



6-1-1996

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Kutsukake, Lynne and Lancaster, Lewis (1996) "Meetings and Conferences," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 1996 : No. 109 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol1996/iss109/7>

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MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Tokyo International Book Fair (8-11 February 1996)

When we think of international book fairs, the name that immediately comes to mind for most of us is, of course, Frankfurt. But for the past several years Tokyo has also been the site of another international book fair of significant proportions. This year's Tokyo International Book Fair 96 was held from 8 to 11 February 1996 at Makuhari Messe, a gigantic convention site situated just east of Tokyo. The four-day event featured displays of books and magazines from Japanese and foreign publishers. As one would expect from an international fair of this type, it was also a critical opportunity for participants to engage in copyright and translation negotiations. For librarians it was an excellent way to see an overview of recent developments in publishing in Japan and in other countries, particularly neighboring Asian nations.

Altogether 686 publishers participated in this year's fair: 462 from Japan and 224 from overseas. These figures are somewhat down from the record participation levels reached the year before at the Tokyo International Book Fair 95, which had 900 publishers: 499 Japanese and 401 foreign presses. But for anyone fighting her way through the crowds at Makuhari Messe, it certainly did not seem that enthusiasm for the book fair had abated in any way.

The Tokyo Book Fair had its origins in 1984 as a local event featuring Japanese publishers and presses. It was turned into an international book fair in 1992 and, since 1994, has been an annual event, usually held in early February. Japan's geographic location makes the Tokyo International Book Fair an inviting site for Asian publishers, as evidenced by the strong presence of publishers from China, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, and other East, Southeast, and South Asian countries. But the event is truly international and there were publishers present from around the world—from Oslo to Milan to Fort Lauderdale. The presence of such a spectrum of foreign publishers and book trading firms indicates strong interest in the Japanese book market. More generally, however, the activities at the Tokyo International Book Fair reflect the increasing global importance of the Asian publishing industry.

For the four days of the Book Fair, the floor of the exhibition hall was turned into a busy mall lined with aisle upon aisle of display booths. There was an astonishing array of materials on display and brochures available for distribution.

Major Japanese publishing houses flexed their muscles by renting blocks of booths in order to put on really big displays, complete with all the multimedia bells and whistles. In addition, there were special "corners" set up, such as the children's books corner and the academic presses corner. But the biggest "corner" by far was the section dedicated to electronic publishing and multimedia products. In terms of exhibition floor space, this section accounted for about one-sixth of the total area. There is no doubt about how quickly this wing of publishing is growing, judging by the bounty of CD-ROMs and electronic books. Interest in the Internet was also running very high at this year's Book Fair, and some exhibitors were eager to show their Web home pages.

The Tokyo International Book Fair is organized by seven Japanese organizations active in the book trade: Japan Book Publishers Association, Japan Magazine Publishers Association, Japan Publications Wholesalers Association, Japan Booksellers Federation, Publish-

ers Association for Cultural Exchange, The Council for the Promotion of Book Reading, and Japan Book Importers Association.

(Lynne Kutsukake)

Unicode and Chinese Character Construction (Berkeley, California: 7 September 1996)

The University of California Berkeley and San Diego campuses will sponsor a workshop in Berkeley on 7 September to discuss the issues surrounding Unicode and the construction of the codes for Chinese characters. The matter of glyph variants is a major one for librarians and scholars who are doing input of ancient Chinese texts. The workshop will be led by one of the major figures in the study of glyphs, Prof. C. C. Hsieh of Academia Sinica in Taipei. He will be joined by three respondents who have been active in the Unicode consortium.

The purpose of the session is to help East Asian librarians understand the problems of the coding of characters and glyphs. Prof. Hsieh will give a description of the history of the glyph formations and the relevance of such study to the code issue. In the afternoon three respondents from the Unicode consortium will provide a description of their work and how it relates to the problems raised by Prof. Hsieh. There will be ample time for questions and discussion from the delegates. The workshop will be by invitation only and there will be no fee for attending. The co-conveners for the workshop are: Karl Lo from the University of California at San Diego and Lewis Lancaster from the UC at Berkeley.

(Lewis Lancaster, email message dated 11 June 1996)