

NEXT



## The Minutes of the Diet of Japan are now available through the Internet

We can read the Congressional Record on the Library of Congress Web site. The full text of the Hansard (Parliamentary debates) can be retrieved on the UK Parliamentary Homepage. From 19 January 1999, full text of the Minutes of the Diet of Japan (text in Japanese) are also available through the Internet.

A full-text database of the Minutes of the Diet is open to public access through the National Diet Library Homepage, the House of Representatives Homepage and the House of Councillors Homepage.



<http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/>

国会会議録検索システム

The database is searchable by keyword(s), name of speaker, title of speaker, date, house, committee and political group.

At present, the coverage of data is limited to recent sessions of the Plenary and Budget Committee meetings, it is due to be expanded to all Committees in April 1999 and back sessions (from 1947) by the end of FY2002.

For further information, please read the article [\*"Full-Text Database of the Minutes of the Diet: A vast source of information on Japan to be available on the Net"\*](#).

This database is searchable only in Japanese.

If you wish to keep your English OS and process Japanese, some related information are available on:

<http://www.jsnet.org/jls.html>

[up](#)

NEXT





## The 18th Mutual Visit Program between the National Diet Library and the National Library of China

A National Library of China (NLC) delegation visited Japan from November 8 to 19 on the 18th mutual visit program between NDL and NLC. The program started in 1981 to exchange opinions on issues of mutual concern and to further strengthen mutual understanding and friendly relations.

Headed by Zhou Heping, Deputy Director of NLC, the delegation consisted of the following four other members: Jin Fengji, Senior Librarian, Liu Xiao Bai, Director of Information and Network Department, Jing Hong Da, Director of Book-Collecting and Circulating Department, Tang Geng Sheng, Director of Youth Committee.



At the reception, from left:  
Mr. Jin, Senior Librarian of NLC  
Mr. Zhou, Deputy Director of NLC  
Mr. Miyawaki, Deputy Librarian of NDL  
Mr. Tobari, Librarian of NDL

### Plenary Meeting (November 9)

At the Plenary Meeting, Mr. Zhou Heping, Deputy Director of NLC described the electronic library projects of the NLC. The NLC started its automatization project in the middle of 1970's. By now, the library has nearly finished automatization of operations from acquisitions to user service. More than 1.3 million bibliographical data are stored in some twenty databases. Nearly 1.5 million pages of electronic books and journals were accessible through the NLC Homepage as of July 1997.

In addition to that, the "Chinese Electronic Library Project" is under examination as an important national project. Digitized Chinese materials will circulate nationally and worldwide through the national networks and the internet.

Mr. Mineo Miyawaki, Deputy Librarian of the NDL, reported on the electronic library projects of the NDL. The library celebrated its 50th anniversary in the transition to the information society. The library is promoting the electronic library projects and the Electronic Library Infrastructure System to improve both domestic and international library services.

### Section Meeting I (November 10),

Mr. Jing Hong Da, Director of Book-Collecting and Circulating Department of NLC, read the paper "*The Collection of Asian Materials and Information of the National Library of China*". Mr. Takashi Tomikubo, Head of Asian Materials Division of NDL, reported on the Asia Resource Information Center project in the Kansai-kan (tentative name).

### **Section Meeting II** (November 11)

The NLC made some proposals to strengthen our cooperative relations at the 17th mutual visit program in 1997. In this session we discussed the draft proposed by the NLC and the NDL. Both libraries agreed on "Letter of Intent concerning Exchange and Cooperation between the National Diet Library and the National Library of China" as follows:

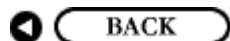
1. Continue the Mutual Visit Program as before
2. Investigate possibility of staff exchange for the training
3. Cooperate in construction of bibliographic databases in Chinese and Japanese
4. Cooperate in international exchange of materials and document supply service
5. Cooperate in the NDL's acquisition of Chinese materials for an Asia Resource Information Center in the Kansai-kan (tentative name)

### **Closing Session** (November 11)

In the closing session Mr. Zhou and Mr. Miyawaki summed up the program.

From the next day, the delegation visited libraries, museums and other institutions in various parts of Japan. They also visited many historic sites relating to Japan-China relations and left Japan on November 19.

