

Preface

The Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation is currently a leader in the field of business archives in Japan. The Foundation's mission is to honour the memory and promote the achievements and high ideals of Shibusawa Eiichi (1840–1931), one of the leading entrepreneurs in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japan. Particular focus is given to his devotion to the ideal of „harmony between morality and the economy“. The Foundation today interprets this mission as one of supporting entrepreneurship and helping improve business ethics and culture. Promoting business archives is one means to fulfil this mission. To this end, the author has been involved in a range of projects in the Foundation, such as the compilation of a directory of business archives in Japan and the publication of a newsletter in Japanese on business archives matters outside of Japan.

In this article, the author takes a look at the current situation of business archivists and archives in Japan, shedding light on three points: 1) a recent international symposium on business archives held in Tokyo, 2) the Business Archives Association of Japan and 3) a case study of an active Japanese business archive, that of the Panasonic Corporation.

1. International Symposium: „The value of Business Archives: Their Use by Japanese Companies and New Global Trends“

The Section for Business and Labour Archives (SBL) of the International Council of Archives (ICA) and the Business Archives Association (BAA) of Japan cooperated with the Shibusawa Foundation to hold an international symposium on 11 May 2011 in Tokyo. In planning the symposium, we at the Shibusawa Foundation worked with the SBL to create an event that would focus on the concepts of „history marketing“, „storytelling“, and „proactive archivists“, concepts that have been gaining attention in the international business archives

community in recent years due to their role in helping to realise the value of business archives.

The Shibusawa Foundation also felt that the multifaceted value of business archives is of particular importance in Japan, where the prevailing view can be extremely narrow. Far too many people believe that the only role of business archives is to compile and publish volumes of company history. This view completely ignores the variety of other ways in which business archives can be of use and the various corporate functions to which archives can contribute, such as public relations, product planning, branding, education, legal affairs, compliance, and CSR.



We hoped that the symposium would provide an opportunity to introduce to Japan an alternative way of thinking, one that values business archives as a management tool.

In addition to providing professionally-minded training for those in the field of business archives in Japan and widening views on the value of business archives, the symposium ultimately targeted corporate managers, the individuals who have the power and authority to establish an archive in their own company. To reach such individuals, detailed presentations were made to the business community prior to the symposium. Nippon Keidanren and the Tokyo Chamber of

Commerce, two leading Japanese business organisations, co-sponsored the symposium and publicised the event in various ways. These efforts were successful, as the symposium was attended by a number of individuals from companies with no prior connections to the BAA.

Due to the Great East Japan Earthquake in March, plans changed several times leading up to the event, but in the final program the symposium was divided into five sessions: „The Power of History Marketing“ 1 and 2, „National Strategies and Business Archives“, „Archives: A Tool for Change“, and a panel discussion that included all of the speakers. The names of the speakers and their presentation titles were as follows:

- *Session 1: The Power of History Marketing 1*
 - Henning MORGEN (A. P. Moller-Maersk, Denmark): „A Broader Perspective: Supporting Today’s Communication with Historical Facts“;
 - Didier BONDUE (Saint-Gobain Group, France): „Company Memory: A Management Tool, The Saint-Gobain Case“;
- *Session 2: The Power of History Marketing 2*
 - Naomi AOKI (Toraya Confectionery, Japan): „Japanese Traditional Industries and Archives: The Case of Toraya Confectionery“
 - Claudia ORLANDO (Ansaldo Foundation, Italy) (read by Yuko MATSUZAKI): „The Ansaldo Foundation: Archives, Training and Culture“;
- *Session 3: National Strategies and Business Archives*
 - Lan WANG (State Archives Administration of China, China): „The Introduction of the ‚Assets‘ Concept and its Effect on Business Records Management in China“;
 - Alex RITCHIE (The National Archives, UK): „The National Business Archives Strategy: England and Wales“;
- *Session 4: Archives: A Tool for Change*
 - Becky Haglund TOUSEY (Kraft Foods, USA): „Proud Heritage: The Importance of Legacy

