Japanese Libraries in the Kinki Region

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This is a report of my visit to seven libraries and one museum in the Kinki Region of Japan which took place between May and August 1993. In this report I will provide a profile of each library or museum and mention its special features, current activities, and other observations I have made, examining these institutions from the viewpoint of a library staff member and of a patron, hoping that readers may gain an understanding of the specific interests of these institutions. In compiling this information, I have particularly taken the interests of Japan specialists outside of Japan into consideration.

The libraries in this report are organized into four categories: national institutions, national university libraries, private university libraries, and public libraries. A few outstanding libraries within each category were selected. I have chosen to concentrate on the field of humanities and, within that field, those institutions particularly strong in rare materials, specialized studies, and public service.

Written references for all the detailed information in this report follow each paragraph; other information was obtained from conversation with the person in charge of that library.

A. National Institutions

1. International Research Center for Japanese Studies Library (Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā Toshoshitsu)

The International Research Center for Japanese Studies began in 1987 as a national research center for scholars in the field of Japanese studies around the world. In 1991 the library was opened and currently holds approximately 80,000 volumes of books and 2,100 titles of periodicals (1,750 titles in Japanese, 350 in foreign languages). Although the location of the library is somewhat inconvenient, the public is allowed to browse and make copies of the library's materials. The library is a great research facility, especially for Japan specialists outside of Japan. Collected materials mainly consist of books dealing with Japanese studies written in foreign languages, basic Japanese-language materials such as statistical data, collected works, prefectural histories, biographies, and reference books written in many languages. Although most of the materials are rather new, the library also has a collection of old and rare materials, especially books on Japan written by foreigners. Since the computer system was installed at the same time the library was opened, all materials are accessible through the local area network system with the exception of materials written in special vernacular languages such as Chinese and Korean. Furthermore, the bibliographical data in the library is also accessible from outside the institution through the National Center for Science Information Systems (NACSIS), which has established an
enormous nationwide network with a membership of many university libraries and has become even more effective with the start-up of the Interlibrary Loan system from April 1992. Besides the bibliographical databases, the library is also developing specialized databases, such as the Who’s Who Database (providing information on overseas researchers and research institutions in the field of Japanese studies) and the Visual Materials Database (providing visual information such as the illustrations and photographs shown in books on Japan written in languages other than Japanese). In addition to the National Diet Library classification scheme (for Japanese language and reference materials), the library also uses the Library of Congress classification (for foreign language materials), which certainly is familiar to researchers from the United States.


2. National Museum of Ethnology

The National Museum of Ethnology is a comprehensive research center which collects materials, conducts research, and exhibits the results thereof. The museum also provides graduate education in the field of cultural sciences. The museum has approximately 186,000 ethnological artifacts, 9,000 of which are usually on display, and 50,000 items of audio-visual material. It also has the Videotheque, developed by the museum as a self-teaching device, which provides visual displays of the world’s many peoples. At present, 457 programs, stored on laser disks, are available to the visitors at forty booths. The research library in the museum holds approximately 10,000 titles of periodicals, 30,000 maps, and 360,000 volumes of books including such notable collections as the Reichel-Dolmatoff Collection (approximately 6,000 volumes) on Latin America and the Tatsumi Makino Collection (approximately 6,500 volumes) on the ethnology of East Asia. All the above mentioned materials are accessible on computer databases to members of the museum and, in the future, these databases will also be available to other institutions through a computer network. In addition, the construction of an image database which will reproduce images of the artifacts is in progress.


B. National University Libraries

1. Kyoto University Library

Kyoto University has the second largest holdings (5.2 million volumes as of March 1993) among the national universities in Japan, following Tokyo University (6.6 million volumes as of March 1991). The Kyoto University Library, which was established in 1899 and whose holdings currently occupy 15 percent of the entire collection of the university, is the central library among sixty-four library units on campus. Although the library started cataloging in the National Center for Science Information Systems (NACSIS) database in 1985 (except for special language materials such as Chinese, Korean, Persian, etc.), at present only about 10 percent of its holdings are accessible on the local system. This forces library patrons to search through the card catalogs for holdings acquired before 1985 and also for the location of materials on campus. Another on-line database for the holdings of national universities in the northern Kinki Region is also available to patrons for interlibrary loans. The rare materials at Kyoto University Library are outstanding. Currently, the library has seventeen special collections which includes thirty-nine (in 170 volumes) items registered in the category of Important Cultural Property.


