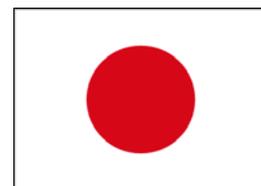


# IFLA/FAIFE World Report: Libraries and Intellectual Freedom



## Japan

18-01-1999

### 1. Statement on Intellectual Freedom, 1954

At the national convention of libraries and librarians (including the Annual General Conference of the Japan Library Association) in 1954, the Statement on Intellectual Freedom was adopted.

<b>Population:</b>	125,351,000 (1996)
<b>GNP per capita:</b>	\$ 40,940 (1996)
<b>Government / Constitution:</b>	Republic
<b>Main languages:</b>	Japanese
<b>Main religions:</b>	Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity
<b>Literacy:</b>	95% (1995)
<b>Online:</b>	21,38 % (May 2000)

Before the meeting, librarians had been discussed on "neutrality" of libraries or librarians' neutrality for two years. After the end of the World War 2, Japanese society faced different dimension in 1950's because of the Korean War. The discussion on librarians' reaction against the Anti-Subversive Activities Act at the national meeting in 1952 made more active debate on neutralism for libraries and librarians after. As the result of the dispute, the "Statement on Intellectual Freedom" was adopted in 1954.

For a long time the Statement had not been focused since then. More public libraries had been built and expanded its activities in 1960's and 1970's, and then libraries had been noticed among communities. In 1973 at Yamaguchi-ken (prefecture) public library, a librarian concealed many books because he thought those books included too much radical idea or far-left wing ideas. This issue was got nationwide news coverage. Japan Library Association executive board decided establishment of the Research Committee on Intellectual Freedom at Libraries for realising the idea and mission of librarians and libraries in 1974. This committee started to revise the "Statement on Intellectual Freedom" since then. The revised Statement was approved at the Annual General Conference of the Japan Library Association in 1979.

### 2. Statement on Intellectual Freedom, revised edition, 1979

The Statement (1954), was based mainly "neutrality" of libraries and librarians, but the revised Statement (1979) was re-organized as library is an organization to certify the people's "freedom to know" rooted in the constitutional principle, that is, people has sovereign power and hold the freedom of expression. People's "freedom to know" and "freedom of expression" by creators is the ins and outs of ideas. The Statement (1979) insists that all people has a right to know necessary information and utilize them anytime, and there is an obligation for libraries to ensure the people's right socially.

The revised Statement (1979) contains four principles;

1. The freedom of libraries to select their materials.
2. The freedom of libraries to make their materials and facilities available to the people.
3. The right of libraries to protect the privacy of their patrons.
1. The right of libraries to oppose all forms of censorship.

The Statement (1979) mentioned on libraries' goal and mission. The Research Committee on Intellectual Freedom act for expanding the idea of the Statement. Every year the Committee published several books and Newsletter a few times a year.

As for each librarian's professionalism, the "Code of Ethics for Librarians" was approved at the Annual General Conference of the Japan Library Association in 1980.

### 3. Code of Ethics for Librarians, 1980

Since the national convention in 1966, discussion meeting on the problems of librarians has been held annually. In 1970, Research Committee on the Problems of Librarians was established and studied on professionalism of librarians. At the Annual General Conference in 1980, the "Code of Ethics for Librarians" was approved.

This is the discipline of governing ourselves as librarians, intending to accomplish librarians' obligation through the

realization of the responsibilities of the library in the society. This "[Code of Ethics for Librarians](#)" is a pair of the "[Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries](#)".

