Developing New Japanese Collections and Services at the University of California, San Diego, 1988-1993

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Introduction

March 15 of this year marked the fifth anniversary of my arrival at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). On a bright, warm spring day in 1988, I moved to the arid, scenic suburban La Jolla campus from the equally beautiful and balmy city of Berkeley where I had worked as a Japanese bibliographer for the century-old University of California, Berkeley (UCB) Library for two and a half decades. The past five years here in southern California have been one of the finest chapters of my professional life — perhaps the last — and a truly fascinating one. As I reflect on the thirty-year journey that started in Seattle and moved through Cambridge, Berkeley, and San Diego, I find I have been fortunate to have had a driver’s seat under the guidance of concerned and skillful library administrators here in San Diego and to have the illuminating experience of building a new collection from scratch and undergoing an adventure in learning that is still in progress. During the initial phase of this experience, I, a newcomer in an entirely unfamiliar environment, faced the challenges and became one of the chief architects in building the emerging collections and services that support the growing Japanese studies programs at UCSD. As a result, I now have a story to tell — an interesting story, I hope — about how one endeavors to shape the direction and scope of new collections and to adapt to radical organizational change. An invitation from Professor Tsuen-hsuin Tsien, the guest editor for the commemorative 100th issue of the CEAL Bulletin, has provided me with an opportunity to tell that story. It is a tale of a bibliographer’s experiences at the small but growing University of California campus, seen from the comparative perspective of my many years at UCB, one of the oldest and largest academic research libraries in the United States. This tale will also describe my working partnerships with administrators at UCSD — how we helped and complemented each other, what we learned from working together, and how our collaboration has benefitted the library and its users.

Profiles: the Faculty in Japanese Studies and Programs

Differences between UCB and UCSD are seen in how faculty members have been recruited and in the decisions of those faculty members to stay or leave. With the advent of expanding area studies in the 1960s and 1970s, newly appointed senior and junior scholars gradually arrived on the Berkeley campus and nearly all decided to stay on, despite lucrative invitations from other prestigious institutions. In addition, the core and scope of the Japanese studies programs at Berkeley have tended to be broad and diverse, yet stable, though courses in such new disciplines as Japanese music and business came to be offered later on. In contrast, during my first two years at UCSD, newly recruited faculty arrived at

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the La Jolla campus in quick succession, their number rapidly reaching twenty or more. This quick growth of new faculty in Japanese studies had a destabilizing effect; several faculty, including some scholars of note, left San Diego for other universities. We have lost at least six professors in the areas of history, anthropology, finance, and political science; replacement faculty, though fewer in number, are now arriving. Perhaps Berkeley's Japanese collection, the largest and one of the finest in North America, has served as a magnet for those notable scholars. In comparison, the small but growing Japanese collection at UCSD can be no match for many years in the future. Thus, change and fluctuation have marked the UCSD and its Japanese studies programs, while continuity and stability have prevailed at UCB. One salient feature of UCSD's Japanese studies programs is that all teaching faculty in the departments of history, literature, linguistics, political science, and sociology and at the International Relations and Pacific Studies Graduate School are interested in contemporary Japan; this enables us to focus the new Japanese collections on the Showa and Heisei periods, especially the post-1945 era.

Building New Collections from the Bottom Up: Challenge and New Direction:

Meeting the needs of the Japanese studies programs on the San Diego campus has been doubly difficult because the programs continue to grow and change while, at the same time, the Library is building new collections from scratch. During the formative years, we faced both challenges and opportunities as we tried to forge plans and strategies that would address critical, immediate needs. In retrospect, it seems that those hard times prompted us to generate new ideas and innovative solutions. When I began work in March 1988, the collection contained almost nothing in Japanese. Imagine yourself, a bibliographer and reference librarian, attempting to serve several faculty and some fifty graduate students empty-handed – no Kojien, no current book list, no directory – nothing at hand to answer questions asked by the Library's primary users. Not even a daily Japanese newspaper, such as the Asahi Shinbun, was available; only the Japan Times came in, delivered to us by sea mail.

