

The Japan Society of Archives Institutions (JSAI)

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Introduction

My name is Manabu Sadakane. I am President of the Okayama Prefectural Archives, and Vice-President in charge of international affairs of the Japan Society of Archives Institutions (JSAI). I will be speaking about the JSAI today. The only languages I am able to use are modern Japanese and early-modern, Edo-period Japanese. For today's presentation, I will be speaking in modern Japanese.

The name of our society is quite long, and is usually abbreviated as “*zenshiryokyou*” in Japanese. The English name is The Japan Society of Archives Institutions, and we have created a logo using the letters, JSAI.

The purpose of our society, which was established in 1976, is to expand communication and relationships among the members, and to contribute to the promotion of activities to preserve and use historical materials through research and discussions. The JSAI is comprised of (1) institutional members and (2) individual members. As of June 2015, the JSAI has membership of 134 institutions and 299 individuals, in total, 433 members. Institutional members include a diverse range of organizations that specialize in preservation and use of historical materials, such as archives (*monjokan* or *bunshokan* in Japanese), public record offices (*koubunshokan*), historical museums (*rekishishiryokan*), historiography offices of the municipal governments and university archives. Individual members are members who support the missions of JSAI, and those who are involved either in practice or research in preservation and provision of historical materials.

JSAI activities include: (1) annual national conference, (2) regional section meetings, and (3) committees.

(1) Annual national conference

Members from around the country gather together once a year for the national conference, which includes a general meeting, seminars, training workshops, and social events.

(2) Regional section meetings

There are currently two regional sections: Kanto and Kinki. Each section holds monthly seminars and conducts other activities for improvement of their members' professional skills and knowledge.

(3) Committees

The committee-initiated activities include meetings to report research findings, educational activities, submission of petitions, reporting on written opinions, and public relations activities.

Members have also taken part as temporary volunteers to salvage documents from the Great East

Japan Earthquake, and as a Category B member of ICA, we have had exchange opportunities with experts overseas.

Management of JSAI has undergone several changes, and has been in its current structure since 2009. Currently, the JSAI is comprised of the President's Office, the Vice-President's Office, and three committees. In general, committee members serve for a two-year term; April 2015 marked the start of the 21st term. The President's Office oversees all JSAI activities. The Vice-President's Office complements the function of the President and his/her office, and is in charge of international affairs. The three committees are: (1) Annual National Conference & Training Committee, (2) Studies & Research Committee, and (3) Public Relations Committee. To give you a general idea before going into detail, the Annual National Conference & Training Committee carries out the planning and management of the national conference and training workshops; the Study & Research Committee carries out studies and research on issues related to the archives, and organizes training seminars. The Public Relations Committee edits and publishes the JSAI journal, *Records and Archives*, and newsletters, and it manages the JSAI website as well.

Now, I would like to explain more about our activities in line with the three committees and their areas of responsibilities.

I. Annual National Conference & Trainings

The JSAI held its inaugural conference in 1976. First, I would like to tell you a bit about its prehistory. The history of Japan's preservation of historical materials goes back many years. However, in terms of its history in relation to the JSAI, the activities of researchers and users in local communities for preserving ancient documents started to gain steam around 1950. These activities had been carried out by the concerned parties from universities, the *Monbusho Shiriyokan* (Ministry of Education Archives—established in 1951 and later consolidated into the National Institute of Japanese Literature), and some public libraries. It can be said that we were naïve and lacking critical observations about the preservation of official documents and other records of local governments around that time.

The local autonomy system in Japan is a dual-layer structure of 47 prefectures and municipalities that make up each prefecture. It was since around 1960 that serious attention has begun to be paid to the preservation of the public records created by these local governments.

In 1959, Japan's first municipal archives to preserve official documents and local historical materials was established in Yamaguchi Prefecture; the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives. It was followed by the Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives, established in 1963, the Tokyo Metropolitan Archives in 1968, the Saitama Prefectural Archives in 1969, the Fukushima Prefectural Archives in 1970, the Kanagawa Prefectural Archives in 1972, the Ibaraki Prefectural Museum of History in 1973, the Fujisawa City Archives in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1974, and the Amagasaki Municipal Archives in Hyogo Prefecture in 1975. However, in the 30 years having passed since the end of World War II, only 10 facilities had been established. More time was needed for the archival

community to gather and create an association.

