

Impressions of Library and Information Studies in Japan: 1973

日本の図書館・情報学教育に関する印象 (昭和 48 年)

Ronald Staveley

ロナルド・ステイヴリー

要 旨

公共図書館について、英国人の目にうつったことは、収集、主題専門化、保存、相互貸借、情報サービスの諸問題に対する協力的関心が低いことである。たとえば、主題専門化などの方向でサービスを充実すれば、これを契機として図書館の社会的重要性へのより大きな理解が生まれるであろう。

大学図書館でも、そのサービスへの期待は低かった。従って学者は個人的に情報を求めざるを得ないとしている。これは、総合的にみればむしろ高価なことになるであろう。

専門図書館の職員と利用者は図書館サービスの最もきびしい批判者となることが多い。国立の科学技術および医学図書館の不在に関する不満は、英国人の大英博物館図書館に対するそれと類似している。

これに対処するため、医学方面では日本医学図書館協会を組織して、効果的な相互貸借システムを作り上げ、さらに文献情報サービスに及んでいる。薬学と農学を除いてはこのような組織がなく、専ら個人の努力に依存している。専門図書館協議会は英国の Aslib のような有効性を示していない。

日本図書館協会も、英国図書館協会に比して、プロフェッションのリーダーシップに欠け、財政的にも弱い。これはプロフェッションの構造的欠陥に起因して、徹底的かつ包括的な討議が生まれにくいためである。

プロフェッションの将来について検討するために政府が諮問委員会を設置する必要があるだろう。とくに現状では不十分な講座が多すぎ、またその修了者の図書館への就職率も低い。司書資格は就職前に、しかも安易に与えられ、また教育の最低基準も明示されていない。この望ましくない方向を是正し、さらに大学院課程を含めて図書館・情報学教育を充実することを期待したい。(Y. K.)

Ronald Staveley, M. A., FLA; Director of Library Studies, School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University College London, Great Britain.

ロナルド・ステイヴリー：ロンドン大学ユニヴァーシティ・カレッジ、図書館・文書館・情報学科 図書館学主任
This article was edited from his report submitted to the British Council in Japan in April 1973. Sponsored by the Council, he came to Tokyo in February 1973 to investigate library education and see public and university library services.

To the eyes of a British visitor, the notable deficiency in the public library scene is co-operative attention to problems of acquisition, subject specialisation, preservation, interlending and information service.

When public libraries show dynamism and initiative in special operations of this kind, they attract to themselves demands for information and service that go far beyond the specialisation concerned. Commercial inquiries bring general inquiries, satisfied technical users become appreciative personal users, and regard for the public library grows with the widening awareness of its great social importance. At the strictly professional level, one recognises that the range of techniques and skills required for good service, and good measurement of service, in the public library field, is formidably large. The notion that the requirements are fewer or simpler than in a specialised information service, does not bear close examination. High standards of service demand high technical skills, whatever the service or the principal medium.

The information I gathered about university library practice in Japan had also to come from short discussions rather than lengthy visits. My talks with academics as *users* of libraries showed low expectation of service, though a fair-minded understanding of the librarian's practical difficulties. Domestic deficiencies are made the more serious by ineffective systems of inter-library loan and by libraries' failure as information services. I found that the services of the Japan Information Centre of Science and Technology were well known and approved, but that the cost of translation or copying services deterred private and academic users. I gained the impression that service was mainly utilised by commercial users, and that academics felt obliged to seek their own information, copies and offprints by writing personally to foreign authors. If this practice is as general as I think, it is itself rather costly in aggregate.

Specialist librarians, and users of special libraries, are often the severest critics of library services. In Japan one notes their low

opinion of general academic libraries, their objections to limitations in the service of the National Diet Library, their complaints at the lack of a national library devoted exclusively to science and technology and the lack of a national library of medicine. The complaints have a familiar ring to British ears. The National Diet Library attracts the same criticism that the British Museum Library knew for so long, that its large science and technology holdings are administered in ways inappropriate to the scientists who urgently need them, and that suitably qualified staff are in a small minority. The thirty special libraries attached to ministries and government agencies are administered as branch libraries of the National Diet Library. They are important collections in subjects as such as agriculture and forestry, education, health and welfare, building, international trade and industry, science and technology, meteorology, maritime studies, national defence, patent literature and registrations. The opinion was several times expressed to me that subordination to the National Diet Library was restrictive and inhibitive for these libraries. My own experience of both progressive and backward ministry libraries suggests that some degree of central control or stimulation may be needed, but that over-riding need is for very full cooperation with each other, and with other special or general libraries serving the same or related subjects. Each special collection needs, of course, its own broader literature base, for the convenience of its own users—and I met criticism of Japanese governmental libraries in that respect.

The lack of a national library for science and technology, and of a national medical library, creates for Japanese librarians a situation the English can well understand. Medical librarians have reacted independently and energetically as did ours, to compensate for deficiencies in literature and bibliography and service. The Japanese Medical Library Association has established an effective inter-library loan system and has given much profitable thought to rationalised literature searching and

information service. Supporting the International Medical Information Center, and the extension of interest into the medical (and MEDLARS) field by the Japan Information Centre of Science and Technology, and giving careful attention to problems of imported literature, bookselling practices, and trends in Japanese commercial publishing, this association has been admirable and wholly responsible in its many activities, including of course continued keen attention to professional education. It is a real misfortune for Japan that other library associations do not have a comparable record. The pharmaceutical librarians, and agricultural librarians, deserve honourable mention, but I have the impression that in most other specialist fields the work of energetic individuals has been more productive than organised activity. Clearly the Special Library Association of Japan has not shown the effectiveness of its British counterpart Aslib. Still more clearly, the Japan Library Association has failed to give the leadership to profession that the English Library Association has undoubtedly provided. In fairness one should mention that both English bodies have had better financial support.

