

## A Consortial approach to scholarly communication in Japan from 2000 on: Online journals, institutional repositories and resource sharing

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### Abstract:

The present report summarizes the activities of Japan Association of National University Libraries(JANUL) with respect to its consortial deals after 2002 and its current status, with a brief description of its prehistory in the 1990s. After the recognition of the steep decrease of the subscribed titles in the 90s, The Association started negotiating with major international publishers, taking advantage of the timely advent and surprising penetration of electronic journals delivered on line. It has preferred to arrange the kind of licensing with a publisher that allows institutions to have access to all titles published by the publisher. The effects of such arrangements are evaluated positively in terms of better value for money and decreasing number of ILL/DD requests. Although most of the national university researchers currently benefit from the improved information environment, future is not necessarily simply bright. Awareness of the coming crisis in the Japanese and world wide scholarly communication is outlined with mentions of the steps the association has taken recently.

### 1. Introduction

The prehistory of Japanese universities' consortial negotiation consists of two threads. One is a dramatic decrease of the number of journal titles subscribed to by Japanese university libraries. 40,000 at the end of 1980s went down to 20,000 around the year 2000. The other is the transformation of the journal market world wide from print to online towards the end of the century. Japan Association of National University Libraries, whose 91 members include all, currently 86, universities funded by Japan's national government plus a few libraries annexed to what we call Inter-University Research Institute Corporations, began to take up those two challenges in 2000.

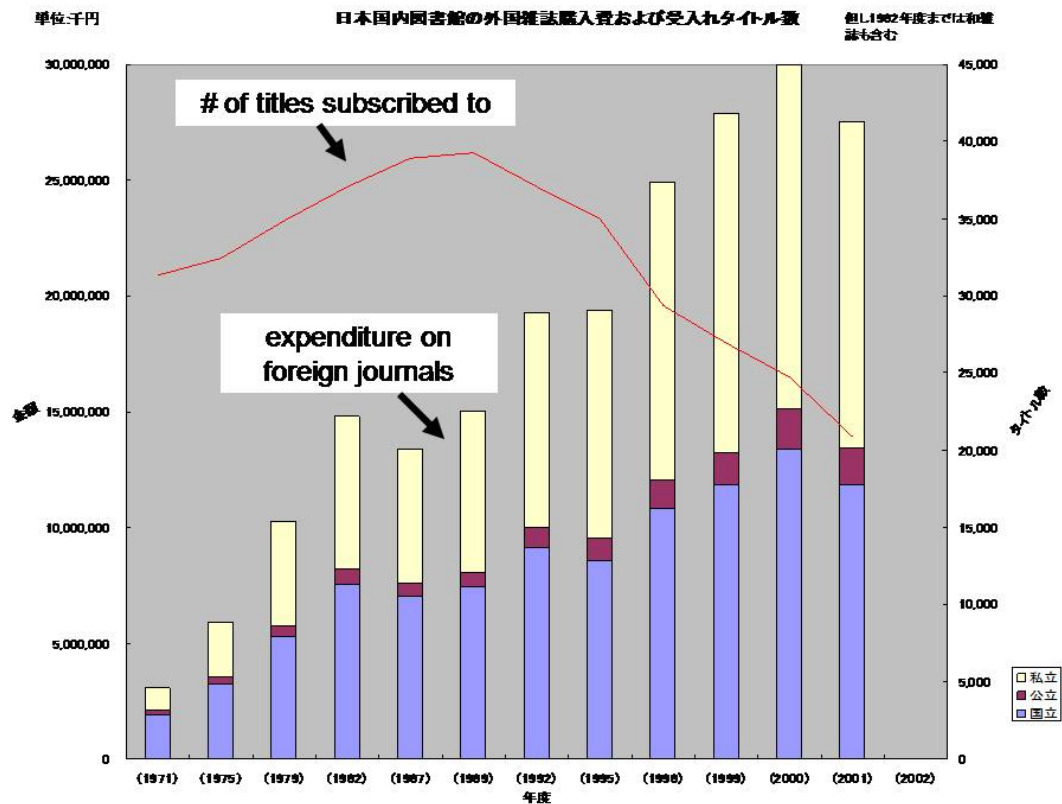
The present report mainly summarizes the activities of Japan Association of National University Libraries(JANUL) with respect to its consortial negotiations and deals after 2000 and its current status, with a brief description of its prehistory in the 1990s in the first section. It has preferred to arrange the kind of licensing with each publisher that allows institutions to have access to all titles published by the publisher because the member libraries thought in general that such licensing would maximize the quality of information environment on campus against the amount of expenditure on "foreign journals." The effects of such arrangements are confirmed by the visibly decreasing number of ILL/DD requests from national university libraries after 2002, which fact will be discussed in section 4.