[up](#)





## Full-Text Database of the Minutes of the Diet: A vast source of information on Japan to be available on the Net

Mika Shinohara\*

### CONTENTS

1. [Facts about the Diet of Japan](#)
2. [The Minutes of the Diet and their lack of accessibility](#)
3. [Development in the retrieval of the Minutes of the Diet](#)
4. [Full-text Database for the Minutes of the Diet](#)
5. [Schedule for the future](#)

### ABSTRACT

The Minutes of the Diet (Parliament of Japan) are a rich and precious source of information about Japan. Especially the Minutes of Standing Committee meetings, which record proceedings of a session in question-and-answer style – questions put by the Diet Members and the answer given by Ministers of State and government officials – provide various kinds of information on the political, economic and social issues which Japan faces.

Up to now access to this information source has been very limited. The National Diet Library (NDL) sends the Minutes of the Diet to prefectural assembly libraries and to some national libraries abroad. The NDL also compiles and publishes an index to the Minutes both in book form and as a database. The NDL is, in fact, the only institution that keeps the complete set of the Minutes and offers them for public access.

A full-text database of the Minutes of the Diet, which has just been developed jointly by the NDL, the Secretariat of the House of Representatives and the Secretariat of the House of Councillors, will soon make public the Minutes and thus provide the people of Japan with an opportunity to get to know the political process and get involved in it, and at the same time provide the people of the world with direct and accurate information about Japan.

The Retrieval System, a subsystem of the Full-Text Database System for the Minutes of the Diet, enables users to search the contents of the Minutes by keyword, name of speaker, title of speaker, date, house, committee and so on speedily, and display, edit and print out or

download the text. The system is scheduled to be open to public access through the Internet in January 1999. Although the coverage of data is at present limited to recent sessions of the Plenary and Budget Committee meetings, it will be expanded to all Committees in April 1999 and back sessions (from 1947) by the end of FY 2002.

## **1. Facts about the Diet of Japan**

The Diet (Parliament of Japan) is specified in the Constitution of 1946 as the highest organ of state power and the sole law-making organ of the state (Article 41). It is composed of two houses, namely, the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. The members of both houses are publicly elected representatives of the people.

A session of the Diet may be ordinary, extraordinary or special according to the reason for its convening. An ordinary session begins in January every year for the period of 150 days. An extraordinary session is convened when necessary, and a special session is held after a general election of the House of Representatives. All sessions are given a sequential number regardless of kind, for instance, the present session is the 143rd.

The final decision of each House is made by its Plenary meeting. However, the most important law-making and oversight functions of the Diet are carried out by various committees of the Houses. The number and names of the standing committees are specified in the Diet Law. A special committee may be set up to deal with a specific matter by a decision of either House. At present there are 20 standing committees in the House of Representatives and 17 in the House of Councillors. Investigation committees are also set up in the House of Councillors to conduct long-term and comprehensive research.

In each committee, the deliberations are carried out in Q and A style: questions are asked by the members of the committee and are answered by Ministers of State or government officials. The topics and subjects for deliberation range from legal, political, diplomatic or economic, financial, industrial, agricultural and communication affairs, to scientific, educational, cultural, welfare, labor and other social affairs, or natural disasters, accidents, scandals and crimes, covering almost all the issues which Japan faces. In particular, the Budget Committee not only examines the budget proposed by the Cabinet but also takes up a wide variety of key policy questions, and this committee is regarded as the most important.

Each House has its own Secretariat, Research Offices of the Committees and a Legislative Bureau. The National Diet Library (NDL) is an organization within the legislative branch of the government which provides the Diet – Houses, Committees and Members – with information and research services, and which is independent of the Secretariats of the Houses. The Library also has the function of the national deposit library of Japan. In the Library, the Research and Legislative Reference Bureau has special responsibility in services for the Diet.

## **2. The Minutes of the Diet and their lack of accessibility**

The deliberations of the Diet, especially in the committees, are a valuable information source

about major topics in Japan and the record of proceedings can be relied on as a precise and comprehensive means of grasping the contents of the deliberations, though some of the Diet deliberations on hot issues are made public through TV and other mass media.

