

Recovery work in progress: a case of the Noda Village Library

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Since the Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami brought widespread destruction, library communities, government organizations, cultural institutions, private corporations and volunteers around the nation have been providing assistance for the recovery and reconstruction of the libraries in the stricken region¹.

As part of the relief activities, the National Diet Library (NDL) has sent staff members of the Preservation Division to the affected areas to respond to the needs of libraries struggling to recover the damaged library materials.

Noda Village Library, in northern Iwate Prefecture, is one of the libraries hardest-hit by the tsunami. The flood water destroyed walls and windows of the building and the entire collection of the library was trapped under the wreckage until the water was removed (Photo 1).

¹ For further information, see Japan Library Association website [“The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami”](#)



What the dispatched staff found when they visited the library on May 10th, 2011, was piles of library materials rescued from the wreckage (Photo 2), all covered with mud. Most of the items were still wet and mold had grown on some of them.

The first thing that needed to be done was the initial triage. The task of saving all the damaged items was dauntingly large but there was no need for it as many of those items could be replaced in some way. It was the special items, local or otherwise unique, that required attention. The dispatched NDL staff assisted the staff of the Noda Village Library to decide what to save and how to handle these items. For the actual sorting and drying of the saved items, the prefectural library of Iwate called for local volunteers. Responding to the call, sometimes as many as ten people a day gathered. Most of these volunteers were from the neighboring libraries and they played a great role, not only in recovery of the collections, but also on the human side of the library.

By the end of May, the items had all been sorted. Saved items had been dried and moved to a clean and airy place. Basic dry-cleaning had also been undertaken to some extent but there was a lot more recovery work to be done before the rainy season began.

A staff member of the NDL joined the Noda team again on May 30th, 2011, and assisted them in intensive cleaning, mold removal and housing. A four-flapped folder made out of a single sheet of

paper was introduced to the team as a handy, easy-to-make enclosure. The team also kept themselves busy receiving books donated as replacements of the items that the library had lost or had to let go. In the case of very badly damaged local and unusual items, the prefectural library of Iwate had interviewed the neighboring libraries asking whether anyone had extra copies to give to Noda Village Library.



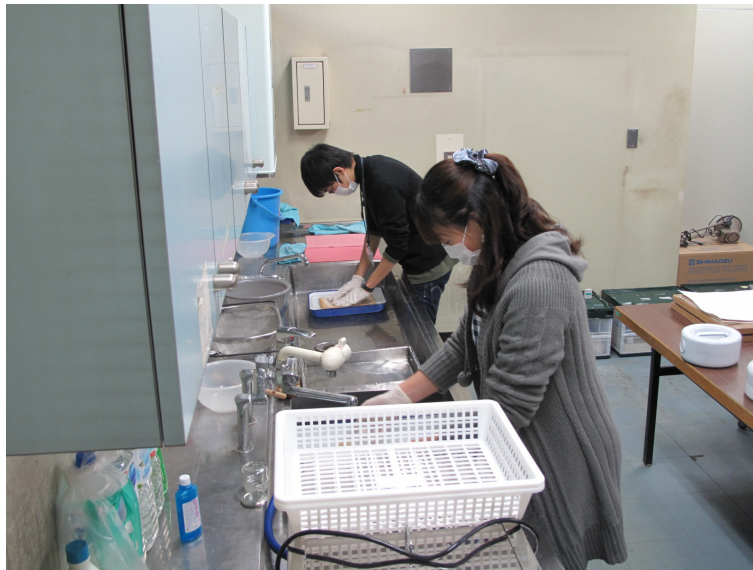
<<Photo 1>>



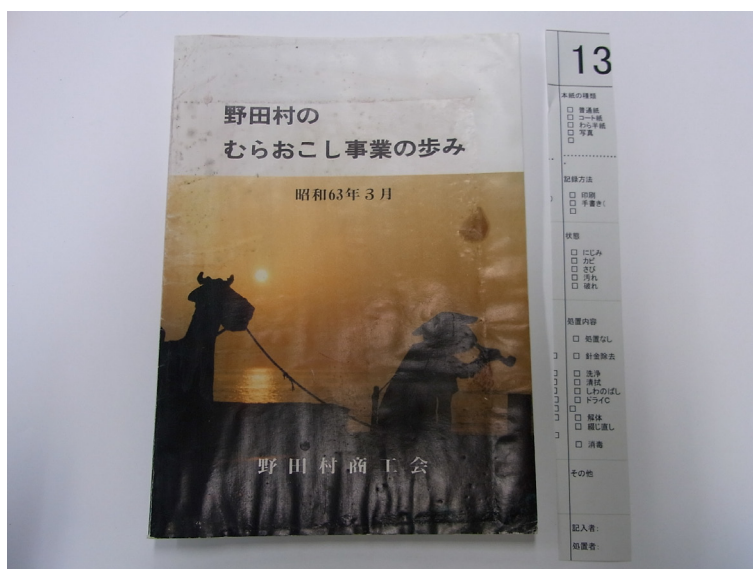
<<Photo 2>>

However, most of them were not held in other libraries so the Noda Village Library decided that about 220 items of its original materials would be preserved. These materials were still wet, and so the team

decided to send them to the NDL for stabilization treatment. We, the NDL team, evaluated the condition, form and paper quality of these materials and then adopted suitable treatments. When it was possible, we washed them in water (Photo 3). If this was not possible, we cleaned them with a brush or microfiber cloth. All of these treatments were recorded by pictures and checklists for further reference (Photo 4). We sent back the materials processed for stabilization at the end of March 2012, and the Noda Village Library reopened on May 21st, 2012 (Photo 5).



<<Photo 3>>



<<Photo 4>>



<<Photo 5>>

The struggle of the Noda Village library is now going on. The continuous assistance and cooperation of the library community will be crucial.