

National Diet Library Newsletter

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Selections from NDL collections

Browsing *Joruri* books with YOSHINAGA Motonobu, NDL Director General (Part One)

This article is a translation of an article in Japanese from [NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 729 \(January 2022\)](#).



YOSHINAGA Motonobu, director general of the National Diet Library (NDL), has been fascinated by *Gidayu-bushi ningyo joruri* for nearly half a century. In this article, he introduces *Joruri* related materials from the NDL collection and discusses why this subject is so interesting.

What is *Gidayu-bushi ningyo joruri* (*Bunraku*)?

Gidayu-bushi (*Joruri* music) is performed by a *katari* (narrator) accompanied on a *shamisen* (a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument). *Gidayu-bushi ningyo joruri* (*Bunraku*) is a form of theater that originated in Osaka at the beginning of the 17th century and in which puppets perform to the accompaniment of *Gidayu-bushi*.

Performances combining puppets with oral storytelling appeared during the Muromachi period from the 14th to 16th centuries. *Heike monogatari* (a military epic depicting the maelstrom of war at the end of the 12th century) is a famous example of oral storytelling. *Gidayu-bushi* was created by TAKEMOTO Gidayu, a well-known narrator during the late 17th century who established *Ningyo joruri* as an art form through his performances of the works of the famous playwright CHIKAMATSU

Monzaemon.

Bunraku takes its name of the last remaining puppet theater of the Taisho period (1912–1926), the Bunrakuza. In 1955, *Bunraku* was recognized by the Japanese Government as an Intangible Cultural Property. Today, it is performed primarily at the National Theater in Tokyo, established in 1966, and at the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, established in 1984.

Terminology

Tayu: a narrator of *Gidayu-bushi*. This term is often heard used as an honorific title for performers.

Sawari: a significant or climactic part of a performance

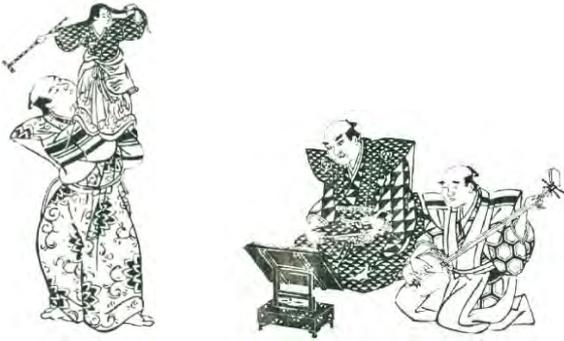
Dan: stages in the structure of *Joruri*

Jidaimono: a historical play set in an era that predates the Edo period

Sewamono: a contemporary play set in the Edo period

Michiyuki: Many *Sewamono* feature stories in which two

lovers set out on their final journey to the other world, concluding with a double suicide. There are, however, other examples of *michiyuki*. In many works, *michiyuki* refers to spectacularly expressed travel scenes and sometimes is used to indicate a scene that is a break in the middle of a long performance, similar to an intermezzo.



Illustrations from *Imamukashi ayatsuri nendaiki*.
Written by SHOHONYA Kyuzaemon, published by Koya Fukusaburo and Tenmaya Yasube. *Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

Shohon

Shohon (正本) are printed editions of a correctly copied *Joruri* libretto. They are also known as *maruhon* (丸本), since they contain the full script, and the word *maru* implies completeness. These books became popular as standard textbooks for practice or just as readers. *Gidayu-bushi* usually come in manuscripts that have seven lines per page. Hence, they are known as *shichigyobon* (七行本).

Kokusenya kassen

Kokusenya kassen (The Battles of Coxinga) was written by CHIKAMATSU Monzaemon and first performed in 1715. The story is about a man named Watonai, who was born to a Chinese father and a Japanese mother and who plays an important role in rebuilding his father's homeland—Ming-dynasty China—after it was ravaged by an enemy. This play ran for 17 months and helped revive the fortunes of the Takemotoza, a theater established by TAKEMOTO Gidayu.



CHIKAMATSU Monzaemon. *Kokusenya kassen*. Nishizawa Kyuzaemon and Urokogataya Magobe. NDL Call No. 191-453.

