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Japan Society for the Promotion of Science



TOPICS

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Presentation Ceremony Held for 2011 International Prize for Biology

On 28 November, the 27th annual ceremony for awarding the International Prize for Biology was held in the presence of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, who attended on behalf of His Majesty the Emperor, at the Japan Academy located in Ueno Park, Tokyo. The ceremony was organized by the Committee on the International Prize for Biology, chaired by Dr. Takashi Sugimura, vice president of the Japan Academy.

At the ceremony, an opening message was delivered by Dr. Sugimura and a report on the selection process provided by Dr. Masamitsu Wada, chair of this year's Selection Committee, after which the Prize and an Imperial gift were presented to this year's awardee, Dr. Eric Harris Davidson, Norman Chandler Professor of Cell Biology, Division of Biology, California Institute of Tech-



Dr. Davidson receives Prize in presence of the Crown Prince



Empress Michiko and Dr. Davidson at reception

nology (Caltech), USA. Congratulatory remarks followed from the Prime Minister (read by Mr. Hiroyuki Nagahama, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary) and from Mr. Masaharu Nakagawa, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The ceremony concluded with an acceptance address by Dr. Davidson.

Her Majesty the Empress attended the reception following the ceremony. In a congenial atmosphere, the Empress, Crown Prince and Dr. Davidson engaged in amicable conversation with each other and with other guests, including representatives of embassies and members of the Prize Committee.

The International Prize for Biology Commemorative Symposium and Lecture on "Genetic Regulation of Development" was held on 30 November and 1 December at Kyoto Garden Palace, Kyoto.

Acceptance Address by Dr. Eric Harris Davidson

I am really very greatly honored by this event, and my first and overwhelming sentiment is to express my deep appreciation to His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince and the Prize Selection Committee. I wish to say at the outset that your decision to award this Prize for basic research sends a clear message.

When this Prize was publically announced, the most important thing to me was the amazing response of many colleagues, some of whom I had not heard from in years, who wrote to me. I have seen, again and again, how the intellectual path that I have been following for what is now a whole scientific generation has influenced the minds and thoughts of so many valuable colleagues over so many years and this is very gratifying to me. Thus, this Prize has been the occasion for my own realization of the role my work has had in the scientific world I have lived in for so long. So I thought that in these few moments I would try to recall how I entered on the journey that has led to where we are now.

My scientific career, which led to the last decade of exploration of the gene regulatory

networks to which the citation refers, extends back many decades. I want to say that from the beginning of that time, I have been thinking about what to me has been the greatest problem in science. This problem clarified and with the passage of time finally became possible to solve, but it has always been with me. What is that problem? It has always, for me, been to understand how animals come to being in each life cycle; how the genes, which reside in all of our cells, generate the dynamically changing process of embryonic development. And this is a very beautiful problem. It was recognized explicitly over a century ago but has never been completely solved until the present time when we are beginning to see the shape of the answer.

I myself had an unusual path into this problem, which began even before I got to college. I began with research at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory with a then famous biologist trained in the 1920s and 1930s. I became familiar with marine eggs and embryos, and these fascinated me to the point that I never forgot them, and never stopped working on them. My boss then and through years of work in his lab

through college was L.V. Heilbrunn, whose personal reprint collection resides today in your Misaki Marine Station right across Tokyo Bay. Heilbrunn was a close friend of Katsuma Dan, at that time Misaki's most famous resident scientist. Like Katsuma Dan, Heilbrunn knew everything that had ever been done in the early years of biology. And by the time I graduated from college I was deeply rooted in the insights of early 20th century "genome biology" as we would call it today. Then, in graduate school at Rockefeller University, my classical upbringing was hybridized with the most modern, quantitatively oriented, physical chemistry and molecular biology. But I never was distracted from what fascinated me right from the beginning. Where I started my independent career was in many ways where Theodor Boveri left off in the first decade of the 20th century, when he showed beyond any doubt that the genetic information in all the chromosomes is needed for an embryo to develop; and he did this on sea urchin embryos. So by the time I finished graduate school we knew that DNA was the genetic material, we knew it was in every cell and the problem clarified: what exactly is it in the DNA that makes embryos develop? For me this was

primarily a problem of logic, and in the late 1960s Roy Britten, who had understood the structure of animal DNA, and I, let our imaginations take us forward into completely unknown territory. We thought about the shape of a gene regulatory system that could produce development and that could evolve. In its basic logical respects our 1969 model has materialized 40 years later in the gene regulatory networks of our own time. I feel very unusually fortunate to have been able to follow the same road for so long without ending in too many dead ends, as is so often the scientific experience. In 1971 Roy and I went to Caltech together and we decided to work on sea urchin embryos. For reasons that are still in a way mysterious, what was so illuminating a biological system for early 20th century biologists, in our time has turned into the most accessible experimental system for understanding devel-

opmental gene networks, and what they are, and how they work. The decades at Caltech saw the research of my laboratory on developmental gene function in sea urchin embryos extend in diverse directions, and curiously, much of what we learned then turned out to be of immediate usefulness many years later when it could be applied to gene regulatory networks.

We operate in a scientific world of potent and various experimental approaches, a world of intellectual crossroads where knowledge and insights from many previously separate fields are requisite for progress, a world where creativity initially often evokes instant suspicion. No one works alone in this world. It is my great pleasure in accepting this award to acknowledge the crucial contributions of very wonderful people who have worked together with me on gene

regulatory networks over the last decade and more, and who continue to share with me the unique experience of scientific exploration. I should like to close with a word to those who will illuminate the mechanisms that lie at the core of developmental systems far beyond where we are now, who will build into our scientific civilization ever more meaningful and beautiful understanding. I hope that you will do as I have tried always to do: go where biologically informed logic leads you personally, not where the latest fads or journal editors or government pronouncements would have you go. In closing I would like to say that despite all our machines and all our computations, discovery grows out of creativity, and this is what science shares with art.

So let me thank you once again for this once in a life time occasion.

— General Affairs Division

Frontiers of Science Symposiums Held with Germany and France

Two Frontiers of Science (FoS) Symposiums were held this fiscal year. The eighth Japanese-German Frontiers of Science (JGFoS) Symposium was held in Tokyo on 28-30 October and the sixth Japanese-French Frontiers of Science (JFFoS) Symposium in Nice on 20-22 January 2012.

