

ML/2020.9

## Some thoughts on



**HAVE BEEN** thinking about the *Australian Library Journal* and what it means to the Library Association of Australia.

Of course, I have a strong attachment to the *Journal* because I edited it from 1959 to 1970, and in those days editing meant not only seeing that there were enough articles, news, book reviews and correspondence to fill its pages, but also proof-reading, deciding on lay-out and pasting up and visiting the printer to see it through the press.

I shall not forget how very pleased I was when the Council finally gave in and allowed me to design a new format and, later, to issue eleven times a year. (The cover was actually planned and printed during one weekend on the Piscator press at the University of Sydney and given to the printer to copy.)

I have looked at the various statements on the reasons for the publication of the *ALJ* that previous editors have made, and asked myself whether those reasons are still valid.

I have also reflected on the frequently expressed desire of Australian librarians (dating back to the 1890s), that there should be a professional journal. There were a few attempts to produce such a journal. *The Library Record of Australasia* published by the Library Association of Australasia in 1901-2 lasted for six issues. *The Library Journal* published by the Library Association of Victoria ran irregularly from 1937 to 1949. The South Australian Branch of the Australian Institute of Librarians produced a *Quarterly Bulletin* - a very modest one-page production which staggered through from 1944 to 1949. By far the most successful of journals on librarianship in Australia was the *Journal of the Librarians Association of South Australia*.

I remember how delighted we were when the *Australian Library Journal* Vol 1, No 1 appeared in 1951, edited and largely written by John Metcalfe, containing a stirring editorial plea that it was ours to make or lose. I remember also how much we South Australians, with our strong interests in book design and bibliography, wished that our Editor cared more about these things. But that was John Metcalfe.

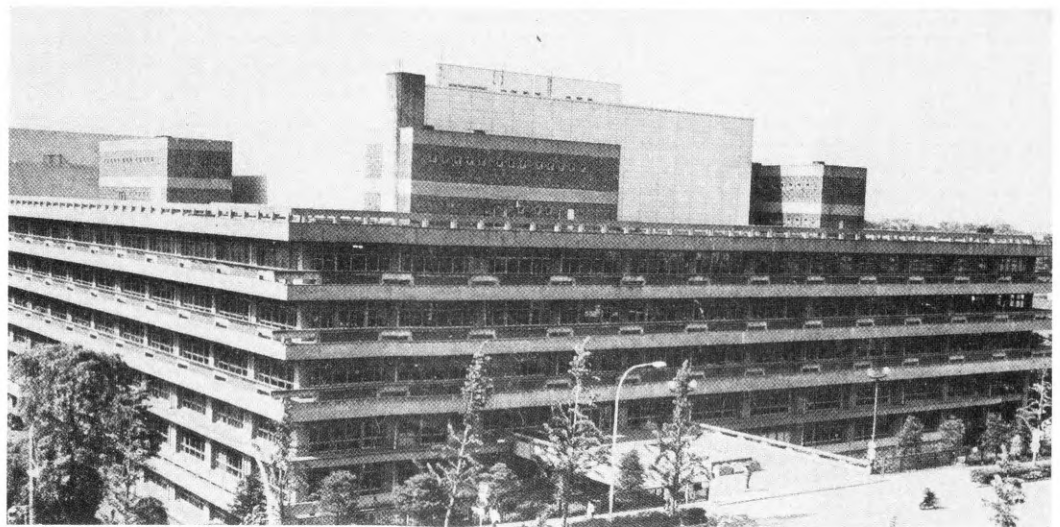
It is twenty-seven years since I stated that the Policy of the *ALJ* must be the furtherance of the objects of the Library Association of Australia through reporting news, increasing knowledge, encouraging and reporting research, encouraging professional debate and presenting Australian librarianship to an international audience.

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# Japan's libraries

— the current scene —

by Christabel Mattingley



**With the emphasis placed on education in Japanese society, it is not surprising that the library system is well developed. On a recent visit to Japan I visited twelve libraries, ranging from the National Diet Library in Tokyo to a local deposit collection shelved in the front room of the house of a village headman in Kawabata snow country near Takada, where I was a guest.**

Host librarians were most courteous in showing me their institutions and indefatigable in arranging introductions to others. I was very conscious that it was their knowledge of English or German which made communication possible, and without which the libraries would have remained largely closed books to me.