There are twelve principles:

1. The foundation of a Librarian's work lies in pursuit of his/her duties in accordance with the known expectation of society in general and the needs of the users of his/her library in particular.
2. A Librarian should not discriminate between or against library users.
3. A Librarian should respect the confidentiality of each library users.
4. A Librarian should honor the Freedom of Libraries in collecting, preserving, and proffering library materials.
5. A Librarian should make it his/her professional aim to familiarize him/herself, as far as possible both in and out of his/her library, with the materials recording human knowledge and experiences.
6. A Librarian should apply him/herself to necessary professional training, both as an individual and as a member of a professional group.
7. A Librarian should actively participate in the formulation of policy in the operation and service program of his/her library.
8. A Librarian should cooperate with other librarians in efforts to develop group professional competencies.
9. Librarians should make efforts to secure labor conditions that are appropriate for the development and pursuit of professional library services.
10. Librarians should make it their aim to develop and maintain understanding and cooperation among libraries of all kinds.
11. Librarians should make due efforts, in association with others, to stimulate the development of the cultural environment in society and the community which they serve, by cooperating with local residents and with members of appropriate groups and organizations.
12. Librarians should make every effort to contribute to the development of the whole culture relating to publications and publishing that is responsive to the needs and viewpoints of the public.

Both Research Committee on Intellectual Freedom of Libraries and Research Committee on the Problems of Librarians have been tried to realize and expand the mission and idea of the "Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries"(1979) and the "Code of Ethics for Librarian". But more libraries have been established and more activities, more problems have occurred especially in 1980's and 1990's.

#### **4. Problems at libraries**

There are more problems have been discussed in 1980's and 1990's related to library activities. As follows, some typical examples, which have occurred in the national debate.

- *Restriction against the freedom to collect materials*

In 1981, at several Aichi-ken (prefecture) public high schools, headmasters of the schools did not approve the lists of ordering library materials. Because they thought those books were about 'war', 'resistance', 'freedom', or 'self-reliance for girls', and some books written by Prof. Inage who was the author against 'censorship' textbooks by the Ministry of Education on trial those days. Headmasters insisted on educational consideration, and this case indicated the difficulties at school libraries.

- *Requirement to abandon library materials or restriction to use*

Most cases are about the books, which present discriminated expression and ideas. Discrimination against 'Buraku'-segregated people, Atomic-bomb-suffers, minorities (Blacks, Ainu (native minorities in Japan), Zai'nichi (Nisei or Sansei of Korean-Japanese and Chinese-Japanese)), the people who engage in certain occupations, handicapped people, and so on.

In 1975, Nagoya-city public library was demanded by a group of handicapped people for removing a translated book titled "Le Avventure di Pinocchio". Because discriminated expression against handicapped people was included. The library firstly agreed to remove, but three years after, the book was returned to the open stack. Librarians had been discussed for three years with those handicapped people and library users, and made the decision. They realized what they need to do is diminishing the discrimination against handicapped, not abandoning books. They set up three rules then. Talk among all library staffs and

librarians. Talk with the people directly who criticized and thought they are discriminated. Talk with community people. Librarians in Japan honoured and follow their rules.

In 1984, Hiroshima-ken (prefecture) public library removed and abandoned 35 books secretly because a librarian decided those books include discriminated expression.

In 1988, an American newspaper reporter attacked the translated versions of "the Little Black Sambo" with not-original pictures, and then a group of Japanese criticized against Japanese libraries and publishers with African-American supporters. Publishers decided not to print all versions of the picture book anymore. Various versions of the book were withdrawn at some public libraries. Furthermore, Nagano City Education Board sent letters to all kindergartens in the city to ask parents for burning the book at homes if they have.

In 1995, at Tokushima-ken, Nakagawa-cho (town) public library was asked to abandon a history book of the local area. The book mentioned about the ancestors of a present resident. The ancestors were regarded as 'Buraku'-segregated class people in that book. This was the first case on trial for asking to judge legally. Same case was happened in 1988, a person was mistaken as a criminal, and reported by newspapers. The person asked the Newspaper Company to abandon the day issue of the newspaper, and the Newspaper Company asked libraries to do so.

At the same year, in 1995, at Shizuoka-city public library, a book titled "Thai Baishun Dokuhon"(it means, "How to buy prostitutes in Thai") was criticized by a group of citizen. Librarians and the people talked over the book and decided not to remove from the stack. The citizen group decided to act against the idea itself and not to be against the library activity.