2. Osaka University Library

The Osaka University Library is composed of the Main Library, the Life Sciences Library, and the Suita Library located on two campuses. However, the materials are scattered in ten locations including the libraries mentioned above. At present, the entire holdings of Osaka University consist of approximately 2.5 million volumes with 39,500 titles of periodicals. It also includes twenty-two rare collections, the most important of which is the Kaitokudo Bunko, a collection of approximately 37,000 items of old Japanese and Chinese books, archives, and manuscripts related to the Kaitokudo, a private school founded in 1724 in Osaka and closed in 1869. The Library started to catalog its materials in NACSIS in 1987, excluding Chinese and Korean materials, but they have begun to include them in their local system recently. As for the materials cataloged before 1987, it is difficult for library patrons to conceptualize the entire holdings of the university because of the lack of centralized card catalogs in one location. Among the national university libraries in Japan, the Osaka
University Library is the main library for the collecting of foreign-language periodicals in the fields of medicine and biology. The Life Sciences Library handles an enormous amount of interlibrary loan requests from all over Japan; the requests are usually filled in a few days. Accordingly, no periodicals are allowed to be checked out at the Life Sciences Library.


C. Private University Libraries

1. Tenri Central Library

The Tenri Central Library, established in 1926, serves as the research library for Tenri University, formerly named the Tenri Foreign Language School, as well as the special library of the Tenrikyo Church and as a library for the general public. At present, the library holds approximately 1.6 million volumes including 7,700 titles of periodicals, most of which are kept in the closed stacks. The Tenri Central Library's rare book collection is extremely impressive. In addition to four major collections, it includes six items registered as National Treasures and eighty Important Cultural Properties, the most important of which are the Jesuit Mission printings of Japan, *Kirishitan-ban* (eight of which are known to be the only extant copies in the world). The library also has approximately 260,000 items of historical documents written in the Edo period, more than 17,000 plates of wood blocks, and more than fifty European celestial and terrestrial globes dating from the sixteenth century. The Tenri Central Library, using computer-based catalogs, has been eagerly cataloging even the old and rare materials in its collections, including historical documents, a difficult task not usually undertaken. In order to maintain a high standard of work especially among the librarians working with rare material, training sessions in reading old texts, letters, and historical documents are held regularly. The library has been very active compiling many catalogs for its own specialized material. Currently it is also assisting the British Library (BL) to compile a catalog of the BL's old Japanese printed books dating from the eighth century to the Genroku period (1688-1704).

2. Kansai University Library

The Kansai University Library, rebuilt in 1985, has a very spacious and functional look with several reading rooms for small and large groups and also a library hall equipped with a video system. In spite of the fact that more than 90 percent of the materials are kept in storage, the response to paging requests from patrons is unexpectedly quick (normally it only takes about five minutes) with the help of the Telelift (the automatic book conveyer system connected between the circulation desk and storage) and the Micro-server (an automatic dispensing system of microfilm and microfiche). Since Kansai University began as the Kansai Law School in 1886, the strength of the library collection is in humanities, especially in law. As of September 1992 the holdings of the library have reached 1.5 million volumes, including 20,000 titles of periodicals. The rare materials of the Kansai University Library include twenty special collections in various fields. Regarding cataloging duties, the library staff is responsible for the care of the old and rare materials published before 1868 and materials in other Asian languages, such as Chinese and Korean. Otherwise, the library purchases the cataloging services of Nihon Ryūtsū Sentā, whose staff actually input the bibliographical data on KUL, the database of Kansai University. The library also has an eight-year plan for the retrospective conversion of the materials obtained before 1985 when KUL began its activity.


3. Otani University Library

While the original body of Otani University was established as part of the Higashi Honganji Headquarters of the Jōdo Shin School of Japanese Buddhism in 1665, the library was established only in 1755. Otani University was formally built in 1922 after a number of
changes in the organization. At present there are approximately 4,500 students in the junior college and the undergraduate and graduate schools. The library of this rather small university, with its holdings of approximately 600,000 volumes, has excellent research facilities. Its collection has a naturally strong emphasis in the field of Buddhism and also in East Asian thought, society, and culture. The rare materials of the library include complete sets of the Korean, Sung, Ming, Ch'ing, and Tetsugen (Obaku) editions of the Chinese Tripitaka, a large collection of Tibetan canonical and noncanonical works (including the Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka, of which only one other set is extant), a sizable collection of Tun-huang manuscripts, and an extensive collection of manuscripts and blockprint editions of Japanese and Chinese Buddhist texts from the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The library also has a large number of important Shih Buddhist texts and other manuscripts and works designated as Important Cultural Properties. Since the library has a long history and its collected materials are very specialized, a specific classification system was established for library use. The Otani University Library is also very active in publishing many catalogs, some of which are especially useful with detailed explanations.


