

# Impact of the Nunokawa Collection on Japanese Publishing Research

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## Background

This paper is an overview of an ongoing study on the Nunokawa Collection housed at the National Diet Library of Japan.(1) The main aim of the study is to use the Nunokawa Collection as an example to demonstrate the history, scope and depth of research on publishing culture taking place in Japan. Since the number of non-Western researchers examining various aspects of publishing culture is relatively small in comparison to Western researchers and most of their results are published in languages other than English, French, German or Spanish, such researchers and their results are generally overlooked or even ignored. Questioning this practice in an article in 2001, I wrote "European and American researchers, scholars, and publishers commonly demonstrate the 'Gutenberg Syndrome' in which the history of the book, the world of publishing, and scholarship in general are viewed in terms of Western principles and practices." (Arboleda 1986) This is now increasingly recognized as a major problem in establishing a balanced worldview of how print publishing emerged and developed in different parts of the world. The dearth of non-Western views is especially pertinent because it is widely accepted that the invention of printing played a pivotal role in allowing certain civilizations to advance faster than others. The most pronounced dichotomy can be found between predominantly Western scholars who contend that printed book culture began with the invention of the printing press in Germany around 1439 and scholars in East Asia who counter that it actually started with the invention of the block printing process in China around 708.(Temple 1986) Dipesh Chakrabarty observed that "'Europe'... continues to dominate the discourse of history. Third-world historians feel the need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. ... [Europeans] ...produce their work in relative ignorance of non-Western histories, and this does not seem to affect the quality of their work." (Chakrabarty 2000) He added that the "...problem of asymmetric ignorance is not simply a matter of ... cultural arrogance... ."

I agree with Chakrabarty's second point because the overwhelming majority of Japanese research results in publishing studies is inaccessible to foreign scholars who cannot read Japanese. I think it can be assumed that this situation is also true for publishing studies in Chinese and

Korean, the languages of two other countries that have extensive research activities in the field. If more results would be produced in Western languages it might contribute to a more even worldview of print publishing development. This is linked to the secondary aim of this paper which is to make known in English the importance of the Nunokawa Collection for researchers of Japanese print publishing history in an effort to encourage more Japanese researchers to produce some of their results in English.

The Nunokawa Collection is formally titled "Nihon Shuppan Kankei Shomoku", which can be roughly translated as "Catalogue of Books Related to Japanese Publishing", but is generally rendered as the "Nunokawa Collection on the History of Modern Japanese Publishing". Informally, the Collection is called "Nunokawa Bunko" or the Nunokawa Collection by researchers, scholars, and librarians who are involved with it. (Asaoka 2003)

The collection, which contains 25, 000 items of mainly books and journals related to publishing and books, is made up primarily of the personal library of Kakuzaemon Nunokawa who had a long and distinguished career as a publisher, editor, teacher, researcher, and writer. The earliest published books in the collection date back to 1868 and the most recent to 1996.

Kakuzaemon Nunokawa was born in 1901 and died in 1996 at the age of 95. He worked at Iwanami Shoten (Iwanami Publishing Co.), one of Japan's oldest and most prestigious publishing companies, from 1928 to 1956, rising to the position of Director of the Editorial Department. After retiring from Iwanami, at age 55, he taught the theory of editing and other publishing related topics as an adjunct professor at various universities in Tokyo. In 1961, he accepted an offer to become the President of Kurita Publishing Company that was suffering from declining sales. He turned the company's fortunes around and later became Chairman of the Board. He stayed at Kurita until 1978.

Nunokawa had already started doing research on how modern Japanese publishing culture emerged and developed from the time he began to work as an editor at Iwanami in 1928 and continued his research after his retirement. During this time he began collecting books and journals on various aspects of publishing and its history in Japan, from editing and printing to marketing and bookselling. Nunokawa believed that it was important for Japanese publishers and experts to have a thorough awareness of aspects of Japanese development. Although the primary focus of his research was Japanese publishing he was also interested in publishing culture in other parts of the world, particularly Europe and China. In 1958, two years after his retirement,

he translated and published Sir Stanley Unwin's "The Truth About Publishing." (Nihon 1998)

During this time he began to expand his burgeoning collection in earnest. In 1968, based on the background material he had accumulated up to then, he compiled and published a volume titled "Nihon Shuppan Hyakunen-shi Nenpyou" (A Chronological History of One-Hundred Years of Modern Japanese Publishing). This was a seminal work in the study of Japanese publishing culture and history. His strong interest in publishing research and the increasing influence he had on younger researchers and experts prompted him to take the initiative in establishing the Nihon Shuppan Gakkai (Japan Society for Publishing Studies) in 1969. He was also very active in creating publishing support and training programs for publishers and specialists of publishing culture from developing countries. Together with Shoichi Noma, the late CEO of Kodansha Publishing Company, he helped to create in 1966 the Tokyo Book Development Center (TBDC), which emerged in 1971 as the Asian Cultural Center for Unesco (ACCU).

