

Anticipatory Research of the National Diet (Parliamentary) Library Japan:  
A Major Research Resource for the Diet  
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## 1. Introduction

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The Research and Legislative Reference Bureau (the Research Bureau) of the National Diet (Parliamentary) Library, Japan is the legislative support organization for the National Diet. The researchers of the Research Bureau do two types of researches and studies, one is the research done "By Request" from the Diet Members, committees of both Houses of the Diet, and political parties, the other is the research done by our own initiative. We call the latter type of research "Anticipatory Research" because we do research anticipating major legislative issues and future research requests from the Diet Members. Anticipatory research is a major part of our research activities.

These two types of researches have a tandem relationship like the front and back wheel of a bicycle. The purposes of anticipatory research are to develop research resources for future research requests, to improve our research ability and to expand our research capacity. The results of anticipatory research are one of our major resources to answer research requests promptly.

# National Diet Library Newsletter

The results of anticipatory research are published in several forms. A hard copy of each printed materials is distributed to all Diet Members. They are also available on the website for the Diet Members and on the website for the general public. In FY2011, we published 349 articles, for a total of 4,100 pages. The total number of the access to our research reports on our website for the Diet Members was 25,518 in 2012. The total number of the access to our research reports on our website for the general public reached 3,292,931 in 2012.

## 2. Steps of the Anticipatory Research

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Before each ordinary Diet session begins, each research division of the Research Bureau selects major research subjects anticipating major legislative agendas and research requests from the Diet Members, and prepares for them by producing research papers and reports about these subjects. Each research division must submit the “Basic Research Work Plan” of the division to the Research Planning Division of the Research Bureau. The plan includes major anticipated legislative agendas of the Diet session, each researcher’s research plan, the title of the research report he or she will write, the type of publication, the reason to make that report, relevance to legislative agenda, and the planned date of publication. Each researcher has to write at least one research report a year.

The Products Planning Committee of the Research Bureau deliberates and authorizes each Division’s plan. The Planning Committee manages and coordinates the publishing of research reports.

When a researcher finishes writing a report, the director and the senior specialist of the research division review it. The review point is whether the report is up to the standard of publication. The draft report is then sent to the office of Interdisciplinary Research Service. Senior Specialists and Specialists of the office review all draft reports before publication. The review points of the office are relevance to legislative agenda, clear and concise writing, perspective, accuracy, objectivity, and non-partisanship. The Two levels of peer review ensure the quality of our products.

After the publication of a major research report, the researcher who wrote the report makes a presentation at a “Policy Seminar” for the Diet Members and their staff. In FY 2011, the Research Bureau held 23 Policy Seminars and a total of 576 Members and staff attended.

## 3. Major Products of the Research Bureau

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The Research Bureau publishes four types of research papers and reports;

(1) *Issue brief*, (2) *Monthly Reference*, (3) *Monthly and Quarterly Foreign Legislation* and (4) *Research Materials*.

### (1) *Issue Brief*

*Issue Brief* is a compact briefing paper of about 10-15 pages on national policy issues. It is modelled after the *Issue Brief* of the Congressional Research Service of the U.S. Library of Congress. The first *Issue Brief* was published in 1986. Each issue covers one policy issue. It is published from time to time during the Diet sessions. In FY 2012, the Research Bureau published 32 new and updated *Issue Briefs*.

### (2) *Monthly Reference*

*Monthly Reference* is the Research Bureau's monthly magazine which contains policy and legal analysis on state affairs, historical studies, and comparative studies on domestic and foreign systems, from a medium to long term perspective. Senior Specialists and other senior researchers mainly contribute articles to *Monthly Reference*. The length of articles is 15 to 20 pages. Each issue contains 3 to 10 articles. *Monthly Reference* was first published in 1951.

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### (3) *Foreign Legislation*

Foreign legislation and foreign public policy research is one of the major and unique research areas of the Research Bureau. To make better laws, foreign legislative information and comparative analyses are essential. At the bill drafting stage and committee deliberation stage, the Diet Members examine similar laws of foreign countries. The Diet Members often ask us to make in-depth comparative analytical reports.

