In October 2013, I was the 11th Horner Fellow, traveling through Japan studying manga and anime, but also observing public libraries and how what teen services are like there, as well as what their libraries look like online and how their electronic resources compare to ours. It was an amazing experience like nothing else in my life so far.

Rather than just recounting what I saw, I kept a travelogue while I was there and I’d like to share it here to help convey some of the flavor and excitement of what I saw and experienced.

By the numbers:

- I visited for **ten** days,
- Traveled through **three** cities—Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima,
- Toured **twelve** libraries, museums, and reading rooms,
- Gave **one** university lecture,
- Shopped at **four** bookstores,
- And survived **five** typhoons. I’m not kidding.
OCTOBER 8

The view from my Japanese Fancy Hotel. I'm not ashamed to admit I spent 20 minutes this morning playing with my new friend, Japanese Fancy Toilet.

It's electronic and, if my high school math serves correctly, has 144,000 possible settings. Haven't figured out yet how to get it to call me a cab.
Adventures in cross-cultural communication #12: Trying to explain to your Japanese interpreter what a "behavior problem" is and why your library needs six nurses to handle them.

I think I can now say definitively that I have taken the most formally conducted and high-stakes tour of the Doraemon museum ever given.
So there is a manga museum in Tokyo. And they have actual manga scholars and curators there. Who speak fluent English. And who have the biggest, deepest, and broadest collection in the country. And who, if you ask them, apparently, will give you a personal private lecture and patiently answer all your dumb American questions.
And who will then take you into their archives and give you a private showing of priceless originals, including works from the 18th century (you know the guy who did the famous wave picture? Yeah, that stuff). And who will bring out all the WWII propaganda and protest art just because you ask. And who will then finally talk with you for over an hour about the history of comics and manga and Japanese vs. American artistic techniques, discuss gender and politics in animation, take a brief sideline into meta-reflexivism in manga, and finally opine on the role of art in reflecting on the individual's relationship with society.

Holy smokes, y'all: I'm a visiting scholar.

OCTOBER 10, part III

So. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that I'm the only Horner fellow who has spent the better part of her official Japan Library Association welcome dinner, hosted by the International Relations Committee, discussing the merits of D&D4e vs. Pathfinder.
"Hello, and thank you for letting me present a lecture on librarianship to your university class today. I am a prestigious visiting American scholar. Here you will see a photograph of me with a cat on my head, and beside it, a photograph of me riding an ostrich. There will be no followup questions."

**Travel tip:**

When your hosts take you to a manga store, it may be amusing to accidentally attempt to purchase erotica, but it is not an optimum public relations move.

**Sign at the train station:**

"Do not lose your ticket. If you lose your ticket, you will have to explain the situation. This may take some time."

**OCTOBER 12**

Took a flight today from Tokyo to Hiroshima. When they brought out the drink cart, I pointed to the pitcher of cold tea and asked for that. It was a hot day and I was thirsty. It was when she put the lid on the cup and handed it to me that I learned it was hot tea. Oh well. I had a tickle in my throat, so I figured it'd feel good. I let it sit for a little bit to cool before drinking it down. And what I want to know is this:
WHY IS BEEF CONSOMME A BEVERAGE OPTION.

OCTOBER 13

Went to the only public manga library in Japan today. Was comforted to learn their library runs internally almost the same as PCPL. Except when I asked about adult manga. They have those in their collection.

Those books are kept in a separate room where you have to ask a librarian for them by name. No one under 18 is allowed to read them. It's the job of four librarians to read each issue and decide what kind(s) of warning sticker to put on it: violence, language, or sex. Then when you check out the book, you're verbally warned by the librarian about how this book may potentially offend you. Apparently this is not a deterrent to readers.

Fun Foreign Facts:

JR (Japan Rail) forbids anyone in cosplay from boarding the train, because think of how uncomfortable that would make other people feel.
OCTOBER 14

Guys. You guys. You guys. The toilet in my new hotel room has a REMOTE CONTROL.