Although most of national university researchers currently benefit from the

improved information environment, the future is not necessarily simply bright. JANUL's Awareness of coming crises in the Japanese and world wide scholarly communication is outlined in section5 with reference to the steps the association has taken recently.

## 2. Backgrounds and prehistory

Around 1990, the Japanese universities altogether subscribed to approximately 40,000 foreign serial titles with duplicates eliminated, but the number had decreased to about 20,000 in the year 2000. These counts were revealed only after a systematic research was done for the first time since the launch of the National Center for Science Information System in 1986, which maintained an online shared catalog among Japanese university libraries. No research has not provided a definitive analysis of the reason for the phenomena, but it has been often pointed out that price increases and uncoordinated cancellation decisions on different departments and campuses have been attributed to as causes the decrease at such a rate, though 20 peripheral titles cancelled per library at as few as 100 libraries out of 1000 universities in Japan, over 10 years would easily add up to 20000 cancellations.



Just at the time when the phenomenon was recognized, journal market was beginning to drastically change thanks to the real impact of electronic journals delivered on line. In 1999, Elsevier approached Japanese university libraries with a proposal named SD21 in hand for the purpose of promoting its ScienceDirect in the Japanese academic market, and soon later it proposed it apply pricing in Japanese yen in the market, claiming that it would free libraries of worries about fluctuating exchange rates. {¥em SD21} basically asked libraries to keep their payment with an additional increase each year. Yen pricing seemed to deprive libraries of the right to import journals on their own choosing the best deals with domestic and international agents. The name Elsevier was simply notorious in the Japanese academic library community.

In fact, the idea of "electronic journals" in practice had been brought by then to Japanese librarians' awareness more concretely by Academic Press's IDEAL, a package of 100 and some titles which we no choice other than either subscribing to it as a whole or not subscribing at all, with the pricing based on libraries' historical subscriptions to titles published by AP. In my knowledge, this is the first installation of what would be later called "big deal." In dealing IDEAL with Academic Press, some of the JANUL's member libraries came up with an idea of joining together and negotiating with a Japanese representative of the publisher as a group. It started with 7 participants from universities in Kanto area in 1999, but grew about 20 next year.

Along with such practical works, there were attempts to catch up with the understanding of the situation as perceived by overseas libraries. There were already quite a few visits by North American and European librarians well known for their writings and achievements, but the usual mode of communication with them was by way of formal symposia and lectures without in-depth discussion of problems shared by all academic libraries in the world. From 1999 to 2000, meetings with Hans Geleijnse and Ann Okerson were helpful.

The board meeting of the JANUL in November 1999 had a very heated discussion, incomparable to any in the past, and could not reach any conclusion on how to cope with the situation it was witnessing. Along series of phone calls and casual discussions followed until in the next board meeting in April 2000, it agreed to an idea of major university librarians of seven major universities sending a letter of dissatisfaction to Elsevier. In July, they received a reply from the then CEO, Derk Haank, saying that, although he had no intention of changing any policy, he would be glad to talk with Japanese university librarians. After a few meetings, JANUL accepted his offer and setup a task force to cope with the meeting with Elsevier, which

was scheduled early October, 2000. The task force was an interesting mix of people from library directors to senior library managers and younger librarians, the first experience for Japanese national university libraries to have such an ad hoc group of people working together for an immediate goal.

A couple of words of explanation on general backgrounds are necessary at this point. There were and are obstacles on Japanese campuses. Generally, Library budget is not very seriously taken on campus. There are only a few universities where libraries take control of the campuswide budget for purchases of books and subscription to either print or electronic journals. In most universities, faculty members control their own budget and decide on what to buy and whatnot, with the libraries only functioning as contractual agents, so to speak. So it is no wonder that the impacts of "hojinka" in national universities in 2004 this connection is not visible in this area yet except that the faculties are more woefully complaining about the budget cuts. In smaller universities budget situation has been apparently bad.

