

JSPS QUARTERLY

JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE

■ FEATURE

Award Ceremony Held for Fourth
JSPS *Ikushi* Prize

No. 49 2014 Autumn

Fourth GRC Annual Meeting 2015 to Be Hosted by JSPS in Japan

JSPS was selected to be the host organization of the fourth Annual Meeting of the Global Research Council (GRC) to be held on 27-28 May 2015, together with the co-host organization, National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.

What is the GRC?

The Global Research Council (GRC) was established in 2012 to bring the heads of research councils from around the world together for the purpose of addressing common issues for advancing scientific research. To date, more than 50 countries have participated in the GRC annual meetings. The GRC has already established itself as a unique international forum assembling the heads of research promoting agencies in countries that create more than 95% of the world's research outputs. In the three GRC annual meetings that have been held so far, the following subjects were addressed and statements of principles were adopted: Scientific Merit Review, Research Integrity, Open Access to Publications, and Shaping the Future.



GRC Tokyo 2015



The discussion to be advanced at the GRC Tokyo meeting will focus on two themes: “Research Funding for Scientific Breakthrough” and “Building Research and Education Capacity.” The former theme will address, among others, ways to advance basic research that spawns breakthroughs and innovation. The latter will encompass a range of issues, such as building and expanding international networks, forming excellent research hubs and fostering outstanding young researchers in countries around the world including developing nations. To pursue these objectives and address other pressing challenges, the GRC Tokyo meeting will work to form common understanding among the world's research councils, while disseminate its discussion outcomes to the global society.

On 26 May, the day before the Tokyo GRC meeting, an open symposium on scientific promotion will be hosted by JSPS with focus on one of the GRC meeting's themes, “Research Funding for Scientific Breakthrough.” The discussion will examine the state of basic research that triggers breakthroughs, while addressing such policy issues as building and strengthening global research networks.

Information on this symposium and the upcoming Tokyo GRC annual meeting will continue to be provided and updated in subsequent issues on the *JSPS Quarterly* newsletter and on our website (<http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-grc/index.html>).

Third GRC Annual Meeting was held in Beijing



On 27-28 May 2014, the third GRC annual meeting was held in Beijing, China, with the attendance of the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Li Keqiang. The meeting was co-hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). Participating in it were approximately 50 heads of research councils from about 40 countries. From Japan, JSPS president Dr. Yuichiro Anzai attended the meeting as a member



of the GRC's governing board. A discussion was held on the topics “Open Access” and “Shaping the Future,” which culminated in the adoption of a “Statement of Principles and Actions for Shaping the Future.”

International Policy Planning Division

2014 Recipient Chosen for International Prize for Biology

On 1 September, the Committee on the International Prize for Biology (chaired by Dr. Takashi Sugimura, president, the Japan Academy) of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science decided to award the 30th (2014) International Prize for Biology to Professor Sir Peter Crane FRS, Professor of Botany and Carl W. Knobloch, Jr., Dean of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University in the United States.

The field of specialization for the 30th Prize is “Systematic Biology and Taxonomy.”

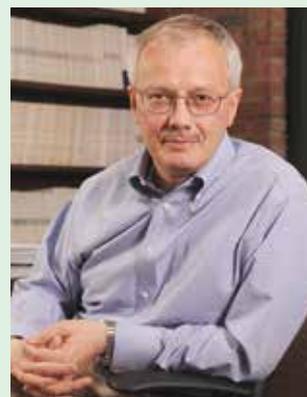
Prof. Crane has contributed greatly to the advancement of the systematic biology and taxonomy of land plants (bryophytes, ferns and lycophytes, gymnosperms, and angiosperms). After they reached land some 450 million years ago, plants evolved vascular bundles, seeds, and flowers and went on to generate plant life on Earth in all its tremendous diversity—a diversity which is truly immense when we include the number of plant groups now extinct. Until the 1970s, the phylogenetic systematics of plants was studied independently from two separate angles of approach: paleontology, which uses plant fossil data, and fields such as comparative morphology and developmental biology, which look at living plants. Prof. Crane broke new ground by being the first in the world to integrate information from these two areas into a comprehensive study.

Prof. Crane integrated information from extant seed plants (cycads, conifers, ginkgos, Gnetales, and angiosperms) with information from the wide range of fossil seed plant groups. Using cladistics, in 1985 he published a seminal paper that posited phyletic relationships among groups of seed plants. By directing renewed attention to the enduring enigma of the origin of angiosperms (flowering plants), his paper provided the impetus for major advances in the phylogenetic study of angiosperms, including modern molecular phylogenetic analysis using gene sequences.

After reaching land 450 million years ago, plants furnished the land’s surface with a rich soil; this was a major event that would favor the subsequent evolution of their diversity. With respect to the early evolution of land plants, a large morphological gap exists between the extant bryophytes and vascular plants, and there still remain many unsolved questions about the early evolution of land plants, including the evolutionary pathway that led to ferns and other vascular plants. In the late 1990s, Prof. Crane carried out comprehensive phylogenetic analyses: in addition to information on living bryophytes, ferns and lycophytes, and seed plants, he also used the fossil record of extinct terrestrial plants which was then becoming increasingly available. He placed the diverse fossil land plants of the Paleozoic era in the gap between bryophytes and vascular plants. This work systematized our understanding of the evolutionary process of early land plants and enabled researchers to infer how the characters peculiar to vascular plants evolved.

Much progress has been made in molecular phylogenetic analysis using extant plants, and phylogenetic relationships have been inferred from molecular information. The paleontological data, however, have not been harmonized satisfactorily with these inferences, and the debate over angiosperm origins has yet to be definitively settled. Nevertheless, the story of the early evolution of angiosperms has become progressively clearer over the course of the 30 years of research led by Prof. Crane as information has been amassed on small fossils, such as flowers, fruit, and seeds, dating from the Cretaceous period, or around the time of angiosperm origins. Thus, we are entering a new phase in solving the origins and early evolution of angiosperms, whose sudden appearance and rapid expansion Darwin dubbed an “abominable mystery.”

Prof. Crane has thus been in the forefront of phylogenetic studies of plants throughout



Professor Sir Peter Crane FRS

his distinguished career. Also worthy of recognition and esteem are the contributions he has made to society through his efforts to enhance the general public’s understanding of plant diversity and his work on behalf of biodiversity conservation.

Award Ceremony

On 1 December, the award ceremony and a following party in honor of the Prize recipient will be held at the Japan Academy. Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress are expected to be present at both events.

Commemorative Symposium

To commemorate the award to Prof. Peter Crane, Commemorative Symposium for the 30th International Prize for Biology “Expanding realm of taxonomy and evolutionary biology” will be held on Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at the Japan Academy, and a special lecture open to the general public will be held on Wednesday, December 3, at the National Museum of Nature and Science, co-organized by the National Museum of Nature and Science and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

Professor Sir Peter Crane FRS

Nationality: United Kingdom

Present position: Professor of Botany and Carl W. Knobloch, Jr., Dean of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, U.S.A.

Curriculum Vitae:

1981 Ph.D., University of Reading, U.K.
1981-1982 Post-doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Biology, Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.
1982-1995 Curator, The Field Museum, Chicago, U.S.A.
1995-1999 Director, The Field Museum, Chicago, U.S.A.
1999-2006 Director and Chief Executive, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, U.K.
2006-2009 John and Marion Sullivan University Professor, The University of Chicago, U.S.A.
2009-present Professor of Botany and Carl W. Knobloch, Jr., Dean of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, U.S.A.

