

**Can The Private Sector Improve
Public Service Delivery?
DMS (Designated Management System)
Library in Japan**

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Abstract

Japanese local governments are now facing pressures to deliver public services more efficiently. Public library is one of the example under this pressure. Some public libraries are now managed by private companies or NGO (NPO) through the use of the Designated Manager System (DMS). Among these DMS libraries, TSUTAYA libraries in which, Cultural Convenience Club Company (CCC) made contracts with local governments, became famous and welcomed as a radical reform case before scandals or negative views ensued. This paper tries to explain the reasons why some local governments introduced DMS to libraries and why TSUTAYA libraries were blamed for changing libraries into noisy places and using tax payers' money wrongly. It also discusses the different views and understanding of citizens about public service and its effects on management, and explores some answers to satisfy various demands to public service of different peoples.

Introduction

Just like many local governments in the world, Japanese local governments are facing pressures to deliver services more efficiently. Some still believe that privatization is the answer. In 2018, Osaka City privatized its public transport (subways and bus services) by creating companies fully-owned by the city. The question is, by changing legal frameworks (not ownership, at least for now), has public transport service become efficient?

Other cities passed on to private transport companies their former public transport businesses. Kure in 2012, Akashi in 2012, and Amagasaki in 2016 are some of recent cases of this public to private change. Again the question is if the operator of bus services changed from a public sector to a private bus operator, how much improvement in productivity and services can we expect?

However, at least we can compare productivities of the pre- reform (public) and the after- reform (private) in the case of profit seeking public services. In the case of non-profitable public service, it might be more difficult to judge whether the private sector can deliver services better than the public sector, because the criteria is not simple.

Designated Manager System (DMS) is the attempt to introduce something which the public sector lacks. It started in 2003 as an amendment to the Local Autonomy Law, and now many Japanese local governments designated public service deliveries

such as public halls, exhibition halls, sports gyms, swimming pools, libraries, museums, public parks, kindergartens, nursing schools, and daycare centers.

In fact, designation by local governments itself has longer history in Japan. Before DMS, many local government designated public service delivery to organizations under their control, such as local public corporations.¹ In most cases in this type of designation, there was no competition between manager candidates when local governments decided designation and the designation contract continued almost forever. Although the contract itself is under budgetary rules, there is no competition over cost and service levels.

DMS reform means that a local government can designate their service deliveries to private companies, NGO (NPO) or other types of non-profit seeking organizations. The central government encourages public offering and the manager is selected from applicants by competition. Although the re-contracting itself is possible, there is a clear term for a contract (for example, 3 years or 5 years). After the term ends, there should be another public offering and selection process. We may say that Japanese DMS is a very much mild Compulsory Competitive Tendering, a Thatcher policy in the 1980s in Britain.

According to MIC (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications), the number of designation reached to 76,788 (as of April, 2015) and 37.5% of designation are designation to private companies, NGO (NPO) or other types of non-profit seeking organizations. As the number of DMS, DMS to private companies and public offerings is continuously increasing, we may say that DMS is now an established option in Japanese local government management.

