

Dear whom it may concern,

How have you been? お元気ですか？

I am contacting you regarding the proposed changes found in announcements including Collection Strategy for 2020 to 2024 of the National Library of Australia, which is announcing the suspension of the Japanese Collection and its services along with Korea and Mainland Southeast Asia (Thai & Burma), and scaling down Chinese and Indonesian Collections.

The Asian Collections started in 1950's and the current Asian Collecting in the National Library of Australia consists of China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Mainland Southeast Asia (mainly Burma and Thai).

The major points proposed there are;

- No more new acquisition for Japanese, Mainland Southeast Asia (Thai and Burma) collection. It means those collections will be stale.
- Chinese, Indonesian and the Pacific collections' new acquisition will continue mainly because *'it reflects Australia's strategic interests and our geographical position within this region'*.
- Asian Collections' Reading Room & access to the stack will be closed, and requested materials will be delivered to the combined Special Reading Room, instead. The area studies librarian positions will be abolished and the existing staff are required to apply for new positions in the libraries.

I attach the National Library's new *'Collection Strategy Policy'* at the end of this document for your information.

What frustrates me most is the undemocratic method taken by the Library during the decision process of the policy. There was no public consultation or consultations to major stake holders, such as the Asian Studies Association, and Japanese Studies Association and research communities, Japanese Embassy, Japanese cultural institutions, and Japanese communities in Australia. The current staff are instructed not to talk to outside about this matter. That explains the silence from the staff who knows most of how important the collections are.

Nowadays, Japan is identified as one of the most trusted and important countries to Australia and many everyday Australian people.

On education, Japanese language is most taught language as second language in Australian schools. Among many students who learn Japanese, the cultural interest is often a major factor they pick Japanese. Australia's Japanese Studies research community is one of the biggest and most active in the world, while resources on Japan in Australian university libraries is very poor compared to other counterpart countries. As a result, researcher's dependency on the National Library as the place for research materials is so crucial.

On cultural aspect, the depth of the diplomatic and cultural ties among Australia and Japan exceeds the ones with any other countries.

Japan is also the most researched country as a tourist destination for everyday Australians, in a 2018 survey.

On economic level, Japan is the second largest trade partner to Australia, after China. In second World War, Australia and Japan fought and the reconciliation after the war led the ties of the countries stronger.

It is also the same, on the National Library (NLA) 's relationship with the National Diet Library (NDL), its Japanese counterpart, itself. It would be (one of) the most committed relationship of the Library with another national library.

From 1970's, the pick of reference librarians of the NDL were deployed to the Library, one at a time for over 20 years until 1998 and they worked as the senior librarian in Japanese Unit and built the core of the current Japanese collection.

The Gift and Exchange Program with NDL also made numerous significant Japanese grey literature available at the NLA and this scheme lasted even longer than the staff deployment program above, and it added the depth to the Japanese Collection.

The Japanese collection at the Library is carefully curated to cover the numerous factors to cater for people with different interests on Japan itself and the relationship between Australia and Japan.

Important facts to quote about the Library's Japanese Collection are listed below, for who would like to know more about the collection. If not, you are most welcome to skip this part.

- In Australia, the university libraries' Japan related collections' budgets have been drastically cut in recent years, using the NLA's 'national' Japanese collection as the alternative to go to. The role of the NLA has been crucial to the scholars.
- In 2008, Japan Study Grant was established to invite researchers from remote areas of Australia. It is funded by a trust fund which was established by the donor of a Japan related collection himself. Before I retired in 2018, , there were nearly 70 researchers took up the grant. The Library is still offering this grant's multiple positions annually when the criteria meets.
- The Japan Fellowship, established in 2006, aimed for established researchers had been offered to oversee researchers, too. Later it became part of National Library Fellowship and is still offered.
- Readers could browse the collection on the stacks through the Asian Collections Reading Room. The Japanese area specialists librarian had been present to assist researchers and general readers onsite and offsite.
- The size of the Japanese Collection : more than 130,000 titles in various formats (books, journals, and others)
- The focus of the Japanese collection: modern history, culture, current affairs, social science, visual art, and Australia and Australians' relationship with Japan
- The size of the new acquisitions : about 1,000 titles per year.
- The staff : 3 fulltime staff with a part time staff on project basis
- The Japanese collection includes some visual collections such as 'Woodblock print collection', ' E-sugoroku (Japanese cardboard game sheets) collection', ' Kuchie (Frontispiece / woodblock coloured book illustrations) collection' In the past, those ephemera were not identified as 'library things'. The importance of

having those pictorial collection in a library is by preparing enriched analytical description, those titles would be the primary source for researchers. NLA's those collections are the first and leading collection of this kind worldwide.

The Kuchie collection was featured in the Library's major exhibition titled, 'Melodrama in Meiji, Japan', curated by Dr Gary Hickey, a renowned curator, specialized in Japanese woodblock prints.

<https://www.nla.gov.au/meiji>

- The Japanese collection also include some Web-Archive collection. The societal changes caused by specific events or accidents in contemporary world is not recorded in print but much more reflected in online sphere. But online contents are often liquid. One day available but next day, it might have changed, or erased. One most significant example of the NLA's Japanese web-archive collections is about the social movements, triggered by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plants crisis in 2013. The project took us more than a year to capture the websites and manage it. It holds 478 sites of social movements, which are now harder to trace back otherwise. It is a precious primary source for contemporary research on that area.
<https://www.nla.gov.au/japanese/japan-social-movements-after-march-11-2011>
- Nearly 300 historical Japanese maps were also acquired as they were selected by the Japanese studies librarian. They are available at Map Collection.

