there seems to be a gap in student needs and collection status; and subject bias in the collections. Regarding resources; it was suggested

collecting publications such as conference papers, proceedings and annual reports which are not commercially obtainable. One suggested that a comprehensive collection of Japanese language teaching textbooks would be useful.

Regarding library services, some respondents indicated the need for detailed library guides for their study topics and library seminars according to need. A very critical suggestion expressed by an academic staff was the need to consider licence agreements to obtain databases, including Internet resources from Japan. Some staff members subscribe to online/Internet licences, which was considered rather wasteful.

On a positive note, users were pleased with libraries long opening hours and the services they received from library staff.

Conclusion

I had hoped for more responses from participants from other states even just to grasp the status of Japanese collections outside Victoria. However only two replied in that category. As I had stated that the purpose of the questionnaire was "to identify the current status of the research, teaching and education of the Japanese Studies in order to improve LIBRARY SERVICES AND ITS USAGE" after my position, this may have discouraged the people from interstate institutions from responding.

Although a small number were surveyed, they were the core client groups of our collections. It was encouraging to know that library resources were utilised by these people and that client groups are interested in library resources. However the existing status of resources far from satisfied their research and study needs and it raises the issues of how the library will bridge this gap under the current climate.

Figures

