

Library Youth Services, the Design of Youth Spaces, and the Puppetry of Japan:

David Brown - Horner Fellow - 2015

Introduction

My name is David Brown and I am the Youth Services Librarian for the Casa Grande Public Library in Casa Grande, Arizona. I am also the lucky 2015 recipient of the AZLA Horner Fellowship; a once in a lifetime opportunity that gave me the chance to visit Japanese libraries, museums, children's amusement spaces, and cultural institutions.

I've worked in Public and University Libraries in Arizona and California now for six years. I have a bachelor's degree in Television production, and I previously worked as a professional video editor before becoming a Youth Services Librarian. I am also an avid puppet enthusiast and performer. I've taken puppetry classes taught by Snuffaluffagus from *Sesame Street*, and I incorporate puppetry into most of my library storytimes and afterschool programs.

One of my major goals as a Librarian serving youth is to make the library experience for children as interactive and fun as possible, through implementing elements from children's books into the physical layout of the children's area at my library. I have constructed a *Chronicles of Narnia* Wardrobe, a *Harry Potter* Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ with a talking owl named Owlbert that leads kids on scavenger hunts, a singing tree, and an interactive puppet theater. I like to think that the library can bring books and stories to life in the physical space as a way to inspire a sense wonder and imagination, to get kids excited about reading, and to celebrate the stories that make our libraries so great. Basically, I like to think that the Library is Wonka's Chocolate Factory, and every kid in town has a golden ticket.

Fellowship goals / purpose of my trip:

- Explore library /museum services for children in Japan.
- Learn Japanese puppetry and storytelling techniques and practices.
- To study the architecture and design of children's spaces as well as the use of interactive elements for the purpose of education and play.
- To live and experience Japanese food, culture, religion, and entertainment.
- To learn from my Japanese librarian colleagues.

Trip Overview (October 12th - 28th)

My Japanese fellowship spanned three weeks, with most of my time divided between Tokyo, Kyoto, and rural areas of Nagano prefecture. I had the privilege to experience a variety of public youth spaces, youth amusement spaces, and puppetry facilities and festivals during my Japanese stay.

Overall Impressions of Japan:

- Japan is the cleanest and safest country I've ever visited. Even in the busiest public spaces people don't lock up their bicycles.



- The Japanese people are also incredibly respectful of the elderly and disabled, going out of their way to help them if needed. There are also yellow rubber strips on the sidewalks that act as paths for the blind, and they are on most city sidewalks.



(Typical Tokyo sidewalk)

- When compared to Japan, America feels light years behind when it comes to technology. Everything works and works well in Japan, from elevators and appliances to trains and high-speed rail. Trains are fast (almost up to 300mph), reliable, inexpensive, frequent, and highly used. Japanese employers in Tokyo typically cover all transportation costs for full-time employees.



- Japanese people are also incredibly friendly, always willing to help with directions or offer you snacks on the train.
- It is common for people of all ages in Japanese culture to be fond of characters and mascots. Even something as mundane as traffic or construction barriers aren't safe from the designs of Hello kitty.



Phase 1: Tokyo

1.) International Library of Children's Literature.



The International Library of Children's Literature is a branch service of the National DIET Library. The library is located in Ueno Park, a large park that houses museums, gardens, zoos, and ponds. The mission of the International Library of Children's Literature is to introduce children to books from around the world. The intended audiences of the museum are children and their families, though during my visit researchers, scholars, and teachers overwhelmingly used the library. The library itself is located in a renovated, historic building featuring large windows, minimal furniture, small collections, and large open spaces. During my visit I only encountered one small child reading on his own. It is not uncommon in Japanese libraries for children as young as 5 to visit and use the library and its services without a parent.

What makes the International Library of Children's Literature so unique is that it functions in a hybrid capacity as library and museum. The building features a large exhibit space dedicated to showcasing Japanese literature from past to present, and the theme of the exhibits change throughout the year, keeping the space fresh and interesting for those visiting. The library and museum are free to the public and there are headsets available for spoken information in different languages. Another interesting thing I learned at the library from multiple staff members that gave me the tour, was that they were not actually interested in youth services, but were more concerned with science and research, but the National Diet Library had assigned them to the International Library of Children's Literature.

2.) Studio Ghibli Museum



The Studio Ghibli Museum is an incredibly designed children's space with countless small and interesting passageways and stairs. The unique design of the museum makes it easy for kids to get lost in, but also easy enough for them to find their way back on track or at least to their parents. The Ghibli Museum does not allow for photographs to be taken while inside the building, so my only photographs of the space were of the exterior and the roof. Due to the popularity of the museum guests are only allowed to book a two-hour time slot, and a large portion of that time is spent navigating the craziness that is the gift shop.