Faculty was not the only one to blame for the lack of a rational decision-making and budget system on national university campuses. Libraries had been only talking to mainly domestic agents in the past. Since national universities had to comply with the government's procurement and accounting rules and regulations before "hojinka," it was much easier only to talk to domestic agents, who were and are good at handling documents in Japanese. That was convenient and also the agents played a role of window to the outside for libraries. Libraries were so dependent on agents in terms of communication as well as paperwork that most of the information library had had about scholarly publishing was by way of the agents. Perhaps in return for such additional services, the agent determined their rate for currency conversion, which was normally very high compared with the market. The higher, marked up, rates could have been justified in the days of print because the delivery of journal contents had to involve physical transfer of shipping and handling tangible journal copies. With the advent of online, electronic journals, libraries no longer needed to rely on agents at least in term of shipping and handling of tangible object, but also it was a surprise, and perhaps an embarrassment for libraries that they no longer needed agents. Anecdotally, it was the case that each library had a hard time listing the subscribed titles published by Elsevier in preparation for the first meeting with the publisher, because it published, and still publishes a large number of title with imprint logos.

### 3. Negotiation with double agenda

In the first meeting with Elsevier and JANUL in October, both sides expressed their

views and opinions on the status quo in terms of electronic journals published by the publisher and agreed to work together to come up with a nice scheme in which both sides could enjoy the advantages of online journals. JANUL described the background situations in Japanese national universities and their libraries, with a strong stress on the fact the government was in the direction of decreasing its subsidy for higher education community, which would actually realized a few years later in the form of “hojinka,” incorporation of national universities as an entity independent of the government. It also pointed out the miserable situation of the decreased number of titles subscribed by Japanese universities. Those first statements by JANUL in October 2000 would define the goals and form of its consortial negotiations with publishers for the coming few years. Another departure from the past is that it insisted in principle on the direct negotiations with publishers, eliminating the intervention, or influence, of importers or subscription agents.

The consortium had two problems to solve at the same time: Affordable licensing and improvement of access from campus. The natural conclusion for this set of two agenda is what has been called “big deal.” In the case of Elsevier’s pricing model for 2002, “freedom collection” seemed to be the way to go, and actually more than 10 libraries, out of 100 then, opted for the collection. The number is still growing. For smaller universities, the freedom collection was not a realistic solution. They tried, successfully, to set up a cross-access subconsortium within which titles subscribed by any could be accessed by all. This description is symbolic of the way JANUL worked with universities and publishers. JANUL consortium do not sign contracts on its own. It just set up a general framework within which each library can most conveniently and economically deals with publishers, and try to share the general conditions for use and payment, including the definition of multicampus site, reservation for walk-in users, provision of download statistics, conditions for ILL, as well as “direct payment,” price caps and the definition of titles to be included in collections. As far as real contracts and payment are concerned, individual libraries sign. This is the scheme of consortial setting JANUL has established in the past 6 years of negotiations and deals.

In early 2001, JANUL began to talk with the then Blackwell, the then Springer, Wiley, and the then Academic Press. In 2002, more than 10 publishers started to talk with the JANUL consortium.

Along with those negotiations, JANUL began to talk to the Ministry of Education(*Monbusho* at the time), which controlled the management and operation of universities, including libraries, by way of the allocation of budgets. JANUL libraries asked for a small funding for starting electronic journal licensing, because it was

considered to be necessary due to the budget structure on campus where everything is decided by the faculty with no direct control of money on the part of the library even when site licensing applies not only departments and schools but all campus. Negotiation with the ministry was hard and tricky but by setting up a workgroup for scholarly communication within a new merged Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*MEXT*), JANUL universities began to receive a small amount of money, around 5% of the total expenditure on foreign journals, with variations according to the size and type of university. That means that it was, and still is, the university's own budget that enabled, and enables, the library to negotiate with publishers for licensing electronic, online foreign journals.

