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NAOMI FUKUDA (1907-2007)



Naomi Fukuda in the International House of Japan Library, 1960s.

Photograph courtesy of the International House of Japan Library.

EULOGY OF MS. NAOMI FUKUDA

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When I was asked to write a eulogy for Ms. Naomi Fukuda, I wanted to include the words and tributes from Japanese studies librarians in the United States who were fortunate to know Ms. Fukuda in person, as well as from some faculty members and students who took her bibliography course. Most of these people have retired, and some returned to Japan, so I contacted them by letters and telephone calls. Several eulogies of Ms. Fukuda will be included in this special Memorial issue of *JEAL* as separate entities. Hence, this is our combined eulogy, a tribute to Ms. Fukuda, and her legacy.

Soon after I contacted retired Japanese librarians who had known Ms. Fukuda asking for words about her, I received a hand-written memo of a speech written by Ms. Fukuda for the occasion of the retirement reception held in her honor by the Center for Japanese Studies of the University of Michigan, on April 24, 1978. It was Mr. Masaei Saito in Japan who sent me the memo. Mr. Saito worked at the International House of Japan under Ms. Fukuda, and later succeeded her as the Associate Head and Curator of the Japanese Collection at the Asia Library of the University of Michigan. Mr. Saito, in his letter, said that he kept Ms. Fukuda's memo for three long decades anticipating the coming of "this day," the day we remember and celebrate Ms. Fukuda's lifetime of accomplishments, dedication and devotion to the betterment of librarianship and of Japanese studies. I was so touched.

According to the memo, Ms. Fukuda graduated from Tokyo Women's Christian College (Tokyo Joshi Daigaku) in 1929, the beginning year of the Great Depression. Because of the depression, it was difficult to find employment, so for a while she taught Japanese to missionaries who came to Japan. She also worked as a research assistant of Professor Robert Reischauer while he taught at her alma mater. Professor Reischauer, a Japanese historian, was the brother of Ambassador Edwin O. Reischauer. Professor Reischauer helped Ms. Fukuda receive a Barbour Scholarship from the University of Michigan in 1935 to pursue a second undergraduate degree. Ms. Fukuda received her second BA in history and an MLS both in 1939. During the summer of 1939, Ms. Fukuda attended the Far Eastern Institute, where she met Dr. Shiho Sakanishi, who had received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Dr. Sakanishi was the Head of the Asian Section of the Library of Congress and was one of the instructors at the Institute. They became friends. Ms. Fukuda went to the Library of Congress as a Rockefeller Fellow from August 1939 through June 1940. After she went back to Japan, she obtained a job at the Tokyo Imperial University Library (Tokyo Teikoku Daigaku Toshokan) as a cataloger of Japanese books and worked there till 1942, while also teaching at the Library Training School (Toshokan Koshujo). Then she moved to Rikkyo University (Saint Paul's University) Library as a cataloger of Western language books and worked there till 1943. She worked as the Head Librarian of the Intelligence Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs till the end of the World War II. Her primary responsibility there was to make clippings from the *New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and other popular science magazines, and then reproduce and distribute them to other sections in the Ministry.

After the end of the World War II, Ms. Fukuda became the Head of the G2 Research Section Library of the General Headquarters. As Library Head, she collected books on Japan written both in English and Japanese. During the summer of 1948, she served as a consultant to Robert Downs, University Librarian of the University of Illinois and Dean of Library Administration at UI from 1943-1971, who came to Japan to help establish the National Diet Library, Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan. At the time Robert Downs was the President of the American Library Association. After going back to the United States, Dean Downs sent food to librarians whom he met in Tokyo during his stay, knowing the severe shortage of food supplies in Japan at the time. Ms. Fukuda felt indebted to Dean Downs for the remainder of her lifetime because of this kind deed. She tried to return the favor by selecting and sending young Japanese librarians to the United States

