

*The Impact of Privatization on the Expansion of
the Public Library's Roles in Japan*

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Abstract

In 2003, the management of Japanese public libraries faced significant changes since the Japanese government began introducing the designated administrator system, one of the methodologies used to advance privatization, into public institutions. Since public libraries were targeted for privatization in 2003, the number that have introduced the designated administrator system has been steadily increasing over the years. For instance, in 2016, 474 public libraries were reportedly using the system and were managed by private companies or non-profit organizations. At the same time, this system has been causing a huge controversy in the field of library and information science. However, most of the research that has been conducted on this topic has involved evaluating sets of opinions objecting to privatization of public libraries. The purpose of this research is to explore various stakeholders' views concerning privatization of public libraries by using qualitative content analysis. To achieve this objective, the authors first collected articles regarding outsourcing in Japanese public libraries from the *Asahi Shimbun*, which had the largest number of articles relevant to our study out of Japan's five major newspapers, from 2003 to 2016. Second, the authors collected 123 newspaper articles and extracted 94 stakeholder opinions from these items. Third, the authors analyzed these opinions and identified 19 types of stakeholders. Finally, the authors illustrated that: (1) a debate regarding the new system had been gradually spreading to Japanese communities and rural areas, (2) the number of library users' opinions had recently increased, (3) most citizens were interested in issues of library management, and (4) public officers used "privatization of public libraries" as a form of political influence in their local communities. In fact, privatized public libraries are becoming a positive foundation of local communities, increasingly capable of providing high quality services and creating new benefits for library users, and having a growing economically efficient influence on local areas. Therefore, the number of libraries managed by private companies is increasing, and this situation is causing controversy in Japan. In conclusion, even though library management through privatization still has some unsettled issues, such as collecting and protecting personal information, it is difficult for local communities to reverse the momentum of privatization of public libraries.

Thus, the authors have concluded that the stakeholders of Japanese public libraries must recommend the next steps regarding the management of these institutions through private companies depending upon the unique situations that each local government faces.

Keywords

Public Library, Library Management, Community Development, Privatization, Designated Administrator System, Content Analysis

1 Research Background

1.1 Privatization of public institutions

In the 1970s, public facilities and institutions supported civic life and were managed by national or local governments. After World War II, most of the infrastructure and public services in many countries were developed through government entities. However, beginning in the 1970s, the economic situation deteriorated in many countries due to changes in the political arena inspired by events such as the oil crisis.

Privatization of public institutions increased in the 1970s through initiatives by the Thatcher cabinet in the United Kingdom and the Reagan administration in the United States to change from “big government” to “small government.” In Japan, privatization of public institutions (e.g., the Japanese National Railways and the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation) was conducted in the 1980s. Yumiko Noda (2004) states that after the 1980s, “Due to the collapse of the economic bubble and economic stagnation in the 1990s, the Japanese government [grew], and the movement [from] ‘government to private’ [was] completely suspended.” However, privatization was formalized as part of public finances and governmental reforms in developed countries except for Japan, where it was established after the 1990s. Noda (2004) also notes that in the 1990s, “A wide range of public-private partnerships (PPP) such as PFI[s] [private finance initiatives] and outsourcing [were] examined, and the form of involvement of [the] ‘private sector’ diversified.” Therefore, the change in public management described above came later in Japan than in other developed countries.

In the 2000s, the second wave of privatization occurred in Japan. In 2003, a designated administrator system that had a considerable influence on the management of public libraries and other institutions in Japan was established by the Koizumi cabinet. This change involved administrative reform, and the cabinet’s major policies advocated the decentralization of governmental organizations, revision of the Local Autonomy Act in 2003, and the establishment of a designated administrator system. This system is described in Law 2, Clause 3 of the Local Government Act, in Article

244. According to this law, Japanese local governments can designate the responsibility of administration of a public accommodation to a private organization; therefore, Japanese local governments that were traditionally in charge of managing public libraries could leave their supervision to private companies. This system allowed private companies and organizations to manage and operate public facilities and institutions, and both the national and local governments expected to improve high quality services and reduce costs as a result.