To satisfy these research requests from the Diet Members, we publish *Monthly and Quarterly Foreign Legislation* which provides legislative information, Japanese translations and analyses of foreign laws. *Foreign Legislation* covers major legislative information of the countries and areas, such as U.S.A., E.U., U.K., France, Germany, Russia, China, Korea and Australia.

## (4) *Research Materials*

*Research Materials* series is a monograph series published irregularly and contains reports of major research projects, such as Interdisciplinary Research, Science and Technology Research and Foreign Constitution Research Project. Each issue is about 100-300 pages.

## 4. Major Research Projects

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The Research Bureau conducts several research projects on our own initiative with outside scholars and experts.

### (1) Research Cooperation Projects

The Research Cooperation Projects are research projects researched by researchers of one or several research divisions of the Research Bureau in cooperation with outside experts and scholars on hot issues. The Projects enable us to collect a wider range of information and to improve our analysis and quality of research. The Projects include several formats of researches, such as hearings from the experts, discussion meetings, and field studies. On an issue-by-issue base, we can choose the length and types of cooperation. They are very flexible.

The results of the projects are published in several forms. The Research Cooperation Office of the Research Planning Division was newly established in 2011 to manage and administer the projects.

### (2) Interdisciplinary Research Projects

One of the major research projects of the Research Bureau is "Interdisciplinary Research Projects," which are conducted on wide-ranging cross cutting issues. Each year the Research Bureau chooses one theme. The project team, which is composed of researchers from several research divisions, visiting researchers, part-time researchers researches together on one issue from different perspectives and by various research methods. It is a long term project, taking from one to two years.

The research theme of the 2011 project was "Regeneration of Japan through Technology and Culture." 27 researchers of the Research Bureau, one visiting scholar, and 3 part-time researchers did the research together from February 2011 to August 2012. One contract scholar

contributed a research report. They reviewed existing studies, did field studies in Japan, the U.S., and Indonesia, held hearings from experts, and held discussion meetings among members of the project. The Research Bureau held an international policy seminar titled "Global Economy and Growth Strategy of Japan," inviting foreign and Japanese scholars. The results were published in the form of *Research Material* in September 2012, including the records of the international policy seminar. The Research Bureau also held a policy seminar for the Diet Members.

The theme of the 2012 project is "U.S.-Japan relationship after 2012 presidential election." The scheme of the 2012 project is the same as the 2011 projects. The project team started its research in April 2012 and will end in July 2013.

### (3) Foreign Constitution Research Projects

The Japanese Constitution was enacted in 1946 and it has never been amended since then. The Commissions on the Constitution of both Houses of the Diet were inaugurated in August 2007. The Commission started their work in October 2011. The Commission on the Constitution is the organization that conducts broad and comprehensive research on the Constitution of Japan and fundamental legislation closely related to the constitution of Japan. Since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in December 2012, constitutional amendment has become one of the hottest political issues.

The Constitution Division was established at the Research Bureau in April 2012. The Constitution Division has responsibilities to do research on both Japanese and foreign constitutions. The main research project of the Constitution Division is the Foreign Constitution Research Projects. The project focuses on the foreign constitutions which have not yet been translated into Japanese. Outside scholars translate them into Japanese together with our researchers. The Japanese translation and commentary article are published in the form of *Research Material*. Up to now, the Division has published translations of the constitution of Sweden, Ireland, Austria, Canada, Greece, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The project also focuses on constitutional amendments procedure and systems of referendum of major countries.

Foreign legislation research needs strong expertise, such as foreign language ability, legal knowledge and long-time experience. The Research Bureau develops such expertise through on-the-job training and the foreign legislation study groups.

## (4) Science and Technology Research Projects

The Research Bureau launched a new science and technology research project in 2010. It is a comprehensive study project and not a technology assessment project. Its characteristic is to outsource a part of the research work. Each year, the Research Bureau chooses one theme.

