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NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON JAPANESE LIBRARY RESOURCES
MULTI-VOLUME SET PROJECT 1998-1999
FINAL REPORT


The schedule of events was considerably later this year than in the past. Announcement of competition and guidelines were disseminated electronically on December 4, 1998, with deadline for applications set for February 20, 1999. Eleven institutions submitted applications, requesting NCC support toward a total of thirty titles. Upon receipt of application packets, librarian Subcommittee members searched bibliographic utilities and elsewhere to determine North American holdings of requested titles. Japanese studies libraries around the country were also informed of titles nominated for support, and were asked to check local holdings and orders not yet available electronically. A complete list of candidates was also sent to Japan Publications Trading Company (JPT) with a request for prices excluding consumption tax, availability and sales history. JPT initially reported it would be impossible to acquire any publications of Ozorasha (including some titles on the list of those nominated for support) due to financial problems the firm was experiencing and ongoing restructuring that resulted from the problems. JPT later reported that Ozorasha titles already in print would be available until the beginning of June 1999. The news about Ozorasha was not only a cause for concern during the initial phase of preselection activity, but also informed some Subcommittee decisions regarding titles to be awarded in 1999.

Again this year the Subcommittee chose to reserve all judgment until a meeting of the full membership, and after all titles ineligible for consideration had been eliminated as candidates. A meeting of the Subcommittee took place in Chicago on April 17, and several hours were given over to careful consideration, one by one, of the merits of the titles nominated for support, the arguments made for them both in terms of their value to the Japanese studies community as a whole and the appropriateness of applicant institution as "home" to them. The Subcommittee agreed upon its own interpretation of the new guidelines, and at the outset decided to generally fund at 75% only those titles fully published by 1997, funding at 50% titles published in 1998, or not yet fully published. As in the past, individual Subcommittee members abstained from discussing or voting upon proposals submitted by their home institutions.

This year members reached consensus in an unexpectedly short time. It was necessary to make some adjustments due to lack of availability of portions of two titles, and additional communication via e-mail followed the meeting, resulting in the approval of one more title, with the remainder of funds to be carried over to 1999-2000. Ultimately, support was provided toward a total of nineteen titles requested by ten institutions, amounting to a total of ¥8,969,628. An effort was made to distribute awards to as great a number of institutions as possible, while closely following project guidelines. Successful applicants were initially informed by e-mail so that they could place orders as quickly as possible, with printed announcements following. Gift
plates were mailed to recipient institutions; those institutions were reminded that they must provide a printout of a MARC record as evidence of cataloging as soon as possible.

Generally applications were better than those of the two preceding years, though there remains room for improvement. At least one institution failed to provide evidence of having searched to determine availability of proposed titles in North America. Greater attention needs to be paid to arguments for the need for a given title, and more particularly, to arguments for institutional priority.

At the same time, the number and quality of applications demonstrates that there is a continuing need for this important program: each year there are more applications than funding, and this past year, at least two of the funded titles were published nearly ten years ago, yet had not been purchased by a single North American institution. The MVS Program makes it possible for smaller institutions to purchase titles outside of the range of their normal acquisitions budgets, and indeed, even comparatively wealthy institutions need assistance with titles that cost twenty or more thousand dollars.

Finally, as there have been a number of revisions in recent years, the committee recommends that the program, which fills a vital need, should continue with no revisions for the coming year.

Frederic Kotas, Co-chair, Multi-Volume Set Project