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An Openness of Municipal Digital PR Magazines as a Local History Material

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Abstract:

The public relations (PR) magazines by local governments are published by almost all local governments in Japan and can be considered as highly important regional materials. While PR magazines in printed form are collected and made available at public libraries in each region, in recent years, with the advance of digitization, PR departments in charge of public relations directly publish them on local government websites, and public libraries are rarely involved in digital versions of PR magazines. Although the National Diet Library WARP archives past digital PR magazines posted on municipal websites, the decision to open municipal websites on the Internet is left to the judgment of each municipality. As a result, citizens cannot view past digital PR magazines on the Internet that have not opened their past homepages to the public. In cooperation with the WARP division of the National Diet Library, further research will be conducted to find ways to make past digital PR magazines more open to the public.

Keywords: local materials, public relations magazine, digitization, openness, municipality, NDL WARP.

Introduction

Local materials are considered to include both materials that have been generated in the past at the regional level and have been preserved up to the present, as well as materials that are currently generated in the region (Local History Research Council ed., 2009). Local materials have been collected in many facilities and institutions, such as public libraries, archives, museums, and libraries of literature (Kansai-kan of the National Diet Library ed., 2008).

In recent years, local materials have increasingly been made available to the public in digital format. However, it is not yet clear to what extent they are digitized, how they are made available to the public, and what problems they face. The author has investigated the digitization and open access of several local materials, including public relations magazines

of local governments, and has raised issues for the future (Nagatsuka, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2021b, 2022, 2023).

Based on the results of the author's survey on digitization and openness of local materials (Nagatsuka, 2021, 2021b, 2022), the paper presents the results of the survey on the present status recognition of the PR departments in charge of each municipality regarding digitization and openness of municipal PR magazines, which are one of the important local materials regularly published by local governments. Then, information disclosure methods and policies of each municipality in the National Diet Library Web Archiving Project (WARP) were studied. And the future direction that should be taken regarding the opening of municipal PR magazines to the public was discussed.

Local Governments and PR Magazines

In Japan, after World War II, under the occupation by the United States and the Allied Powers, since a new constitution was enacted, the people became sovereign authority and democratic management of society was required. At such a time, municipalities across Japan began to emphasize public relations to their residents, and each municipality began to print and distribute municipal public relations (PR) magazines, as shown on the left side of Figure 1.



Figure 1. An example of print and digital format of Municipal PR Magazines published by Itabashi City Ward in Tokyo (left: Print, right: PDF)

For this reason, the municipal PR magazine is a new local resource that emerged in the years following World War II. In addition to being distributed to each household, PR magazines have long been kept in public libraries within a municipality as one of the most important community resources, and no change has been made in this regard to this day.

Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, as shown in Figure 2. Each prefecture is further subdivided into 1,741 relatively small municipalities, such as cities, towns, and villages, as shown in Table 1. The total number of municipalities is 1,788. Most of the 1,788

municipalities publish a monthly or bi-weekly municipal PR magazine as a local newsletter. In the larger cities, the municipal PR magazine for a local area is also published for each individual area within the municipality. Around the year 2000, with the spread of the Web, municipalities began to open their homepages. As shown in the right side of Figure 1, municipalities after opening the homepage have posted text and/or PDF versions of municipal PR magazines on their homepages, since that time, citizens became freely accessible to them.

