Report on the Information Needs Assessment of the Japanese Collections at The Ohio State University

By Maureen Donovan and Yuji Tosaka

Table of Contents

Summary

The Ohio State University Japanese Collections, part of the Language and Area Studies Department within the Main Library Research and Reference Services, is managed by the staff of one professional librarian and a group of student assistants. The librarian provides instructional and reference support for nearly 30 faculty members, selects and acquires both Japanese- and English-language materials on Japan, and helps to process those materials for public access. One of the primary public services has been the librarian's participation in team teaching of Japanese 800: Japanese Bibliography and Research Methods, a graduate course offered annually in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. The librarian has also consulted regularly with individual faculty members about their research and teaching needs since they first arrived on campus, and has informed the faculty on new research sources and databases through e-mail messages and library liaison and committee systems. Another major current program has been a grant-funded cooperative project known as Portal to Asian Internet Resources, which has selected, cataloged, and annotated high-quality online resources on Asian studies. The Japanese studies librarian at Ohio State University has been responsible for evaluating and organizing Japan-related web sites.

This study was proposed by Maureen Donovan, Japanese studies librarian, and Yuji Tosaka, Kent State library science practicum student, to conduct formal information needs assessment in light of multiple transitions facing users of the Japanese Collections. Major issues included the renovation of the Main Library and the temporary relocation of the library holdings to a former factory two miles away from the present location, the increasing location of library materials to the remote book depository, and the cancellation of many journal subscriptions. In particular, the study was intended to identify the impact

of the increasing amount of digital resources available to our users because they are emerging as a primary means of accessing library collections and services in a fast-changing, dynamic information environment.

The methodology used for the study was an extensive series of structured interviews with 13 faculty members. Part of the findings were presented to a group of interested librarians at an informal staff seminar in the Main Library in early March, and at the public services panel in the annual meeting of the Council on East Asian Libraries under the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago at the end of March.

Among the primary findings of the faculty interview was the high level of user satisfaction with the library's collections and document delivery system, including OhioLINK and ILL. However, several areas of information needs emerged repeatedly during the interview process, including the need to enhance user awareness about the library collections and services (in terms of both outreach and instruction programs) and the need to promote the library's web site as a main gateway that provides access to "virtual" collections and helps the users manage the information overload in an increasingly electronic environment.

Several goals were identified as providing new approaches to meet the increasingly complex information needs of the users of the Japanese Collections at minimum staff costs, such as the promotion of instructional support and the creation of more robust online presence geared to a cohesive outreach program. Objectives under these goals include the use of new technology (blog and RSS) as a means of marketing library resources and services and planning for ongoing development of new research and instruction support, such as web-based guides and tutorials and class-integrated instruction and regular workshops introducing faculty and students to databases and new research techniques.

Methodology Notes

In the November meeting, Donovan and Tosaka decided to conduct information needs assessment for users of the Japanese Collections. After examining a series of data-gathering instruments listed in articles and books on library evaluation, Tosaka prepared an extensive list of possible questions for interviews and focus-group discussions. Following initial discussions, the list was pared down to 10 questions focusing on overall user satisfaction, user concern about the Main Library renovation, and user familiarity and support need as to digital resources and services (see the interview questions attached), and it was also decided to limit the data-gathering method to faculty interviews on the ground that focus-group discussions with faculty members would be impossible to arrange and there would not be enough time to speak with students in addition to individual faculty. Survey questionnaires were rejected due to concern about response rates.

Donovan contacted Japan-related faculty in person and via e-mail and scheduled interviews with a total of 13 faculty members over the three-week period from late January to mid-

February. Each interview lasted approximately from 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews followed the semi-structured format and mostly went over the same set of 10 questions that also had been sent to all Japan-related faculty in the initial e-mails requesting their cooperation in the evaluation project.

Interview Questions

An e-mail questionnaire (see Appendix) was sent in advance to Japan-related faculty. The faculty members were also given printed copies of the questions for personal reference during the interviews.

Finding Highlights

The primary finding of the faculty interview was the high level of user satisfaction with the library's collections and document delivery system, including OhioLINK and interlibrary loan. The faculty also appreciated the ability to request books and articles from Japanese academic libraries.

At the same time, faculty information needs showed several common themes. One interesting finding was limits of traditional communication with faculty. They receive regular notice of new library resources and collections through department liaisons, library committees, and e-mail updates. But it seemed that many people have a hard time dealing with the ever-increasing problem of information overload today with the result that a noticeable number were not fully aware of the electronic resources essential to their research and teaching.

