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# UBC Asian Library Celebrates Fiftieth Anniversary

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## UBC ASIAN LIBRARY CELEBRATES FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

On the warm spring afternoon of March 5, 2010, the Asian Library at the University of British Columbia celebrated its first half century. About 130 invitees, including Asian Librarians emeriti, Professors emeriti of the Department of Asian Studies, and current UBC faculty members and students attended. Among the distinguished guests were the Honourable Hideki Ito, Consul General of Japan at Vancouver and Mr. Koshi Terakawa, President of the Sanyo Canada.

### **Past Asian librarians attending**

At the beginning of the ceremony, UBC University Librarian Ingrid Parent presented to the audience Ms Tung King Ng, the first Head Librarian (1959-85); Ms Linda Joe, the second Head Librarian (1985-98); Ms Eleanor Yuen, the present Head Librarian (1999- ); Mr. Yim Tse, the first Chinese librarian (1968-98) and Mr. Tsuneharu Gonnami, the first Japanese librarian (1969-02). All of these retired librarians were honoured with the title of Asian Librarian Emerita/Emeritus. Then, Ms Eleanor Yuen, current head of the Asian Library; Mr. Robban Toleno, a representative of the Graduate Students of the Asian Studies Department; and Dr. Henry Yu of the History Department at UBC, commented briefly on various library-related subjects such as collection building, preservation of ethnic materials, the trend to digitalize important and rare materials, and the upcoming need for the expansion of physical space within the library.

### **Asian Collections at UBC**

The Asian Library at the Asian Centre maintains various collections in nine Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese Korean, Indic (Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Sanskrit), Tibetan and Indonesian.

The Japanese Collection started in 1959, and shortly thereafter UBC was designated as the Canadian depository library for Japanese Government Publications by the National Diet Library (NDL) of Japan in Tokyo. This is an international exchange program of government publications. Since 1959, all the federal government publications of Canada printed in English and French have been shipped to the NDL in Tokyo, and the equivalent Japanese publications go to the UBC Asian Library on behalf of the National Library of Canada in Ottawa. This agreement was arranged by Ronald Dore, at the time professor of Japanese and sociology. Thanks to Dore's foresight, the Japanese Collections at UBC have been successfully developed to the present 156,000 volumes, one of the twelve major Japanese Collections in North America (the second largest in Canada, next to the University of Toronto's 176,000). In addition to this main Japanese Collection housed in the Asian Library, there are also several unique Japanese collections scattered about the UBC campus. They include the Japanese Legal Collection at the Law Library and the Antique Japanese Map Collection along with the

Japanese-Canadian Archives housed at the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (formerly the UBC Central Library).

The current librarian in charge of the Japanese Collection, Ms Shirin Eshghi, and her assistant, Ms Chie Kuroiwa, anticipate that many visitors will use these various Japanese collections.

### **Sanyo Pavilion at Osaka Expo 70**

Nowadays there are very few people who know that the present Asian Centre is the former Sanyo Pavilion at the Osaka Exposition in 1970. It was donated to UBC as a symbol of international friendship among nations and the close relationship between Canada and Japan. In 1981 the pavilion reopened as the Asian Centre, right next to the Nitobe Memorial Japanese Garden. The surrounding area has been developed into the Asian Studies facility zone by the subsequent erection of the Institute of Asian Research and the Liu Institute of Global Issues adjacent to the Asian Centre.

Mr. Koshi Terakawa, president of Sanyo Canada, met Dr. John F. Howes, retired professor emeritus of Japanese history and culture in the Asian Studies Department, and learned from him about the history of the Japanese program at UBC and also about the details of transferring the Sanyo Pavilion to UBC. Mr. Terakawa listened with great interest to what Dr. Howes said about the many hardships shared with the initiator of this big project, the late Prof. Shotaro Iida (Religious Studies), as well as many other dignitaries involved in this major international undertaking that involved both the public and private sectors of Canada and Japan. Mr. Terakawa said that he vaguely remembered the Sanyo Pavilion at Osaka Expo70 as a child, when he visited the Expo site. He had never heard that the building had been reconstructed at UBC until he was dispatched to Canada.

At the reception held after the fiftieth anniversary ceremony, retired librarians and faculty members in the Department of Asian Studies enjoyed a happy reunion after many years' separation and also pleasantly conversed with current Asian Studies faculty members and students.

(As reported by Louise Akuzawa in the *Vancouver Shinpo*, a Japanese-language weekly newspaper, March 11, 2010, p. 18. Translated into English by Tsuneharu Gonnami on March 24, 2010.)