when many American academic institutions began East Asian studies programs and needed librarians to start Japanese collections in the early 1960s. Between 1948 and 1953 Ms. Fukuda made a living as a translator, and in 1953, she became the Head Librarian of the International House of Japan, Kokusai Bunka Kaikan. Ms. Fukuda started the library from scratch. The International House of Japan Library was meant to become a working library of current books of a scholarly nature displaying the intellectual trends of the world. The books collected are mostly in English. She wanted her library to become a resource library for libraries in Japan, United States and other countries. Many early scholars of Japanese studies used I House Library, and Ms. Fukuda left a strong impression on many of these visiting foreign scholars and librarians by her devotion and broad knowledge of both Eastern and Western culture. She stayed in that position until 1970. Professor Masaya Takayama, a member of trustees of National Archives (Kokuritsu Kobunshokan) writes in his eulogy to Ms. Fukuda, which appeared in *Maruzen Library News* (Fukkan, no.1, Feb., 2008, p.14) that “. . . Ms. Fukuda acted as a go between for delegates of librarians from the United States and the Japanese library world and established democratic libraries using American libraries as a model. I can swear that neither the National Diet Library nor the Library School of Keio University would have materialized without her.” He continues, “. . . she published *Nihon no sanko tosho* from the International House of Japan Library to establish reference services, and organized the tour of American libraries by middle-ranked Japanese librarians from different types of libraries to help them learn library services. Thus she established the basic structure of current Japanese libraries. . . . She was the most influential person in modern Japanese library history.”

Ms. Fukuda promoted the importance of modern library services, particularly reference services in libraries in Japan. In 1959 she led a group of eight senior librarians by the invitation of the American Library Association, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, on a tour of libraries in the United States. All except Ms. Fukuda were male librarians who were selected to represent various types of libraries in Japan. They visited one hundred libraries in two months and attended several seminars held for them. Ms. Miwa Kai's eulogy in this special memorial issue includes a section about the details and meaning of this delegation. Known as the US Field Seminar on Library Reference Services for Japanese Librarians, this delegation's purpose was to bring back knowledge of daily operations and reference services in the U.S. to Japanese libraries. Reference services did not exist in Japan at that time. Professor Madoko Kon, Professor Emeritus of Chuo University, writes in her eulogy that appeared in *International House of Japan Bulletin* (V.27, no.2, 2007, pp.46-48; Japanese version v. 18, no. 2, pp. 42-43) writes, “It was Naomi Fukuda who laid the foundation for reference service in Japan through her efforts in compiling the Guide to Japanese Reference Books, founding a special committee investigate reference service in American libraries, and organizing study tours in the United States for mid-level Japanese librarians.”

In 1962, Ms. Fukuda compiled *Nihon no sankō tosho* as an Editorial Committee member. In 1965, the revision of this work was published, and in 1966, she was instrumental in publishing the English translation of *Nihon no sankō tosho* as the *Guide to Japanese Reference Books*, published by the American Library Association. In 1968, she came to the University of Maryland from Japan to help “clean up the library's Japanese collection,” according to her own words in her memo. After going back to Japan briefly, she took the position of Associate Head and Curator of Japanese Collection at the Asia Library of the University of Michigan, her Alma mater. During her tenure at Michigan, she made its Japanese collection one of the best Japanese collections in the United States. In her talk, she mentioned the difficulty of building and keeping the excellent collection up-to-date when the value of Yen was very weak and her book budget was limited. She concluded her talk by saying “I worked hard to create a great collection. . . . Indeed, I would like to say that our library is a de facto regional center for this Midwest region coupled with the powerful Chinese collection. . . . I respect the effort and enthusiasm of American scholars in area studies dealing with difficult vernacular languages. I want to congratulate all of you for your accomplishments in interpreting the area culture of your specific field, and I hope you will keep producing good books for next generation.” Clearly Ms. Fukuda left Michigan with a strong sense of accomplishment and pride. The University of Michigan's excellent Japanese collection still is the resource that many Japanologists and students all over the United States depend on heavily.