The UCSD Library Administration, under the leadership of University Librarian Dorothy Gregor and Associate University Librarian (AUL) for Collections George Soete, articulated its philosophy and the Library's overall goals and objectives to this newly appointed bibliographer. From these principles, we developed UCSD's Japanese collection development guidelines. These two librarians "coached" me in applying these principles to the development of new Japanese collections within the wider context of the San Diego library system. I needed to shift gears in this new workplace. In the five years that followed, these guidelines helped me to perform my job in collection development, in providing services to the faculty and graduate students, and in working with colleagues on and off campus. These administrators' visions and ideas were based on their perceptions of the status of the UCSD Library and its "programmatic" and pragmatic financial and management needs. The first of these guidelines was to focus on the users and customers rather than on the collections, with instructions to acquire for UCSD what the faculty and students requested and needed, not "what every library should have."

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The second guideline, closely related to the first, is that a new Japanese collection at the La Jolla campus should not replicate what other University of California campus libraries already hold. Instead, our campus library will not and cannot afford to duplicate much of what the major traditional collections hold. This principle leaves the door open to develop a young, working library of modest size with basic and, in some ways, unique collections that will complement its sister collections, thereby allowing the UCSD Japanese collections to become a regional study center in southern California and in the western United States. Using these guidelines, we have focused our acquisitions endeavors on contemporary and modern Japan and, in doing so, addressed the UCSD Japanese faculty's principal teaching and research needs. In terms of the range of subjects, our five-year-old collection, now 20,000 volumes, is growing in such fields as economics, business and finance, international relations, public policy, contemporary literature, contemporary social criticism, and Showa history. One critical and ongoing issue at UCSD is the impact of unexpected faculty departures, which I have mentioned above. Newly appointed successors are now coming to the library with their own research and instructional programs which are not identical with those of their predecessors' programs. In response to this changing environment, we have substantially curtailed library acquisitions in Japanese popular culture (e.g., manga and cinema) because of reduced user requests. Instead, we have begun to increase our collection development efforts in the two key areas not yet adequately covered at any University of California campus library: (1) creative and critical writings on minority groups in contemporary Japan and (2) the cultural and social history of the early Meiji period. Another important area for development has been electronic databases which enable us to serve the needs of researchers interested in Japan's current economy, politics, and society.

Working Together and Learning

The collection policy guidelines are by no means all that the Library Administrators have advised me to learn and implement in my new workplace. The organizational and personnel environment in the La Jolla library, highly conducive to staff participation, has drawn me into various collaborative processes within the library organization. Attending regular Bibliographers Council meetings and other staff meetings and getting training at workshops on MELVYL and other database information services have gradually led me into the collaborative life of the library. It has been a pleasant discovery to find that the administration prizes teamwork. I soon found myself working closely with managers, especially with the AUL for Collections, George Soete. Soete has been influential and persuasive enough to convert my old views into "programmatic needs." At Berkeley I had met with the AUL only on a few occasions throughout the year regarding new book fund allocations or serial cancellations. Since my first day of work at UCSD, we have held regular biweekly meetings in which we discuss Japan and East Asian issues; at these meetings Soete has offered many helpful comments and much advice. These meetings continue, although he is no longer my immediate supervisor. I have learned a great deal from him and often find his counseling extremely valuable. Clear-headed and skillful, friendly and patient, Mr. Soete has been a great teacher. Among the important areas in
which we have worked together in the past five years, let me select two that illustrate his helpfulness: grantsmanship and resource sharing.

In Berkeley my role in grant applications was that of an assistant providing the faculty chair in charge of Japanese acquisitions with data for his proposals. The library administrators at UCSD encouraged me to take the initiative in selecting grant agencies and in drawing up draft applications. Soete's advice and support have had much to do with our success in receiving awards from the Japan Foundation and from other organizations. One indicator of the importance of the librarian's role in grantsmanship is the half day workshop that Soete and Library Development Officer Lynda Claassen offered to all selectors. In the area of resource sharing, working closely with Soete, I have come to play an active and extensive role in the regional University of California-Stanford East Asian group's cooperative movement. In the early 1980s I was fortunate enough to work closely with Emiko Moffitt, Deputy Curator of the Hoover Institution Library East Asian Collection, in developing coordinated acquisition programs for Japanese materials for our two libraries, the first of this kind of cooperative acquisition program in the East Asian library community in North America. Much of the credit for the success of this pioneering joint venture goes to Emiko. The program was local in scope; the senior faculty members at the two neighboring institutions took turns in chairing the Bay Area library consortium. In the southern California library consortium, library administrators such as George Soete took the lead in initiating new statewide collaborative programs. My initiative on interlibrary loan reform would not have been sustained throughout the final year of discussions without Soete's steadfast encouragement and counseling, especially as the group's proposal met with resistance from several quarters. What is remarkable about Soete's leadership is that he was more responsible than anyone else for making the present UC-Stanford East Asian group's activities more work-related and program-oriented. He has also been steadfast in requiring the group's task forces to complete their ongoing programs in a timely fashion and to draw up written agreements for the review and approval of the University of California Librarians Council.

