

History and Recent Trends in Library and Information Science Education in Japan

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Abstract: This paper describes the history and recent trends in library and information science education in Japan. Education in this field started with the Japan Library School at Keio University after the end of World War II. Later, the name was changed to the School of Library and Information Science, which encouraged other universities to provide courses in this field; however, the number of universities with such courses has not sufficiently increased since that time. On the other hand, many of Japan's universities and junior colleges provide limited training for working in public and school libraries. Efforts have recently been made to improve library and information science education, such as by offering evening classes for the Masters program, conducting qualification tests and conferring the title of senior professional librarian.



Start of Library Science Education

“The founding, in 1951, of the Japan Library School, now called the School of Library and Information Science, at Keio University, was of great significance in the development of librarianship in Japan and a remarkable example of international collaboration.” These are the words of Professor Michael K. Buckland, who edited an autobiographical narrative by Professor Robert L. Gitler (Gitler, 1999), the first director of the Japan Library School (慶應義塾大学文学部図書館学科). The School opened after the end of World War II under the leadership of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) as the first formal college-level school for librarianship in Japan. The SCAP organized the reformation of the educational system in postwar Japan, and Keio University in Tokyo was selected as the optimal institute for establishing a school of library science. Under the support of the American Library Association (ALA), many American professors including Gitler visited the Japan Library School and shared their high level of skills and knowledge on librarianship.

Prior to the Japan Library School, there was a training institute for library staff in Japan although it was not part of a university. The institute, Monbu-sho Toshokanin Kyoshujo (文部省図書館員教習所), was established in 1921 by the Ministry of Education (文部省) and produced a high number of Japanese librarians before and after World War II with repeated organizational changes. In 1964, at last, the institute became the Library Junior College (図書館短期大学), and was located in Tokyo.

The Japan Library School and the Library Junior College played an important role in library science education in Japan after World War II.

Change to “Library and Information Science” and Start of Graduate Schools

In 1967, the Japan Library School at Keio University introduced a new graduate Masters program, “Library and Information Science” (LIS). Shortly afterwards, the School reorganized its undergraduate program and changed its name to the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS: 図書館・情報学科). The 1968-1970 School Catalog (Keio SLIS, 1968) explains that the intention of adopting the new name was to integrate a ‘library science approach’ and ‘information science approach’ in its teaching and research activities. Furthermore, a PhD program was established in 1975, and since then, the program has produced many Japanese LIS researchers.



At almost the same time, one of the laboratories in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Tokyo (東京大学) became another training center for young researchers of LIS (the predecessor to the laboratory was established in 1951, the year that the Japan Library School opened). This is the reason for the high number of LIS researchers receiving education at Keio University and the University of Tokyo.

In 1979, the Library Junior College expanded into the University of Library and Information Science (ULIS: 図書館情報大学) and moved to the Tsukuba area, which is a special region for science and technology slightly distant from Tokyo. Its Masters and PhD programs were launched in 1984 and 2000, respectively. ULIS has since become a college and a graduate school within the University of Tsukuba (筑波大学) following the merger of the two institutions.

As a result, Keio, Tokyo and Tsukuba universities have been the three centers for LIS research in Japan. It should be noted that at present, LIS education is also provided by other universities, several of which are shown in Figure 1 (furthermore, there are also universities that provide undergraduate courses in LIS without the corresponding graduate program).