Awards and Distinctions:

1998 - Fellow of the Royal Society, U.K.
2001 - Foreign Associate, National Academy of Sciences, U.S.A.
2002 - Foreign Member, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Sweden.
2004 - Member, Academy Leopoldina, National Academy of Sciences, Germany.
2008 - Member, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, U.S.A.

International Policy Planning Division

Award Ceremony Held for Fourth JSPS *Ikushi* Prize

Graced by the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino, the fourth *Ikushi* Prize award ceremony was held by JSPS at the Japan Academy on 24 February. At the ceremony, 18 young researchers received an *Ikushi* certificate and medal.

In 2009, JSPS received an endowment from Emperor Akihito on the 20th year of his reign. Amidst a severe economic environment in Japan, His Majesty's desire was to encourage and support young scientists who are working diligently to advance their studies and research. In deference to his wishes, JSPS established the *Ikushi* Prize program and placed it into operation in FY2010. It functions to formally recognize outstanding doctoral students who can be expected to contribute to Japan's future scientific advancement, while seeking to fan the flames of their enthusiasm for education and research pursuits.

For this conferral of the fourth *Ikushi* Prize, in March 2013 a request to nominate candidates was sent out to 2,798 Japanese universities and academic societies, from which 130 nominations were received by June. Over a 6-month period, JSPS's Research Center for Science Systems conducted preliminary document and panel reviews on the nominees, upon which the program's Selection Committee made the final decisions. Meeting on 9 January, the Committee members engaged in a vigorous discussion of the nominees, taking into account their current research activities and



FY2013 awardees

future potential they finally came to the difficult decision on which 18 nominees to select for the Prize.

JSPS president Dr. Yuichiro Anzai opened the ceremony with introductory remarks and was followed by Selection Committee chair Dr. Takeshi Sasaki, who reported on the vetting process. Then, Dr. Anzai presented an *Ikushi* certificate and medal to Ms. Fusa Miyake, a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Science at Nagoya University, who received them as a representative of all the awardees. This was followed by a congratulatory message from the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, read by Senior Vice Minister Mr. Yoshitaka Sakurada. The program concluded with a message of appreciation and future resolve on behalf of the awardees by Ms. Miyake.

After the ceremony, a tea party was held at the Japan Academy, in which Prince and Princess Akishino enjoyed pleasant conversation with Mr. Sakurada, Dr. Sasaki, and the *Ikushi* laureates.



Receiving the *Ikushi* certificate and medal

On Receiving the Fourth *Ikushi* Prize by Fusa Miyake, Nagoya University

*I am very honored and grateful to receive the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science's *Ikushi* Prize. First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress who devote particularly kind consideration to supporting young researchers, while having created this opportunity for us to receive such a treasured prize. I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone*

*who has dedicated time and effort in carrying out the *Ikushi* Prize program.*

My doctoral study focused on reconstructing past cosmic-ray intensity by measuring radiocarbon in tree rings, which translated into this Prize. Incoming cosmic rays react with the Earth's atmosphere and produce radiocarbon (¹⁴C: isotope of carbon). That ¹⁴C becomes dioxide which is absorbed by

trees during photosynthesis. The ¹⁴C content in tree rings contains a record of past cosmic-ray intensity. I was fascinated by the idea that a familiar tree could give us past cosmic information, so I started studying past cosmic ray intensity using Japanese Yaku-cedar tree rings. To measure the ¹⁴C content in these tree rings, we need to pretreat a sample manually. It takes plenty of patience and a lot of time to establish ¹⁴C

data. For example, it takes a whole month to measure the ^{14}C content of just 30 years.

I investigated the annual ^{14}C content over the period from AD550 to AD1100 in my doctoral study, and found sudden and rapid ^{14}C increases in the years AD775 and AD994. This meant that a lot of cosmic rays fell to the Earth in those years. The origin of these increased ^{14}C events is considered to have been a very large explosion on the surface of the sun. These were the first successful detections of short-term cosmic ray events. If such a large solar explosion were to occur today, it would have a serious

effect on modern society. This makes me all the more aware of the need to learn from the past so as to apply the knowledge gained to the future.

I have been interested in nature from an early age due to the influence of my parents, who both majored in earth science. In particular, I wanted to solve a mystery of the universe. Through my past study experience, I have learned the importance of making steady effort toward achieving a goal. I want to dream even bigger and keep trying. I will also do my best to spread the fun or charm of science

to the younger generation.

Last but not least, I would like to express my appreciation to my research advisers who provided me a place to study and do my research while giving me warm encouragement. Further, I would like to offer a word of special thanks to my family for the great support they've given me and the fun of science they've instilled in me. Without their guidance and encouragement, the work for which I received this Prize would not have been possible.

Fourth (FY2013) JSPS *Ikushi* Prize Awardees

Awardee Name	Affiliation	Research Subject of Doctoral Course
Mami Iima	Graduate School of Medicine, Kyoto University	"The Development of a New Non-invasive Diagnostic Tool for Investigating Breast Cancer Using Diffusion Weighted MRI"
Masahito Ohue	Graduate School of Information Science and Engineering, Tokyo Institute of Technology	"A Protein-protein Interaction Network Prediction Method Based on Tertiary Structure Information"
Motofumi Kumazoe	Graduate School of Bioresource and Bioenvironmental Sciences, Kyushu University	"Molecular Mechanisms of Epigallocatechin-gallate-induced Cancer-specific Cell Death"
Nanase Kohno	Graduate School of Science, Hiroshima University	"Unified Study of Kinetics and Dynamics on the Elementary Processes in Collisions of Vibrationally Excited Molecules"
Atsushi Kobayashi	Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University	"The Role of Intra-Southeast Asian Trade for the Development of Regional Economy in the 19 th Century"
Mizuki Komura	Graduate School of Economics, Nagoya University	"Public Policy Analysis of Family Bargaining"
Yoshihisa Nakahata	School of Life Science, The Graduate University for Advanced Studies	"Activation-Dependent Spatial Dynamics of Postsynaptic Glycine Receptors"
Nao Hamamuki	Graduate School of Mathematical Sciences, The University of Tokyo	"Crystal Growth Phenomena and Hamilton-Jacobi Equations"
Takashi Fukaya	Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, The University of Tokyo	"Analysis of MicroRNA-mediated Gene Silencing"
Noritoshi Furuichi	Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo	"Sociology of Young Entrepreneurs in Japan"
Yoriko Heianza	Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba	"Development of Optimal Strategies for Predicting and Screening Risk of Type2 Diabetes in Japanese Individuals"
Takashi Matsushita	Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University	"Research of Contemporary Russian Literature after the Dissolution of USSR"
Fusa Miyake	Graduate School of Science, Nagoya University	"Reconstruction of Cosmic-ray Intensity in the Past from Measurements of Radiocarbon in Tree Rings"
Hiroshi Mukai	The United Graduate School of Agricultural Sciences, Kagoshima University	"Studies on Parent-Embryo Interaction and Its Communication Mechanism in Subsocial Stink Bugs"
Kenji Mochizuki	School of Physical Sciences, The Graduate University for Advanced Studies	"Theoretical Study on the Molecular Mechanism of Ice Melting and the Local Structure of Aqueous Solution"
Yuya Morimoto	Graduate School of Information Science and Technology, The University of Tokyo	"Construction of Robotic Actuator by <i>In Vitro</i> Reconstruction of Tissue Structure"
Seiji Yamasaki	Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Osaka University	"Drug Development Against Resistant Bacterial Infections Using the Structural-functional Information of Multidrug Efflux Pumps"
Yong Liang	Graduate School of Engineering, Kyoto University	"Beam-steering Photonic-crystal Lasers"

Titles and affiliations current as of 1 May 2013

Attended by 115 young pre- and postdoctoral researchers from the US, UK, France, Germany and Sweden, this year's JSPS Summer Program was held over a two-month period from 10 June to 20 August.

