



Activities of Overseas Offices

The Japan Foundation has 22 offices in 21 countries. They operate according to their respective regional- and country-specific policies and conduct diverse activities matching local needs and conditions. Activities include arts and cultural exchanges, Japanese-language education, and Japanese-studies and intellectual exchanges. Activities of overseas offices during the past fiscal year are summarized below.

Italy The Japan Cultural Institute in Rome

Kids and Parents Enjoy Japanese Picture Books

The staff showed a picture book, and the children learning Japanese for the first time pointed to the pictures and shouted "sankaku!" (triangle) or "zo!" (elephant). The exhibition hall seemed like a kindergarten class.

With the cooperation of the Casina di Raffaello and Biblioteca Centrale Ragazzi public libraries, the Japan Cultural Institute in Rome held picture book events named, "Japan Picture Book Festival."

The main highlight was the exhibition of original pictures by young artists who had been selected for exhibition at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the world's largest children's picture book fair. They included a young Japanese artist who debuted at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. We also had picture book readings, *kami shibai* picture storytelling, and a workshop by picture book author Satoe Tone. We thereby presented the world of Japanese picture books unknown to the Italians.

Besides the children, their parents also got very interested in children's books from Japan due to the high-quality illustrations and unique ideas. The events attracted many parents and children.



Left: Institute staff conduct picture book readings and a Japanese quiz.

Below: Visitors could freely browse through a selection of the best picture books.

Photo below: Mario Boccia



Germany The Japan Cultural Institute in Cologne

Japanese and German Experts Discuss Family Policies

For two days in January 2015, we held a symposium called, *Family Policy in Japan and Germany, Womenomics and Doing Family* organized by Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf and University of Tsukuba. The subject was a mutual concern for both Japan and Germany.

The symposium had 10 Japanese and German researchers and policy experts give reports like *Family Policy in Japan—Current Status and Problems of Family Policies in an Aging Society*, *Work Time and Family Time—Comparison of Working Women in Germany and Japan*, and *Child Caring Fathers (Ikumen) in Japan from Family Policy Perspectives*. All the presenters then held a discussion to summarize the symposium.

They explained how government policies in both countries were progressing and how government and social actions and networking were working to improve the family conditions. The audience heard reports on the current condition in both countries complemented by a lively discussion peppered with recommendations. The symposium was therefore meaningful for both countries where they face a decreasing birthrate and aging population.





 France The Japan Cultural Institute in Paris

Spinning Colors — Kimono by a Living National Treasure

As a pongee weaver artist, Fukumi Shimura is a Living National Treasure. She is also a dyeing artist using plant-based dyes to create very unique colors and works. Her daughter and apprentice, Yoko Shimura, is an artist exploring new frontiers in indigo dyeing. The Japan Cultural Institute in Paris held this exhibition entitled *Spinning Colors - Kimono by a Living National Treasure*, which showed about 40 works of these two artists.

The works were explained and complemented with the writings and thoughts of Fukumi. The writings came from her books about textile art expression and her research on colors in the east and west.

The displayed kimono were woven with her unique taste in colorful yarns dyed with natural, plant-based dyes which she extracted herself. The beautiful artistic world of Fukumi and Yoko was thereby recreated in the exhibition room.

The exhibition aimed to convey that dyeing is not just an artistic activity for these two artists. Rather they do it while having great respect, reverence, and appreciation for Mother Nature that enables them to create such works. Creating such beautiful work lasting for centuries and passing it on is an ode to Japanese culture.



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 United Kingdom The Japan Foundation, London

Introducing Japanese-Language Education in Primary Schools

"Our school has kids from diverse countries!" "Studying a foreign language is a new challenge for all of us." "What language is that?" "Nihongo!" "Ohayo, ohayo, konnichiwa, konnichiwa ♪ "

This is a sample of what we heard during the awards ceremony for the "Japan Webpage Contest for Schools," a contest of participating schools presenting on a webpage their unique ways of learning Japanese. The Bronze Prize-winning kids from Holbrook Primary School gave a crowd-pleasing, enthusiastic presentation with Japanese mixed in.

Foreign language became a compulsory subject in UK elementary schools from fall 2014. Each school is free to decide which foreign language to teach.

By developing Japanese-language teaching materials and holding training session, we, the Japan Foundation, London is working hard to have British children have fun learning Japanese. We also hold anime screenings, etc., to try to expand the kids' interest in pop culture to the Japanese language as well.





