

Some Aspects of Japanese Library
Services for Children

児童図書館の現状

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要 旨

わが国における児童を対象とする図書館活動は、大別して学校図書館と、公共図書館における児童奉仕として考察できる。前者は、義務教育の普及と、教育即学校教育と考える一般的な教育観により、必要な教育施設の一部として理解されやすく、その結果、施設及び蔵書の面では、順調な発展を示したといえる。しかしながら、後者は、児童図書館関係者の真剣な努力にもかかわらず、望ましい発展の様相を示すことができなかった。

児童図書館の現状を最も明確に示すものは、日本図書館協会その他による調査の数字であり、筆者は、その調査を分析しながら、発展の遅れている理由を解明しようとつとめたものである。その他、国立国会図書館における児童図書の推察される現状、日野市立図書館の目ざましい具体例などをあげて、今後の発展の可能性を推測した。近年、国際的に児童図書館の情報交換が要請されており、この報告が、一助になれば幸いである。

(図書館学科)

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I. Number of Children's Rooms

According to statistics compiled by the Japan Library Association in 1965, there are 773 public libraries throughout Japan, 295 of which have either a separate children's room or a children's corner and six of which are libraries exclusively for children. In other words, only two fifths of our public libraries provide services for children.

Of 270 public libraries that reported the maintenance of children's rooms, 103 had rooms with more than 3,000 volumes and 30 seats. The others had as few as a hundred books and fewer than 20 seats.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Library and 48 ward and other city libraries in the Tokyo area have children's rooms, but only 18 of these have more than 3,000 volumes and 30 seats.

Much can be learned of how Japanese public libraries have developed services for children during the past ten years by glancing through the statistics of the decade. The following table, taken from *Statistics of Libraries in Japan*, issued by the Japan Library Association, shows the ratios year by year between facilities for children and the total numbers of government-administered and privately operated public libraries.

As far as the number of children's rooms is concerned, Table 2 shows a slow but steady growth. This has been paralleled by growth in the collections of children's books in these libraries. In 1957, there were but 849,915 volumes; by 1966, the number had doubled to

1,689,794.

Despite such evidence of quantitative improvement, children's librarians are dissatisfied and complain that development of library services for children has been too slow. As the latest statistics indicate, still only two-fifths of the total number of public libraries provide books and reading space for children. Why, it is asked, do not most of them open their doors to children?

The first and main reason for their failure to do so is lack of understanding of children's library services among public library administrators. All but a few library directors and chief librarians are appointed from among local government officials and serve for only a few years following which they are shifted to other governmental posts. It is almost impossible to expect them to have or to acquire any sense of how important library services for children are or of the need for such services in libraries other than school libraries. Even those who are willing to learn remain too briefly to gain much understanding or to take any action.

The second reason is the traditional inclination among public librarians to disregard or disparage services for children. Japanese public libraries, they contend, have too many fundamental needs and problems at this imperfect stage of their development to bother with children. Until the needs of adults have been fully met, the children can wait.

The third and perhaps fatal reason is a related misconception that seems to prevail not only among a large proportion of librarians but

Table 1. No. of Children's Libraries

Administrative Types	Number of Libraries	Children's Rooms	Children's Corners	Independent Children's Rooms	Totals
Prefectural	77	40	2	—	42
City	450	205	20	6	231
Town & Village	210	15	3	—	18
Private	36	10	—	—	10
Totals	773	270	25	6	301

(Japan Library Association. *Libraries in Japan*, 1965.)

Table 2. No. of Children's Rooms in Public Libraries

	Prefectural	City	Town & Village	Private	Total	Total Number of Public Libraries, including those providing no information
1957	*47/52	149/336	14/205	6/51	216/644	725
58	Figures not available					
59	48/54	185/376	21/186	9/43	263/659	766
60	47/54	171/383	17/191	7/42	242/670	780
61	45/54	191/391	16/194	8/38	259/677	736
62	45/54	190/395	12/193	9/38	256/680	739
63	42/54	197/406	14/198	9/36	262/694	756
64	43/54	214/397	14/197	11/38	282/686	756
65	41/55	216/410	13/210	10/36	280/711	773
66	41/56	230/416	21/213	12/39	304/724	791

(* 47/52 The Numerator shows the number of children's rooms, and the denominator the total number of libraries which answered a request for information as to whether they had facilities for children. The column at the far right includes non-answering libraries, the number of which for any year may be obtained by subtracting the denominator in the adjoining column.)

also among the general public. It is that services for children in the public libraries are superfluous because they already are being provided amply by school libraries. Those who hold this notion point out that much effort has gone into the development of school libraries and that almost every school now has a library. That is true, as the following table comparing the percentages of library-equipped schools in 1954 and 1965 shows.