Carried out in partnership with counterpart organizations, FoS symposiums are among JSPS's most highly appraised bilateral programs. The German symposium was carried out with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), while the French symposium was with the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE), French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR), and National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS).



Japanese-German Frontiers of Science (JGFoS) Symposium

Each of these symposiums assembles 60-80 talented young researchers, 30-40 from each country. Presentations that delve into the interesting aspects of cutting-edge topics are given by the speakers and discussed by the participants. FoS symposiums are unique in their cross-disciplinary discussion format. Where else could you find a physicist and an economist vying in a spirited exchange of views on a topic related to chemistry?

The excellent researchers these symposiums bring together will in the near future go on to be leaders within the academic and scientific communities. At this early stage in their careers, these

events offer the young participants an opportunity to derive momentum from free interaction across disciplines and cultures with peers, expanding their conceptual horizons in ways that may prompt them to explore and even pioneer new disciplines. What's gained from this experience doesn't only accrue to the benefit of the individual researchers but also constitutes an important investment in society as a whole.

Most researchers arrive at an FoS symposium feeling some anxiety as to whether they will be able to engage people on the leading edge of other fields in meaningful dialogue. However, all apprehension melts away as soon as the participants become engrossed in the discipline-crisscrossing discussions sparked by the speakers. In every FoS symposium, the participants, who lodge together, can be seen sparring back and forth in an animated exchange of views late into the evening.

At each symposium a planning group with members selected from the participants is organized to select the topics and speakers for the next event, thus passing forward the "tradition" of FoS symposiums, which crosscut and challenge frontiers of science, to the next generation of participants.



Japanese-French Frontiers of Science (JFFoS) Symposium

— Research Cooperation Division II

ASIAHORCs Meeting Held in India

On 27 November, the fifth meeting of the Asian Heads of Research Councils (ASIAHORCs) was held in Bangalore, India. Hosted by the Indian government's Department of Science and Technology, the meeting brought together the heads of leading science-promotion



organizations in Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand in an exchange of views on the topic "Nurturing Centers of Excellence."

Their concept initially having been proposed by JSPS as a means of advancing science and technology and fostering young researchers in the Asian region, these ASIAHORCs meetings have been held annually since 2007.

In this year's meeting, the members introduced their countries' various efforts to build and strengthen centers of excellence (COEs). JSPS executive director Dr. Makoto Asashima described changes being made to Japan's COE program implementation based on the government's new S&T policies, and he introduced JSPS's Global COE Program and other related initiatives. The array of questions he fielded bespoke a strong interest by the other members in JSPS's COE-nurturing activities.

The next ASIAHORCs meeting is scheduled to be hosted by the National Natural Science Foundation of China in the fall of 2012.

— Asian Program Division

JUNBA 2012 Held in San Francisco

The Japanese University Network in the Bay Area (JUNBA) held its annual event on 9-10 January, bringing together Japanese university leaders in a discussion on the evolution of university management toward greater internationalization. The event was co-organized by the Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco and JSPS and supported by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) San Francisco. It was attended by over 100 people.

In the first-day symposium, three presentations were delivered by representatives of the University of California Office of the President (UCOP), who spoke about the organization and functions of the UC system with respect to the meeting's theme "Institutional Research and Enrollment Management—Keys toward Internationalizing Japanese Universities."



On the following day, the summit opened with remarks from JUNBA president Dr. Masato Matsuo, who was followed by greetings from Mr. Hiroshi Inomata, Consul General of Japan, and JSPS president Dr. Yuichiro Anzai. Then, Mr. Yutaka Tokiwa, deputy director-general of MEXT's Higher Education Bureau, gave the keynote address. Stimulated by the speeches of the UCOP representatives, the Japanese university leaders spoke about and exchanged views on their management experiences and policies for nurturing students within internationalizing environments.

Concluding successfully, JUNBA 2012 provided the Japanese universities with an excellent opportunity to consider new dimensions to applying institutional research and enrollment management in their operations back in Japan.

— JSPS San Francisco Office

San Francisco Office Joins Asia Research Funding Workshop

On 17 November, the JSPS San Francisco Office participated in the "Asia Research Funding Workshop," held at UC Davis. Two institutions, the Consulate-General of the People's Republic of

China and the JSPS San Francisco Office, presented overviews of their organizations' research and educational opportunities in the workshop, which began with an introduction by Dr. William



B. Lacy, vice provost, University Outreach and International Programs, UC Davis. The San Francisco Office introduced JSPS's fellowship programs, followed by two UC Davis students who talked about their exhilarating experiences in Japan under the JSPS Summer Program. Attended by over 40 students and faculty, many questions were asked about the fellowship programs as well as life in Japan and China.

The San Francisco Office strives to encourage young American researchers to take advantage of JSPS's programs, firmly believing that their experiences in Japan will accrue to strengthening the academic partnerships enjoyed between the two countries.

— JSPS San Francisco Office

Workshop Held in Paris on Nanotechnology

On 12-13 December, the JSPS Strasbourg Office teamed up with Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan (ENS Cachan) to hold a French-Japanese Workshop on the theme "Nanotech Revolution from Science to Society—A Time for Passion, a Time for Reason."

Nanotechnology is seen as being indispensable to progress within the 21st century knowledge-driven society. Advances in this technology are expected to revolutionize a wide spectrum of fields including info-communications, environment and energy, and bio- and material sciences. In fact, nanotechnology is becoming closely connected to all areas of human activity. Not limited to research, education and industry, its tentacles stretch to such other sectors of society as medicine, health and welfare.

In the workshop, the coordinators, Prof. Seizo Miyata, Tokyo Institute of Technology, and Prof. Joseph Zyss, ENS Cachan, headed a cadre of 19 lecturers who addressed the theme from the various perspectives of their cutting-edge endeavors in the nanotech domain. A force of some 40 young Japanese and French researchers used the workshop as an opportunity to introduce their

work through poster presentations. While offering this cross-generational platform for reporting a wide scope of advances being forged in nanotechnology research, the event also strengthened ties of collaboration between French and Japanese colleagues working on the frontlines of this proliferating domain.



