

The Japan Library Association

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ABSTRACT

The Japan Library Association (JLA) was established in 1892 following the establishment of American Library Association (ALA) in 1876, and Library Association (LA, now CILIP, the UK library and information association) in 1877 in the United Kingdom. JLA has been a leader in forming Japanese librarianship by organizing professional activities such as national conferences, local seminars, and publishing journals and books. This article describes the history and organization of JLA, and how JLA encourages Japanese librarians to develop professional skills.

Keywords: Library Association, Global Library Cooperation

Located in northeastern Asia, Japan is a Pacific Rim archipelago country with a total land area of 378,000 km², including over 126 million people. The word for library is *Toshokan* in Japanese. *Tosho* means book, and suffix word *-kan* means building. Each city (population over 50,000) has its own public library. There are 3,296 public libraries (2018) offering library services to the public in Japan, in addition to three national libraries, 1,427 university libraries, and 37,979 school libraries. Almost all public libraries and academic libraries have their own public online catalog available via the Internet.

HISTORY

The first modern public library was opened in Japan around 1872 under the influence of western culture, although premodern open library has existed since 8th century. Originally, the Japan Library Association (JLA) was founded in 1892 to promote library services and to cooperate librarians around Tokyo metropolitan areas. Mr. Tanaka Inagi decided to establish librarians' association with 24 founding members and was installed as the first president of JLA in 1900, when president system was introduced. JLA was established following the establishment of American Library Association (ALA) in 1876 and Library Association (LA, now CILIP) in 1877 in the United Kingdom. Initially, JLA was named *Nihon Bunko Kyokai* in Japanese, and was renamed *Nihon Toshokan Kyokai* in 1908. *Bunko* is the way of saying library in premodern period, and *Kyokai* means association. In 1903, the first JLA library seminar was held, to which over 50 librarians attended, studying clerical work. In 1906, JLA held the first All-Japan Library Conference, which was to be held annually ever since, led by Mr. Wada Mannkichi, the second JLA president and professor of Tokyo University. JLA published *Library Journal* (*Toshokan*

Zasshi) three times a year in the succeeding years (later switched to monthly publication.) These early efforts led to the further development of the Japanese librarianship. JLA started book selection for the standard catalog for public and school libraries in 1914. In 1929, JLA became a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

In 1926, Board system was introduced. JLA became Incorporated Association in 1930 under the chairperson, Mr. Matsumoto Kiichi, the Librarian of National Library. The relationship between JLA and the Ministry of Education became strong, and the building of JLA was transferred to the premises of the Ministry of Education in 1933. In the same year, *Library Imperial Ordinance (Toshokan Rei)*, which was enacted in 1899, was revised, and the regulation on public and private libraries was strengthened. During the 1930s-1940s, nationalism influenced the Japanese librarianship.

Japanese library system was reformed after World War II. A new *Library Law (Toshokan Ho)* was enacted in 1950 under the U.S. influence of the allied occupation (1945-1952). The law stipulated that public library was democratic institution and should be supported by tax, free of charge, and adequate to meet the information needs of the community. Some JLA individual members cooperated with American military officials in the enacting process. In the 1950s, library material organization tools were developed by JLA: *Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC) 6th ed.* was published in 1950; *Nippon Cataloguing Rules (NCR)* in 1953; and *Basic Subject Headings (BSH)* in 1956. NDC was formerly published and revised by Mr. Mori Kiyoshi since 1929, influenced by Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system in USA, and JLA became responsible for its revision after the 1950s. In 1953, JLA also started to publish the *Statistics on Libraries in Japan*. As for intellectual freedom, "A Statement of Intellectual Freedom in Libraries" was adopted in 1954, claiming library autonomy in selecting and offering library materials and rejecting censorship. This statement was revised in 1979, adding protecting user's privacy in library, followed by the approval of 'Code of Ethics for Librarians' in 1980.

In mid-1960s, along with Japan's rapid economic growth, libraries began to undergo remarkable development. Mobile libraries, services for children, services for handicapped persons, audiovisual materials, and computers, were introduced. In 1963, JLA started the publication of a quarterly journal, *Libraries Today (Gendai no Toshokan)*. Papers about specific research themes have been published on *Libraries Today*; short articles about recent topics or events have been published on *Library Journal* monthly. JLA published the report titled *Management of Public Libraries in Small and Medium Cities*, which is called *Chu-sho Report* in Japanese, and the book *Citizen's Library (Shimin no Toshokan)* in 1970. *Chu-sho* means small and medium libraries and *Shimin* refers to citizen. The report and the book focused on the service offering in libraries, not just storage of materials. In 1971, JLA adopted April 30th as "Library Day" when Library Law (1950) has been promulgated on that day.

In 1980s, JLA expanded its operations and activities. From 1982, *Library Yearbook* has been published. JLA has been responsible for producing trend report in librarianship. JLA founded Library Architecture Award in 1985 and many new innovative libraries have received the award at the annual All-Japan Library Conferences since then. In August 1986, the 52nd IFLA General Conference was held in Tokyo, Japan. JLA re-joined IFLA in 1952 after its withdrawal during

WWII. Two thousand librarians from all over the world, including 1,500 Japanese librarians, attended the IFLA conference and discussed topics including library automation, electronic publishing, and multicultural services, etc. under the theme of “Toward 21st Century Libraries.” Aside from that, over 15,000 people came to the IFLA conference exhibition for four days. As for automation, JLA started the distribution of J-BISC in 1988, which is CD-ROM of the Japanese National Bibliography (JNB) of the National Diet Library (NDL).