The writer of this report has no intention of commenting on the qualitative aspects of our school libraries but believes there is a significant contrast between what has been done in

the schools and what has not been done in the public libraries.

The public in general has not yet understood what is meant by the "free" in "free public library services". To understand that it means "informal" and "independent" as well as "free of charge" will take time.

There also is a fourth reason for the slighting of children's needs by public libraries. It is the tendency for smaller libraries to follow the patterns of larger libraries without considering whether they have any relevance whatever to their own local community needs. The big libraries must know what is best. If they refuse to concern themselves with child-

Table 3. No. of School Libraries

	Elementary Schools	Jr. High Schools	Sr. High Schools
1954	*21,734 (13,040) 60%	12,455 (8,719) 70.3%	3,235 (2,426) 74.7%
1965	22,676 (19,728) 87%	11,581 (10,191) 88 %	4,082 (4,000) 98 %

(* The total number of schools is followed, in parentheses, by the number with libraries. The 1954 figures from *Gakko Toshokan Jiten (Cyclopedia of school libraries)*; The 1961 figure from *Asahi Nenkan (Asahi year book, 1967)*.)

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Table 4. Collections, Registrations and Circulation

Libraries	Prefectural	City	Town	Village	Private	Totals
Collections (No. of volumes)						
For adults	7,380,897	10,777,261	1,276,807	75,648	1,342,471	20,853,084
For children	370,215	1,151,973	110,419	5,470	51,717	1,689,794
					*Grand total	22,819,326
Number of Registrations						
At the libraries (children)	121,928 (20,545)	540,607 (139,100)	116,646 (27,303)	3,434 (583)	15,894 (5,087)	798,509 (192,618)
*Bookmobiles	158,944	62,364	2,245	—	466	224,019
Totals	280,872	602,971	118,891	3,434	16,360	1,022,528
Number of Circulation						
Borrowed at libraries (children)	1,054,306 (247,434)	6,459,395 (1,643,196)	1,325,392 (323,585)	47,779 (11,893)	213,073 (74,423)	9,099,945 (2,300,531)
*Bookmobiles	701,236	702,614	26,832	9,231	32,739	1,472,652
Totals	1,755,542	7,162,009	1,352,224	57,010	245,812	10,572,597

(* Children are included.)

(* Grand total includes books not specified as for either adults or children.)

ren, why should a small library? Some large prefectural libraries—similar to but not quite the same as county libraries in the United States—during the past decade closed their children's rooms because they had changed from the policy of serving only those who came to them to that of extending their services by sending out book collections. Whether right or wrong, this was their reason. As a consequence, some local community libraries, with no attempt to analyze this reason, closed their children's rooms simply because their prefectural libraries had done so.

II. Activities

Again, the statistics enable us to discern the quantitative inadequacy of the services for children in public libraries throughout the country. The tabulation—Table 4, made by the JLA in 1966, shows the ratios between the book collections for adults and those for children in the various types of public libraries, the ratio between adults and children registered as library

users, and the ratio between books borrowed by adults and those borrowed by children. As the figures indicate, while children constitute a fourth of the registered library users and borrow fourth of the books circulated, less than a tenth of the books in library collections is for children. It is obvious that if more libraries—at present only two-fifths do so—provided children's rooms and if more children's books were acquired children very easily would account for more than half of the total circulation.

If proof of this be needed, one has only to pick at random a few libraries that have children's rooms and circulate books for home use and look at their statistics—Table 5. Of the libraries chosen, the Maebashi, Azuma and Imabari are average municipal libraries. In all of them, children clearly outweigh adults as patrons.

III. Hino City Library: The Brightest Future

The theories and principles of modern public

Table 5. Collections, Registrations and Circulation in 4 Public Libraries

Library	Area Population (1,000)	Collection		Registration		Circulation	
		Total	Children's	Total	Children	Total	Children
Maebashi City Lib.	199	109,609	6,283	4,915	1,107	112,805	22,683
Sumida Ward Azuma Library, Tokyo	(318) One of 3 branches	21,086	5,013	4,949	3,399	45,139	25,548
*Hino City Lib.	75	31,865	16,936	6,036	3,638	201,619	129,196
Imabari City Lib.	102	28,730	6,655	3,125	1,498	79,661	34,751

