Report from Tokyo, February 1999

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I. Conference sponsored by the Association of National University Libraries

In February 1999, the Association of National University Libraries (ANUL) invited me, as chair of the National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources (NCC), Mary Jackson as director of the NCC, and four other librarians (Sharon Domier, Maureen Donovan, Scott Edward Harrison, and Amy Heinrich) to attend a conference in Tokyo. For three days we shared information on our respective needs for information and our existing interlibrary loan/document delivery structures as we worked to draw up a plan to improve access to information between Japan and the United States. The result is a nine-month pilot project beginning July 1 for the delivery of non-returnables between ten university libraries in the United States and five in Japan.

The pilot project will be reviewed in April 2000. The review will include tracking of transactions of non-returnables. If the evaluations of both the U.S. and Japan are both positive, the project will be renewed for a second year. The evaluation of the project will be reported to CULCON at the end of the second year.

The project proposes to investigate solutions to some of the problems (copyright, payment, technology) involved in international ILL. Many of these obstacles are not unique to Japan; we may borrow solutions temporarily from the German project, and we hope that the solutions we develop will be useful for other areas of the world.

Copyright: The Japanese copyright law is not technology neutral; hence while a copy of an article may be sent by mail, it is unresolved whether transmission of copyrighted works by fax or ARIEL is legal. The concern is that using an electronic delivery system such as Fax or ARIEL may make it a public transmission which may not be legal. This is the first issue for which we need to find a solution.

Technology: The Japanese have developed a system called EPICWIN which is compatible with ARIEL. For the ANUL project, the American participants will send documents via ARIEL while the Japanese will use EPICWIN and send the documents as mime attachments.

The most significant technological hurdle remaining is how to send requests back and forth. One solution depends on the ability of the NACSIS-ILL (NACSIS is similar to OCLC and RLIN in that it is both a national cataloging database, an ILL system and a provider of databases and other information resources) to communicate with OCLC. OCLC has recently agreed to implement the ISO ILL protocol, and in February, NACSIS agreed to do so as well. Once in place, this will facilitate sharing requests, because any request that can go through the usual channels and does not require accessing a separate database or method of delivery (email, fax) will make it more likely to be used and make the requests more likely to handled promptly.

Until NACSIS is able to implement this protocol, however, requests to the National Diet Library (NDL) will be handled by paper forms (and, presumably during fiscal 1999, fax); the method of sending requests to the ANUL libraries has not yet been decided.
Payment: Foreign currency and the costs of cutting checks pose a significant obstacle for international ILL. These costs usually exceed the cost of the ILL transaction. For the nine-month pilot project with the ANUL libraries, how to resolve this issue has not yet been decided, although ANUL has proposed waiving all charges for the period of the pilot project.

Many U.S. universities borrow from two other libraries in Japan: the National Diet Library, which asks for payment in postal money orders and Waseda, which uses the OCLC IFM (fee management) system that avoids this problem. For now, NDL suggests that U.S. libraries ask Japanese book vendors to pick up the requested material and pay for it in yen, and then bill the American libraries for the service. This method is actually cheaper than paying NDL with a check in yen.

II. Reports from Tokyo University Library, NACSIS, National Diet Library

1. Tokyo University:
   Todai is developing a database of the tables of contents of 100,000 books published in Japan held in its library. This will be open in April or May.

2. National Diet Library:
   NDL has completed the retrospective conversion of the books published in the Meiji period (1868-1912) as well as the Taisho and the first half of Showa. NDL is digitizing the backfile (1948-1984) of their periodical index, Zasshi kiji sakuin; this will be available on CD-ROM as well as through NACSIS or Nichigai. NDL is increasing the number of titles covered by Zassaku; it covered about 3100 titles when published in hard cover; it now covers about 5700 titles which will increase to about 7200 titles by April 1999 (it is expected that this will cover about 80-90% of requested journals) and to about 10,000 titles when the Kansai library opens (90+% of titles).

   NDL, in cooperation with MITI and the Information Technology Promotion Agency, is experimenting with the scanning of 29 English language government white papers and mounting them on the web (see http://www.lpl.cii.ipa.go.jp:25051/wp/IGPMenu.html) and is investigating archiving the digital resources of the various government ministries because they are not archiving their own information.

   NDL plans to make their entire online catalog (rather than a single year) accessible on the Internet soon; the stumbling blocks relate to government laws not technology.

   NDL is creating a digital children's library. They have created a database of 130,000 bibliographic records and are digitizing 8300 titles published before 1950 in bit-mapped images of 400 dpi in TIFF format; colored pages are in JPEG colored images format.

   NDL opened on January 19 a full text database of the minutes of both houses of the Diet on its web page.

   NDL is scanning the 90,000 cards in its card catalog that are for materials written in Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Thai, Turkish, Hindi, Persian, Vietnamese, and Burmese. NDL's opac system cannot handle the writing systems for these languages.
3. NACSIS:
NACSIS is planning to migrate to UNICODE by January of 2000 for the creation of its union catalog. This will address current character code problems; in particular, the current character code cannot handle Korean hangul nor simplified Chinese characters. Most Japanese personal computers cannot handle UNICODE, so NACSIS will not use UNICODE for display. 650 libraries are contributing records to the union catalog. NACSIS assumes that about 15-20% of university holdings are in the database. There are 37 million entries but about 220 million books in Japanese libraries. Keio's 2 million records will be added all at once.

NACSIS will make all of the NACSIS-IR databases available on the web as of January 2000. The issue of kana readings for names and titles in Zassaku in particular was addressed because there is a need for accurate romanization, especially for ILL within the US as well as between the US and Japan, and NACSIS will try to do this.

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