- Stories in Post-Acquisition Integration“,
- Vrunda PATHARE (Godrej & Boyce, India): „The Shaping of History in a Corporate Setting: The Godrej Scenario“;
- Francesca PINO (Intesa Sanpaolo, Italy) (read by Becky Haglund TOUSEY): „After the Mergers Wave: Change Management and the Building of Intesa Sanpaolo Group Archives“;
- *Session 5: Panel Discussion*
 - Moderator: Yuko MATSUZAKI (Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, Japan).



International Symposium „The Value of Business Archives: Their Use by Japanese Companies and New Global Trends“ in Tokyo, 11 May 2011

The panel discussion focused on talking point suggestions collected from participants throughout the day. The discussion was very lively and centred on issues that included access to business archives, the negative legacy of a company’s past, partnerships with museums, cooperation with collecting repositories in the public sector, and how to raise awareness of the value of archives within a company.

In addition to one participant from South Korea, the symposium was attended by over 100 people from across Japan. In an effort to reach a wider international audience, the symposium was also streamed live on the internet. Some of the presentations are still available online via Ustream at www.ustream.tv/recorded/14622732.

The Shibusawa Foundation decided to try to further share the presentations and discussions from the symposium with a wider population within Japan and are working towards the publication of a book in Japanese based on the symposium. In addition to translations of the papers presented in Tokyo, other papers previously presented at other conferences or published in journals on business archives have also been included in translation. The book includes the cooperation of members of the Association of German Business Archivists, for which the Foundation is very grateful. The book, like the symposium it was based on, will be the first of its kind in Japan.

2. Business Archives Association (Kigyo Shiryo Kyogikai)¹

Along with the Shibusawa Foundation and the SBL, the BAA also acted as co-organiser of the symposium. The BAA is the only organisation in Japan that specialises in business archives and archivists. Founded in 1981, it celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2011.

From the beginning, the BAA has been active in education, information exchange, and networking in the following three domains of activities: 1) the management of corporate archives, 2) the start-up and maintenance of corporate museums and 3) the compilation and publication of company histories, or *shashi*.

One example of the BAA's activities in the first domain is a multiple-session training course run each year on the management of business records and archives.

The second domain, corporate museums, is a field of great interest for business archivists in Japan. According to a well-maintained and reliable website dedicated to Japanese corporate museums (<http://homepage3.nifty.com/hoshiais/>) there are around 200 business museums across the country.

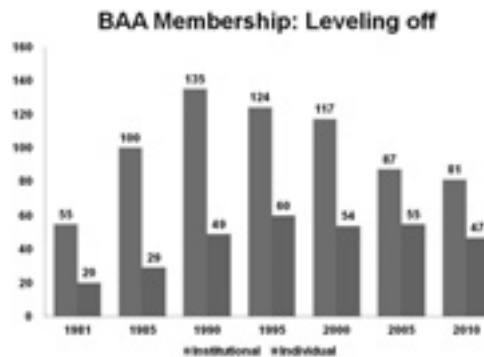
The BAA regularly organises tours of corporate museums, archives, and repositories.

The third domain is particularly important, as great emphasis in Japan has been placed upon the making of *shashi*. Since the compilation and publication of company histories have long been the main role of Japanese business archivists, organising seminars and providing opportunities for training and the exchange of information on the production of *shashi* have been the most important of the BAA's activities.

The BAA has two membership categories: institutional and individual. Institutional membership has been the prime membership type from the beginning. Let us look at changing membership numbers over time. Trends in membership correspond well with trends in the Japanese economy. A prolonged slump in the 1990s after the collapse of the Bubble Economy is mirrored in a decrease in BAA membership at the same time. In Japan, when business thrives, so too do archives. The same can be said in Europe and in North America.