Otani University. [Kyoto: Otani University, 19??]


D. Public Libraries

1. Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library

The Osaka Prefectural Library consists of two libraries, Nakanoshima and Yuhigaoka Libraries. At present a third library is under construction and is planned to open in 1996. As of March 1993, the holdings of the Nakanoshima Library were approximately 930,000 volumes, which is the second largest collection in a single public library in Japan. While the
volumes, which is the second largest collection in a single public library in Japan. While the building of Nakanoshima Library, which was built in 1904, is of special interest as an Important Cultural Property, its materials, with eighteen special collections, also have been very important to patrons with a wide variety of interests. An extensive collection of materials on Osaka, which is available in the Local Materials Section, is particularly impressive and includes a variety of works and historical documents mainly from the Edo period (1600-1868), since Osaka was an important cultural center at the beginning of this period. The Nakanoshima Library has also been very active in publishing the catalogs and reproductions of the original texts of its rare materials. With regard to cataloging activity, the library changed the classification system from its own (ODC) to the National Diet Library Classification (NDC) in 1990, when it started to use the databases of Nihon Ryūtsū Sentā for computer processing, although the old and rare materials are still processed manually with ODC. As a result, it is quite complicated for patrons to locate library materials using the author card catalogs in two different systems. One must also check the open stack card catalog, since this information is not provided elsewhere. The introduction of a local on-line catalog to the library patrons will be delayed until 1996 when the new library is opened and this problem should be solved.


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I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Karin Wittenborg, the former Associate University Librarian for Collection Development at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and now the University Librarian at the University of Virginia, and to Mr. James K. M. Cheng, Head of UCLA Richard C. Rudolph East Asian Library, who kindly approved my leave of absence for nearly four months, from May to August 1993. During this time I was given the great opportunity of visiting these libraries and other special institutions. I am also grateful to them because they offered me a week of official leave as a part of staff development activities. Also, because of the kind consideration of the Vice University Librarian of Kansai University, Ms. Katsuko Ōkuni, I was able to attend the Annual Conference of the Association for Private University Libraries, which was held July 28-29, 1993, at Kansai University. This program included a visit to the Kansai University Library and to the special exhibit entitled "Ōsaka Gadan," a collection of printed picture books and paintings related to Osaka from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. In addition, as part of the conference program mentioned above, July 30 was devoted to visiting the National Museum of Ethnology where I obtained the information given above.
I would like to express my appreciation to all the library staff and specialists who were extremely kind and generous in providing me with such a wide variety of materials and information. I would like to convey my special thanks to Mr. Osamu Morigami, the librarian at Kinki University Central Library, who introduced me to some of the libraries mentioned above and also took me to the Akatsuki Kōbō Bindery where I learned how old and rare materials are repaired.

With the experience of visiting libraries in the Kinki Region, I was surprised to learn that there were such strong personal relationships between librarians at different libraries, especially those of private university libraries, not only in the lending and borrowing of materials but also in staff education, such as the activities of the Shoshigaku Kenkyūkai (Bibliographical Study Group). Mr. Morigami, a very active member of the Shoshigaku Kenkyūkai, explained to me that members of this study group usually meet once every two months and discuss a variety of topics related to old materials (see Shiritsu Daigaku Toshokan Kyōkai Nishi Chiku Bukai Hanshin Chiku Kyōgikai Shoshigaku Kenkyūkai, Shoshikan no Ayumi: 1976-1992 [Osaka, 1992]). It would be a great learning experience for any library staff member interested in old materials to attend one of these meetings, an opportunity that we do not have in the United States. I was also told by another member of the Shoshigaku Kenkyūkai that it was extremely helpful to hear the comments of other experienced librarians as he worked at compiling a catalog of one of the rare book collections for his institution.

Another fact that I learned from my investigation is that all libraries cannot afford to retrospectively convert from the manual card catalogs to computerized catalogs. In conclusion, although we already have access to some Japanese databases in the United States, it will undoubtedly be a long time before we can have the pre-1980s holdings of a Japanese institution in these databases.

The purpose of this study is not to assess the general situation of libraries all over Japan, but rather to gain an understanding of libraries in the Kinki Region specifically. I am convinced that each of these libraries has its own particular character and strengths and, in most cases, they have maintained their own respective traditions. It is very important for each library or institution to have its own direction, since it is impossible to satisfy every demand. It was also my great pleasure to share the interests and concerns of the library staff members in the Kinki Region, confirming the idea that we are all working in the same community with the same aims, no matter how far apart we are geographically.