BOOKMARKS BENCHMARK A CHANGE IN THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE AFFAIRS

Recently, newly available websites in Japan have benchmarked a significant change in attitudes about information. Only a couple of years ago, no one could expect easy access on the Internet to government Shingikai reports or the minutes of current Diet sessions. Today, these are available electronically.

The bottleneck was never technical, but stemmed from the absence of a sense of urgency. However, the sense of urgency has now arrived, as evidenced by rule changes and the appearance of new channels of critical information. The very existence of the Shingikai system was threatened by the prime minister (Nikkei shimbun, 23 July 1997). The Big Bang is coming to the financial system in 2001 whether it is ready or not. Prosecutors are going after business, bureaucratic and political practices that have been business as usual for decades. And citizens are demanding (and even getting) access to information that belongs to them—their medical records, school evaluations and records of local government expenditures.

A number of new web-based resources of potential interest to Japan specialists are reviewed below. The obvious conventional channels, like the websites of newspapers, broadcasters and the ministries, are not mentioned in favor of some less well-known URLs. All sites are primarily in Japanese unless otherwise indicated. Feedback and input to the DCJ are most welcome.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICS

Network Democracy Forum FNETD
(http://www.niftyserve.or.jp/forums/fnetd/index.htm)
Network Democracy Forum, whose members fashion themselves "Netizens" (network citizens) started this site this summer with the stated aim of creating a database for political participation in Japan. The site is home to many discussion groups and to a seihi (government) database, which includes a directory of memberships to Diet committees. This rather young site promises to become a useful gateway to national and local political information.

Postwar Formation of Japan database
(http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/tanaka/tanaka.htm)
This website (produced by leading Japanese political scientists such as Tanaka Akihiko of the University of Tokyo) provides full texts of every key address by a Japanese prime minister since 1885 and policy speeches in the postwar period (by the ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs and by the heads of the Economic Planning Agency). The site also provides telnet access to a postwar chronology.

Shingikai reports
(http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/index.htm#gaikyoku)
Minutes of Diet sessions:
Lower House (http://www.shugin.go.jp/top/hon.htm)
Upper House (http://www.sangin.go.jp/honkaigi.htm)
Information on Japan’s forthcoming Big Bang
(http://www.mof.go.jp/big-bang/big-bang-bbt.htm)

LAW/LEGAL

LEC Cyber Station of Law
(http://www.lec-jp.com/law-station/law_station_index.htm)
This department store of Japanese legal resources provides

Continued on page 7
UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENT On September 24, 1997 the Kawamura family of Nô performers will give a demonstration and performance in Lowell Lecture Hall from 8:00 to 10:00 PM. Call (617) 496-3314 for information.

Recent special event On March 21, 1997 Professor Hitoshi Miyake (Keio University), a leading specialist on shugendō, presented his research on the topic “The Local Adaptation of Shugendo Practitioners.”

GRADUATE STUDENT AND FACULTY WORKSHOP FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1996-1997

The research workshop "Visual and Material Culture of Modern Japan" was established last fall as one of the workshops funded by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University. The workshop encourages interdisciplinary research by Harvard graduate students and faculty members on the cultural studies of modern Japan. It serves as an interactive forum composed of researchers in diverse disciplines such as anthropology, architecture, art history, literature and sociology of modern Japan, as a means of sharing research interests, methodological approaches, and theoretical concerns.

Last year, the workshop met once a month with about a dozen attendees. The presentations covered a variety of topics such as the significance of "China" in Meiji novels, Korean painters under Japanese colonial rule, the representation of Western women in Meiji oil painting, the formation of a modern Japanese literary canon and mass publishing, and avant-garde performance in the 1960s.

We are very fortunate to have received continued funding for the coming academic year, with additional support from the Reischauer Institute. Our goal is not only to continue with the presentations of ongoing research work within Harvard, but also to invite outside speakers as well.

If you are interested in attending or presenting in the workshop, please feel welcome to contact me, graduate student coordinator Noriko Murai (nmurai@fas.harvard.edu) ((617) 625-4593), or Alexander Smith (aosmith@fas.harvard.edu) ((617) 491-1419), or the faculty sponsors Profs. Norman Bryson and Cherie Wendelken in the Fine Arts Department.

— Noriko Murai