1.2 Japanese public libraries managed by the designated administrator system

Privatization of public libraries has been introduced in several developed countries, including the United States. The American Library Association (ALA) (2011) defines privatization as “the shifting of policy-making and the management of library services or the responsibility for the performance of core library services in their entirety, from the public to the private sector.” Jane Jerrard et al. (2012) note that “the trend of privatizing public libraries started in 1997” in the United States. However, the ALA (2011) affirms that “publicly funded libraries should remain directly accountable to the public they serve. Therefore, the ALA opposes the shifting of policy-making and management oversight of library services for the public to the private for-profit sector.” Moreover, Jerrard and her colleagues (2012) report that in the United States, “with the addition of Santa Clarita, [only] seventeen public library systems, comprising seventy-one libraries, were being managed by a private company” in July 2011. Thus, privatization of public libraries has not expanded in the United States.

In Japan, there were 3,273 public libraries in 2017 (Library Researching Committee of JLA 2018). Although privatization of public libraries has increased, some are still managed by local governments. Both Japanese public libraries and privatized libraries provide services to users for free. According to a survey of the Japan Library Association (JLA) (Library Policy Planning Committee of JLA 2017), in 2017, 536 out of 3,273 public libraries were managed by private companies using a designated administrator system (see Figure 1).

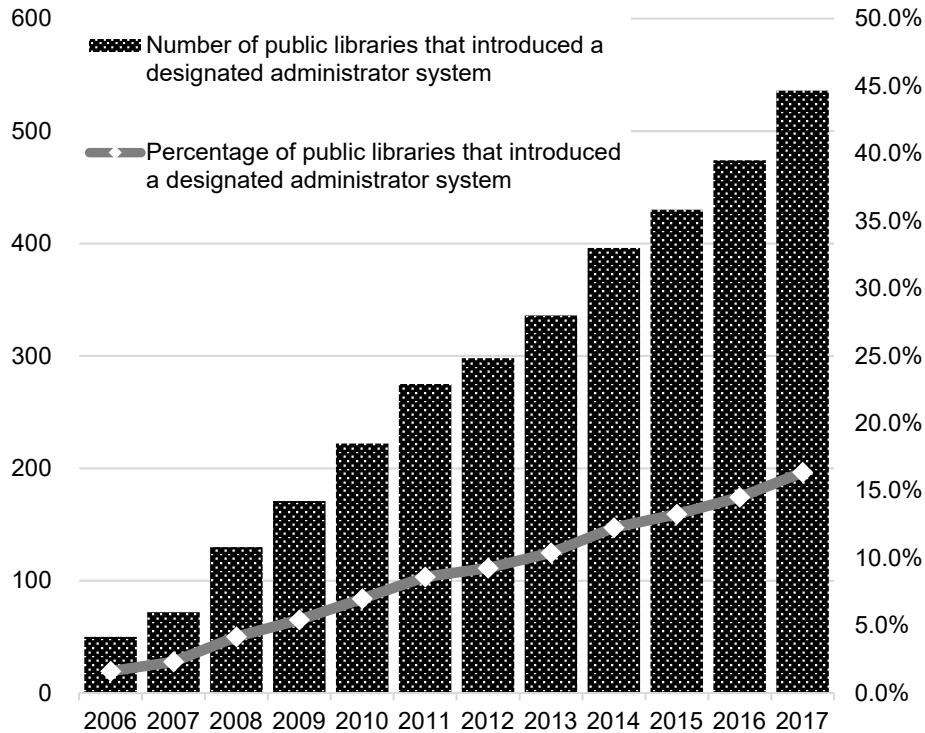


Figure 1 Change in number and percentage of public libraries that introduced privatization in Japan

The number of Japanese libraries that have introduced the designated manager system has been increasing over the years. While more libraries have implemented the system, researchers found some cases in which Japanese local governments stopped using a designated administrator system for public libraries and have moved back to managing the institutions by themselves.

