

International Collaboration Research for Japanese Literature

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Abstract

From 2001 a new 5-years research project has been started at the National Institute of Japanese Literature, called the Organization and Circulation System for Japanese Literary Research Based on International Collaboration, funded by the Grant-in-Aid Scientific Research (S). The aim of the project is to construct a digital library system serving as an archive center for Japanese literature through a joint international program. The project has three R&D themes for organizing databases and systems for practical use, such as research directories, shared collaboration environment and meta-data usable with common protocols.

1. Introduction

With the expansion of the internet, it has become relatively easier to gain access to digital Japanese language materials overseas. However, resources and information necessary to carry out academic research are still poor in regards to quality and volume, as well as having many unresolved issues to be dealt with. In particular, the completion and circulation of digital contents for education and research of Japanese literature and related fields is still lacking.

The construction of a digital library system (NIJL) for Japanese literary and historical research is under way. As a part of this system, a new five-year research project was launched in 2001. This is the Grant-in-Aid Scientific Research (S) “Organization and Circulation System for Japanese Literary Research based on

International Collaboration”[1]. This project’s purpose is the enrichment of digital materials regarding Japanese literature and related areas, that is, the cooperative construction and circulation of digital archives, through collaboration (digital collaborative work system) with researchers overseas.

Concretely, we will create joint research bases in Europe and North America and seek to collect and store materials matched to the situation and needs of each country. In order to do this, we have developed a collaboration system using the internet and are seeking advancing our daily work and research.

Bellow is an outline of the project.

2. Research Topics

2.1 Topic 1: Preparation of International

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Materials for Japanese Literature and Related Fields

(1) Research Directory

There are numerous academic societies, both domestic and international, for the research of Japanese literature operating in countries in Europe and North America. Unfortunately, it is difficult to grasp the state and direction of research in each country from Japan and other nations. The creation of a research directory of each country's universities, researchers, and academic associations[2] is called for. We will collect and organize this information and create a unified database, freely accessible domestically and internationally.

In addition, international academic societies and research groups[3] are also very active, and many have produced much research worth attention. A directory database for these groups as well is needed.

(2) Research Thesis Directory Database

The direction of research theses presented in each nation is difficult to grasp in Japan and other countries. Therefore, we will collect directories of research theses that have been presented, and construct a database centered on retrospective data. In particular, we will look to establish systems at our research bases in each country in order to allow the direct online entry and correction of data regarding the latest research theses. Also, directories and location information regarding dissertations is also unclear, and we are working on including them in the database.

(3) Translated Works Database

The number of works of Japanese literature that have been translated into

other languages has also increased, but the actual situation regarding these translations is difficult to grasp. We need to construct a directory and a database for them.

We will collect translations, and for the more important works create a full text database. Through close collaboration with the translator, we will create a parallel text database for the original Japanese works and their translated versions. In the beginning we are considering a two-language system with Japanese as the base language, but we are also considering the inclusion of other languages for more famous works. For example, the *Kokin Wakashu* and other works have already been rendered into English, French, Italian, and many other languages[4].

2.2 Topic 2: Joint Construction of a Collaboration System for Japanese Literary Research

(1) System Development

As a basic server, we will expand the variety, scope, and functions of our present digital library system (NIJL) and develop through collaboration an internationally usable archive system controllable from both ends. We will work with each country to develop the needed interface, etc.. In addition, we will develop and research a collaboration client system, and set one up for each country. We will bring about a system, which is easy and quick to access via the internet.

(2) Storage in the Archives

We will need to complete what materials are not currently included in the present digital library system. We will work to digitize the materials required by

each country, but there are material we can work with inside Japan and those we cannot. The construction of the archives will require collaboration with researchers in each country as a prerequisite.

(3) Promotion of Collaboration

We will further Japanese literary and historical studies through international collaboration. In order to do this, we will need to prepare the environment outlined above. We will set up a concrete research theme matched to the situation in each nation and conduct test research using the collaboration system. Specifically, the topic will be one, which is not complicated, yet important, and work on concretely examining it.

2.3 Topic 3: Construction and Use of a Meta

Data Database

(1) Joint Management of Joint-use Humanities

Research Organizations' Databases

We will work on joint construction of meta data databases for information and materials concerning Japanese literature and history with Joint-use Humanities Research Organizations (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, National Museum of Japanese History, Historiographical Institute the University of Tokyo, etc.). We will set up meta data based on an international standard (Dublin Core) and test it jointly among the research organizations using an internationally recognized search system (Z39.50 System).