Article 57 of the Constitution of Japan stipulates: "Deliberation in each House shall be public,.... Each House shall keep a record of proceedings. This record shall be published and given general circulation, excepting such parts of proceedings of secret session as may be deemed to require secrecy." While the provision of the Constitution is interpreted as the requirement for Plenary meetings, the Rules of each House also demand records of deliberations in the committees should be compiled, and we usually describe both of them as the Minutes of the Diet.

Compilation of the Minutes of the Diet is mainly the responsibility of the Records Department of the Secretariat of each House. The Proceedings Department and Committees Department also cooperate on it. The printing is done by the Printing Bureau of the Ministry of Finance which has a somewhat similar function to the HMSO of the United Kingdom or the GPO of the United States.

The minutes of the Plenary meetings are distributed as special supplements of the Official Gazette. Anybody can purchase them at the Government Publications Service Centers or the Service Stations. The minutes of committee meetings are printed and distributed to the Members but are not circulated as supplements of the Official Gazette, although members of the general public are still able to purchase them if they apply to a certain Diet-related body.

The people can read the Minutes of the Diet in such public places as the Service Lobby of the House, the NDL and libraries of prefectural assemblies, to which the NDL sends them. The Minutes are also sent to some national libraries of foreign countries. In addition, each House has recently opened a Web site on the Internet that includes the minutes of recent Plenary meetings.

It would be deceitful, however, if I said that the general public could use the Minutes of the Diet easily and whenever they wanted. We cannot expect the people to purchase the Minutes. For readers, the locations available are limited. As a matter of fact, the NDL is the only institution that keeps a complete set of the Minutes ready for use by the general public.

### **3. Development in the retrieval of the Minutes of the Diet**

(General Index to the Debates)

Apart from the question of the location of the Minutes of the Diet, it is essential for the accessibility of the Minutes that we have the means of searching the information in them and reaching the specific part of them. The NDL has been compiling and annually publishing the General Index to the Debates in book form from the 39th Session which was convened in September 1961. It consists of two volumes, namely, Speakers Index and Subjects Index.

The work of compiling of the General Index to the Debates, which used to be done manually

using cards, has been transformed into electronic compilation with computers from the 58th Session convened in December 1967. Since then the data have been accumulated electronically. Using this mass of data in electronic form, the database of the General Index to the Debates was developed in FY1982.

(Optical Disc Filing System)

What has been described above, however, is nothing but an index, and after retrieving the General Index to the Debates, you still have to go and locate the minutes themselves and physically find the pages you want.

The Optical Disc Filing System for the Minutes of the Diet was developed, starting in 1992, to enable these two jobs to be done simultaneously. The system stores the Minutes of the Diet in optical magnetic discs as image data, and links them with the index database which is also improved in a user-friendly way on the menu-display method. By this means, you can retrieve the index database and display, print and transmit by facsimile, texts of the Minutes selected from the results of the retrieval.

The input of data into optical magnetic discs was started in FY1992. The scanning of the Minutes for the first session (1947) to the latest was completed in FY1996.

#### **4. Full-text Database for the Minutes of the Diet**

(Background)

The Full-text Database System for the Minutes of the Diet is something completely different from the preceding databases. Whereas the General Index database and the Optical Disc Filing System use already-printed Minutes to index and digitize as image data, the Full-text Database System enables stenographers to compile the Minutes efficiently as digital data from the beginning, and enables users to make full-text search into the contents, reach the specific part directly, display the text and download it.

In FY 1994, the NDL and the Secretariats of the two Houses jointly commissioned a private company to help them carry out research on a full-text database of the Diet Minutes. The three organizations continued research and developed a prototype of the system in FY 1995, again commissioning a technology consulting body.

In June 1995, the Librarian of the NDL and the Secretaries General of both Houses signed an agreement which stipulates three objectives for the development of the full-text database system: (1) To improve the means of delivering the contents of the Diet deliberations to the Diet Members and to the general public; (2) To improve the efficiency of work done by the three organizations for the compilation and provision of the Minutes of the Diet; and (3) To make the Diet open, promoting information access to it, in line with the efforts for information disclosure in the administrative and judicial branches of the Government.

After having taken the above-mentioned steps, the Library and the two Houses jointly started the development of the Full-text Database System for the Minutes of the Diet in FY

1996.