An important event concerning Japanese public libraries occurred in 2012. A famous private company in Japan, the Culture Convenience Club (CCC), entered the Japanese library market with its “Tsutaya library” and created a significant impact. CCC was initially a bookstore (operating as “Tsutaya bookstores”), but is now a major point-card-company in Japan and is leading the entertainment industry. One of the positive changes that CCC introduced to library management was presenting the library as a meeting place. This innovation has succeeded in attracting library users. However, CCC’s system of library management has several problems such as the

protection of personal information and collection building. Therefore, some stakeholders were against contracting with CCC to develop its proposed Tsutaya library.

1.3 Research on outsourcing in Japanese public libraries

In Japan, researchers have written a few summaries (every 5 years) concerning privatization of public libraries and the arguments surrounding it. This research has often included outsourcing movements.

Toshihiko Ogawa (2008) addresses the early stage of privatization in Japanese public libraries, stating that “public library services were outsourced because of unavoidable circumstances during the post-war confusion.” From this perspective, the Japanese government had to outsource public libraries in order to construct them and provide postwar library services to its citizens. Specifically, outsourcing of library services was related to the development of Japanese public libraries. Moreover, Ogawa (2008) explains that most of the negative opinions on outsourcing were expressed by librarians.

Masanori Koizumi (2010) notes that in “the discussion of the style of library management was a dualism as to whether or not to introduce privatization.” Additionally, there was the case of Komaki City, in which the discussion regarding the contract with CCC evolved into a matter requiring a local vote. Concerning this example, Koizumi and his colleagues (2016) describe how “the formation of opinions by the civic [body] will affect not only library management but also [...] overall public management.” Specifically, discussion regarding the management of libraries is not restricted to local government and library stakeholders.

However, the papers referenced above were just studies of arguments collected from librarians and other professionals from academic/technical journals, in addition to negative opinions against the privatization of libraries. For instance, conventional research has focused on summarizing discussions expressed only by librarians, contracted companies, and researchers in the library information science field. Indeed, they have important insights about privatization and management of libraries, and summarizing their opinions is of great value. However, stakeholders who provide

library services as well as those who utilize them are also involved in public libraries; therefore, it is necessary to collect and summarize the opinions of all parties engaging with these institutions.

2 Research Purpose and Motivation

The purpose of this research is to organize and analyze the topics/opinions that have been discussed concerning the outsourcing of public libraries in Japan from 2003 to 2016. Previous studies have been performed that have summarized opinions regarding outsourcing of public libraries. However, most of them have only outlined opinions from library staff and supporters. In this research, viewpoints regarding outsourcing of public libraries were not limited to those of library staff and supporters. The authors collected topics/opinions presented by various stakeholders in the public library field and formed the following two hypotheses: 1) The number of citizens' opinions on outsourcing of public libraries has increased, and 2) the number of positive and negative opinions is the same. This research aims to contribute to the discussion of a future style of library management that considers library users.

3 Research Method

3.1 Extraction of objects

In this research, using content analysis, the authors widely collected and analyzed opinions concerning privatization of public libraries that were obtained not only from library staff and supporters whose views were typically published in specialized or academic journals, but also from various stakeholders. The authors focused on newspapers that were published from 2003 (the year when the designated administrator system was introduced to Japanese public libraries) to 2016. The authors analyzed every paragraph of newspaper articles published in this period. Using content analysis, they could systematically extract and analyze all opinions regarding the privatization of libraries.

In Japan, there are five major newspapers: the *Asahi Shimbun*, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, the *Nikkei* (formerly known as the *Nihon Keizai*

Shimbun), and the *Sankei Shimbun*. To survey these newspapers, the authors used the following search expression: “(designated administrator OR outside order OR outsourcing OR PFI OR privatization) AND library (in Japanese).” The authors searched for articles related to privatization of public libraries on five databases using keywords that were selected based on previous research. Out of the five national newspapers, the authors chose the *Asahi Shimbun* as the research target since it had the most articles about the privatization of the public library (see Table 1).