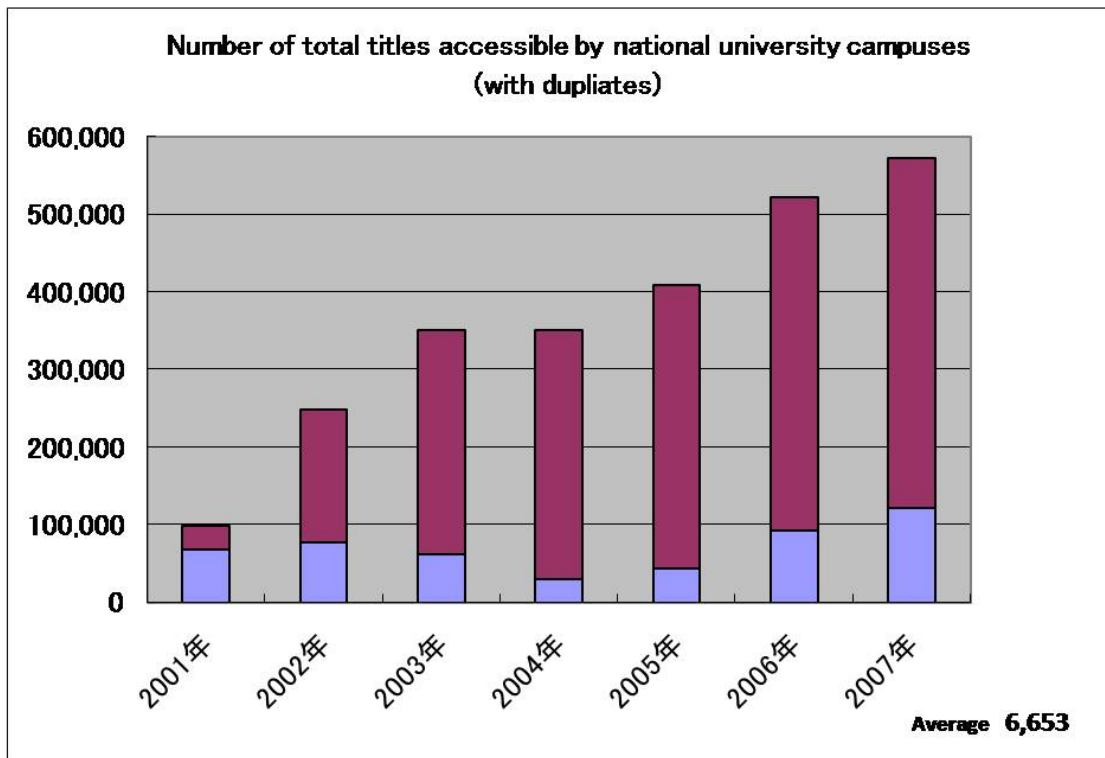
#### 4. Results so far

In this section, we evaluate the results of JANUL's consortial approaches to journal licensing in terms of its value for cost and the objectively measured statistics of ILL transactions.

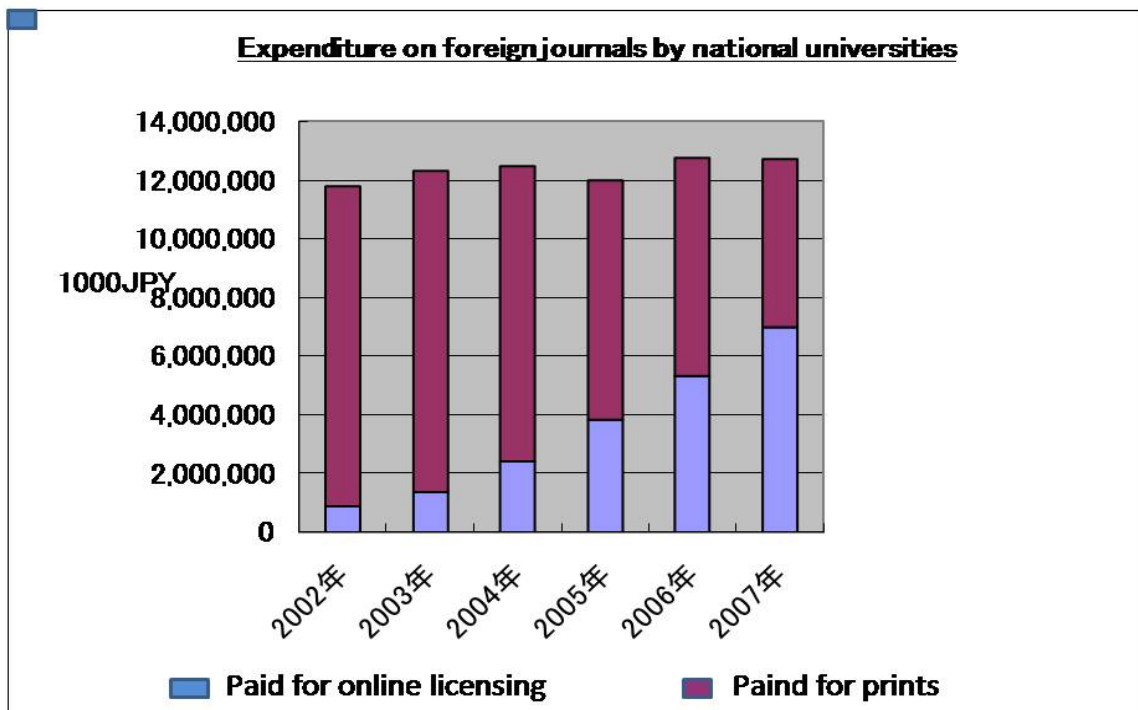
##### 4.1. Improved access with stable expenditure

