

Hello, my name is Coralie Castel and I work at the French National Library, or BNF, in the Literature and Arts department. I am in charge of the Japanese modern and contemporary collections, and in this presentation, I will focus on the Japanese literature collection.

I started working on this position two years ago, and I have been questioning myself on how to build a collection that can be coherent and useful, in the context of a national library, which is a different context than that of a university library since we aim at being at the same time a generalist, reference and patrimonial library.

When I arrived, my boss told me to keep in mind that we are working for today and for the centuries to come. That was pretty much intimidating. But it is true that it is a particular context, and that we have to constantly rethink the collections in order to meet the needs of the researchers of today and tomorrow.

## **SLIDE 2**

So today, I will first present the Japanese collections at the French national library in general, to explain where the modern and contemporary literature collection is situated.

Second, I will share some questions I have had about the collection, its composition and visibility and what can be the role of a national library in this specific field.

Lastly, I will present my conclusions as to how to make the most of these resources and how to maximize the use than can be made of them.

I -

The French National Library holds a massive Japanese collection, but it is more well known for its ancient material, such as scrolls and prints gathered through centuries of French interest for Japan, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century japonists collectors. I will begin with a brief presentation of the different sections that hold Japanese collections, in order to set the place of the modern and contemporary literature among all the Japanese material.

In fact, some of you may have met my colleague, Véronique Béranger, in previous meetings of the Association. She used to work at the Manuscripts department as a specialist of ancient resources. She changed positions last year, but my position is in another department of the library. So, I am not replacing her, since my section is about modern and contemporary Japan only. By the way, we are still waiting for a replacement for her position.

## **SLIDE 3**

In fact, Japanese materials can be found in many different sections of the French National Library. First, of course, the Manuscripts department, where Véronique used to work, holds precious resources, with hundreds of xylograph books and manuscripts, including illuminated scrolls, and 15 nara e-hon, ancient Buddhist texts, and also some of the first Japanese language handbooks and dictionaries ever made in France. This department also gathers publications about classical literature, book history and classical art.

#### **SLIDE 4**

The Prints department also holds a remarkable collection with thousands of prints, ranging from Moronobu to Hokusai, Hiroshige or Sharaku and many more, and some original woodblocks and drawings. It also holds 1000 illustrated xylograph books, some as old as an 1608 illustrated Ise monogatari.

#### **SLIDE 5**

The Performing Arts department, also, has a smaller yet precious collection of kabuki prints and albums, and also counts a few nô masks, bunraku puppets, and of course books related to these matters.

#### **SLIDE 6**

Lastly, the Maps and Plans department holds about 5000 maps of Japan, 600 of which date back from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also includes a collection of early photographs and plates, including volumes of photographs made by Felice Beato in Yokohama.

#### **SLIDE 7**

These are old and specific material, whose common point is to be resources from and about pre-Meiji Japan. They are all accessible at Richelieu library, which is the older library building in the center of Paris. These resources are quite well-known among researchers specialized in classical Japan, and there have been many high quality research projects conducted about them.

It is a truly unique collection, and very powerful to attract audience. The material is very popular, and often used on the social networks accounts of the institution, such as twitter or instagram, to promote the national library.

#### **SLIDE 8**

Many items have been digitized and are now accessible on Gallica, the online library. There is also a more specific website, called "portail France-Japon", that makes it easy to search through the collection and understand its history. But, modern and contemporary resources are not included in these.

#### **SLIDE 9**

20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan at the BnF is represented through the fields of Literature, Japanese language (including linguistics and learning material), the humanities and contemporary art.

This means, basically, that the collection is made of books, which is less spectacular than prints or scrolls. They are all located within the towers of François-Mitterrand, which is the newer library building that opened in 1996 in the 13<sup>th</sup> district of Paris. Therefore, they are less visible and less easy to promote. It is clear that it is not so very well known among researchers and students.

In addition, Japanese literature material can also be found at other university libraries in Paris, from which the books can be borrowed, which is not the case at the national library where the resources can only be consulted on site. Thus, it is really important to think about how to make the national library collection stand out.

#### **SLIDE 10**

So, what is the collection composed of, more precisely? Among what I personally purchase for the library, 60 % of my yearly budget is dedicated to buying literature materials, including literary works such as novels or poetry, but also dictionaries, biographies, and academic works on literary topics. The rest is divided between contemporary art, which is 15%, and the humanities, history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century being twice as much represented as other humanities subjects.

#### **SLIDE 11**

This second graph shows that 80% of what I buy is in Japanese: I also buy a little in French, mostly translated novels for the free access reading rooms, and English, mostly academic publications.

#### **SLIDE 12**

To sum it up, here in this last graph, the big circle represents all the Japanese resources that can be found at the library : the middle one is for the fields I am responsible for, in my position : this is to emphasize that modern and contemporary literature, on which I am going to focus now, may be the core of the collection in my view, but it is just a small bit of all the Japanese resources at the French national library.