A total of 1,228 articles were counted from the *Asahi Shimbun*, and the number of extracted articles per year from the publication ratio of each year was calculated. From this result, 123 cases (corresponding to 10% of all articles) were selected. As a result of dividing 123 articles to be surveyed into paragraph units, the total number of paragraphs counted was 1,474.

Finally, the authors analyzed the topics/opinions presented in each paragraph of the extracted articles, reading every one carefully and confirming whether its content related to the privatization of the public library. If the content matched the theme of this research, the authors extracted the opinions and noted the characteristics of the people or groups who expressed them.

Table 1 Search Results

Newspaper title	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	<i>Mainichi</i>	<i>Nikkei</i> (<i>Nihon-Keizai</i>)	<i>Sankei</i>
Number of articles	1,228	1,061	986	147	139

3.2 Content Analysis

The authors evaluated 1,474 extracted items. According to the manual, they read every paragraph and analyzed the discussion regarding Japanese public libraries. In the analysis, the authors collected opinions concerning privatization, data on the characteristics of persons/organizations who expressed their viewpoints, data concerning whether the opinions expressed were positive or negative regarding privatization, and the bibliographic information of the extracted articles.

An example of the analysis is shown in Figure 2. A sentence surrounded by a thick border line indicates a paragraph to be analyzed.

- 1) The opinion is the part underlined and noted with the subscript “1).”
- 2) The persons/groups who expressed opinions were "three civic groups in the city," underlined and indicated with the subscript “2).”
- 3) Whether the opinion regarding privatization was positive or negative was determined to be “Negative” based on the viewpoint indicated at Subscript “1).” The authors analyzed the target paragraphs using this method.

<p>On the introduction of the designated manager system under discussion at the Nakatsu City Library Management Council, ²⁾<u>three civic groups in the city</u>[,] announced [by] Mayor Masakatsu Shinkai and a chief of education[,] Kazuhiko Kitayama[,] on [the]19th, [believed that] ¹⁾<u>“the city should [abandon] the introduction of the designated administrator system, and we'd like to continue the direct management”</u> and hand[ed] out the signature of 3391 people.</p>
<p>1) Opinions <i>the city should abandon the introduction of the designated administrator system, and we'd like to continue the direct management</i></p>
<p>2) Persons/groups who expressed opinions <i>three civic groups in the city</i></p>
<p>3) Positive or negative regarding privatization <i>Negative</i></p>

Figure 2 An example of content analysis

Source: Nakatsu City library “Continue to manage by the city government”
Submission of signatures by civic groups/ Oita. (2010). *Asahi Shimbun*, 29.

4 Results

Out of the 1,474 paragraphs that were analyzed (from 75 articles extracted from the original 123 articles that were surveyed), 243 paragraphs matched the theme of this study. Finally, the authors identified 94 opinions and 19 types of stakeholders who expressed their viewpoints in these paragraphs. The authors analyzed the number of articles that matched the theme and created a graph (see Figure 3). Based on this graph, the authors highlighted two turning points in 2006 and 2011. The authors divided and analyzed the time periods into Phase I (2003 to 2006), Phase II (2007 to 2011), and Phase III (2012 to 2016) due to changes in the number of opinions.