— JSPS Strasbourg Office

Germany-Japan Round Table Held

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Germany and Japan, a Germany-Japan Round Table was held on the theme "From the Early Universe to the Evolution of Life" over a 3-day period from December 1st through the 3rd. Cosponsored by JSPS, National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS), Heidelberg University, and Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, the roundtable



spanned a wide spectrum of the natural sciences. The first day of the event, which also celebrated Heidelberg University's 625th anniversary, was held in the campus's historic Old Lecture Hall. It featured an opening ceremony and five keynote lectures. One of which was given by NINS president Dr. Katsuhiko Sato on the theme "Birth of the Universe and Multiverse."

For the second and third days, the roundtable moved its venue to Villa Bosch, a conference hall on the city's hillside. Four sessions were carried out with more than 30 Japanese and German researchers giving lectures and fielding questions. In the interval between the sessions, 23 young researchers from the two countries delivered poster presentations. The Q&A periods in each session saw many probing questions asked by researchers across lines dividing their fields.

Having been an intellectually stimulating event, the roundtable ended on a buoyant note with the participants saying how it prompted them to want to do such things as engage in international or interdisciplinary research activities, promote exchange with and between young researchers, and create closer links of outreach with society.

— JSPS Bonn Office

JSPS Colloquium Held on Nuclear Energy in Sweden

On 13-14 October, the JSPS Stockholm Office held a JSPS colloquium on the topic “Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Applications” in Gothenburg, Sweden. With the historic building Chalmersska Huset as its venue, the colloquium, which featured 14 Japanese and Swedish lecturers, was attended by some 60 interested mem-



bers of the academic community. Taking the lead in planning the event was Dr. Imre Pázsit, Chalmers University of Technology, who had experienced research in Japan under JSPS programs.

In the wake of the breakdown of Japan’s Fukushima nuclear power plant, the focus of the colloquium naturally centered on that incident, with the Japanese lecturers commenting on its scientific ramifications and on the lack of adequate tsunami countermeasures. Some also spoke about their firsthand experiences of engaging in post-disaster response activities in the affected area over the past half year. From the Swedish side, presentations were given on such topics as the country’s adoption of EU stress tests prompted by the Japanese plant failure. At the dinner reception, Dr. Pázsit gave a spirited talk on his several experiences of going to Japan, in which he praising Japan’s culture and the high level of its scientific research.

Abstracts of the presentations delivered are posted in the “Past Activities” section of the Stockholm Office’s website (<http://www.jspss-sto.com>).

— JSPS Stockholm Office

Jointly Sponsored Seminar Held in Stockholm

From 2009, the JSPS Stockholm Office has partnered with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA) in planning and holding seminars in which Japanese researchers with achievements of high interest within the Nordic region give presentations on their work. The third in this fiscal year’s series of seminars was held on 24-26 January at Stockholm University. Dr. Hiroshi Ishida, professor in the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, was invited to speak at it.

His presentation on the theme “Japanese Youth in Transition” introduced occupational, marriage and other trends among young people in Japan, while spurring a spirited exchange of views on such subjects as job searching and marriage partner hunting. As there is little familiarity in Sweden with such social phenomena peculiar to Japan, Dr. Ishida’s talk sparked interest in the attending students and researchers, who asked volleys of questions—wrapping up the last day of the seminar on an animated note.



Discussion at the seminar

— JSPS Stockholm Office

JSPS London Programme Introduction Days

During the period of 11 October through 9 November, the staff of JSPS’s London Office made a series of visits to eight UK universities across the length of the UK starting with the London



Briefing at University of Bristol

School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in the south and ending with Scottish universities in the north. The tour included the Universities of Edinburgh and Dundee as well as the University of the Highlands and Islands, which through a network of 13 colleges caters to researchers located in the remote areas of Inverness and the Shetland Islands. At each of these institutions, the London Office held a “JSPS Programme Introduction Day” to promote JSPS’s fellowships and other programs.

The largest of these events was held on 14 October at the University of Bristol, where a good mix of over 50 researchers from various fields attended, and the London Office was warmly welcomed by the directors of the university’s research office. A memorandum of understanding had recently been signed between Bristol and Kyoto Universities, intensifying interest in the institutional level funding offered by JSPS—how it could facilitate Bristol’s research links with other universities in Japan.

— JSPS London Office

Pre-Departure Seminar and Alumni Evening Held in London

On 21 October, the JSPS London Office held its pre-departure seminar for UK researchers scheduled to go to Japan under JSPS fellowships. At it, JSPS's various programs were introduced along with the Japan exchange and visit programs of the Royal Society and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. A member of the UK JSPS Alumni Association gave a talk on her experience as a JSPS fellow in Japan, before which remarks were offered by Kyoto University president Dr. Hiroshi Matsumoto, who participated in the seminar as a specially invited guest.

At the UK JSPS Alumni Association Evening following the seminar, a ceremony was held for the members selected to revisit Japan under the London Office's FURUSATO Award and JSPS's BRIDGE Fellowship programs and selected for funding under the Office's symposium scheme for the UK JSPS Alumni Association. After the ceremony, a reception was held to give the Japan-bound fellows an opportunity to mingle with the alumni association members. The curtain fell on the event, which enjoyed a congenial atmosphere throughout, with some of the pre-departure participants saying that they were really looking forward to going to



Dr. Matsumoto offering remarks

Japan now the seminar had relieved the sense of anxiety they felt and that the exchange of views and information with the alumni had been very helpful to them.

— JSPS London Office

Fourth China-Japan Science Forum Held

On 21-22 November, JSPS and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) cosponsored the fourth China-Japan Science Forum, this time co-organized by the Low-Carbon Development Institute (LCDI) in Hainan. Venued in Haikou City, Hainan Province, the forum featured lectures around the theme "Low Carbon City and Economy" by more than 30 frontline Chinese and Japanese researchers, and was attended by some 50 researchers in related fields and students interested in the topics addressed.

Diverse in range, these topics included such content as recycling-intensive cities, low-carbon transportation, water-resource management, energy-saving urban planning, urban climatology, and environmental policy and economy. In the closing addresses by the organizers, it was advocated that efforts be continued to advance Sino-Japanese collaboration in this critical field so as to



solve the host of issues germane to developing low-carbon cities in both countries.

