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The Meiji Imprints Microform Project

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1. Statement of the problem

The deterioration of paper by acid is now considered a grave social problem because important historical documents are being destroyed. It is said that imprints made of acid paper have a natural life span of one hundred years and may be lost through acidic deterioration in the near future.

At the beginning of the Meiji era, western knowledge and technology were imported into Japan. In the 1870s the method of western paper production was adopted by Japan. In the 1880s the production of wood pulp began in Japan; and the introduction of wood is a main reason for acid paper.

This means that roughly one hundred years have passed since acid paper publications started being produced. The texts of many of these imprints reveal aspects of the modernization of Japan and are therefore very important social documents, yet they are in danger of being lost due to deterioration. According to an investigation on the deterioration of paper by the National Diet Library (NDL) and others, the deterioration of imprints published in Japan since the 1880s is severe and it is clear that we have to take urgent action.

Research on paper deterioration by libraries in Japan is not as widespread as in western countries so the condition of library materials from the standpoint of paper deterioration is not clearly delineated in Japan.

There are only a few examples of such research in our country. The leader in this kind of activity, the NDL, investigated the conditions of its collection and submitted a research report in 1984. In 1983 the NDL dealt with the preservation problem by quickly establishing a task force for research on acid paper. The above-mentioned report was the result of this task force activity. Also Keio University Library investigated conditions in its collection and in 1984 reported on the state of paper deterioration there. The Sapporo Central Library in Hokkaido, a public library, carried out the same kind of research. There are about three thousand libraries in Japan, but only a few libraries have examined their collections for deterioration as the first step for dealing with preservation problems. From among these few, I will present the summary of the report of the National Diet Library.

In this paper I cite the result of the NDL's research only on books which were published in Japan. First of all, the present state of books published in Japan in the 1870s is in rather good condition, but the books published from the 1880s through the 1910s are deteriorating. The condition of periodicals in Japan is much the same as for books. It seems that the introduction of wood pulp in the early Meiji era is the main reason for these paper conditions. In 1874, through Yukosha, the production of foreign-style paper using wood pulp began in Japan, and by 1889 Japanese-made wood pulp was used on a large scale. In the 1870s foreign paper had been produced using imported pulp and cotton; therefore, the quality of paper at that time was good. But in the 1880s the quality of paper declined because the pulp used was made in Japan. The paper
manufactured from Japanese-made pulp is now deteriorating considerably. The research report of the NDL clearly indicates this. The result of Keio University Library's research was similar. These reports reveal the true present condition of books scattered all over the country in many libraries and institutions.

So it was that Waseda University Library created the project to transfer to microfiche Meiji-era imprints published from the 1860s to the 1910s. Most of these imprints were made with paper using Japanese pulp. Considering this fact, the project which Waseda University Library is carrying out is very significant.

In western countries, especially in England, this kind of acid paper problem has been discussed for a long time and several projects are in progress there to solve these problems. They are important projects like the Short Title Catalogue (STC), the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), and the Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (NSTC).

In Japan the number of Meiji imprints continues to grow scarce in the secondhand book market and, accordingly, their prices are going up. In other words, it is very difficult to obtain Meiji imprints, even in Japan. It can be said that there are virtually no more except those held by libraries and institutions throughout the world. It is very difficult to systematically collect the materials published during the Meiji era and in the future this situation will grow worse.

The Meiji era has a special meaning in the long history of Japan. It was the turning point in the modernization of Japan and we cannot understand Japanese history in toto without first developing an understanding of the Meiji era. As the nineteenth century is especially significant in the history of Europe (and the NSTC project is important because of that significance), the Meiji era is very important in Japanese history, yet the imprints of this era are vanishing from the world. It is said that in Japan everything of the past flows into the Meiji era and everything of the present comes from that age. This being so, we should recognize the present peril of our acid-paper texts and take action to preserve these Meiji imprints. Indeed, it is our responsibility and duty to preserve these imprints and hand them down to following generations.

Waseda University Library was fortunate to have escaped the big Kanto earthquake in 1923 and the devastation of the World War of the 1940s and thus holds many Meiji imprints. Together with the NDL, Waseda has one of the largest collections in Japan of the many printed materials published during the Meiji era. Therefore, Waseda University Library has a responsibility to preserve these materials and pass them on to our descendants.

The number of extant Meiji imprints is not clear. In the Meiji era there were many publishing houses in the local districts of Japan, particularly in the Kansai district. Consequently, Meiji imprints are preserved in many libraries and institutions throughout the country.

At the beginning of the Meiji era, the Publication Ordinance of 1869 was put into effect to control publications, to require publishers to obtain permission to publish, and to have them deposit a few copies of a publication with the proper authorities. A few years later in 1875 the government control passed to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Afterward, all publications had to be presented to this Ministry to be examined and controlled. Thus a publishing system was established in Japan whereby all publications issued in Japan had to be presented to the proper authorities in order to be granted
permission to publish. This control system of publications continued to the end of World War II.