Featuring a research internship for the participants at a host institution, the Summer Program began with a one-week orientation held by the cosponsoring Graduate University for Advanced Studies in the seaside town of Hayama. At it, the fellows received special lectures, gave poster presentations, attended classes in Japanese language learning, engaged in Japanese culture activities, and experienced Japanese living through homestay with a Japanese family. The welcome reception for them was attended by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, who enjoyed exchanging views and chatting with the young researchers. After the orientation, the young researchers went their separate ways to their respective host institutions. Their summer internships afforded them an experience upon which to consider coming back to Japan to do research at future junctures in their careers. On the day



Welcome reception attended by the Emperor and Empress

before the program ended, the participants reassembled to present reports on their summer research activities.

Overseas Fellowship Division

The centerpiece of the JSPS Summer Program is the fellows' internship at a host research institution, where they take part in research activities with frontline Japanese researchers in their respective fields. The following are comments offered by two of the fellows on their research and culture experiences.

Ms. Kimberly Ann Stevens

(Graduate student, Brigham Young University) at Ritsumeikan University

Her host: Prof. Isao Tokuda

The JSPS Summer Program provided me an extremely valuable research collaboration opportunity. My research involves studying the mechanics of vocal fold vibrations through the use of synthetic models. Dr. Isao Tokuda and his collaborators in Japan have developed a specialized endoscopy system capable of imaging the vocal folds in three dimensions. Through the Summer Program, I was able to use synthetic models to validate a new endoscopy system. The collaboration also provided the Japanese researchers an opportunity to learn how to manufacture vocal fold models. Working with the team in my host lab was delightful—they were incredibly welcoming and accommodating, holding



Ms. Stevens (left) with resident assistant in on-campus dorm

parties to welcome me, and even showing me how to enjoy singing *karaoke* Japanese style. Living near Kyoto gave me the chance to see and experience the beauty of classic Japanese culture. The entire experience was highly productive, educational, and personally rewarding.

Ms. Aiko Julia Möhwald

(Graduate student, University of Freiburg) at University of Tsukuba

Her host: Prof. Yoshinori Okade

During my two-month research stay at the University of Tsukuba, I conducted field studies of Japanese Physical Education (PE) classes to gain a special insight into the feedback culture of Japanese PE teachers. I was highly impressed by the organization, discipline and management exercised by the PE teachers and the quality of their students. The JSPS Summer Program offers a perfect opportunity to experience intercultural dialogue with excellent Japanese researchers. Those conversations not only enriched my research but also broadened my cultural horizons. I am deeply grateful to JSPS for affording



Ms. Möhwald with her host Prof. Okade (right) and his group

me this chance to learn about and explore this unique country in such a rewarding way! Last but not least, a special word of thanks goes to my host researcher, Prof. Yoshinori Okade, and his team, who received and hosted me in such an extraordinary way.

Summer Program Pre-orientation Meetings

In Bonn and Paris, JSPS offices and representatives of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Center for Scientific Research: CNRS) respectively held pre-departure meetings for young researchers who would participate in JSPS's Summer Program. At each meeting, a briefing was held on the program's details and past participants told about their summer experiences and offered advice, while DAAD and CNRS introduced their various programs as JSPS's counterpart organizations.

Pre-Orientations in Bonn, Germany

In Bonn, this orientation meeting was held on 8 May and attended by eight Japan-bound researchers. In addition to receiving information from the staff that will be helpful in preparing for their stays in Japan, the participants also received reports from two fellows in last year's Summer Program. Ms. Anja Batram and Mr. Thomas Ludwig spoke to them about their experiences in Japan over the course of the summer including their homestays with a Japanese family. They also went into detail on such subjects as the extent to which English is understood in the lab and in town, differ-



Former fellow's presentation

ences between German and Japanese eating habits and manners, and how communication networks, including cell phones, work in Japan—all of which was received with piqued interest. Any anxiety that the young researchers might have felt was relieved when the former fellows told them about how painstakingly the Summer Program is organized to ensure that they are well cared for as they go about having a scientifically productive and personally enjoyable summer in Japan.

Along with the program briefings presented by the Bonn Office and DAAD, the German JSPS Club (alumni association) also introduced their activities.

Pre-Orientation Held in Paris, France

On 2 June, a pre-departure orientation was held for young French researchers heading to Japan to participate in JSPS's Summer Program. Amidst a trend that

sees fewer French researchers going to Japan, all thirteen of the summer-bound researchers attended the meeting held at the headquarters of CNRS. After welcoming remarks, each of the participants introduced themselves. What sparked their interest the most were talks given by two past Summer Program fellows. Ms. Camille Ndebeka-Bandou and Ms. Sophie Buhnik spoke about how they found their stays in Japan to be both unique and awarding experiences. Everybody understands, they said, that it is meaningful for students to study in other countries; but differing from going to countries within Europe, traveling the great distance to Japan offers students a more culturally diverse experience. Covering such details as coping with Japan's muggy summer climate and even mosquitos, their remarks triggered an animated exchange of questions and answers and spinoff discussions.



At CNRS

Briefing Held by Japanese Higher Education Network Association in China

On 7 June, a meeting to introduce Japan's overseas student programs was held by the Japanese Higher Education Network Association in China (*Kiheikai*)*. Its venue was the Center for "Face-to-Face Exchange" on the campus of Shandong Normal University in Jinan. Some 160 people attended despite the fact that the meeting was held on a Saturday.

Founded in 1902, Shandong Normal University established a Japanese department in 1972. Then, in 1999, it launched a master's program in Japanese language, making the university the historical first in Shandong Province to establish such a program.

At the introductory meeting, Dr. Hu Xuexing, Dean of Foreign Language College, and Prof. Osamu Wada, director of the JSPS Beijing Office, offered messages geared to students thinking about going to Japan to study or do research. Next, Ms. Shinobu Yoshii, Overseas Student Advisor, Embassy of Japan in China, described the various Japanese study programs and scholarships that Chinese students are eligible for. As this was a rare chance for the students of Shandong Normal University to receive a detail briefing on the study opportunities available to them in Japan, they listened attentively while jotting many notes. In conjunction, JSPS also gave a briefing on its program offerings. Then, each Japanese university introduced its programs, and held their own briefing sessions.

This was the first time for the Japanese Higher Education Network Association in China to hold a briefing in cooperation with the Japan Foundation, Beijing and the JSPS Beijing Office. Plans are to continue this collaborative relationship in the future.

Role of the Center for Face-to-Face Exchange

The Center was established by the Japan Foundation as a platform for promoting exchange and mutual understanding in cities and towns of China's outlying regions that have few opportunities to receive the latest information on Japan or to meet and talk with Japanese people.

The Center was opened in Shandong Normal University in November 2013. A vigorous program of activities is already being carried out by the university's Prof. Li Guangzhen, student volunteers, and many Chinese and Japanese affiliates.

Agencies and Universities Participating in this Briefing

In addition to JSPS and the Japan Foundation, the following Japanese universities participate in the Center's briefing: Hokkaido University, University of Tsukuba, University of Tokyo, Hitotsubashi University, Kobe University, Hiroshima University, Waseda University, J.F. Oberlin University, and Daito Bunka University.