— JSPS Beijing Office

General Meeting and Symposium Held by China Alumni Association

On 10 December, the JSPS Fellow Alumni Association in China held its second general meeting and a symposium at Huazhong University of Science & Technology in Wuhan City, Hubei Province.



Dr. Yu offering remarks

Convened in the morning, the general meeting was attended by about 50 alumni members, affiliated people, and such invited guests as officials from the Embassy of Japan in China. Alumni association chair Dr. Xiang Yu offered greetings and reported on the items of business discussed in the priorly held meeting of the association's executive council. He was followed by speeches from two members who had recently returned to China after revisiting Japan under the BRIDGE Fellowship Program. Then, the leaders from the Chongqing and Zhejiang alumni districts reported on their activities during the fiscal year. All in all, the meeting offered an excellent opportunity for the members to rekindle their enthusiasm to carrying forward an ever-more vigorous alumni program.

Delving into the theme "Regional Development and Cutting-edge Technology," the afternoon symposium was attended by about 80 mostly alumni members. Eight Japanese and Chinese researchers delivered presentations, sparking lively interaction with the audience.

— JSPS Beijing Office

Bangkok Office Visits Myanmar

On 1-2 December, two members of the JSPS Bangkok Office participated in ICSE 2011 (third International Conference on Science and Engineering), held at Sedona Hotel in Yangon, Myanmar. At it, Bangkok Office director Dr. Wataru Takeuchi delivered a research presentation and introduced JSPS's programs. At the venue, the office passed out 300 copies of JSPS's brochure, bespeaking the high level of interest in researcher development programs carried out with foreign funding.

During the conference, Dr. Takeuchi held a discussion with Dr. Ko Ko Oo, Deputy Minister of Myanmar's Ministry of Science and Technology and three administrators of the country's technical universities, in which they conveyed a spirit of enthusiasm for building Myanmar as a modern nation through the promotion of science and technology that advances technological development and fosters talented researchers.

On 3 December, the staff visited Yangon Technological University where they engaged in a discussion with its rector Dr. Mya Mya Oo and members of the faculty, in which views were exchanged on developing cooperation in the area of engineering,

particularly civil engineering.

Now that the door has been opened, the Bangkok Office will keep a close eye out for possibilities to cooperate with academic institutions in Myanmar.



Dr. Takeuchi holding discussion with Myanmar's administrators

— JSPS Bangkok Office

JSPS Program Briefing Held at Khon Kaen University

On 8-9 November, the JSPS Bangkok Office held a program briefing at Khon Kaen University, an institution of higher education in the process of transiting to a research-oriented university in the northeast of Thailand. The 2-day meeting was attended by over



100 mostly young researchers.

At the meeting, Dr. Sukanya Aimimtham and Dr. Kittisak Sawanyawisuth, both members of the university's faculty and of the JSPS Alumni Forum of Thailand, told about their experiences of participating in JSPS's RONPAKU (Dissertation PhD) Program. They also spoke about what's needed to be a successful researcher, such as mental preparedness and approach toward the work.

In fielding questions, they were asked about finding a host advisor in Japan—whether JSPS could introduce applicants to suitable Japanese researchers. In reply, the lecturers said that finding and making contact by oneself with a researcher who can effectively act as an advisor is both an important aspect of the RONPAKU application process and of doing international research in general. The questioner appeared persuaded by this answer.

The office will continue its proactive initiative to visit universities outside the Bangkok area.

— JSPS Bangkok Office

JSPS Reporting Meeting Held in Bangkok

On 10 January, the JSPS Bangkok Office held a reporting meeting at Thailand's National Cancer Institute (NCI). Attended by about 40 young researchers, the meeting introduced JSPS programs and reported on Thai participation in its BRIDGE Fellowship Program and RONPAKU (Dissertation PhD) Program.

The event began with a greeting from NCI director Dr. Thiravud Khuhaprema, followed by introductory remarks by JSPS Bangkok Office director Dr. Wataru Takeuchi. In the reporting session, Dr. Danai Tiwawech of NCI spoke about his Japan revisit experience under the BRIDGE Program last August and September. He reported that he was able to bring back 20 joint research proposals from his trip to Japan. Then, Dr. Archawin Rojanawiwat of the Ministry of Public Health told about his research and Japanese experience under the RONPAKU Program.

Both of these researchers had been accepted for RONPAKU fellowships on their second application. From their own experi-



ences, they urged the young researchers wishing to participate in this program to keep up their spirits and preserve if their first applications are not accepted due to quotas. In close cooperation with former JSPS fellows, the office will continue to work resolutely in carrying out a vibrant program agenda.

— JSPS Bangkok Office

In Hope of Revitalizing the JSPS Alumni Association in Egypt

In July and October, the JSPS Alumni Association in Egypt held meetings at the office of the JSPS Cairo Research Station to advance a discussion on how to invigorate the association, whose activities have stagnated over recent years. Some members living far away from Cairo traveled many hours to attend the meetings.

The Alumni Association in Egypt was established in April 2008. Over the ensuing years, however, its program has never been that proactive due to the large geographical expanse of the country and its underdeveloped transportation infrastructure. It is also true that despite a large number of over 100 past-JSPS program participants, sufficient effort has not been made to mobilize them. The association's activity has furthermore been affected by political instability before or after the revolution of January 2011.

Now, core alumni members, including Dr. Mohsen Abd El-Aziz Zommarra of Kafrelsheikh University, who revisited Japan under the BRIDGE Fellowship Program, have taken the initiative to re-energize the association's activities. Moving swiftly, they held an election to establish the association's executive board on 15 February. The newly elected president, Dr. Ibrahim El-Tantawy El-Sayed of Minoufiya University, will plan the upcoming fiscal



Voting for association's board members

year's events, the success of which will depend on the zeal of the members. The JSPS Cairo Research Station looks forward with optimism to the new path that the alumni will blaze and stands ready to support them as they forge ahead.