The parties concerned from the organizations specializing in preservation and use of historical materials first gathered in 1973. The first meeting was a voluntary and informal gathering. After the Preparatory Committee's meetings, in February 1976, the first general meeting and the research seminar of the JSAI was held at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives. This is the reason why our inaugural year is 1976. There were 67 participants from 45 organizations at the inaugural meeting. The first president was Niro Iwakami, Director of the Ibaraki Prefectural Museum of History.

The establishment of JSAI had the following significance: first, the issues on preservation and use of historical materials, which had been discussed exclusively by researchers and users, began to be considered by the people who preserve and provide services on those materials; second, it became a common recognition that not only the locally-preserved ancient documents but administrative documents and archival materials, created and possessed by the national and local governments, also had important value.

Since the establishment of JSAI, we have held the national conference and general meetings, as well as training workshops, each year in different areas.

You can see the conference venues and the number of participants in this slide. Last year's conference in Fukuoka marked the 40th, and to date only 15 out of 47 prefectures have not been a venue for the conference.

Themes are set for each conference, and discussions are held on various issues sometimes continuously over several years. To give you a few examples, the 39th Annual National Conference held in Tokyo the year before took the theme "Archives Developing in the Local Community: Preservation of Documents in the Era of the Public Records and Archives Management Act." The 40th Annual National Conference in Fukuoka last year was held under the theme of "Aiming at Improving Access to Archival Materials," and the main topic of discussion was the issues caused by rapidly advancing digitization of archival materials in the wake of 21st century. A similar discussion preceded this year's EASTICA Fukuoka program in the same city one year ago.

Looking at the earlier themes, one can see that legislation for preservation of historical documents had been the main issue for three years from 1977. Whereas the Science Council of Japan and the Historical Society of Japan had taken the lead in drafting of legislation, Mr. Niro Iwakami, who was the first President of JSAI, became a member of the House of Councilors in Japan, and made great efforts in his political life to enact this legislation. In 1987, the Public Archives Act was passed by lawmakers including Mr. Iwakami, who was then Advisor to JSAI. Of course, the JSAI itself was involved in extensive discussions and movements until the enactment of the law.

After the promulgation of the Public Archives Act, discussions on the establishment of archives in different areas of the country, as well as discussions to improve already existing archives, were continued at JSAI national conferences. The 20th National Conference was held in Kanagawa in 1994 under the theme of "Towards the Expansion of the Archives System." The number of participants climbed to 393 from the usual average of about 200, and it has been the never-broken

record for participants in the past 40 JSAI national conferences.

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that occurred in January 1995 was a major disaster that claimed the lives of 6,434 people. Local historical materials also suffered extensive damage. At the 21st National Conference in the same year, discussions were immediately held on the preservation of historical materials damaged by disasters under the theme of “Disasters and Historical Materials.”

Next epoch was the large wave of municipal mergers. On the basis of the Act on Special Provisions of the Merger of Municipalities, the national government established generous financial support measures and encouraged municipal mergers from 1999 to 2005. As a result, the number of municipalities in Japan decreased from over 3,200 to 1,800 by the year 2005. In 2015, this number is now 1,718. More than 1,500 municipalities have disappeared as a result of incorporations or equal mergers. As this wave coincided with the beginning of the 21st century, discussion about how we should respond to the challenges in the new century of great mergers of municipalities was actively participated, and it still has been.

In 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred and immediate reports were made on the disaster at the 37th National Conference in that year. A special task force on the Great East Japan Earthquake was commissioned to tackle with the issues arising from the disaster. Public Records and Archives Management Act (PRAMA) was also being enforced in 2011, and we have focused on discussion about this new law for the following three years.

At the time of the national conference and general meeting, we organize training workshops and courses including introductory training on archives and trainings on the fields specialized in archives, and we issue textbooks for those trainings as well.

II. Study & Research

The Study and Research Committee carries out studies and research on issues related to archives. It was formed after the integration of the committee for professional affairs and the committee for preservation of materials. In Japan, a national credential system for qualified professional archivists has not yet been established. Archival organizations employ and assign their staff members at the discretion of each institution in accordance with its organizational features and its holdings. To change this situation, JSAI established the Professional Affairs Committee in 1996 to: (1) examine issues on professional systems; (2) conduct research on training systems for archivists; and (3) collaborate with other organizations who share the interest in professional affairs.