The publications presented to the Ministry of Home Affairs were transferred to the Shojakukan in Tokyo (one of the first modern public libraries, built in 1872). This collection was then taken over by the Imperial Library, the national library of Japan, until the end of World War II. In 1948 the National Diet Library was founded and succeeded the Imperial Library. The NDL issued _Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan shozō Meijiki kankō tosho mokuroku_ (The National Diet Library Catalogue of Books Printed in the Meiji Era) in six volumes in 1971-1976. This catalog records about 120,000 volumes. The introduction states that this catalog includes about seventy percent of all the publications issued during the Meiji era. This puts the total number of Meiji imprints at approximately 170,000 volumes. On the other hand, there is another figure for the total number of Meiji imprints. This is found in the 1936 edition of _Shuppan nenkan_ (Publishing Yearbook). According to the yearbook's chronological table of the number of publications, i.e., the number of titles submitted to the government, the total number of publications presented to the Ministry of Home Affairs from 1881 to 1912 was about 700,000 volumes. This number perhaps includes several editions of the same title, several copies of the same book, etc., but the difference between these two statistics is quite large.

At present the total number of publications issued during the Meiji era is not clear. We intend to resolve the question of Meiji imprints clearly through implementation of the Meiji imprints microform project. The total number of Meiji imprints in Waseda University Library is now being investigated; it is assumed the number will be at least 70,000 volumes.

Clearly, it cannot be presumed that all Meiji imprints are represented only in the collections of the NDL and Waseda University Library. Therefore, the Meiji imprints microform project has many difficult problems to be resolved before it can be completely accomplished. In particular, mutual understanding and cooperation between the libraries and institutions of both Japan and other countries will be needed. Waseda University Library is going to proceed with the microform project of Meiji imprints in spite of these difficulties because of the acid paper problem and the scarcity of publications from the Meiji era. We would like to solve these problems by mutual cooperation. Waseda University Library intends to take up the role of guide in developing this project; we hope that this project, the Japan Meiji Short Title Catalogue (JMSTC) will become a part of the worldwide NSTC project. Also, as a human being living in this world, I wish to fulfill my responsibility to current history.

2. The aims of this project are

   (1) To make microfiche copies of all the Meiji imprints in the Waseda University Library system and to preserve them for following generations. Waseda University Library consists of a main library and thirty-three branch libraries, i.e., faculty and undergraduate libraries. All the materials published during the Meiji era in these branch libraries will be included in this project.
To create a data base of the Meiji imprints. Waseda University Library will computerize its whole library system and plans to put all library materials in Japanese into MARC format. This project will be a part of the retroactive data base of pre-Japan MARC Japanese materials.

To begin the compilation of a Union Catalog of Meiji imprints.

To discover currently unknown works of Meiji imprint in order to stimulate more study on the Meiji era.

To foster the establishment of conservation and preservation technology in Japan.

To collect Meiji imprints not already in the Waseda University Library system.

The components of this project are

(1) All Meiji imprints in the Waseda University Library system. The total number of volumes is about 130,000 volumes; monographs account for 70,000 volumes and periodicals are about 60,000 bound volumes.

(2) Meiji imprints in the other libraries and institutions in Japan exclusive of those held by Waseda University Library.

(3) Meiji imprints in the libraries and institutions in other countries.

Methodology

(1) Length of time required for the first stage of this project (See 4(3) below.) It will take around fifteen years to microfiche the 70,000 monographs in Waseda University Library. We plan to put 5,000 volumes on microfiche each year. This fifteen-year period will be divided into six subject divisions, each division lasting from two to three years.

(2) Photoduplication format. We will use microfiche to copy the Meiji imprints. The reasons we chose this microformat are as follows: one sheet of microfiche can record many pages (98 mode will be used); this format makes it easy to include in this project the materials from other libraries and institutions in Japan and in other countries, thus developing it into a worldwide project; this format allows for distribution either of an entire set of the microfiche collection or of individual titles.

(3) The stages of production. The following is a general estimate of the production schedule. It may be changed by the progression of bibliographic research and by other factors.

First stage

First period: Literature and Linguistics.
About 15,000 volumes related to literature and linguistics in Waseda University Library is the material to be microfiched in this period. This part of the first stage in now in progress.


Third period: Philosophy, Religion, and Education.

Fourth period: Politics and Law.

Fifth period: History, Geography, Anthropology, and Archeology.

Sixth period: General, Art, and Natural Science.

Second stage

Serials. All serials held by Waseda University Library will constitute the material worked on at the second stage. However, if a nationwide project dealing with this category is started, Waseda's project will become part of that national project.

Third stage

At the third stage Meiji imprints held by other libraries and institutions both in Japan and in other countries will be microfiched. These Meiji imprints will not duplicate material already reproduced from the Waseda University Library collection.