Major development has taken place in Japanese libraries since the 1950s. Many of the 4,800 public and institutional libraries in existence before 1940 were destroyed during World War Two, and the post-war advent of American concepts and personnel had significant influence on new patterns of librarianship and library service. The democratic principles embodied in the new Japanese constitution led to two major pieces of legislation which form the basis of modern library practice - the National Diet Library Law, promulgated in 1948, and the Public Library Law enacted in 1952 and amended seven times up till 1962.

The National Diet Library, the principle library of Japan, serves a dual role, as both par-

liamentary and national library. It came into being in 1948, absorbing the former Imperial Library and parliamentary libraries.

It occupies a complete block near the National Diet building, in the heart of the government administrative office area of Tokyo. It is housed in a 24 year old six storey building with double basements, designed by Japanese architects in a public competition for the purpose. But its 172.5 kilometres of shelving is now almost full, with a collection approaching four million items, and its total floor space of 73,674 square metres is insufficient for expanding routine work and developing computer operations. An annexe to relieve the pressure is under construction on an adjoining site.

Its four principal functions are a legislative reference service to the Diet, which takes precedence; service to government agencies through a system of 35 branch libraries; service to the general public; international service and cooperation.

As the sole legal deposit library in Japan, the National Diet Library's resources are unique, with a comprehensive national coverage dating back to the foundation of the Imperial Library in 1875. Because of its parliamentary function the collection is strong in law, economics and social sciences, both Japanese and international. Special collections of modern Japanese history in manuscript and unpublished source material and a microfilm archival project of unclassified documents of the Allied Powers, 1940-1951, are significant. Books about Japan by foreign authors have always had high priority in acquisition policy, and

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## Japan's libraries

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there is also an important classic Chinese collection. The science and technology section, now one of the best in Japan, has grown rapidly and includes 12,500 foreign periodical titles.

The NDL has a wide range of bibliographic activities and an impressive list of publications. Since its inception in 1948 it has compiled and published *Japanese national bibliography*, which includes maps and music scores as well as books and periodicals. It has also published two series of ten year cumulations of the NDL catalogue and is responsible for the national *Union catalog of foreign books acquired by 52 libraries in Japan* issued annually in book form. It issues four accession lists and three indexes, including the *Japanese periodicals index* covering approximately 3,500 titles in three parts: humanities and social sciences; science and technology; medical sciences and pharmacology; computer compiled and issued quarterly. Bibliographies on special subjects are also a feature.

Automation has been under investigation since 1961, with a decade of experiment. Installation of a computer in 1971 began the implementation of a computer compilation and publication programme which now includes seven major bibliographic productions. The most significant development is the accumulation of data from *Japanese national bibliography — weekly list*, computerised since its first issue in 1978, to form JAPAN MARC, a central data base of Japanese current monographic publications.

Co-operation, both national and international, is an important feature of NDL policy and activity. Regular conferences with prefectural, metropolitan and university libraries are held on policy and problem sharing, and NDL distributes government publications as well as its own, and local and overseas duplicate material. There is also co-operation with over 560 special libraries, through the Special Libraries Association. Public, local assembly, university, college and other institutional and research libraries have access to NDL holdings through inter-library loan.

The main library is administered as one department with six divisions. The staff numbers approximately 850, recruited by annual competitive examinations open to graduates of universities, junior colleges and senior high schools. University graduates are examined in a foreign language, either French, German, English or Russian, and a subject selected from law, political science, economics, sociology, literature, history, library science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and engineering. College and high school graduates are examined in general culture and English. For every hundred competitors there is approximately one place. After orientation on first appointment, regular programmes of in-service training are concurrent with duties. Staff also have the benefit of medical and dental clinics and a barber, as well as dining facilities, on the premises.

The NDL has one administrative arrangement which other libraries might well consider. It is closed on the fourth Wednesday of each month for housekeeping. In my Gaijin ignorance I visited the Library on the fourth Wednesday of January. After a hurried conference at the front desk, an exception was made for me with traditional Japanese courtesy.

Japan has approximately 1200 public libraries to serve its population of 120 million, ie the ratio is one public library to serve 100,000

people. Rural areas tend to be more disadvantaged and the need for a national library plan with a detailed network system for the whole country is acknowledged. Public libraries are of two types, prefectural and municipal. There are 47 prefectures with 74 libraries, and almost 3,300 municipalities. Of these 22% of the cities and 75% of towns and villages have no public library.

Two major libraries operate within the metropolitan area of Tokyo. Tokyo Metropolitan Hibiya Library, opened in 1908, was the major service until 1973, when the new Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library was opened. Hibiya now functions mainly as a lending institution. Central has been developed as the reference service, with a strong commitment to high level reference and research for other Tokyo ward and city libraries and for individuals. It is also the centre for inter-library co-operation and loan, and has two delivery vehicles serving some of the largest ward libraries twice monthly.

