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A STUDY OF JAPANESE VENDOR SERVICES IN NORTH AMERICA

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I. Introduction

This paper is a study of Japanese vendors providing their services to research libraries in North America. The fact that book orders and current funds for Arizona State University (ASU) Libraries' Japanese collection have been encumbered more than two years has led me to conduct this study. As of September 1991, the encumbrance of firm orders took 98 percent of the total budget for Japanese firm orders. Eighty-nine percent of the encumbered fund was spent on orders with a single vendor who had not been in contact with ASU for more than two years.

This study is based on information derived from interviews with vendors in Japan and a survey conducted among libraries in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed to be as simple as possible, with hopes for a high response rate. Questions asked in the survey were: name of the answering institution, size of the collection and of the budget, types of budget (firm order or automated acquisition programs), names of vendors, discount information, exchange rate agreement and payment methods, return policy, and comments.

Questionnaires were sent out to seventy-nine research libraries listed in the Committee on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) Directory (1991). Twenty-six libraries out the seventy-nine queried responded. This 33 percent return rate is not large but is sufficient since the aim of this study is not to calculate averages, but to present facts on current business practices between Japanese vendors and libraries.

Despite the low return rate, the results of the study are informative, especially if used complementarily with a report prepared by the Task Force for ARL Foreign Acquisitions Project for Japanese Materials (1993). This report produced the results of a survey "on vendors used by fourteen major research libraries in North America that hold more than 100,000 volumes of Japanese materials" (Task Force 1993:102). On the other hand, the majority of libraries that responded to my survey have medium to small collections (less than 100,000 volumes). As a result of data being obtained from libraries different in size, these two surveys contain information complementary to each other. For example, the Task Force reported that Hakurinsha was a single specialized vendor for fine art materials among vendors used by the fourteen libraries. However, three art museum libraries which
responded to my survey indicated that they maintained two specialized vendors other than Hakurinsha for fine art materials.

II. Analysis of Responses Returned

The Genealogical Society of Utah, one of the twenty-six respondents, reported that, following the library's collection development policy, the institution acquires its library materials directly from primary sources by microfilming, photocopying, or other methods such as tape recording. Since these operations are performed by its staff, the library does not use a vendor for acquisitions. Therefore, this study excludes the Genealogical Society of Utah in the analysis, except for the section following, "Means of Communications."

1. Means of Communications in Responses

The questionnaire forms were sent to seventy-nine libraries listed in the 1991 issue of the CEAL Directory. Twenty-six libraries responded by various means. Among the twenty-six, sixteen libraries returned the questionnaires by mail, four sent electronic mail responses, three libraries faxed their responses, two libraries phoned their responses, and one library responded with a personal interview.

2. Sizes of Collections of Responding Libraries

Twenty-one libraries, out of the twenty-five, responded to the question on the size of their collections. The rest could not report their figures on collection sizes since breakdowns for the Japanese collections were unavailable from their parent institution collections.

For the convenience of the study, I grouped these libraries into categories of large, medium, and small based on collection size, i.e., those which hold more than 100,000 volumes, between 10,000 and 100,000, and less than 10,000, respectively. Six collections of the respondent libraries hold more than 100,000 volumes and belong to the large collection group, ten collections belong to the medium size group, and five are in the small group.

3. Budget Sizes of Responding Libraries and Their Uses of Automatic Acquisition Programs

Twenty-one libraries provided information on their budget sizes and their use of automatic acquisition programs. Five libraries did not respond to this question. Of these five, two libraries reported that their parent institutions prohibited releasing their budgetary information, while two others could not obtain breakdown figures of the budget for their Japanese collections.

Three libraries reported that they maintain automatic acquisition programs (approval plans or blanket orders) for selecting materials for their collections. Japan Publications Trading Company (JPT), Isseido, and Maruzen provided information on libraries with which they
maintain automatic acquisition programs. JPT maintains the programs with three libraries in the United States, Isseido provides the service to one library in the United States and one in Germany, and Maruzen serves one library in Australia.

Library 1 and Library 2 of the three that maintain automatic acquisition programs have independent annual budget allowances for the programs: $248,000 ($230,000 for general acquisitions and $18,000 for legal acquisitions) and $28,000, respectively. The amount which Library 3 spends for the program varies year by year. Libraries 1 and 3 maintain their programs with JPT, Library 2 with Isseido.

