

The National Diet Library and Its National Responsibilities

Yoshitaka Ikuhara
National Diet Library, Japan

1 The National Diet Library – Profile (<http://www.ndl.go.jp>)

- Double function--- Parliamentary and national

The National Diet Library was established in 1948 on the recommendations of the US Library Mission to Japan represented by Verner W. Clapp and Charles H. Brown. In the course of the overall restructuring of political systems immediately after the World War II, the members of the National Diet, or parliament, of Japan proposed to establish a parliamentary library with reference and research services for themselves. They envisaged a parliamentary library that would provide a national service to the public as well. As evident in documents, they had in mind the Library of Congress as a forerunner.

In respect of institutional status, many national libraries today are government, or government-affiliated, institutions in their respective countries where, in most cases, exist parliamentary libraries other than national libraries. The United States and Japan are in a minority in this respect because the Library of Congress and the National Diet Library, as known from their names, are legislative organs, i.e. both being parliamentary libraries playing the roles of national libraries.

- The International Library of Children's Literature

The National Diet Library has gone through reorganizations in response to the changing needs of the society, but it had held basically the same features in terms of functions and services as envisaged at the time of its establishment until the International Library of Children's Literature (ILCL) was opened in May 2000 as a branch of the National Diet Library. Having a children's library was a challenging project, and it was made possible by an ardent support from those, including the Diet members, who had longed for a national library for children.

Though this Library is open to children, emphasis is put on fulfilling the needs of the researchers of children's literature and related subjects and on collaborating with other children's libraries, public and school libraries. Among the services by the ILCL are the Union Catalog of Children's Literature, the digital picture books gallery and the multimedia and multilingual presentation of picture books produced

by the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for Unesco. The Union Catalog of Children's Literature is one example of the collaboration with the public and special libraries of children's literature.

- The Kansai Library

Another big change in the history of the National Diet Library, bigger than anything else in fact, is the establishment of its Kansai Library. The idea is to have a storage facility and service point in Kyoto, about 500 km west of Tokyo. Kansai is what we call the area where Kyoto, Nara, Osaka and other prefectures are situated. Construction was over in last March, and it will open to public on October 7, 2002. Now under way are all sorts of preparation, including the transportation of 600,000 volumes of books, 55,000 titles of journals and other materials. While the Main Library in Tokyo and the Kansai Library will closely collaborate with each other in every aspect of services and operations, the Kansai Library is expected to play the role of a center for interlibrary services and document supplies.

2 National responsibilities

- Legal deposit – Building a national collection

The National Diet Library is the legal depository of Japan. In many countries, a national library is designated as a national institution to receive the deposit material, but it could be a national archive, a government library or a university library. In case of the United States and Japan, the national depositories are the parliamentary libraries. (1)

Between the Library of Congress and the National Diet Library, however, lies a difference in legal deposit legislation. Whereas the Library of Congress acquires the deposit material in accordance with the Copyright Act, legal deposit in Japan is enacted in the National Diet Library Law which has no reference to copyright. The purposes of legal deposit are categorically defined in the National Diet Library Law for official publications and non-official publications: Official publications should be deposited for official use by the Library and for the international exchange of official publications with other governments, while non-official publications for contributing “to the accumulation and utility of cultural goods”.

In establishing the National Diet Library, there was an argument among legislators that legal deposit legislation should be based on the Copyright Law. However, the idea was not realized because Japan was a member nation of the Berne Convention

concerning copyright which prohibited such formalities as copyright deposit.(2)

The National Diet Library Law was modified in 2000 to include digital publications in tangible form in the deposit materials. Before modifying the Law, we had set up an advisory committee represented by academics, lawyers, journalists and other specialists, and asked for their recommendations on the possibility of legal deposit legislation of electronic publications. They recommended that electronic publications in tangible form should be deposited to the National Diet Library. As for online information, they found it difficult to make it subject to legal deposit.

However, the digital information environment was so rapidly changing that it soon became clear that the legal deposit of off-line publications alone is not adequate for a national library. The legal deposit advisory committee mentioned above is now discussing the matter.

(1) IFLA National Libraries Section. Guidelines for legal deposit legislation. 2000.

(2) HARA, Hideshige David. Legal Deposit in the Electronic Age: Toward the Free Flow of Information. Tokyo, Gakubunsha, 2001.

- National bibliography and other products

The National Diet Library is also the national bibliographic agency of Japan. We started to compile and publish a list of deposit materials soon after the opening of the Library in 1948. The production and distribution of printed cards in 1949 was an epoch-making national library service in Japan. In 1981 we began to distribute JAPAN/MARC, the database of Japanese books acquired by the National Diet Library. JAPAN/MARC has been available basically on the closed online network mostly for academic libraries and large public libraries, but the bibliographic records of books acquired since 1948 are available on our website. In October 2002 all bibliographic records of books published in and after 1868 will be made accessible on the website.

Other products of the National Diet Library are the Full Text Database of the Minutes of the Diet, available on the website, the NDL Catalog of Serials and the Japanese Periodicals Index. The Catalog of Serials and the Periodicals Index will be accessible on the website in coming October.

As part of our collaborative projects, we are compiling some union catalogs. One of them is, as already mentioned, produced by the ILCL. The others are the National Union Catalog of Braille & Recorded Books in Japan and the Union Catalog of Newspapers. The Union Catalog of Newspapers cover the newspaper collections of about 1,300 institutions, including newspaper publishers,

broadcasting companies, public libraries, academic libraries and research institutions. Though this database is now accessible only to the participating institutions, we hope we can make it open on the website before long.