— JSPS Cairo Research Station

General Assembly Held by Eastern Africa JSPS Alumni Association

On 3 November, the Eastern Africa JSPS Alumni Association held a general assembly and a symposium at the Japan Information and Culture Centre within the Embassy of Japan in Kenya. Established in 2008, the alumni association has garnered 41 members to date and, though still in the process of development, carries out a vigor-



ous agenda of activities. The general assembly was convened to deliberate and draft the association's charter and to elect its officers. Under the association's chair Prof. Shaukat Ali Abdulrazak, a good balance of executives among the participating countries was established.

The meeting and symposium offered a platform for 18 alumni members from the four countries of Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya to engage in an exchange of scientific views and information. In addition to three lectures by researchers invited from Japan, a briefing was provided on JSPS's programs at the symposium.

Regarding the lectures, they were delivered by Dr. Shuichi Asanuma, Nagoya University; Dr. Makoto Kimura, Kyoto University; and Dr. Wakana Shiino, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. They discussed their various experiences of doing research with colleagues in East Africa and ways to exploit science and technology in advancing the region's socio-economic development. Also, an experiment was introduced to promote the use of websites in advancing scientific exchange between East African countries and Japan.

— JSPS Nairobi Research Station

Welcome to JARC-Net

JSPS operates the Japan-Affiliated Research Community Network (JARC-Net) database. Its purpose is to support the maintenance and expansion of working networks forged between Japan and other countries over long years of implementing JSPS's various international exchange and fellowship programs.

Registered members of the database are able to access other members' profiles, including their names, affiliations, positions, research fields, and education/work histories. They can then use this information to look for new research partners or to broaden support for their activities by mobilizing past colleagues, such as university or JSPS program alumni. Members are also provided an information mail service on JSPS's international exchange and cooperation programs.

Registration in the JARC-Net is open to all who are interested in research exchange between Japan and other countries, including but not limited to overseas students and researchers who have experienced stays in Japan, Japanese researchers interested in research exchanges with colleagues in other countries, international exchange program administrators in universities and research institutions, and corporate R&D personnel.

We look forward to you registering on and taking active advantage of our JARC-Net service. Please visit our website: <http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-affiliated/>.

— Asian Program Division

Indian JSPS Alumni Association Holds International Conference

On 5-6 August, the Indian JSPS Alumni Association held an international conference at the Residency Tower in Trivandrum, Kerala. Titled “Futuristic Science and Technology in Frontier Areas,” it featured 14 lectures by distinguished Indian and Japanese researchers.

In the opening ceremony preceding the technical program, a moment of silence was observed to mourn the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, after which remarks were offered by Mr. Akihiko Satomi, head of JSPS’s Overseas Fellowship Division; Mr. V. S. Sivakumar, Minister for Transport and Devaswom of the Kerala Government; Dr. Sakthi Kumar, chair of the Indian JSPS Alumni Association; and Dr. K. Radhakrishnan of the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST). Then, Mr. Sivakumar presented a contribution provided by the alumni members for Japan’s relief efforts to Mr. Satomi, who represented JSPS.

In continuation from the previous year, this conference also gave the alumni themselves a platform to introduce the universities where they had stayed and done research in Japan. Through their presentations and displays, information was shared on 14 universities and one research institution. In parallel with lectures on the theme by the invited researchers in various related fields, a poster session was held by master’s and doctoral students.

At the closing session, chaired by Dr. P. V. Mohanan, conference organizing secretary and chair of the alumni association’s



Handing alumni contribution to JSPS representative

south chapter, a certificate and monetary prize were awarded to the participants with the first- and second-place poster presentations.

The contribution received from the alumni association was later forwarded to the Tohoku University fund for use in the disaster-relief operation. This was in keeping with the alumni’s wish to contribute to the restoration of the affected communities, born out of a desire to repay the many kindnesses they had received while living and researching as JSPS fellows over an aggregate of many years in Japan.

— Overseas Fellowship Division

Recent Visitors to JSPS (November 2011-January 2012)

AvH Secretary General

On 4 November, a top delegation from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) paid a courtesy visit to JSPS president Dr. Yuichiro Anzai. Its members included AvH secretary general Dr. Enno Aufderheide, head of AvH’s Asia Division Dr. Klaus Manderla, and AvH’s ambassador scientist in Japan Dr. Koichiro Agata.

Both JSPS and AvH provide international fellowship programs for young re-

searchers. An exchange of views was held on possibilities of further collaboration between the two organizations. This being the first time for Dr. Anzai and Dr. Aufderheide to meet and hold a discussion, it marked a new chapter in the nearly 40-year partnership between JSPS and the Humboldt Foundation.

— Research Cooperation Division II



DAAD Acting President

On 4 November, a top delegation from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) paid a courtesy visit to JSPS president Dr. Yuichiro Anzai. It comprised DAAD’s acting and vice president Dr. Max Huber, head of DAAD’s department for Japan Dr. Ursula Toyka-Fuong, and resident director of DAAD’s Tokyo Office Dr. Holger Finken.

Dr. Huber talked to Dr. Anzai about

strengthening the already-close relationship between Germany and Japan in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake. They exchanged views on global issues, such as CO₂ reduction, that need to be solved through scientific endeavor and, for that purpose, the need to continue supporting exchange among young researchers from the two countries.

— Overseas Fellowship Division



Introducing JSPS Alumni Associations



JSPS French Alumni Association

In November 2003, seven former JSPS fellows in France declared the establishment of the JSPS French Alumni Association, mandated to encourage expanded French-Japanese cooperation in all academic fields, create networks among French researchers who have experienced research stays in Japan under JSPS programs, and promote JSPS fellowships for researchers in France and its surrounding French-speaking regions. Over the ensuing eight years, the alumni association has grown while these three original aims have remained at the center of its activity. In January 2012, we had more than 380 members from a rich assortment of age groups and academic disciplines. While making continuous strides to increase the membership of the association, we are working to imbue it with an ever-more active and attractive program.

Association board

With Prof. Jean-Marie Lehn, 1987 Nobel laureate in chemistry, as the association's honorary president, we have eight active board members comprising leading French researchers and led by Prof. Marie-Claire Lett of the University of Strasbourg and director of Maison Universitaire France-Japon, on the premises of which the JSPS Strasbourg Office is located. In their annual meeting, the board members discuss a wide range of topics including expanding academic networks between France and Japan, disseminating JSPS fellowship information, and encouraging young researchers to do more research in/with Japan, in addition to setting a program agenda for each year.