II –

#### **SLIDE 13**

First thing is that I cover post-Meiji literature, whereas Edo and older times material are bought at the Manuscripts department. The collection I deal with includes literature from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, 20<sup>th</sup> century, and contemporary, up to the latest published works.

As of now, this collection holds around 10000 books, mostly in Japanese. About 10% are on free access in two reading rooms : one for undergraduate students and general public, and the other for graduate students and researchers. The other 90% can be orderer from the researcher's reading room only.

The yearly increase is of about 400 volumes in Japanese, plus over a hundred volumes in French and English. So the main questions, which I rapidly asked myself when I started in this position, are the following : what to purchase, and how to make it attractive to the public?

#### **SLIDE 14**

One thing that my predecessor used to do as a routine, was to buy complete works series, or zenshû. This has become a major strength of the collection, as the library now holds 63 zenshû series, ranging from Abe Kôbô to Mishima Yukio, including also less well-known authors and a few thematic zenshû, such as Okinawa bungaku zenshû or Nihon SF zenshû. Being very expensive, these resources are

typically the kind of resources that only a major library can afford, so from this point of view, going on with the systematic purchase of all new zenshû series seems to go without saying.

But speaking with students and professors, I could not help but wonder if these long series of 20, 30 or even more volumes were frequently used. Zenshû series appear to be useful for research on one particular author, but recent research topics in literature tend to be more thematic, exploring the expression of a phenomenon in several authors' works, for example. The trends of research in the literature area are also more and more transdisciplinary, combining literature with social or historical topics, and zenshû series are maybe not best fitted for these kinds of approaches.

I observed that the most used part of zenshu series is the critical material, with introduction, biography and indexes that accompany the texts. And the reader really has to see, and browse the volumes, to find what they need in a massive amount of information. Yet, the reading rooms' shelves are not big enough to fit all zenshû series on free access : most of them are in the stocks and not ordered very often through the catalogue. As reference material, they are of course a basis, but they are not enough.

In addition, I really have to question whether I should buy all zenshû series, especially considering that they are very expensive. If we take the example of Natsume Sôseki, the library already holds the Iwanami series, which consist of 29 volumes, and was published in the 90's, but Iwanami recently started publishing a revised edition : engaging in buying all the volumes would cost around 100 000 yen. There is indeed new material in this edition, but it is worth the cost considering the little use that will be made of it?

## **SLIDE 15**

Another question regarding zenshû, is that there are no such complete works series for contemporary authors who are still alive. Therefore, I must not spend all the yearly budget on costly zenshû series but also keep some for contemporary authors' new books. Indeed, Murakami Haruki or Ogawa Yôko's novels must be purchased one by one, and younger authors' works as well. So every year, I wonder how to choose from the massive amount of books that are published in Japan. The national library's role should be to build a corpus that reflects the present state of literary life in Japan, which is moving and prolific. One possible method is to keep an eye on the literary awards such as Noma prize, Akutagawa prize and so on, in order to spot the new authors that deserve attention. But there are really a lot of different awards, so I still have to think about ways of choosing the right authors and books and how I can build a coherent collection.

More generally speaking, what can be the role of a national library when it comes to building a collection of foreign literature? I think that one thing a national library must do is to be the reflection of the national interest for this foreign literature. And one way of doing so is to keep track of the translated works that are published in the country. This can be done thanks to the legal deposit, which is the process through which the national library receives a copy of every book published in France. In fact, Japanese has been the second most translated language among books published in France for many years, with around 1500 titles every year. Many of them are manga, but still, even when considering novels only, Japanese literature is very successful in French bookshops. So, I keep

track of all these translations and for each of them, I buy a copy of the original work, in Japanese, when the library doesn't hold it already. That enables me to build a corpus that is at the same time a reference library, with original material available for all Japanese literature published in France, and that also reflects the latest trends.

### **SLIDE 16**

One last question that I ask myself is the one of manga as literature. As I said, most of the translated works from Japanese to French are manga; here again choices have to be made, because the publications are plethoric. But where can I draw the line between manga that are purely entertainment material, and manga that should be considered as literature? I have begun to put some classics in Japanese on the shelves of the reading rooms, such as Tezuka's works. Last year, the program of the examination for the Secondary school certificate in Japanese language and literature included a series of manga, *Hyôryû kyôshitsu* by Umezû Kazuo, published in 1974. Manga has now been accepted as literary work in its own right and is a subject for research in literature. But still, I constantly have to question these categories. For example, some rather old manga have been recently translated and published in French. Since they have been translated into French, should they be now considered a classic and purchased in Japanese for reference material? Many other criteria should also be taken into consideration, such as the French editor, or the translators, who may also work on translating novels and thus be an indication of literary value, and so on.