Student volunteers

JSPS Beijing Office

* The Japanese Higher Education Network Association in China comprises mainly Japanese universities, research institutes and government agencies with offices, bases or alumni organizations in China. Its Japanese name *Kiheikai* denotes carrying out international exchange driven by a "peace-seeking spirit."

International Symposium on Disaster Preparedness Held in Washington DC

After the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck Japan in March 2011, medical management for large-scale disasters entered a new era. “Disaster preparedness” and “resilient communities” became buzzwords in establishing a framework to reduce disaster risk.

This international symposium, titled “Disaster Medical and Public Health Management: Review of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA),” was held at the George Washington University, Washington, DC on May 21-22, and attended by over 100 practitioners and distinguished researchers in the subject fields.

At the symposium, a discussion on various topics related to disaster medicine and public health management was advanced in ways that provide direct input to the HFA initiative. Launched in 2005, HFA has devised and is carrying out a 10-year plan to make the world safer from natural disasters while setting goals to reduce the loss of life and mitigate the impact on society when disasters strike. To develop a post-2015 framework, the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), a division of the United Nations, in Sendai, Japan.

Breakout sessions were held on five topics on May 21, the symposium’s first day. They were titled (1) Frameworks and policies relating to medical preparedness and health management in disasters, (2) Health planning for all phases of a disaster including risk assessment with concern for vulnerable populations, (3) Psychosocial/mental health concerns and building community resilience, (4) Health infrastructure and logistics for disaster preparedness including resources and funding, and (5) Public

health development of evidence-based technical guidance and education/training programs for the advancement of health and disaster risk management capabilities. On the second and final day, each session group summarized its discussion, broached proposals, and delivered a presentation.

Along with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the symposium was supported by Tohoku University, George Washington University, Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine at Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, and Children’s National Health System.

JSPS Washington Office



Prof. Virginia Murray, UNISDR, giving remarks

The First KI-Osaka University Joint Symposium Held

On 10 June, the Karolinska Institutet’s Department of Microbiology, Tumor, and Cell Biology (MTC) and Osaka University’s Graduate School of Medicine jointly held a symposium on the theme “Immunology and Infection Biology.” Venued at the Nobel Forum of the Karolinska Institutet (KI), the event drew an audience of nearly 100 people.

In 2001, Osaka University and Karolinska Institutet signed an agreement to carry out an academic exchange between them. They updated the agreement in 2013; now, this year, KI and Osaka’s Graduate School of Medicine have signed an agreement and initiated a student exchange, the only program of its kind that KI has with a Japanese academic institution. This symposium was held to commemorate that new milestone in the long-standing relationship



Dr. Hirano

between the two universities.

At the symposium, Dr. Klas Kärre, professor of MTC at Karolinska Institutet, and Dr. Toshio Hirano, president of Osaka University, offered opening remarks. Dr. Kärre spoke on KI’s history, giving examples of academic exchange between Sweden and Japan, while Dr. Hirano spoke about Osaka University’s vision of global outreach including its exchange with KI. Then, Dr. Hideo Akutsu, director of JSPS Stockholm Office, offered remarks on behalf of JSPS. They were followed by scientific presentations from members of KI and Osaka University’s research faculties, including Prof. Birgitta Henriques Normark and Prof. Shizuo Akira who spoke respectively on the topics “Pneumococcal interactions with the host,” and “Regnase-1, an endoribonuclease regulating the immune response.”

During coffee breaks, a number of young researchers gave poster presentations and enjoyed the space it provided them for networking.

Upon the successful close of the symposium, participants moved to the Japanese ambassador’s residence for a reception hosted by JSPS and Embassy of Japan. Attended by KI pro-vice-chancellor Prof. Kerstin Tham and dean of research Prof. Hans-Gustaf Ljunggren, the reception offered everybody from the two universities an opportunity to form and expand personal and professional ties.

JSPS Stockholm Office

UK-Japan Astrophysics Symposium at University of Oxford

On 9-11 July, JSPS London supported a UK-Japan astrophysics symposium held at the University of Oxford. Ninety-seven people attended, almost half being Japanese, a notable number of whom were postgraduate students. The purpose of this conference was to disseminate the latest results in astronomical research output from the AKARI infrared astronomy satellite launched in 2006 and to discuss the legacy of its data while making plans for the next major Japanese-European venture, the SPICA infrared space telescope. The symposium, therefore, marked an important next-phase juncture in expanding an already fruitful collaboration among the Japan Aerospace Exploration



Participants attentively listening to presentations

Agency (JAXA), the University of Tokyo, and Nagoya University on one side, and the UK Space Agency, Oxford University, the Open University, and University College London on the other.

A total of 50 invited

speakers presented the latest results of their research on all aspects of astronomical data and observation ranging from pre-stellar cores and evolving stars to the design of next-generation infrared space instrumentation for the SPICA mission. The London Office staff also gave presentations on a variety of JSPS's international programmes.

One special feature of the conference was the involvement of PhD students through "elevator sessions," designed to give them an opportunity to describe their research and to facilitate interaction between them and senior researchers. After a full day of presentations and discussions, more networking was carried out during a traditional high-table dinner at Mansfield College. Overall, the symposium provided a strategy for opening up the AKARI legacy data and products to the international community and a roadmap for future UK-Japan scientific collaboration in the run-up to the SPICA mission. Official proceedings of this symposium will be published shortly, and a follow-on conference to cement collaborative plans is slated to be held in Tokyo in 2017.

JSPS London Office

France-Japan Academic Forum Held on Aeronautics and Space

On 12-13 June, the JSPS Strasbourg Office and Université Toulouse III held a France-Japan Academic Forum titled "Recent Advances in Aeronautics and Space: Smart and Green Technologies and Applications for the Future." Venued at Fondation Bemberg, now an art museum housed in Hôtel d'Assézat, previously an elegant mansion built in the 16th century by Toulouse's best Renaissance architect. It drew a large response of 62 participants.

Coordinated by Dr. Thierry Lebey of CNRS's Laboratory on Plasma and Conversion of Energy (LAPLACE) and Prof. Mengu Cho of Kyushu Institute of Technology, the forum featured presentations by eleven top-notch Japanese and French researchers and industry experts on the latest research advances being forged in areas of aeronautics and space. Their remarks spurred an energetic discussion with and among the audience, which included doctoral students and young researchers.

After welcoming remarks by the organizers and guests, an invited lecture was given by Mr. Alain Gleyzes, deputy assistant director of CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales) Orbital Projects on the theme "Pleiades system is fully operational in orbit." (This system, which comprises two optical Earth-imaging satellites designed for dual civil-military purposes, is implemented as an international joint undertaking.) The following Q&A period saw questions related to markets for the Pleiades system. Then, five sessions were convened in each of which specialists from both Japan and France gave presentations. The sessions were titled Space Environmental Effects, Small Satellites, Composite Material, Space Application, and Electrical Aircraft. The first day wound up with a roundtable discussion whose panel of experts included representatives from Airbus. In it, an in-depth

and engrossing discussion was advanced on the application of the latest research related to the previous sessions and on the aerospace industry including its future prospects.

The forum gave both the lecturers and participants an opportunity to discover and explore new areas of interest and the impetus to form new research networks among themselves.

In parallel with the forum, the JSPS French Alumni Association held its general meeting. Attended by eight members, it saw a report on the previous year's activities and finances and an active discussion on the association's upcoming agenda of activities. The alumni association's president Dr. Isabelle Sasaki played an instrument role in not only organizing the general meeting but also the preceding forum, bespeaking a continuation of the close relationship enjoyed between the Strasbourg office and French alumni association well into the future.