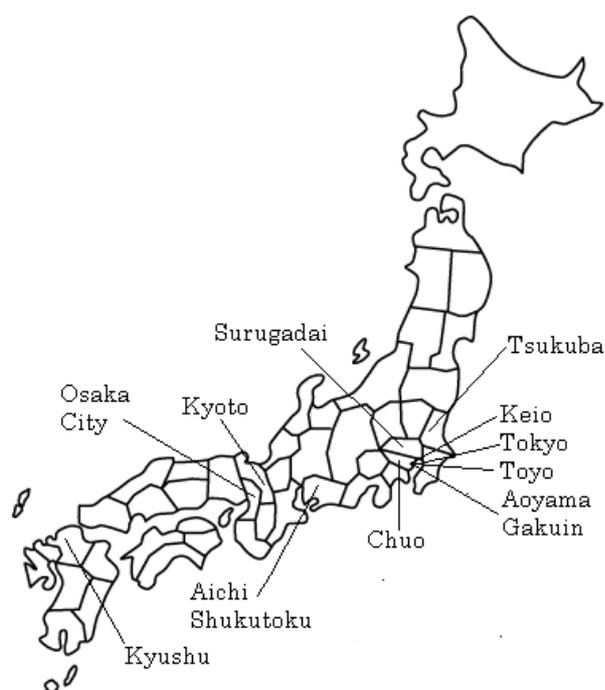


Figure 1 Typical universities providing LIS education at the graduate school level



Certification of Librarianship in Public Libraries and School Libraries

Certification of librarianship in public libraries (Shisho)

In 1950, the Library Law was established for public libraries in Japan, and the *Shisho* (司書) or library specialist for public libraries is officially prescribed in the law. *Shisho* certification can be obtained by earning credits in subjects determined by the Ministry of Education (presently, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology, MEXT: 文部科学省) in universities or junior colleges (i.e., the courses for *Shisho* certification are placed at the undergraduate level).

The curriculum for *Shisho* certification is different from that of the LIS education program partly because the *Shisho* is a specialist limited to public libraries, although some academic and other libraries regard this as a critical qualification. For example, greater emphasis is placed on traditional library science in the curriculum, and certain aspects of information science are relatively weak. Also, the number of subjects and credits is not large; only 13 subjects and 24 credits are required in the new curriculum from 2012 (basically, 2 credits are given for a lecture of 1.5 hours per week for a term of 15 weeks), partly because it is assumed that the courses for *Shisho* certification are incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum of all disciplines besides LIS. For example, a student entering the history department can obtain both a Bachelors degree in history and *Shisho* certification during the four-year undergraduate program if the university provides the *Shisho* course. It may be difficult for a student to take the full LIS program, but it is possible to obtain the skills and knowledge required for working in a library. The revised *Shisho* curriculum from 2012 was published online (http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/detail/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2009/05/13/1266312_8.pdf).

Universities and junior colleges throughout Japan provide the course for *Shisho* certification (see below), and many students obtain their certification every year. The course can also be taken after graduating from university or junior college because it is frequently provided as an intensive summer course, which makes it possible for active library staff to obtain their certification through an in-service education program. As a result, over 10,000 persons obtain *Shisho* certification every year (e.g., see Miwa et al., 2006).



Unfortunately, Japanese society does not fully recognize the highly specialized skills needed to be a librarian. Thus, many people without *Shisho* certification are actually working in public libraries as a library specialist. In other words, *Shisho* certification is not so effective for obtaining a permanent job in public or other libraries. The resulting situation is that a very small portion of those who are certified have actually held a position in a public library (Takayama, 2001), possibly coupled with the fact that the total number of staff in public libraries in Japan is small in comparison with the number of persons obtaining certification.

Certification of librarianship in school libraries (Shisho-kyoyu)

Another type of librarianship certification prescribed in a Japan’s law is for a specialist in school libraries, called *Shisho-kyoyu* (司書教諭). *Kyoyu* means teacher, and for *Shisho-kyoyu* certification, an official license for teaching at elementary, junior high or high school must be obtained simultaneously, which is not an easy task. Instead, besides the subjects for obtaining the official teaching license, it is necessary to earn credits in only five subjects on librarianship (10 unit credit).

Similar to *Shisho* certification, many persons (possibly over 10,000) obtain *Shisho-kyoyu* certification every year. As a result, in Japan, while the number of universities providing full LIS education is relatively small, there are many people acquiring skills and knowledge in librarianship. Nemoto (2009) summarized this situation as follows:

- (1) *Shisho* training – about 250 universities and colleges provide this.
- (2) *Shisho-kyoyu* training – over 100.
- (3) Undergraduate education (LIS major) – about 10.
- (4) Graduate education (continuing) – about 5.
- (5) Graduate education (research) – about 5.