I found during my visit a degree of professional apathy and frustration, and a lack of confidence and conviction that certainly exceeded what is justified by the nature of the problems. The structure of the library profession in Japan has clearly not sufficed to generate through and comprehensive discussion of alternative ways of rationalising and developing the country's library and information services. The professional literature seems thin, unbalanced, unconvincing. In particular, it shows great reluctance to ask basic questions about the profession, about the common elements in library, archive and information activities. Proposed solutions to problems seem often, in consequence, to start from unwarranted, unquestioned assumptions. I found this to be the case whether the literature was referring to professional practice or professional education.

I do not wish to suggest any lack of personal enthusiasm or dedication, among practitioners or teachers, for I know that this is produced abundantly by the work itself, as apparently in Japan as in the United Kingdom. What I was repeatedly warned not to expect was effective *corporate* action for general improvement, whether by professional groups or by library educationalists as a group.

I understand that Japan has been unrepresented, or under-represented, at many international conferences, through lack of funds for this purpose. For the same reason, local, regional and national meetings of librarians are infrequent, and inadequate for generating and maintaining the discussion of ideas and sharing of experiences that good professional activity requires. There seems here an easy way of increasing efficiency and enthusiasm.

Japan's professional education in library and information studies could be much improved. For archive studies there is no effective provision at all, though a small start will be made in the near future in two schools; this is timely, for Japan is rich in older manuscript collections, and modern business archives must clearly be posing the same problems as in other industrialised countries. These educational matters need attention by any working party or joint body set up by the government to advise about the profession's future. The first problem for Japan is an excessive number of inadequate courses in library and information studies. The Japan Library Association report *Books for all*¹⁾ mentions that three full-time professional courses of repute produce some 200 students annually, whilst 1,300 other students emerge from short courses provided by 115 colleges or universities. This is exclusive of short summer courses offered by ten further colleges or universities, attended by 900 potential or employed librarians.

Evidence about the subsequent employment of students suggests a total of 84% not gaining posts or having no known employment. It is by no means certain that the best qualified students were always the ones chosen by employers, for there is no professional register

and no accreditation of courses or qualifications. The public library law stipulates a licence before employment, but credits are easily obtained and no minimum acceptable standard of education or training is prescribed. In the educational field there is an anomaly of a different kind. I understand that a library must be provided in a school, but that there is no position in the school's salary structure for the employment of a full-time librarian, with the result that the Tokyo prefecture, for example, was obliged to stop making such appointments.

I failed for a time to understand how severely Japanese librarians are hindered by the restrictions on mobility imposed by their terms of employment, in particular by superannuation schemes that are exclusive and non-transferable. A librarian may find himself limited not merely to one kind of library but to one specific library or library system. Mobility within a profession is to everybody's advantage, and it should not be too difficult to achieve more of this in Japan, and less frequent loss of pension benefits by professionals with enthusiasms and ambition.

The combination of over-production of recruits, haphazard employing practices, and general low level of professional studies, is clearly a serious matter, economically wasteful and likely to depress both educational standards and standards of library service. To the extent that government funds contribute (through the Association of Private Universities) to the salaries, research and development plans of the private universities, it seems likely that some public as well as private money is being applied inefficiently in this area.

The problems of professional education would of course emerge from the studies I have recommended, but one point could be made at once. The only way of discouraging inadequate courses and the employment of inadequate recruits is by the Ministry of Education practising the accreditation of courses that suffice for their purpose. I see

no hope of proper control of education by the present professional associations in Japan. They could doubtless help at a later stage, when the government has introduced order into the whole profession.

I hope that any body called on to review and re-direct Japan's professional library studies will take a liberal view of needs at the level of first professional study. The mixture of general studies and library and information studies can be justified on professional grounds, no less than on academic and social grounds. Equally welcome are academic first degrees that are followed by graduate study, for diploma or Master's degree. There is no need to restrict library, archive or information studies to students who are professionally motivated, if professional employment is made conditional upon both satisfactory choice of subjects and satisfactory levels of performance in them. Students are often uncertain about their choice of career, and even more so about the part of a profession they will favour as a specialisation. A young person is a better library user after library or bibliographical studies, regardless of his choice of profession. If he *does* choose library employment, the professional should not ask him to decide prematurely for or against college library, medical library, public library, school library, industrial library, or any other kind. First professional studies are first and foremost a time of opportunity for young people to become acquainted with the profession, on personal terms that can lead to the right personal career choices.

This is a condensed version of my report and I would therefore like to make acknowledgement to the good quality teaching I did find and admire, and I would not wish it to be thought by the friends I made in the library schools that I do not recognise excellence when I see it.

- 1) *Books for all* [Toshokan hakusho]. Tokyo, Japan Library Association. 1972, p. 40-41.