General assembly

We hold a yearly general assembly which is open to all the alumni members. They are usually held in Strasbourg in parallel with a French-Japanese symposium organized by the Strasbourg Office each year. At these assemblies, reports are generally presented on our regular activities such as visiting French universities, while the members report on their own research networking activities with Japan. Proposals from the association board are presented and discussed on a free format basis. For example, at the 2011 general assembly, ideas were proposed for creating a new, multifunctional website for the association.

Participating in JSPS visits to French universities and grandes écoles

In addition to these basic yearly meetings, another of the association's most important activities is participating in visits to French universities and *grandes écoles*, elite higher education institutions, together with the staff of the JSPS Strasbourg Office. To promote JSPS programs and encourage more Japanese-French cooperation, the office staff visits about 10-15 universities/*grandes écoles* in France's various academic regions each year. On these occasions, usually one of our board members introduces the association's activities to the students and faculty. Other alumni members in the region are also invited to give a "live" account of their stays in Japan. They describe their research activities and what it was like living in Japan with emphasis on their daily experiences. For the French people, as well as people from other cultures, living in Japan can be a very different kind of experience from that of their daily lives back home. Many unfamiliar experiences are encountered, starting from taking off one's shoes when entering the house. So, it's important to tell real-life stories about Japan, especially to those interested in going there to do research stints. In 2011, the Strasbourg Office visited 10 universities/*grandes écoles*, in which 24 former JSPS fellows told about their individual experiences in Japan.

Organizing local networks of alumni members

During these visits, local alumni are encouraged to hold their own region meetings. As JSPS alumni, we all share the common experience of doing research in Japan, but it



Alumni president giving presentation at JSPS's university briefing

is difficult to know who is currently doing what kind of research with Japan. Holding local meetings allows us to get to know colleagues who have various links with Japan. This can trigger new connections among members and Japanese counterparts, expanding possibilities for collaboration. At these local meetings, the members share information on their research activities with Japan and receive the latest information on JSPS programs.

Towards a more active and attractive association

The association has decided to support, in cooperation with the JSPS Strasbourg Office, small symposiums planned and implemented by local alumni branches so as to give itself more visibility and thrust on the regional level. Furthermore, so as to open the association up wider to researchers interested in doing research in/with Japan, we have begun to renovate our website. The updated version will include a new search function that allows young researchers of the next generation to seek and contact alumni members who can mentor them in their various disciplines.

The small group of Japanophile researchers established in 2003 has grown into a large association of Franco-Japanese colleagueships and networks. Its development has been a joint effort driven by former JSPS fellows in cooperation with the JSPS Strasbourg Office. Collaboration between French and Japanese researchers is rooted in individual experiences and inter-connections. Our alumni association will continue working to grow such bilateral exchange in ways that help it to thrive and flourish.

— JSPS French Alumni Association



Participants of local alumni meeting in Grenoble

Fukushima Prefectural Soma High School

Date: 9 December

Dr. Alexander Viehweider (Italy)
Host institution: The University of Tokyo
Title: "Future Electric Vehicles: Cleaner, Safer and More Comfortable? Let's Think Together!"



Junior High and Senior High School at Komaba, University of Tsukuba (Tokyo)

Date: 8 October

Dr. Mathew Kallumadil (Austria)
Host institution: Tokyo Institute of Technology
Title: "Nanotechnology in Cancer Treatment"



Ichikawa Gakuen Ichikawa Senior High School (Chiba)

Date: 11 October

Dr. Meryem Benohoud (Portugal)
Host institution: Tokyo University of Science
Title: "Chemistry in Our Everyday Life"



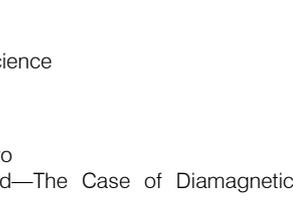
Date: 5 November

Dr. Rando Tuvikene (Estonia)
Host institution: Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology
Title: "Polysaccharides from Seaweeds"



Date: 12 October

Dr. Radouane Gannouji (Morocco)
Host institution: Tokyo University of Science
Title: "Some Aspects of Cosmology"



Date: 12 November

Dr. Mikhail F. Chernov (Russia)
Host institution: Tokyo Women's Medical University
Title: "Some Facts about Russia, Neurosurgery, and How Can We Treat a Brain Tumor without Even Skin Incision"



Dr. Christian Pigot (France)

Host institution: The University of Tokyo
Title: "Introduction to the Microworld—The Case of Diamagnetic Levitation"



Niigata Municipal Bandai Senior High School (Niigata)

Date: 14 October

Dr. Alexandre M. Fort (Switzerland)
Host institution: RIKEN
Title: "Regulation of Gene Expression by Non-Coding RNAs"



Date: 21 October

Dr. Yun-Guo Liu (China)
Host institution: Fisheries Research Agency
Title: "Conservation of Genetic Diversity of Shellfish"



Date: 17 October

Dr. Craig A. Barnett (New Zealand)
Host institution: Rikkyo University
Title: "How Studying Life, the Universe, and Everything Can Help You"



Toyama Prefectural Toyama High School

Dr. Eoin C. T. O'Farrell (Ireland)
Host institution: The University of Tokyo
Title: "Introduction to Solid State Physics"



Date: 22 November

Dr. Alena Neviarouskaya (Belarus)
Host institution: Toyohashi University of Technology
Title: "Comprehensive Exploration of Attitudes in Text: Textual Attitude Retrieval and Analysis"



Dr. Noelia M. Sanchez Ballester (Spain)
Host institution: National Institute for Materials Science
Title: "My Research Story..."