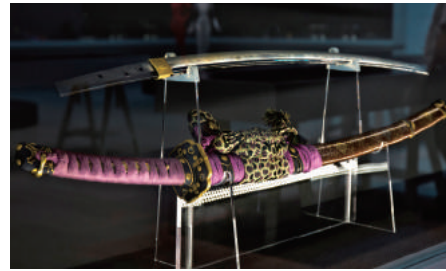
Evangelion and Japanese Swords Exhibition of Swords with a 700+ Year History

From July to September 2014, co-organized with the ABC Museum, we held the *Evangelion and Japanese Swords* exhibition as the final event of the 400th anniversary of Japan-Spain relations. The exhibition had a novel concept of combining modern culture (popular anime *Evangelion*) and traditional culture (old Japanese swords). Although the museum usually draws in mainly older patrons, it saw many young people during the exhibition.

Besides traditional Japanese swords, the exhibition displayed swords from the *Evangelion* series and original swords inspired by the anime. Many of the swords were crafted by swordsmiths all over Japan using diverse techniques.

On the first day of the exhibition, two swordsmiths who made some of the exhibited swords and a sword expert held a talk about Japanese swords and a sword inscription (*meikiri*) demonstration. They explained how to appreciate the work of a true professional. It was a great opportunity for the attendees to meet and talk directly with the sword experts.

During the exhibition, it was touching to see people so enamored that they brought their faces down to the same level as the swords for a closer look.



Left: Traditional Japanese swords

Below: Evangelion sculpture with Japanese swords displayed in the background

© Museo ABC



V4 + Japan Exchange Year in 2014 to Expand Relations with Japan

The year 2014 was designated as the V4+Japan Exchange Year to promote people-to-people exchanges between Japan and the V4 countries (Visegrad Group: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia). The Japan Foundation, Budapest, which covers 13 countries in Central and Eastern Europe including Hungary, held a variety of cultural events, both modern and traditional. They were held with the cooperation of diplomatic missions in the V4 countries.

In Hungary, a joint performance of *Taiko* drums and Hungarian folk music, a joint performance of *Tsugaru Jamisen* and jazz piano, Kabuki dances by young actors, and the traditional *Sujoruri* performance drew praise from all their audience segments.

Also, the Japanese Film Festival in Hungary drew full-house audiences as it mainly screened the latest movies depicting modern Japanese society. Other events included a screening of the documentary film *Hafu*, a traveling lecture in Central Europe by historian and Harvard University Professor Emeritus Akira Iriye, and the Japanese Studies Conference for Building Connections among Researchers in Central and Eastern Europe. With so many people attending these events, this year showed the great potential for further exchanges with Japan.



*The V4 countries is a regional alliance of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. They provide cooperation with Japan in various fields.

http://www.hu.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/exchangeyear.html



Picture Book Author Hiroshi Abe in Moscow with Picture Books Going Beyond National Borders

The theme of the 16th *International Book Fair for High-Quality Fiction and Non-Fiction* was "Children." We invited children's picture book author Hiroshi Abe to Moscow for a lecture entitled, *Picture Books and Nature*. Being a former zoo keeper at Asahiyama Zoo in Hokkaido, Abe has lively animals appearing in his picture books. His animal stories during his lecture amused the audience. He also participated in the awards ceremony of a picture book contest organized by the Children's Book Department of the Library for Foreign Literature, and held a special lecture at the Moscow State University of Printing Arts. He thereby presented the wonderful world of picture books to kids and college students alike.

Abe envies the birds and fish that can freely travel through the sky or ocean between Russia and Hokkaido without a passport and visa. However, he exclaims, "The wonderful thing that can freely go beyond national borders is picture books!" We can expect Abe's picture books to continue going beyond national borders and impress children around the world.



Left: Abe with the winners of the picture book contest

Below: Lecture at Moscow State University of Printing Arts





Egypt The Japan Foundation, Cairo

Japanese Culture in the Provincial City of Alexandria with the Help of Local Cultural Organizations

About 220 km northwest of Cairo is Alexandria, Egypt's second largest city. With the cooperation of local cultural organizations, the Japan Foundation Cairo office held various events in this city.

In October 2014, Japanese mime artist Fukuro Koji was invited to the Backstreet Festival in Alexandria, organized by the NPO I-act. His humorous street performances made audiences excited. Also, the Arab Origami Festival was held by the Arab Origami Center in Alexandria. The Japan Foundation Cairo office also presented a booth at the festival where about 1,000 visitors experienced the joy found in origami.

In March 2015, Utazo Katsura was invited to perform rakugo storytelling in Japanese and English at two venues in Alexandria. His audience filled the hall with laughter.

