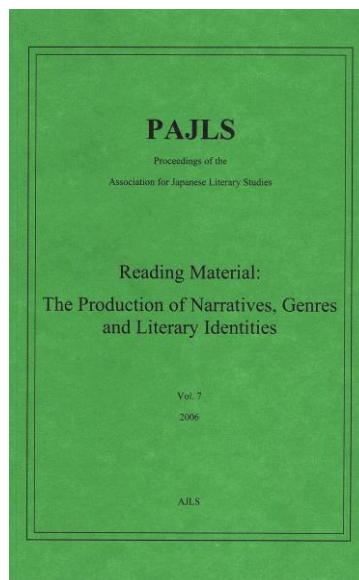


“The Histories of Japanese Book Collections in the United States: An Interim Report and Some Thoughts about the Research”

Atsuhiko Wada 

Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies 7 (2006): 29–36.



PAJLS 7:
Reading Material: The Production of Narratives, Genres and Literary Identities.
Ed. James Dorsey and Dennis Washburn.

The Histories of Japanese Book Collections
in the United States:
An Interim Report and Some Thoughts about the Research

Atsuhiko Wada

Shinshu Daigaku

This essay is an interim report of my research project: the Histories of Japanese Book Collections Research Project (JBC Project). This project was supported by the Overseas Advanced Educational Research Practice Support Program in Japan.¹

First, I'd like to explain the aim of this project, its process, and plans for the future. The aim of this research is really quite simple; it's to write the histories of Japanese book collections in the US, mainly at university libraries. But the ways to reach this aim are quite complicated and so is the outcome of my research. Each library and each collection has its own unique history, and primary sources about origins and development are dispersed in various libraries and offices. Unfortunately there have not been any nation-wide attempts to gather and order these materials. Some articles were found which describe the "current" situation of each Japanese book collections in the US, such as Naomi Fukuda's work in 1959 and in 1980 or Tien's report in the 1970's.² But these articles focus on contemporary analysis and don't pay much attention to the archives of collection history or its preservation.

In my research I focus on the time period from 1945 to 1970, when remarkably, Japanese books were imported to the US. I am also gathering information on each collection's nucleus before that time period. For example, The University of Hawaii, Yale University, Columbia University and Northwestern University have Japanese collection histories before the war. To understand these histories I have gathered the following items.

1) Papers or documents written about the history of collections

¹ The Overseas Advanced Educational Research Practice Support Program in Japan is sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Technology. This research was carried out from 20 Mar. 2005 to 12 Jan. 20 2006.

² Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei, *Current Status of East Asian Libraries in the United States* (Washington D. C: Center for Chinese Research Materials. Association of Research Libraries. 1976). Naomi Fukuda, *Some Aspects of Japanese libraries* (Non-published, 1959). *Survey of Japanese Collections in the United States* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan. 1980).

These are mostly secondary resources and I need to find the proofs these papers are based on. Although there are few articles which cover many collections in the US, it's not difficult to find papers which deal with each Japanese book collection. And some of them contain important historical information.³

2) Annual reports of librarians or libraries

In most cases there are some versions of these reports in each library. Generally, annual reports made by a Japanese section is handed in to the head of East Asian libraries and edited by him/her to hand in to the librarian of the main library. And also the librarian then edits again the reports from each library. I gathered as many first versions as I could find, but at the same time I gathered the last version to understand the larger situation surrounding the collection. Of course it's rare to encounter all of these versions at one university.

3) Various documents about East Asian Libraries

These are invoices, reports of meetings, cataloguing records, and accession records. And correspondences concerning the installation, acquisition, and exchange of collections are useful. Sometimes the director's records of the main library, and the president's records also contain information about library collections. Additionally, files about institutes or centers of Japanese studies or Asian studies often include important information about book collection or book accession.

4) Oral history or direct/ indirect interview with librarians

I interviewed more than 50 current and retired librarians, excluding librarians who supported and advised my research. Since I began in April 2005, I have visited 25 universities, and interviewed librarians there.

Currently I'm ordering and examining these documents and planning to publish the results in 2006 in Japan.

As I mentioned before, each collection has its unique history and various factors influencing its development. Thus these records and documents are diverse and don't have simple constructions. Additionally not all libraries keep all of these records. Though I could get many items, at the same time I found many of these documents had been discarded. It was necessary to gather documents from diverse archives of libraries to understand even a certain Japanese collection. This work is like a jigsaw puzzle.