By the 1980s Nunokawa's collection had long outgrown the space in his home and his office. He was also advancing in age and wondered how he could preserve the vast collection he had amassed. In consultation with influential figures in publishing, sympathetic Diet members, and supportive staff at the Ministry of Education which oversees the Diet Library, it was decided that the vast collection of 25,000 volumes was of great cultural importance and merited being housed in the National Diet Library alongside other important collections.

The books were formally donated to the Diet Library in 1987, nine years before his death. However, it was not until 2004, 17 years later, that the collection could be made widely available to the public. Nevertheless, even though all the individual items had not been made available, many researchers already knew of much of the contents and had already started producing works about the collection itself. Among these were:

- (1) "Nunokawa Bunko no Koto", Nihon Kosho Tuushin, Vol. 50, No. 5, 1985;
- (2) "Tokubetsu Korekushon 'Nunokawa Bunko' ni Tsuite", Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan Geppou, 1988;
- (3) Nunokawa Kakuzaemon Jiten, Nihon Editazuru, 1998

Inspired by Nunokawa, other researchers have followed in the footsteps he created to look at specific aspects of Japanese book culture. The Japan Society for Publishing Studies he helped to initiate and headed for a number of years is a vibrant, productive group that helps to further

define what is Japanese publishing culture. It is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2009 and is one of the oldest societies of publishing studies in the world.

## The Collection

The entire Nunokawa collection is housed at the National Diet Library in Tokyo. The National Diet Library, or the Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan in Japanese, is intended as the library of the National Diet, much like the Library of Congress in the United States. It holds about 19 million items in total, 400,000 of which are children's books, many from other countries. With a total of 25,000 items, the Nunokawa Collection is one of the largest collections in the Diet Library holdings. When I first visited the "Features and Collections" Section of the Humanities Room on the second floor of the Main Library building in Nagatacho Tokyo I did not expect that it would be possible to actually see any part of the huge collection. However, I explained that since I intended to disseminate information about the collection in English to an international audience it would be helpful to be able say that I had seen the collection and could describe its physical dimensions. The staff of the Features and Collections Section agreed with me and secured permission for me to visit the stacks where the collection is housed. I was taken to the eighth floor of the stacks tower where the Nunokawa Collection is located next to the better known Ashihara Collection on Performing Arts. The staff accompanying me said that since the Library had copies of many of the books and periodicals in the Collection these could be available to borrowers. Some items from the Collection for which there were no copies could also be made available upon request. Since many items in the Collection were periodicals or documents the Library was undertaking steps to protect them from excessive contact caused by handling. This meant they had to have special folders made. As the Library had limited annual budget for this and there were many projects competing for similar protective folders the progress was slow, particularly for such a large collection.

The 25,000 items in the Nunokawa Collection cover a period of 128 years, from 1868, the year the Meiji Period was established, to 1996, the year Nunokawa died, and includes 12,000 volumes of books in Japanese, 600 books in western languages, 1,700 periodicals, as well as 10,700 papers, pamphlets, diaries, notes, and documents on a wide range of topics related to publishing. The collection is particularly unusual because it gives researchers of modern Japanese print publishing access to a large body of work on publishing, accumulated in one place, going back as far as 1868. Another strength is its very wide range of publishing-related topics and the broad scope of materials.

The Collection as classified by the National Diet Library is grouped roughly under the following nine general categories:

- (1) Publishing History
- (2) Publishers History
- (3) Biography of Publishing Personalities
- (4) Publishing Affairs and Theory
- (5) Legal Aspects of Publishing
- (6) Editing, Printing, Binding
- (7) Publishing and Journalism
- (8) Books and Bibliography
- (9) Publishing and Libraries.

Publishing experts use Nunokawa's own more specific classification for subdividing the Collection into the following five major categories:

- (1) Books and Periodicals
- (2) Written Accounts
- (3) Indexes
- (4) Main Publishing References, and
- (5) Miscellaneous.

"(1) Books and Periodicals" is further divided into 25 categories that are readily understandable to print publishing scholars and experts. There are 5,165 items in this category comprising the most important material in the collection. These are shown briefly here according to category and number of items.