These events impressed and delighted both adults and children in Alexandria which normally has few opportunities to see Japanese culture. We could directly feel their affection for Japan. We will continue to hold more Japanese cultural events in provincial areas.



Left photo: Alaa Nasr



Korea The Japan Foundation, Seoul

East Asian Cultural Envoy Brings Diverse Okinawan Culture

To kick off the 50th anniversary of the normalization of the Japan-Korea relations, singer-songwriter Suguru Ikeda from Iriomote, Okinawa and young traditional Okinawan musicians and dancers were invited to perform and present Okinawan culture in late January 2015. Ikeda had been appointed by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as one of Japan's first East Asian Cultural Envoys.

The "Japanese Language & Culture Class" held at the Japan Foundation, Seoul featured elegant Okinawan court dances from the Ryukyu Kingdom era and dances popular among the commoners. Ikeda also performed traditional Yaeyama folk songs including songs from his hometown of Iriomote.

People could also try wearing Okinawan kimono, taste Okinawan *awamori* sake, watch Okinawan movies, and more. Diverse facets of Okinawan culture were presented.

A performance was also held at the National Palace Museum of Korea which was holding an exhibition of Ryukyu Kingdom treasures around the same time. It drew a full house and much applause. They also performed in Seogwipo, Jeju Island with the cooperation of the Korea Foundation. All the performances ended with the traditional *kachashi* dancing to everyone's delight.



Left: Suguru Ikeda (third from right) and Okinawan musicians and dancers

Below: Performance at the National Palace Museum of Korea



China The Japan Foundation, Beijing

Long-Awaited Makoto Shinkai Traveling Exhibition Opens in Beijing with 2,000 visitors!

A special exhibition of anime film director Makoto Shinkai's works was held for Chinese fans. Shinkai is extremely popular among young Chinese for his beautiful anime films and poetic stories dubbed as "film novels of the digital age."

The exhibition displayed storyboards, character descriptions, anime cels (reproductions of layouts and original drawings), and other production-related items of his four famous films including *5 Centimeters Per Second*. Behind-the-scenes videos of his films and a video interview of Shinkai were also shown. A picture-taking area greeted visitors.

At the opening-day ceremony on March 7, 2015, *The Garden of Words* was screened and a related lecture was held. A crowd of almost 2,000 gathered. A long line snaked out from the 1st floor lobby of the Japan Foundation, Beijing's building to the sidewalk outside.

To meet the enthusiastic demand for Makoto Shinkai and Japanese anime in China, this exhibition will travel around China's provincial cities for the next two to three years.



HANDS! –Hope and Dreams– Project! Creative Disaster Education Connects Asia

"Let's boldly rise up to disasters together with Asia's young people and keep our hope and dreams alive!" This was the idea behind the *HANDS! –Hope and Dreams– Project!* This project aims to have over 200 young creators, teachers, NGO staff, and students learn from Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and India by 2020 to be able to conduct disaster education programs using creative methods.

Project fellows visiting areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake mourned the victims and were impressed to see the survivors' strong determination to recover and rebuild. They vowed to make Asia stronger together. What the 24 fellows on the 1st training program cycle learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake will be put into practice, and they will expand their networking through disaster education.

Project fellows were also featured on TV programs in Indonesia, Thailand, and Japan. The fruits of the project were thereby shared with many people.



Theatre Co-production by Young Japanese and Thai Stage Directors

At the Bangkok Theatre Festival, Japanese theatre company HANCHU-YUEI performed *Girl X*. We co-organized the performance with Chulalongkorn University.

The actors' movements on stage were superimposed on projected background images to create a "2.5-dimensional drama." It drew much attention and won the festival's top prizes for best performance and best screenplay.

This Thailand performance led to a collaborative work called *Girl X (Japan-Thailand Collaboration Ver.)* by HANCHU-YUEI and a Thai theatre company called "Democracy Theatre." The first performance was held in February 2015 at the Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama (TPAM in Yokohama) and received high praise. They are now preparing to hold this collaborative performance in Bangkok.

HANCHU-YUEI's performance in Thailand was first proposed by a Chulalongkorn University drama lecturer who was invited to Japan by the Japan Foundation. By building upon such connections, we plan to further support collaborative projects between artists in Japan and Thailand as well as between young artists in Asia.



Sharing Disaster Experiences Between Japan, the Philippines, and Asia to Spread Disaster Preparedness

With so many natural disasters befalling the Philippines, interest in disaster preparedness has heightened among its people. It was therefore a good time to show Japan's highly advanced disaster preparation measures to increase people's disaster preparedness.

