

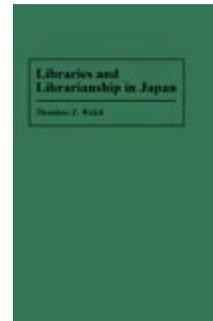
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Theodore F. Welch. *Libraries and Librarianship in Japan*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997. xv + 215 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-29668-0.

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Toshokan Revised

Since the 1976 publication of his *Toshokan: Libraries in Japanese Society*,^[1] Theodore Welch has been recognized as one of America's experts on Japanese libraries. *Toshokan* was the first English-language survey of Japanese librarianship, and (with the exception of the Japanese Library Association's *Libraries in Japan*) remained so until the publication of his *Libraries and Librarianship in Japan (L&LJ)*.^[2] Welch also authored most English-language encyclopedia entries on Japanese libraries since then and was instrumental in the United States-Japan Conferences on Library and Information Science in Higher Education.^[3] He was rewarded for these efforts by the Japanese government with an honorary title.

Toshokan was based on research conducted in Japan, where Welch was Regional Librarian for the USIA between 1967-9 and between 1973-5, as Chief of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development of Information Services. *Toshokan* was the author's dissertation at Tokyo University in 1976. *L&LJ* is essentially an updated version of *Toshokan*, although much of the information has been re-written and re-organized, and a fair amount of new data has been added. As with *Toshokan*, *L&LJ* is a useful introduction to aspects of Japanese librarianship, but it is far from an academic critical treatment of the subject.

Toshokan was very much a product of its age, representing the heyday of international and comparative librarianship studies. It should be clear, however, that one can no longer present the history and present state

of librarianship in a developed country in one volume, without dramatically overgeneralizing. This is especially the case in Japan, which has a long and complex history of print culture. More focused studies in English along these lines include the works of Brown, Kornicki, Siggins and Suzuki.^[4] A recent overview in English of Japanese-language historical studies in can be seen in Kawasaki and Tsuda.^[5]

As with *Toshokan*, Welch relies mostly on undocumented observations, letters, and brief articles from the Japanese popular library press, including short articles in the *Nihon Toshokan Kyokai* [Japan Library Association's] *Toshokan-Zasshi* [The Library Journal]. At the same time, he ignores the academic studies produced in Japanese library science journals. One would also expect more documentation in the bibliography for each chapter. It is noteworthy that the most of the items in the bibliography are brief articles which are over twenty years old, and no mention is made of Ishii or Nagasue^[6] or other major studies of Japanese libraries. *L&LJ* also contains a good deal of statistics, and thirty-five tables which unfortunately are all too often presented without context or interpretation.

As with too many comparative librarianship studies, Welch's coverage attempts to be macrohistorical. His survey of libraries goes from prehistoric periods to the present with discussion of the evolution of writing and printing. Under this wide umbrella, he includes general information on reading interest, largely drawn from NHK surveys on reading as a leisure activity. He has

separate chapters on the Diet Library, Japan's National Library, and Academic, Public, School and Special libraries. Additional chapters cover bibliographic access, automation, professional associations, and LIS education. These chapters include some of the dramatic changes in Japanese libraries; for example, public library book acquisitions have increased 1200 percent since *Toshokan* was published.

The information is much more logically presented and is more accessible than his earlier work. Welch has also deleted irrelevant chapters, such as the appendix on the origins of papermaking in Japan. Many sections read as literal translations of organizational structures and reports, such as the description of the Japan Library Association. Statistics and addresses of organizations are included and are obviously more current. Aspects from *Toshokan* which were missing in *L&LJ* included a chronology of Japanese Librarianship, a glossary of library terms and translations of select Japanese Library Laws.[7]

This work is the second in Greenwood's series of Guides to Asian Librarianship. The first, Pongsoon Lee and Young Ai Um's *Libraries and Librarianship in Korea*[8] did not receive much attention in the library press. Although it was in serious need of editing and is equally overgeneralized, it is a much better-informed and personal evaluation of the state of library and information studies in Korea, and its bibliography, which includes many theses, provides substantially more resources for further investigation.

Although the current research trends in LIS have drifted away from international and comparative librarianship, there is a use for Welch's and Lee and Ai Um's works, which can serve as first steps to develop an understanding of the roles libraries play in the information culture of other countries. I hope that other researchers will use these works as bridges to begin more critical academic explorations, which will examine the historical evolution of the library and information in modern society.

Notes

[1]. Theodore F. Welch. *Toshokan: Libraries in Japanese Society*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1976. According to *Books in Print*, a reprint of this will be available from Books on Demand (ISBN 0-317-26358-7) for \$90.10.

[2]. Japan Library Association, *Librarianship in*

Japan. Revised Edition. Tokyo: JLA, 1994. A recent overview in German is Hiroshi Kawai. *Das Bibliothekswesen in Japan: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Herausgegeben von Brend Moeller. Hannover: Laurentius, 1997. The reviewer has not seen a copy yet, but it was reviewed by Steffi Zoller in *Buch und Bibliothek* (January 1998): 60-1.

[3]. "Libraries." *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Vol. 5. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983:1-3; "Japan." *Encyclopedia of Library History* Wayne A. Wiegand, and Donald G. Davis, Jr., Editors. New York: Garland, 1994: 319-322; and "Japanese Libraries in the Nineties." *Bowker Annual* New York: Bowker, 1993:94-102. Welch also edited, along with Warren M. Tsuneshi and Mary F. Grosch, *Strengthening the U.S.-Japan Library Partnership in the Global Information Flow: Fourth United States-Japan Conference on Library & Information Science in Higher Education*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1991.

[4]. Yu-Ying Brown, ed. *Japanese Studies: Papers Presented at a Colloquium at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 14-16 September*. London: British Library, 1990; Peter F. Kornicki. *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginning to the 19th Century*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997; Jack Siggins. *American Influences on Modern Japanese Library Development*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1969; Yukihisa Suzuki. *American Influence in the Development of Library Services in Japan, 1860-1941*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1974.

[5]. Yoshitaka Kawasaki and Sumiko Tsuda, "Library History Studies in Japan and the Japan Society for the Study of Library History (JSSLH)," *Libraries and Culture* 25 (1990): 130-137.

[6]. Atushi Ishii, *Nihon Kindai Kokyoo Toshokanshi no Kenkyuu [Study of the History of Japanese Modern Public Libraries]* Tokyo: Nihon Toshokan Kyokai, 1972; Toshio Nagasue, *Nihon Kooyoo Toshokan no Kesei [The Formation of Japanese Public Libraries]*. Tokyo: Nihon Toshokan Kyokai, 1984.

[7]. Oak Knoll Press is now distributing a glossary of 2,000 library terms in English, Japanese and Chinese entitled *Glossary of Library Terms in Japanese-Chinese-English* by Zentaro Yoshimura.

[8]. Pongsoon Lee and Young Ai Um's *Libraries and Librarianship in Korea*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1994.

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