There has been an increasing research demand in this area because Members of the Diet believe science and technology is essential for Japan's future prosperity. The House of Representatives of the Diet established the Special Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation Promotion in January 2011. Under severe budget constraint, however, we cannot increase our research staff with expertise in science and technology. By outsourcing, we can do research using minimum staff of our own and widen the range of our research.

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The Science and Technology Research Office was newly established in the Education, Culture, Science and Technology Division in 2010. The responsibility of the Office is to do research on these issues and to manage the projects.

Having obtained a certain amount of budget allocation (some U.S. \$26,000) to outsource a part of the science and technology research work, the Research Bureau contracted with one of the leading private think-tanks in Japan. The Research Bureau set the theme of the project for FY2010 as "science and technology policies of major countries."

The project was composed of researches done by the Research Bureau's staff members and by outside scholars. The Research Bureau organized a project team consisting of its staff members and visiting scholars, whilst the think-tank organized a research committee consisting of scholars. The project team was in charge of planning, administering and scheduling the whole project. It also controlled the quality of the whole research. Members of the team conducted researches by themselves. The research committee and the think-tank implemented researches in accordance with the plan set forth by the project team.

The results of the project were published in the form of *Research Material* in March 2011. The report covers 12 countries and it contains comparative analysis of their science and technology policies. The Bureau held a policy seminar for Diet Members and their staff based on the results of the research projects.

The theme for the FY2011 project was “State Promotion of Research and Development: Support for Higher Education Institutions and Public Research institutions.” The goals of the project were to analyse the mechanism of research and development by state funding in major countries, and to make clear the policy implications. The research issues are (1) visions and agenda setting in science and technology policies, (2) public research institution as platform of research for science, technology and society, (3) funding and evaluation of public R & D, and case studies. FY 2011 project had the same scheme as the FY 2010 project. The final report was published in March 2012.

The theme for the FY2012 project was “Science and Technology Policies on Offshore Resources and Ocean Energy.” The research result was published in March 2013.

### 5. Evaluation by the Diet Members

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The Research Bureau conducted a Diet Members' survey and interview research on our research services in November 2011. The Research Bureau distributed a one-page survey questionnaire to all Diet Members' offices. The participation rate of the survey was 24.4%. We asked which products of the Research Bureau were recognized among Diet Members and whether the Diet Members are satisfied with them or not.

The results of the survey are shown in Figs.1-5 of the last pages.

Among our products *Issue Brief* is most widely recognized and shows the highest satisfaction rate. As a result of the interview, the Diet Members evaluate that *Issue Brief* is very concise, handy, well organized, easy to read, and most directly helps Diet Members with their preparation for committee deliberation.

*Monthly Reference* is also widely recognized. The satisfaction rate is the second among the products. The Diet Members evaluate that the articles of *Monthly Reference* are detailed, reliable and very objective.

*Monthly and Quarterly Foreign Legislation* is evaluated as a useful resource of foreign legislations and foreign public policies. On the other hand, *Foreign Legislation* is not well recognized among Diet Members because of its unique feature of covering highly specialised foreign issues. Each issue of both *Monthly Reference* and *Foreign Legislation* contains several articles on different policy areas. Some Diet Members say they prefer a featured issue on a specific policy area.

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*Foreign Legislation* is well recognized among foreign law scholars and researchers. To be more focused on hot legislative agenda, each year one issue of *Quarterly Foreign Legislation* features articles on one hot topic. The March 2012 issue featured “Major Counter Disaster Legislation” and the March 2013 issue featured “Government Oversight by Parliament.”

*Research Material Series* contains various kinds of research reports and the Diet Members say it is hard to recognise as a single series.

The Policy Seminar for the Diet Members is relatively new and it is still not well recognized among the Diet Members. The Diet Members are interested in the Policy Seminars, but sometimes they are too busy to attend them while the Diet is in session.