In fiscal 2014, the *Earth Manual Project* exhibition was held at the Ayala Museum in Manila. It showed outstanding disaster preparation activities in Japan and other countries. In fiscal 2015, the exhibition will travel to Baguio in the northern Philippines and to Thailand.

Also, the *Izai Kaeru Caravan!* project for children to have fun learning about disaster preparedness has been revamped as the *Move Philippines* project geared for the Philippines. This project was produced with the cooperation of the NPO Plus Arts which also conducted workshops.

Japan, the Philippines, and the rest of Asia are actively sharing their experiences and lessons of disaster preparedness.



Left: *Earth Manual Project* exhibition

Below: *Move Philippines*





Dye Colors Linking the Past and Future

Dyeing and weaving historian Sachio Yoshioka held an exhibition at the Malaysia Natural History Museum from December 13, 2014 to January 11, 2015. Yoshioka has been researching colors in ancient Japan and trying to reproduce them.

According to Yoshioka, many colors in ancient Japan were made with dyes from plants brought over from Southeast Asia. He also mentioned that everyday spices commonly used in Malaysia are used as dyes in Japan. This surprised many people.

Before the exhibition, he did some research in Malaysia. He visited the East Coast, famous for batiks, one of Malaysia's most famous traditional crafts. There are fewer than 10 batik factories that produce block print batiks manually. He also found out that the use of natural dyes is almost non-existent. Through this encounter with Mr. Yoshioka, some local young researchers have started a five-year project to use his techniques to resurrect and spread the traditional craft of using colorful natural dyes found locally.



Left: The first batik factory Yoshioka visited on the East Coast



Below: Dyeing demonstration at the Natural History Museum



Bunraku Meets ASEAN —Bunraku Meets a Doll Theater in Asia—

In August 2014, a young troupe of Bunraku puppeteers, *tayū* narrators, and shamisen players toured Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam to perform and meet local people in traditional puppet theatre.

The troupe performed Bunraku and also explained to the audience how Bunraku puppets work and moves, how the narrators and shamisen players express themselves, and how these three performing roles work together to produce a Bunraku story.

In Vietnam, where they have water puppetry, the Bunraku troupe met local water puppeteers and learned how water puppets worked. They also actually went into the water and tried operating water puppets at a water puppet theatre.

In the world of puppetry, it is unusual to see three people operating a puppet. But this is done in both Bunraku and Vietnam's water puppetry. It was a new discovery for the troupe. The local water puppeteers also tried their hand at manipulating Bunraku puppets and experienced the fine precision of puppet expressions. A new discovery for them as well.



Left photo: Megumi Katsu

Photo below: Noriko Tabata



Joint Exhibition by Japanese and Indian Artists After Experiencing Each Other's Country

In January 2015, we held an exhibition planned by Zasha Colah, a curator at Clark House Initiative in Mumbai, India. The exhibition was inspired by Zasha's visit to Japan on the invitation of the Japan Foundation in 2013. With an open-minded sensibility, Zasha conveyed to the Indian people her impressions of traditional and modern elements co-existing in Japan. Besides our gallery, the exhibition also graced the courtyard in front of the entrance hall, the landing around the stairs, the sliding door frame, and even inside the restroom. The Japan Foundation, New Delhi's entire building served as a playful exhibition venue.

The exhibition included the work of Japanese artist Michiko Tsuda. Her video was combined with the performance of Indian dancers and also got the audience involved. It was a unique and interesting experience for the viewers.

We shall continue providing opportunities for joint exhibitions by Japanese and Indian artists expressing new viewpoints and values inspired by what they experienced and encountered in each other's country.



Left: Video combined with a dance performance

Below: Red "trees" in the courtyard in front of the entrance hall





Japanese Performing Arts Lectures at Art Gallery of New South Wales

The *Noh to Now: Traditions and Counter-Traditions in Japanese Performance* lecture series was held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney from July 23 to August 27, 2014. The series was produced by the Japan Foundation, Sydney in conjunction with an exhibition on Noh and *kyogen* at the gallery. The lectures covered the gamut of Japan's performing arts from the feudal era to today. Besides Noh, the lectures covered Kabuki, Butoh, Bunraku and Hatsune Miku, and Takarazuka Revue.

Buoyed by the gallery's popularity in Sydney, the lectures also attracted many people who normally did not have much interest in Japan. Advance reservations were all booked, attesting to popularity of the lectures.

