

## Overview

As Japan continues to be the country in the world most affected by a rapidly aging society, reconsidering the role of library services has become an urgent theme. Until now, there has been a tendency that the older people were included in the users “who have difficulties to access the library services.” However, this perception ignores the idea of “positive aging” – in other words, older people who work and live independently even as they get older. In addition, it can be said that not enough attention has been paid to the issue of dementia, which cannot be separated from the issue of the aging society.

This report was written and researched with the aforementioned issues in mind. Additionally, using the reimagined framework of Laslett’s third and fourth ages of life, this report’s purpose is to reconsider the role of library services in a super-aged society. This report pays special attention to think about how public libraries can support in the pursuit of lifelong learning for people in the third age of life, and how they, with its rapidly aging society, can support issues of dementia and cognitive impairment of people in the fourth age.

This report consists of nine chapters:

Chapter 1, “Research Background and Purposes,” expresses the background and purposes of the research.

Chapter 2, “What is a Super-aged Society?” This chapter outlines what exactly an aging society is and what sort of issues arise within an aging society, as well as how regional care systems and libraries can combat these issues. The four main issues raised in this chapter are 1) The decline of working-age population; 2) The increase of older solitaries; 3) The increased cost of social security and welfare spending; and 4) Aging and dementia. In response to these four issues, the government has created integrated community care systems. This chapter also explains the important role of libraries within integrated community care systems.

Chapter 3, “The Changing Role of Library Services and the Older People,” outlines the preliminary steps moving forward for Japan’s library services in an increasingly aging society. Until recently, the older people were a part of those who had difficulties to access the library services. However, since the 2000s, library services for the older people were separated from library

services for people with disability. The main reason for this was identified as a change in the perspective of the aging society – namely, from the older people being seen as a group to be protected to a group that could play a leading role in regional communities.

Chapter 4, “The Super-aged Society, Library Services, and What is Next.” This chapter discusses the current situation of library services in a super-aged society, as well as where to go from here, using Laslett’s third age theory as the framework. Because Japan is one of the fastest aging societies in the world, there are no guidelines for library services for the older people. This chapter introduces library services for both the older people and dementia patients in North America, as well as those of the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA). This chapter discusses the three main roles of libraries in the third and fourth ages of life: 1) As a space for learning; 2) As a space to build/support ones’s ‘Ikigai’; and 3) As a place simply to be.

Chapter 5, “The Third Age: Supporting the Older People and Libraries in a Super-aged Society,” examines the library services for older people as third age people, specifically what sort of support libraries need in a super-aged society, with specific emphasis on lifelong learning at public libraries. Third age library services are examined in four parts: 1) Construction of community leadership through library services; 2) Volunteer opportunities; 3) As a place for supporting ‘Ikigai’; and 4) Library services orientations for the older people. Finally, this chapter discusses the importance of being proactive in the creation and support of a super-aged society by the older people themselves.

Chapter 6, “The Fourth Age: Dementia and Libraries,” discusses the issue of dementia experienced by the older people, which is becoming a more pressing issue worldwide. Dementia is heavily tied to aging, and is a subject that cannot be ignored in Japan reaching super aged society. This chapter also introduces UK’s dementia support programs in libraries, such as “Reminiscence Kits” and “Reading Well Books on Prescription .”

Chapter 7, “A Case Study of Library Services in a Super-aged Society,” introduces real implementation of library services for the aging in three separate areas: 1) The “Tsuzuki Library Fan Club,” a club for elderly users of the the Yokohama City Tsuzuki Library in Yokohama; 2) Dementia support approached from a library’s perspective at Miyamae Library in

Kawasaki City; and 3) Approaching social security and welfare administration services at Hyuga City's Daiodani Community Center and Library. This chapter discusses how essential libraries and their users are to the welfare and social security administrations.

Chapter 8, "Library Service for Older People and Their Needs," explains the needs of library services for the older people, analyzing data from interviews of residents involved in programs from the previously mentioned case studies of Kawasaki's Miyamae Library and Yokohama's Tsuzuki Library. From this research, this chapter looks at library usage now and in the future from six points of view: 1) Various different types of older people; 2) Access to libraries; 3) The needs for library resources and information; 4) The needs for specific library locations; 5) Concerning cognitive impairment; and 6) A desire to be involved in society.

Lastly, Chapter 9 recaps Chapters 1 through 8 and proposes ideas of study for the role of library services in a super-aged society moving forward.

There is a negative connotation associated with a super-aged society. However, as Japan's older population increases, it must become a leader in how to deal with an aging society. This report hopes to show the problems for and the role of libraries in a super-aged society – issues that have never before been dealt with.