According to information provided by Library 3, JPT gives the Japanese collection section of the library a 10 percent discount on every serial volume purchased in return for maintaining the program with JPT. On the other hand, Library 2 did not receive such a financial advantage by maintaining the automatic acquisition program with Isseido.

JPT's automated order-receiving and -shipping systems could trace Library 3’s acquisition history and report duplicate orders since the library purchased almost all of the Japanese materials from JPT. This type of value-added service by JPT made it possible for the library to cut personnel expenses which it might otherwise spend on preorder searches.

Unfortunately, Library 1, which used JPT for the automatic acquisition plan, answered this question without further information other that its budget size for the plan. JPT also did not provide information regarding such services; therefore, I cannot confirm that these services provided to Library 3 by JPT are applicable to all libraries.

These three vendors have different policies for material selected through automatic acquisition programs. These policies affect sources from which they select library materials and personnel for material selection. JPT and Maruzen depend on the *Nihon zenkoku shoshi* as their only source to select materials for the programs. JPT and Maruzen allocate a single person for material selection. Isseido, on the other hand, employs four staff members to select materials. According to the Exporting Department at Isseido, these four members search for library materials in numerous sources in order to compile lists for automatic acquisition programs.

4. Names of Vendors Reported by Responding Libraries

The twenty-five libraries named twelve Japanese book vendors. A directory of these vendors is presented at the end of this paper, pp. 8-11. The names of the vendors are listed in descending order in terms of numbers of libraries using their services. The directory also includes the names of the libraries which use the vendors, as well as the vendors’ addresses.

The vendor listed first in the library’s response to this inquiry was considered to be the responding library’s primary vendor. Seventeen libraries (nine large, four medium, two small libraries, and two unidentified libraries in terms of size) placed JPT at the top of their
lists. As their primary vendors, four libraries (one medium, two small, and one unidentified) use Maruzen; and two libraries (one large and one medium) maintain relations with Isseido. Geibundo, specializing in art materials, was listed as a primary vendor by one library which did not report its collection size.

Along with the names and addresses of vendors, several libraries commented on the vendors with which they do business. These comments are given below.

**JPT**
- Efficient, reliable and fast service (books arrive in about thirty to forty-five days after ordering);
- No trouble with stagnant encumbrances;
- Slow or no reply to communications in English.

**Isseido**
- Good for local and regional publications acquisition;
- Good for antique, out of print, and old books;
- Competent;
- Charges rather high prices.

**Gannando Overseas**
- Provides flexible service by using medium and small wholesale stores;
- Exchange rate is higher than bank rate.

**Maruzen**
- Competent;
- Often slow communications (due to staff shortage?);
- Having a large number of unfilled orders (perhaps the Japanese *kanji* was not included on the purchase order forms?).

**Government Publications Service Center**
- Charges very high fee for invoice transaction;
- Does not recommend purchasing from them if material is available from other vendors.

**OCS America**
- Competent for serials and government publications.

**Kobayashi Shobo**
- For Buddhist titles.

**Yaguchi Shoten**
- For film studies materials.
Minjoksa Publishing Company
*For inexpensive reprints of original Japanese imprints on Buddhism.

Geibundo
*Specializes in art exhibition catalogs;
*Issues two sale catalogs yearly;
*Takes about a half year (182 days) to obtain materials after ordering;

Geibundo (Continued)
*Very reliable;
*For smooth communications, write in English.

Elm & Company
*Reliable;
*Cleveland Museum of Art purchases most of their serials from Elm & Company.

5. Discount

Often material prices listed in publication pamphlets or catalogs from Japan include the national 3 percent consumption tax (sales tax). Ten libraries out of twenty-five have clear agreements with their vendors to exclude the tax from invoices. The other fifteen libraries may not be aware of the tax since they did not comment. JPT told the author that they subtract the tax from listed prices when they charge overseas libraries. There is one exception to JPT’s policy: it lists a price with the 3 percent tax in invoices to libraries which purchase materials from the vendor infrequently.

As reported in the section on automated acquisition programs, one library (Library 3 in this study) receives a 10 percent discount for every serial volume purchased from JPT in return for the library’s maintaining the plan with JPT. A library in Canada reported receiving several serial titles without shipping costs, although it did not identify the name of the vendor providing such a generous added service. An art museum library mentioned that Geibundo, depending on items purchased, gave them some discount.