JSPS Strasbourg Office



Participants in courtyard of Hôtel d'Assézat

Useful Links for Research and Study in Japan

If you, your students, colleagues or offspring are thinking studying or doing research in Japan or working in Japan's academic community, the following websites can give you insights into Japan's study/research environment.

For researchers

- Research in Japan
http://www.mext.go.jp/english/science_technology/1304788.htm

- JREC-IN (Japan Research Career Information Network)
<http://jrecin.jst.go.jp/seek/SeekTop?n=1>

For students

- Study in Japan/ Comprehensive Guide (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)
<http://www.studyjapan.go.jp/jp/index.html>

- Japan Study Support/Information for Foreign Students (The Asian Students Cultural Association & Benesse Corporation)
<http://www.jpss.jp/ja/>

- Study in Japan (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet) Source: We are "TOMODACHI" 2013 Winter
<http://japan.kantei.go.jp/letters/medical/study/1j.html>

Finland Alumni Hold Board Meeting and Seminar

On 23 May, the JSPS Alumni Club in Finland (ACF) held a board meeting and tandem seminar at the University of Helsinki. The five executive members attending the board meeting discussed the club's budget and upcoming agenda of activities. The meeting



Lecture by Dr. Wilcock

offered an opportunity for JSPS Stockholm Office's new director Dr. Hideo Akutsu and also its new deputy director Ms. Yuriko Kawakubo to meet for the first time after their arrival from

Japan, testifying anew to the strong collaborative relationship enjoyed between the Stockholm Office and the Finland Alumni Club.

In the following seminar, Prof. Satoshi Nakamura, Nara Institute of Science and Technology (NAIST), and Dr. Graham Wilcock, adjunct professor, University of Helsinki, gave lectures on a theme of "Language, Translation, and Communication." Prof. Nakamura spoke on the topic "Multimodal Interaction and Speech-to-Speech Translation," and Dr. Wilcock on "Speech-based Wikitalk Robot Application." Both triggering active discussions among the participants.

JSPS Stockholm Office

JAAP Symposium and Assembly in Manila

On 11 July, JSPS Alumni Association of the Philippines (JAAP) convened its second scientific symposium, this time on the theme "Health and the Environment." It was held at De La Salle University in Manila.

The symposium started off with a welcoming address by the university's Dr. Raymond Girard Tan, Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, following whom inspirational remarks were given by Prof. Fortunato T. Dela Pena, undersecretary of the Philippines Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and a report on the alumni activities by JAAP president Dr. Maricar S. Prudente. A keynote lecture was delivered by Prof. Naoki Saito, Department of Life and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Meiji Pharmaceutical University, on the subject "Chemistry of Antitumor 1,2,3,4-Tetrahydroisoquinoline Marine Natural Products."

Prof. Saito is carrying out research on drug development using marine resources, while doing bioprospecting to advance his research. In his lecture, Prof. Saito drew upon his experience in

JSPS's Asia-Africa Science Platform Program and the research he had conducted under it to stress the importance of advancing basic research through international joint endeavors.

After his keynote address, scientific papers were presented by three JAAP members. Then, JAAP held its general assembly, in which Dr. Jaime C. Montoya, executive director, Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, was elected as the association's new president.

JSPS Bangkok Office



JSPS staff and JAAP members

Symposium on Pharmacy's Past and Future Held in Germany



Dr. Mueller (left)

On 23-24 May, JSPS's Bonn Office and the German JSPS Club joined forces in holding the nineteenth German-Japan Science Symposium, this time on the theme "Pharmacy—A Journey from Edo Times to Modern Pharmaceuticals and Health Economics." Ven-

ued at the Erlangen-Nürnberg University in Erlangen, Germany, the symposium was attended by some 130 people, mostly researchers who have experienced JSPS programs.

In the opening session, remarks were delivered by Mr. Hidenao Yanagi, Consulate-General of Japan in Munich, which deepened the participants' perception of the very long years of exchange enjoyed between Japan and Germany. Various lectures addressed the subject of "pharmacy" from different angles, with a focus on two themes.

The first looked at the use in Japan of Chinese medicines from

the Edo Period (from the 17th century). From the perspective of a scientific analysis, it addressed the effectiveness of those medicines and the differences between them and Western pharmaceuticals. The second theme leaped the discussion forward to state-of-the-art pharmaceutical research and to current health technology assessment (HTA) policies that employ such strategies as a cost-QALY (Quality-adjusted Life Years) ratio. The high degree of participant interest in these topics was demonstrated by the salvos of questions they asked the lecturers.

During the meeting, the German JSPS Club made JSPS International Program Department director Mr. Hisashi Kato an honorary member out of appreciation for the long years of cooperation and support he has accorded their alumni association. Then, the JSPS Alumni Club Award was conferred on Dr. Johannes Mueller (University of Cologne), who has made significant contributions to advancing exchange and building networks between German-speaking regions of Europe and Japan.

For the lecturers' profiles and their lecture abstracts and materials, please visit the Bonn Office's website at <http://www.jsp-s-bonn.de/index.php?id=1577>

JSPS Bonn Office

JSPS Presentation Given at Regent's University London

On 17 June, the JSPS London Office gave a program briefing at Regent's University, located inside Regent's Park in the center of London. The impetus for holding this briefing stems from another briefing that the Office gave at the event during Japan University and Career Information Day 2014 held earlier by the Embassy of Japan in the UK. Representatives of Regent's University attended the event and, attracted by the Office's briefing on JSPS's international exchange programs, they approached the staff about holding a briefing on their campus.

Regent's University was the second university in the UK to be recognized as a private university by the British government. Regent's University was established as college in 1984 and became a university in 2013. As such, it is still a very new university. The university has seven schools, mainly in the humanities, social sciences, and business management, and a student body of about 4,500. Most of the courses offered at the university award degrees that are valid in both the UK and US. Another unique characteristic of the university is its international conference hall in which various lectures and meetings are held together with the European Union and other international organizations.

On this day, the JSPS briefing was attended by six people from the university and four from the London Office, including its director Prof. Kunio Takeyasu.



Discussion on JSPS international programs

The meeting began with an introduction by the university of its programs, research activities, international exchange initiatives, and collaborations with Japanese universities. In turn, the London Office introduced JSPS's program, especially the fellowships it offers for overseas researchers to come to Japan. In the subsequent Q&A session, the university showed particularly high interest in the London Office's symposium schemes and JSPS's invitational fellowship programs.

JSPS London Office

JSPS Briefings Held on University of California Campuses



Ms. Watanabe explaining JSPS programs

JSPS's San Francisco Office held program briefings on 3 May at UC Berkeley and on May 29 at UC San Diego—both universities ranked among America's top-level public research institutions. Japan-related studies thrive at the Center for Japanese

Studies of the Institute of East Asian Studies in Berkeley and also at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies in San Diego. The office enjoys a close relationship with UC Berkeley, having cosponsored several symposiums with it, with the next scheduled for this fall. In the Office's relationship with UC San Diego, it has already held a number of program briefings on its campus.

In the May briefings, San Francisco Office deputy director Ms. Chihiro Watanabe introduced JSPS's program offerings and the Office's various activities to groups of mainly entry-level researchers, after which she went on to explain in detail JSPS's doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship programs, including their eligibility requirements and application procedures. The volleys of questions asked bespoke the high level of interest that the students had about these programs and opportunities. In the UC San Diego briefing, a former JSPS fellow talked about his experience of living and doing research in Japan and offered advice to the students who could be future JSPS fellows.

Over the course of this fiscal year, the Office will continue to give program briefings mainly at universities on the West Coast of the US, while initiating a new thrust of giving them to science-promotion agencies and major universities in Central and South America.