Shown in the figure is the text of a scene in which Watonai travels to Ming-dynasty China to visit General Kanki, who is married to Kinshojo, Watonai's older half-sister, and ask him to become allies. On the way, he uses a talisman from the Ise Grand Shrine to tame a ferocious tiger and gains many retainers.

Director General Yoshinaga's commentary

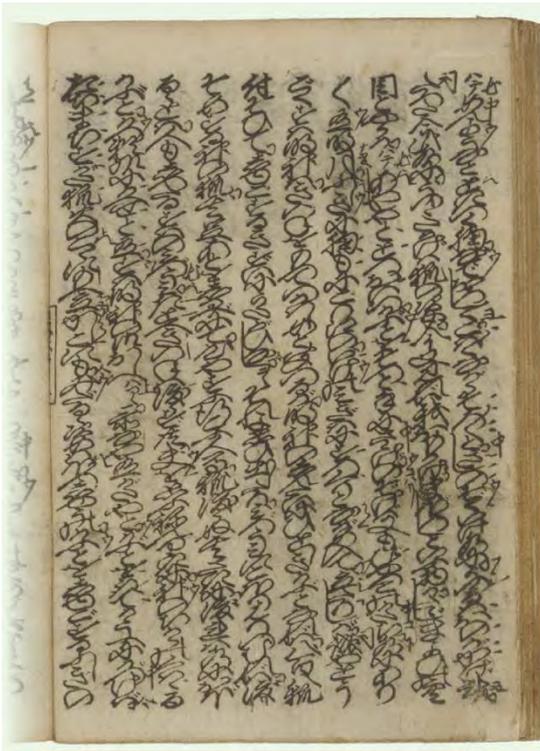
It is amazing to me that Chikamatsu could create such an epic story about a foreign country at this point in Japanese history. Tigers did not exist in Japan, but they appear in the story. Many of Chikamatsu's works are not written in the common, seven-five-syllable style, which makes them very difficult to perform. But that is just another part of what makes them interesting.

Jyugyobon

Jyugyobon (十行本) are similar to *shohon* but have ten lines per page rather than just seven, which reduces the total number of pages in the book. Although less bulky, there is little room on the page for writing notes during practice.

Honcho nijushiko

This is a collaborative work by CHIKAMATSU Hanji, MIYOSHI Shoraku, TAKEDA Inaba, TAKEDA Koizumo, TAKEDA Heishichi, and TAKEMOTO Saburobe. It was first performed in 1766. Set during Japan's Warring States period, the plot revolves around the idea that even though daimyos TAKEDA Shingen and UESUGI Kenshin are bitter rivals, the true villain is their common enemy, SAITO Dosan. The story is full of intrigue and unexpected twists. Princess Yaegaki, the daughter of Kenshin, is a popular character.



CHIKAMATSU Hanji, et al. *Honcho nijushiko*. NDL Call No. 191-434.

Shown here is a scene entitled *Jushuko* (The Incense Burning). Princess Yaegaki is betrothed to TAKEDA Katsuyori, oldest son and heir of Shingen. Hearing that Katsuyori is dead, she mourns his passing by burning a famous incense called Jushuko. As she does so, Katsuyori appears to assure her that he is alive and well. In the next scene, Princess Yaegaki learns that Katsuyori is in danger and prays for his safety to the *Suwa Hossho no Kabuto*, a treasured helmet owned by TAKEDA Shingen. The spirit of a magical fox hears her prayers and causes Lake Suwa to freeze over, allowing Princess Yaegaki to cross the lake so that she can warn Katsuyori of the danger.



There is also a *sugoroku* board game based on *Joruri*, in which Princess Yaegaki appears holding a kabuto in her hand.

Tosei Ryuko Joruri gedaizukushi mawari sugoroku. Illustrated by Munehiro, Asakura.

*Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

Director General Yoshinaga's commentary

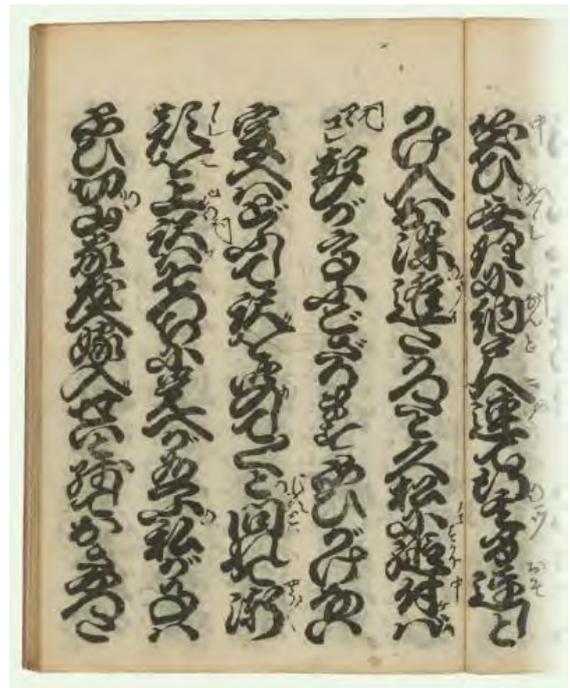
This is a very beautiful scene! Both spectacular and fascinating. I used to teach at a university in Suwa, which is in present-day Nagano Prefecture, and there on the shore of the Lake Suwa is a huge statue of Princess Yaegaki holding the *Suwa Hossho no Kabuto* in her hand.

Gogyobon

Gogyobon (五行本) differ from *shohon* in that they feature condensed versions and have only five lines per page. The libretto used onstage by *tayu* during performances are called *yukahon* and they, too, have only five lines per page for ease of reading. Many *gogyobon* are printed versions of *yukahon* that are used for practice.

Shinpan utazaimon

Shinpan utazaimon was written by CHIKAMATSU Hanji and first performed in 1780. It is based on a true incident that took place in 1710, when Osome, daughter of an oil-seller, and Hisamatsu, a young apprentice, committed double suicide. The word *shinpan* here means "new version," and indicates that this is a reworking of a story that was the subject of an earlier work.



CHIKAMATSU Hanji. *Shinpan utazaimon*, no. 1: *Nozakimura no dan*. Kashimaya Seisuke. NDL Call no. 912.4-Ti2382s.

In *Nozakimura no dan*, Hisamatsu is an apprentice who was cheated out of money he had collected and is sent back to his hometown, Nozakimura. His adopted father, Kyusaku, wants him to marry Omitsu, who is Kyusaku's wife's stepdaughter, and Omitsu herself is very pleased about the prospect of marrying Hisamatsu. But then Osome comes to visit, and it becomes apparent that Osome and Hisamatsu have already made up their minds to commit suicide. Sensing this, Omitsu steps aside.

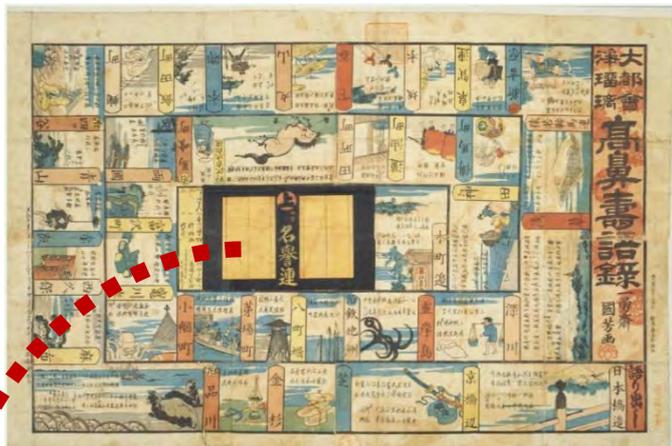
Director General Yoshinaga's commentary

The shamisen accompaniment to this work is known colloquially as "Nozaki" and is one of the first pieces given to beginners learning to play the shamisen. It is easy to understand and has many *sawari*, so it is always included in anthologies of popular *Gidayu*.

Sugoroku

Daitokai Joruri Takahana Sugoroku

Sugoroku (双六) are board games that were popular during the Edo period, and this game takes groups of amateur *Joruri* performers called *ren* (連) as its subject matter. Each cell contains the name of a well-known amateur performer, and crossing the finish line entitles the winning player to open the last cell and reveal a proud *taiyu* and *shamisen* player. Amateur groups of *Gidayu-bushi* and *shamisen* players were very popular, and the inscription "禁賣買不出連外" (Not for sale or distribution outside the group) on right edge indicates that these games were shared only with group members. *Daitokai* in the title literally means "metropolis" and in this case refers to Edo.