#### (Outline of the System)

The system consists of four subsystems – the texts-producing support system, the research support system, the retrieval system, and the retrospective input system. The former two subsystems help staff members of the Records Departments to compile the Minutes in a speedy and accurate manner. The two Houses are mainly responsible for the development of these systems. The retrieval subsystem allows users to carry out full-text search and display the text chosen. The NDL is working on this system. The retrospective input system converts past Minutes stored in optical magnetic discs as image data into digital text data, using a kind of OCR, and incorporates them into the database. This subsystem is being developed jointly by the three organizations.

The retrieval system adopts a menu-display method. You can enter any word or, to be precise, any part of any word or sentence, which might be spoken in the Diet meetings. A combination retrieval equivalent to the so-called 'and/or' search is available. You can also retrieve the system by the names of Diet Members, Ministers, government officials, witnesses and other speakers, the name of the party to which each Diet Member belongs, the role of the speaker, the title of the speaker (such as Chairman of Fair Trade Commission), and the period, the session number, House or Committee's name, if you wish to specify. In this case, you do not always have to enter the exact name or word; what you need to do is just to pick out the appropriate one from possible candidates on the screen. Then a list of the Minutes which contains the keyword appears, from which you can choose one to let the text be displayed. The keyword entered is highlighted in color and underlined. The speakers' list is always shown on the left side of the display. By marking the box attached to each record in the list, you can make a group of records to be downloaded for editing and printing. The System is also linked with the printed Minutes stored as image data, so that you can download and print the Minutes as they originally looked.

#### **5. Schedule for the future**

The development of the Full-text Database System for the Minutes of the Diet is finishing its first stage. The database is now available as an in-house system for the Diet Members and staff members working in the Diet Buildings. With regard to the accumulation of data, we started to store the minutes of the Plenary meetings and the Budget Committee in the 142nd Session convened in January 1998. The coverage of data will be expanded to all committees in April 1999 and to back sessions (from 1947) by the end of FY2002.

Meanwhile, the database is scheduled to be available to the public on the Internet in January 1999. (The description of Sec. 4 applies to the already-developed in-house system. Some of the functions may be changed in the Internet version.)

As mentioned earlier, the Minutes of the Diet are a rich and precious source of information about the key issues Japan faces now or confronted in the past, but the access to them has been limited. The Full-text Database, being posted on the net, will actually make public the Minutes and thus provide the people of Japan with an opportunity to know the political



process and get involved in it, and at the same time provide people of the world with direct and accurate information about Japan.

Japanologists around the world, I hope, will soon be able to consult this database that covers a wide range of topics and time span, along with newspaper databases, periodical article databases, OPACs of major libraries and other internet resources.

(September 1998)

\* Head, International Liaison Section, International Cooperation Division,  
Library Cooperation Department, The National Diet Library (JAPAN)

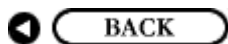
[up](#)



# National Diet Library Newsletter

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No. 108, April 1999



## □□ Shiohi no Tsuto □□

**Author** Painted by Kitagawa Utamaro (?-1806), edited by Akera Kanko (1738-98),

**Publisher** Tsutaya Juzaburo

**Imprint** ca.1789

**description** Album, 27.4 x 19.4#p

**Contents** A colored picture book of *Kyoka* (satirical poems).

The title *Shiohi no Tsuto* means souvenir of shell gathering. Thirty-eight *kyoka* poets, led by Akera Kanko, composed *kyoka* on 36 kinds of shellfish and on the two *genre* pictures of beautiful women.

This is a rich and luxurious book, and represents the highest-level technic of the time.

Here are all twelve leaves of "Shiohi no Tsuto". Click on the little images below to go to the large images.



Title page



Preface



A *genre* picture. 1b, 2a.



2b, 3a,



3b, 4a,



4b, 5a,



5b, 6a,



6b, 7a,



7b, 8a,



A *genre* picture. 8b, 9a.