There are, however, differences between business archivists in these areas and in Japan. First of all, Japanese companies do not tend to hire professional archivists. This tendency is a result of three features of general employment practices: 1) life-long employment, 2) the seniority system and 3) enterprise unions, or the one-company-one-union system. Most corporate archivists in Japan are veteran employees who have gained a variety of job experiences within the company after having been hired as a college or university graduate. The employee is taken from the corpo-

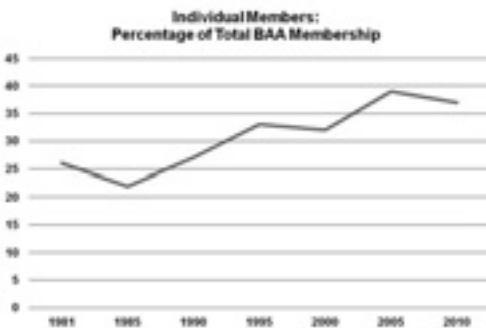
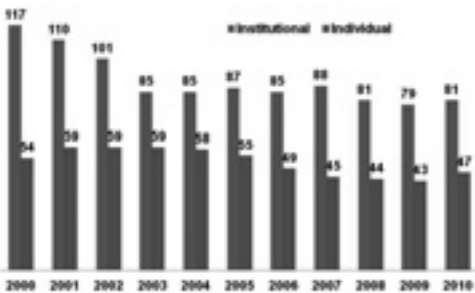
rate communications, investor relations, laboratory, or other department and appointed archivist by the management in order to prepare for a coming anniversary and celebrate the company's past. This is a common way of becoming a corporate archivist in Japan. The newly appointed



archivist may attend the BAA's training course to gain necessary knowledge and skills, but the rest is left to on-the-job training. There is thus almost no external job market for trained corporate archivists, but there is also little supply of professionally trained archivists. It was only in 2008 that the first graduate programme leading to a Master's or Doctoral degree in archival sciences was established in Japan.

In Japan, there is no certification system like that of the Academy of Certified Archivists in the US. Business archives and archivists in Japan are thus quite different from those in Europe and in North America. It is this difference – the lack of professionally trained archivists in Japan – that accounts for the bulk of the BAA's membership resting in the institutional category. Nevertheless, the charts below demonstrate that the ratio of individual members is increasing, which may suggest a new direction for business archivists in Japan.

BAA Membership Over the Past Decade



3. A Case Study: The Panasonic Archives

Presentations at the symposium „The Value of Business Archives: Their Use in Japanese Companies and New Global Trends“ included one on Japan, by Mr Naomi Aoki, archivist at Toraya Confectionary, a long-established manufacturer and retailer of traditional Japanese sweets. Originally Ms Ayako Kurata was scheduled to speak about one of the best business archives in Japan, the Archives of the Tokyo Electric and Power Company (TEPCO), but her presentation was cancelled as a result of the earthquake and subsequent nuclear crisis. In addition to Toraya Confectionary and TEPCO, other Japanese companies also utilise their archives in management. One such example is the archives of the Panasonic Corporation.

The Panasonic Corporation was founded in 1918 by Konosuke Matsushita (1894–1989), a self-made man who quit school at the age of nine. The company is now a leading electronics manufacturer and the largest general manufacturer of home electrical appliances in Japan. Headquartered in Osaka, the group's workforce is well over 360000. Panasonic has been listed on the Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and New York Stock Exchanges. The consolidated net sales for fiscal year 2010 were US\$ 113 billion and the operating income was nearly US\$ 40 million.

Within Panasonic there are two departments related to archives: the Office of Corporate History and the Konosuke Matsushita Museum. Both departments are located on the premises of the Panasonic Headquarters in Kadoma, Osaka. The Director of the Office of Corporate History is also the Director of the Konosuke Matsushita Museum and both sections are now under the control of the Corporate Communications Department.