The museum abounds with interactive, hands-on elements for kids to play with, learn from, and explore. One section of the museum is dedicated to the moving picture, showcasing cranks and levers for kids to turn and pull revealing animated scenes from Ghibli films. The cranks and levers allow kids to animate small photographs at their own speed, introducing them to the basic principles of animation. This section of the museum also houses many elaborate zoetropes, which are essentially stop motion figures that spin and simulate animation due to a strobe effect. Climbing up a spiral staircase to the second floor kids are introduced to a replica of Hayao Miyazaki's office (Ghibli's most famous animator and director),

with original artwork and artifacts for inspiration lining the walls. Miyazaki's office also featured a miniature library, where guests can look through the different books that inspired Miyazaki as an artist. Kids can also play inside of a giant stuffed animal cat-bus, explore an elaborate rooftop garden, and take an elevator that puts Willy Wonka's Great Glass Elevator to shame. Every minor detail of design, from door knobs to stained glass windows, are incredibly detailed making repeat visits a must for anyone lucky enough to attend.

Mosashino Place Public Library:



Mosashino Place Public Library was the most stunning public library that I've been to. The architecture is very futuristic, resembling a large, multi-story white cube, with bubble-like windows, and chairs that look like white beans. The bottom floor of the library houses local businesses consisting of little cafes and shops that were very busy. For kids, they had a band rehearsal space, a rock climbing wall, ping pong tables, a designated breastfeeding room, and a children's space in the library run by a nonprofit that allows the kids to hangout and be loud (still very quiet by American standards). Of all the public libraries I traveled to in Japan, this was by far the most used. There were probably 200 or so teens hanging out in the designated teen space.

In Japan, a library certificate is easily obtained, and does not require a separate masters degree. The shift in Japan toward the outsourcing of librarian and library jobs to non-profits and those in the private sector was seen as worrisome by my Japanese librarian colleagues.

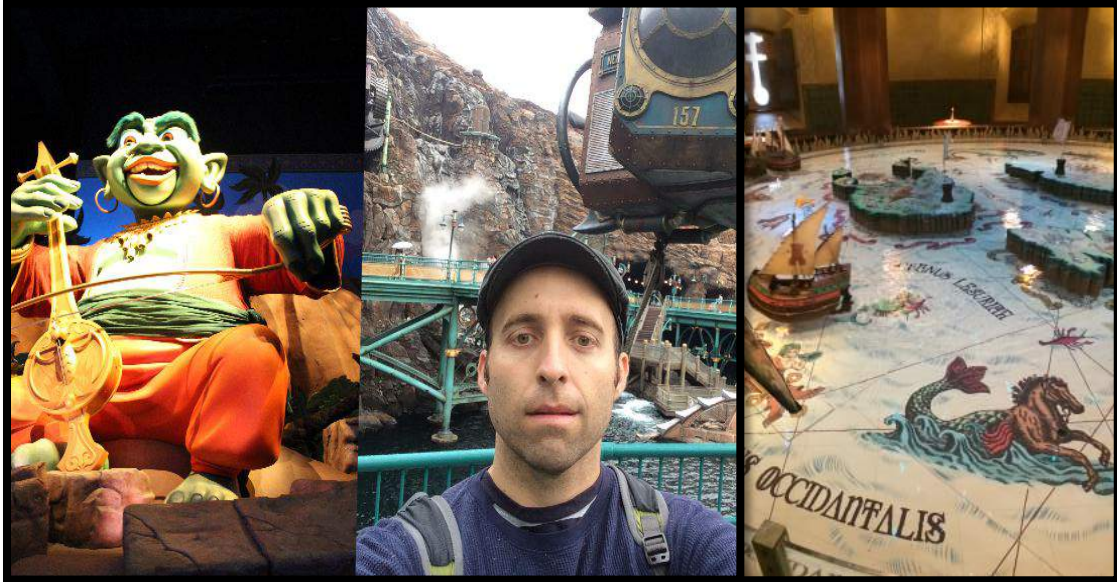
3.) Tokyo Disneyland



Tokyo Disneyland is home to some of the most sophisticated amusement park technology in the world. The *Winnie the Pooh* ride at the park features trackless ride vehicles, essentially driverless cars that move about and swarm with other cars to position riders at different parts of the ride at different times. The ride experience and seamlessness of the trackless technology was amazing. The *Monsters Inc.* ride provides park-goers with a memorable interactive exchange, allowing riders to shine flashlights at animatronic monsters, which in turn move and interact with park guests. The theme park overall is similar to the American Disneyland theme park, but caters to Japanese tastes. Cookies dominated gift shops, and popcorn carts were everywhere selling curry, black pepper, pumpkin, cappuccino, and chocolate flavored popcorn. There were probably over 20 different flavors of popcorn sold in the park.

