

The House Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee held hearings March 6 and 7 to investigate the availability of Japanese scientific and technical information (STI) in the U.S. Japan now ranks second as a world economic power in the free world, and third in research and development spending. The collection, analysis, translation, and application of STI from all over the world has played a role in Japan's success but, according to subcommittee Chairman Doug Walgren (D-PA), the U.S. does not have an adequate system for exploring technical developments in other nations and does not take advantage of scientific information available elsewhere.

Representatives from government agencies such as the National Technical Information Service, academic programs such as MIT's Japan Science and Technology Program, and firms and organizations such as Chemical Abstracts Service, Engineering Information, Inc., and Xerox Corporation discussed collection and translation efforts now being made, needs and problems, and the role of the federal government. Witnesses included William Budington, executive director of the John Crerar Library in Chicago, and Robert W. Gibson Jr., head of the Library Department, General Motors Research Labs in Warren, Michigan.

Gibson, who has studied and written extensively on Japanese scientific and technical literature, has identified over 9,100 pertinent Japanese sci/tech periodical titles, three-fourths of these published only in Japanese. Only 19 percent of the total are available to researchers through the major Western abstracting and indexing services. Budington noted that the larger research libraries hold only a few hundred Japanese STI periodicals each; the Library of Congress with about 2,000 titles may have the largest holdings. Better information about holdings and improved procedures for obtaining copies of articles are needed.

It is difficult to acquire Japanese professional and technical journals and reports. Japanese scientists and engineers have relied to a much greater extent than the U.S. on oral communications, personal libraries, and in-house company and government publications, most of which are unavailable to the public. Recent developments in Japan are beginning to impose a more formal structure on information exchange and processing, however.

The most significant problem is the scarcity of Japanese language competence teamed with technical and scientific background and understanding. There is an extreme shortage of skilled technical translators in the U.S. Finally, existing translations must be announced and disseminated. The John Crerar Library operates the National Translations Center, a depository and information clearinghouse on individual, unpublished translations. In 31 years, the Center has provided access to some 120,000 needed and requested translations, saving \$50 million in duplicative translating expertise. Removal of National Science Foundation support in 1972 caused a 50 percent cut in operations and instigation of fees to cover costs. Budington admitted that the Center's fees made its services unaffordable to most of the academic community.

On the appropriate federal role, many witnesses compared the current situation to the Sputnik crisis in the late 1950s when the U.S. had to catch up with Russian technical literature in a hurry. Suggested remedies included (cont'd on p. 221)



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(Washington Hotline, cont'd)

government support of language training, funding of translations, government cooperation in sharing translations, plus subsidizing the acquisition, announcement, and dissemination of Japanese STI.

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