The Research Bureau issues various types of publications, both in the form of monographs and periodicals, to provide various research reports. Most parliamentary libraries in the world issues their research reports in just a few forms, most of them being monographs. The Diet Members prefer shorter, visually attractive and more succinct reports. At the same time they need in-depth analytical reports. We would like to satisfy these needs of the Diet Members.

### 6. Challenges for us

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To keep publishing the current level of research reports is really challenging for us.

The training and development of junior researchers' writing ability is a big challenge for us. Very few researchers are good at writing at the start of their career as a researcher. We train them step by step, from writing research reports of a few pages to longer ones. The Research Bureau offers in-house training courses on writing papers for junior researchers every year.

Most researchers complain that they are too busy to deal with day-to-day research requests from the Diet Members and they have not enough time to write long research papers. Especially during the periods of the Diet session, most researchers have almost no time to write in ordinary working hours. We often make research memorandum of a few pages to answer research requests from the Diet Members. In FY 2011, we provided 6,465 memos to answer research requests. These memos are rich sources of research reports which will be published in the form of *Issue Brief*. To revise memos to research reports can save the time of researchers.

The research together with outside specialists and scholars enables us to improve our



research specialty and to add broader perspective. Because our resources of research staff are limited under budget constraint, we cannot expand our staff on new policy areas. The style of writing of research reports of parliamentary libraries is different from that of academic dissertation. Our research reports have to be non-partisan, accurate, and objective. They need to show both pros and cons and to provide clear indication of sources of data. Quite often outside specialists who participate in our research projects and write reports on our publications have difficulties in adjusting to our writing style.

One of the challenges of the science and technology research project is quality control. Private think tanks take different approaches and methods of research from those of our research. To get research products of expected quality, we must carefully draft the conditions of the contract and manage the schedule of the project. Japan has a limited number of policy research institutions which do research on a contract bases. In some countries, there are many non-profit think-tanks and research institutions. They have wider choices to outsource their research.

### 7. Conclusion

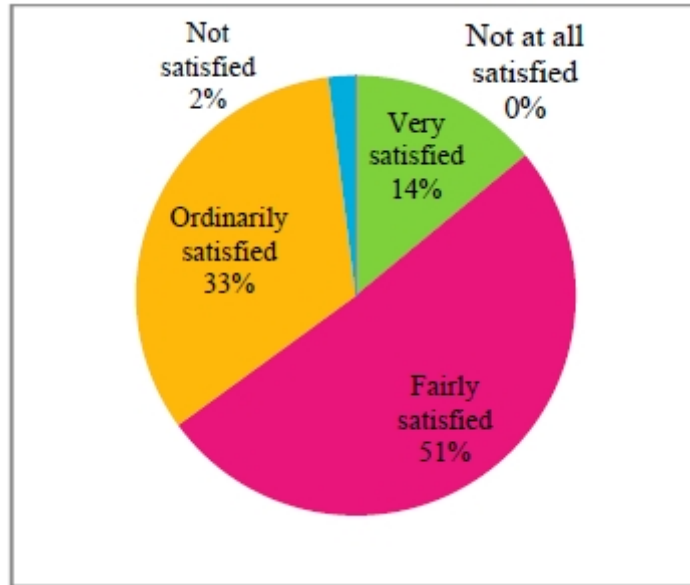
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By utilizing our original research reports and papers as our research resources, we can provide the Diet Members with timely and high quality original information. In addition, research activities on our own initiative enhance our research ability, and that results in improvement of the ability of the quality of our research at the Diet Members' request.