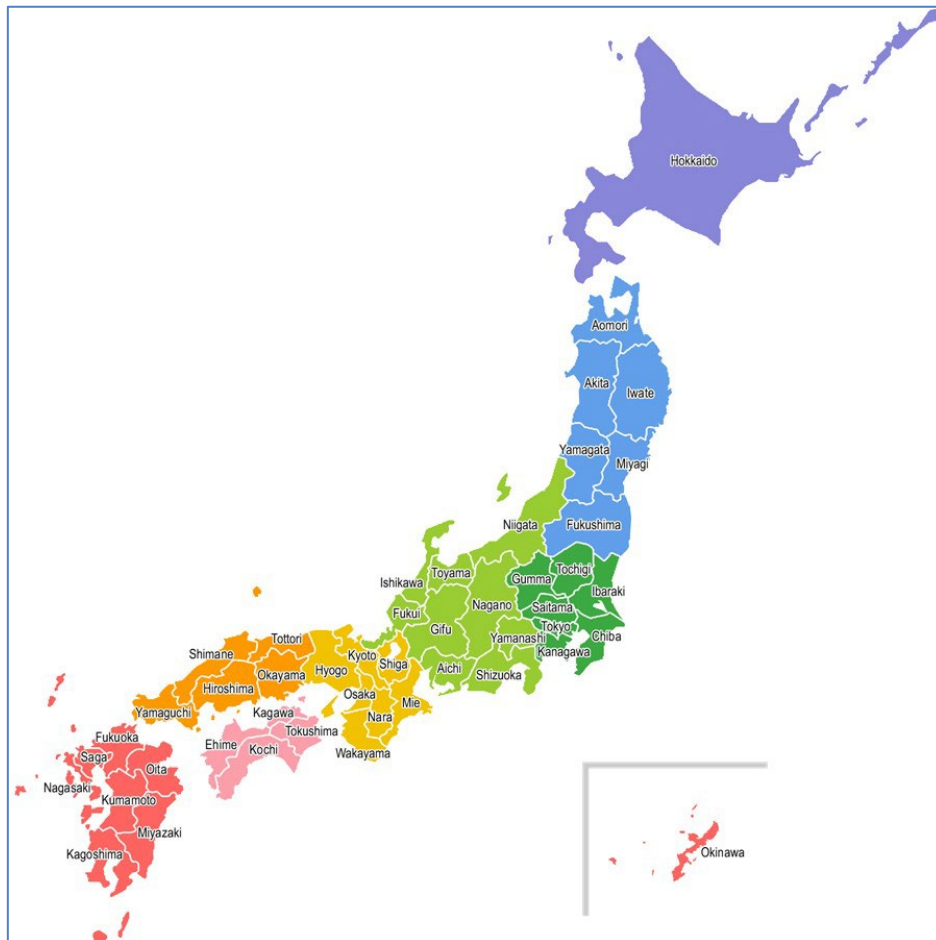


Figure 2. Map of Japan by Prefecture

1) <https://frame-illustr.com/fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/map-japan-english.png>

Nowadays, as shown in Figure 3, with the spread of smartphones, many municipalities provide dedicated applications for easy viewing on smartphones and audio versions for use by people with weak eyesight. In addition, services that allow users to cross-search PR magazines of many municipalities have also appeared in My koho shi¹.

Table 1. Composition of governments in Japan

Prefectures	47
Cities	815
Towns	743
Villages	183
Total	1,788



Figure 3. A smart phone application “Matiiro” for Municipal PR Magazines published by Itabashi City Ward in Tokyo

Digitization of Municipal PR Magazines from the First Issue

It was found that many municipalities have removed their PR magazines from their websites after a few years because they are only available to use the limited capacity of the web servers (Nagatsuka, 2021, 2022). At present, many municipalities' PR magazines that have been removed from their websites can only be viewed in printed form at the appropriate public library.



Figure 4. Digitization of Municipal PR Magazines from the First Issue published on the website by Odawara City in Kanagawa

The results of a questionnaire survey to municipalities in the 23 city wards of Tokyo and all municipalities in Kanagawa Prefecture showed that their PR magazines digitized and published on the website from the first issue onward revealed only 3 city wards in Tokyo and 2 cities in Kanagawa Prefecture (Nagatsuka, 2022). Figure 4 shows an example of Odawara

City in Kanagawa Prefecture, which publishes past municipal PR magazines from the first issue on its website. As shown here, the number of municipalities that publish past municipal PR magazines from the first issue on their websites is very small.

Compared to large municipalities, it is understandable that digitizing and opening PR magazine from the first issue in small municipalities involves even greater difficulties. It was asked whether municipalities not to publish their PR magazines from the first issue on their websites are planning to digitize their PR magazines back to the first issue and publish them on their websites, few of them were preparing to publish their PR magazines from the first issue (Nagatsuka, 2022). It seems that many municipalities will need to overcome a major hurdle to digitize their past PR magazines and realize archiving from the first issue.