In addition, many people expressed various levels of concern about information management issues, including the need to keep track and gain a deeper understanding of the growing electronic resources and services that provide them with options for sophisticated information searching and retrieval in their teaching and research fields. At the same time, many faculty showed interest in having the ability to access guides and tutorials online all the time at the time of need. Also, they expressed the need for more opportunities to receive librarian support for learning (or re-learning) and helping to teach students new resources, services, and information skills, such as regular workshops and in-class instruction.

Recommendations

The following list of plans is based on the data that resulted from the information needs assessment of the users of the Japanese Collections at Ohio State University. The next stages are to incorporate them progressively as part of the overall workflow of the Japanese studies librarian and staff.

The main goal is to promote awareness of the library resources and services that meet the increasingly complex information needs of the users at minimum staff costs. Key objectives are to provide new approaches for outreach and instruction programs, including the use of new technology to strengthen the Japanese collections web site as a gateway that provides access to "virtual" collections in an increasingly digital information environment. Also important is planning for ongoing development of new information support services, such as web-based guides and tutorials and class-integrated instruction and regular workshops introducing faculty and students to databases and new research techniques.

Users' Need	Means of Meeting the Need
To learn to use electronic resources outside one's fields	Create guides on effective searching strategies Use new technology (blog, RSS) to increase user awareness and communication, supplemented by e-mails (twice a quarter)
To find journal articles	Create user handouts (web) on online browsing techniques (e.g., Nichigai, NACSIS indexes)
To find journal tables of contents	Current awareness services (scanning TOCs) Create user handout (web) on online browsing techniques (e.g., Nichigai, NACSIS indexes)
To find articles, chapters, and works in muli-volume sets	Special project: analytics, content notes Create user handout (web) on database searching Create guides on Japan-related collections that are integrated
To obtain information about new books	Create new acquisition lists on focused topics for online access
To access guides and tutorials when needed	Use the home page as information gateway
To learn to use library collections	Create guides and tutorials on local resources Create online tour of the OSU collections Create guides on using Unicode Create guides on levels of access for resources (OSU, non-OSU, etc.)
Support for non-specialists with limited or intermediate Japanese skills (expanding constituency)	Acquire introductory books in Japanese and/or on Japan Create guides on using Japanese collections and accessing Japanese resources Create guides on visual resources (Nihon no bijutsu, etc.)
Support for teaching and research needs	Offer class instruction/orientation Offer regular workshops

	Outreach and liaison opportunities to arrange individual instruction and discuss research/teaching needs Create user handouts on commonly needed topics (some in Japanese) Promote Portal to Asian Internet Resources as a gateway to quality web sites
Support for the growing constituency in Japanese classes/film studies	Acquire more multimedia materials
Interest in Japanese bibliography class materials	Conversion to online access for faculty and other users
Need for in-depth information about manga and using manga collections	Create guides on using manga collections (e.g., genres, authors)

Final Commentary

This study was conducted because the fast-changing information landscape, as well as the planned renovation of the Main Library, was felt to warrant a new study of the information needs of the users of the Japanese Collections. Future studies will need to include a different subpopulation, i.e., graduate and undergraduate students interested in Japanese studies. An open workshop scheduled for early May will be the first step in this direction. Graduate students as well as faculty will be introduced to the new blog-based home page for the Japanese Collections and other Japan-related information resources. Their feedback will be used further to enhance the usability of the redesigned web site and restructure service to faculty and students.

The partnerships that were generated by the information needs assessment process were significant. A number of faculty members expressed an interest in inviting the Japanese studies librarian to offer workshops and in-class instruction on Japan-related information resources. The increased awareness of the value of the library's services and resources was another fruit of this evaluation study. Preliminary indications are that evaluation itself also served as an important tool for library outreach and marketing.

2005-04-25

Needs Assessment Questionnaire

Information Needs Assessment of the Japanese Collections at the Ohio State University

We are currently conducting an evaluation of Japanese library resources and services at Ohio State University in view of multiple transitions currently underway, including:

*Relocation of entire library collections to 650 Ackerman Rd for 2005-2008 (during the renovation of Thompson Library);
*Ongoing transfer of materials to the book depository;
*Cancellation of many print journals over the past few years (along with cessation of publication on the part of many others);
*Increasing amount of digitized resources available freely on the web or through subscription databases, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc

The goal of this evaluation is to help us understand user needs better so that we can develop the best possible support for faculty, students, and researchers using the Japanese collections. As we prepare for the next round of Title VI applications the availability of pro-active services targeted to support students, faculty and other researchers may be something that we can highlight.

