

Changing face of access to government information in Japan: Issues concerning policy, the electronic environment, and the role of libraries and archives

(Web version: references added)

Takashi Koga (古賀 崇 Kyoto Univ. Library)

tkoga@kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp

http://researchmap.jp/T_Koga_Govinfo/

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Agenda

- Introduction and background
 - Including comparison with China (PRC)
- Three major policy initiatives in Japan
- Analysis of government information policy in Japan

I dedicate this presentation to ...

The late Mr. Shohei Muta
(1953-2009)

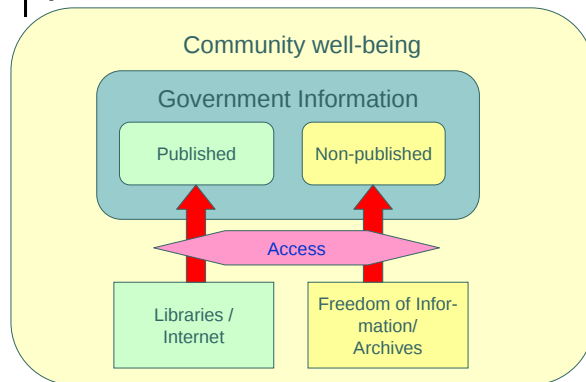
- Former Senior Specialist for Archival Affairs, National Archives of Japan
- Former Senior Researcher, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR)



At the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, July 2, 2007

Introduction

The scope of this presentation



Research by the presenter

- Koga, Takashi. 2004. Government information and roles of libraries and archives: Recent policy issues in Japan. City Development and Library Services: Proceedings of the Second Shanghai International Library Forum. p. 355-364.
→ Revised: Progress in Informatics. (1), p. 47-62.
- Koga, Takashi. 2010. Recent development of the government information policy in Japan. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Government Information and Official Publications Section (GIOPS) Newsletter. (8), p. 8-11.

Background (1): Role of government information revisited

Four roles

- (1) basis for the rule of law
- (2) quality-of-life issues
- (3) historical and cultural heritage
- (4) accountability for current and future generations



Background (2): Access to government information in China



Regulation of the People's Republic of China on the Disclosure of Government Information

- Article 16
 - The people's government agencies at various levels shall set up **a place for consulting government information at national archives and public libraries**, and equip with corresponding facilities to provide convenience for citizens, legal persons or other organizations to access government information.



中华人民共和国政府信息公开条 例

- 第十六条 各级人民政府应当在国家档案馆、公共图书馆设置政府信息查阅场所，并配备相应的设施、设备，为公民、法人或者其他组织获取政府信息提供便利。

http://www.gov.cn/zwqk/2007-04/24/content_592937.htm



Comparison of PRC with Japan

- More popularity of archives than public libraries in PRC?
 - Contrary to Japan ...
 - 3,164 local public libraries (2009.3)
 - **54** local public archives (2010.8)

Recent revolution in government information policy in Japan

Three major policy initiatives

- (1) Enactment of **Public Records Management Act (PRMA)**
- (2) Strengthening the **archive of government websites** by the National Diet Library (NDL)
- (3) Enhancing the effectiveness of Section 9 of the Library Law concerning the **dissemination of government publications in public libraries**

Enactment of Public Records Management Act (PRMA)

Timeline (1)

- **2003.12** Advisory Panel to the Chief Cabinet Secretary on the management, Preservation and Use of the Public Records (-2006.6)
 - Storing influence from then Chief Cabinet Secretary **Yasuo Fukuda**
- 2007.2 Legislative plans for the "Government Records Management Law," by a research group under the NIRA (Japan's leading think tank)
- 2007.9 **Fukuda** became the Prime Minister of Japan (-2008.10)
- **2008.2** Advisory panel for overseeing public records management policy (-2008.11)
- 2008.2 First-ever Minister in Charge of Public Records Management



Timeline (2)