(2) Development in Each Country

As the second phase we will progress to create internationally accessible archive systems through collaboration based on meta data.

3. Research Plans and Progress

3.1 System Research

We have introduced the basic server, advanced testing of the prototype, as well as expanding the digital library system (NIJL) and debated the archives system. The needed interfaces for the collaboration system are being prepared at each country's research base. In addition, we have begun joint construction of meta data for joint accessibility to resources with Humanities Research Organizations.

3.2 Content Research

Through coordination with researchers in each country, we have prepared an exhaustive selection of high quality information for academic research as well as examined methods for information collection and digitization, such as the collection and digitization of book-form directories, methods of data entry and correction, and ways to enter data on-line.

Additionally, we have begun research on methods for formulating content based on the following three axes.

1. Conceptual Axis: The Conceptual Axis organizes important topics, concepts, themes, and other research information connected with Japanese literature.

2. Works Axis: We have centered the more famous works (for example the Tale of Genji, Kokinshu, Manyoshu, etc.) around the Works Axis and have collected and arranged all research information related to them.

3. Authors Axis: For the Authors Axis we have selected the more famous authors (for example Murasaki Shikibu, Fujiwara no Teika, Ihara Saikaku, Natsume Soseki, etc.) and are researching how to organize

all information related to them.

3.3 Plans and Topics for Collaboration with

Each Country

The United Kingdom, Italy, France, and the United States should be regarded as important bases for research. BAJS: British Association for Japanese Studies, AISTUGIA: Associazione Italiana per gli Studi Giapponesi, SFEJ: Societe Francaise des Etudes Japonaises, AAS: The Association for Asian Studies are active in their countries and are thought to have prepared the foundation for research therein. Cooperation has also been earned from the international association EAJS: European Association for Japanese Studies. The following research organizations have already prepared concrete research coordination for research: in the U.K. in addition to the already listed the British Library and London, Oxford, Cambridge, Leeds, Sheffield, and other universities, in Italy Venezia, Firenze, Roma, Napoli Oriente and other universities, and in France Paris 7 University and the College de France. The US is still coordinating their efforts. The kinds and varieties of materials have been made clear at the research organizations, and digitization has become concretely possible.

In addition, with Topic 1 we are planning the shape of the research directory and organizing a research thesis directory. We are examining ways to list important research materials, collect them, and organize them that are not present in the current digital library system (NIJL). In Italy we are working on a database of translated works of Japanese literature[5].

We are also looking forward to developments in research for Topic 2.

Examples of this include creating a common base for citation analysis of concepts in renga, haikai, youkyoku, etc., the development of “representation” and “parody”, etc. Also, this will include promotion of the use of the products of this research. We have started citation analysis research for Youkyoku with Venezia University. We are also looking forward to suggestions on concrete research topics for collaborative research.

For Topic 3, we have begun studies on settings for meta data, using Z39.50, etc. at Joint Use Humanities Research Centers and Historiographical Institute the University of Tokyo.

There are many issues remaining in regards to how to promote the project further. For the time, we will need to focus on research coordination through close collaboration. We will work on coordinating communications via network while starting a collaboration system in order to begin joint research in order to promote further research.

4. Conclusion

This paper deals with the overall concept of the project. As the project has only just gotten under way we still have yet to produce any significant results, but we can hold hope for the future. The first year was spent preparing for research. Continuous meetings were held at research facilities, and research was promoted through setting up topics and through mailing lists in each country, as well as creating a prototype home page[6]. Also, we participated in many related research groups and symposiums, presenting our research and giving updates on our progress[1][7].

Lastly, this research is not a one-sided request for assistance for this project, but rather we are looking at the project as a concrete base for education and research in each country, therefore taking aid where we can get it, taking care to keep our joint research open-ended. As it is, how to treat the copyrights for data is an extremely difficult problem.

One issue that remains is the fact that the key to this project's success lies with the people participating in it. The best people will be those who will participate in actual collaboration. In particular, cooperation from researchers in the area of data entry and retrieval is needed, as well as an examination of some kind of incentive.

One technical issue lies in the problem of character sets, as the project will by nature be a multi-lingual system centered around Japanese.

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