Table 1 LIS curriculum in the undergraduate program at Keio University (2007)

Required subjects	
Second Year	Library and Information Science: Basics Information Service: Basics 1, 2 Information Sources: Basics 1, 2 Information Retrieval: Basics 1, 2 Reading of Literature on Library and Information Science
Course of Study	



	Library	Information Media	Information Retrieval
Third and Fourth Year	Library Management Reference Service Library Materials Organization of Recorded Materials History of Communication Library Services for Children Library and Information Service Internship 1, 2	Introduction to Information Media Structure and Analysis of Information Media Epistemological Foundations of Information Digital Media Print Media Scholarly Communication Information Seeking Behavior	Introduction to Information Retrieval 1, 2 Information Seeking Behavior Database Management Digital Archives Information Technology Organization of Recorded Materials
Elective subjects			
Third and Fourth Year	Library Management and Services 1, 2, 3, 4 Society and Information Basics of Natural Language Processing Basics of Image Processing Bibliography 1, 2 Note: Through each course of study, detailed rules for selecting subjects to be learned are systematically determined. Basically, seven subjects must be taken from the lists of required subjects and elective subjects for the third and fourth year.		

Typical Undergraduate-Level Curriculum of Library and Information Science

As a typical curriculum for library and information science, Table 1 shows a set of LIS subjects in the undergraduate program at Keio SLIS from 2007 to 2010. In the third year, each student selects a special course of study from among the Library Course, Information Media Course and Information Retrieval Course, and follows it until graduation.

The Library Course is oriented towards the education of professional librarians. Students selecting this course can obtain *Shisho* certification upon successfully graduating from the School (it is possible for students in other courses to obtain *Shisho* certification by taking a prescribed set of subjects). On the other hand, the Information Media Course is mainly concerned with issues on information media from sociological and psychological points of view, as well as the functions and problems related to production and distribution. In the Information Retrieval Course, subjects on information retrieval, database systems and computer technology are the main focus.

By separating the undergraduate program into three special courses of study, the components of LIS developed by the School become clear. The structure helps students to clarify what they should learn in the School, and to determine their professional



direction after graduation. For example, the typical targets would be professional librarians (Library Course), specialists in the media industry (Information Media) and experts in computer-related companies (Information Retrieval). Of course, students do not always follow the expected direction, but it is important to sufficiently articulate the specialties and professional directions in LIS education.

It should be noted that the curriculum at Keio University shown in Table 1 is not the standard for LIS education in Japan. Each university carefully produces their own LIS curriculum with consideration given to the background, objective, or situation. Table 1 is only a sample from Japan.

Education of Active Librarians in the Masters Program

Subjects in the LIS Masters program at Keio University are not as highly structured as those in the undergraduate program shown as Table 1, which would be the traditional style of research-oriented graduate schools in Japan. The main subjects are ‘Special Lecture on Information Science’, ‘Special Lecture on Information Media’, ‘Special Lecture on Information Storage and Retrieval’, ‘Special Lecture on Information Systems’ and ‘Research Methods’, for which the actual contents are flexibly tailored according to the current research situations or the interests of the professors or students.

However, other than the traditional LIS graduate school, the School launched another Masters program in 2004 for educating active librarians (similar education has been provided at the University of Tsukuba). In Japan, as mentioned above, many librarians have received librarianship training only in the process of obtaining *Shisho* certification in an undergraduate program, which is not a full LIS education. An effective way for providing such librarians with more LIS knowledge and skills would be to hold evening classes for the Masters program so that they can attend the School after their working day ends.

Actually, on Monday and Thursday evenings and on Saturday afternoon, the School provides classes for active librarians. During the two-year program, they can take over 18 subjects on: 1) library administration, 2) management of public libraries, 3) management of academic libraries, 4) organization of library materials, 5) information management, 6) information media, 7) digitalization in academic libraries, 8) reference services, 9) information retrieval, 10) advanced reference services, 11) computer literacy, 12) computer network, 13) database management, 14) library-related laws, 15)



current topics in public libraries, 16) current topics in academic libraries, 17) research methods, and 18) writing research papers. It should be noted that some of these subjects are offered every other year and that it is not necessary to earn credits in all 18 subjects to obtain the Masters degree (a Masters thesis is required). From 2004 to 2011, over 50 persons completed the program of Master's degree at Keio University.

