

Multicultural Library Services in Japan

— The Current Situation Based on the 2015 Questionnaire —

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Summary

Based on the result of the 2015 questionnaire, the Japan Library Association (JLA) found that the multicultural library services in Japan had improved in some degree, but are still being developed.

Introduction

According to the Immigration Bureau, the number of foreign residents in Japan has more than doubled over the past three decades. As of 12/31/2015, they are now total 2,232,189 people, comprising 1.76% of the entire population.

JLA carried out the research project on multicultural library services in 1988 and 1998. There are several purposes for the new 2015 questionnaire. Among them are to determine whether multicultural library services have made progress since the last study; whether there are new services or technologies now being provided; and what problems libraries are facing now in delivering on these services.

Methods

This research was conducted by questionnaire. They were sent to the main libraries of each local government, college, and university, and asked for replies through the website.

Questionnaire 1. Multicultural services in public libraries

Research period: from October 9 to November 31

Response: 1182 answers (1005 out of 1366 main libraries of local governments and 177 branches)

Questionnaire 2. Multicultural services to international students in academic libraries

Research period: from July 9 to August 31

Response: 956 answers (751 out of 1,021 main libraries and 205 branch libraries)

Brief result of the 2015 questionnaire

Questionnaire 1 (Public libraries)

		1998	2015
Preparing guidelines for multicultural services	Yes	157	256
Providing events for minority peoples	Yes	13	312
Having a partnership with other sections	Yes	53	475
Providing computer(s) to access the internet	Yes	---	949
Having a meeting with minorities	Yes	13	31

Top five problems which public libraries are facing now.

The information needs of minority people are not clear.
Communications skills of library staff dealing with minorities are poor.
Budget for multilingual materials is very small.
Promotion of library usage by minorities is inadequate.
Selecting and ordering multilingual materials is very difficult.

Questionnaire 2 (Academic libraries)

		1998	2015
Providing a web site for international students	Yes	137	290
Having a partnership with other sections	Yes	160	287
Providing multilingual materials	Yes	493	351
Conducting a needs analysis of international students	Yes	50	128

Top five issues that academic libraries are facing now.

Communications skills with international students should be developed.
Guides to library use in several different languages should be provided.
Analysis of international students' needs should be prepared
Library manuals for multicultural services should be prepared
Budgets for multilingual materials and staff should be increased.

Toward the future development of services

Based on the result of the 2015 questionnaire, JLA recommends:

- ☆ Collect and share information on multicultural library services and best practices in Japan.
- ☆ Do research on foreign users' needs.
- ☆ Develop staff communications skills with foreign residents or students.
- ☆ Attract multicultural populations to libraries.
- ☆ Establish a partnership with other sections in the same organization and local community.

Thank you!

See a handout for more information.