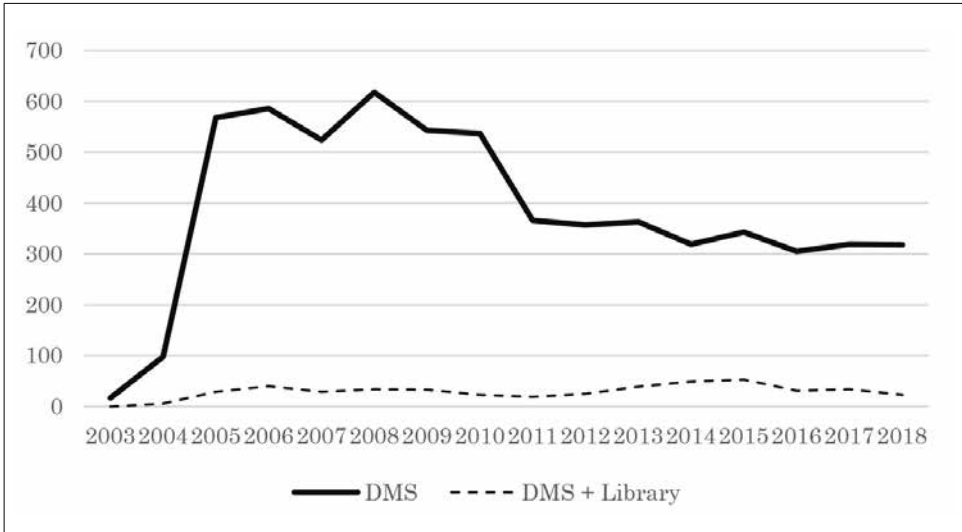
Table 1: DMS in Number

	2006	2009	2012	2015
DMS in total	61,565	70,022	73,476	76,788
DMS to private companies* (percentage)	11,252 (18.3%)	20,489 (29.3%)	24,384 (33.2%)	29,004 (37.5%)
DMS by public offering (percentage)	(29.1%)	(40.0%)	(43.8%)	(46.5%)

* Here "private companies" means private companies, NGOs or other types of non-profit seeking organizations
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

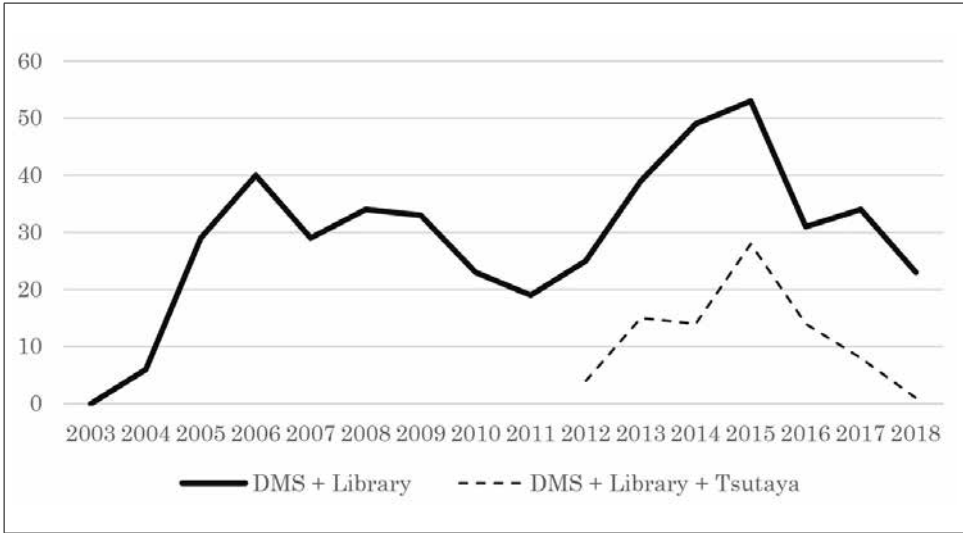
However, there are some controversial cases in DMS, particularly in DMS library. The Japan Library Association (JLA), which organizes the whole public libraries and sets the standard for libraries such as book classification, opposes the introduction of DMS into public libraries even in 2016 or after 13 years of its introduction (Japan Library Association 2016). Newspaper articles are sometimes critical to DMS libraries. For example, we find that newspaper articles referring to the DMS increased to 618 in

2008 then decreased and stayed just over 300 after 2011 in Asahi Shimbun, one of Japanese national newspapers. However, articles referring both to DMS and Library increased again after 2012 (See Figure 2). It is clear that the second increase happened because of reports on the designation of CCC or TSUTAYA,² a company doing business in video shops, bookstores and other media related business. At first, the TSUTAYA case was reported as an ideal DMS case with fresh ideas from the private sector. Then, scandals rocked the same company.³ We find a similar trend in Nippon Keizai Shimbun, an economic national newspaper.