I met Ms. Fukuda in 1967 for the first time when she came to the University of Illinois to pay respects to Dean Robert Downs whom she served as an assistant and translator during his stay in Japan to establish the

National Diet Library in 1948. She also wanted to see Dr. Suzuko Ohira, also a University of Michigan Library School graduate, and a Japanese librarian whom she had sent from Japan to Illinois, and inquire how she was doing. Dr. Ohira still remembers the detailed advice and pep talk preparing her to become a good Japanese studies librarian Ms. Fukuda gave her before she headed to the United States. At that time, I was a library assistant working on hourly wage in the Far Eastern Library to support my husband who was working for Ph.D. I was very impressed by Ms. Fukuda's vigor and strong presence despite her small stature. By the time she came back to visit for the second time, I was working as a Japanese cataloger, but was interested in public services, particularly reference works. When Ms. Fukuda found out I was working on compiling subject bibliographies she asked me to read her manuscript of the bibliography of Japanese history for comments. I was flattered, but at the same time, really humbled because I realized what broad and profound knowledge she had for the subjects she had chosen. I still follow her style when I write annotations to reference books.

Ms. Fukuda told me to stay and work for Dean Downs as long as he was alive. I almost kept this promise. I left Illinois to work for Columbia University Library only a few weeks before Dean Down's death. Although Ms. Fukuda was bilingual and bicultural, she retained her strong sense of Japanese *giri* and *on*, obligation and gratitude. During the process of gathering information for this obituary, I learned that Ms. Fukuda, in consultation with Professor Takahisa Sawamoto of the Library School of Keio University, sent several librarians who were mostly Keio graduates to take positions as Japanese librarians for libraries in the United States which were starting up many East Asian collections thanks to the generous federal support for area studies in the 1960s in the academic institutions in the United States. They did this to return the kindness and help that American librarians such as Robert Downs, Verner W. Clapp, and Charles H. Brown had shown to the Japanese library field at the rebirth of postwar Japan.

Dr. Eugene Wu, retired Librarian of the Harvard-Yenching Library, sent in the following words, "I am saddened by her death, for she was such a capable librarian and a wonderful person. Not having her around is a great loss to our field...She moved easily between the East and the West and shared her vast knowledge about Japan and the Japanese research sources with whoever sought her advice, ... [thanks to Naomi] Michigan's Asia Library is now one of the most important research centers for Japanese studies in the United States." Ryoko Toyama, retired Director of the Rutgers University Alexander Library said, "Ms. Naomi Fukuda deserves a big celebration of life. [She was] a long-lived career woman with a conviction of the worthiness of subject bibliographies. While she was opinionated in many areas as I have been, she was also open to new ideas. She had a good sense of humor and a positive outlook on life. She was a pioneer librarian in Japanese Studies in the U. S. After her retirement in Hawaii, she withdrew herself from professional scenes. Obviously, she knew when and how to close one chapter in order to open another. In takes a certain discipline." Ms. Fukuda's first stage was as a leader in modernizing library operations in Japan, and then she moved to the United States and strengthened the bridge between Japan and the United States by preparing important surveys and preparing annotated bibliographies. Teruko Chin, retired from the University of Washington, wrote, "She was just superb. She had a tremendous memory and was very quick to grab the situation whatever it was. . . . I was somewhat afraid of her at first, but it quickly changed to admiration." " She always made it clear about her likes and dislikes. She was a person of integrity. She rose to any occasion, and always accomplished what she started," said Mr. Eizaburo Okuizumi of the University of Chicago Library. "She had excellent judgment, and was a mentor to so many," he continued.

Truly, Ms. Fukuda was the eminent, accomplished librarian whom we all looked up as a mentor. She had excellent leadership abilities. She mobilized Japanese librarians who worked at the Library of Congress to prepare the translation of the supplement to *Nihon no sankō tosho*, and published it from the Library of Congress in 1979, according to Dr. Warren Tsuneishi, retired Head of the Asia Division of the Library of Congress. Ms. Mayumi Taniguchi, Ms. Ryoko Toyama, Ms. Yoshiko Yoshimura, and Sumiko Takamura are the ones who worked on this translation project. Ms. Emiko Moffitt, retired from the Hoover Institution, recalls that Ms. Fukuda was instrumental in persuading the Japanese government to support Japanese studies. One million dollars were donated to ten universities having active Japanese studies programs to commemorate the visit of Premier Kakuei Tanaka to the United States. The money was distributed through the Japan Foundation to fund regional cooperative collection development of Japanese language materials.