Epilogue

I would like to close this story by answering the following questions: what role did I play in building a new collection, what did I need to learn at a new workplace, and how did I do my work differently? As the first Japanese bibliographer at UCSD, I was fortunate enough to have the direction of skillful administrators, to oversee an infant collection get off the ground, and to navigate that collection toward steady growth. The strategies of focusing on the user rather than the collection, of the support offered by resource sharing, and of the guidelines of the UCSD Library's collection development policies were the most important elements in shaping the direction and scope of the emerging collection. As one of the chief architects in this collective venture, it delights me that many of the challenges that the library faced in its initial years have been met, though it is still too early to draw conclusions about our pilot program having lived up to the original institutional goals and to user
expectations. Such conclusions await the outcome of events still evolving; they will in time be recorded in full.

My association with a young, growing University of California campus and with its library administrators and staff in the final chapter of my long professional journey has been satisfying and rewarding. The lessons that I began to learn, working with the supportive administrators — especially with Dorothy Gregor and George Soete — have considerably altered my outlook and activities. Once an old-fashioned book selector who worked more or less independently, I have gradually become an active team player through the collaborative processes of a new library organization, one which is in the forefront of managerial and technological innovation. Training, counseling, and coaching, which the AUL for Collections and other staff with their expert skills have provided me, have helped me to apply the Library's overall policies and priorities to the processes of selection, acquisition, and service to Japanese studies faculty and students on and off the campus.

Postscript by George Soete

As one of the administrators so often referred to in Eiji-san's writing, I claim the final word. In part, I want to repay his extravagant compliments. It would have been easy for him, a senior scholar and bibliographer coming from one of the great Japan collections, simply to select books for us. And, given the enormity of the initial effort, this would have been quite enough. But he wanted, as he suggests above, to partake fully in the life of his newly adopted organization. This meant encountering new challenges and trying out new attitudes and behaviors. It meant, as he has suggested, joining the team. He has risen successfully to the challenge, and I am pleased to have him identify me as a key actor in that process.

At the same time, I want to suggest what Eiji-san has taught me, an aspect of our working relationship that he very modestly does not touch upon. Knowing not a word — and certainly not a character — of Japanese, I had nonetheless to provide guidance in the development of the Japan collection at UCSD. It was a humbling challenge. With limited resources and barely any extant holdings, we had to begin to support scholars such as John Dower, Masao Myoshi, and Chalmers Johnson as well as a number of other very active researchers. Quickly, a relationship of trust developed; Eiji-san taught me volumes about the Japanese book trade, about the research going on in the Japan field, about the key actors and issues in the world of Japanese librarianship. Gradually, I became an active participant in that world, attending the 1991 Stanford Symposium and serving on two subsequent task forces on the future of cooperative acquisitions and library education. Most recently, I have been asked to serve on the Association of Research Libraries/National Coordinating Committee Task Force on Japanese Databases and I have been leading a strategic planning effort among the East Asian research collections in California (the University of California, Stanford University, and the University of Southern California).

In all of this, whether he knew it or not, Eiji-san was my coach and mentor, helping me to appreciate cultural differences, to understand the technical and the political issues.
At the Stanford Symposium, one of the key questions that emerged was: How do Japan librarians communicate the importance of Japan collections to library administrators? How do they gain an active and influential role in their parent institutions? I must confess that I, rather naively, did not understand the question at first, having worked so successfully with my colleague Eiji-san on these very issues. Suddenly, I understood how fortunate I had been to have the experience of learning from and collaborating with this most valued colleague!