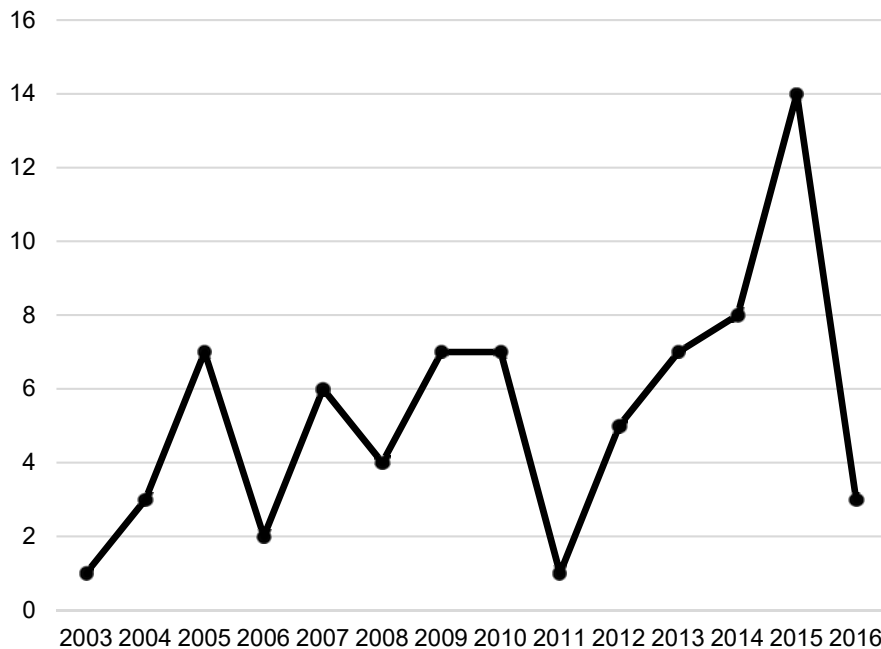


Figure 3 Change in the number of articles

4.1 Opinions and Stakeholders

The authors examined 94 collected opinions, which were categorized into three groups: (1) positive, (2) negative, and (3) neutral regarding the privatization of the

public library. As a result, they identified 56 positive opinions, 35 negative opinions, and 3 neutral ones.

There were 19 types of stakeholders noted in the articles, which the authors classified, after further analysis, into the following five groups: (1) Local Government, (2) Librarian, (3) User, (4) Contracted Company, and (5) Other.

The authors classified opinions according to the stakeholders that expressed them and created a graph (see Figure 4) to show the changes in the totals for each of the aforementioned phases (study periods). As a result, in Phase I, stakeholders in the Local Government and Librarian categories expressed many opinions. In Phase II, stakeholders in the Librarian group continually expressed many opinions; however, the number of viewpoints of those in the User category increased, as well. In Phase III, the number of opinions expressed by individuals in the Local Government group increased, and those in the Librarian category decreased. Therefore, the percentages of opinions expressed by Users and Librarians were equal.