Date: 8 December

Dr. Daniel M. Packwood (New Zealand)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Probability and Molecules"

Kanazawa University High School (Ishikawa)

Date: 18 October

Dr. Sarah Naimi (France)
Host institution: RIKEN
Title: "From Nuclei to Stars"



Date: 16 December

Dr. Antoine Fleurence (France)
Host institution: JAIST
Title: "A French Materials Scientist in Ishikawa"



Fukui Prefectural Koshi Senior High School

Date: 26 November

Dr. Jason W. M. Lee (Singapore)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Public Health and Health Economics"



Fukui Prefectural Wakasa Senior High School

Date: 31 October

Dr. Krishna Bahadur KC (Nepal)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Natural Resources and Rural Livelihood in Developing Countries"



Gifu Prefectural Gizan Senior High School

Date: 14 October

Dr. Laila Alabidi (UK)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Discovering Our Ancient History: Cosmology and the Universe"



Date: 18 November

Dr. Alexandre Alie (France)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Darwin, Sponges, and the Animal Evolution"



Yamanashi Prefectural Tsuru High School

Date: 9 December

Dr. Jeffrey A. Fawcett (New Zealand)
Host institution: The Graduate University for Advanced Studies
Title: "How Do Species Evolve and How Do Their Genomes Evolve?"

Dr. Seung-Wook Shin (Korea)
Host institution: The University of Tokyo
Title: "Life Science, Stem Cell & Importance of Protein Degradation"

Aichi Prefectural Kasugai High School



Date: 14 November

Dr. Marcin L. Pilat (Canada)
Host institution: Nagoya University
Title: "Evolution of Virtual Creatures"

Shizuoka Kita High School (Shizuoka)

Date: 24 October

Dr. Md. N. Islam (Bangladesh)
Host institution: Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology
Title: "Wood Preservation: An Alternative Technique for Forest Restoration"



Date: 11 November

Dr. James J. Cannon (UK)
Host institution: The University of Tokyo
Title: "Nanotechnology: From Single Molecules to the World at Large"



Dr. Phillip R. Litchfield (UK)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Research with Neutrinos; Life in the United Kingdom"



Dr. Mark J. Winchester (UK)
Host institution: Hitotsubashi University
Title: "To See the World in a Grain of Sand: Standing at the Crossroads of the Social Sciences and the Humanities"

Aichi Prefectural Zuiryo Senior High School

Date: 9 November

Dr. Lukasz Kotula (Poland)
Host institution: Nagoya University
Title: "Adaptations of Plants to Waterlogging Stress"

Hyogo Prefectural Kakogawa Higashi High School

Date: 13 December

Dr. Ryan G. Banal (Philippines)
Host institution: Kyoto University
Title: "Developing a New Deep-Ultraviolet Artificial Light Source"



Tokushima Prefectural Jonan High School

Date: 6 October

Dr. Mathieu B. Lefevre (France)
Host institution: Okayama University
Title: "Investigation of TSG in 1p36 Region in Oral SCC"



Shizuoka Prefectural Nirayama High School

Date: 6 October

Dr. Prima R. Tatum (USA)
Host institution: Nagoya City University
Title: "A Journey through Chemical Research"



Miyazaki Prefectural Nobeoka High School

Date: 1 November

Dr. Khandaker A. Ahmed (Bangladesh)
Host institution: Kumamoto University
Title: "Unique Function of 8-nitro-cGMP in Sepsis Pathology"



Hailing from the United States, Dr. Timothy Stasevich has been conducting research with his host researcher, Dr. Hiroshi Kimura, in the Graduate School of Frontier Biosciences at Osaka University under a JSPS postdoctoral fellowship since June 2010. After obtaining his PhD at the University of Maryland and working as a research fellow at the National Institutes of Health, he decided to come to Japan with his family to gain international experience Japan-style.

What are you currently researching under the JSPS fellowship?

I am studying gene regulation in single living cells using a combination of quantitative fluorescence microscopy and theoretical modeling. Gene regulation refers to the process by which cells turn genes on and off. Without gene regulation, all cells in the body would look and behave the same since they all have the same genes. Fortunately, different cells have different genes turned on and off, so a neuron will look and behave differently than a skin cell, for example. At its best, gene regulation gives stem cells the ability to change into any other cell in the body; at its worst, gene regulation gone awry can lead to cancer.

How did you become interested in your research field?

I first became interested in gene regulation while working at the US National Institutes of Health with Dr. James G. McNally. There I learned firsthand that the cell nucleus is an incredibly dynamic place. Measuring just a few millionths of a meter across, the cell nucleus contains approximately two meters of jiggling DNA and hundreds of thousands of dynamic proteins. And yet, in spite of this extremely crowded and chaotic environment, genes are regularly turned on or off on demand in each and every one of our cells. Understanding this astounding fact is what

first got me interested in gene regulation and it continues to motivate me to this day.

How did you get to know your Japanese host researcher?

Dr. Hiroshi Kimura is well known abroad and his pioneering work on chromatin (DNA and histones) dynamics continues to generate lots of citations. I read his paper on this subject and wrote to him a few years ago to arrange a meeting while I was visiting Japan. He was very kind and gave me the opportunity to present my research at a seminar at Osaka University. During this time we talked about the possibility of applying for a JSPS fellowship and began to devise a research plan together.

Why did you choose Japan to pursue your research?

There are a number of reasons I chose to do my research in Japan. First, I was interested in working in an interdisciplinary environment, so the Graduate School of Frontier Biosciences at Osaka University was a particularly attractive option because it was designed to bring biologists together with chemists, computer scientists, engineers, and physicists to tackle some of the toughest problems in biology today. I believe these sorts of interdisciplinary efforts will be more and more valuable in the future as the boundaries of science continue to blur. Second, Japan has emerged as a mecca of microscopy, matched perhaps only by Germany. Japanese universities therefore house some of the latest and greatest microscopes. Here in our lab alone, we have three state-of-the-art Nikon and Olympus fluorescence microscopes, as well as a DeltaVision super-resolution microscope and a Zeiss microscope for fluorescence fluctuation analyses. In addition to that, I have access to the world's first multi-color microscope capable of tracking single molecules in the eukaryotic nucleus through our collaborator in RIKEN. Finally, on a more personal note, I think Japan is a beautiful country and great place to raise a family.

Generally speaking, what is your impression of Japan's research environment?

Needless to say, the research environment in Japan is top notch and very competitive. Speaking as a foreigner, research in Japan has also become quite international, with a number of universities actively recruiting foreign faculty for increased diversity. Japan also hosts many international meet-



Dr. Timothy John Stasevich

Ph.D. (Physics), University of Maryland, College Park, USA, 2006

M.Sc. (Physics), University of Maryland, College Park, USA, 2001

B.Sc. (Math & Physics), University of Michigan-Dearborn, USA, 1999

ings, so there is ample opportunity to meet and collaborate with other top researchers both inside and outside of Japan.