Daitokai Joruri Takahana Sugoroku. Illustrated by UTAGAWA, Kuniyoshi, Yoroishima Toshuken.

*Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

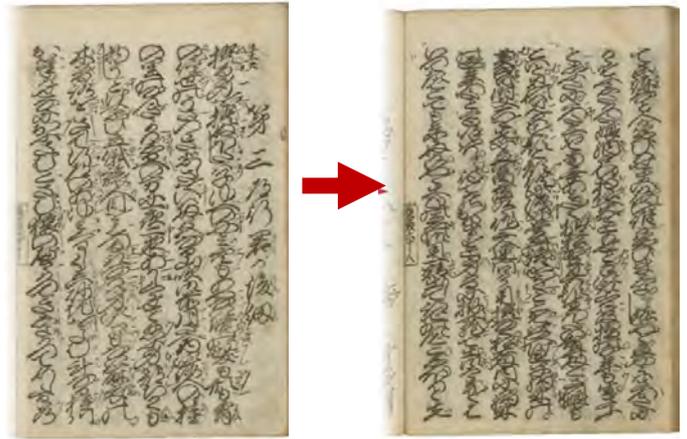
Opening the final cell...



Essential characteristics of *Joruri* books

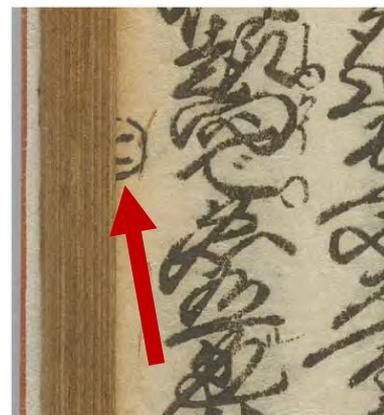
Joruri books are written using a unique form of *kuzushiji* (cursive characters) that are slightly flattened relative to other forms of *kuzushiji*.

A tightly packed page...



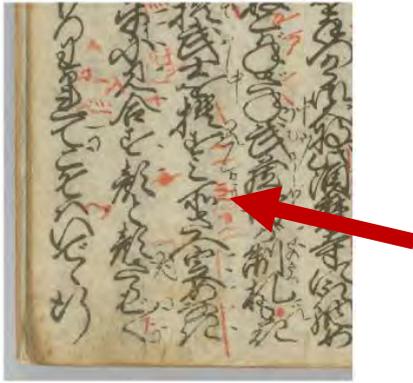
YOSHIKAWA, Sobe and YAMAMOTO, Kuhe. *Hiragana seisuiki*. Bunkodo et al., first performance in 1739. NDL Call No. 238-203.

Lines at the end of a scene are often written with characters that are cramped together and tightly packed on the page in order to fit as many characters as possible into a single line without changing the number of lines on the page. This can be seen in the above two images, where the image on the left shows the beginning of a scene, and image on the right shows the end.



From *Kana dehon Chushingura*. Written by TAKEDA Izumo, et al. NDL Call No. 912.4-Ta464k.

Scenes are identified by a number written on the edge of the page where the scene begins, so then are easy to find!



NAMIKI, Sosuke. *Ichinotani futaba gunki*. First performance in 1751. NDL Call No. 238-150.

Symbols in red ink are for performance. It seems that the owner of this book wrote them down for practice.

Banzuke and ezukushi

Banzuke (番付) were posted in towns for publicity or distributed to patrons, listing the name of the theater, the titles of the works to be performed, and the names of the performers. *Ezukushi* (絵尽) were pictures that illustrated the highlights of the play and explained the story. They were sold during performances and were often purchased by those who had seen the show as souvenirs or by those who were unable to attend but wanted to imagine what the play was like.

