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journal or publication title	Science and Technology reports of Kansai University = 関西大学理工学研究報告
volume	61
page range	45-51
year	2019-03-20
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10112/16672">http://hdl.handle.net/10112/16672</a>

# CHANGES IN THE PRESERVATION OF MODERN ARCHITECTURAL MATERIALS IN RECENT YEARS IN JAPAN

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(Received December 12, 2018)

## Abstract

This paper is an attempt to clarify the changes in efforts toward the preservation of and research on modern architectural materials, particularly in Japan, since the establishment of the International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO) in 1988. Focusing on studies and research that describe preservation activities and discussions as movements within Japan, and beginning with the opening of the Japanese National Archives of Modern Architecture, which acts as a repository for these materials, we will proceed with our investigation by tracing the changes in their preservation.

## 1. Introduction

This paper describes changes in the preservation of modern architectural materials in Japan and examines the future prospects for the preservation of such materials. Specifically, we discuss the opening of the Japanese National Archives of Modern Architecture, the Modern Architectural Materials Nationwide Survey Special Working Group (WG), the Basic Concept of the Architectural Museum, the Special Investigation Committee for the Comprehensive Survey of Modern Architectural Materials, the AIJ Architecture Museum, the Architectural Institute of Japan, the Architectural Institute of Japan Archives Sub-Committee, and the research and discussion meeting on “Archives and Documentation of Modern and Contemporary Architecture”.

This paper is a significantly modified version of my study *The Current Status of the Preservation of Modern Architectural Materials in Japan* (*Engineering and Technology* 21, 2014, pp. 17–20). This paper includes some findings that were derived from a reexamination of certain documents that were cited in the previous paper as well as a first look at a survey report published in 2015 (after the previous paper).

## 2. Opening of the National Archives of Modern Architecture

The opening of the Japanese National Archives of Modern Architecture in 2013 is evidence of the increasing interest in the study and preservation of modern architecture in Japan. It was established to prevent the deterioration, dissipation, and overseas outflow of materials

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(drawings, models, etc.) related to modern architecture, as well as to collect and preserve them. Moreover, it supports the dissemination and succession of architectural culture through the study and exhibition of materials<sup>1)</sup>. The facility is adjacent to the Kyu-Iwasaki-tei Garden (the Old Hisaya Iwasaki Mansion) in Yushima, Tokyo. The Basic Policy on the Promotion of Culture and the Arts was adopted by the Cabinet on February 8, 2011. As part of the strategy outlined in the policy, it is imperative “[to collect] information on the location of materials and works from relevant areas and promote the creation of an inventory of the works available (inventory of materials) so that culture and arts can be assured to the next generation—for the creation of archives in the field of culture and the arts, in addition to using them proactively.” The policy aims at “building a system that can ensure that the academic, historical, and artistic values of modern architecture are passed on to the next generation; this cannot be sufficiently assured when compared with preservation policies pertaining to pre-modern traditional buildings in the field of architecture.” Large-scale renewal projects have been initiated by the Government Buildings Department of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism instituted by the Fundamental Law for the Promotion of Culture and Art. In the three years since its opening in 2013, the Japanese National Archives of Modern Architecture has collected and stored approximately 60,000 materials requiring urgent safekeeping.

As noted above, in addition to engaging in research and development, the facility develops exhibitions to educate the public regarding the value of modern architectural materials and the inheritance of architectural culture. The exhibition *Aiming for an Archives of Architecture* was held from May 8, 2014 to August 24, 2014. The creation of this exhibition also involved producing a report of the results of nationwide information-gathering activities on the locations of modern architectural materials in 2013. It introduced the idea of an architectural archive such as the National Archive of Modern Architecture was intended to house.

### 3. Special Working Group for the Nationwide Survey of Modern Architectural Materials

This report was created by a Special Working Group (WG) for the Nationwide Survey of Modern Architectural Materials.

In present-day Japan, no adequate system of architectural archives exists to preserve and organize architectural materials (drawings and models, including indispensable ones) in order to pass on modern architectural culture to future generations. In addition, the majority of valuable architectural materials are in danger of dissipation due to the deaths of several prominent architects who remained active until recently. Accordingly, the National Archives of Modern Architecture aims to gain an accurate understanding of the current preservation status of modern architectural materials and to create not only a basic inventory of these architectural materials but also a nationwide network of the owners and managers of the architectural materials in this inventory.

In 2013, a nationwide survey was commissioned to determine the locations of these architectural materials. This survey was conducted from July 29, 2013 to March 31, 2014 under the auspices of the Research Committee on the History and Theory of Architecture of the Architectural Institute of Japan. University teachers and individuals involved in architecture

from all over the country supported the project. The results of the survey were published in two reports: *A Comprehensive Overview of Information on the Location of Modern Architectural Materials in Japan and Proposals for Information Management Methods* in 2014<sup>2)</sup> and *A Survey on the Status of Modern Architectural Materials in Japan and Proposals for Preservation Standards* in 2015<sup>3)</sup>. In 2014, the results of the 2013 survey were also released in the form of an exhibition at the National Archives of Modern Architecture.

