

Symposium Overview:

On Saturday 18th November 2017, Hiroshima University Writing Center hosted a symposium on the topic of: “Support for Researchers Publishing in English: From the Perspective of Institutional Administration”.

The purpose of this symposium was to bring people together who are engaged in supporting researchers writing in English at universities and institutions across Japan. Further, the purpose of this symposium was to offer an environment for administrators to share information and ideas about good practices and confronting challenges. The symposium was not organized from the perspective of instructional experts in academic writing but from that of administrators of the services for researchers. Rather than focusing on enhancing skills in academic writing in English, the symposium provided participants the opportunity to share with each other their assessment and analysis of the effectiveness, potential and institutional initiatives related to this important topic. Two keynote speakers offered their insights, four presenters offered case reports, and six groups discussed a number of relevant topics. These are summarized and titles of speakers’ presentations are linked to their PowerPoint slides below.

Keynote Speakers:

1. **Mr. Tom Gally (University of Tokyo *in Japanese*)** – [Overcoming Individual Challenges and Institutional Barriers to Research Progress in Japan.](#)

According to an August 2017 report from the National Institute of Science and Technology Policy, the output and quality of scientific research in Japan—as measured through publication volume and citations—have grown little in recent years; in fact, some fields have seen a decline. In the past decade, Japan’s overall international ranking has dropped from fourth to ninth. This trend has occurred despite the Japanese government’s continuing large-scale investment in education and research. In this talk, I will examine the stubborn barriers to greater international productivity faced by Japanese researchers and institutions, focusing on three main areas: linguistic, institutional, and cultural. The linguistic barriers include the very different structures and vocabularies of Japanese and English and the limited motivation for people raised in Japan to acquire English ability, especially at an early age. The institutional barriers include a national curriculum intended to give all children a uniform education and universities, research laboratories, and scholarly societies focused largely on

parochial needs. The cultural barriers include strong identity by many individuals as Japanese rather than as multinational or global; assumptions about interpersonal relationships and career paths that hinder international engagement; and a lessening sense of urgency about Japan's international status. The talk will conclude with proposals for positive, practical steps that universities, research organizations, and other institutions can take to try to overcome these barriers.

2. **Dr. Carole Sargent (Georgetown University *in English*)** – [Operations and Management of the Office of Scholarly Publications at Georgetown University.](#)

After introducing the office, I'll outline the three kinds of support for faculty scholarly publishing that we offer: Groups, Writing Together, and Individual Meetings. I will explain how each works at an American university, with the understanding that a Japanese university may choose to do things differently.

Next I will share some of our favorite books and resources that we have developed over 11 years. The books *How to Write a Lot*, and *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* are useful for faculty at all levels. We also use the Pomodoro timer technique, which is available as a phone app. The journal *Nature* has a wonderful online series that helps all scholars, not just scientists. I'll show how I met editors for Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Cambridge, etc. at academic conferences.

There are always challenges to scholarly productivity, such as a changing publishing world in crisis, that make things harder. Also, as scholars advance in their careers they can have a heavy administrative burden. Growing families are a joy, but new children also mean less time. Finally, faculty mentoring can be uneven, so this office provides consistency of standards.

Next I will explain the university organization chart and structure, and also the necessary qualifications to do this job. I'll also share my favorite methods for attracting more faculty participants, including events and workshops. Finally, I will discuss our most important institutional collaborations, especially those with our various campuses. Although I only work on one campus, I give workshops for faculty on all of our campuses, including Medicine, Law, Business, and our university in Qatar.

Case Reports:

1. **Dr. Xin Yao (Osaka University *in English*)** – [How university research administrators can help researchers with scholarly publication: An example from Osaka University.](#)
 - In this report, Dr. Xin explained how publication support was implemented at Osaka University. In particular, she described how eligible faculty are awarded funds for editing services. The report concluded with a discussion about university administrators using their expertise in the support of researchers.
2. **Dr. Yuki Takagi (Hokkaido University *in Japanese*)** – [Pilot webinar as a medium for providing English writing assistance for researchers: An experience from Hokkaido University.](#)
 - In this report, Dr. Takagi discussed academic writing development programs and the use and effectiveness of a webinar series implemented at Hokkaido University.
3. **Ms. Flaminia Miyamasu (University of Tsukuba *in English*)** – [Setting up and running a publications support center at a Japanese university: Experiences from the Medical English Communications Center, University of Tsukuba.](#)
 - In this report, Ms. Miyamasu discussed the integral role the Medical English Communications Center (MECC) plays in the editing of manuscripts and presentation coaching for research faculty at University of Tsukuba. In addition, the benefits gained from having such a center as well as offering advice for implementing similar centers in Japan were also discussed.
4. **Ms. Hiroko Araki (Hiroshima University *in Japanese*)** – [Writing group: Challenges and opportunities of Hiroshima University's new initiative.](#)
 - In this report, Ms. Araki discussed the implementation of Writing Groups at Hiroshima University. Issues surrounding the Writing Group such as organizational structures and culture at Hiroshima University were discussed. The talk concluded by outlining the lessons learned and the hope to build similar writing group models in other universities in Japan.