4. Distribution

The microfiched titles will be cataloged in detail and labelled clearly. These microfiches will be arranged in units of 500 sheets and distributed through a company affiliated with Waseda University Library.

5. Operating procedures

(1) The first stage

(a) The original registers of books and the official card catalog of Waseda University Library will be checked to pick up each and every Meiji imprint. The Meiji imprints in special collections will also be included. Special collections refers to the collections named after the former individual owner; for example, the Yanagida Collection was originally owned by Yanagida Izumi, formerly a professor at Waseda University. There are twenty-six such special named collections in the Waseda University Library.

(b) The call numbers of all Meiji imprints will be listed; as a result of this work, the total number and the subjects of these imprints will be clear.
(c) On the basis of the lists of call numbers, the original books will be checked.

(d) The original texts to be microfiched are selected from the shelves and are collected together and arranged according to the plan of photoreproduction.

(e) Before transferring the materials for microfiche production, these materials are cataloged in detail.

(f) After being cataloged, each book is photoreproduced on microfiche.

(g) The original materials are then removed to a special stack. Further access to them has still to be decided.

(h) *Tosho shinbun* 図書新聞 (Book Review Press) will present a brief notice of each cataloged microfiche title in issues published during the final week of every two-month period.

(i) The Meiji imprints not already in Waseda University Library collections will be obtained if required.

(2) The second stage

(a) After the first-stage activities have been completed, the collections of other libraries and institutions will be examined to select Meiji imprints not in Waseda University Library. Other libraries participating in the project with Waseda University Library may elect to process their materials together with Waseda.

(b) The materials are dealt with using the same procedures applied during the first stage; i.e., visiting each library and institution and borrowing the targeted materials. At this time a committee having members not at Waseda University may need to be established.

(c) Selection of material from libraries and institutions in foreign countries will then take place, using the same operations as those of the first stage.
6. **The oversight committee**

(1) **Producing MARC records for the Meiji imprints.**

Waseda University Library is constructing a computerized information network system, part of which is a data base of the foreign books in Waseda University Library. It is a retroactive data base of the collections in our library. However, for the Japanese materials in Waseda University Library, we have not yet started that part of the data base. Waseda University Library plans to make a data base of Meiji imprints and in this way place the library's Japanese materials in a computerized data base. This work is very important in constructing the information network of Waseda University Library.

Presently there is no data base covering the Meiji imprints as yet and there is no plan currently to create one. Japan MARC, which is the representative data base of Japan produced by the NDL, covers publications in Japanese since 1969. The NDL plans to computerize the retrospective bibliographic records of the materials published in Japan from 1947 to 1968.

(2) **Publishing of reprint editions.**

In order to put the Meiji imprints onto microfiche, the examination of the original works and the cataloging of these materials is necessary; these operations are the preconditions for proceeding with this project. One result of these operations is that many unknown materials will probably be found. It was discovered that literature unknown even to the specialists in particular fields made up nearly half of the total number of titles listed in NSTC. The literature newly discovered through the process of this Meiji imprints project will be reprinted and published. This task is thought to be a very important one, one that should be done as well as placing Meiji imprints onto microfiche. The number of Meiji imprints is decreasing over time. In a sense, the disappearance of these Meiji imprints means the extinction of Meiji culture. To protect printed Meiji culture from disappearing and to increasingly promote the study of the Meiji era throughout the world is the very important task to be shouldered by the reprinting of Meiji imprints.
ENDNOTES


4 The outline of the laws concerning the presentation of books to the proper authorities in the Meiji era is as follows: Meiji 2 (1869) Shuppan Jōrei (Publication Ordinance) provided that five copies of works planned to be published should be presented to the authorities in order to be distributed to each library. The authorities referred to were Shohei Ko (universities in the early Meiji era). Meiji 5 (1872) In the Shuppan Jōrei as amended, the number of books presented to the authorities became three copies. Meiji 8 (1875) The function of publication control was transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Article 20 of Shuppan Jōrei provided that two bound copies of the book should be presented and could not be published until the presentation. Shuppan Jōrei was changed to Shuppan Hō (Publishing Law) in Meiji 26 (1893) and it continued until the end of World War II in 1945.

5 The National Diet Library has a collection of so-called Otsubo tosho, which are duplicate copies, pamphlets, various kinds of leaflets, and popular books, such as storybooks. They are separated into a special group called low-frequency-of-use books. According to the preface in the National Diet Library Catalogue of Books Printed in the Meiji Era, there are 58,000 titles of this kind of book.

The total number of books listed in the *National Diet Library Catalogue of Books Printed in the Meiji Era* is 106,901 volumes. The number of the Meiji imprints in the Waseda University Library is now under examination, but it is estimated to be about 70,000 volumes. There are thirty-three branch libraries and reading rooms in Waseda University and the Meiji imprints they may hold have not yet been checked. Therefore, the total number in the Waseda University Library system will be over 70,000 volumes.