III-

### **SLIDE 17**

As a conclusion, I would like to share ideas as to how to make the most of Japanese literature resources at the French national library, and how to maximize the use that can be made of them. These come from observations during only the last two years, so of course they should be considered as tools that still need to be perfected. I will be glad to discuss them later with those of you who might have an opinion or ideas about this.

My first suggestion is that the library itself should produce some reference content. For example, regarding the case of the *zenshû* series, what I can do to make them more useful to researchers, is to go through the volumes meticulously in order to produce detailed and extensive bibliographies that explore all the titles of the works published, sort them and associate them with the translated versions and critical works that the library holds, both in our on-site stocks and also in the online resources, and finally make a synthesis out of it.

### **SLIDE 18**

I have started to make such critical bibliographies about authors that are on the national examination programs for Japanese teaching certificates: Ishikawa Jun, Sôseki and Mishima. Each are about 20 to 30 pages long and can serve later as reference material for researchers. They are accessible online on the national library's website.

When talking to teachers and students, I also realized that one simple but yet very appreciated way to promote the collection is just to make a list of the latest additions and e-mail it to researchers. I still have to implement the regular sending of these lists from the library, and I have to admit that is

it very time-consuming. But I believe that if these lists are made and sent on a regular basis, they can be the more direct and powerful way to keep in touch with the researchers' community.

#### **SLIDE 19**

Lastly, I would also like to mention some resources that may be unexpected as Japanese resources and that researchers and student don't always think of. First, some online resources and database can prove really useful. For instance, the national library does not offer an access to any Japanese database, such as Japan Knowledge. In fact, other libraries, especially university libraries, already offer this access to specific databases whereas the national library offers access to more general resources. But those general resources portals sometimes hold hidden Japanese sources: for example, Factiva, which aggregate more than 30000 newspapers, magazines, and journals from all over the world, counts a lot of Japanese periodicals. Therefore, it can be very useful for a student or researcher to learn how to use this tool: I tried a research using the keyword "Akutagawa shô", in Japanese characters, and it turned hundreds of citations in Japanese media.

#### **SLIDE 20**

Such a research can prove very useful for someone who is working on contemporary literature.

#### **SLIDE 21**

Second, another major strength of the national library is that it holds very diverse materials, and not only books: audio files, video games and films can also be found and consulted on site, together with the written material. The researchers' attention also needs to be driven to these complementary collections, as they may not always think of the library as a place where they can encounter something else than just books. So, cooperating with colleagues from other sections of the library, who work with completely different material, could stimulate transdisciplinary research, granted that we make presentations, symposiums and so on, and that we communicate enough about them. Literature is not to be found in books only : the richness of a national library collection can encourage new approaches and new uses of the collections.

#### **SLIDE 22**

Thank you for your attention

Liste des zenshûs :

Abe Kôbô ; Akutagawa Ryûnosuke ; Dazai Osamu ; Edogawa Ranpo ; Endô Shûsaku ; Fujisawa Shûhei ; Hayashi Kyôko ; Higuchi Ichiyô ; Hirabayashi Taiko ; Hisao Jûran ; Hori Tatsuo ; Ibuse Masuji ; Iida Ryûta ; Inoue Yasushi ; Ishimure Michiko ; Itô Noe (anarchiste féministe) ; Izumi Kyôka ; Izutsu Toshihiko ; Kaikô Takeshi ; Katsura Beichô sansei ; Kobayashi Hideo ; Kôda Aya ; Kôjô Kô (polars, obscur) ; Komatsu Sakyô (sf) ; Kurumatani Chôkitsu ; Maruya Saiichi ; Maruyama Kaoru ; Matsumoto Seichô ; Minakami Tsutomu ; Mishima Yukio; Miyamoto Yuriko; Miyamoto Teru; Miyazawa Kenji ; Mori Ôgai ; Mukôda Kuniko (nouvelliste et scénariste pour la tv) ; Nagai Kafû ; Nakagami Kenji ; Natsume Sôseki ; Nishio Kanji; Ôba Minako; Okamoto Kanoko; Ôoka Shôhei; Ôtsubo Sunao; Ozaki Midori; Sakaguchi Ango; Santô Kyôden; San'yûtei Enchô; Sasaki Kiichi; Setouchi Jakuchô ; Shiba Ryôtarô; Shibusawa Tatsuhiko; Shiga Naoya; Tamura Ryûichi; Tanabe Seiko; Tanigawa Ken'ichi; Taoka Reion; Terada Torahiko; Uchimura Kanzô; Yamamoto Shûgorô; Yosano Akiko; Yoshimoto Takaaki + Thématique : Okinawa Bungaku zenshû, Nihon SF zenshû