LIPER Project and LIS Test

LIPER Project

A Japanese research group organized by Professor Shuichi Ueda at Keio University initiated the LIPER (Library and Information Professions and Education Renewal) Project in 2003 (Ueda et al., 2005; Miwa et al., 2006; Nemoto, 2009), which attempted to explore the reformation of Japanese LIS education, encouraged by the report on KALIPER (Kellogg-ALISE Information Professionals and Educational Reform, see Pettigrew & Durrance, 2001). Over 30 LIS researchers in Japan participated in the project, and conducted various surveys on the current status of LIS education including *Shisho* and *Shisho-Kyoyu* training and of career development systems at public, academic and school libraries in Japan. Some of the results have been reported by the members at meetings of A-LIEP (Asia-Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education and Practice) and others.

After three years of research, the LIPER Project proposed a new LIS curriculum consisting of three layers: 1) category, 2) domain and 3) subjects (see part of the final report written in Japanese, <http://wwwsoc.nii.ac.jp/jslis/liper/report06/2teigen.doc>). In the top layer, there are three categories: 1) core domains, 2) individual subject domains and 3) individual professional domains, and sub-domains are placed under each category. For example, as core domains, the proposal enumerated eight sub-domains: 1) foundation of LIS, 2) information users, 3) organization of information resources, 4) information media, 5) information services, 6) information systems, 7) administration and management, and 8) digital information.

It seems that the curriculum intentionally includes *Shisho* and *Shisho-kyoyu* training and expands this for the education of librarians working in public, academic and school libraries. Although the revision of the curriculum for *Shisho* certification in 2012 could not possibly reflect the proposal, the LIPER proposal can be considered as a valuable model for developing the LIS curriculum at each university.



LIS Test

Another significant proposal by the LIPER Project was to carry out a test on LIS for those who have obtained any type of librarianship certification or who are trying to obtain it. The objective would be to motivate them to expand their skills and knowledge to the full range of LIS. Of course, this test would also be useful for those who have received a full LIS education to ensure that sufficient LIS knowledge has been acquired. In a sense, this would be considered as a test for qualification, but without issuing an official license.

Under the leadership of Tokyo University Professor Akira Nemoto, who is the current president of JSLIS (Japan Society of Library and Information Science), the LIPER2 Project was executed in order to examine the practical aspects of implementing the test. In fact, a preliminary LIS test was conducted yearly from 2007 to 2010 as an activity of LIPER2, and the first regular test will be held in autumn 2011 by JSLIS. Also, the LIPER3 Project is currently underway for the purpose of publishing standard textbooks on LIS within the context of Japan, and the textbooks are expected to be published this year or next year.

Certified Professional Librarian by the Japan Library Association

Another important plan for enhancing the skills and knowledge of librarians has been initiated by the Japan Library Association (JLA), in which the title of ‘Certified Professional Librarian by Japan Library Association’ (日本図書館協会認定司書) is conferred to librarians satisfying specific conditions prescribed by JLA. For example, the conditions include the publication of books or articles, participation in training courses for professional librarians and so on. That is to say, a librarian having this title can be considered as a senior professional librarian with advanced knowledge and skills on librarianship.

A committee within JLA examines applications from librarians and judges whether or not the title is to be conferred (the first invitation and judgment were conducted in 2010). It should be noted that the target of this title is limited to those who work in public libraries. Therefore, conferring the title of Certified Professional Librarian by the Japan Library Association can be considered as an extension of the *Shisho* certification.



Summary

Substantial education in the field of library science or library and information science began with the Japan Library School at Keio University after the end of World War II. Unfortunately, the number of schools in this field has not seen a sufficient increase, but many universities and junior colleges offer *Shisho* or *Shisho-kyou* training, which is a limited education on librarianship. Recent efforts to improve the situation of LIS education include the introduction of evening classes for the Masters program, conducting LIS qualification tests, and conferring the title of Certified Professional Librarian by the Japan Library Association.

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