What do you do outside your research work?

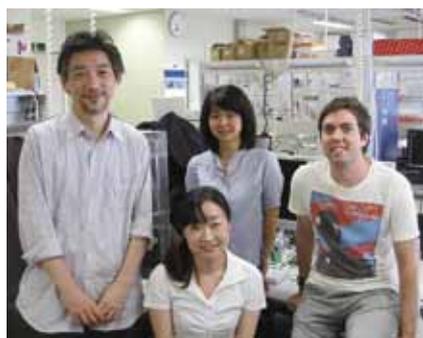
I often take weekend excursions to nearby tourist attractions with my wife and son. He has just turned one, so we are somewhat limited on how far we can travel and where we can go, but in a way this has helped us discover many interesting local sites that we might otherwise have missed.

What do you think of life in Japan—its culture and customs?

I like life in Japan and respect the deep traditional roots of Japanese culture. I also found out that Japan regards preventative medicine as important. This comes from its universal health insurance system which is unfortunately lacking back in my country. Since arriving in Japan, I have already had three mandatory health checkups. Because of these checkups, I now know more about my own body than ever before.

Please give some advice for young researchers who may be thinking about doing research in Japan.

The JSPS fellowship has been a wonderful experience for me and I encourage any foreign researcher interested in doing cutting-edge science to apply. The most important thing is to contact your potential mentor well in advance and devise an innovative yet realistic research plan. The maximum fellowship length is just two years, so the plan needs to be crisp and focused. If possible,



Dr. Stasevich with host and labmates

get a head start by doing some preliminary experiments together with your mentor to prove the feasibility of your plan.

Only naturally, many people are hesitant to leave their home country to reside in another especially non-English speaking country, with all the challenges that would seem to portend. However, Dr. Stasevich made the undaunted

decision to come to Japan with his expecting wife. We were very pleased to learn that he and his family are enjoying a happy and positive experience living in Japan. From what he said when we talked to him, we believe his stay in Japan is also adding depth to his experience as a researcher: "I often see the lights on in the university hospital late at night. The devotion of doctors and nurses to

patients inspires me and also reminds me why we do research in the first place." We hope Dr. Stasevich will share his experiences with colleagues around the world who may due to language and cultural differences be reluctant to come to Japan despite it being a dynamic international venue for advancing their research and building their careers.

Introducing Japan: Northern Osaka

By Dr. Timothy Stasevich

I'm currently living in Suita in Northern Osaka. Our closest train station is Kita-Senri on the Hankyu Railway. From there we can easily get to downtown Osaka, in particular Umeda, which has a huge selection of fantastic department stores and a plethora of restaurants and cafes. Enough has been written about downtown Osaka already, so I'd like to focus instead on some of the smaller local attractions that my family and I visit on a fairly regular basis.

Expo '70 Commemorative Park

Expo '70 Commemorative Park, usually referred to as Banpaku Koen, is just a twenty minute walk from our apartment. The site was originally used to host the 1970 World Expo, for which the park derives its name, but has since morphed into a more tranquil setting with multiple gorgeous gardens, a world-class ethnology museum, entertainment and sports facilities, and lots and lots of nature.

The park is probably most well known for its iconic Tower of the Sun (*taiyou no tou*) designed by the late Taro Okamoto, one of the largest artwork pieces in Japan. The Tower looms over the park like some giant preternatural creature and can be seen clearly from the Osaka Monorail as well as the Osaka University Hospital.



A rare site: Sun tower at night

If you have some free time, I highly recommend this park. Strolling through it you'll be fascinated by all the secret trails and lovely settings, including waterfalls, lily-pad covered ponds, flower fields, and an elevated walk through the forest canopy. And when your feet get tired you can enjoy a nice foot bath or a cup of green tea.

Minoh City

Minoh is a mountainside town that boasts a beautiful mountain walk through a quasi-national park that leads up to a stunning waterfall. It's best to go in the spring to view the cherry blossoms or late fall when the leaves are changing colors. Along the path you'll be greeted by vendors selling all sorts of sweets. If you're brave you can try the *momiji tempura*, basically deep-fried maple leaves! There are also a few temples and a number of quaint cafes settled amongst the leaves where you can relax. The only thing to beware are the monkeys! They're not always around, but when they are they like to steal sweets and take drinks from the vending machines. My wife and I have gone to the park many times, more recently with our son in his baby carrier. It's a relaxing walk, but can be tiresome all the way to the waterfall, especially with a heavy baby in tow.

Takarazuka Revue

I believe most people in the US and abroad are familiar with Japanese Kabuki theater in which all-male performers play both male and female roles, but fewer will know of the Takarazuka Revue, where the situation is

reversed! The Takarazuka Revue is an all-female theater troupe that began in 1914 in Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture. The city is near Itami Airport. Half of the actresses specialize in portraying men; they cut their hair short and learn to master masculine behavior and speech. The other actresses specialize in portraying females. There are five troupes in total (Flower, Moon, Snow, Star, and Cosmos) putting on a variety of different shows at any given time. Shows are elaborately costumed and choreographed and give off a Vegas-style air that leaves you breathless when the finale is over. Highly recommended!



Walking in Minoh with baby in tow





Cover photo:

A tiny Japanese white-eye (*mejiro*) perched on the branch of a cherry blossom tree is not much bigger than a few of its flowers.

About JSPS

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) operates as an independent administrative institution to perform the following main functions: fund scientific research, foster researchers, promote international scientific exchange, and advance university reform.



Crowing Rooster, Emblem of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

From days of old in Japan, it has been the belief that the vigorous cry of the rooster in the gray of the morning augurs the coming of a new and bright day. As the crowing rooster can therefore be thought of as a harbinger of the kind of new knowledge that promises a brilliant future for humankind, it was chosen as the emblem of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This emblem was designed in 1938 by Professor Sanzo Wada of Tokyo Fine Arts School to depict the rooster that symbolizes the breaking dawn in a verse composed by Emperor Showa.



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