(* Hino City Library. *Annual Report*, 1965-66.)

library service have been studied and discussed extensively among educators and librarians, and yet seldom are they put into practice. This cannot be said, however, of the Hino City Library, near the western edge of the Tokyo metropolitan area. Though only two years old, it "is trying to absorb the fundamental theories practiced by outstanding libraries in advanced countries and at the same time build a real public library which is most appropriate to the demands and needs of Japanese society," writes the Mayor of Hino, Mr. Takashi Ariyama, who happens to have been executive secretary of the Japan Library Association. (Annual report, p. 7)

The library started its services with circulation. Without a reading room, it carried books to housing projects, other residential areas, factories and farms by two bookmobiles. Two branches were opened during the past year. These have only shelves for their books and a circulation desk around which citizens swarm.

One of the branches was specially planned as a children's library. For it, no architect or designer drew a floor plan. It came into ex-

istence when a retired streetcar was brought into a center of a large housing project one night. Its seats were replaced by shelves, and it was freshly painted inside and out. There and then was born a very attractive children's library indeed.

A large proportion of the budget is spent for books—about 40%—because the librarian thinks that the richer the collection the more persons will be drawn to the library. There is no other library in Japan which divides its book budget equally between books for adults and books for children.

Compared with the average public library in cities of the same population, the Hino City Library is far ahead in registration and circulation. Its circulation exceeds even that of one of the largest city libraries. Mr. Maekawa, the librarian, reports modestly that "12.6% of the community residents" have registered to use the library. Though this figure may rank far below the average among U.S. and some other nation's libraries, it is a skyscraper in this country.

This library presents a fine example of co-

Table 6. Hino City Library Compared with Other City Libraries

	Population	Collection		Registration		Circulation	
		Total	Children's	Total	Children	Total	Children
Average Lib.	70,000	29,792		1,260		16,208	
Hino City Lib.	70,000	31,865	16,936	9,674	3,638	201,619	129,196
Largest City Library	316,000	510,894		17,721		172,713	

operation between a city administrator and a librarian. The citizens are enjoying the resultant advantage.

IV. Children's Library Study Group

In 1953, seven children's librarians met at the Saisei Children's Library, in downtown Tokyo, and organized the Children's Library Study Group. The following year, they reported on the poor condition of library facilities for children at the general convention of Japanese libraries. In 1955, the group started to issue "*Children's Library*," and in the general convention of that year thirty-one of its members proposed to the Japan Library Association that it create within its organization a special unit on children's libraries, a step which it took a year and a half later when it inaugurated the Children's Library Section in its Public Library Division.

During these years, Miss Georgia Sealoff and Miss Mabel A. Turner, visiting American professors to the Japan Library School of Keio University, gave valuable advice and suggestions to the members of the group. In turn, the members, all of them experienced children's librarians or new graduates of the Japan Library school, organized such projects as a book review committee, a survey of library conditions, demonstration of library techniques, and the exchange of information with foreign children's libraries. The annual Children's Library Workshop sponsored by the Public Library Division of the Japan Library Association was led mostly by active members of the group.

So far, the Children's Library Study Group has expanded to 192 members. It has published the following literature—books and monographs—either by itself or in collaboration with the Japan Library Association:

年鑑こどもの図書館 (*Children's library yearbook*, 1956, 1958, 1963.)

こども図書館の手引 (*Guide to children's library work*), 1959.

日本の児童図書館 (*Children's libraries in Japan*), 1957.

児童図書館ハンドブック (*Children's library handbook*), 1963.

児童図書館の手ひき (*Guide to children's library Work*), 1967.

児童図書館への道 (Translation by Reiko Tomono of "Rich the Treasure," by Haariet G. Long.)

V. Children's Books at the National Diet Library

The writer of this article is very reluctant to say anything about children's books at the National Diet Library for several reasons. One is that he has been unable to find but meager information about it in library literature. Another reason is his failure to obtain enlightenment from any department of the National Diet Library. He therefore has doubts as to whether there is anything worthy of mention.

The following, however, summarizes what is known. Since 1948, the National Diet Library has accessioned approximately 28,000 titles 36,000 volumes of children's books. These figures had to be compiled from the annual issues of *Zen Nippon Shuppanbutsu Somokuroku (Japanese National Bibliography)* by the writer himself. In 1948, a children's room was opened. The reason for this was clearly stated in "*National Diet Library; Report on technical processes, bibliographical services and general organization, 1948*," by Robert B. Downs. The following is the whole text:

Children's Room

When the Diet Library was officially opened, it was not the intention to admit children to the Library. For several reasons, however, the policy was changed. It was found that adult patronage at the beginning was less than expected, and children's books and periodicals deposited by the publishers were not being used. Further, there was the belief among some library officials that a regrettable indifference to, or lack of knowledge of, library service among a majority of parents might be corrected through work with their children. Since public libraries are lacking or limited for Tokyo residents generally, there was little danger of duplicating the work of other agencies. These considerations led to

the opening of a special reading room for children.