JSPS San Francisco Office



Essay by a Former Fellow

Dr. Francisca Nneka Okeke, Professor of Physics at the University of Nigeria

My Life in Japan and Relationship with the Japanese

I first came to Japan on April 1st, 1999 as a fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). I was a postdoctoral researcher in the field of geomagnetism and geophysics of the upper atmosphere. Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed at Narita Airport by my host researcher, Prof. Yozo Hamano of the University of Tokyo. My first impression of Japanese was the humility and simplicity I saw in him.

Working with him at the university, I found Prof. Hamano to be particularly wonderful, very humble, kind and easily accessible. He was able to secure a research grant for me, which facilitated my research work. I was happy that opportunities were given to me to attend conferences not only in Japan but also in Perth, Western Australia. In the department, I enjoyed an exceptional reception and wonderfully warm attitude toward me by all staff and faculty throughout my stay. The excellent atmosphere that they created made my work very easy to advance. It also compelled me to work as hard as my Japanese colleagues, resulting in my being able to publish many papers in reputable journals. I took a Japanese language class for six months. I also acquainted myself with Japanese culture and the Japanese way of living, both of which helped me a lot during my stay in Japan.

Outside the university too most of the Japanese I came across really cooperated with me, also making my stay very comfortable. The little Japanese language I learned helped me in communicating with people I met. Life in Japan was for me very interesting and truly unforgettable. Generally speaking, of all the countries I have visited including South Africa, the UK, USA, Australia, Brazil, India, and France, Japan is the place where I found the people to be most hospitable and friendly—that is not an exaggeration. The Japanese culture and lifestyle are worthy of emulation: They care for their aged parents and children normally stay at home until they get married. This is very interesting and attractive to me.

I can attribute part of my achievements today to my participation in the JSPS program, which I regard as having been a unique and marvelous experience as well as a golden opportunity. After my JSPS fellowship, I was made a Professor of Physics (in 2000), a fellow of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS), and Nigerian Institute of Physics. I won the prestigious L'Oreal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science for the Physical Sciences, a Laureate. I am ever grateful to Japan and JSPS for the opportunity it accorded me to take off to such heights in building my career as a researcher from its early stages.



Sound Sleep to Everyone in the World—IIS's Challenge

Sleep is a behavioral state ubiquitously observed in all mammals and other species with highly developed brains. We human beings spend one third of our lives in sleep, making it a very familiar phenomenon to most of us. Amazingly, however, the fundamental function of sleep remains unclear. Sound sleep is indispensable for maintaining physical and mental health. Sleep disorder is not only a major problem in and of itself but is a well-recognized risk factor for lifestyle diseases such as metabolic syndrome, mental illness such as mood disorders, and neurological disorders such as narcolepsy. Social problems attributable to sleep disorders are significant, including automotive accidents due to excessive sleepiness, increases in the prevalence of mood disorders, increases in suicide, and increases in wandering and delirium among elderly patients causing an excessive burden on caretakers. Despite these urgent issues, we have very few means of medical intervention for sleep disturbances because little is known about the fundamental mechanisms of sleep regulation.



The International Institute for Integrative Sleep Medicine (IIS) at the University of Tsukuba was launched in 2012 to elucidate the fundamental mechanisms of sleep/wake regulation and to develop new methodologies for intervening in sleep disturbances and related disorders based on discoveries made through advances in basic research, thereby responding to the needs of society. IIS gathers top researchers from a wide range of fields including molecular genetics, neuroscience, molecular and cell biology, biochemistry, pharmacology, medicinal chemistry and clinical medicine. Fusing these research fields, IIS has formed a unique institution focusing on fundamental research of sleep. Under Dr. Masashi Yanagisawa, Director of IIS and a world-leading scientist who discovered the neuropeptide orexin that regulates sleep/wakefulness, 10 core principal investigators (four of them being non-Japanese) belong to IIS. Shoulder to shoulder, they are working to solve the mysteries of sleep, one of the biggest black boxes in modern science.

A landmark achievement of IIS is its discovery of genes that regulate sleep/wakefulness, which had never been reported. The methodology

that led to this discovery (forward genetics) is quite simple: Randomly mutate the genome of mice using a mutagen, then subject the mice to screening for sleep abnormalities by evaluating their sleep/wakefulness using electroencephalography (EEG) and electromyography (EMG). Dr. Yanagisawa and his colleagues prepared about 100 mutagenized mice every week and measured their EEG and EMG individually. This laborious effort is now paying off: By analyzing more than 7,000 mice, ten pedigrees with heritable sleep abnormalities have been established. Any of these pedigrees could provide the key to a breakthrough in sleep science. One striking example is a pedigree named 'Sleepy,' which shows significant hypersomnia. It literally is a sleepy mouse (as seen in the IIS logo) being awake for only six hours a day. The team has already identified its causative mutation, and they expect the molecular pathway involving the mutant gene to be the core mechanism for regulating the amount of sleep, which has the potential of effecting a paradigm shift in today's neuroscience.

A distinguishing feature of IIS comes from its having created a new style of research center, learning from US universities. As such, IIS employs a high degree of freedom and prompt decision-making in its recruiting and staffing. It gives researchers irrespective of their age or career stage an even chance to participate freely in discussions on science. Moreover, a startup package (i.e. funds and human resources) is provided to support young candidates as they embark along their paths to becoming independent scientists. Dr. Yanagisawa learned the merits and virtues of these strategies from the way "departments" are organized and run in American universities during his career spanning over 20 years in the United States.

Truly valuable discoveries in the course of research are achieved from taking "calculated risks"—Dr. Yanagisawa firmly believes this. Scientists have to carefully consider the resources available, incorporate the cutting-edge methodologies of the day, exert the "technical courage" to switch fields if necessary, and take calculated scientific risks. IIS will keep providing a scientific culture and atmosphere that strongly encourages all its members, regardless of their career stage, to take risks and perform "truly interesting" studies.



Michael Lazarus

Associate Professor and
Principal Investigator of IIS,
University of Tsukuba

In 1999, after receiving his doctoral degree (Dr. rer. nat.) at the University of Wurzburg in Germany, Dr. Lazarus came to Japan to join the Osaka Bioscience Institute (OBI) with prestigious fellowships from the Takeda Science Foundation of Japan and the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation of Germany. His first motivation to come to Japan was to work with Dr. Osamu Hayaishi, renowned for his discovery of oxygenase, a family of physiologically important enzymes. He was subsequently fascinated by the idea of taking advantage of Japan's excellent research environment, as well as spending time studying Japanese culture.

After working at Harvard Medical School for 5 years, Dr. Lazarus came back to OBI and led a sleep research group in the Department of Molecular Behavioral Biology from 2007 to 2013. He is now leading his own laboratory at the IIS as a principal investigator.

Life in IIS is pretty busy; I usually work for 12-13-hour on weekdays and most Saturdays too. Sundays are spent with my family instead—I let my two kids decide what to do. It's been fantastic to work for IIS. As I have been doing sleep research for quite a while, it is, of course, an extraordinary experience and honor to be a founding faculty member of a globally visible, one-of-a-kind sleep research center. IIS provides a cutting-edge research environment and is free of disciplinary barriers. I believe that people coming from different fields can interact on a regular basis and collaborate.

IIS provides the world's premier attractive opportunities and environments to conduct sleep research. The IIS Admin Office is very helpful in providing prompt, courteous and efficient support. Communication with administration staff in English is smooth, too.