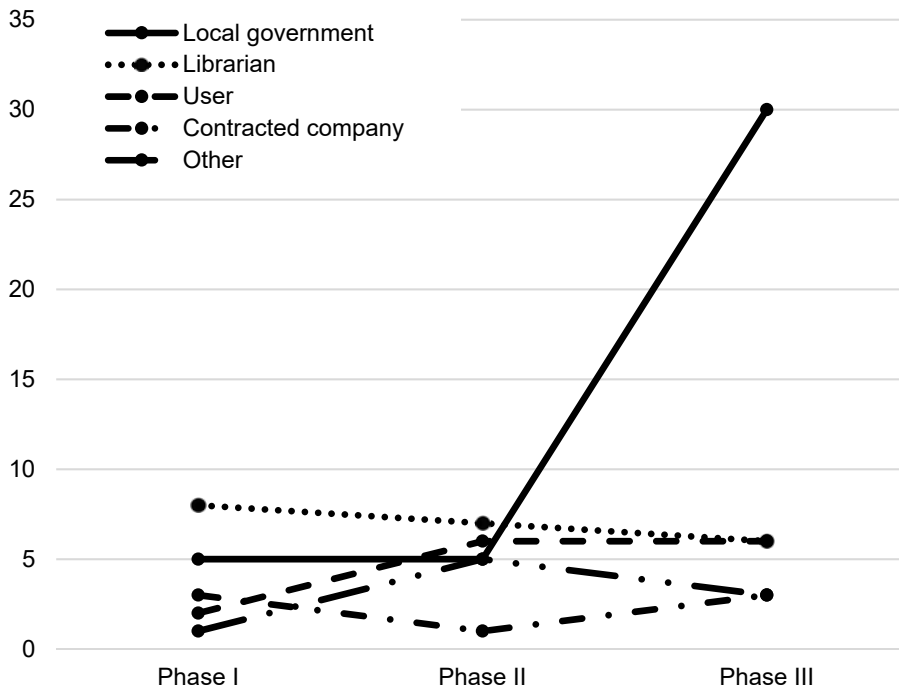


Figure 4 Change in percentage of groups that expressed opinions

4.2 Relationship between Opinions and Stakeholders

The authors analyzed the opinions of the stakeholders found in the newspaper paragraphs and created a cross tabulation representing the positive and negative opinions and types of stakeholders for every year (see Table 2).

Table 2 Transition of stakeholders' opinions about privatization of public libraries

group	year	Phase I					Phase II					Phase III					total		
		2003	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16				
Local government	positive	0	4	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	2	4	3	5	8	5	4	25	43
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	5	7
Librarian	positive	0	0	3	0	3	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	13
	negative	0	3	2	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	5	23
User	positive	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	9
	negative	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	1	3	1	5	13
Contracted company	positive	0	0	3	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	10
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Other	positive	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	7
	negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	8
Summary	positive	0	4	9	0	13	1	4	3	2	3	13	3	8	8	6	5	30	82
	negative	1	3	2	0	6	0	7	0	4	0	11	5	1	2	6	4	18	52

These results showed that stakeholders started actively discussing privatization of public libraries in Japan in 2012, ten years after the designated administrator system was introduced.

On one hand, several positive opinions regarding privatization were expressed by individuals in the Local Government category. On the other hand, many negative opinions were stated by stakeholders in the Librarian and User groups.

For instance, the positive opinions expressed by individuals in the Local Government category concerned the improvement of library service quality and library budget reduction, and stakeholders in this group recently indicated that the new role of public libraries is creating prosperity for the town. However, the negative opinions expressed indicated that individuals in the Librarian and User categories feared the disclosure of their personal information after the privatization of libraries, and that management by private companies might be unable to guarantee continuity.

4.3 Expansion of discussions about privatization

Since the authors collected the bibliographic information of articles used in this survey, they analyzed where articles were published. As a result, the authors found that 11 articles were printed on pages reserved for national news, and 64 items were published on pages focusing on local stories. (Some Japanese national newspapers have approximately 30 pages, in which roughly 90% of coverage focuses on national news while the other pages are reserved for regional information. Concerning local Japanese newspapers, the authors note the opposite is true.) The authors created a graph to express the change of percentage of articles which were published (see Figure 5). In all phases, the percentage posted on national pages never exceeded the

percentage posted on local ones, and the distinction between local and national editions increased.

