

Save the Disaster-stricken Archives! : From Devastation to the Discovery of Hope for Tomorrow

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Plenary III : Disaster Planning and Response

Masaya Takayama
President of the National Archives of Japan

Good morning ! Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to introduce myself. I am Masaya Takayama, President of the National Archives of Japan. I am filled with deep emotion to be here in Toledo, a city rich in history and cultural assets, to report on what happened at the Great Earthquake in March this year.

1. Summary of the Great East Japan Earthquake



Main shock

14:46 pm, March 11, 2011

• Magnitude : 9.0

Casualties

• Dead : over 15,800

• Missing: over 3,900

• Injured: over 5,900

(As of Oct. 4)

Total Financial Damage

• 16,900,000,000,000yen

(approx. 220 billion US\$)

At two forty-six (2:46) P.M. on March eleventh (11), the eastern half of Japan was hit by a catastrophic earthquake. Its magnitude on the Richter scale was nine point zero (9.0), the fourth strongest earthquake ever recorded in the world history.



March 11, Onagawa, Miyagi
East Japan Earthquake Picture Project

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Thirty minutes later, it was followed by the biggest tsunami in the history of Japan which struck the Pacific coast. This earthquake and tsunami destroyed a huge number of coastal buildings and port facilities. Approximately twenty thousand (20,000) persons went missing or perished as a result, and the total damage is estimated at sixteen trillion and nine hundred billion (16,900,000,000,000) yen, or two hundred and twenty (220) billion U.S. dollars.



April 12, Rikuzentakata, Iwate, (C) INSTITUTE FOR FIRE SAFETY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Despite the efforts of the heroes of Fukushima, who received a Spanish Crown Prince's Award, the Daiichi Nuclear Power Station of Fukushima lost its emergency power, resulting in a very serious accident, and forcing many residents in the nearby towns and villages to evacuate.

It truly was a once-in-a-millennium disaster, and it affected the values or even the way of life of the Japanese people.



April 16, Rikuzentakata, Iwate
East Japan Earthquake Picture Project

- Sense of “mujo” 無常観
Haruki Murakami’s Speech
on Catalonia International
Prize (June 9, 2011,
Barcelona)

Haruki Murakami, the world-famous writer, who visited this country in June this year, said in his speech in Barcelona “The Japanese people have always lived with a sense of 'mujo'. 'Mujo' is a Buddhist world view. It means everything in the world is destined to disappear someday and nothing in the world is unchanging or eternal. Throughout history, Japanese people have been exposed to so many disasters that they have come to accept them as inevitable. And they learned to survive by overcoming difficulties with a forward-looking attitude. Destroyed houses can be rebuilt, damaged roads can be repaired, and even devastated cities can be restored. Many of us are aware that this is the time when the whole country should stand up for recovery and reconstruction.

2. Initiatives of the National Archives of Japan (NAJ)

- Message of Condolence to the Victims (March 18)
- Presented the survey results at the Annual Meeting of the Directors of the Public Archives (June 9)
- Conducted field research and exchanged opinions on how the disaster affected public archives in the stricken area
- Sent staff to Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures in July and August, implemented a system of restoration measures against damaged materials and held skill training in cooperation with a volunteer organization, the Tokyo Document Recovery Assistance Force
- Launched a new operation for Restoration of Damaged Public Documents, taking fiscal measures expected to be included in the upcoming supplementary budgets.

Now, I would like to speak about "Initiatives of the National Archives of Japan" towards the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Soon afterwards, the National Archives posted a message of condolence to the victims on our website.

Damaged Public Documents at Rikuzentakata City



Photographed by the National Archives of Japan Staff

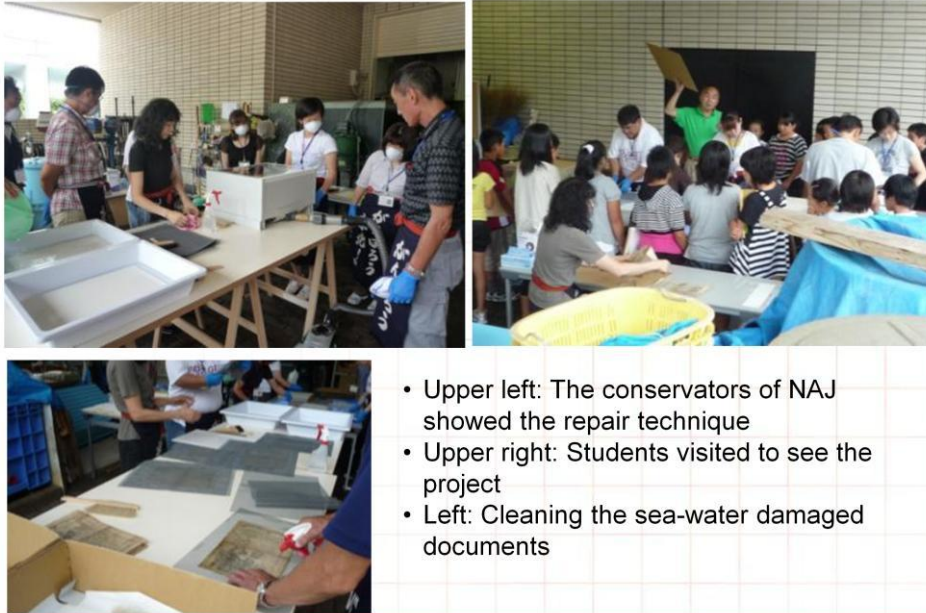
Since then, we have been giving every possible support and have engaged in activities reflecting the needs of the stricken area.

