

A look at Okinawa's libraries

The recent G-8 Summit focused worldwide attention on Okinawa, a group of Japanese islands that few nonmilitary Americans know much about. Ethnically and culturally somewhat distinct from Japan, the islands have been a Japanese prefecture (like a province) since 1879. After World War II, Okinawa was under the control of the U.S. military until 1972. Even now, American military bases take up 20% of the land on the main island of Okinawa.

One military contribution was the establishment of the first university in Okinawa, the University of the Ryukyus (UR), in 1950. The university became part of the Japanese national system in 1972, and its library is the largest in Okinawa.

Like other Japanese national universities, the dean of the library is a faculty member, appointed by the university president. Reporting to the dean is a chief librarian, employed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, and subject to rotation among the libraries of the other national universities. This allows room for promotion while still adhering to the Japanese tradition of lifetime employment.

UR holdings are entered into the National Academic Center Science and Information System (NACSIS), a national database for all Japanese academic libraries and accessible to users on the Internet. The software for

the online catalog is available to all libraries. However, vendors have developed various upgrades for the software and most libraries choose to purchase an advanced version.

Other universities on the island of Okinawa include the brand-new Okinawa Prefectural School of Nursing, Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts (devoted to the preservation of traditional Okinawan art forms), Okinawa University, Okinawa International University, and Meio University

(where the G-8 Summit was held).

Like all academic libraries, Okinawa university libraries are moving into the electronic age. All have CD-ROM LANs and Internet connections. UR has taken the lead

with approximately 1,200 electronic journals, including a subscription to Elsevier's *Science Direct*.

Worries about how to cover increased costs for electronic resources was a major topic at the June 2000 meeting of the Okinawan academic librarians' association.

Okinawa has been shaped by its Japanese connection, its own heritage, and the 30 years of American occupation. Its universities and their libraries also demonstrate this unique combination of influences.—*Mignon Adams, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, e-mail: m.adams@usip.edu* ■



The reference desk at the University of Ryukyus in Naha, Okinawa.

many in the fall of 2001 without a traditional library. Instead, through collaboration with Rice University in Houston, IUB will have a digital Information Resource Center. A broadband connection between Rice and IUB, provided as part of an agreement between Rice and Enron Broadband Services, will allow simultaneous access to resources to users at both universities. ■