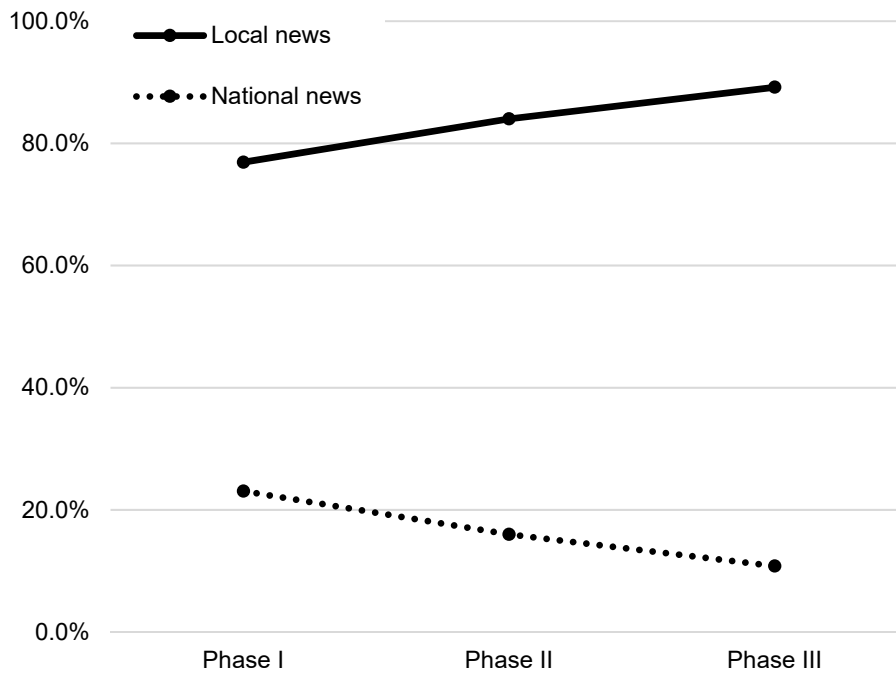


Figure 5 Change in percentage of local and national news

4.4 Case Analysis: Tagajo City Public Library

The Tagajo City Public Library was a representative case (Suzuki 2016), albeit a very controversial one managed by CCC, due to the variety of opinions expressed by the public regarding privatization. This article was published in the local section of a morning edition newspaper on March 21, 2016 and reported on a newly opened public library in Tagajo, Miyagi Prefecture. Tagajo, with a population of sixty thousand, is located in northeastern Japan and is next to Sendai, one of the largest cities in the country (see Figure 6). The Tagajo City Public Library is a complex facility that consists of a bookstore, a restaurant, a café, and a convenience store, a feature not commonly found in Japanese public libraries. By 2018, although the library had been open for only two years, many users had come to enjoy the facilities

(see Table 3). It could be said that it was a very crowded library considering the scale of the city.



Figure 6 Location of Tagajo City

Table 3 Statistics of the Tagajo City Public Library

Collection	Circulation	Users	Population
256,075	220,728	1,382,062	62,365

This article consisted of 20 paragraphs, 2107 characters, and two photos, making it one of the largest articles used in this research. According to the article, the Tagajo City Public Library was the third library managed by CCC in Japan. The story mainly

focused on the criticisms of CCC's past library management and the opinions of local governments. The authors collected four groups of stakeholders and eight opinions from this article. The opinions consisted of four from members of the local government, one from CCC, one from a user, and two from other parties.

Opinions shared by the local government (e.g., the Tagajo City Board of Education) included concerns which were also problems noted in CCC's past libraries, such as the leakage of personal information, book selection, and searching issues. From these opinions, it was shown that the local government had great expectations for library management performed by CCC and that the role of public libraries had been changing. CCC expressed its confidence in its improved library management abilities, obtained as a result of the accumulation of know-how after entering the library market. However, one user was concerned about difficulty finding books in CCC's prior libraries due to a change in its classification system. Other opinions (categorized as "Other" because the stakeholders were not clearly described) included concern about selection.

In this scenario, it was shown that in order for public libraries to change, local governments had considered entrusting library management to private companies that had accumulated know-how, such as CCC. However, CCC might have had a negative influence on aspects such as construction and library collections, resulting in critical opinions from users.

In this case, the problem involved classification (see Table 4). Almost all Japanese libraries use the Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC) system for organization of collections. NDC is a unique classification system used in libraries and is difficult for many users. The classification that was introduced in the Tagajo City Public Library was a special system created by CCC that was easy for users to understand since it was similar to shelving organization seen in bookstores. Yet, this system was the subject of users' criticism. This suggested that recent changes in Japanese libraries were unacceptable to users. Adopting CCC's system did not match what users wanted.

Furthermore, in this case, there was a problem concerning profits obtained through library management (see Table 4). Such a problem had not occurred in traditional

Table 4 Opinions in This Case

Groups	Opinions
Local government	Circulation data is never analyzed for marketing purposes by CCC.
	Approximately 10% of the book purchasing budget in the previous library was used for magazines. Cost reduction is needed (regarding decreasing magazines in the new library)
	The user may say that the library intended for books to be bought at the Tsutaya bookstore in the library. However, that type of scenario occurs in public-private partnerships.
	Users will be confused in Tagajo, too.
Contracted company	It is different from Takeo City and Ebina City libraries (managed by CCC); our staffs entered one year ago and cooperated with the city board of education and prepared enough in Tagajo. We want to constantly evolve while watching the reaction of users.
User	Users cannot find a book.
Other	It is very difficult for users to find books using CCC's original classification.
	Selection is prioritized based on profit.