I'll show you one piece as an example. Below find a photo of the Japan reference library. It operated during 1939 to 1941 in New York and it traveled around the US, because it was "mobile". It was comprised 4000 books, slides, and photos concerning Japan. According to its

³Roger Sherman, *The Acquisition of the Mitsui Collection by the East Asiatic Library, University of California, Berkeley*, Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980.

leaflet, these books are mostly (95%) written in English. This mobile library also carried 16 mm and 35 mm films on Japan and could make a small exhibition. 600 copies of this leaflet were distributed from the end of 1939 to early 1940.⁴ When I found the leaflet at the Princeton archives, I knew little about it. It was a piece of the puzzle. While researching at many library archives, I've encountered other pieces concerning this library and now I understand it was planned and prepared by Shio Sakanishi (坂西志保), a librarian at the Library of Congress (LC). And it was sponsored by the Japanese Embassy and the Japan Institute in New York. Their books were purchased by Nunokawa Tsunozaemon



(布川角左右衛門) at the Iwanami bookstore (岩波書店).⁵ The Library appeared at the University of Michigan and the American Library Association annual meeting in San Francisco. It was closed by an order of a Japanese consul just before the war. To put together even this small puzzle, it's necessary to pick pieces up in many libraries such as Princeton, LC, Columbia, Yale, and Michigan. So, it's like a puzzle.

It's impossible to mention all of these collection histories in this paper and additionally I'm still in the middle of processing these records. In this essay I'd like to write some reflections on my research days. And I hope my results will be published in the near future and will inform you of this research in detail.

Diverse and complex factors of the collections' developments

While I was researching each collection's histories, I was impressed with the variety and complexity of their origins and formations. For example, Columbia's Japanese book collections' main nucleus is the Japanese Cultural Center's collection. This private center was established in 1927 by members who wanted to improve the relationships between Japan and the US. Tsunoda Ryusaku (角田柳作), a proposer and an acting secretary of the organization, appealed to many Japanese facilities to donate books to this Center. Koyata Iwasaki (岩崎小弥太), the leader of a famous zaibatsu, a giant family concern in Japan, provided fiscal support. As it was difficult to establish an independent facility to maintain the collection, Columbia took it over. Tsunoda moved with the collection to the University as a curator and additionally took charge of the Japanese course.⁶

During the Second World War, Columbia also took over the collection of the Japan Association, which had been established by Jokichi Takamine (高峯讓吉), a famous Japanese

⁴ *Report of the First Year's Activities of the Japan Reference Library: May-November*. Shio Sakanishi Collection (Washington D.C.: The Library of Congress. 1939).

⁵ The documents of the Japan Reference Library are found at the libraries it visited. The Library of Congress's Shio Sakanishi Collection also contains many documents about its activities.

⁶ *Japan Culture Center at Columbia University*. This leaflet was made by the University and sent to Jerome D. Green in Jan. 1931. Nicolas M. Butler, "Letter to Jerome K. Green. 28 Jan. 1931," *Jerome K. Green Papers*. University Archives, Columbia University.

chemist. And soon after the war, New York's office of the Civil Affairs Division of the Army gave about 4,000 Japanese books and 6,000 periodicals published during 1946 to 1948 in Japan.⁷ In 1949 even though it was hard for the library to purchase Japanese books in those days in a normal way, the library procured more than 5,000 Japanese books from the LC through the Japanese book sorting project, which I will discuss below. Many organizations were involved in the history of this collection and many collections were merged with each other. This is only an example of such complexities.

Additionally each collection history is influenced by Inter-library factors. Let me give another example. Yale's collection was mainly purchased in 1907 and 1908 by Kanichi Asakawa (朝川貫一), a graduate from Dartmouth College. He also selected the LC Japanese collection and at the same time, he is one of the members of the Japanese Cultural Center, which I mentioned earlier concerning Columbia's origin. This kind of relationship between collections became more prevalent after the war. Yale contacted the LC and Columbia to purchase their duplicates of Japanese books soon after the War.⁸ In 1949 at Yale there was the National Committee on Oriental Collections, a national meeting of librarians and scholars, where participants exchanged and shared information about acquiring Far Eastern books. This meeting also influenced Yale's tactics of acquiring Japanese books.⁹ That's why I need to understand each collection history in the context of a national relationship among libraries, librarians, and scholars.

While I'm researching the relationship among libraries, I have to examine the details of how each library acquired books. For example, let's think about the Hoover Institute at Stanford. Without examining this process in detail, we couldn't understand why the Hoover Institute could have gotten Japanese books and documents so effectively soon after the War. Today at Stanford we can see hundreds of correspondences between the Institute and its Tokyo office.

The Hoover Institute at Stanford kept in close contact with its Tokyo Office from 1945 to 1951. The books and documents it acquired amounted to 1500 boxes. All lists of titles in each box are kept there. The staff using various bibliographies would request detailed list, such as "Chuo Koron, August 1937". The office cooperated not only with the NRC (Natural Resources Section) and the CI&E (Civil Information and Education) section of SCAP (Supreme Commander for Allied Powers), but also promoted exchanging items with Japanese Universities and the National Diet Library. In 1946 a committee was established to advise the office and to avoid purchasing duplicate books of other universities. The staffs at UC Berkeley and the University of Washington joined the meeting.¹⁰ I gathered the documents about these activities

⁷ *East Asiatic Collection Annual report 1947-1948* (The East Asiatic Library. Columbia University, 1948).