- *Critical action against programs and exhibition*

In 1981, a photo exhibition on Atomic Power Plants at Kochi-city public library was criticized at the city assembly meeting because some policy makers thought the idea of the exhibition was full of excessively one-sided idea. Same case happened at Tokyo Meguro-ku (ward) public library in 1982.

- *Violation privacy*

In 1986, at Kagamihara-city a girl was kidnapped. She was released, but she remembered the criminal had a book with a library spine label. So police checked all public libraries in that area, and required to show users' borrowed records.

In 1995, at Tokyo a religious cult group AUM attacked in the subway and many people were killed and injured. Later police arrested some. For getting evidences at the trial case, police came to the National Diet Library and took over using-library records of 530,000 users.

In 1997, at Kobe-city a weird case was happened. An 11 years-old boy was killed. A 14 years-old boy was arrested as a suspect. Because of the law to protect minors' privacy, the boy's information was covered. But news media was heated to report about this case and the suspect himself. One of photo magazines got his picture and published. It was breaking the law, so most of bookstores stopped to sell. Libraries, on the contrary, got the issue and annoyed whether protect the suspect's privacy or respond users' requirement to know. Some libraries concealed only the picture, or some just refused for users to see the issue of the magazine. Further, other journals secretly got and printed most part of the prosecutor's report. The Ministry of Justice criticized the publishers. Now the case causes the discussion on minors' legal protective age.

- *Censorship*

In 1990's many books are attacked because of violence and sex. All prefectures settle the local act to restrict printed matters, Manga (comics), CD-ROMs, computer games, and so on for "protecting" minors. The local authorities don't ask public libraries directly to remove certain books yet, but legally already they have a power to censor library materials.

In 1994, several suicide teenagers were found to have same book titled "Kanzen Jisatu Manual" (it means, "Complete Suicide Manual"). In Tottori-ken (prefecture), the book was attacked and asked to stop selling, withdrawing from libraries' stacks. In 1997, in Okayama-ken (prefecture) the local authority listed the book among harmful books and videos. No librarians were among the decisive committee members who selected the list. Several other local authorities settle same kind of secret committee to decide which books, videos, or CD-ROMs are harmful materials. Fukuoka-ken (prefecture) decided to include Internet information among them. Once a book is listed by the committee as harmful material, the person who sell, show, or use the book for minors is charged and fined by the local law.

- *Self-restriction by librarians*

In 1987 Toyama-ken (prefecture) public library decided for users not to use a museum exhibition catalogue.

The catalogue included several montage works with pictures of Showa emperor, and the ultra right-wing group annoyed the museum and attacked the governor of Toyama-ken. After a few years conceal, the library decided the catalogue to be used as demand. Then a far-right wing person came and broke the catalogue. The case was on trial. The point was the argument whether the emperor is an ordinary person with privacy or not. The criminal was defeated at the case. After ending of the case, the catalogue as evidence returned to the library. But the library refused to receive the catalogue. So users put the case on trial for their right to know. In 1998, the last case was ended. The users' right to know was admitted and the library was defeated. This case would be one of notorious librarians' self-restriction.

## **5. Future discussing points**

Economic crisis in Asia connects to financial depression in Japan, too. Japanese government cut grant-in-aid for building new public libraries. As the result of that, the local government authorities can hire non-professional head-librarians. Because local authorities had to hire an experienced professional librarian as the head of a new library for getting grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Education. More malaise of self-restriction by 'librarians' on Intellectual Freedom at libraries increases day by day. Furthermore, the public library law has been regarded to change from free-charge to library-decisive-charge. More electronic library network expanded, and the government offices tend to provide their information only through on-line. Public libraries without grant-in-aid struggle to survive and provide information to the people.

Schools start to connect Internet, but filtering soft is recommended. School libraries face trouble that would charges its activities.

Children and young adults in Japan try to survive in very 'peaceful' society, but with full of violence and pornography. Teenagers kill or attack other children, teachers at school, their own parents, or homeless people. Media like TV or newspapers, magazines dig up those suspect teenagers privacy. Libraries and librarians annoy among the media's excessive heated reaction, the minors' privacy, and people's right to know.