The report published in 2014 had three objectives: 1. a comprehensive overview of information on the locations of modern architectural materials nationwide, 2. a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and types of modern architectural materials, and 3. proposals for methods of managing the information related to these materials.

Taisuke Yamazaki, the head of the Special WG for the Nationwide Survey of Modern Architectural Materials, summarized the survey results as follows.

The findings related to objective 1 revealed that:

- Materials exist that are related to the work of the regional and branch offices of large enterprises in the provinces (head offices have begun to manage these materials since the recent onset of computerization).
- The materials for administrative use regarding individual buildings (such as those pertaining to registered cultural properties) are relatively well maintained. In a few cases, the original drawings are also preserved.
- The materials of local architects can help determine the way in which information on modern architecture is transmitted to the provinces.
- No agencies are operating as archival hubs in the provinces.

With regard to objective 2, original drawings were mostly preserved at design offices only; blueprints and microfilms, on the other hand, were also preserved elsewhere. Preserving materials in forms other than the original drawings is important.

Regarding objective 3, the major challenges include improving the understanding of archives among entities possessing architectural materials, proposing policies for enabling the acceptance of such materials in public institutions of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, finding facilities that can operate as bases for local archives, and building an archive network model on a trial basis involving both the center and the provinces.

Methods of research were difficult to establish because the holders of architectural materials and their attitudes toward the materials varied. However, trends and future challenges could be identified. Exploring the background that led to the emergence of the National Archives of Modern Architecture and the Special WG for the Nationwide Survey of Modern Architectural Materials requires us to discuss the state of preservation of modern architectural materials in Japan.

#### 4. Archives of Modern Architecture in Japan

The International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modernist Movement (DOCOMOMO) was established in 1988 in the Netherlands to preserve and document modern architecture in the 20th century. Its establishment was spurred by awareness of the difficulties of conserving modern architecture

in its native region of Western Europe only half a century after the movement's origins. DOCOMOMO aims to deal with shared problems and conduct discussions beyond national borders. In particular, it focuses on the records of architectural materials in addition to the conservation of extant buildings. Students of architectural history focusing on modern architecture have been the guiding lights of DOCOMOMO since its establishment. Even architects who are not interested in recording or documentation understand that actual drawings, structural calculation sheets, and working diagrams are essential for renovation, preservation, improvement and repairs, and seismic reinforcement; this implies that these documents are necessary for building conversion, which is becoming increasingly prevalent. To date, architects have shown strong interest in architectural materials. However, the value of each building on which conversion, preservation, or improvement and repairs are conducted must be assessed, and the importance of each site for both conservation and practical-use purposes must be understood before preservation or repair work can advance. Students of architectural history typically perform this work, which cannot be conducted without documents. The collection and accumulation of architectural materials is indispensable for the succession of a rich urban culture, including the conservation of buildings with high historical value.

### 5. Fundamental Concept of Architectural Archives

In 1986, only shortly before the establishment of DOCOMOMO, a Japanese movement to establish a national-scale architectural museum arose, and an architectural museum research committee was established with Teijiro Muramatsu as the chairman. This was accomplished as part of a commemorative event celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Architectural Institute of Japan. In August 1986, an official request for the establishment, as soon as possible, of an architectural museum was submitted to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, the Chairs of the Committees of Education in both Houses of Parliament, and the Director General of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in the name of Chairman Yoshinobu Ashihara. In 1994, a definite plan for the basic concept of an architectural museum was released, and the purpose of this proposed museum was "to collect materials on modern architecture in Japan and on urban history (including the legacy of modernization of Japan), to preserve and exhibit them and to promote its use by the general public, taking into account educational considerations, to conduct necessary business to contribute to the improvement of culture and education, to research, and conduct surveys related to these materials." This was nearly the same phrasing that had been used previously to propose the National Archives of Modern Architecture, which would eventually be established in 2013. This plan was specific and detailed; it included physical plans and management forms, and proposed activities including the collection and preservation of materials and research or public awareness activities through exhibitions. Furthermore, it encompassed the functions of material analysis, such as identifying the period of construction and the architect, in addition to the installation of a video library and a texture library. In other words, it contained a comprehensive and ideal exhibition of activities. However, the concept of an architectural museum gradually disappeared after this proposal was generated, and no real institution fulfilling these ideals was ever built.

