

Survey on best practices of digital archiving projects conducted by public libraries in Japan (2010): overview

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1. Background

The National Diet Library (NDL) selected actively conducted digital archiving projects by domestic public libraries (including 3 projects by local governments as reference cases) and conducted a survey, aiming at providing useful information to public libraries under consideration for constructing digital archives.

This survey was conducted as one of the activities of “Forum for Promotion of Digital Archives in Public Libraries” Working Group of the Digital Information Resources Roundtable¹, a framework to promote cooperation between domestic museums, libraries and archives concerning digital information resources.

2. Surveyed institutions (for details, see the Appendix)

- 20 cases of public libraries actively conducting digital archiving projects
(12 prefectural libraries, 5 city libraries, 2 town libraries and 1 village library)
- 3 cases of local governments conducting digital archiving projects for the purpose of regional development (as reference cases)

3. Survey period

November 2010 - March 2011

4. Survey method

Interview by e-mail

5. Scope of survey

¹ For details, please see: <http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/aboutus/d-library/roundtable.html>.

The scope of this survey included: start of digital archiving projects, contents, process and framework for construction of digital archives, daily work and issues, participation of regional residents, cooperation with other institutions, use of commercial services, future prospects, etc.

6. Summary

Survey results were roughly as follows. For details, please refer to each institution's answer².

(1) Contents

Most of the surveyed institutions were providing materials such as rare materials (e.g. old documents, ukiyo-e (Japanese woodblock prints) and old maps) and/or still images (e.g. picture postcards and photos) related to their regions.

Some of them were providing distinctive contents such as digital images of train tickets, signatures of famous figures in the library's old visitors' book, movies of local traditional events or festivals.

(2) Circumstances of the construction of digital archives

As reasons for constructing digital archives, events such as system updating, website renewal, IT promotion policies of their own local governments were mentioned. In some cases, plans started from the mid-1990s. Most institutions outsourced some tasks to contractors. In most cases, from 1 to 5 library staff were engaged excluding contractors. Some institutions took 5-10 years to construct digital archives; on the other hand, some others took less than 1 year.

A variety of answers were given as the most difficult challenges in the construction of digital archives, such as budget, manpower, drawing up specifications, negotiation and coordination with other organizations and research of original materials.

On the technical knowledge required for staff in charge of construction of digital

² <http://www.ndl.go.jp/aboutus/kokyo.html#a01> (Japanese only)

archives, most of the surveyed institutions answered fundamental knowledge (e.g. knowledge enough to draw up specifications and standard knowledge about HTML). As for other fields, knowledge on original materials collected most answers, followed by knowledge on copyright law and other related laws and regulations. To acquire necessary knowledge, more than one-third of the surveyed institutions joined training programs and/or seminars such as the NDL'S e-learning program.

(3) Operation

Daily work included data registration, creation of metadata, handling of applications for secondary use of digital contents, etc. In a little less than half of the surveyed institutions, one person was responsible for the above-mentioned daily work of the operation (excluding contractors and/or volunteers).

The following were mentioned as issues in daily operation: manpower (lack of staff exclusively in charge of digital archive, human resource development, etc.), budget, updating of contents, and creation and/or maintenance of metadata.

To the question on knowledge required for staff in charge of daily operation of digital archives, about one-third of the surveyed institutions answered that no special technical knowledge was required. Fundamental knowledge on network and building of websites were specifically mentioned as required knowledge in the technical fields. As for other fields, knowledge on original materials (including knowledge of how to handle them) collected most answers followed by knowledge on copyright law and other related laws and regulations.

More than half of the surveyed institutions did not make special effort for human resource development. Efforts such as outside training programs and seminars (e.g. the training programs by the NDL and the All-Japan Library Conference) and training within the institutions (e.g. training for operation of digital archives and introduction of materials provided by digital archives) were specifically mentioned.

(4) Participation of regional residents

A little less than half of the surveyed institutions were gaining the cooperation of regional residents (excluding researchers and universities/colleges within the

region) in their digital archiving projects, e.g. ingestion, creation and provision of digital contents, creation of bibliographic information and classification.

(5) Cooperation with other institutions

Most of the surveyed institutions were cooperating with other institutions in some way.

Examples of linkage with external databases were the “National Diet Library Digital Archive Portal” (PORTA)³ (digital archives in 10 out of the 23 surveyed institutions had linkage with PORTA) and the “National Archives of Japan Digital Archive.”⁴

There are many instances of cooperation with other museums, libraries and archives within the same local government body, such as:

- gaining advice about materials, computer systems, etc.;
- getting cooperation in data registration and maintenance;
- operating portal sites providing access to contents of other cultural institutions;
- and lending contents of digital archives for the purpose of reproduction for exhibition in other libraries.

Many examples of cooperation with local universities or colleges could be seen, especially examples of utilizing universities’ or colleges’ know-how about system construction, creating contents, cataloging, research on materials and others, e.g.:

- making a commission contract with a local university for constructing the system to provide digital contents;
- and creating new contents based on collaborative research with a local university.

Examples other than utilizing universities’ or colleges’ know-how were also seen, such as providing digital contents to a regional collaborative repository operated by

³ <http://porta.ndl.go.jp/portal/>

PORTA is scheduled to be integrated into “NDL Search” in January 2012.

(NDL Search is provided as beta version as of September 2011 at <http://iss.ndl.go.jp/>.)

⁴ http://www.digital.archives.go.jp/index_e.html

a local university's library.

As for cooperation with other departments in the same local government body, some of the surveyed institutions had consultations with the departments in charge of ICT policies when they constructed digital archives. Other examples also could be seen such as:

- having consultation with departments in charge of compilation of local history;
- and gaining documents relating to academic-industrial alliance through the department in charge of commerce and industry for commission contract with a local university.

(6) Efforts in fund-raising/cost saving

Efforts in fund-raising/cost saving could be seen such as utilizing subsidies, using affordable and reasonable commercial services, as well as use of local human resources as stated in (4), and cooperation with other institutions as stated in (5).

(7) Secondary use of digital contents

Examples of secondary use of digital contents could be seen such as:

- collecting usage fee in case of commercial use and devoting it to creating new digital contents or other related purposes;
- utilizing digital contents for lecture meetings and/or instruction sessions held by the library;
- holding exhibitions utilizing digital contents;
- creating films from digital contents to be lent for purposes such as publication and TV broadcast;
- and making library goods using digital contents.

Appendix: List of surveyed institutions

Public libraries:

Hokkaido Prefectural Library
Iwate Prefectural Library
Akita Prefectural Library
Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library
Toyama Prefectural Library
Fukui Prefectural Library
Shizuoka Prefectural Central Library
Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives
Nara Prefectural Library and Information Center
Okayama Prefectural Library
Fukuoka Prefectural Library
Nagasaki Prefectural Nagasaki Library
Hakodate City Central Library
Nagaoka City Library
Toyama City Public Library
Ueda City Library
Toyonaka City Okamachi library
Obuse Public Library - Machi Tosho Teraso
Aisho Town Echigawa Library
YAMANAKAKO Library for The People's Creativity

Local governments (reference cases):

Ishikawa Prefecture
Nagano Prefecture
Osaka Prefecture

*The list of the digital archives operated by the above-mentioned institutions is available as the appendix of the Japanese version of this document posted at:
[http://www.ndl.go.jp/jp/aboutus/pdf/Kokyo_H22research\(Overview\).pdf](http://www.ndl.go.jp/jp/aboutus/pdf/Kokyo_H22research(Overview).pdf)
(PDF file: 319KB)