Walkways in the park were huge and covered allowing for large numbers of people to navigate through the park easily without feeling crowded. The large scope of the park makes it feel less charming and intimate than a children's space like the Ghibli museum, but with the volume of tourists, I'm sure it is necessary. Buying gifts is a huge part of Japanese culture, and all throughout the park park-goers could be seen purchasing carts full of gifts. Most of the JLA members and guides I met during my Japanese stay gave me gifts; everything from scarves and shirts, to cookies, origami paper, and candy.

4.) Tokyo Disney Sea



Tokyo Disney Sea had some of the most sophisticated animatronics and robotics that I've ever seen. They have a *Sinbad* ride with characters that look like they could jump out of the ride and have a conversation with you. The park also features a land completely themed after Jules Verne's novels *20,000 leagues under the Sea*, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The land is so well themed and detailed that I could sit there all day and be satisfied with the experience. They also had an area called Port discovery where kids get maps and then wander through different castles and fortresses solving clues in an interactive scavenger hunt where kiosks illuminate maps to let kids know if they've answered riddles or problems correctly. This theme park is considered by many to be the best park in the world.

Nagano Prefecture



5.) Iida Bunraku Puppetry Festival / Lion Dance Festival / Ryokan / Onsen / Bunraku Museum

The city of Iida is famous for both puppets and apples. The Iida Bunraku Puppetry Festival I attended was my favorite part of my trip. I got away from the craziness of Tokyo to a small mountain village (small in Japan is around 100,000 people). I got to stay in a traditional Japanese hotel with bamboo floors, awesome food, and a bathhouse that overlooked a river where birds dove into the water near long wooden fishing boats. People in Iida grew both apples and persimmons, but apples were everywhere and stores sold apple everything: wine, pies, snacks, cookies, pickled apples, you name it, they sold it. The city of Iida also has a green bear mascot with an apple on his head for a hat. That Iida bear mascot could be found in all souvenir shops on everything from stickers and key chains to cookies and dolls.

While in Iida I was able to attend a Lion (more like a Dragon) Festival, where performers operated large Lion puppets and simulated dances to music performed by musicians located inside the oversized puppets. The Lion Festival is an annual festival that happens only in Iida, and is famous for having the largest lion puppets in Japan.

My hotel in Iida was located near a local shrine, where fireworks were set off all day to let people in the village know that there were going to be bunraku puppet performances at the shrine that day. The shows that I saw were amazing. People in the village train from the time they are small children to become puppeteers, musicians, and storytellers in the same way that American children play soccer or are in scouts. The festival had sake, food booths, and men from the shrine threw mochi desserts to people in the audience similar to floats in an American parade. Women and men were both performers, which I thought was really great, because lion dance performers were only men. Many of the puppet performances reflected stories revolving Shinto gods. My favorite puppet performance was the story of Ibesu, a god who challenges men to get him full or drunk, and if they do, they will have good luck. Ibesu is traditionally the god of fisherman, and one of the few Japanese gods to have not originated from India or China (according to my guide).

While in Iida I was also able to attend the bathhouse (onsen) at my hotel. Westerners are often denied access to onsens especially those who have tattoos, as tattoos are a sign of gang status in Japan. I summoned the courage to try out the onsen and it was a very interesting experience.

One of the last things I did in Iida was visit the Bunraku Puppetry Museum. The museum features modern bunraku puppets from a local master that were featured in a popular Japanese televised miniseries. It was great to see modern Japanese puppet fabrication in addition to the older puppets used in the puppetry festival.

Kyoto

6.) Manga Museum / Tonda Bunraku Traditional Puppetry Troupe / Temples – Shrines / Gion.

My first stop in Kyoto was the Manga Museum, which was converted from an old elementary school, and featured a vast manga library showcasing material from the art form's inception all the way to current published works. Almost everything in the museum was hands-on, with very few items behind glass. There were lots of teens just reading and hanging out in the space and the museum also teaches drawing workshops with famous Japanese manga illustrators. The Manga Museum mascot is a scorpion with a pen head for a tail.