We would prefer to meet with faculty members individually. Can you let us know some convenient times in your schedule over the next few weeks when you would be available to meet with us for about 30 minutes? Yuji Tosaka is available only on Thursdays and Fridays, but Maureen Donovan is on campus throughout the week.

We certainly understand if you do not have time to meet in person, but in that case we would be very obliged if you could provide feedback by email. Below is a list of questions for discussion.

Thank you again for your cooperation! We look forward to hearing from you.

Maureen Donovan
Japanese Studies Librarian

Yuji Tosaka
Library science practicum student (Jan – May 2005)

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I. Japanese collection in general

Q1. In 2004-05 the Japanese collection will pass 100,000 volumes in size. As it joins the ranks of "established" collections there may be areas that were neglected in the past that should receive more attention in the future, or your research interests may have moved into new areas for which the collections locally are inadequate.

Please let us know your opinions of the adequacy of Japanese language library resources available to you and your students (either locally or through ILL) and, in particular, about areas of the collections most in need of further collection development at Ohio State.

II. Library as a Place

The Thompson library collections will be moved to 650Ackerman Drive for 2005-2008, while at the same time library materials will continue to be transferred permanently to STX (remote depository). Physical access to the collection will continue to be available at 650 Ackerman.

Q2. Are there any particular concerns or anything you would like to know about this physical transition, especially about the use of the Japanese collections?

Q3. What types of support services and resources would help you cope with the transition and facilitate the use of the Japanese collections?

- Improved cataloging of the contents of multi-volume sets (if possible, please provide specific titles that need analytic cataloging)
- Instruction on conducting more effective searches and doing "online browsing" to retrieve needed materials via online catalogs
- Handouts/quick guides (print or online) describing Japanese collection materials and/or search strategies
- Classroom or group instruction given by librarian

III. Library Use and Research

Ohio State participates in national and international networks of libraries to facilitate remote access to research materials held by other libraries. The interim relocation to 650 Ackerman and the increasing location of books in STX (depository), means that, even on campus, the primary method of accessing the Japanese collections will be through OSCAR. We want to get a sense of how "comfortable" people are with OSCAR and other systems. Do you need any aids (online?) or instruction in new methods of using library resources?

Q4. How do you use OSCAR and other online catalogs (OhioLINK, WorldCat, NACSIS, NDL)? How familiar are you with various features of these online catalogs?

- To get the call number of a known item
- To conduct author, title, or keyword searches
- To conduct a subject search
- To check circulation records
- To browse
- To request items
- To limit searches
- To display Japanese characters in OSCAR and Worldcat
- To use Japanese (Unicode) for searching
- Other (please specify)

Q5. To what extent are you aware of the primary source materials in Japanese that are available at Ohio State? How do you bring such materials to your students' attention? Should we provide services (web pages?) to highlight and promote awareness of such resources, especially since they are increasingly located at the book depository?

IV. Digitized Resources and Services

Q6. How often do you use online subscription databases relating to Japanese studies? What databases do you tend to search most heavily?

- Nichigai Web Service
* BOOKPLUS
* Konpyuta Gijutsu Yogo Jiten Fairu
* MAGAZINEPLUS
* Sakka Shippitsusha Jinbutsu Fairu
* Sho no Jiten Fairu
- Japan Knowledge (new as of January 15th!)
- Bibliography of Asian Studies
- JSTOR
- MLA International Bibliography
- LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts)
- Citation databases (Web of Science)
- Other (please specify)

Q7. How do you tend to learn about online databases related to your studies?

- From my colleagues
- On my own navigating the library web site
- Library staff
- Other (please specify)

Q8. What problems have you encountered in using the library's online databases?

- No problems
- Difficulties deciding on appropriate databases
- Online helps do not answer questions
- Lack of instruction by library staff
- Methods of searching databases unclear or confusing
- Staff unavailable to provide assistance
- Library does not own materials cited

Q9. A variety of services may be required to help users become self-sufficient in the use of digitized library resources. What type of support services would be desirable to facilitate the use of such resources for research and teaching?

- Detailed user handouts (print or online)
- Basic instruction from library staff
- Instruction lecture from library (one-time, regular workshops, personalized instruction, etc.)
- Computer-assisted instruction (interactive learning software)
- Receive current awareness services (new books lists, journal table of contents, citations to books and journals on particular topics, etc.)
- More opportunities to discuss your research and/or teaching needs with librarian
- A set of authoritative, scholarly web sites in my field available via the library web site
- Bibliographic management software
- Regular e-mail
- Library newsletter
- Regular information on the library home page

Q10. Have you ever used or heard of other university library services, especially electronic ones, that you found useful or interesting and think we should consider implementing at Ohio State?

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