From the standpoint of use, there is no question that establishment of a children's division has been fully justified. Space assigned for the purpose is crowded, at all hours the Library is open, with children ranging in age from infants to high school students.

Whether the admission of children is a sound plan from the point of view of the Library as a whole is more questionable. The National Diet Library's aim is to become a great reference and research library, and not a popular public library. There is a distinct place for each type of institution and both are needed. Whether one library, on the other hand, can perform successfully such different functions is more doubtful. For anyone engaged in serious study, swarms of children in the library are a disturbing element, especially since they are not strictly confined to one part of the building. To meet this problem in American public libraries, a separate entrance for children is often provided, leading into a wing or other building unit cut off from departments for adults, and young people usually are not admitted to the adult division until they reach high school age.

Since the Diet Library appears to be committed to the policy of providing library facilities for children, at least until some other agency is organized to assume the responsibility, the present rather unsatisfactory arrangements might be corrected by either of two plans: (1) find building space elsewhere, to which the book collection and work with children could be transferred; or (2) assign a room on the first floor or in the basement of Akasaka Palace, if possible with a side entrance, and limit all children to the use of that area.

The children's room, though small, with only thirty seats, was well appreciated children in the neighborhood community, for whom no other reading facility was available. It was

closed in 1950 when the National Diet Library adopted a policy of excluding children.

Until 1959, a part of the general collection was circulated to individuals and groups. Special loans of children's books were made to local public libraries and community centers, and these helped greatly to supplement their own collections of children's books. Yet the criticism was raised that this service was contrary to the library's role as a conservator of publications. Circulation inevitably resulted in damage to books and thereby lessened their value as information resources. This may have been the reason for the library's decision to end the circulation of children's materials in 1959.

That is the sum total of "what is known" about children's books at the National Diet Library. The library, as is obvious from its acquisition lists, still is acquiring children's books, but no section or department is responsible for the handling of them as distinct from other books and no service is available in any form to those who would like to make inquiries about children's books. They are not catalogued, and they cannot be located in the public catalog. Where are they kept? In what manner? The National Diet Library apparently is too big an agency to bother itself with such inquiries.

VI. The Children's Literature Library

The Children's Literature Library was opened in May, 1967, as a branch of the Museum of Japanese Modern Literature Foundation. This is the first research library concerned with children's literature in this country and aims to collect and preserve not only children's literature published in book form but also manuscripts, letters, drawings and other related documents. Open to the public, at present it is located temporarily in the Ueno Branch Library of the National Diet Library. The bulk of its collection is seven thousand children's books collected by the Foundation (no connection with children's books in the National Diet Library). Maintenance of the collection and the rent for the facilities of the National Diet

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Library which it uses are paid for by the Foundation.

Summary

In this country, children always have been well taken care of. Japan is proud of the highest literacy in the world. The Government and all adults are eager to provide children with the best possible schooling. As individuals, teachers and parents always want to give their children good books and ample opportunity for reading. The quality of children's book published in recent years in general is excellent. Many of them would receive high international recognition if properly translated into Western languages.

In spite of this desirable background the development of library services for children, steady though it may have been, has been slow. Some individuals have been impatient with the pace of the national and local governments in extending public library services and dissatisfied with what the existing library services offer. They have started small libraries in private homes, at housing projects, in kindergartens and elsewhere to make free reading available for neighborhood children with their personal funds. Some of these home libraries are run by such internationally known authors of children's books as Miss Momoko Ishii and Miss Tomiko Inui. Quite often activities at these libraries are reported in the papers and magazines, and obviously they have the enthusiastic approval of mothers who are in-

terested in children's books and reading.

The writer of this article hopes that public libraries will develop in such a way that these individuals need not feel compelled to buy books for their own and neighborhood children with their own money and instead will be able to rely on the services of their public libraries.

It is strongly hoped also that the National Diet Library will organize a special section for children's books, placing in it the bulk of the collection it now keeps somewhere in storage, or at least will cooperate closely with the recently established private Children's Literature Library.

(Japan Library School)

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