As the following two graphs simply show, accesses from Japanese national university campuses has recovered from that severe decline as reported in the prehistory section of this article. As of 2000, large sized universities subscribed to 5000 to 8000 titles and middle sized ones 2000 to 4000. In 2007, the average number of titles accessible from campus has grown more than 6000, which means that currently most universities enjoy the same level of information environment as that of the one only possible for larger universities in the 1990s. There might be discussions about the validity of the number of titles as a metric for the quality of information environment, but it does indicate the improvement in JANUL's case.

What is interesting about the second graph is that since the first year of consortial deals with publishers the total expenditure by national universities have stayed almost the same, between 12 and 13 billion JPY, till this year. This is a dramatically good value for money, given the improvement of environment mentioned in the previous paragraph. In JANUL's analysis, this progress has been made possible mostly by the cancellation of prints in return for big deal licensing, as witnessed in the decreased proportion of expenditure on print over these years. It has been also confirmed the fluctuating currency exchange rate have not have great effects on the total expenditure.



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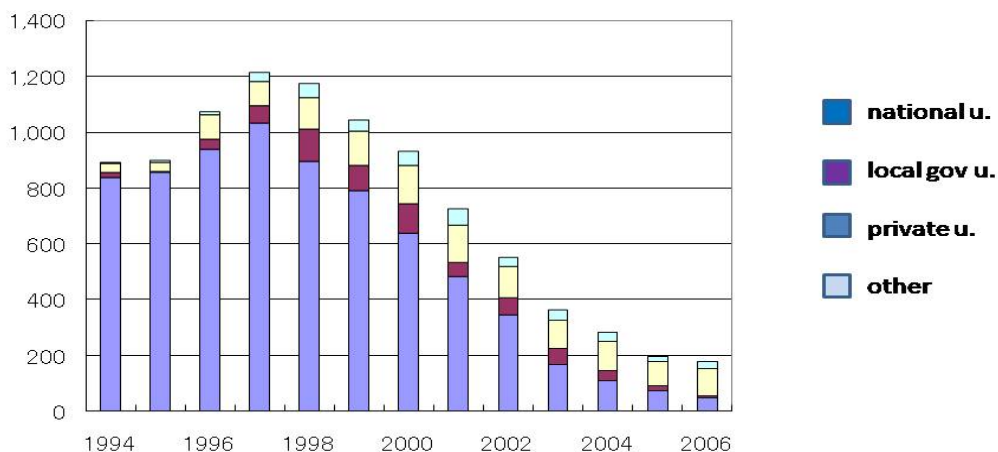
#### 4.2. Decreased ILL/DD requests for foreign journal articles.