- 2009.3 The Cabinet submitted a Bill of Public Records Management to the National Diet (Parliament)
- 2009.6 The revised bill passed the both houses of the Diet unanimously
- 2009.7 The Public Records Management Act (PRMA) was enacted
 - due to come into effect by April 2011



The main points of the PRMA

- Covers full life cycle of records
- Regulates management of the records of all national government agencies
- Acknowledges the public's right to access records
- Empowers the National Archive's roles
- Establishes the [Board of Public Records Management](#)
- Urges (but not enforces) local governments to comply with the PRMA and establish their own archives



Members of the Board of Public Records Management

- Appointed in June 2010
- Professors of History (x2)
- Professors of Library and Information Science (x2)
- Professor of administrative law
- Lawyer
- Senior staff of local public archives



Challenges

- Education and training for professional archivists and records managers
- the actual creation of public records
- management and preservation of electronic records
 - Under collaboration/cooperation of the National Archives with IT-oriented government departments

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Future legal deposit system of NDL

- In June 2010, the advisory council for the legal deposit recommended the NDL to include online materials into the deposit
 - The subject is the materials published by **private** companies, organization and persons (not by government ones)
 - Taking the **trend for electronic books** into consideration

Enhancing the effectiveness of Section 9 of the Library Law

Section 9 of the Library Law

- 1. The [national] Government shall furnish public libraries established by prefectures with two copies of the Official Gazette and other documents which are made available for public information published by the National Printing Bureau.
- 2. Agencies of the national government and of local governments may furnish public libraries free of charge, upon request with publications and other data and materials which they publish.

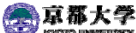
→ Resulted in weak compliance ...

Towards more compliance

- Question from congressmen
 - In conjunction with the revision of Library Law
- The advocacy programs of the Library Policy Program Committee of the Japan Library Association



Analysis of government information policy in Japan



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The meaning of three major policy initiatives

- Did not have direct relationship among them
 - Promoted at the same time by accident?
- Implied importance of management, archiving of and access to government information



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Four issues to be considered

- (1) The pros and cons of leadership and **top-down policy-making**
- (2) Awareness of government information **as evidence**
- (3) Issues concerning the management of **electronic information**
- (4) Education and training for **professional librarians and archivists**



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The pros and cons of leadership and top-down policy-making



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Leadership: key persons

- Political leadership toward enactment of the PRMA
 - Yasuo Fukuda: Former Prime Minister
 - Yoko Kamikawa: First Minister of the Cabinet Office in Charge of Public Records Management
- Administrative leadership
 - Mitsuoki Kikuchi: Former President of NAJ
 - Masaya Takayama: Current President of NAJ
 - Makoto Nagao: Current Head Librarian of NDL

Changing political environment

- Fukuda (Liberal Democratic Party) forced to resign Prime Minister in 2008
- New ruling party since 2009, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), is not eager to promote government records management, though it stresses importance of freedom of government information
- DPJ lost the Upper House election in July 2010

Advocacy from professional organizations

- Weak bottom-up policy making
- Librarians and archivists had been reluctant to get involved with political issues?
- From “viewers” to “players”

Awareness of government information as evidence



Effect of mismanagement of government records

- Huge impact by mismanagement of pension records
- Toward change of the view of historical government information
 - From “historical material as luxury” to “evidence of government activities accessible by any people”



Issues concerning the management of electronic information



Need of collaboration among policy initiatives

- Issues of archiving government information
 - Hard copy: public libraries
 - Web contents: Web archiving at NDL



Education and training for professional librarians and archivists



Current situations

- Archivists
 - No professional certificate, very small job market
 - Graduate courses for professional archivists are just beginning
- Librarians
 - Low status
 - Specialization (e.g. government information librarians) is very difficult



Conclusion



- From simply discussing abstract concepts (e.g. “right to know”) toward **developing concrete measures** to manage, archive, and provide access to government information
- In this sense, the role of libraries and archives will be very important
- The key will be ...
 - Raising of the **visibility** of these institutions
 - Keeping up with the **electronic environment**



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