Group Discussions:

After the keynote speeches and case reports were presented, participants were divided into six groups, and a number of topics were discussed. The following list outlines the discussion points in those groups:

Group 1: Discussion led by Mr. Tom Gally

- *Improving faculty/students' writing abilities* – the group discussed the ways in which universities can support faculty and students' writing skills. They also discussed the importance of specific programs – education support (to faculty or students) and publication support (paper quantity and quality). Further, the group discussed academic writing courses for students at the University of Tokyo.
- *Translation support for academics* – the group discussed the difficulties surrounding direct translation of Japanese research into English, and the issue of the translator as co-author.

Group 2: Discussion led by Dr. Carole Sargent

- *Writing Groups* – the group discussed the need to adopt a model appropriate for the Japanese (and university) context
- *HASS¹ & STEM²* – the group also discussed different support structures that are required for different faculties/disciplines (i.e., experts in STEM are required to assist with publishing in English).
- *Publishing in English* – the group also spoke about the need to change university culture in order to improve publishing in English by those from HASS disciplines.

Group 3: Discussion led by Dr. Xin Yao

- *Open access book publishing* – the group discussed a new service being developed by Leverpress and Luminos where authors can publish their books in an open access format. The group discussed the applicability of this service in light of HASS faculties in universities across Japan.

¹ HASS – refers to disciplines related to the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty (e.g., arts, literature, sociology, linguistics, etc.)

² STEM – refers to disciplines related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

- *Language* – the group discussed these services and researchers’ English language abilities. The group pointed out that this may be problematic in the Japanese context as some researchers may have low English language proficiency.

Group 4: Discussion led by Dr. Yuki Takagi

- *Webinar* – the group discussion focused on the positive aspects of webinars in terms of language assistance. These positive aspects included: flexible times and locations, feedback and assistance with instructors after the webinar and availability of webinars online (published to YouTube after the live session).
- *Advertisement/Promotion* – The group discussed the promotion of these webinars, which can be circulated online, advertisements posted around the university and through online groupware such as IROHA.
- *Support for HASS Researchers* – The group noted that across HASS disciplines, researchers prefer to publish books, which are seen as more valuable when they are evaluated. The group also noted that researchers in other non-native English countries are writing papers in their own native languages. A member of the group explained their use of a writing retreat at Hokkaido University to support researchers in HASS disciplines, which is a four-day event, including one-to-one consultations.

Group 5: Discussion led by Ms. Flaminia Miyamasu

- *MECC* – the group began this discussion by analyzing the establishment of this center at the University of Tsukuba. The group also raised a number of fundamental questions, such as, “how to encourage doctors to engage with this service?”. Further, the group discussed the need for subject area specialists and the “educational effect” of publication results.
- *Language styles/education* – the differences between English and Japanese language style in regards to medical science and practical medicine were discussed. The group also mentioned the use of undergraduate education courses in regards to medical terminology (1-1.5 years in duration) and other forms of support such as seminars on case presentation skills (speaking/writing).

Group 6: Discussion led by Ms. Hiroko Araki

- *Writing Groups* – this group discussion was focused on writing groups at Hiroshima University. Participants in this group discussed plans for future writing groups as well as the lack of participation by Japanese faculty members. The group also discussed the separation of faculty member and student writing groups. Ms. Hiroko Araki explained that the writing groups for students became writing classes in the case of Hiroshima University.
- *HASS* – the group also discussed the need to support faculty members from HASS disciplines in their pursuit of publishing in English. The group suggested that as there is interest abroad in research related to Japanese language and culture, it would be beneficial for researchers to publish in English.

The symposium concluded with a casual reception held at Mermaid Café (Hiroshima University Campus), where speakers and participants continued to discuss the topics raised during the keynote presentations and group discussions.

Symposium Pages:

English: https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/wrc/2017_sympo

Japanese: https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/wrc/2017_sympo