#### Books and Periodicals

- A-A publisher's catalogues, 95 items
- A-B bibliographies, encyclopedia, individual publisher items, 100 items
- B publisher's general references, 606 items
- C freedom of press, publishing references, 349 items  
(related) publishing regulations; publishing statutes, 37 items
- D copyright, 265 items
- E Japanese book history, publishing history (early modern), 281 items

F	Japanese book history, publishing history (modern), 165 items
G	foreign book history, publishing history, 198 items
H	authorship, author, 100 items
I	publishing industry, publishing company and entity history, 385 items
J	publishing personalities, 352 items
K	publishing-related businesses, 129 items
L	editing technologies, 159 items
M	writing, 76 items
N	proofreading, 55 items
O	bookmaking, 219 items
P	printing, 411 items
Q	bookbinding, 43 items
R	paper, 159 items
S	publishing distribution, 134 items
T	bookstores, 186 items
U	used bookstores, 121 items
V	book reading, book readers, 121 items
W	periodicals, 380 items
X	miscellaneous, 33 items

The remaining four categories contain about 20,000 items of the bulk of the collection, including a large proportion of the 12,000 or so books mentioned earlier. Most of this still has to be properly classified. The most important significance of this classified portion of the collection is it brings together in one place, based on one person's concept, observations, records, accounts, and directions for various facets of the print publishing undertaking in Japan. As such, it comprises a valuable source of information for Japanese and foreign researchers of Japanese print culture. The other sections of the collection should be classified as soon as possible, particularly that on (4) Main Publishing References. This would provide researchers with a wealth of information on many of the actual undertakings in individual publishing companies and related businesses.

## Conclusion

The concept of the collection as a whole, more than its individual components, has had the most impressive impact on how many researchers in Japan perceived the country's history of modern publishing and publishing culture. Up until this time, many Japanese researchers had assumed

that concepts of modern publishing culture in Japan had been to a large extent adapted from Western practices with little or no links to Japan's past experience with early Chinese-style publishing and later Edo-style publishing developed over a period of more than 300 years. The collection and Nunokawa's thinking helped to reveal the richness, diversity, and depth of the Japanese experience and how this had been recorded. Without the monolith of the collection the totality of Japan's efforts could not be clearly seen. The Collection contributes to changing this. One of the first tributes to this influence was the volume titled "Nunokawa Kakuzaemon Jiten" published in 1998. Another volume was "Nihon Shuppan Kankei Shomoku" published in 2003. These and other efforts are changing the way Japanese researchers and publishers look at the country's experience.

I was told by one of the librarians at the Library that although the Collection was turned over to the Diet Library in 1987 very few researchers outside Nunokawa's intimate circles knew about it or its contents. After the Diet Library began to disseminate information about it on the Internet a few years ago inquiries about it increased at a rapid pace. At the same time, other groups began to produce material related to the collection that was also accessible through the Internet. The most notable among these is the Dijitaru-ban ShuppanNenpyou. This is an Internet version of Nunokawa's "A Chronological History of One-Hundred Years of Modern Japanese Publishing". The Diet Library is now developing plans to improve the way in which information about the Collection and its contents can be accessed and used on the web. My own research will look into some specific books and periodicals in the Collection to see if it helps to show Japanese print publishing research emerged and developed. I hope that by publishing the results in English I can contribute more to opening Japanese print culture research and history to a wider international audience.

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# Impact of the Nunokawa Collection on Japanese Publishing Research

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## Abstract

This paper examines the importance to print publishing culture researchers of the "Nunokawa Collection on the History of Japanese Publishing" at the National Diet Library of Japan. The collection is made up mainly of the personal library of Kakuzaemon Nunokawa who was a publisher, editor, teacher, and writer. Born in 1901, Nunokawa worked most of his life as an editor for Iwanami Shoten, one of Japan's oldest and most prestigious publishing companies. He donated his books to the Diet Library in 1987, nine years before his death. The collection was made available to the public in 2004. Given the size of the collection with 25,000 items examination of it and its implications has barely started.

The paper will try to demonstrate the enormous importance of the collection for research on the emergence and endurance of a dynamic print publishing culture in Japan. Covering a period of 128 years from 1868 to 1996, it includes 12,000 volumes of books in Japanese, 600 books in western languages, 1,700 periodicals, as well papers, pamphlets, diaries, notes, and documents on a wide range of topics related to publishing. The collection is particularly unusual because it gives researchers access to a large body of work going back as far as 1896. Another strength is its very wide range of topics and the broad scope of materials. The presentation will also cite some of the ongoing research about the collection and research based on it, as well as plans to make it more accessible through the Internet.

Finally, the paper gives some details about Kakuzaemon Nunokawa's roles as a publishing culture specialist and one of the founding members of the Japan Society for Publishing Studies. Using the part of the collection he had amassed by the 1960s he wrote and published "A Chronology of 100 Years of Publishing in Japan".