⁸ Yanaga Chitoshi, *Memorandum on Visits to Harvard, Columbia, and the Library of Congress*, 26 Feb. 1948, University Library Records, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

⁹ Joseph Yamigawa, *Minutes of Group Meeting of National Committee on Oriental Collections And a Section of the Far Eastern Association*, 7 April 1949, University of Michigan Library Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁰ Reports and correspondences of the Tokyo Office were held by the archives at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

and now I'm working hard to re-order and examine them to reconstruct the activity of the Tokyo office in those days and to make clear as to why their activity succeeded.

Political factors and influences

There is another reason that I focus on the details of collection histories. I can see various political factors or historical situations reflected in the changes of the collections, and these are interesting to me.

Let me return to the first example, Columbia's collection, which sometimes received donations from Japanese politicians such as Shigeru Yoshida (吉田茂), Hayato Ikeda (池田 勇人), Eisaku Sato (佐藤栄作), all politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party. These successive prime ministers donated books when they were presented with honorary degrees at Columbia. And the fund established when Yoshida retired has made it possible since the 1960s to call on support from librarians in Japan for years to come. Not only direct relationships between the collection and politicians, but also various political situations reflect changes in the collection.

This is to say nothing of the influences of the Second World War. While the war has produced many outstanding scholars in Japanese studies, it has also influenced collection development and its management. The Japan Association in New York, whose collection was bought by the University, couldn't maintain its collection, as well as that of the Japan Institute, because its assets were frozen.

And the war also affected Columbia book acquisition from LC's Japanese book sorting project. The LC planned to have other libraries send their librarians to catalogue Japanese materials in 1949. These materials were gathered and transferred from occupied Japan by the Washington Documentation Center, the WDC. According to Edwin G. Beal, a librarian at the LC, in 1946 the LC began to accept these materials from the WDC and it amounted to 270,000 pieces. It was too much for the LC staff to process these materials, which consisted of about 3,000 mail sacks. According to Beal, instead of book cards which indicate the information of each book, there were "sack cards" to indicate their location in the library.¹¹ The LC contacted many libraries for this program and 6 universities sent librarians. They catalogued these items and could get duplicate items for their own libraries.

I managed to confirm directly Miwa Kai, a librarian at Columbia who is one of the participants of this project, the details of this process. And the documents of this project can be seen in each library that sent librarians to the project. As far as I know, correspondences between Kenneth Colegrove at Northwestern University and Harry Harada, a Japanese librarian at the University library are the best at describing the days vividly and concretely.

Like other libraries, Columbia's collection has been supported by the Japan-US Friendship Commission. It was created with US proceeds from returning Okinawa to Japan.

¹¹Edwin G. Beal, *Minute of Group Meeting of National Committee on Oriental Collections And a Section of the Far Eastern Association*, 7 April 1949, Appendix, University of Michigan Library Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Thus the resources of Japanese book collections have a deep connection to the political relationship between Japan and the US. And of course world affairs influenced the book funds as the NDEA, the National Defense Education Act after the 1960.

Interestingly, I found sometimes these influences were neither direct nor simple. For example, first I thought that the books donated by the LDP politicians might be politically biased. In this case, it isn't true. Because librarians at Columbia negotiated with the Japanese consul and informed these politicians of their "wish list".¹² The library used the situation effectively and actively to cover the gaps of its collection. It's worth noting that such tenacity or inventiveness of librarians has developed the collections.

Problems with historical records of Japanese book collections

While researching this issue, I also faced some problems concerning the archives of each library. At first I thought it was easy to gather these materials because a library is the very place where records are kept. But as far as the collection histories, various problems have made it difficult. I talked with many librarians at East Asian libraries and almost every librarian is so busy with their present work, and so occupied with supporting current users that they aren't able to spend enough time servicing their past. That is to say, even librarians at East Asian libraries aren't familiar with these documents.

In addition to overwhelming workloads, there is a problem of the jurisdiction of these documents. Generally documents which have important meaning for each library section are sent to archives such as directors' files. Thus documents of East Asian libraries in the past are not in the East Asia libraries and they are under University archivists' control. In most cases there is somehow a distance, or a gap between librarians at each collection and University archivists. In other words, there is a gap between librarians and archivists and in addition a gap between East Asia libraries and main libraries; a librarian called this "a bamboo curtain". Japanese collection librarians know a great deal about books and periodicals in Japanese but they aren't familiar with grey materials such as papers, photos, invoices, and correspondences, including their own documents from the past. While university archivists know much about these materials they can't read Japanese in most cases. That is to say, these documents are in a sort of a blind area.