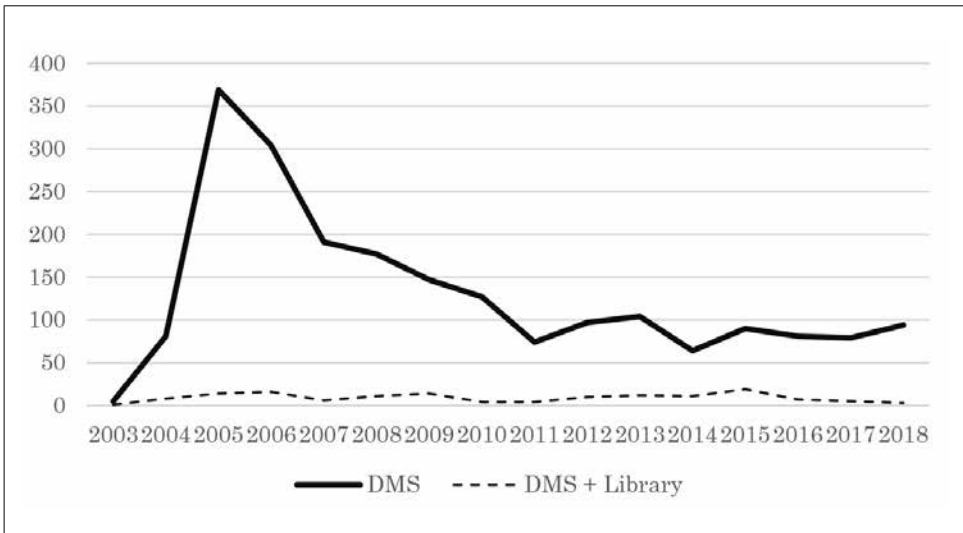
Source: Kikuzo (Asahi Shimbun Data Base)

Figure 1: DMS and “DMS+Library” (Asahi Shimbun)



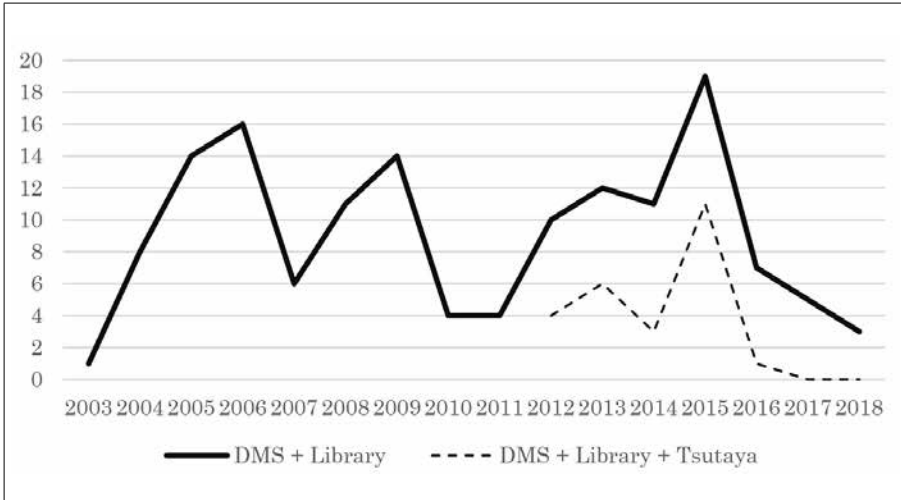
Source: Kikuzo (Asahi Shimbun Data Base)

Figure 2: DMS and “DMS+Library” and “DMS+Library+TSUTAYA”



Source: Nikkei Telecom (Nippon Keizai Shimbun Data Base)

Figure 3: DMS and “DMS+Library” (Nippon Keizai Shimbun)



Source: Nikkei Telecom (Nippon Keizai Shimbun Data Base)

Figure 4: “DMS+Library” and “DMS+Library+TSUTAYA” (Nippon Keizai Shimbun)

There is another interesting feature in DMS library. Unlike other DMS, DMS libraries and direct managed libraries by the same city hall exist in some cities. A similar size (population) or similar local governments from socio-economic point of view tend to introduce or not to introduce DMS in the same institution, but in the public library case, there is a variety even if they have similar populations or they are neighbors. City A has introduced DMS to its public libraries but its neighbor City B continues to manage public libraries through the city hall. City C passed all its public libraries to DMS, but DMS libraries and directly managed public libraries coexist in City D.