NAJ Restoration Project for Water-damaged Public Documents at Miyako City

- Sent 9 staff members of the NAJ in total
- Provided the necessary equipment and supplies free of charge
- Hired the part-time staff at Miyako City
- Provided technical training
- Cleaning, flattening, and drying the documents
- Recovered documents: 30 volumes, 5,036 sheets (387 sheets per day)

For example, in September, the National Archives launched a project for the restoration of damaged public documents in response to a request from Miyako City, Iwate Prefecture.

NAJ Restoration Project at Miyako City



- Upper left: The conservators of NAJ showed the repair technique
- Upper right: Students visited to see the project
- Left: Cleaning the sea-water damaged documents

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The project lasted for 13 days. We sent nine staff members to Miyako, provided the necessary equipment and supplies free of charge, hired part-time staff for the local restoration work and gave technical training to them. In total, 5,036 (five thousand and thirty-six) sheets of water-damaged documents were repaired. We plan to start a new operation for the restoration of the damaged public documents following this project.

3. Initiatives of the Japanese Government (1)

- The Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary issued instructions: "...each ministry must **carefully preserve the factual records of the great earthquake** as provisions against possible future disasters."
- **The Reconstruction Design Council (RDC)** was established under the Prime Minister to discuss the direction of comprehensive reconstruction.
- RDC submitted a recommendation to the Prime Minister: **Towards Reconstruction "Hope beyond the Disaster"**.

Next is about the Initiatives of the Japanese Government.

The Japanese government did recognize the need to preserve records of this disaster from an early stage. The Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary issued instructions that each ministry must carefully preserve the factual records of the great earthquake as provisions against possible future disasters.

One month after the disaster, the Reconstruction Design Council was established under the Prime Minister to discuss the direction of comprehensive reconstruction; the result of which was to be reflected in concrete guidelines. The Council submitted a recommendation to the Prime Minister under the title of: Towards Reconstruction "Hope beyond the Disaster".

3. Initiatives of the Japanese Government (2)

- “For us, the surviving, there is no other starting point for the path to recovery than to remember and honor the many lives that have been lost. Accordingly **we shall record the disaster for eternity**, including through the creation of memorial forests and monuments, and we shall have the disaster scientifically analyzed by a broad range of scholars to draw lessons that will be shared with the world and passed down to posterity.”

“Seven Principles for the Reconstruction Framework”

This recommendation included Seven Principles for the Reconstruction Framework, the first of which stated that: “For us, the surviving, there is no other starting point for the path to recovery than to remember and honor the many lives that have been lost. Accordingly we shall record the disaster for eternity” Thus it highlighted the importance of the preservation and inheritance of records.

The Basic Guideline for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake (2011.7)

“Reconstruction Policy” includes:

- Repair and conservation of “local treasures”, namely, cultural properties and historical materials
- Implementation of a detailed survey and research on this disaster, including international collaborative research
- Preparation for the preservation of records and lessons from the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power disaster, and of a disclosure system, based on the above research
- Conservation and preservation of public documents in the stricken area
- Promotion of digitalization of related materials and video images found in records, lessons, local information and publications by utilizing info-communication technology
- Formulation of a structure for the unified preservation and utilization of such records, which should be made accessible to everyone, both nationally and internationally, and disseminated worldwide

In June, the Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake were decided. They included, the policies related to repairing, conserving and preserving records and archives. Moreover, digitalization of related materials is promoted, and so is formulation of a structure for the unified preservation and utilization of such records, which should be made accessible to everyone.

4. Support activities by the institutions (1)

(1) Japan Society of Archives Institutions (JSAI)

- Started investigating the state of damage in all member associations nationwide, and reported the results on their website
- Requested the Prime Minister and the Conference of Governors to rescue and preserve damaged materials
- Participated in the restoration work implemented by the Cultural Affairs Agency

In the meanwhile, archival institutions and individuals have also actively been participating in the preservation activities.