Shibai shogedaishu

Shibai shogedaishu is a collection of *banzuke* and *ezukushi* of *Ningyo joruri* and *kabuki*. It includes *Ningyo joruri* works from the Takemotoza and Toyotakeza theaters, both of which were popular in their heyday, as well as indications of when the performances were premiered and who performed them. Shown below is an *ezukushi* depicting several scenes from *Honcho nijushiko* on each page. NDL Call No. 106-246.



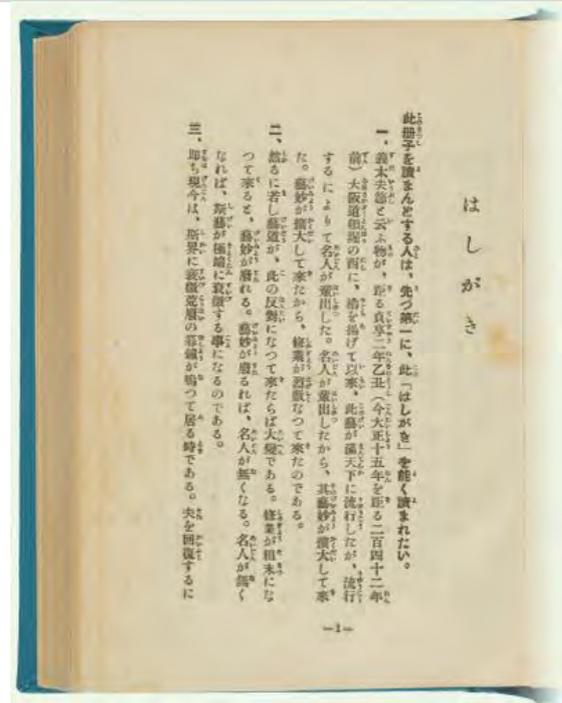
Ayatsuri ebanzuke¹

Ayatsuri ebanzuke is a collection of *Ningyo joruri banzuke*. Shown below is a *banzuke* from a 1750 performance of *Kokusenya kassen* at the Takemotoza Theater. The names of the *tayū* and *shamisen* players for each scene are given. The title of the play includes a two-line subtitle: A Chinese father and a Japanese mother.



Materials from the Taisho Period

Joruri shiroto koshaku



SUGIYAMA, Sonohian. *Joruri shiroto koshaku*. Kokubiyaku Hakkajo, 1926.

*Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#) (Monochrome)

This book on the art of *Joruri* was written by SUGIYAMA Shigemaru, an important figure in the nationalist movement, and compiles into one volume a series of

¹ Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

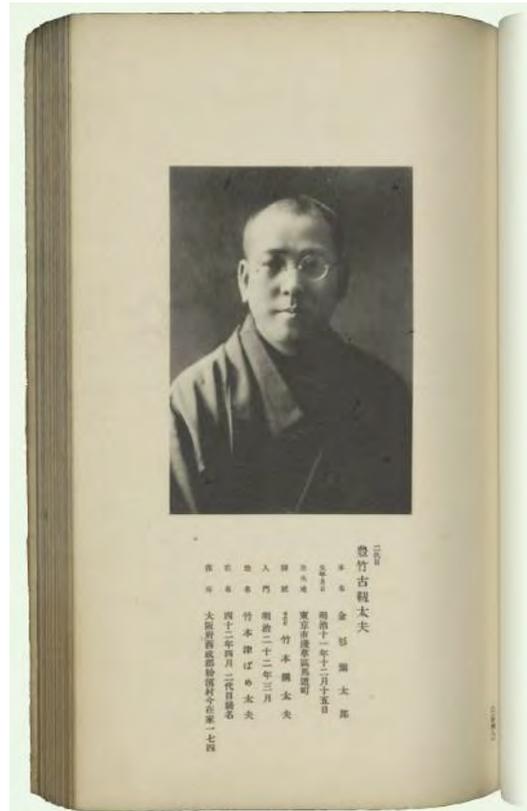
articles published under an alias in *Kokubyaku*, a magazine of which Sugiyama himself was the publisher. In 2004 Iwanami Bunko issued a reprint of this book. The title means “essays on *Joruri* by an amateur player.” In this work, Sugiyama laments the present state of *Joruri* performance, which he describes as being in “decline and desolation.” He recommends practice as the only way to remedy the situation but also laments that “given that *Joruri* was largely an oral tradition, information is only available from living masters. Since ancient times, there must have been many such masters, who passed down their knowledge orally. But, alas, we no longer have access to them.” Sugiyama asserts that he wrote these articles to share what he learned from the masters of the day, and while many of these plays are no longer performed, this book is still a valuable record of live performances and provides information such as how the play should be narrated, whether the *tayu* was good or bad, and other commentary.