This paper tries to explain why controversial cases happened in DMS public libraries and why different management systems exist in similar local governments, with the end in view of deepening our understanding on the meaning of public service delivery by a private sector organization.

I. Problems which Japanese Public Libraries Now Face

A. *Public Libraries in Japan*

In recent years Japanese public libraries are continuously faced with criticism. Some argues that public libraries are closed by the time people arrive in their hometown from work in other cities. Public libraries are closed once a week (typically on Monday) and on most of public holidays. If people want to read a best seller, they need to wait several months to borrow the book. Those people compare public libraries with video rental shops, which are open late at night (in some cases 24 hours a day), 7 days a week and allow people to borrow the most popular films easily by stocking and renting many DVDs of the same film.

Secondly, the budget for libraries is continuously decreasing. Even if the total number of the people who register public libraries and the total number of books that people borrow from public libraries are increasing, budgets for library services are decreasing in many local governments.⁴ With increasing demands from the people and decreasing budgets, many public libraries are trying to extend opening hours on weekdays (particularly on Friday) and to open on some public holidays, by introducing shift working to library staffs and by hiring part-time staffs.⁵ To allow people to borrow best sellers, many libraries are now asking citizens to donate most popular books which they have already read and which they do not need anymore. Libraries also ask companies or individuals to be a sponsor so as to continue to buy journals or newspapers for their readers.

If these attempts are incremental reforms by existing public libraries, DMS library is regarded a drastic reform attempt. Therefore, DMS library has been implemented by mayors or governors who want to show their strong leadership and their commitments to more efficient public service. In some cases, it was implemented together with the opening of a new library building.

Table 2 shows how DMS public libraries have increased. Although the number of DMS public libraries are not so large (19.4%), DMS public libraries have steadily increased since FY 2004.

Table 2: Introduction of the DMS to Public Libraries (FY 2004-FY 2017)

Financial Year	DMS Libraries	Financial Year	DMS Libraries
2004	3	2011	21
2005	10	2012	61
2006	76	2013	61
2007	54	2014	39
2008	53	2015	59
2009	55	2016	74
2010	70	2017	35
Returned to direct management -27 Decreased by closure -6		Total in 2017	638

Source: Kuwabara (2018: 35).

Table 3 gives us another interesting information. In 2017, there were 638 DMS libraries. At the prefecture level, the ratio of DMS libraries is only 10.3%. At the city and special ward level, it is 21.9% and at the town and village level, it is 10.4%. If we calculate the ratios of local governments which have introduced DMS library against the total local governments, we get similar percentages: Prefecture: 10.6%; City and Special Ward: 21.5%; Town and Village: 10.9%. Why is it that the largest local government (pre-

fecture) and smallest local government (town and village) are not so keen to implement reforms in public library while the middle sized local government units (city and special ward) are relatively keen?

Table 3: DMS Libraries in FY 2017

	Prefecture	City,Special Ward	Town, Village	Total
Local Governments which Have Libraries	47	805	522	1374
Libraries	58	2,598	617	3273
Local Governments which Introduced DMS Libraries	5	183	57	245
DMS Libraries	6	568	64	638

Source: Kuwabara (2018: 33-35). Japan Library Web page.

Table 4 explains the kind of organizations (companies, NGO (NPO) or any other types of nonprofit seeking organizations) local governments designated as manager of DMS libraries as of 2017. Private companies comprise around 80% of the managers of DMS libraries. Of this, only seven are managed by TSUTAYA. But because TSUTAYA-managed DMS libraries were reported as a success example of administrative reform at the beginning, and later suffered from controversies, we need to know what happened along the way.

