

Comparison of the Library Services for the Handicapped in Japan and Arizona

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1. Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect in 2008, requires the state parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the freedom of the disabled to seek, receive and impart information. As hubs for information distribution, libraries should provide, and actually providing, services for the handicapped.

By virtue of the Horner Fellowship program, one of the authors (Hoshino) visited libraries in Arizona, USA in October 2018 to investigate the services for the handicapped provided by them. The present work compares the services for the handicapped provided in libraries in Arizona on the one hand and in Japan on the other.

2. Method

Nineteen libraries in Arizona were visited during the period from October 14 to 30, 2018. From among services provided for disabled by these libraries, services for persons with print disability and the telecommunication relay service were chosen for comparison with the counterparts in Japan.

3. Results

Services for persons with print disability

Service Name	Japan		Arizona	
	Data Transmission Service for Persons with Print Disabilities	Sapie Library	NLS Service	Bookshare
Provider	National Diet Library(NDL)	National Association of Institutions of Information Service for Visually Impaired Persons	Library of Congress	Benetech
Who can use?	Blind persons Persons with visual disabilities Persons with dyslexia Persons who are not able to turn pages due to upper limb disabilities, etc.	Persons with visual impairment or with difficulties in recognition of visual representations	Blind persons Persons whose visual disability Persons certified by competent authority(e.g. Physical limitations, reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction)	people with dyslexia, learning disabilities, visual impairments, physical disabilities, and other reading barriers
Material(s)	Audio-only DAISY, DAISY multimedia, Text-only DAISY, EPUB, Plain text, Braille data	Braille data, Audio-only DAISY, Text-only DAISY, DAISY multimedia, Cinema DAISY	Braille books and magazines, Audiobooks and audio magazines, music appreciation materials , music scores , and music instruction in braille , audio , and large print .	ebook
Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free for US Students Adults: Bookshare memberships cost \$50 per year

Both the Japanese and American systems serve persons with visual, learning or physical disabilities who cannot obtain information from usual printed matter, but with different coverage of material: while the Japanese services provide only printed matter converted to other formats as braille or audio DAISY, the American ones also offer music through the NLS.

Telecommunication Relay Service

	Japan	Arizona
Service Name	Model Project of Telecommunications Relay Service by the Nippon Foundation	Telecommunications Relay Service
Restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not available for an emergency call • Not a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week service • Offered for a limited time (to be discontinued on March 31, 2021) • Not available for sign language interpretation on the spot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not available for sign language interpretation on the spot
Who can use?	Persons who have physical disability certificates (hearing or speech disabilities)	hearing and speech disabilities
Cost	Communication fee with the operator is charged on the user, communication between the operator and the intended party is free	Free
How to Relay?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text to Speech • Sign Language to Speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text to Speech • Speech to Text • Speech to Speech • Non-English Language Relay Service • Sign Language to Speech
Example		

This type of services is provided both in Japan and Arizona. Major differences are, however, found in scope and limitation of the services.

The difference in scope results from the difference of the legal status of the services. The Japanese TRS is a model project by the Nippon Foundation and is to be discontinued on March 31, 2021, although institutionalization is under consideration, while the American services are already institutionalized by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

4. Summary

Two types of library services for the handicapped in Japan and Arizona, US, were compared on the basis of information obtained by visiting Arizona libraries. Analysis showed that the Japanese and Arizona libraries focused on similar target groups, but the American services were superior in scale and diversity.

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