

The Japan Specialist Workshop 2013 Symposium “Why support for overseas Japanese Studies now?”

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On February 20, 2013, the Japan Specialist Workshop (JSW) 2013 Symposium “Why support for overseas Japanese Studies now?” was held in the Tokyo Main Library of the National Diet Library (NDL), co-sponsored by the [International House of Japan](#) (I-House). 146 people were in attendance.

“Why support for overseas Japanese Studies now?” Prof. Emeritus Koichi Kabayama, Director of the Printing Museum and the chair of the steering committee of JSW, answered the question in his keynote speech. As shown in the phrase “Cool Japan,” recent overseas Japanese Studies has been covering popular culture beyond conventional classics-oriented studies. “Now” is the time, he argues, when a new concept of support is needed.

The NDL had carried out a training project for overseas librarians working in Japanese Studies institutions, in cooperation with the [I-House](#), [Japan Foundation](#) and other organizations. The project, launched in 1996, attracted 137 librarians from 36 countries. Under the framework of the JSW, which started in 2010, one-week training programs including field study have been organized for researchers in Japanese Studies in addition to librarians. The symposium was staged to review the fruits of the last two years and look beyond at the forms future support should take.

Following the keynote speech, two of the workshop participants in these two years made presentations. Ms. Ursula Elke Flache of the Berlin State Library pointed out the importance of such training programs for Japanese information specialists, especially those in Germany with no official courses and few training opportunities. Ms. Ayako Hatta of the Monash University Library, Australia, pointed to the human network among participants as one of the workshop’s fruits. Next, Ms. Izumi Koide, Director of the Resource Center for the History of Entrepreneurship at the Shibusawa Memorial Museum, explained how various types of materials are used in the research process. She stated that Japanese information specialists such as overseas librarians have a role in providing information

services on Japanese-language primary sources which are not housed in libraries. Dr. Sven Saaler, Associate Professor at Sophia University, corroborated her opinion in terms of right understanding of Japan, drawing on examples of unconfirmed or misleading flash reports on the Great Japan East Earthquake by overseas media.



<<Ms. Koide, Ms. Flache, Ms. Hatta, and Dr. Saaler (from left)>>

In the next session, domestic Japanese Studies institutions outlined the current situation and issues of support offered by each institution. Mr. Junichi Shimizu, Head of the Japan Foundation's Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange Department, explained their activities and the trends of Japanese Studies in abroad. Mr. Toshinori Egami, from the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, talked about their activities: their library has been developing its collections focusing on Japan-related materials and has worked as a hub for research activities; on the other hand, it has yet to enhance its international library services, such as inter-library loan overseas. Ms. Rie Hayashi, Librarian of the I-House, presented their three kinds of support: organizing lecture meetings and conferences; managing a special library for Japanese Studies; carrying out training projects. Ms. Yoriko Sato of the NDL explained some of our support: international loan, photocopy and reference services; digitized materials available on the Internet (e.g. the Digital Library from the Meiji Era); bibliographic and holding information; training projects.

Subsequently, the outcome of the strategic meeting to cultivate Japan specialists held on the previous day was reported. The meeting dealt with the form support for diversifying Japanese Studies should take, including multilateral joint research.

In the last session, a discussion “The future form of Japanese Studies support” was held among Prof. Emeritus Kabayama; Dr. Kazuhiko Komatsu, Director-General, International Research Center for Japanese Studies; and Dr. Harald Fuess, Professor, Heidelberg University, the former president of the European Association for Japanese Studies. The following five issues were pointed out:

- 1) a gap between researchers in Japanese Studies, who tend to seek focused and in-depth information according to their research interest, and Japanese information specialists, who need to have a general view;
- 2) needs to support the future researches covering not only Japan but also the whole of East Asia;
- 3) importance of stronger projection of research results written in Japanese by, for example, supplementing them with English bibliographic information;
- 4) delay in Japan of developing digital resources, which are crucial especially to overseas researchers;
- 5) needs to increase overseas interests in Japan by providing information to the general public as well as researchers.



<<Discussion session: Prof. Emeritus Kabayama,
Dr. Fuess and Dr. Komatsu (from left)>>

The symposium brought out high expectations for Japanese Studies institutions including the NDL. As Mr. Takashiro Furuhata, Executive Director of the I-House, and Mr. Noritada Otaki, Librarian of the NDL, mentioned after the discussion, those institutions' collaborative efforts are required to support a new type of Japanese Studies.