At the Manga Museum I also got to see a form of Japanese street storytelling performance known as Kamichibai. Kamichibai uses large format pictures to tell stories. The pictures are housed inside of a wooden theater and are pulled out in order by the storyteller to tell the story. The art form has fallen out of favor, but with a little digging I managed to find one theater for sale in Tokyo, and I was able to purchase it along with several kamichibai stories. I have been performing the stories for my storytime kids and they love the theater and the large format of the pictures.

My next stop was the Tonda traditional Bunraku Puppetry theater in Nagano prefecture. I took a bullet train from Kyoto to Gion and then a small train out to the countryside of Nagahama. The puppet theater was located in an open field of rice paddies and smaller Japanese homes. The puppet theater houses the oldest puppets in Japan, which I was able to hold and operate. It was an amazing honor to be there and to have the opportunity to experience a national Japanese cultural treasure. The town acquired the puppets over 400 years ago from a group of traveling puppeteers who were snowed in. The travelers needed shelter and food for months while they were snowed in and had no way to repay their debts when the snow finally melted. The traveling puppeteers offered their puppets to the city as payment for their lodging and food. The city didn't know what to do with the puppets. Eventually a theater was built, and a puppetry culture developed around the gift. At the theater, I was given a tour by a Bunraku puppetry master.

After visiting Nagahama, I spent the remainder of my time in Kyoto sightseeing, exploring the cultural treasures, shrines, parks, and rock gardens the city has to offer. Kyoto is one of the most visited cities in Japan because it escaped being bombed in World War II, and so many of the historic buildings, temples, and shrines are still in tact. Kyoto is also one of the few places in Japan where you can spot real Geishas. My favorite sights in Kyoto were a Japanese rock garden shrine, an exhibit on ancient Meiji temple scrolls, and a Japanese Parade, showcasing the entire history of Kyoto from past to present. The costumes, and wooden carts in the parade were incredible.

Tokyo



7.) Welcome dinner with JLA / Tokyo Children's Library / Sightseeing / Picture Book Museum

Welcome Dinner

Most members of the JLA international committee spoke English as a second or third language and accompanied me at various stages of my trip. Having learned basic Japanese phrases and expressions, I was easily able to communicate with members who were not English speakers. Very rarely did I require a translator during my stay. Near the end of my trip I had the opportunity to eat with everyone at the same time. It was a great opportunity to reflect on my trip and thank everyone for all of their hard work in planning and organizing the various stages of my trip.

Tokyo Children's Library

The Tokyo Children's Library began as a private library inside of a woman's house, and now 70 years later it is still up and running. Here I learned that traditional Japanese storytimes don't use books (storytellers memorize stories), they also feature a storytime candle that the kids in attendance all extinguish when storytime is over. Kids are also extremely well behaved and many ride their bikes to the library on their own. Parents don't sit with their children in the storytime room during storytime; they sit quietly in the hall waiting for the craft project to begin. The Tokyo Children's Library also features a small shop that sells postcards, calendars, traditional Japanese hand cloths, books, and professional children's

collection development materials for public libraries. The Tokyo Children's Library mascot was a baby elephant.

Sightseeing: Imperial Palace, Meiji Shrine, Other shrines.

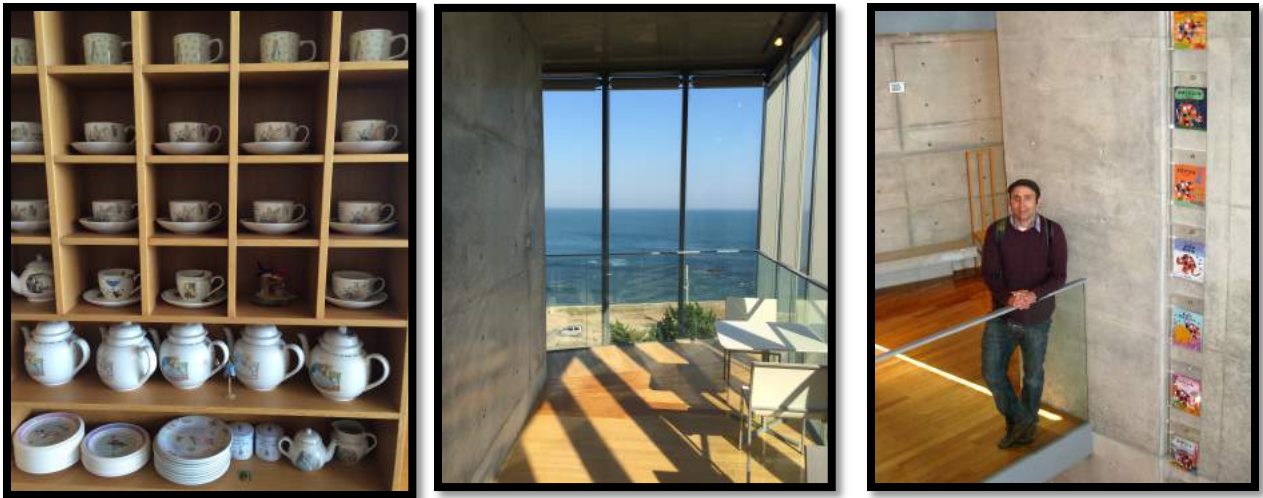
The original Imperial Palace in Tokyo is no longer standing, but the original wall and stones that fortified the palace are still in tact. The gardens on the grounds of the Imperial Palace create a sense of peace and tranquility in a hectic and sprawling urban business landscape.