I retired from the senior librarian's position in Japanese Unit, Asian Collections in 2018. So I have time, freedom and responsibility to do this, on behalf of others who can't.

I hope you can sign the online petition and share the petition, too.

If you already have done it, I would like to thank you and sorry for sending this to you.

Please contact me at any time if you have any questions.

Mayumi Shinozaki

篠崎まゆみ

mshinoza@gmail.com

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Image below left is the main stack of the Asian Collections.

Below right is one of the Kuchie woodblock print, originally published as part of a publication, from the Japanese Collection's 'kuchie (frontispiece) collection'. The bottom image is the screen shot of the front page of Web Archive Collection on social movements in 2011 Japan, following the Fukushima Nuclear Plants crisis.



Japan, Social movements after the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plants crisis, March 11, 2011

Collected by: [National Library of Australia](#)

Archived since: Dec, 2011

Description: Websites, blogs and images of social movements following the crisis of Fukushima Nuclear Power Plants in northern Japan on March 11, 2011.

COLLECTING STRATEGY 2020-21 – 2023-24 (of the National Library of Australia)
(This draft was Published in late May 2020)

PURPOSE:

In accordance with the *National Library Act 1960*, the Library collects documentary resources relating to Australia and the Australian people so that the Australian community – now and in the future – can discover, learn and create new knowledge.

MISSION:

We collect today what will be important tomorrow.

PRINCIPLES:

The National Library of Australia is the principal custodian of Australia's documentary resources – physical and digital – ensuring Australian heritage, culture and knowledge is sustained for all Australian people, both now and in the future.

The Library enables the creation of knowledge. It develops, curates and preserves an astounding and diverse collection that inspires, delights and educates Australians.

This strategy outlines the Library's priorities for collecting, operating in conjunction with the *Collection Development Policy*, and identifying the areas for sustained focus over the next four years.

1. As the National Library of Australia, we will sharpen our focus on collecting Australian material and material with Australian content, and look to strengthen collecting in identified priority areas.
2. Our collecting will also reflect our place in the world, regionally and strategically, with a curatorial focus on Indonesia, China and the Pacific. We will significantly reduce overseas collecting that does not have Australian content.
3. Collecting will be increasingly digital, where possible, to enable effective, efficient and sustainable collection building, storage and accessibility.
4. Collecting will be collaborative, recognising the strengths and interests of other national and state cultural institutions, while capitalising on current arrangements and exploring new opportunities for a shared national collection.
5. The Library will be responsive to meeting the challenge of collecting new and emerging formats quickly, and provide associated tools and technology to leverage this capability as part of the national digital cultural network.

PRIORITIES:

NATIONAL COLLECTING

1. Legal Deposit

This is a mandated function under the *Copyright Act 1968*.

The Library aims to comprehensively collect Australian publications in order to reflect the full diversity and range of Australian life depicted in the published record. When it is not possible or practical to comprehensively collect every Australian publication - for example ephemera, posters, websites - the Library collects a representation of the breadth and diversity of materials.

2. Australiana – material by Australians and about Australia

The Library will continue to collect primary material that is of national significance, selectively acquiring a wide range of unique materials documenting the lives and activities of Australian people, places and events that have shaped society.

To improve the range and representation of the Library's collection, the Library also intends to strengthen its thematic collecting focus. Identified priorities include:

- Increasing and improving representation of **Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities**. As opportunity allows, the Library will actively engage with these communities, noting the development of a representative and deep collection will evolve over successive plans.
- Ensuring the perspectives and stories of **rural and regional communities** are included in the collection.
- Increasing awareness of **active citizenship and representative democracy** by documenting **individuals and communities who have sought to bring about social and political change**. This will reflect a range of ages and voices, including for example movements for equality and broader political reform.
- Collecting that documents the **relationship Australians have with the environment**, for example responses to natural disasters, climate change etc.
- Collecting that documents **Australia's involvement in and contribution to science and technology over time**. This could range from world-leading technological innovations and contribution to scientific endeavour, involvement in space programs and the way that technological change has impacted on the everyday lives of Australians over time.
- Across all these collecting areas the Library endeavours to seek materials that ensure **gender parity**.

INTERNATIONAL COLLECTING

Overseas resources are selectively collected to inform and enhance Australians' understanding of their region and their place in the world.

3. Asia-Pacific region – Indonesia, China and the Pacific

Collecting material from and about Indonesia, China, and the Pacific (including Timor-Leste) is the Library's next highest priority after its Australian collecting. This reflects Australia's strategic interests and our geographical position within this region. This is subject to change according to social or political factors and the Library's priorities and resources. The focus is predominantly related to social sciences, history and politics, culture and society.

- **Indonesia** – the Library's Indonesian collecting program (predominantly in Indonesian languages), recognises the country's regional significance, and a strong collecting program facilitated by the Library's regional office in Jakarta since the 1970s.

- **China** – Reflecting the strong Australia-China bilateral relationship that is based not only economics and trade, but also community and cultural links, the Library collects material from and about China.
- **The Pacific** – The Library prioritises countries in Melanesia, focusing on Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and New Caledonia as well as East Timor. The Library does not aim to duplicate the well-established collecting programs of the National Library of New Zealand and libraries in Hawaii which have strengths in Polynesia and Micronesia.

4. The wider world

The Library selectively acquires or provides access to publications that offer an understanding of global issues, current events and topics affecting Australia, and geographical regions where Australia’s national, economic and strategic interests are clearly articulated, including material that documents the history of Australia’s First Nations, and European colonisation to the present day. The aim is to develop the strongest possible collection for the broadest cross-section of Australian society. In the current resource environment this necessitates a reduction in the collecting of overseas materials outside the identified priorities and countries.