Table 4: Types of Organizations Managing DMS Libraries (FY 2017)

Private Companies ⁶	508	TRC ⁷	333
		TSUTAYA	7
		Other Bookstores	45
		Non Bookstores	123
Local Public Corporations		72	
NGO (NPO)s		43	
Others		15	
Total		638	

Source: Kuwabara (2018), pp.35-36.

B. *TSUTAYA libraries*

It was in 2012 when the people heard that the management of the public library in Takeo City in Saga Prefecture would be designated to TSUTAYA. At first, newspapers reported that this was an attempt by a reform minded-mayor to put new private sector ideas into the public sphere. Asahi Shimbun reported that the library would be open the whole the year. Not only allowing to read and borrow books, the Takeo City Li-

brary would also rent DVD and sell magazines. By using the library the people could get reward points which they could use at convenience stores and other shops for discount prices.⁸ In August, it was reported that Starbucks would open in the library and the people could read library books while sipping coffee.⁹

On 1 April 2013, the opening of the renewed Takeo City Library was reported. "It is nice and we read the books with drinking coffee. I will come again." The newspaper still reported the TSUTAYA library positively.¹⁰ One month later, it was reported that the number of Takeo City Library users has increased 4.5 times than before and 2.3 times than predicted.¹¹ Later the same year, newspapers reported that other cities had plans to designate their public libraries to TSUTAYA.¹²

However, from 2014, the same newspaper started to print negative views on TSUTAYA libraries. First, it reported a meeting against TSUTAYA library plan in Tagajo City in Miyagi Prefecture. Those people who opposed the TSUTAYA library plan argued that privacy related data might go out from the library and be used for business purposes.¹³ In September 2015, it was reported that second hand books that TSUTAYA sold to Takeo City Library contained old travel guidebooks and textbooks for qualification published more than 10 years before.¹⁴ When Ebina Central Library in Kanagawa Prefecture reopened in October 2015, a few sex tourism guidebooks were found, and the city hall decided to remove them from the library book selves.¹⁵

In September 2015, Komaki City Assembly decided to hold a referendum on their library,¹⁶ and in October, the citizens voted against the new library plan which included a designation contract with TSUTAYA. Although TSUTAYA continues this library business, it seems that TSUTAYA cannot expand because of this negative image.

Those who criticized TSUTAYA libraries argued that they were not public libraries anymore. TSUTAYA libraries stopped to use the standard JLA classification and introduced its own unique classification. They argued that the latter made finding books more difficult. TSUTAYA libraries have also become noisy places because they installed big TV screens and toys for kids. TSUTAYA libraries installed too high bookshelves, which might be dangerous in case of earthquakes. They claimed that the numbers of TSUTAYA library users were overestimated because the people who just came to drink coffee or buy books were also counted.¹⁷

However, these are the same points, which the supporters of TSUTAYA libraries find meritorious. They argued that people come and use libraries more often than before. TSUTAYA revitalized the city center where their DMS libraries are located. Those doing business nearby found more customers going to their shops.

The question thus, is what is the role of public library, a public institution supported by taxpayers' money.

Table 5: TSUTAYA Libraries (as of April 2019)

City	DMS	Additional Information
Takeo (Saga)	April 2013	Became famous as the first case. The city mayor who introduced TSUTAYA library stood for Saga Prefecture governor election but lost in January 2015. In October 2017, Takeo Kids Library was opened next to the Takeo City Library. DMS contract renewed in 2018.
Ebina (Kanagawa)	April 2014	2 libraries (Central Library and Arima Library) DMS by a consortium (CCC and TRC) Sex tourism guidebook scandal DMS contract renewed in 2019.
Komaki (Aichi)	The referendum in 2015 stopped DMS plan	
Tagajo (Miyagi)	March 2016	
Takahashi (Okayama)	February 2017	
Shunan (Yamaguchi)	February 2018	The City Assembly decided not to hold a referendum in 2016
Nobeoka (Miyazaki)	March 2018	(Public space where the people can read books, not categorized as a public library)
Wakayama (Wakayama)		Plan to open in 2019

Source: Toshokan Tomo no Kai Zenkoku Renrakukai (2018), p.4. CCC web page: https://www.ccc.co.jp/show-case/sc_004056.html?cat=life

C. *Non-TSUTAYA DMS Libraries*

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, TSUTAYA libraries are small in number. The greater bulk of the 80% of DMS libraries designated to private companies, unlike the former, have not brought any controversies and never become big news. However, they are not spared of criticisms as well.