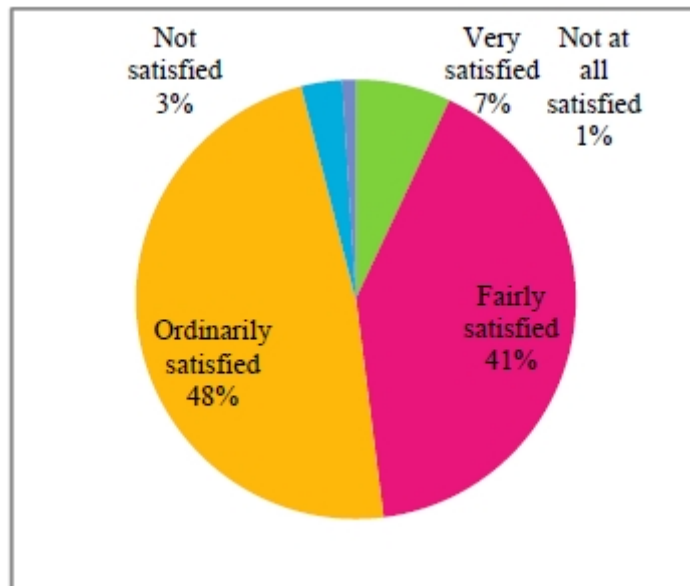
Our researchers and research resources are limited under budget constraint. We need to concentrate more on carefully planned research projects, and to simplify the research process. We would like to do original and unique research that other research institutions do not do, in more effective and efficient ways. We will keep improving our products to provide more focused and clearer analyses on a timely manner for the Diet Members.

Figures Results of the Diet Members' Survey

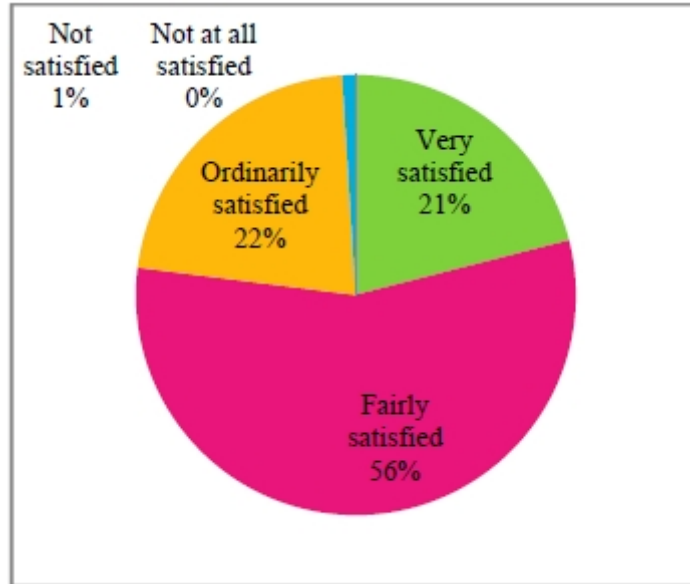
<< Fig. 1 *Monthly Reference*>>



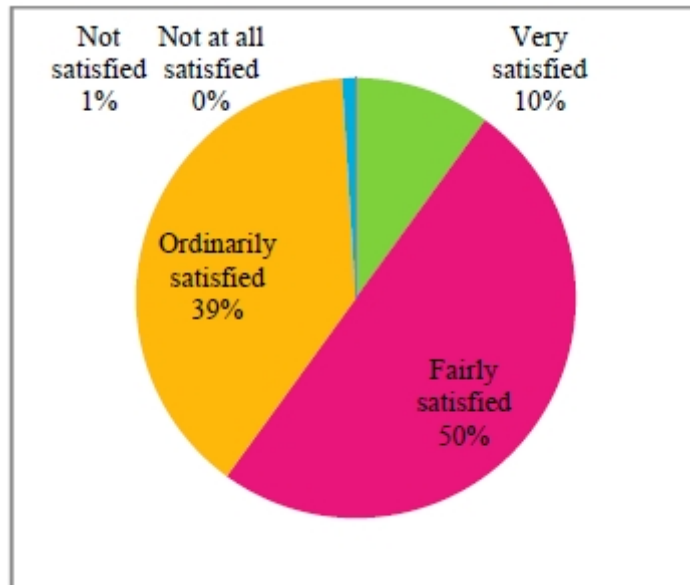
<< Fig. 2 *Foreign Legislation*>>



<< Fig. 3 *Issue Brief*>>



<< Fig. 4 *Research Material*>>



<< Fig. 5 Recognition and Satisfaction Rate >>