6. Payment Methods and Rate Agreements

It seems that there is no uniform single method adopted by these twenty-five libraries regarding currency for payments. Some libraries always pay vendors in one type of currency; it might be in Japanese yen or in US dollars. Some libraries use both currencies, yen and dollars, to pay their invoices. In such cases, they maintain one type of currency to pay a certain vendor; once the library uses yen to pay Vendor A, it maintains the same currency in paying that vendor. In this limited survey, it was not possible to find out whether these differences were the result of the libraries’ preferences or were initiated by vendors for their own convenience. Fourteen libraries reported using only US dollars for payment, four
libraries pay their invoices in Japanese yen, three libraries pay in both currencies, and four libraries did not answer this question.

JPT, when preparing an invoice, uses the following formula: \((\text{listed price of book} \times \frac{3}{103}) + \text{postage}\). Isseido and Maruzen use the same formula but add a handling charge to the cost calculated in the formula in order to list the final cost in the invoice. Both Isseido and Maruzen have two types of handling charges: a bulk mail handling charge and a parcel mail handling charge. Maruzen charges 600 yen for bulk mail and 100 yen for parcel mail handling charges. Isseido, despite its reputation as a higher priced vendor, charges 100 yen less than Maruzen for bulk mail handling; but Isseido's parcel handling charge is the same as Maruzen's.

Books Nippan, located in Los Angeles, computes a final charge for a book the way other Japanese vendors in business with a retail store use. Japanese vendors within my survey use the same exchange rate of one yen = 0.014 dollar as of July 1, 1993, attempting to calculate the price of a book shipped to a retail store in the United States. Books Nippan uses a formula of "\((\text{cost of book} \times 0.014) \times \text{discount rate}\)" and then adds a United Parcel Service charge if applicable.

7. Return Policy

The problem of duplicate volumes of a title or unwanted books creates problems for libraries. Keeping such volumes takes up stack space, handling them takes up staff time, and purchasing them takes money. In order to avoid the problems caused by duplicates, Arizona State University Libraries has a collection development policy of a single copy per title although it permits exceptions. Despite thorough searching of a title before ordering, it is impossible to avoid duplicates. Therefore it is highly desirable if the duplicates and unwanted volumes can be returned to the vendors for refunds or credits. It was interesting to find out how other libraries with Japanese collections handled the situation with Japanese vendors.

Eighteen libraries responded to this question. Although a variety of responses were offered, they still stressed one point: the Japanese vendors have been accepting returned materials in most cases without much difficulty. Eight other libraries did not respond to this question.

Two libraries, a university library and an art museum library, indicated that they could return materials without needing a particular reason. The art museum library emphasized that Isseido, Elm & Company, and Geibundo have accepted "returns all the time." On the other hand, another art museum library reported that JPT did not permit the library to return books once the books were shipped and Geibundo permitted the return of books only in "reasonable circumstances." Reasons for the two art libraries receiving different kinds of service from the same vendor were considered, but it was impossible to determine those reasons from the short statements provided by the libraries. In general, books can be
returned under the following conditions: if books are defective upon receipt, if books are intact when returned, or if duplicate books are shipped due to vendors' mistakes.

One of the three libraries, Library 1, which maintains automatic acquisition programs with JPT, reported their practice of returning books. Books can be returned up to 5 percent of their "total plan", including duplicates and "out of scope" materials from their specifications for the plan. This figure of 5 percent is of the library's total budget for the plan. One of the libraries in the large library category attached a copy of its written policy for returning materials to vendors. According to this policy

"Report before sending any item which is part of a series, an offprint of a periodical article, an extract from a larger work, a society publication, or a translation from English, unless our order gives this information. We reserve the right to return items not so reported.

When publication does not agree with your description with regard to author, title, edition, imprint, etc., we reserve the right to return.

Report before sending if your price is considerably higher than our estimate."

Ten libraries commented that returning books to the vendors had been handled on a case-by-case basis. All, except two libraries mentioned above, do not have formal written agreements with the vendors for returned materials; or they might be unaware that their acquisition departments have such agreements on file.

III. Conclusion

This paper on the use of Japanese vendors by libraries in North America is not intended to be a complete study. Data for such a study should be collected from a greater number of libraries and there should be more questions to cover wider aspects of the field of librarianship. However, I believe that this study provides a profile of the subject.