Director General Yoshinaga’s commentary

Nowadays, we have the added convenience of recording performances, but *Joruri* is still basically an oral tradition. While Noh songs can to some extent be reproduced from written sources by reading symbols called *gomasho*, *Joruri* cannot be reproduced from written sources alone. That is why materials such as Sugiyama’s book are priceless.

Konokimicho

Konokimicho is a who’s who of famous *tayu* and *shamisen* players, such as TAKEMOTO Gidayu, including portraits and profiles. The book was printed using a high-quality collotype process and bound in the traditional Japanese style.



TACHIBANA, Yonekichi, ed. *Konokimicho*. Fukuzumikai, 1923. NDL Call No. 192-152.

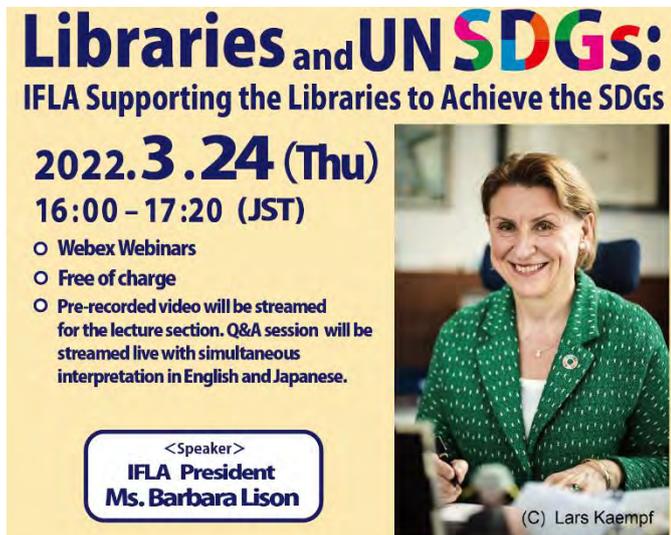
The image shows TOYOTAKE Koutsubodayu II, later known as Toyotake Yamashirono Shojo. He introduced modern realism to *Gidayu-bushi* through his emotional descriptions and interpretations.

(Translated by NOZAWA Asuka and OGAWA Kanako)

Events

NDL Webinar—*Libraries and UN SDGs: IFLA supporting the libraries to achieve the SDGs* by IFLA president, Ms. Barbara Lison

Branch Libraries and Cooperation Division, Administrative Department



Libraries and UN SDGs:
IFLA Supporting the Libraries to Achieve the SDGs

2022.3.24 (Thu)
16:00 - 17:20 (JST)

- Webex Webinars
- Free of charge
- Pre-recorded video will be streamed for the lecture section. Q&A session will be streamed live with simultaneous interpretation in English and Japanese.

<Speaker>
IFLA President
Ms. Barbara Lison

(C) Lars Kaempf

On March 24, 2022, the NDL sponsored a webinar entitled *Libraries and UN SDGs: IFLA supporting the libraries to achieve the SDGs*. The lecturer was Ms. Barbara Lison, president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

The webinar consisted of a lecture followed by a Q&A session. The lecture was pre-recorded on video, but the Q&A session was live, with Ms. Lison participating from the Netherlands.

Lecture

The lecture began with an overview of IFLA and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), after which Ms. Lison described the IFLA's activities for achieving SDGs.