Source: Suzuki, T. (2016). Tsutaya library open today with expectation and anxiety in Tagajo City. *Asahi Shimbun*, 19.

public libraries since the library was a non-profit facility and had a system that allowed almost all services to be used free of charge, except copy services. Therefore, the authors noted that users were against profits for public libraries, which were generally non-profit facilities.

The article mentioned that there were no central facilities in the city, and that the local government planned to attract 1.2 million users each year despite the municipality's relatively modest population. The local government expected the public library to be a central location for attracting people. Furthermore, it was clear that CCC had reliably accumulated know-how regarding public library management while improving problems.

As a result of being assigned a central function in the city, the library changed from being simply a space to read and study, which was the traditional role of Japanese public libraries. Recently, Japanese public libraries have been transforming into spaces where users communicate with each other. To realize such a change, local governments have come to consider library management using a designated administrator that has accumulated know-how, such as CCC.

Certainly, the library management by CCC described above was an advanced case that tried to break away from traditional Japanese library management to make users' convenience compatible with corporate profitability. However, it was not well accepted by users of Japanese libraries for the institutions to be managed as private, for-profit companies. It was believed that Japanese libraries traditionally emphasized free principles and that users were unconsciously seeking libraries that were non-profit facilities. While library management by CCC was characterized by the positive additions of a café and a bookstore, there was no need for CCC to be involved in library management at all. Furthermore, these additions were management options that could be sufficiently executed even by local governments. From this, it could be said that entrusting library management to private organizations was not necessarily a required condition for the library to succeed as a town center.

5 Conclusions

As a result of this survey, we observed that in Phase III, opinions on the privatization of public libraries indicated that local governments were taking the initiative in expressing viewpoints, and that the number of opinions expressed by librarians had decreased. In contrast, the number of users' opinions increased. Also, articles printed on local news pages were increasing more than those posted on national pages. Specifically, the topics were considered not only as matters of national debate, but also as social issues at the regional level. This transformation has allowed local communities to recognize the management of public libraries as their own issue, and to transfer authority from the national government to the regional level. From these facts, it was noted that both local governments and users had come to search for their own ideal library management systems. As a result, opinions regarding the management of public libraries and its role had become subjects of discussion. Additionally, in some municipalities, privatized libraries had begun being recognized as central locations.

The reason that these discussions were increasing was that CCC entered the library management market in 2012. The first Tsutaya library became a nationally discussed topic as it gained great success in attracting users. Meanwhile, negative opinions were expressed from the perspective of protecting personal information, as there were concerns about the commercial use of one's personal loan history, etc. As a result, in some contexts, introducing management by CCC into public libraries was decided through voting. The emergence of opinions on municipal development was closely related to the change in the status of public libraries. The development of information and communication technology in recent years has significantly influenced the management of public libraries, and it is no longer necessary for citizens to obtain information in these institutions.

The creation of a new function of the public library has meant change for the role of public libraries in Japan. Local governments have tried to cooperate with private enterprises, hoping that competition and the flow of capital would lead to the development of local communities through privatization. However, a designated administrator system involves a contract deadline, and the continuity of management

cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, permanent support by private organizations for town planning is not secured.

In the near future, the management style of public libraries will need to respond to the specific needs of each region to perform these institutions' new functions. Therefore, it is desirable for Japanese public libraries and their stakeholders to be able to choose the appropriate style to fulfil the needs of the community. Additionally, since libraries are supposed to select from only two types of management styles (i.e., direct oversight by governments, or supervision by private organizations with a designated administrator system), it is necessary to create an environment where stakeholders can discuss various methods of library administration.

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