Tutiya et al(2007) corroborates the above descriptions about the course of Japan's consortial deals in objective and quantitative terms. The article reports an analysis of the inter-university cooperative library service that has been in practice in Japan since mid-1990s by way of an ILL request message sending system called NACSIS-ILL. The study analyzes the log data recorded by the system from 1994 to 2005. Among major findings are (1) that the "Interlibrary Loan (ILL)" in the Japanese university context is very peculiar in that requests for photocopies of "foreign journal" articles are significantly predominant in 1990s; (2) that, ironically, increase of requests for "domestic journal" articles, including those in nursing science in particular, is becoming conspicuous as if to match the decrease of requests for "foreign journal" articles, most of which have become available online through site licensing under consortial arrangements that began in 2002; (3) that requests for book loan, which have only accounted for a small portion of requests, apparently increased as the union catalog database called NACSIS-CAT grew; (4) that the system is remarkably efficient with the fill rates in lending/supplying constantly high and the average turnaround time generally less than a week; (5) that while the original intention was construction of a mutually beneficiary collaborative system, there have been some libraries that mainly only request and others that mainly only supply, due partly to the existence of "subject foreign journal center" libraries which started in 1970s; and (6) that some small or middle-sized libraries noticeably began to supply in recent years. From the standpoint of this report, the finding (2) above corroborate the success of JANUL's consortial scheme from 2002 on.

The first graph on the next page depicts the increase in the 90s and the decrease after 2000 of requests for articles published in foreign journals, together with the steadily increasing requests for articles in domestic, Japanese language journals. The drop after 2000 can be easily attributed to the start of consortial, big deal licensing in national universities. The next table is to show that the journal titles whose articles were requested most often dramatically changed over those years. In the 90s, the most needed titles were foreign journals, but now they are domestic. Assuming that there is no sign for change in the direction of research and researchers' attitudes, the need for foreign journals has been generally met at least in national universities. To give further evidence for this observation, one title, Genomics, has been chosen from Elsevier's Science Direct and analyzed in terms of the kinds of requesting libraries, as show in the next graph, which shows that the number of requests from national universities decreased while those from private universities, where consortial approach has only



- **Genomics on ScienceDirect: Changes in the number of requests from different kind of universities**



The study concludes as follows: While achieving the originally aimed goals of efficiently sharing scientific information among university libraries, particularly documents collected in "foreign journal centers" and some major university libraries, university library community has experienced sea change, almost without knowing it, as a result of the advent of the age of electronic, online journals and the new era of Japanese higher education, namely incorporation of higher learning institutions and shift in research interest to socially relevant issues, like comedical practices and clinical psychology. Online journals have enabled libraries as well as publishers to maximize accessibility on campus to scientific publications, changing the concept of unit cost from that per copy to that per download, the latter of whose marginal cost could be literally minimal. Consortial deals between libraries and publishers in Japan and the rest of the world in the early 2000s have brought about an environment in which the constituency of campus has unlimited access to virtually all English scientific publications "in print," though under budget constraints. The current situation so described does not require interlibrary arrangement for access to journal article contents and it is perfectly reflected in trends observed in the statistics we have discussed in this paper. The sea change in question has not been brought to attention because the statistics provided by NACSIS and currently by NII have rather concentrated on illustrating the growth of ILL/DD in Japan in general than analyzed the details of the trends hidden behind the total number of transactions. The lacuna

resulting from the decrease in request for foreign articles have been quickly filled up almost coincidentally by the increase in request for domestic articles written in Japanese in a limited range of research fields whose value in societal commitment of universities have come to be appreciated recently on campus as well as in society at large. This change also led to the structural change of ILL, where small or middle-sized university libraries noticeably began to supply for the photocopies of articles in domestic journals mainly in the subject of nursing science. It can be said that the purpose of ILL in Japan has been shifted from the provision of articles published in foreign journals to those in domestic journals.

#### 5. Not necessarily bright future

The currently apparent success is a good thing to hear, but the future is not straightforwardly bright. National universities are told that their budgets are, and will be cut by 1% each year, and in fact the budget is diminishing. The cut attacks the infrastructure of smaller universities, because larger ones can make up for the cut by applying to and getting from various kinds of newly introduced competitive funding schemes. On the other hand, research and development money is growing in developing parts of the world, and at worst be slightly decreasing in the advanced countries, which fact rightly predicts the future increase of the results from research funding, most of which will be published in scholarly journals you will have to be licensed to read. There is no way out so far, even with the cutting edge IT, which once made journal big deals and consortial approaches economically feasible. It is obvious that we are challenged.

#### References:

S. Tutiya<sup>1</sup>, H. Takeuchi, Y. Sato and H. Itsumura, ILL/DD in Japan across the turn of the century: Basic findings about NACSIS-ILL from 1994 to 2005, *Progress in Informatics*, No. 4 (2007), pp. 29-49 .