Sometimes my visit and research created the opportunities for the two sides to cooperate. And I found this cooperation was really fruitful for my research as well as for the libraries themselves. For example, the East Asia library at Stanford University was separated from the Hoover Institute a couple years ago. And the documents about the Tokyo office are held separately. The invoices and book list of acquisitions are in the East Asia library and shipment information and correspondences are in the Hoover. We only realize its acquisition history when both collections are put together. To my delight, my visit and research made it necessary for both sides to begin exchanging with and supplying their information to each other.

In any case, the location where these documents are held and the criteria for keeping historical documents about a library collection depend on each university's circumstances and

¹² Kai Miwa, Personal Interview. 13 June 2005. The list of donated books is held by the rare book room at the Starr East Asia Library at Columbia University.

librarians. In the US, for better or worse, each library is unique and this quality is reflected in the holdings of their archives, so that I was sometimes lost because of these eccentricities.

Another factor making my research difficult is the “time factor”. The first generation curators who began working after the war are now in their seventies or eighties, a few even in their nineties. I had to give up interviewing some librarians because of their age. I was often told, “If you had come 5 years ago”. Even while I was researching, Ike Nobutaka and Ike Hiroko passed away. They are well known for their academic work in Japanese Studies, but they also played an important role for Japanese book collections. Ike Nobutaka, who worked at the Hoover Institute at Stanford as a curator soon after the war, instructed the accession of its Tokyo office. Ike Hiroko is one of the first members who processed the Mitsui collection, the famous huge collection that The University of California Berkeley acquired in 1951, and additionally was familiar with the growth of the collection at the University of Hawaii. However, this kind of problem accompanies almost every modern type of historical research.

What I should find through the research

This research is still in progress. My ultimate goal is still far away but I believe this research will produce fruitful and exciting results. I’m planning not only the publication of this result, but the production of a useful database which will provide the information of these documents I gathered. They total more than 3,000 items and I’m sure to support many scholars in various countries who are interested in Japanese materials and its histories in the US. The history of collection contains issues far beyond the history of books themselves. Japanese books, like other foreign materials, have their own unique history of management; the ways of acquisition, cataloguing, classifying, and shelving. These problems seem to be for the librarians' consideration rather than for literature students'.

But for me, this is a fundamental and indispensable step to approach books, including Japanese literature. Imagine I'm here in the US and I take a book from a shelf, I know many libraries have shelves far away from their campus but that's another story. When I take a book, I can't stop thinking about why, how, and when this book came here from Japan. How and when was this book provided, and by whom? All these questions, from my point of view, cannot but influence the reading of the book. I've studied about the history of readers and their circumstances together with Japanese literature. My main interest is the diacritic analysis of the interaction between readers and publications. That's why I tackle this issue, the history of Japanese book collections in the US and contemplate the problems surrounding it.

For example, let's consider the classification of Japanese books. The classification of books is deeply connected with the notion of genres and changes within them. Before 1960, the classification methods of Japanese books were diverse in each library. Though there was a movement to expand the Harvard-Yenching classification after the war, Asakawa at Yale was strongly opposed to the plan, which adopted the classification to Yale's Japanese book collection. For him, it was not only the problem of convenience. He said that the Yenching classification

reflects too much of Chinese traditional values and isn't adequate for Japanese materials.¹³ He perceived it as if the adoption of this method were a violation of his whole notion about Japanese books. He reacted as if he felt this movement was a vengeful act for the Japanese invasion in China. In any case the classification conflict is a conflict about which Japanese materials should be called "literature".

As for Yale, in connection with this issue, the problem of the physical location of East Asian materials was seen during the same time period. There was a movement to disperse Japanese materials into other Western books. This movement was also not a matter of convenience. It was supported by the concept of an interdisciplinary approach to East Asian materials.

These issues, which accompany the history of Japanese collections, are concerned with providing an infrastructure for readers, or in other words, for acting as a medium between readers and collections. And that's what I'm most interested in. Needless to say, librarians are a great part of this issue. Not only Japanese books, but also Japanese librarians have their histories, such as why, when, and how they reached the US. To tell the truth, while researching I have become more fascinated by each librarian's personal history than by the collection histories themselves. Their stories and histories are the precious parts of collection histories; or in other words, for me these librarians are kinds of rare and unique books worthy of researching and recording.

¹³ Asakawa Kan'ichi, *Petition to the Library and the Administration of Yale University to reconsider the recent decision to adopt new systems of transliterating Japanese sounds and of classifying Japanese books classification*, 16 April 1948, University Library Records, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.