## 6. Special Investigation Committee for the Comprehensive Survey of Modern Architectural Materials, Architectural Institute of Japan

After the concept of an architectural museum had vanished, a Special Investigation Committee for the Survey of Modern Architectural Materials was established in 2001. This occurred after a six-month research project (conducted from October 30, 2000 to March 15, 2001) entitled *A Survey on the Location of Materials Related to the Development of Architectural Technology* in Japan. The project was commissioned by the National Science Museum (an independent administrative institution under the name of the National Museum of Nature and Science) in 2001 and accepted by the Architectural Institute of Japan. In March 2004, the *Report of the Special Investigation Committee for the Comprehensive Survey of Modern Architectural Materials, Architectural Institute of Japan*<sup>4)</sup> was compiled regarding the activities of this committee. In Chapter 1, this document presents a provisional report on the current status of the management of architectural materials in the construction industry by manufacturers, universities, museums, archives, and design offices. Chapter 2 presents a summary of the results of an inspection tour of nine architectural archives in Washington DC, Philadelphia, and New York. Chapter 3, in addition to a summary of chapters 1 and 2, presents recommendations for the Architectural Institute of Japan to address relevant issues. This marked the beginning of the assessment of archives of architectural materials in Japan.

## 7. AIJ Architectural Museum, Architectural Institute of Japan

Although the concept of an architectural museum was abandoned in 1994, the Architectural Institute of Japan created a research committee and established an architectural museum as a part of its architectural institute in January 2003. This organization collects, organizes, preserves, and assesses architectural materials as a resource enabling the public to obtain information on architecture in general with galleries for exhibitions. The architectural museum aims to collect modern architectural materials, especially drawings (including digitized ones), documents, and photographs. A year after its establishment, the collection remained limited; however, it included materials by Chuta Ito, drawings from the Sone Chujo Architectural Office, and materials by Mamoru Yamada. The framework for the business operations of the National Archives of Modern Architecture was formed to preserve and publish information on materials. This included digitalizing the collection, collaborating with existing organizations while advancing the preservation of and research on architectural materials, and advocating exhibition creation in affiliated galleries. This architectural museum was significantly smaller than the museum that had been conceptualized, and its business operations did not amount to more than those of a single division of an academic society. However, it was an important stepping stone toward the establishment of a full-scale architectural archive.

## 8. Architectural Institute of Japan Archives Subcommittee

As a successor to the Special Investigative Committee for the Comprehensive Survey of Modern Architectural Materials, which operated under the guidance of the Architectural In-

stitute of Japan, an Architectural Archives Review Committee was established at the Japan Institute of Architects (JIA) in September 2003. In May 2005, it was renamed the JIA Architectural Archives Subcommittee. This committee was created as part of the process of establishing an archives of modern architectural materials from 2006 to 2007<sup>5)</sup>. The activities conducted here were characterized by profound discussions on the scope of architectural archives.

In any discussion of a proposed new architectural archive, the materials that the archive is intended to preserve typically include architectural drawings, relevant documents, records, contracts, and so on (Refer to *A Guide to the Archival Care of Architectural Records*, edited by The International Council on Archives, Architectural Records Section, translated by Shuichi Yasuzawa, and published by Shoshi Noir). These are all two-dimensional materials, yet many collections of documents and records related to architecture include three-dimensional materials such as models and parts. Additionally, collected photographic materials indicate differences between design drawings and completed buildings. The extent to which architectural materials are developed is directly connected to the method of preservation and management. Further, the entities involved in preservation and management are limited, and this significantly impacts the creation of archives. In March 2007, a report was published on the activities of the Architectural Archives Subcommittee. In its appendix, the *We Want an Architectural Museum!* document published in *Science*, the journal<sup>\*\*1\*\*</sup> of the Architectural Institute of Japan, can be found as a reference material.

## 9. Archives and Documentation of Modern and Contemporary Architecture

In September 2010, a research and discussion meeting was held on the theme *Archives and Documentation of Modern and Contemporary Architecture* in the Architectural History and Design Division of the Architectural Institute of Japan Conference (Hokuriku)<sup>6)</sup>. This meeting included the presentation of a compilation of individual research results related to modern architectural materials by learned and experienced individuals after 2007. Discussions were held in relation to case studies and other subjects, as were exchanges on the development of an architectural museum and the direction of architectural archives and documentation.

## 10. Conclusion

As shown above, since the establishment of DOCOMOMO, studies on the preservation of modern architectural materials have continued in Japan. These efforts originated in response to a global trend of preserving architectural materials and aimed to establish an architectural archive. The National Archives of Modern Architecture, which opened in 2013, was established as a result of these activities. Yet the concept of the preservation of architectural materials was not complete when the archives were established; rather, their establishment created a foundation for the future full-scale advancement of specific work on the conservation and understanding of preservation of architectural materials. One concrete initiative that was achieved after the archives were established was the work of the Special WG for a Nationwide Survey of Modern Architectural Materials. In the future, it is expected that such work will continue, as

the preservation of architectural materials and the awareness of their value will only gain in importance as our appreciation for the urban landscape of modern Japan grows.

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