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FROM THE PRESIDENT

With this issue of the Journal of East Asian Libraries, I am replacing my introductory remarks with a copy of a letter I sent recently to the Librarian of Congress on behalf of our membership. I think the letter speaks for itself. As I mentioned in my brief email message about this letter, if you, your faculty, or your institution feel strongly about the Japan Documentation Center, I urge you to join your individual or institutional voice to that of CEAL. As of this writing, I have received no response from the Library of Congress.

Bill McCloy, Acting President, CEAL

Council on East Asian Libraries
Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
Acting President: William B. McCloy

Sept. 10, 1999

James H. Billington
Librarian of Congress
101 Independence Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20540

Dear Dr. Billington:

It has come to my attention as Acting President of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) that funding for the Library of Congress' Japan Documentation Center (JDC) will run out at the end of March, 2000. As you know, major funding was received from the Center for Global Partnership of the Japan Foundation (CGP), and the Documentation Center was established in 1992 as a joint project between the CGP and the Library of Congress. Since the Center began its operations in March 1994, its services to Congress and to the American people in providing Japanese public policy information and current source materials in fields such as economics, commerce and industry, law, politics, the environment, and social conditions have been unparalleled anywhere in the world.

In my role as Acting President of the Council on East Asian Libraries I speak on behalf of hundreds of librarians and thousands of researchers who need access to current information about Japan. However, I also speak personally as a satisfied user of the JDC collections. Over the past several years, my department -- the East Asian Law Department of the University of Washington Law Library -- has utilized the excellent services of the JDC on numerous occasions and has referred researchers to it as well.

The concentration of the JDC on collecting gray literature on Japan -- unpublished information which is difficult to obtain -- makes its resources and services incomparably valuable. Nevertheless, as you know, this effort at collecting ephemeral material is not without precedent
within LC. For example, at a recent RLG East Asian Studies Librarians Forum held during our CEAL conference, Ms. Helen Poe noted that the Library of Congress collects similar materials for its Hong Kong Dissident Collection and is planning to establish a Korean Gray Literature Collection as well, patterned after the JDC. The need for such collections is widely recognized in the scholarly community, and the Library of Congress' efforts in this regard are greatly appreciated.

The members of the Council on East Asian Libraries and the many, many scholars they represent strongly encourage the Library of Congress to make every effort to ensure continued funding for the Japan Documentation Center that it may continue its current level of service to Congress and to the American people. If, however, continued funding from the Japan Foundation proves impossible, Japan specialists in CEAL have suggested that a cooperative arrangement between the Library of Congress and the National Diet Library of Japan (NDL) might be one way to save this valuable resource.

The National Diet Library has heretofore not collected Japanese gray literature as actively as has the JDC. If, therefore, the Library of Congress could persuade them to take over the support of the dedicated and experienced LC staff in Tokyo, the NDL would have a ready-made way to acquire copies of these important materials for themselves as well as for LC. The Library of Congress' contribution would be to broker this arrangement and to provide the nominal funding necessary to continue support for the excellent staff and services of the JDC in Washington. It is my sincere hope that you will find a way for the Library of Congress to continue to provide access to this important collection, in service to Congress and to the American people.

Your attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated. Please let me know if I or any CEAL members can be of any assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

William B. McCloy
Acting President
Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL)

cc: Winston Tabb
Associate Librarian for Library Services
Library of Congress