For more detailed information about IIS, please visit our website: <http://wpi-iis.tsukuba.ac.jp/>



Scientific Venture of an Indian Fellow in Japan

Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh



On July 14, students at Ikeda High School in Kagoshima received a lecture from JSPS fellow Dr. Shailendra Kumar Singh who hails from India. He is currently carrying out research in the field of immunology in the Graduate School of Medical Sciences at Kumamoto University. His Science Dialogue lecture was on the theme “Scientific Venture of an Indian Fellow in Japan.”

Dr. Singh began his lecture by introducing India’s historical and scientific background, highlighting it with four themes: “Indus Valley civilization,” “Discovery of ancient mathematical calculation,” “Concept of Zero,” and “Natural medicine (*Ayurveda*).” Then, he moved to the Indian educational program, followed by his own academic experience in the Indian and Japanese higher education systems. As a university student, he became intrigued with research, especially in the fields of immunology and molecular biology and decided to pursue a career as a researcher.

When explaining immunology in his lecture, Dr. Singh used many diagrams and illustrations to aid the students in understanding such aspects as the immune system, lymphatic system, and the interplay between antibodies and antigens. These visual aids became not just useful but indispensable when he turned to the focus of his own research on immunoglobulin gene rearrangement, diversification and mutation.

This was the first time for Dr. Singh to interact with Japanese high school students. Looking back at his own experience at that age, he said that a specialist in the field of chemical biology came to his school from Indian Institute of Technology to give a scientific talk on biology with byways to biochemistry. “His talk influenced me a lot and as a result I shifted my major from mathematics to biology. This was the starting point of what would become my

career as a researcher in that field.” It was perhaps the legacy of that experience which motivated Dr. Singh to volunteer to give this high-school lecture in hope of kindling a fiery enthusiasm in the Kagoshima students for studying biology.

Asked for what advice he would give to young future researchers, Dr. Singh answered, “Patience and focus are important. Discussing with your teacher or mentor (*sensei*) is also very important in acquiring both direction and inspiration in the pursuit of your study or research. When I first came to Japan, I didn’t have a deep knowledge of immunology. I learned most of the advanced techniques I use today from my *sensei*. His coaching and guidance have been very valuable in helping me to both advance and apply my studies. Through such mentorship and my own efforts spurred by it, I have finally been able to pen some well-received research papers.”

Dr. Singh said that he really enjoys his life and research in Japan. “One of the good points about doing research in Japan in my field is the speed at which it is advanced.” He continued, “While I’ve been in Japan, I have never experienced any trouble in my daily life, largely because the people are so kind and supportive.”



The following fellows participated in JSPS’s Science Dialogue Program during the period from April through June 2014. For details about the program, please see its website: <http://www.jspss.go.jp/english/e-plaza/e-sdialogue/>.

Overseas Fellowship Division

Venue	Lecturer	Nationality
Ibaraki Prefectural Namiki Secondary School	Jean-Baptiste A. Delfau	France
	Mong Sing Lai	Malaysia
	Casey C. Stevens	USA
	Wali Ullah	Pakistan
Chiba Prefectural Chosei Senior High School	Daniele Magistro	Italy
Tokyo Metropolitan High School of Science and Technology	Weena Jade S. Gera	Philippines
Junior and Senior High School at Komaba, Univ. of Tsukuba	Bostjan Bertalanic	Slovenia
	Ludmila Cojocar	Moldova
	Briony L. Mamo	Australia
Toyama Prefectural Toyama High School	Adriana Ledezma Estrada	Mexico
Fukui Prefectural Fujishima Senior High School	Risky A. Kristanti	Indonesia
Yamanashi Prefectural Hikawa High School	Etienne Skrzypek	France
Yamanashi Prefectural Tsuru High School	Johan S. Hysing	Sweden
	Bretislav Smid	Czech
Shizuoka Kita High School	Maria G. Dainotti	Italy
Shizuoka Prefectural Numazu Higashi Senior High School	Olakunle Adeegbe	Nigeria
Kyoto Prefectural Yamashiro High School	Mohammad H.N. Al Assadi	Australia
	Antoine M. Collin	France
	Alexander Krahl	Germany
Hyogo Prefectural Akashikita High School	Dahanayakage Don G. L. Dahanayaka	Sri Lanka
	Sanjay K. Mehta	India
Mukogawa Women’s Univ. Junior & Senior High School	Mustafa Supur	Turkey

Hailing from Slovenia, Dr. Maja Veselič has been conducting her research with her host Associate Prof. David Slater at Sophia University since 2012 under a JSPS postdoctoral fellowship.

- What are you currently researching under the JSPS fellowship?

My research is mainly concerned with the disaster relief and recovery efforts carried out by Japanese Buddhist priests in the aftermath of the March 2011 tsunami and nuclear meltdown (called 3.11) in northeastern Japan (Tohoku). Immediately after the earthquake, these priests were quick to mobilize their extensive networks to collect and efficiently distribute food provisions and other aid. Many of their temples in and around the disaster areas opened themselves up as evacuation shelters. Also, following the lessons learned from the 1995 Kobe earthquake, they soon initiated activities such as tea parties to offer the tsunami survivors and nuclear evacuees basic emotional and psychological support. *Kokoro no kea*, or "care for the heart," as this kind of work is called, has become the main focus of their efforts now that people have settled down in temporary housing units and the need for material support has gradually waned. In addition, the Buddhist priests continue to perform their traditional role as ritual specialists for the dead, performing funerals and memorial services for those who perished in the disaster or whose graves had to be abandoned due to high levels of radiation. In Japan, and especially in Tohoku where ancestor veneration is still held important, such care for the deceased is an inseparable part of the care for the living. Finally, many priests in the Fukushima area are engaged in decontamination projects and in raising public awareness of the residents' plight. All of this has worked to change the perception of Japanese Buddhism, both internally and publicly.

- How did you become interested in your research field?

In my previous doctoral and postdoctoral research, I examined the ethno-religious revival among the Hui, a predominantly Chinese-speaking, ethnic Muslim group in China. In the case of Islam, as well as other religions in China, an important aspect of their revival has been the boom in religious NGOs and charities. Like in Kobe, the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 served as a powerful catalyst for religious and non-religious social engagement, especially in terms of volunteering. This, I thought, offered rich ground for comparisons.

- How did you get to know your Japanese host researcher?

I had heard of Prof. David Slater from a close friend who was a sociologist in Japan, but neither she nor any of my colleagues had had any personal contact with him. I therefore wrote directly to him explaining who I was and what I wanted to do in my project. By that

time, he was already directing a research unit titled "3.11 as Crisis and Opportunity" and had been teaching a seminar on the Tohoku disaster since the fall of 2011. He was taking his students to various disaster areas to volunteer and to collect video-recorded narratives about life after 3.11. So my project became a small part of this greater endeavor, which is still ongoing. While I am in charge of my particular topic, I should emphasize that my research is truly a collaborative effort and could not be advanced without Prof. Slater and his students.

- Besides the earthquake, did you have other reasons to choose Japan to pursue your research?

While conducting my fieldwork in China, I was very impressed by some of the young Japanese researchers I met there. Also, having worked in the Department of Asian and African Studies at the University of Ljubljana, I had heard many great things about Japanese academia. However, it was really thanks to my above-mentioned friend, who had for years encouraged me to seriously consider working in Japan for a while, that I decided to apply for the JSPS fellowship.

- What is your impression of your host institution?