The history of the Konosuke Matsushita Museum is longer than that of the Office of Corporate History. When the Museum opened in 1968 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the company, it was under the direct control of the office of the CEO. The Museum has a clearly defined mission, namely to contribute to increasing the value of the Panasonic brand by disseminating the ideas and ideals of the founder Konosuke Matsushita as well

as the company's corporate history. Exhibits at the Museum centre around three elements: 1) the life of the founder and the development of Panasonic, 2) the management philosophy and vision of the founder and 3) leading and historical products that have supported Panasonic's rise through the years. The Museum is open to the public.

The Office of Corporate History, on the other hand, was established in 1976 in order to prepare for the 60th anniversary of the company in 1978 and was under the direct control of the CEO's office. Since the founding of the company, the founder, Konosuke Matsushita, had been very keen to keep records, both in the form of documents and also audio-visual materials. The Office of Corporate History collects, appraises, arranges, describes, preserves, provides access to and oversees use of the historical materials held in the archives. Non-current records are now transferred to the Office of Corporate History once a year.

In addition to records and audio-visual materials, the Office of Corporate History also collects products and merchandise. Approximately 2000 items are stored in a warehouse in Nara. According to Panasonic archivist Ms Masako Nakanishi, however, physical objects are not always collected systematically or comprehensively. Panasonic defines the work of the Office as being centred around 1) exploring the business philosophy of the founder and sharing this information both internally and externally, 2) exhaustively collecting and preserving all materials related to the company's history and 3) compiling company histories.

The two departments were low-profile for more than two decades after their respective openings. The business slump in the early 2000s, however, proved to be a major turning point for both the Office and the Museum. In 2002, the company recorded annual losses of more than four billion yen, which brought a sense of crisis to the staff of the Office and the Museum. The archive is not a profit centre and budget cuts seemed inevitable. In the face of this crisis, the Office of Corporate



History made a move for innovation as archivists tried to find ways to leverage the archives, which they felt should contribute to business.

The Office of Corporate History began to produce content according to the themes and strategies pursued by management and make use of the archival holdings for various exhibits and other uses. The Konosuke Matsushita Museum now holds exhibits based on content created by the Office of Corporate History, thus disseminating the ideas of the Office and functioning as an information centre. The Museum uses this content to hold special exhibitions twice a year, in spring and autumn. In planning these exhibitions, archivists discuss prospective themes with senior management, sometimes even directly with the CEO. This is to ensure that exhibitions are in line with current management policy. For example, the theme of the special exhibition in spring 2009 was „Konosuke Matsushita's Vision of Growth and Development through Difficult Times: Historic Challenges Prepare the Ground for Historic Growth“ . This exhibition was the first after the financial crisis of September 2008 and aimed to show how the company coped with difficulties such as the Great Depression of 1929–30 and the boycott of Panasonic products in 1970–71. Special exhibitions such as these can inspire the general public, employees, and even management executives through the use of vast volumes of materials, such as written texts, audio materials, film footage,



Konosuke Matsushita Museum in Kadoma, Osaka, 2009

and documents concerning the founder's management philosophy and ideals. The success of such attempts, and the exhibitions themselves, are entirely dependent on the content produced by the archivists.

While the number of visitors to the museum was rather low around the turn of the 21st century, today it is visited by approximately 35000 visitors annually. Half of this number are employees of Panasonic. Each year approximately 4000 foreigners visit the museum. Captions in the exhibits are in Japanese and English and some audio-visual exhibits also have information in Chinese.

Almost all of Panasonic's executive officials visit every single special exhibition, a fact that demonstrates the high value placed on these exhibitions by the company. This appreciation also shows itself in other ways. When executives prepare speeches, or other departments create content related to company history, for example, they go first to the Office of Corporate History. After consulting with these clients, the archivists then draft a story based on historical facts and gather materials to be used to support the story. Thus the clientele of the Office of Corporate History is not limited to the Museum, but includes other departments within the company as well as various

external bodies. As a result, historical content is not only exhibited in the Museum but also disseminated in various other ways, such as websites, books and leaflets, and travelling exhibitions.

