The Medical Library and Media Center of Keio University in Tokyo: report on a visit

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The Medical Library and Media Center at Keio University in Tokyo offers many facilities to its users: access to medical information within a large catalog of monographs and journals, online searching and CD-ROM databases, and a dynamic interlibrary loan service. This article is a report of a professional visit to the library on September 30, 1993.

INTRODUCTION

The Medical Library and Media Center (MLMC), located in a large hospital in Tokyo and supported by Keio University, is one of the most important health sciences libraries in Japan. Because there is relatively little information in North American literature about Japanese medical libraries, librarians may be interested in an accurate and up-to-date overview. This article is based on a professional visit in September 1993 with the director of the MLMC, Mr. Yoshio Amano, and the library staff. Sources and statistics (most of them for 1992) are official.

JAPANESE HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARIES

There are approximately 100 health sciences libraries in Japan. The budget of each library depends on its size, but, usually, each can purchase 400 to 3,000 periodicals and 1,000 to 3,000 books a year. They generally offer online access and CD-ROM databases (mainly MEDLINE). Interlibrary loan service is dynamic, even if there is no National Library of Medicine. Keio University's International Medical Information Center (IMIC) is the national center, established in association with the universities of Osaka, Tohoku, and Kyushu.

KEIO UNIVERSITY

There are three major universities in Japan: Osaka, Kyushu, and Keio. Keio University is the most well known, both in Japan and abroad. Keio has several departments and, in 1969, started the IMIC project to improve the four existing university libraries. The objectives of this project were to increase the number of books and journals for research and education, to perfect cataloging systems and standardize information service facilities in the university as a whole, and to increase efficiency and policy making for literature services and other information activities.

To accomplish these objectives, four centers were established between 1970 and 1972, all at Keio University: the Mita Library and Information Center (formerly the Main Library), the Hiyoshi Library and Information Center (formerly the Undergraduate Library), the Science and Technology Library and Information Center (formerly the Faculty of Engineering Library), and the Medical Library and Information Center (formerly Kitasato Memorial Medical Library, and now the MLMC). Each library has a director, and the Libraries Committee of the university is made up of the four directors.

HISTORY OF THE MLMC

The MLMC was established as the Kitasato Memorial Medical Library in 1937, in memory of Dr. Shibasaburo Kitasato, the first dean of the School of Medicine at Keio University. The creation of the library was made possible by donations from students and friends who had respected and loved Dr. Kitasato in recognition of the important role played by libraries in medical research. The library provided services, not only to Keio University staff and students, but also to outside clients.

In 1962 and 1965, through the generous financial assistance of the China Medical Board of New York, the interior of the building was remodeled completely to improve services and meet the needs of a modern health sciences library.

Since the early 1960s, the library has provided a literature search service. Various information services
have been added over the years, such as MEDLARS and Air Pollution Technical Information Center (APTIC) indexes and abstracts.

In 1971, the name of the library was changed as a result of reform of the entire university library system. At that time, the library was too large for the university to manage. So the university created a new organization, the IMIC, which is responsible for providing information services mainly to customers outside the university. A part of the IMIC Operation Division now is located in the library. Since the establishment of IMIC, the library has been providing services to all Japan Medical Library Association (JMLA) member libraries.

In 1992, the library became the “MLMC,” offering modern multimedia services such as online searching, e-mail, and CD-ROM databases. The MLMC is located in buildings dating from the 1930s that have been renovated.

THE MLMC COLLECTIONS

As of 1992, the MLMC had 71,316 monographs (34,191 domestic and 37,125 foreign) and 3,111 journals (1,382 domestic and 1,729 foreign). The library also provides other materials, including cassettes (1,305), films (106), slides (265), records (98), and film reels (128).

The library holdings are listed in the Union List Catalog in Japanese Medical Libraries, which is published once a year and compiled every five years. The JMLA is in charge of the catalog, which has been published since 1931.

One of the most famous Japanese medical publications, Igaku Chuo Zasshi (Japanese Medical Abstracting Journal), also supported by the JMLA, abstracts articles from 1,600 Japanese medical periodicals. JMEDICINE and JMEDICINEK are the two main medical databases and include parts of the Igaku Chuo Zasshi, especially the clinical medicine and nursing sections.

For online searching, the library has its own MEDLINE system and three CD-ROM sets of MEDLINE and Excerpta Medica; one computer is set up for Current Contents searching.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MLMC

The library has a staff of twenty-six and is organized into three sections. The General Affairs Section handles accounting and other general affairs. The Technical Service Section, with a staff of three, handles selections, acquisitions, and cataloging (Figure 1). Cataloging chores are shared among universities through the MEDIANET network (the host computer is located on the Fujisawa campus). This system, called KOSMOS, has bilingual software (in Japanese and English), and the Medical Subject Headings are used for indexing. KOSMOS has been used since 1979; prior to that, the data were kept in a card index.

The Public Service Section handles circulation (20,000 monographs and 26,528 bound journals in 1992); interlibrary loan (13,765 loans); photocopying (313,000 pages for Keio University users, 900,000 pages for outside users); and reference (questions of location, 2,609; fact finding, 284; instruction, 1,600; online searches, 393). The slide-processing department made 5,522 slides in 1992.

CONCLUSION

The Medical Library and Media Center in Tokyo offers numerous facilities and services, including access to medical information through a large collection of monographs and journals, online searching and CD-ROMs, and a dynamic interlibrary loan service supported by Keio University.

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