

GREETINGS FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

The National Institute of Japanese Literature (NIJL) was established in 1972 with the express purpose of serving as an institution dedicated to the investigation of material relating to Japanese literature, as well as the preservation of relevant images via microfilm. From its very inception, the mission of NIJL has been to make this rich store of materials readily available to the public. Now, some four decades later, NIJL continues to ardently pursue this same mission.

In recent years, a serious demand for more interdisciplinary and international collaboration has made itself felt, not only in the field of Japanese literature, but in many other fields of research as well. As of 2014, in accordance with suggestions put forward by the Science Council of Japan (SCJ), NIJL launched a large-scale research frontier project known as the “Project to Build an International Collaborative Research Network for Pre-modern Japanese Texts (NIJL-NW Project).” This project, not limiting itself exclusively to Japanese literature, aims at collecting and researching a broad range of premodern texts from a variety of fields, in both the humanities and the sciences. NIJL is currently endeavoring to make available to the public a body of some 300,000 digitalized images of this material.

As a means of further promoting research into Japanese literature and culture by scholars active in Japan and overseas, NIJL is engaged in a number of collaborative research projects. In Japan, we have a number of such projects dealing with such varied subjects as premodern Japanese mathematics, Japanese cuisine, and traditional medicine. In addition, several international collaborative research projects, equally interdisciplinary, are currently underway.

Something must be said here in regards to international research. Despite the inclusion of the word international in the titles of these various projects, and despite the active involvement of scholars from abroad, the fact remains that the actual results of these projects has hitherto been made available almost exclusively in the Japanese language. So long as this rather sorry state of affairs persists, the probability of these projects reaching a truly international audience is unlikely. The present journal is an effort to remedy this problem. By focusing on themes that are at once foundational and interdisciplinary—themes that are of deep interest to the academic community at large—this journal makes public the findings of specialized research, along with related images, on-line and in the English language. In this way, it is hoped that this journal will act as a platform for the international exchange of research into Japanese literature and culture. A journal of this sort, rich in information and images, as well as being easily accessible to the wider public, has yet to be attempted. Aside from its value as a companion to researchers, this journal should prove useful in the classroom, serving as a textbook for universities all over the world.

International collaborative research at NIJL was inaugurated by two professors. Dr. Haruo Shirane of Columbia University led a project entitled “Borders and Japanese Literature: Constructing a Platform of Knowledge,” while Dr. Peter Kornicki of Cambridge University led another project entitled “A Comprehensive Study of Publishing and Learning in the Early Edo Period.” Due to unavoidable circumstances, Dr. Shirane stepped down as leader of the former project. Seeing as how I had served as the representative of the aforementioned NIJL-NW Project—in a sense the forerunner of both Dr. Shirane’s and Dr. Kornicki’s projects—since 2016, I was consequently invited to assume the role of leader of the “Borders and Japanese Literature” project.

This English-language online journal, to which we have given the title *Studies in Japanese Literature and Culture* (SJLC), is a means of making the fruit of international collaborative research available to as wide an audience as possible, and as such, ought to serve as a springboard for further international collaborative research projects. All articles submitted to this journal have been reviewed by an advisory board that consists of high-level researchers hailing both from Japan and abroad, in hopes that this journal will be worthy of serious recognition and continued consideration in the decades to come.

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