Except for Professor Naohiko Umewaka from Shizuoka University of Art and Culture who delivered the Noh lecture, the other four lecturers were Japanese studies scholars from universities in Australia. The event showcased the strength of the Japanese Studies community here in Australia, as well as the breadth of Japan's performing arts traditions.



Seiji Ozawa in Toronto: A Photography Exhibit of a Young Maestro

With the cooperation of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and City of Toronto Archives, the Japan Foundation, Toronto hosted, *Seiji Ozawa in Toronto Photography Exhibit*, from May 6 to July 31, 2015.

Ozawa had just turned 30 years-old when he became the music director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1965. Ozawa's legendary excitement is evident in the collection of photographs which far surpasses documentation of other music directors in both quantity and quality.

With the support of the members of the orchestra, the front office, music professionals and the general public, Ozawa became very popular. His success in Toronto was the start of the maestro's becoming active on the international stage. It was also a time when Canada was developing further into a multi-cultural society. Many black-and-white photographs showed Ozawa as a talented, young Japanese leaping onto the world stage and the city of Toronto turning cosmopolitan.

This exhibition reassessed the power of music beyond words and the starting point of international exchanges between Japanese and Canadian societies.



Photo exhibition brochure



OBENTO Workshops in the Southern United States

With the designation of Japanese cuisine as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, the level of interest in Japanese food in America is higher than ever. This compelled us to hold lectures and demonstrations on *obento* (boxed lunch) in three cities in the South where there is relatively little exposure to Japanese culture (Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, Alabama).

Debra Samuels, food writer and Japanese cuisine expert, talked about the role of *obento* in the Japanese household and society, as well as how nutritious and well-balanced Japanese food is. A hands-on session on the aesthetic arrangement of Japanese food impressed the participants and was well received by all.

The hands-on session used locally-sourced ingredients, and many participants expressed their desire to continue making *obento*. It was a valuable opportunity for them to better understand Japan's food culture.





United States The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

Japanese Design Today 100 Traveling Exhibition on Japan's Craftsmanship

The University of California, Los Angeles was the first venue for the Japanese design exhibition of 100 products traveling around the world.

The exhibition displayed a wide range of products including furniture, household items, stationery, and state-of-the-art medical and disaster preparedness equipment. They were presented in ten sections: furniture and fixtures, tableware and cooking utensils, clothing and accessories, children's products, stationery, hobby items, health products, disaster-relief products, and transportation.

Although the purpose and use of the products were diverse, they shared the Japanese penchant for detail and aesthetics stemming from traditional Japanese crafts and craftsmanship. The exhibition saw many visitors every day.

A local newspaper called it, "an exhibition spreading understanding of one's country through 100 products." From the viewpoint of everyday design, American viewers got a glimpse of modern Japan's society and culture.



Mexico The Japan Foundation, Mexico

Kendo Demonstration 10 Years Ago, a Great Inspiration!

In February 2015, Kendo, *laido*, and *Jodo* martial arts experts were sent to Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, and El Salvador in Central America to kick off the Japan-SICA Friendship Year in 2015.

In Central America's Caribbean countries, martial arts are well-known through movies and manga. However, they are seldom depicted correctly. At each venue, beginners as well as experienced kids and adults enjoyed handling the bamboo swords and short staffs, trying a martial art, and watching martial arts demonstrations.

Still in his 20s, the young chairman of the Honduras Kendo Association started Kendo after seeing a Kendo demonstration held by the Japan Foundation 10 years ago. In El Salvador, 400 people came to the Sports Ministry Gymnasium to see the event that was covered by the local newspaper and TV station.

We will continue to hold Japanese sporting events in Mexico and Central America's Caribbean countries until the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.



Brazil The Japan Foundation, São Paulo

Concert by A Cappella Group INSPi

Attracting about 200,000 people annually in São Paulo, *Festival do Japão* is one of the world's largest Japan expos. Taking the main stage at the 2014 festival was INSPi, an a cappella group.

They performed upbeat songs like *Omatsuri Mambo*, a medley of children's songs, and nostalgic songs. Each group member introduced himself in Portuguese and did a unique vocal percussion of a drum or bass. The crowd applauded and cheered each time. After they sang the bossa nova song *Tristeza* famous in Brazil, the crowd of over 2,000 clamored for an encore which was very unusual.

The Brazilians who saw INSPi for the first time told us how wonderful they were. We were reminded once again of Brazil's high level of interest in Japan and that we have to continue our activities to promote better understanding of Japan.