Sophia University is a small private university and as such has a research infrastructure that is more limited than big state institutions. However, its Faculty of Liberal Arts is famous for its bilingual student body. For someone like me who didn't know any Japanese before coming to Japan, this meant it was relatively easy to find people to assist me in my research. Moreover, the fact that all the university's classes are held in English has allowed me to take full advantage of the great work the students have been doing in Prof. Slater's Tohoku course. Also, my host institution serves as an important connecting point for numerous foreign-based researchers in Japan, providing me with many opportunities to meet interesting colleagues. Lastly, the ideal location of the university in central Tokyo makes it easy to avail myself of the facilities of other institutions. All in all, Sophia is a very good fit for me.

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

I find it amazing that despite the country's decades of difficult economic times, Japan still invests a great amount of money in research while continuing to fund a wide variety of projects in the humanities and social sciences, disciplines that have suffered a lot in Europe during the recent economic crisis. As I mentioned, I believe Japanese scholars are conducting excellent research. Unfortunately, at least in the fields of my interest, they don't publish much of their results in English. Another shortcoming I see, though it doesn't apply to my host institution, is the extremely hierarchical and overly communitarian nature



Dr. Maja Veselič

Lecturer, Department of Asian and African Studies, University of Ljubljana, 2011-2012
Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, Beijing University, 2010-2011
Ph.D. (Anthropology), University of Ljubljana, 2009
Junior Researcher, Asian and African Studies, University of Ljubljana, 2003-2008
University Diploma (Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and Sinology), University of Ljubljana, 2003

of researcher groups in Japan. This makes it difficult for outsiders and young scholars to approach seniors without appropriate introductions by others. Once a senior researcher takes you under his wing a lot of doors can open for you, but it may be difficult for you to work with other researchers depending on the relationship they or their seniors have with your mentor. That said, I find younger Japanese scholars to be very open, engaged and eager to exchange ideas. One final observation: As a social scientist, I cannot help but note how predominantly male the Japanese academic sphere is.

- What are your research achievements under the JSPS fellowship so far?

The thing I am most proud of is the sheer amount of video interviews that I and others within this large collaborative project have managed to collect so far and the temporal continuity of this data, starting from about six months after the disaster up until literally yesterday. We now have more than 400 hours of oral narrative interviews by people from all walks of life in all three affected prefectures.

- What do you do outside your research work?

For me, work and pleasure often mix. I do most of my field research on weekends due to availability of my research assistant. Although this means work, at the same time getting out of Tokyo into the countryside or to the sea-shore can be wonderfully relaxing. I have done a bit of traveling outside Tohoku as well, but

there are still many places I hope to visit before I leave. I spend quite a lot of my free time studying Japanese, which again is a challenging yet also extremely rewarding activity. Apart from that I meet friends for meals or drinks and read some fiction when time allows. Also, I like going to the *sentō* (public bath).

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

I find living in Japan to be very comfortable. Of course, knowing many *kanji* characters from my years of interest in China and Chinese was of great help upon my arrival, and now that I have learned some Japanese it is even easier to go about everyday errands. Among the many things I like here, there is a sort of eclecticism ranging from religious practices to food and fashion. People from other parts of Japan tend to think that the inhabitants of Tokyo are too serious, murky or unfriendly, but try bathing in my local *sentō*, taking in a *sumo* match or a summer *matsuri*, or riding the late Friday night Chuo Line train, and you will see a very different, friendly face of Tokyoites.

- Before coming to Japan, what kind of image did you have of the country? Has your per-

ception changed after coming here?

I imagined Japan and especially Tokyo to be a super-developed futuristic high-tech place, full of skyscrapers, where people live their lives past each other. But I was wrong. While people here really love their gadgets I don't think that on average they are more technologically savvy than, for example, Europeans. There are surprisingly few high-rises in Tokyo and the city is full of small cozy shops and *izakayas*. As for the locals, they are not only polite, but also genuinely friendly. In my experience, the reason why it might be difficult to make Japanese friends is that people are simply too busy to be able to meet each other frequently. The one stereotype that has proven to be true is that people spend too much time at work.

- What do you plan to do after your fellowship ends?

I will return to Slovenia, but I plan to look for opportunities to come back to Japan for shorter periods of time. Although the empirical part of my project here will be over when the fellowship ends, the work itself will not. Prof. Slater and I are currently writing two joint publications and plan to finish another two before

I leave. Still, the wealth of the data collected simply calls for a continuation of our collaboration as do some other research ties that I have woven during my stay here. I find it hard to imagine this to be the first and the last thing I will ever do in Japan.

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

Come, come! You won't regret it.

During our interview with Dr. Veselič, she told us about details of her research very enthusiastically, showing a deep fondness and understanding of her Japanese colleagues, the residents of her community in Tokyo, the local people of Tohoku, and Buddhist priests. The very wide and deep relationships and understanding, both academic and personal, she has developed with regard the Japanese and Japan will, we are certain, continue to be a catalyst for advancing the internationalization of Japan's research environment. We hope that Dr. Veselič will find future opportunities to come to Japan and do joint work with her Japanese colleagues through JSPS's various international programs.

Introducing Japan: Tokyo

Needless to say, Tokyo offers a wealth of opportunities for sightseeing and all sorts of entertainment. Still there are a few places where one can enjoy the bustling yet relaxed old-town *shitamachi* atmosphere. The best-known place for a nostalgic walk is probably in the area of the Yanaka, Nezu and Sendagi neighborhoods. I like getting off the train at Nippori station, strolling first through the lovely Yanaka cemetery before making my way through the narrow streets towards the Nezu Shrine, stopping for shopping and snacks as I walk along.

Another neighborhood that retains a traditional atmosphere is Kagura-zaka. It is famous for the geisha houses that were plentiful there in the early 20th century. Now, the neighborhood also has a strong French feel to it. Because a French-Japanese school used to be located nearby, many French people settled in the area. When you peek into the bistros and restaurants through their terrace windows or read their French-Japanese menus, you might wonder

whether you have been transported to Paris.

My favorite part of Tokyo is, however, my "hometown" Koenji. This residential neighborhood is famous for its vintage shops, music venues, alternative politics, street performances and, perhaps, most of all for its Awa Odori festival, with its frenzied dancing through the streets by the performers cheered on by throngs of enraptured onlookers. The festival has been held yearly at the end of August since 1956, when urban migrants from Tokushima Prefecture first started performing their traditional dance here. Nowadays, troupes come from all over Japan and hundreds of thousands of visitors flock here to enjoy the festive atmosphere, the delicious street food and, of course, the three hours of uninterrupted music and dance on each day of the weekend.

I would like to recommend two more interesting places. Silkroad Tarim is an Uyghur restaurant, opened by an Uyghur man. Uyghur cuisine, which consists of a mixture of Central Asian and Chinese dishes, has become very popular all over China. While the excellent meat-and-pumpkin pies are typically Uyghur, the delicious lamb kebabs and noodles are similar to those prepared in regions closer to central China. After you have eaten too much—and

believe me, you will—you can go for a long walk to Vowz, a small bar unique for the fact that it is run by a Buddhist priest. It is a place where you can drink cocktails with religious names against a background sound of sutra chanting and receive spiritual counselling should you wish. This might be a bit of a shock even for those familiar with the particularities of Japanese Buddhism, but it is one of the experimental attempts to bring Buddhism and Buddhist priests closer to the everyday life and concerns of ordinary people.



On Enoshima, a lovely one-day trip from Tokyo



With her research assistant and friend Aina in front of the *King of Sentō* in Tokyo



Enjoying Uyghur cuisine



Cover photo:

This tree is a Chinese tallow, or *nankin-haze* in Japanese. The changing color of its leaves makes it popular in the fall. It is the symbolic tree of Nagasaki, having transited through the city on its migration from China to Japan in the Edo period.

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



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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