Ms. Moffitt went to pay a visit to Ms. Fukuda at the Library of International House of Japan in 1964. She remembers the first impression of Ms. Fukuda as a “scary lady,” but later Ms. Fukuda, Ms. Miwa Kai, Mr. Hideo Kaneko, Ms. Emiko Moffitt, and Dr. Eiji Yutani came to work closely together to build what now is the Committee on Japanese Materials of CEAL. From these five core members, the Committee on Japanese Materials has grown to now boast over 100 members.

As we all know, Ms. Fukuda published many important bibliographies starting with *Nihon no sanko tosho* as one of the editors in chief, followed by many other subject bibliographies. Ms. Fukuda inspired me to prepare annotated subject bibliographies. She made a very clear distinction between the role of faculty and that of librarians. When she found out that I was preparing annotated subject bibliographies, she told me that evaluating books is faculty’s territory, and librarians should take supporting roles by simply presenting the resources to them to aid their research. Evaluating the usefulness of resources should be left to faculty. I wonder how she would have reacted to the term “scholar librarian,” which seems to be very popular nowadays, but is so remote from her principle and philosophy.

Professor Tom Rimer, a specialist in Japanese literature and Theatre, met Ms. Fukuda while he was the Chief of the Asian Division of the Library of Congress when she visited the library while preparing the Japanese literature section of her Japanese history bibliographies, which was later published from the Center for Japanese Studies of the University of Michigan. He said, “I still remember her vast knowledge, dedication. . . . I don’t believe I have ever known anyone with a more well-proportioned sense of mission, and such a large and just framework within which to place her many projects. I guess we might term this a very special kind of wisdom, a quality as rare as it is precious.” Professor Rimer said that he had not seen Ms. Fukuda for some twenty years or more, but he still has such a strong memory of her presence. Other professors and her former students of Japanese bibliography courses at the University of Michigan echo the same sentiment.

Ms. Miwa Kai, formerly of Columbia University Library, says, “The name Naomi Fukuda represents for me an outstanding pioneer in the history of modern librarianship in Japan. . . . Naomi-san will be long remembered as an enthusiastic, energetic, and resourceful librarian who, through her outstanding contribution, bridged Japan and the Western World.”

After deciding to retire to Hawaii, Ms. Fukuda was looking for a person to give her warm clothes, since she figured she would no longer need them in Hawaii. She was such a tiny lady, so most of her clothes had to be made to order so they were expensive. She told me that she was so happy to find a Chinese woman exactly her size working in a Chinese restaurant who gladly accepted all of her winter clothes. Ms. Fukuda was always so generous and thoughtful.

After her retirement from the University of Michigan, she moved to Hawaii. There she made new friends, and some of them became like family members. Since most of us who are so much indebted to her were so far away from her, I am so very happy that she was surrounded by new friends in her old age. Mr. John Rohan, who became very close to Ms. Fukuda, said that he called her every day no matter in what part of world he was. He wrote in his email, “I was one of the closest people . . . in the last 20 years of her life. . . . She took good care of me, and when Naomi was in her 90’s I did my best to look after her. . . . You may say she became like my mother, and others say I became like the son she never had.” As I quoted earlier, Ms. Toyama said, “Obviously, she knew when and how to close one chapter in order to open another. It takes a certain discipline.”

Ms. Fukuda wanted to become a part of the Hawaiian ocean after her death, according to Ms. Wakiko Oguri, her niece. On November 7th, Mr. Rohan hired a cruiser to fulfill Ms. Fukuda’s last wish to scatter her ashes in the Kaneohe Bay in Hawaii. Ms. Oguri described the beautiful ceremony in the Kaneohe Bay, while the musicians played Alohae, leis and flowers were strewn on the ocean water while Ms. Oguri was scattering ashes. Ms. Fukuda started a new life in Hawaii, came to love the place, and found many people who loved her, too. The peaceful, fitting ceremony to celebrate the great, accomplished life of Ms. Fukuda warms our hearts. Fukuda-san, rest in peace.