The National Diet Library is also the host institution of the National Union Catalog Network of Japanese Books. This is a bibliographic network of the National Diet Library and larger public libraries. The number of participating libraries is 512 as of February 2002. This project started in 1998 for the purposes of sharing library resources, standardizing bibliographic services and promoting ILL among public libraries.

3 Collaboration with other institutions

- Branch libraries in the government and the Supreme Court

The National Diet Library has 27 branch libraries both in the government ministries and in the Supreme Court. The branch libraries are institutionally part of, and managed by, the respective ministries and the Supreme Court, and the library staff, including chief librarians, are employed by the ministries and the Supreme Court. According to the NDL Law, the Librarian of the National Diet Library appoints the chief librarians of the branch libraries.

Through the branch libraries, the staff of the government ministries and the Supreme Court have access to the collections of the National Diet Library. The branch libraries are instrumental in securing official publications for deposit to the National Diet Library.

- The National Institute of Informatics - NII (<http://www.nii.ac.jp>)

The NII (formerly the National Center for Science Information Systems, NACSIS) is an inter-university research institute of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Its services include NACSIS-IR / ILL. For NACSIS-IR, i.e. NII's information retrieval service, the National Diet Library provides the databases of the Periodicals Index, the Foreign Books Catalog, the Science and Technology Conference Proceedings in European Languages, and JAPAN/MARC. Available in NACSIS-IR are 59 databases, of which the Periodicals Index database is the most frequently used.

The NACSIS-ILL system is linked with the National Diet Library ILL system. Though the National Diet Library is not a member institution of the NII information network, the NII member libraries and institutions have access to the collections of

the National Diet Library virtually in the same ILL system.

- The Japan Science and Technology Corporation – JST (<http://www.jst.go.jp>)

A quasi-government agency, the JST provides a wide range of information and document delivery services. We have meetings with the JST, as with the NII, on a regular basis to exchange information and to coordinate service policies with each other. The clients of the JST have access, though on an experimental basis, to the NDL's Web-OPAC in their Integrated System for Decentralized Digital Contents service, while our visiting users can freely use in one of our reading rooms the JST's CD-ROM versions of the catalog of their holdings and the Current Bibliography on Science and Technology. In fact the National Diet Library, the National Institute of Informatics and the Japan Science and Technology Corporation form on the basis of the signed agreements a triangle in the accumulation and dissemination of science information in Japan

4 New Challenges

- Digital library

The major contents of the NDL Digital Library are Web-OPAC, the Full Text Database of the Minutes of the Diet, the Rare Books Image Database, which contains about 29,000 items of old drawings, and the Directory of Japanese Scientific Periodicals. The Directory of Japanese Scientific Periodicals lists the bibliographic and editorial records of Japanese periodicals in science and technology. The Research and Legislative Reference Bureau of the NDL, which is specialized in services to the Diet members, provides its own website for the Diet.

We have been promoting a three year project of digitizing approximately 170,000 volumes of Japanese books published from 1868 to 1911, part of which will hopefully be made accessible on the website in October. The development of the digital library will further be pursued in the NDL Kansai Library as well as in the Tokyo Main Library.

A digital library is of common interest to the national libraries in the world. One example of the international collaboration in this field is Bibliotheca Universalis. Originated in the G8 electronic library project in 1999, this is a project to network the national libraries and other institutions in the world for the purpose of sharing digital information and texts under the common theme of "Exchanges between People". "Japan in the World" is our contribution to this international project.

We are also providing the image database of rare books to the Virtual Memory of the World project being promoted by Unesco.

- Web archiving

As mentioned earlier, we had the National Diet Library Law modified so as to make the deposit of “packaged” electronic publications possible. The next policy target is the deposit legislation of online publications. No matter how important it may be, however, the fact is that we cannot wait for it because online publications are of great importance to the patrons of national libraries, because they are rapidly increasing in quantity and because they are accessible only for a short period of time. We have to seek ways and means to capture, store and provide intangible digital information before it is lost.

I understand that the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has been working on drafting a joint statement with the International Publishers Association on the archiving and preserving of digital information. In the draft statement, national libraries are expected to “ take the lead responsibility for long-term archiving of digital publications ”, because they are legal depositories in their respective countries and most of them are in fact acquiring digital publications.

The National Diet Library hosted the International Symposium on Web Archiving in last January. The guest speakers were Brewster Kahle, Alexa Internet, U.S.A.; Cassy Ammen, the Library of Congress, U.S.A.; Margaret E. Phillips, the National Library of Australia; Birgit N. Henriksen, the Royal Library, Denmark; Machiko Nakai, the National Diet Library, Japan. Discussed in the symposium were such topics as web harvesting software, bulk/selective archiving, legal deposit legislation as well as web preservation projects being pursued by the national libraries in the world.(3)

We at the National Diet Library have just made a small step toward web archiving, and it is a long way to go. We have a plan to preserve digital government documents such as white papers, research papers, statistics, and digital information provided by academic and research institutions and associations. As part of this project, we conducted a questionnaire survey concerning electronic information resources on the internet in February 2001. The findings: 80 % of 2,300 respondents are paying no attention to metadata; only 10 % are comprehensively preserving their own digital information after deleting from the websites, while 20 % are preserving not a bit. Encouraging is the fact that 67 % of those asked would

be ready to give consent to the National Diet Library, either with or without reservation, if the NDL should store, preserve and provide their digital information on the web. (4)

Finally, we formulated in March 2001 the National Diet Library Metadata Element Set. It is our version of the Dublin Core Metadata Element Set.(5)

(3) <http://www.ndl.go.jp>

(4) Result of the survey of electronic information resources on the Internet.

National Diet Library Monthly Bulletin. No. 484. July 2001. Tokyo.

(5) <http://www.ndl.go.jp>