Some argue that there is little change. Unlike TSUTAYA libraries, they are closed on some days. Library users cannot drink coffee, nor buy books. They believe that there is little change before and after DMS.

Kuwabara (2018) pointed out rather disappointing results about the DMS libraries managed by NGO (NPO). In 2017, there were cases that NGO (NPO) could not renew DMS contracts with local governments. Some could not pass the qualification criteria for contracts; other NGO (NPO) themselves gave up to continue the DMS. Those NGO (NPO) were interested in, and had experiences in cultural activities in libraries, but not competent to manage public libraries. They might be too small to handle budgets to buy books and maintain buildings. Employing many part time librarians and staffs were new for some NGO (NPO) whose activities were supported by relatively small number voluntary personnel.¹⁸

In the next section we will examine the realities in the DMS libraries from other points of view. These will be elaborated in a case study, with interviews with library staff.

II. Amagasaki City Library

A. *Background*

Amagasaki is an industrialized city whose population is now 0.45 million. It enjoyed economic development and its population continued to increase because workers and their families come to the city to work in factories until the 1970s. In 1971, its population reached its peak at 0.55 million. However, after the 1970s, factories which at one time supported the city's prosperity started to be closed and its population started to decrease. In recent years Amagasaki needs to rebuild its economy because the borrowing by the city hall is so big compared to other Japanese cities with similar population. The city decreased its city hall staff and leveled down some of its public services. Amagasaki has also the feature of the so called commuter town because it is located next to Osaka and is very near to Kobe, where public transportation to these cities are well developed.

Its public library has a long history. In 1920, after a few years when Amagasaki Town became a city (1916), the public library was opened. In its nearly 100 year history, Amagasaki city moved its library to a larger building and then built new library buildings. Now it has two main libraries (Amagasaki Central Library and Amagasaki North Library (opened in June 1979)) in its 50 km² area. Its citizens can visit libraries, read and borrow books and periodicals freely. There are also many mini libraries in community public halls where citizens can ask to deliver, borrow and return main library books. They do not, however, keep large number of books on their bookshelves.¹⁹

B. *DMS to TRC*

Just like many other public libraries, Amagasaki city library needed to provide public services in more efficient ways. In 2004, all library counter services were passed to a contracted private company. To cut the public expenditure, some of community public halls were closed and the number of mini libraries dropped from 22 (until the end of FY 2012) to 8.

In September 2010, the City Assembly agreed the introduction of DMS in the North Library. In January 2011, the city hall made a DMS contract for North Library to TRC, and in April 2011, North Library became a DMS library.

However, like many other non TSUTAYA DMS libraries, not so many Amagasaki citizens noticed the change. The difference between before and after DMS might be negligible in Amagasaki than other cities. It is said that DMS libraries extend open hours and open on some public holidays, thus some people notice the reform and welcome DMS. However, in the case of Amagasaki libraries, they had a long history of being open until late at night (until 20:00) and on most of public holidays since 2004. There

is no change about opening hours after the North Library became a DMS library.²⁰

It is interesting that the ratio of borrowing from North Library and Central Library has been almost same for these 11 years or before and after DMS (Table 6). The central library staff pointed out two factors which might affect the ratio during the period. In 2005, the online network was renewed and book reservations from library PCs became available for library users. In 2007, book reservation from home PCs or smart phones started. Gradually online book reservation became popular among citizens. Secondly, as we have already pointed out, more than half of mini libraries were closed. The first factor might have increased mini library borrowings, because some people want to pick up the reserved library books delivered to the mini library near their home or working place. The second factor might have increased the Central and North Library borrowings, because many mini libraries people used to visit were closed in the recent years and some people start to visit and borrow books from the Central or North Library. “I believe that DMS itself did not matter,” was his reply.