Afterword and colophon



Back cover

[up](#)

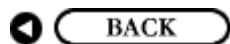
◀ **BACK**

**NEXT** ▶

# National Diet Library Newsletter

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No. 108, April 1999



## New Publications from the NDL The National Diet Library Catalog 1924–March 1949

### Magnetic Tape Edition

**JAPAN/MARC Sokyu ban**  
**Showa gannen – Showa 24-nen 3-gatsu**

(JAPAN/MARC Retrospective Edition 1926 – March 1949)

Available for 600,000 yen from:

Nihon Toshokan Kyokai (Japan Library Association)

1-11-14 Shinkawa, Chuo-ku,

Tokyo 104-0033 JAPAN

Tel: +81-3-3523-0812

a Gannen – Showa 24-nen 3-gatsu

### CD-ROM Edition

**NDL CD-ROM Line**  
**Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan Zosho Mokuroku**  
**Showa Gannen – Showa 24-nen 3-gatsu**

(The National Diet Library Catalog 1926 – March 1949)

Available for 326,000 yen from:

Kinokuniya Shoten (Kinokuniya Book Store)

5-38-1 Sakuragaoka, Setagaya-ku,

Tokyo 156-8691 JAPAN

Tel: +81-3-3439-0128

The magnetic tape edition and the CD-ROM edition of the *Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan Zosho Mokuroku Showa Gannen – Showa 24-nen 3-gatsu (National Diet Library Catalog 1926–March 1949)* published in 1998.

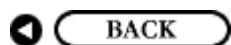
217,844 entries include Japanese books published in Japan from 1924 to March 1949, books published abroad by Japanese organizations. Some books written in Chinese and Korean.

In principle, data is based on *the Imperial Library Catalog*.

Many pamphlets held by the Imperial Library have been newly catalogued. The Imperial Library divided the materials they acquired into three classes: Ko, Otsu, and Hei. The library fully catalogued only Ko materials. Otsu materials, being considered less important, were catalogued in short form and lay idle in the stacks for a long time. This new catalog includes full data of 69,000 Otsu materials.

[up](#)





## Bulletin Board

### 65th IFLA Council and General Conference

<b>Date</b>	20–28 August 1999
<b>Place</b>	Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Center (BITEC), Bangkok, Thailand
<b>Main Theme</b>	On the Threshold of the 21st Century: Libraries as Gateway to an Enlightened World
<b>Conference website</b>	<a href="http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla65/65info.htm">http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla65/65info.htm</a>

### 6th International Conference on Japanese Information in Science, Technology, Education & Commerce (JOHO 6)

<b>Date</b>	1–3 September 1999
<b>Venue</b>	Stockholm, Sweden
<b>Fees (tentative)</b>	3000 Swedish kronor (about 375 USD) until 31 July 1999 3500 SEK thereafter
<b>Secretariat</b>	Prof. Bruce Henry Lambert (Chairman) Mr. Kazune Funato Hallgren <a href="mailto:Kazune.funato@hhs.se">Kazune.funato@hhs.se</a> European Institute of Japanese Studies (EIJS) Stockholm School of Economics P.O. Box 6501, SE-113 83 Stockholm, Sweden Tel: (+46-8) 736 9364 Fax: (+46-8) 31 30 17
<b>Conference website</b>	<a href="http://www.hhs.se/eijs/joho/index.htm">http://www.hhs.se/eijs/joho/index.htm</a>

[up](#)



# National Diet Library Newsletter

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No. 108, April 1999



## Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

(Text in Japanese)

### National Diet Library Monthly Bulletin

No. 456 March 1999

- Completion of the retrospective conversion of Japanese books, by Bibliography Division, Books Department
- Participating in the seventh Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) and the Papua New Guinea Library Association Conference (APLAP), *by Akihiro Yabe*
- Internationalization of the JAPAN/MARC: Recent state of the IBCIM, and the UNIMARC, *by Kiyoko Tamura*

No. 455 February 1999

- In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Branch Libraries System:
- Symposium "Dissemination and management of government information", *by Mikiko Tomita*
- Network of NDL and its Branch Libraries: Current situation of each Branch Library, *by Nanae Otssuka*

No. 454 January 1999

- Ground-breaking ceremony of the National Diet Library Kansai-kan (tentative name)
- Toward improvement of research services and information disclosure: Full-text Database System for the Minutes of the Diet and the expansion of services for the Diet, *by Hidehisa Oyama*
- Report of the second mutual visit program with the National Library of Korea, *by NDL Delegation to Korea*

[up](#)

