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FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH AMERICAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON JAPANESE LIBRARY RESOURCES (NCC): THE BACKGROUND

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Fundamentally users are the center of libraries' services. Academic libraries focus on their services for faculty and students. Neither librarians nor faculty can do their best work without consultation with each other. They are complementary professions.

The NCC was established in December 1991 following the recommendations made at the Hoover meeting, which took place in November of 19911. This meeting was sponsored by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission (hereafter the Commission) and the Japan Foundation’s Center for Global Partnership, two organizations which have been central to the founding of the NCC and to its endurance. Faculty involvement was prominent in the history of the NCC 2.

Emiko Moffitt explained the background of why this meeting was held as follows: The situation surrounding Japanese libraries had changed greatly since the Commission was founded. There had been phenomenal increase in Japanese Studies programs and many libraries had grown from very small collections to much larger ones since 1972. Also new libraries had been formed or were about to be formed. With these changes the time was ripe for the meeting held in November 19913.

Prior to this Hoover meeting, in 1991 Diane Perushek, formerly of Princeton University, was asked by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission to survey and report on Japanese library developments and needs. Based on this report, the Japan Foundation and the Commission then convened a meeting in Washington, D.C. in June 19914. In this meeting, Prof. Carol Gluck of Columbia University also participated and an idea of the NCC was conceived.

The participants in the Hoover Conference were a broadly based group that included faculty members, library and database specialists from Japan, representatives of different libraries (including the Library of Congress), directors of large university libraries, CEAL chairs, the Chair of the Subcommittee for Japanese Materials, heads of East Asian libraries, and some others5.

Thus faculty involvement was present even before the formal establishment of the NCC. When the NCC was established, Amy Heinrich elucidated, the relationship between scholars and

4 Ibid.
librarians had attenuated during the 1980s, because libraries were busy with computerization; the need for restoring a close relationship between faculty and librarians was felt. These needs were enhanced by the fact that some institutions lack a librarian for Japanese studies. Hence, librarians had to consider how to serve the entire Japanese studies community. The NCC resulted from librarians' and faculty members' shared goal of improving access to Japanese studies resources; the natural course was helping each other to achieve it. Some design to include faculty in the original structure of the bylaws and the mission statement was essential.

The NCC's mission statement begins with the following:

The mission of the National Coordinating Committee on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) is to mobilize the resources of information providers, information users, and funding organizations toward the long-range goal of creating a comprehensive national system of cooperative collection development and ready access to Japanese information in as wide a range of fields as possible for all current and potential users in North America. And it ends with the following:

In other words, the committee will help both sides define library and user needs and articulate those needs clearly and accurately; it will work autonomously to develop and implement programs to best meet those needs.6

On the other hand, the NCC bylaws state:

The membership shall represent insofar as possible library and user interests, including representatives from currently functioning organizations concerned with library and scholarly issues in Japanese studies, and librarians and scholars from major, as well as from second and/or third tier, academic institutions.7

Thus, users, i.e. faculty and students, were eminently taken into consideration in the NCC's mission as well as the bylaws. When the membership of NCC was constituted, an attempt was made to include as many types of institutions as possible. The representations of various groups are reflected in the membership composition of the NCC Bylaws, which states.

Membership in the Council shall consist of at least twelve but not more than nineteen members, at least six from major national associations with an interest in Japanese information, identified by the Council as a whole, and originally including the American Advisory Committee (AAC) to the Japan Foundation, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), the Northeast Asia Council (NEAC) of the Association for Asian Studies, and the Library of Congress, but not limited to those organizations.8

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7 NCC Bylaws <http://www.lib.duke.edu/ias/eac/ncc/bylaws.htm>
8 NCC Bylaws <http://www.lib.duke.edu/ias/eac/ncc/bylaws.htm>
Reflecting these considerations, the faculty membership in the NCC typically consists of two faculty members, one from the humanities and the other from the social sciences (in selecting them, in addition to their subject fields their geographical location as well as size of the institution are also taken into consideration) and two faculty members representing the AAS NEAC and the American Advisory Committee of the Japan Foundation. In addition to these regulars, faculty members have been recruited for a number of NCC projects such as the Multi-Volume Set and the electronic help desk for East Asian Scholars.

Thus, faculty has been involved in NCC since before its inauguration, and their involvement has been vital for the NCC activities. Their participation in the NCC has been beneficial in both directions. Librarian received a different kind of input from faculty while librarians educated faculty about library functions and issues they they have not previously understood. Faculty members typically expressed their experience in NCC as “Boy, how interesting! I didn’t expect it to be so interesting!” Thus the benefits are mutual.

In an ever-changing electronic and networked environment, communication, involvement, and cooperation between faculty and librarians are indispensable in order to most efficiently and effectively meet the shifting expectations from today’s users. And the NCC has been trying to incorporate faculty involvement at its best.

Note:
This was originally presented at the CEAL Plenary Session on March 22, 2001, during the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago.

The author would like to express her sincere appreciation to Dr. Amy V. Heinrich, Columbia University, also the founding chair of NCC, who was willing to have me interview her in preparing this manuscript.