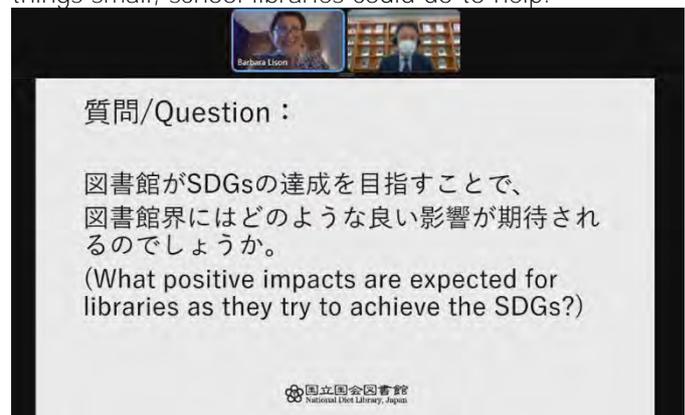
Ms. Lison noted that Goal 16-10, "Ensure public access to information and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national laws and international agreements," was particularly important for libraries, in that libraries have a role to play in providing access to information necessary for promoting SDGs. She also introduced a booklet that was published by the IFLA describing initiatives taken by libraries around the world and a toolkit explaining actions for achieving SDGs.



The IFLA website includes a *Library Map of the World*, from which visitors can learn about initiatives taken by libraries around the globe, and during her lecture, Ms. Lison described the activities of libraries in Germany, including those of the Bremen City Library, where Ms. Lison serves as director.

Q&A session

During the Q&A session that followed the lecture, questions were asked about what kinds of positive impact on the library community could be expected from libraries' efforts to achieve SDGs, how libraries that were not yet involved in SDGs could get started, and what kinds of things small, school libraries could do to help.



Reference:

The lecture materials and video have been made available on our website, as shown below.

- Lecture materials
[NDL Webinar—*Libraries and UN SDGs: IFLA supporting the libraries to achieve the SDGs*](#)

- Lecture video

[Libraries and UN SDGs: IFLA supporting the libraries to achieve the SDGs \(YouTube\)](#)

Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

Selected Articles from the Research and Legislative Reference Bureau, 2022

Research Planning Division, Research and Legislative Reference Bureau

The Research and Legislative Reference Bureau (RLRB) of the National Diet Library publishes research papers on national policy issues in Japan.

We are pleased to announce that selected articles from the RLRB's publications are now available in English at [Publications in English](#).

The RLRB prepares research papers on national policy issues for the use of Diet members and the Japanese public. Also, for the benefit of research analysts in parliamentary libraries around the world, the RLRB provides English translations of selected articles from the RLRB's publications, which include information about social, political, and economic issues in Japan.

All translations are available online. We hope you find our work inspiring and useful.

- **ONDA Hiroyuki**, "[Measures against Viral Hepatitis \(PDF: 800KB\)](#)."
- **IDA Atsuhiko**, "[Constitution of Japan and the Youth: The Human Rights of Minors \(PDF: 640KB\)](#)."
- **SATO Ryo**, "[The Development of Political Parties in Post-war Japan \(PDF: 638KB\)](#)."



Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

The NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 732, April 2022/ No.733, May 2022

If you click the volume number of each issue, you can read the full-text of NDL Monthly Bulletin. The text is provided in PDF format* (in Japanese).

No. 732, April 2022 (PDF: 7.02 MB)

- <Book of the month — from NDL collections>
Kain'okajo—Cherry blossoms by HIROSE Kain, a painter of the Mikuma school
- **Protecting our books—Tools for preservation and restoration** (final installment)
(4) Examining
- *Zaihaku nihon imin rekishi chosa kiroku*—**Digitization of glass plates**
- Working at the NDL, Season 2 Episode 7
- Digital exhibition
“Portraits of Modern Japanese Historical Figures”
- <Tidbits of information on NDL>
“Top secret” mission?
- <Books not commercially available>
➤ *Wakayamakenjin burajiru iju 100shunen kinenshi*
- <NDL Topics>

No. 733, May 2022 (PDF: 7.24 MB)

- <Book of the month — from NDL collections>
Tales of mystery and imagination—**Fantastic illustrations** by Harry Clarke
- Revealing the digitization project of materials at the NDL
- Browsing library materials—deciphering photographs
(4) History and background of newspaper photography
- Working at the NDL, Season 2 Episode 8
- <Tidbits of information on NDL>
Preparing for the journey to digitization
- <Books not commercially available>
➤ *Tohoku hogen onomatope (Giongo · gitaigo)*
Yoreishu
- <NDL Topics>