

Committee on Japanese Materials, AAS 2009, Comments

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Thank you very much for the invitation to make some remarks about publishing in the field of Japanese studies. I'm sorry that I can't join the discussion in person, but assuming that all has gone according to schedule, I'm presently somewhere above the Atlantic, in transit from a conference in England.

I imagine that Albert Hoffstadt and Pat Crosby have already mentioned developments about publishing on Japan that are relevant to journal as well as book publishing, so let me focus here on a couple of points that I would see as distinguishing what may appear in journal form as opposed to a book. I will then touch on a couple of aspects of the current state of the field where I hope that you as a group might be able to provide support and assistance.

One obvious difference between journals and books is that the articles appearing in journals are shorter than books. The length of articles varies from journal to journal, with some journals aiming for quite short pieces and others allowing longer pieces or pieces appearing in installments. *Monumenta Nipponica* falls in the latter category; articles appearing in recent years have averaged between 15,000 and 20,000 words, with some pieces considerably longer than that. Because of this quite generous length, authors can address a subject in some depth, and some articles might be regarded as in fact mini-monographs. As mini-monographs, however, journal articles are perhaps freer from some of the constraints presently facing book publishing. Most notably, although journals, like book publishers, of course have to keep in mind the overall audience for what they publish, they don't have to think so much about whether an individual article will "sell." Journals thus provide a valuable venue for solid scholarship that, because of its specialized nature or in-between length might be difficult to publish in book form. Librarians like yourselves can be of great help to faculty and especially students, I think, by keeping abreast of what is appearing in journals in the field as well as in book form and directing people to articles that might be relevant to their interests.

Also, greater publicity about the scholarly worth of this type of journal publication might help over time to redress a current imbalance, at least in the U.S., in the relationship between academic advancement and publishing. That is, generally speaking, in the humanities and social sciences, a book counts for more than a body of articles when someone is being considered for tenure or promotion. In this situation, young researchers seeking to get tenure, in particular, have to put great effort into getting a book published quickly. But there are many things that are probably more suitable to journal publication than as a book, and if journal articles were awarded more weight in the promotion process, it probably would result in a more beneficial and rational distribution of effort and resources for all concerned—authors, publishers, and readers.

I understand that this committee focuses particularly on the use and availability of scholarly resources in Japanese, rather than English, so although what I'm directly familiar with is publication in English, let me mention a couple of other features of journal publication, or at least features specifically of MN, that may be of relevance to your concerns. One is that over the years since the journal was founded in 1938, we have published a large number of translations of Japanese primary sources, not just literature, but also historical sources, broadly defined. Many of these fall into the category of pieces that because of length or nature might be difficult to publish in book form. A list by the name of the author of the original work (or title, when the author cannot be readily identified) is included under the indexes on the MN website, and again, I would urge you to keep this in mind as a resource both for people who can't make use of materials in Japanese and those who can or who are working towards that goal. Another aspect of journals that should be useful for your group is that through reviews and, more particularly, review articles, they serve to some extent as a bridge between the Japanese and overseas research communities by making available to a larger audience knowledge of work being done in Japanese. English-language journals do not usually publish reviews of individual works in Japanese—given that most journals cover a range of disciplinary areas, it is just too difficult to justify singling out for review one or two books of the hundreds available. But reviews of books in Western languages—particularly review articles—may mention relevant work on the subject in Japanese. And articles on the state of the field in a certain area may also focus attention on scholarship in Japanese. I wish there were more such articles, but even by making use of what is available, you may be able to anticipate some of the resources in Japanese that your immediate clientele in the US may learn about and want to be able to access directly.

Finally, let me mention one other type of valuable bridging resource that is not directly connected to journals, but which I hope you can help to draw to the attention of a wider audience. In the last few years, many Japanese academic institutions have been trying actively to make available in English and other languages important Japanese reference sources. Among these are the Kanagawa Daigaku project on “Nonwritten Cultural Materials,” which is preparing translations of *Emakimono ni yoru Nihon jōmin seikatsu ebiki* 絵巻物による日本常民生活絵引, translated as *Multilingual Version of Pictopedia of Everyday Life in Medieval Japan*. Another, with which I have some direct familiarity, is the Kokugakuin Daigaku project to develop a large-scale website with a full online English translation of the *Shintō jiten* (Encyclopedia of Shinto) and translations from and into Japanese of articles related to Shinto. The site is <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/>. These resources often don't reach their intended audience as smoothly and directly as one might hope, and certainly one extremely useful thing that your group could do is to compile a list of them and to develop ways of making them widely known.