Further evaluations of vendor services can be conducted by using a prescribed formula such as the one described by Charles Brownson in his article "Selection and Evaluation of Vendors: The Librarian Speaks . . ." (Brownson 1991). An article entitled "Western European Vendors: A Critical Survey of Their Use by American Academic Libraries" by Thomas D. Kilton and Robert G. Sewell (Kilton 1992) gives guidance for conducting a study on vendor services. If a future study on this topic were to include libraries in other countries, a wider perspective might be presented, thereby giving results more depth in the quality and quantity of information gathered.

The days of "forklift librarianship" (Webster 1991 defines this term as a satisfactory materials budget) are over but there are more books to buy. Today's librarians are not only responsible for selecting library materials carefully but also for lowering the cost of
purchasing them. In the past, Japanese librarians had merely reacted to situations created by publishers and vendors. Under today's severe economic pressures, they are taking more initiative in business matters.

Vendors need librarians as purchasers and librarians need vendors as middlemen. We must understand and know each other. There are and will continue to be differences between us. Therefore we must talk to each other. Vendors and librarians might fear that they are giving away trade secrets if they talk to each other. However, we must work together to create standards and modes of operation and interaction that will suit our diverse needs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


A List of Vendors in Japan Providing Services to the Libraries in North America for Japanese Studies Materials

   For monographs: Att.: Mr. Hideaki Nakano
   Book Export II Department
   1-2-1, Sarugaku-cho, Chiyoda-ku
   Tokyo 101, Japan

   For serials: Att.: Mr. Tetsuro Suzuki.

   Used by libraries of:
   University of Arizona
   Arizona State University
   Brown University
   University of California, Berkeley
   University of California, Davis
   University of Chicago
   Duke University
   Freer Gallery of Art
   Harvard University
   University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
   University of Iowa
   Library of Congress
   University of Massachusetts at Amherst
   University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
   University of Pennsylvania
   University of Pittsburgh
   Princeton University
   University of Washington
   Washington University in St. Louis
   University of Wisconsin-Madison

2. The Isseido
   Att.: Mr. Shigeaki Sasaki
   Export Department
   7 Kanda Jimbocho 1-chome
   Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan

   Used by libraries of
   University of Arizona
   Arizona State University
   Brigham Young University
3. Maruzen Company, Ltd.
   Att.: Mr. Yasuyuki Tohara
   Export Department/International Division
   P.O. Box 5050 Tokyo
   International 100-31 Japan

   Used by libraries of
   University of Arizona
   Arizona State University
   Brown University
   University of California, Berkeley
   Harvard University
   University of Iowa
   Université de Montréal
   University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
   University of Pittsburgh
   Princeton University
   Washington University
   Washington University in St. Louis

4. Gannando Overseas, Inc.
   Tokyo Koshokaikan Building
   3-22 Ogawa-cho, Kanda
   Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101 Japan

   Used by libraries of
   University of California, Berkeley
   University of Chicago
   Harvard University
   University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
5. Books Nippan
   Att.: Mr. Byung-hun Park
   1123 Dominguez Street, Suite K
   Carson, California 90746

   Used by libraries of
   Arizona State University
   University of California, Berkeley
   University of Iowa

6. OCS America
   5 East 44th Street
   New York, NY 10017

   Used by libraries of
   University of California, Berkeley
   University of Chicago

7. Geibundo
   c/o Mr. Joseph Seubert
   Dai 2 Toun-so, Kizuki 471
   Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki-shi
   Kanagawa-ken 211 Japan

   Used by libraries of
   Cleveland Museum of Art
   Freer Gallery of Art

8. Elm & Company
   12-8 Taishibashi, 1-chome
   Asahi-ku, Osaka 535 Japan

   Used by libraries of
   Cleveland Museum of Art
   The Metropolitan Museum of Art

9. Kobayashi Shobo
   2-12 Kanda Jinbo-cho
   Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101 Japan

   Used by University of Iowa libraries
10. Yaguchi Shoten  
    2-5 Kanda Jinbo-cho  
    Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101 Japan  
    Used by University of Iowa libraries

11. Minjoksa Publishing Company  
    Chong Ro-ku  
    Chung Jin-dong 208-1  
    KPO Box 1560, Seoul, Korea  
    Used by University of Iowa libraries

    2-1 Kasumigaseki 1-chome  
    Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100 Japan  
    Used by University of Washington library