Central is located on high ground at the edge of a beautiful park. Full use is made of natural lighting and the outlook is superb, with extensive views from higher floors. Another feature of the building, which is another example of good modern Japanese architecture, is the provision of facilities for handicapped people, not only in layout, but also in equipment. Optiscopes to enlarge print for weak-sighted readers are available in each of the five major reading rooms. A reading service is also available by arrangement. There is also a special section for the blind, with Japanese Braille. The Japanese-English Braille dictionary runs to 70 volumes. A well-developed audio-visual section with its own TV studio is also a feature.

Central holds some 800,000 titles, almost 10% of which are in foreign languages, and has a shelf capacity for almost two million. Books published in the past ten years are on open access. Compactus shelving in the basement stores the less requested items. Each of the five floors houses a major department with its own shelf list. The ground floor, the ready reference area, holds an extensive array of colour coded catalogues — Japanese in three sequences, author, title and classified. There is also a corporate body author catalogue, separate from individual author entries. Western languages are in two sequences, author-title and classified. There are also Chinese and AV catalogues. Dictionary catalogues are unpopular because of difficulties in filing.

Current periodicals, of which there are some 4,000, including 550 in foreign languages, are arranged in AIUEO order. Books are classified according to the Nippon Decimal Classification, in which 2000 has been allocated to history, with Japan at 2100, China at 2200, Europe at 2300. Literature is located at 9000, with the same mnemonics by country. Humanities on the third storey has the largest floor space. In the foreign literature section translations are filed at the main place and original language versions are in a separate sequence with the prefix F. Science and technology on the fourth floor holds the Japan Industry Standards. The most important special collection is the Tokyo collection on the fifth floor, with some 43,000 volumes covering the history of the city from 1603. It is arranged by locality and then subject, with its own classification scheme and notation. Items from this collection may be borrowed by other libraries.

Central is so popular with students that 250 of the library's 1200 seats are reserved for non-students, and in the afternoons students queue for places. Use for Central is restricted to persons over 15. But Hibiya is open to anyone and has children's literature and librarianship collections with associated

reference materials, as well as a children's section. In comparison with Central, the older building, also in a park setting nearer the city centre, seems rather drab and cheerless. But the staff in the children's lending and research collections were most alert and aware, full of interested questions about Australian and English children's books and writers. Australian delegates to the IBBY and IFLA Conferences will find much of interest in these libraries.

### SOURCES

National Diet Library: organization, functions and activities. Tokyo. NDL. 1979.

National Diet Library. (Kokuritsu Kokai Toshokan). Tokyo. NDL. 1981.

Guide to reader service. National Diet Library. Libraries in Japan. New ed. Tokyo. Japan Librarian Association. 1980.

Handbooks and brochures from relevant libraries

### REMINDER!

#### Call for Nominations for Division Officers for 1987

Nominations for LAA Division officers for 1987 close on 1 September 1986. A call for nominations was circulated as an insert in *InCite* no.12 of 18 July 1986. Copies of the nomination form may be obtained from the LAA Office, phone (008) 22 1481, or from Branch secretaries.

**Please note the following additions or changes to the call for nominations:**

- **Public Libraries Section, Queensland Group** — nominations are called for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Members (6). Nominations to be sent to Kathy Grgic, c/- Library, Brisbane CAE, Kelvin Grove Campus, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove QLD 4059 (**Note:** nominations close 30 September).
- **QLD Branch** — nominations are called for the positions of President; Vice President; Secretary; Treasurer; Branch Councillors (6); General Councillor (1987/88).
- **Childrens Libraries Section, NSW Group** — nominations are called for the positions of President; Secretary; Treasurer; Committee members (15). Nominations are to be sent to Miranda Harrowell, Ryde Municipal Library, Civic Centre, Devlin St, Ryde NSW 2112.
- **Children's Libraries Section (National)** — nominations are to be sent to Robyn Collins, c/- Public Libraries Service, 28 Macquarie Street, Teneriffe QLD 4005.
- **University & College Libraries Section, NSW Group** — Nominations are called for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Members (6). Nominations to be sent to the Executive Director.
- **Library Technicians Section (National)** — Nominations are called for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Publications Officer.
- **Library Technicians Section, Tasmanian Group** — Nominations are called for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer. Nominations are to be sent to Monica Brooks, 5/23 Berega Street, Howrah TAS 7018.