The committee compiled “Report on Archivist Training Systems Overseas” in 2003, “Analysis of the Current Status of Archivist Training and Future Outlooks” in 2006, and “Collection of Documentation on Archivist Systems” in 2009. Nevertheless, we have not yet reached the point of establishing an actual system.

The Preservation of Materials Committee was established in 2001 as a reorganization of the Disaster Prevention Committee, which had been set up in April 1995 in the wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The committee conducted studies and research on document

preservation and provided information on the subject. The committee published the series of reports as follows: “Municipal Mergers and Preservation of Archives in Statistical Data” in 2003, “The Current Status of Public Records and Archives in Municipalities” in 2004, “Collection of Records: Ten Years since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake” in 2005, and “Preservation of Materials and Disaster Prevention Measures” in 2006. In an effort to provide information on archives preservation from a broader perspective, the committee also organized training sessions and lecture meetings on legislation of PRAMA.

In 2009, the Professional Affairs Committee and the Preservation of Materials Committee merged to the current Study & Research Committee. In recent years, the Committee has involved itself in formulating self-assessment indicators and organizing a series of seminars to disseminate information about archival functions. In March 2015, the Committee compiled and published an electronic version of the “Guidebook on Archival Functions.”

We have published this guidebook in the aim of contributing not only to establish new archives but also to develop archival functions in the style adaptable to each local government. In the past, JSAI took a central role in the movements for establishing new archives. We have not lowered our tone in this regard, however, local governments in Japan have been facing severe financial problems due to the stagnation of the Japanese economy since the mid-1990s, and it has become difficult to finance the cost to establish new archives.

JSAI holds the belief that local governments, regardless of how dire fiscal straits may be, must create systems to maintain, preserve, and use public records and archives. The guidebook can be regarded as one form of JSAI’s efforts to help local governments to develop archival functions.

III. Public Relations

The Public Relations Committee carries out the following: (1) editing and publication of JSAI’s journal, *Records and Archives* (once a year); (2) editing and publication of newsletters (twice a year); and (3) maintenance and management of the JSAI website, which contains a variety of information.

The journal’s latest issue is no. 25. It is also distributed to non-members. We are proud that the journal is filled with state-of-the-art contents as an information magazine about archives and it has an English title, too. The journal includes special features, research notes, essays introducing the archivists’ viewpoints, world news on archives, domestic archival network, book reviews, reference files, information on members’ publications, and annual report of JSAI’s activities. The journal focuses not only on exchanging information and ideas around the country; it also focuses on the global situation.

We have learned a lot from East Asian countries, as well as from the ICA.

If I may take up some old names, the lectures given in Japan by Mr. Michael Roper in 1987 and Dr. Charles Kecskemeti in 1991 were profoundly inspiring. We also held a meeting in honor of ICA President Jean Favier.

The newsletters are published twice a year. Of those, one issue includes the proceedings of the general meeting, as well as the national conference and training seminars, thus utilizing it as a medium to deliver information to those unable to attend the conference.

The homepage of our website is as seen on the slide here.

It should be noted that, although detailed descriptions are not given here individually, the publications you can see on this slide are all produced by JSAI.

Conclusion

The purpose of the establishment of JSAI, as mentioned earlier, is to expand communication and relationships among the members, and to contribute to the promotion of activities to preserve and use historical materials through research and discussions. It is based on our strong recognition that we are an organization that promotes the value of archives as the founding basis of democracy and local communities. Although we are an unincorporated voluntary association, I believe it is a strong organization supported by the members who can cooperate with each other in addressing and solving the problems that could never be solved by individual person or institution.

I spoke about the achievements of Mr. Niro Iwakami earlier with regard to enactment of the Public Archives Act. As this had been a long-sought goal of JSAI itself, we took an active role in the discussion through various channels including our special committee for the legislation of the law.

With the preservation of judicial documents, as well as that of the public records after the municipal mergers, we submitted petitions and recommendations to our government. After the Great East Japan Earthquake, JSAI participated with its expertise as a professional archival organization in salvaging disaster-affected public records and documents. As such, we have been making a significant contribution to the world of archives in Japan.

As a group of specialized institutes and individuals of archives, we would continue to take pride in helping protect democracy and sustain communities in Japan, and take a lead of the Japanese archival community.

This concludes my presentation. Thank you for your kind attention.