Table 6: Borrowing from Libraries (FY 2007-FY 2017)

Financial Year	Central Library	North Library	Mini Libraries	Total
2007	417,897 (31.3%)	569,497 (42.6%)	349,825 (26.2%)	1,337,219
2008	448,625 (30.4%)	595,140 (40.3%)	431,361 (29.2%)	1,475,126
2009	469,694 (30.3%)	603,554 39.0%	476,300 (30.7%)	1,549,548
2010	461,478 (30.3%)	586,114 (38.5%)	476,236 (31.3%)	1,523,828
2011	466,785 (30.4%)	608,790 (39.6%)	460,531 (30.0%)	1,536,106
2012	453,192 (30.5%)	593,023 (39.9%)	441,563 (29.7%)	1,487,778
2013	436,514 (31.2%)	548,227 (39.2%)	412,386 (29.5%)	1,397,127
2014	423,011 (30.9%)	544,247 (39.8%)	400,561 (29.3%)	1,367,819
2015	490,266 (32.1%)	613,518 (40.1%)	424,578 (27.8%)	1,528,362
2016	499,103 (32.8%)	595,217 (39.1%)	429,092 (28.2%)	1,523,412
2017	498,855 (31.9%)	607,862 (38.9%)	454,928 (29.1%)	1,561,645

Source: Amagasaki Central Library (2018), p.20.

The library staff also points out that there are different demands from Amagasaki citizens. Many citizens simply want to read newspapers or periodicals in the library and/ or borrow and read novels or nonfictions freely. They seldom use librarian services. There are some citizens who ask help from the counters regularly. They are researching local history, local culture or their own interests. They ask advice like how to read historical documents, how to use database, or how to access data which the library does not have. The library staff argues that there can be two types of library services. Some services like giving advice to local history research can be delivered more effectively by experienced local librarians. Such library staff can work well in directly managed libraries. Other type of library services like lending books by using machines or organizing a book fair for youth can be delivered more efficiently by part time librarians or staff without qualifications in DMS libraries.

From this point of view, dividing libraries into two groups, i.e. directly managed libraries and DMS libraries might be an answer in some cities. In the case of Amagasaki, because there are only two libraries, citizen's demands are not so clearly divided, although most of local history interested citizens come to the Central Library because it has longer history than the North Library. In the case of Kobe, the library staff argues, because Kobe city has eleven libraries and 1.5 million population and larger than 550 km², they can divide libraries into two groups. 10 libraries are for community, and only the Central Library is the library for research.²¹ "It might be a good idea to make 10 libraries DMS libraries but contracted to different companies, while keeping the Central Library as a directly managed library."

Conclusion: Will the Private Sector be able to Change Japanese Public Libraries?

Japanese local governments are facing pressures to deliver services more efficiently and to reform themselves. TSUTAYA libraries tell us the difficulty to introduce private sector ideas into public libraries. Because there are similarities between video rental shops and libraries, CCC was thought to be capable to manage libraries. However, there are differences between them, too. Differences brought about a clash between the values, which some people strongly believe all public libraries should have, and the values of the private sector.

We also need to point out that NGO (NPO) are not always capable to manage large institutions like libraries. Managing libraries means that spending large amount of public money to maintain buildings, to buy books and to employ staff. For some organizations, the amount of money they have to handle was too large compared to their original activities and members.

It should be noted that there are demands to use local libraries to stimulate local economy and business. A noisy library is not ideal for traditional library users, but for others who want to revitalize the local economy, it can be an opportunity to make people go to the city center.

