

Digital Libraries in Japan: A retrospect

Syun Tutiya
Hiroya Takeuchi
Yoshinori Sato
Masamitsu Kuriyama
Hiroshi Itsumura

Outline

- Backgrounds and prehistory
- Nara Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Digital Library Project
- Leading Digital Libraries at Kyoto, Tsukuba, TIT, Kobe, ULIS
- General characterization of the digital library projects in 90s Japan
- Where are They Now?
- Lessons to Learn

Prehistory

- Library Automation since 1980s
 - Union catalog system across university libraries
 - National Center for Scientific Information System
 - Dictated by a proposal by Monbusho's council
- Interests in digital contents
 - Natural language processing
 - Library without paper

Backgrounds

- What is to come after library automation
 - Interests in networked information, particularly on information sharing on “intranets”
 - The Internet just looming far beyond
- Changing role of university in Japan
 - New stress on graduate education, along with basic research in early 1990s
- “Digital library functionalities at university libraries” proposal(1995)
 - Basically , stress on digital contents

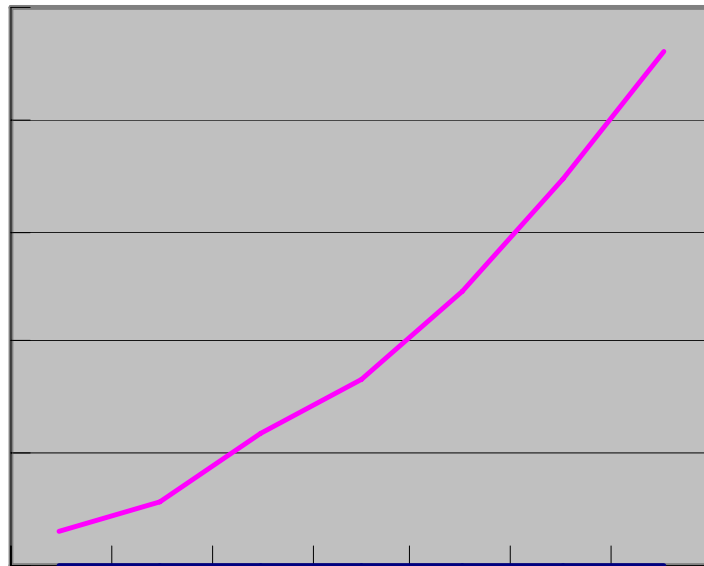
A mismatch

- NII in US started 1993 and the Internet began to be popularized, spreading to the rest of the world through 1995-1998
- “Internet explosion” in Japan in 1996
- NSF funded digital library projects starting in 1995
- Most of the digital library/electronic library projects in Japan conceived in 1995 without serious awareness of the Internet

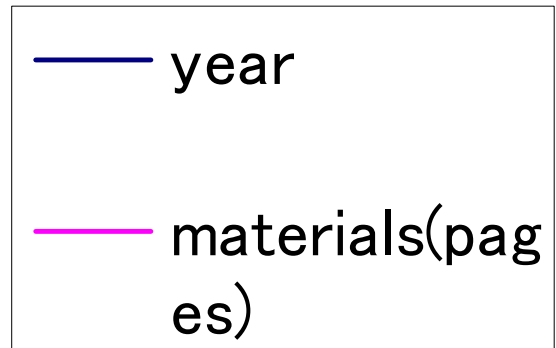
AIST-Nara DL project

- Launched in 1995 with substantial budget of around 200M yen in 1996
- Main stress on image-digitization of printed material
 - scholarly journals
 - books, monographs
 - gray literature
- Conventional indexing
- Idea of “paperless library”

2500000
2000000
1500000
1000000
500000
0



1 2 3 4 5 6 7



1000000

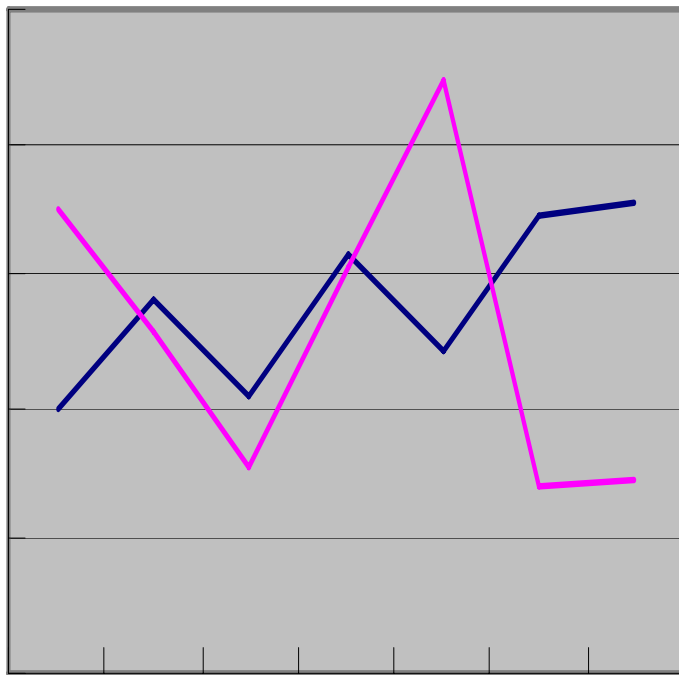
800000

600000

400000

200000

0



— in. access
— ex. access

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

2002

Observations

- Copyright negotiations too selfish
 - only for internal use
 - small user body
- Scanning articles in journals otherwise electronically available
- Simply a paperless substitute of conventional library, ie no real employment of advantages of digital, networked materials

Other leading DLs after 1997

- Kyoto: Image digitization of rare material collection
- Tokyo Institute of Technology: Hybrid library
- Tsukuba: Digitization + Collection from within
- ULIS: Digitization
- Kobe: Digitization of earthquake related material including gray literature

What were they?

- Focus of digitization of not-yet-digital material
 - rare material/special collection
 - currently available material, which might be available online or, soon to be available online
- No conceptual change
 - No attention to what digital benefits users, changes libraries
- So where are they now?

Where are they now?

- They are there on library web sites, but not easy to find
- They have URLs but not seamless searchable, sometimes very deep on the web
- About 500 URLs detectible, more to be located
- That is, almost forgotten

Lessons to learn

- Things born digital need not be digitized
- No metadata
 - situation changed, but need some more efforts towards standardization etc
- No pedagogical development
 - experts are not content with digital fakes
 - educational use must be developed, but Japanese classroom/textbook oriented education may be a obstacle
- No collaboration
 - OK, let's collaborate!