Joey Reiman, expert on the marketing uses of corporate heritage, gave the keynote address at the Business Archives Section meeting of the Society of American Archivists in August 2010. In his speech, entitled „The Fruits are in the

Roots“, he said „Cultu-

re or virtue with a valuable purpose is necessary for human activities. People cannot feel the true meaning of life without it. An organisation can create valuable goals and cultural stories by tracing back to its origins. The materials for stories can be found only in the archives of an organisation. Archives can boost the people's positive feelings by providing stories.“ According to Panasonic archivist and curator Ms Masako Nakanishi, the Office of Corporate History, together with the Konosuke Matsushita Museum, has been putting Joey Reiman's claims into practice. Visitor questionnaires demonstrate the positive emotions elicited by the archives and museum. A special exhibition entitled „Konosuke Matsushita's Global Perspective: Quest for Prosperity“ was held 20 April through 15 July 2011. During this period, approximately 2000 employees of SANYO Electric Co., Ltd., a company recently acquired by the Panasonic Corporation, visited the exhibition. An employee of the old SANYO commented, „I was disappointed that the company I had worked for was taken over by the Panasonic Group, but after viewing the exhibition, I was truly inspired. I will continue to work hard. I would like to visit the museum again.“

Archives can and actually do make a significant difference to the success of a company. This is what archivists at Panasonic try to share with museum visitors and although SANYO did not have archives or a museum, demonstrating that the company did not place a high value on its heritage, records, and archives, the message has reached some old SANYO employees who now understand the importance their new employers attach to the company's heritage.

The Office of Corporate History and the Konosuke Matsushita Museum are now an integral part of the Panasonic Corporation. The basis of their success is twofold. First is the actions of the founder, Konosuke Matsushita, who laid the foundations for the Office of Corporate History by taking the individual initiative to preserve records of his excellent management principles and practices. Not all Japanese companies have founders like Konosuke Matsushita but it is possible to learn from his example and use his „attitude“ and „effort“ to tie past corporate legacies to the present. Secondly, and most importantly, is the strong support and cooperation of top management executives. Owing to the proactive work of corporate archivists after the business slump in early 2000s, management now understands the role and realises the value of the archives and its creation of content that is then disseminated by the museum and elsewhere. Due to this understanding, management is very supportive of and cooperative in the formation of links to the corporate business strategy. The historical content created in the archives can then be used to further the corporate business strategy, support in-house decision-making, and inspire positive feelings toward the company and its brands, to name just a few benefits.

In Conclusion

Business archives in Japan have faced challenging circumstances since the slump in business activity in the early 1990s. As the recent international symposium clearly showed, however, the ties between business archives in Japan and those in other countries have been growing stronger. Individual business archives have been working

hard to gain trust and a high profile within their companies. The Panasonic Office of Corporate History and Konosuke Matsushita Museum are one such example.

The Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation will continue to work both as a promoter of business archives in Japan and as a hub for international exchange between business archivists and archives. This essay is an attempt to contribute to these goals, and the author hopes that it will give readers in Germany a brief introduction to business archives and archivists in Japan.

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* This article is based on a presentation at the Business Archives Colloquium organised by the Business Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists and held on 24 August 2011 at the American College of Surgeons, Chicago, Illinois. „Bijinesu Akaibuzu“ is a transliteration of the pronunciation in Japanese of „business archives“ and one of the terms for the same in Japan.

1 „Kigyo Shiryo Kyogikai“ is the transliteration of the Japanese name of the BAA. The more information on the BAA can be found in the following article: *Yuko Matsuzaki*, The Shibusawa *Shashi* Project and Sharing Information on Business Archives in Japan, in: Business Archives Principles and Practice, No 91, May 2006, Business Archives Council, London.