JLA celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1992 and held the 100th memorial All-Japan Library Conference in Tokyo in 2014 (time-lag was from the conferences interrupted during WWII.)

ORGANIZATION

JLA is a non-profit organization representing the library profession in Japan. In 2014, JLA was repositioned as Public Interest Incorporated Association. The Council is the highest decision-making body of JLA. The Councilors are chosen by election among individual members. One councilor is elected per 100 individual members. The Board of Councilors meets twice a year to review JLA’s budget and other important business matters. The Board of Councilors also elects members of the Board of Directors, which is the executive body of JLA. The Chairperson of the Board of Directors is the official representative of JLA. Mr. Mitsuhiro Oda, professor of Aoyamagakuin University, was newly inaugurated as the chairperson of the Board of Directors in June 2019. The Board of Directors (2019-2020) is consisted of 20 Directors, including Ms. Yoko Sakata, vice chair, Mr. Yutaka Ebine, executive director/managing director, and Mr. Koichi Hiruta, managing director.

Membership of the association is composed of four types: 3,296 individual members, 2,204 institutional members, 11 cooperate members and 56 supporting members (2019). Its activities have been supported by countless dedicated librarians for over 120 years. JLA represents all types of libraries and related information organizations in Japan. For professional activities, the present organization consists of six divisions: 1) The Public Library Division, 2) University Library Division, 3) Junior College Division, 4) School Library Division, 5) Special Library Division, and 6) Library and Information Education Division. Each individual member belongs to one of the six divisions. For those members in the Library and Information Education division, they can select one other division depending on their research areas. Chairpersons of the six divisions become members of the Board of Directors automatically.

For specific activities, there are 28 committees (2019). Each committee consists of one chair and about 5-10 individual members.

1. Library Policy Planning Committee
2. Copyright Committee
3. Intellectual Freedom Committee
4. Library Use Education Committee
5. Resource Preservation Committee
6. Services for Disabled People Committee

7. Children and Young Adult Committee
8. International Relations Committee
9. Library Journal Editorial Committee
10. Libraries Today Editorial Committee
11. Library Yearbook Editorial Committee
12. Publishing Committee
13. Cataloging Committee
14. Classification Committee
15. Subject Headings Committee
16. Training Program Committee
17. Library Survey Committee
18. Library Facility Committee
19. Publishing Distribution Committee
20. Multicultural Committee
21. Health Information Committee
22. Certified Librarian Program Committee
23. Election Management Committee
24. Library Disaster Countermeasures Committee
25. Book Introduction Program Committee
26. Non-regular Employees Committee
27. Library Development in Japan (1993-2017) Editorial Committee
28. JLA Library Management Committee

ACTIVITIES

JLA developed the following activities to cooperate and coordinate all kinds of libraries and library organizations:

Training for Library Staff

JLA holds the three-day All-Japan Library Conference in different cities annually in each fall. Over 2,000 Japanese librarians have participated in meetings, workshops and exhibitions, and enjoyed cultural events during the annual conference. In November 2019, the 105th All-Japan Library Conference will be held at Mie prefecture (<http://105th-mietaikai.info/>). In addition to the national conferences, JLA also carried out about 30 seminars and symposiums throughout the year, including step-up seminars for mid-career librarians, library basic courses, and seminars for several current topics. Since 2010, JLA has authorized Certified Librarian Program. A total of 150 librarians, who has ten years of experiences and gained over 20 points, have been certificated. Points could be earned by attending professional seminars, giving presentation at conferences, speaking at lectures, and so on.

Consultations and Support on Library Management and Policy Recommendations

JLA has given advices on library management to newly established libraries and local authorities, and announced several policy recommendations, such as “A Way of Designated Manager System in Public Libraries (2016),” “Guidelines for Eliminating Discrimination Against People With Disabilities in the Library (2016),” “Improvement for the Environment of Character and Print culture (2006),” and so on.

Research and Collection of Materials on Library Management, Operations, Services, and Technology

JLA has conducted nation-wide surveys for public and academic libraries, publishing *Library Yearbook* and *Japanese Libraries* annually. The JLA Library collects materials on libraries, and library and information science, and holds about 10,000 monographs and 2,300 titles of periodicals, including conference proceedings, reports of committee meetings, Annual Reports of public libraries, architectural plans and booklets of various libraries. The Library is open to the public as well as JLA members. The reference and photocopy services are available to general public, though only members can borrow books.

Creation and Dissemination of Library Management and Selection Tools

JLA has revised information organizing tools: the latest versions are *NDC 10th ed.* (2014) for classification, NCR 2018 version for cataloging and BSH 4th ed. (1999) for subject headings.

Publication of Journals and Research Results

Each year, JLA publishes 20 new titles concerning librarianship, including *Library Practice Series with 40 titles*, and *Library and Information Text Series* (now 11 volumes and the third season), in addition to *Library Journal* monthly and *Libraries Today* quarterly.

Campaigns to Promote Library Progress and Awards for Contributions to Promoting Progress

JLA has promoted library activities to the public and celebrated “Library Day” in April 30th. JLA has awarded the Library Architecture Award at the All-Japan Library Conferences since 1985.

Collaboration, Cooperation, and Support With Domestic and Overseas Library Organizations

JLA are affiliated with many regional library associations. JLA has been the Japanese national association member of IFLA since 1929.

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