



TOKYO NO TOMADACHI (MY TOKYO FRIENDS)

In late 2010 Claire Stuckey was selected for Gosford Council's staff exchange program with Edogawa City in Tokyo. During her stay she visited many of the 12 public libraries and many other facilities, and shared in an exchange of ideas that still resonates.

In Edogawa, the development of a new children's library as well as the large space and collections offered to children reflect the great value the city's officials place on children's literature. The new Shinozaki Library brings together the best, most innovative features in library architecture and the Director has created a vibrant and practical building for children and youth. The latest environmental practices and principles have been integrated into this beautiful facility. Another new multi-story branch library is currently being constructed, a modern facility in this culturally rich community. Six of the 12 branch libraries are situated within council owned and controlled community buildings. Older branches are being replaced with new library-specific developments to enhance professional service delivery to the increasing population, including the youngest average age range in Tokyo.



Claire with John McKie and the staff of the Edogawa Library outside the library

Library Manager Sato san and his vast staff made me most welcome. The collections mirror our own, however here the local government area operates the 73 elementary and high schools in the city. These schools do not have a library of their own so a special service operates to coordinate delivery of books requested by teachers. The large children's collection did not include anime or manga as these are considered comics and therefore not in the library realm. Some similar programs, such as storytime, are offered and educational programs are a focus. The city is also trialling contract staff in several of the branch libraries.



I was excited and proud to present the *Jean Genies*, a pair of decorated jeans with local themes and faces from the popular young adult series here in Australia, *Travelling Pants*. A Gosford Library initiative, this program has been operating for three years with 56 public libraries in New South Wales participating. Edogawa Library service will now join the International Children's Library in Munich and Bakul Library in India as an international participant and the Edogawa team told me they look forward to planning and promoting a youth program to decorate jeans for exchange. This program signals the beginning of a continuing library exchange between our cities and since my visit I have received a Japanese translation of the series to complement our next display.

A gift of a traditional kamishibai screen and story cards arrived at Gosford after my return and now provides our children's team with an interesting new method of storytelling. The technique has been embraced by our children's library team and will be used in programs including Australian Book Week complementing the 2011 theme of 'one world, many stories'. We are also planning special kamishibai programs for our regular *Stories at the Gallery* presentation in the tea house within the Edogawa Commemorative Garden each school holidays.

During my visit I was given a special tour of the National Diet Library in Tokyo, organised by Edogawa staff and including a tour through several levels of stacks. The main reading rooms, foyer online catalogue access, newspaper and photocopy rooms are streamlined with a customer registration card, with either a day pass or patron card being the key to accessing all services. The large conveyor system ensures timely delivery of requests, while copying and printing is done by staff, safeguarding all formats from damage and copyright infringement. It was interesting to note that cataloguing had been contracted out and that the contract staff wear distinguishing coloured uniforms.

Renewing my friendship with Yuko, a member of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), while I was in Japan was great. I was privileged also to be present at the lecture by Tayo Shima, President of the Japanese Board on Books for Young People, titled *Messages for Children Which Picture Books Brought: The 1920s*.

The lecture complemented the exhibition at the International Children's Library (a branch of the National Diet Library Tokyo). Shima worked as an editor, and a consultant at the Children's Literature Centre of the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. from 1983-1987 and as



Gosford Library displayed a thousand paper cranes as a gesture of support for Japan's earthquake victims

IBBY President she has promoted children's literature throughout the world. It was also a pleasure to be introduced to many of the ILC staff including Mr Fujimoto, Exhibition Manager. For anyone contemplating a visit to Tokyo I would recommend a visit to the ICL in Uneo Park area. It is a central location near many historic sites and museums.

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Postscript

Edogawa City sustained little damage since the March earthquake however longterm effects such as power outages and petrol shortages continue to strain city resources. Staff are busy ensuring services are maintained to the large urban population. At the request of the local Japanese community, Gosford has hosted a special display of a thousand paper cranes. Through this display, local families have endeavoured to channel their deep sadness following the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami into a beautiful message of support.

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