The Meiji Shrine I visited in Tokyo was incredible, consisting of the largest wooden arches in Japan. At the Meiji shrine I got to see a traditional Japanese Wedding, and I got to see the custom of bringing young children to the shrine on their 3rd, 5th, and 7th birthdays. Parents bring their children to the shrine on these special days to give thanks for their survival, because historically children perished during these younger, fragile years. Families also bring vehicles to the shrine to be blessed, and visitors must first cleanse their hands and mouths before entering. There is a specific way to cleanse the hands and mouth, and I unfortunately washed in the wrong order and got some wild looks, luckily my guide was there to correct me.

I also visited other various shrines across the city with a trained tour guide. There are so many temples and shrines in Japan that the meaning or purpose of many are forgotten. Some shrines are heavily visited while others along alleyways and sidewalks are overgrown and neglected. The most interesting shrine I visited with my tour guide featured the largest paper lantern in Tokyo, and the grounds are famous for vendors who sell little pancake-like pastries filled with sweet red bean paste. One of my other favorite sites were a series of Gingko trees that survived the bombings of WWII. The trees were melted and scarred, but otherwise thriving.



Picture Book Museum Iwaki City



Iwaki City is located in Fukushima prefecture, so I was able to see some of the devastation from the recent tsunami there. Beaches and homes were destroyed, and tsunami barriers were being built all along the coast. The Picture Book Museum is located on a cliff overlooking the ocean. The architecture of the building is industrial and minimal from the outside, looking similar to a cement parking structure. The inside of the museum, however, was breathtaking. The walls of the museum were lined from ceiling to floor with books. Whole walls featured books about dogs and cats. The museum is privately owned, and there were no children inside on the day I visited, but it is considered a popular field trip destination for children. The museum also had a huge wall of tea sets where kids can have tea overlooking the ocean. The Picture Book museum is a brilliant example of the potential for books and libraries to inspire awe in new generations of readers through architecture, location, and design.

Things I take away:

- Japanese libraries, neighborhoods, trains, and companies are amazing at branding and use mascots and characters to their advantage. Characters and mascots are prominently featured in parades, festivals, pamphlets, and fundraisers creating a sense of community pride amongst children, and

- surprisingly adults. Adults in Japan love characters and mascots; they can be seen on shirts and sweaters, and even on traffic and construction barriers.
- Children in general are polite, quiet, and respectful. During storytimes kids sit separate from their parents. Japanese libraries seem less program intensive, with the main goal of most libraries being to introduce children to books. Despite being incredibly technologically advanced, Japanese people still can be found reading physical books, and books stores are fairly common as well as DVD shops.
 - Japanese libraries don't seem to have to worry about crime, drunkenness, disorderly patrons, mental illness and all of the many other problems that we as librarians have to deal with here in America. They do have to worry about funding (materials) and the outsourcing of jobs to non-profits (similar to boys and girls clubs). Japanese libraries are really quiet, and people in general are very polite, some libraries I visited had rowdy teens, but only in designated areas where it was okay to be so.
 - I also take away new storytelling (kamichibai) and puppetry skills (bunraku) that I plan on implementing in my youth services for children. I also take away new insight into the mission and goals of foreign libraries. Learning from librarians around the world is a great way to inject new ideas into our profession and practice as Librarians in Arizona.

I encourage all members of AZLA to apply for the Horner Fellowship in the future. The fellowship was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I will always cherish and be thankful for.