Immediately after the disaster, the Japan Society of Archives Institutions (JSAI), an ICA B member, started investigating the state of damage in all member associations nationwide, and reported the results on its website. It also requested the Prime Minister and the Conference of Governors to rescue and preserve damaged materials and disaster-related documents.

4. Support activities by the institutions (2)

(2) The Cultural Affairs Agency

- Established the Cultural Property Rescue Program 20 days after the earthquake
- Salvaged cultural properties in urgent need of preservation, and provided temporary storage in safe facilities
- Sent conservation expert to rescue the cultural properties, including public documents and historical ancient documents damaged by the tsunami water

Drawing on its experience from the Kobe Earthquake in 1995, the Cultural Affairs Agency established the Cultural Property Rescue Program 20 days after the earthquake. A full-scale operation got underway to conserve cultural properties, in which the JSAI participated as a member institution.

4. Support activities by the institutions (3)

(3) “Shiryō Net” --- Voluntary groups

- Since the Kobe Earthquake in 1995, university faculties, graduate and undergraduate students, staff of archival institutions, and historical researchers joined hands to form groups called “Shiryō Net” nationwide and worked as volunteers to rescue and conserve historical records and archives damaged by the disasters.
- One of such groups, “Miyagi Shiryō Net” immediately took on the task of conserving historical materials affected by tsunami in liaison with the public sector and museums.
- “Shiryō Net” groups in other regions are also involved in the rescue activities for historical records and archives.

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Researchers from the private sector also stood up to help. Since the Kobe Earthquake, university faculties and students, staff of archival institutions, and historical researchers have joined hands to form groups called "Shiryō Net" and worked as volunteers to rescue and conserve historical records and archives stricken by the disasters. One such group, the Miyagi Shiryō Net, a Network for Preserving Historical Materials, has been operating remarkably in Miyagi Prefecture, one of the heavily-stricken areas.

5. Challenges we face today

1. Conservation and preservation of damaged records and archives
 - “Triage” --- how to decide the order of rescue of the damaged historical materials?
 - Restoration of the records contaminated by radiation
2. Review of disaster prevention measures
 - Disaster prevention measures for documents in various formats including digital records
 - Risk management for vital records
3. Collecting, preserving, and disseminating the disaster - related records
 - Pass down the records of the disaster for the next millennium

Before closing, I would like to discuss three challenges we face today.

The first challenge is the conservation and preservation of damaged records and archives. One of the lessons we learned was the need to establish something similar to "triage" in emergency medical service. Given the huge volume of materials damaged all at once, and a serious shortage of restoration staff and facilities, archivists were obliged to urgently evaluate, select and decide the priority of the damaged historical materials to be rescued. We would like to request cooperation from global experts.

The second challenge is the review of disaster prevention measures related to records and materials. When electricity was lost for many days over a wide area, the restoration of digital documents posed another problem. To establish disaster prevention measures for vital records and records in various media, our prime task is to examine the damages from this disaster in depth to safeguard archives from future disasters.

The third challenge is the issue of collecting, preserving and disseminating the disaster records. I believe it is our duty to maintain and pass them down for the next millennium and share what we have experienced with future generations.

Right: March 20, Albums,
Onagawa, Miyagi



Left: June 28, Miyako, Iwate,
Individual "memories" collected
from the heaps of rubble.

East Japan Earthquake Picture Project

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Hundreds of thousands of people in the stricken area lost their beloved family members and friends. They lost the places where they were born and grew up. The Self Defense Force, the first rescue troops that arrived in the stricken area to clear the rubble, voluntarily delivered many photos and albums they found to the evacuation shelters. What people wanted to find from the heaps of rubble was not bank check books, money or valuables. What they sought was objects of memory such as family photos, graduation certificates, letters, or diaries. When everything was lost, the only thing people wanted was archives as evidence of their lives, or of the community in which they lived.

I am most grateful to you for the opportunity to give this report here at CITRA as president of the National Archives of Japan. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to ICA colleagues for their warm messages of encouragement. I hope to organize sessions on the Great East Japan Earthquake with many Japanese archivists and conservators at the ICA Congress 2012 in Brisbane.



May 6, Minamisoma, Fukushima, East Japan Earthquake Picture Project

We all know that in the real world, nothing lasts forever. Based on the philosophy of “the ‘mujo’ of life” whereby all things are destined to change, we believe that things created by man may once be destroyed but they can nevertheless be restored.

I sincerely hope that our path to recovery is full of hope for tomorrow.

Thank you very much for your attention.