Kuwabara (2018) suggested a possibility to utilize local bookshops in DMS libraries. If a local bookshop committed to provide books related culture to its customers and if it can provide private sector knowledge and new ideas to public libraries, a local bookshop is a better option for DMS libraries.²²

Another point we should consider is that there are different types of library users. People want to use the library differently. It could be just to borrow novels one day; on another day, to do research. Some may need only a staff to check the barcode and lend them books. On other day, some may need an experienced librarian to seek historical documents or business information. Keeping some of libraries directly managed, while changing others into DMS libraries can be the right approach in some cases. We wondered why cities and special wards (the middle size local governments) tend to introduce DMS to libraries more than prefectures or towns and villages. Because some cities have several libraries, they can divide their libraries into two types.

Introducing new idea, private sector knowledge, will improve public services. DMS is one tool to put new ideas into the public service delivery. However, we need to think carefully what we want to receive from the public service, and there can be different understanding among the people, about what the particular public services are providing us.

Notes

- 1 Local public corporation is an organization established by local governments. Some of them were established by one local government alone, while other local public corporations were established by the cooperation between local governments and the private sector.
- 2 CCC (Culture Convenience Club Company) is the shareholding company and many companies owned by CCC doing each business. However, TSUTAYA is much known to the public as video rental shop and bookstore name and most of newspaper and journal articles referred DMS offered to CCC as “TSUTAYA Library”. Therefore, we also use TSUTAYA in this paper.
- 3 We will discuss problems relate to TSUTAYA Libraries in detail in the following section.
- 4 According to the Japan Library Association, the budget to buy books reached to 36.97 billion yen in FY1997. Since then the budget has been continuously decreased and in FY2016 it was 28.46 billion yen.
<http://www.jla.or.jp/Portals/0/data/iinkai/%E5%9B%B3%E6%9B%B8%E9%A4%A8%E8%AA%BF%E6%9F%BB%E4%BA%8B%E6%A5%AD%E5%A7%94%E5%93%A1%E4%BC%9A/toukei/%E5%85%AC%E5%85%B1%E7%B5%8C%E5%B9%B42018.pdf>
- 5 In FY 1990, there were 13,097 full time staffs and 2,106 part time staffs. In FY 2015, fulltime staffs decreased to 11,448, while part time staffs increased drastically to 19,511.
e-Stat (Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan) <https://www.e-stat.go.jp>
- 6 Some DMS libraries were managed by consortia which two or more companies or other institutions made. Kuwabara (2018) checked the most important company (institution) and decide which category each library should be listed.
- 7 TRC (Toshokan Ryutsu Center) is a company selling books to public libraries and doing other books related business.
- 8 Asahi Shimbun, 18 May 2012.

- 9 Nisei Sangyo Shimbun, 16 August 2012.
- 10 Asahi Shimbun (Evening), 1 April 2013.
- 11 Nippon Keizai Shimbun, 1 May 2013.
- 12 Asahi Shimbun, 11 November 2013
- 13 Asahi Shimbun, 26 January 2014.
- 14 Nippon Keizai Shimbun 15 September 2015.
- 15 Nippon Keizai Shimbun 7 October 2015.
- 16 Asahi Shimbun, 11 September 2015.
- 17 Toshokan Tomo no Kai Zenkoku Renrakukai (2018), pp. 6-8.
- 18 Kuwabara (2018), pp. 37-40.
- 19 Mini libraries are regarded not public libraries which Japanese Library law defines. In Amagasaki, they are regarded as book selves installed in community public halls. Books in mini libraries belong to the Central Library.
- 20 Interview to a Central Library staff in March 2019. Because Amagasaki is an industrial city, there was a demand from factory workers to open library late at night. In 1959, library started to open until 20:00 on weekdays.
- 21 6 libraries are managed by a consortium organized by TRC and Kobe Shimbun (Local Newspaper). 3 libraries are managed by Daishinto (Originally a bus operating company then entered public utility management business). 1 library is managed by another consortium organized TRC, Kobe Shimbun and Haseko (General contractor entered public utility management business).
- 22 Kuwabara (2018), pp. 40-42.

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