(With an electronic display.)
OCTOBER 15

Guys, I'm pretty sure I went to the Jedi Archives today, although they called it the National Diet Library (Kyoto). I was hosted by an extremely bright, formal, and impeccably Japanese young administrator with excellent English. One of the things he showed me was the automatic stacks. I'd never seen them: books are kept in boxes, then when staff asks the computer for a book, it selects the box, puts it on a little trolley thing (think Gringott's) and delivers the box to you on a conveyer system. And because it's Japanese, it even then turns the box around to make sure it's facing you. The boxes can be delivered to any staff station on any 8 floors. I was extremely impressed by this, as you can see in this pretty faithful re-enactment:

Admin: As you can see, these are our automatic shelves, which—
Me: OMG LIBRARY ROBOTS
Admin: Um, yes, the conveyer system—
Me: IT BRINGS THE BOOK RIGHT TO YOU IT'S LIKE LIVING IN THE FUTURE
Admin: I...yes.
Me: THIS IS THE MOST AMAZING THING EVAaaaaaARRRRRR
Admin: Thank you for your visit today.

OCTOBER 15, part II

I spent the morning with library robot lust and the afternoon making myself at home in another country. I'm having probably grammatically terrible but ultimately completely successful transactional conversations in Japanese. I watched the sun set over Kyoto from a 1000 year old castle. And I had dinner with a lovely couple and their little daughter where we discussed immigration policy, the role of the government in regulating the individual, and why preschool is a lot more difficult than you might remember. Love you, Japan.

OCTOBER 16

So I know we're in a hurry, but if you think I'm not stopping to take a picture of a sign that says, "Beauty Pelvis," you don't understand Americans at all.
So the other thing they'll do for a prestigious visiting American scholar is take you to the Kyoto Archives, where first they'll take you up to the digitizing room. There they take rare
documents from the 8th century and process them so researchers worldwide can access them online. You will get to touch these.

Next they'll take you down to the basement, where they have acres of old Kyoto government records. They'll pull out the WWII records so you can read through the day-to-day business of American-occupied Japan. You'll listen raptly as the curator tells you that these are his favorite in the whole library, because Japanese schools don't like to teach about the occupation, so this is a precious memory of history. You will also get to handle these.

Finally, they will take a photo of you to put on their website.

Because Japan.

OCTOBER 17

Talked to a public librarian this morning about library databases. I asked how well they're used at her library. She shook her head and said, "Almost nobody knows of the existence of databases at this library."

Then we all laughed and laughed.
This afternoon we visited a manga park, which is halfway between public library and private reading room. It's a revitalization project for the city but privately funded.

On the first floor are government offices for women and children. Out back is a park. Second floor is a paid admission (token cost—like $2) reading room for all ages with 35,000 volumes. It's all tatami and blond wood and natural light, with soft happy music playing overhead, and they have little reading cubbies everywhere, like comfy little closets so you can curl up and read privately. They have a custom-built catalog and a homegrown cataloging system, where the most popular category is biographies and school studies. There's a bathroom just for women and children and another for nursing mothers, and a special hot water pot just to mix formula. The staff makes rounds once an hour to control.
behavior issues. They said their biggest behavior problem is "sometimes children get too happy."

OCTOBER 18

One really nice thing about traveling in Japan is that it gives me a chance to play my favorite game, "How Do I Flush This Toilet?"

Seriously, Japan, there are fewer ways to leave your lover.
Today was the last official day of the fellowship. I went to the Tsukiji fish market, walked through a beautiful garden, then ate lunch in a gorgeous park before going to the Ghibli Museum, which is rightfully famous but I'll let you look up. I really can't think of a more perfect ending to a more perfect fellowship.

I hope I've conveyed how wide and deep and wonderful the Horner fellowship is, and I hope all of you will consider putting in for next time. You can choose whatever course of study you like and discover some amazing things and some lovely people along the way. And while I can't promise you you'll come back with as many humorous Fancy Toilet stories as I did, I can promise you your stories will be just as memorable.

Domo arigato gozaimasu!