

## JAPANESE LIBRARIES AND THEIR NEEDS\*

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In August, 1950, fifteen educators were sent to Tokyo to act as Consultants for the Institutes for Educational Leaders (IFEL) to be held under the auspices of the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) of the Army. We were given two weeks of orientation, then we were introduced to the Japanese Directors and Advisors of the Institutes and our Interpreters.

The institutes which were held by CIE the fall of 1950 and the winter of 1951 were primarily to improve the public schools of Japan and as part of that program to improve the school libraries. Students were sent to these institutes from all over the country and they represented as many prefectures as possible. The men in the Library Science Institute were not all librarians and those who were had had no professional training; yet they had been chosen as being the ones most likely to give courses for school librarians in their universities and normal schools. Our work was to discuss school libraries, what they could do, and what they should do. There were talks by the Japanese Director, the Japanese Advisor, the American Consultant, and by visiting Japanese lecturers. There were visits to the schools to see their libraries. Because the students were primarily interested in their own libraries there was some discussion of public and university library problems; and

there were visits to those types of libraries also.

I visited university, prefectural and city, and elementary and secondary school libraries. I found the buildings of those that I visited rather large, dark, and unattractive. Every building in Japan has living quarters for someone, food is cooked in every building with the attendant odors of fried fish, etc. The school libraries were the most attractive libraries that I saw there. They have one room usually with adequate light, pictures in color done by the school children, and in some instances suitable furniture.

The maintenance of the library buildings is very poor, since repairs are not made, and the cleaning is poorly done. At least two firms in Tokyo make library furniture and the school libraries often have tables and chairs of varying heights, adjustable shelving, catalog cases, magazine and newspaper racks, and loan desks. The Japanese are apt to pick out the unusual, hence most of their newly equipped libraries have the bottom shelves tilted forward to make it easier to read the titles of the books.

The public and university libraries seem to have a relatively large number on the staff, but there are very few women, as on the whole they still work only in the home. Perhaps a larger number of the staff are clerical workers than is usually found in the U. S. A. Girls are needed to make and serve the tea which is offered to the staff and to

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## NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

all visitors. The librarians are untrained, even many head librarians, who have been appointed to positions of administrative authority, have not had suitable experience under an experienced or trained librarian.

Book collections are difficult to judge when one has only a few minutes while being shown rapidly through a building, and the handicap of an unknown language is very great. There are, of course, the Japanese and Chinese classics, there are a surprisingly large number of books from America, England, and Europe. But the books are not made accessible to the readers, many reading rooms have not a single book in them, and the book stacks are not open to the readers. Chicken wire or glass is frequently put over the books on the shelves, and the reader may poke a finger through the wire or point to the book he wants. Readers pore over the catalog trays, which are fastened down to the top of a table; then they ask at the desk, get the book, and read it in the reading room, almost never are they allowed to take books home with them.

Japanese libraries are still in the stage of preserving rather than servicing their books, as they are afraid of losing them. A Japanese reading a book and getting a new idea, hesitates to return the book to the library, as someone else may read it and know as much as he knows, and would also know where he got his idea.

A number of the school libraries do have open shelves and the children may go to the shelf, select a

book, and read it in the library or the adjoining classroom.

In university libraries the student goes to the reserve book desk, gets his book, signs for it, affixes his stamp (most of the Japanese carry a rubber name stamp—hahn) and takes the book to the reading room.

The Japanese librarians have the Nippon Decimal Classification system, somewhat like the Dewey Decimal Classification system; the Nippon Catalog Rules; and the Nippon Subject Headings List. All of these need revision. The Japanese also have and use, so far as their knowledge of English permits American books of library science. English is taught today in all Japanese secondary schools and many of the older people know some English. They use ditto apparatus for reproducing catalog cards and they have Japanese typewriters with 3,000 or more characters. Their tendency is to have many catalogs; a classed catalog, an author and title catalog, and a subject catalog.

The Chiba Prefecture Library has two bookmobiles, so far the only two bookmobiles that are owned by a Japanese library. The shelves are filled with books for adults and books for children. And these books show wear. There are loud speakers on the top of each bookmobile and they play music as they drive through the country. The farmers are said to enjoy the music very much.

The Japanese have many library associations, but they are not very active; probably because of the Japanese lack of a spirit of co-operation.

The New Japan Library School with its American faculty and funds from the U. S. Department of the Army and the A. L. A., opened at Keio University on April 1, 1951. They have at least 30 students, and more remarkable still half of them are women. Keio University has agreed to continue the School, taking it over in June, 1952. This opportunity for training will mean much to Japanese libraries and Japanese librarians.

The greatest needs of the Japanese libraries seem to be: better book selection—book selection for libraries as it is done in the United States is almost unknown in Japan; reference service—almost none is offered by the Japanese libraries; greater access to books; trained library personnel; attractive library quarters; and co-operation between libraries and librarians—sharing of knowledge rather than hoarding it for the prestige of the individual.

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