Removing past municipal PR magazines from municipal websites

The PR magazines published monthly or twice a month by each municipality and distributed to all residents in principle are valuable local documents which provide detailed information on local events over time. They are also a valuable local resource born after World War II, when their publication began almost 70 years ago. From 2010 onward, these municipal websites have been collected and made public through the National Diet Library Web Archiving Project (WARP) for over 10 years (Nagatsuka, 2020).

Nearly half of the municipalities in Kanagawa Prefecture and the 23 wards of Tokyo are subsequently deleted their digitized and published PR magazines from the websites (Nagatsuka, 2021, 2021b). Many of the municipalities to delete the PR magazines from their municipal webpages have no intension to change their present policy (Nagatsuka, 2022).

Although public libraries in each municipality are archiving the printed PR magazines, only a few public libraries are currently archiving digital PR magazines. Many municipalities do not have a system for archiving digital local materials published by each municipality. It can be said that the preservation of digital local materials is an important issue to be considered in the future.

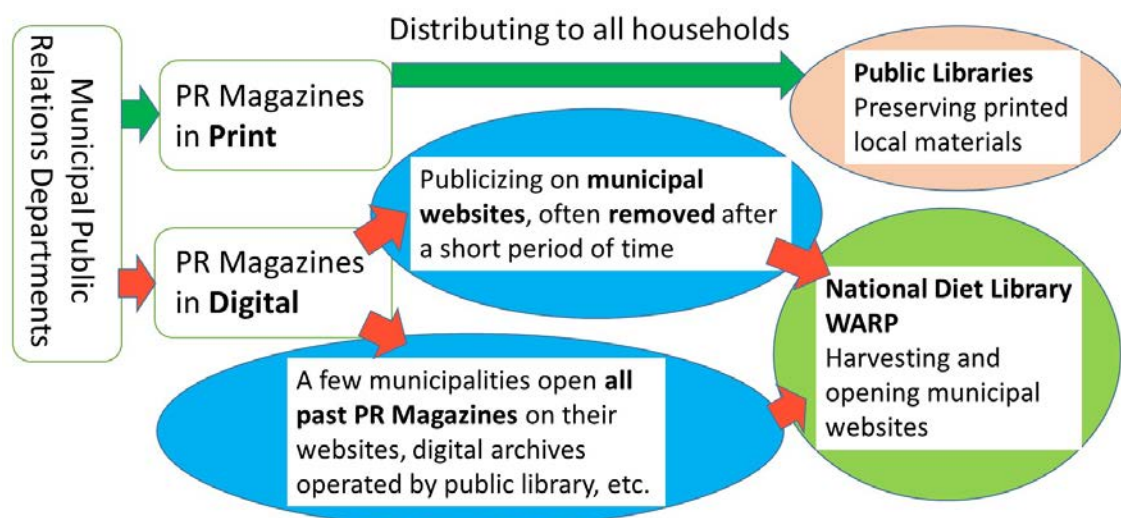


Figure 5. Transitional period from print to digital format for municipal PR magazines

Figure 5 summarizes the status of distribution and preservation of municipal PR magazines. Municipal PR magazines can be said to be one of the typical local materials that is changing from print to digital. Printed copies have been archived at public libraries, but at present there

is no fixed archive location for the digital version. The PR departments of local governments have made digital versions available on their municipal websites, but many municipalities have removed them from their websites after 2-3 years.

Because the National Diet Library WARP has been regularly collecting and archiving all local government homepages in Japan four times a year since 2010, past municipal PR magazines should be available at WARP. However, a relatively large number of local governments have restricted access to them at WARP as shown in Figure 6. If you hope to see the PR magazine of Tokyo Metropolitan Government as shown on the left side of Figure 6 which is restricted access at WARP, you must visit the National Diet Library and can view it by using a computer in the National Diet Library (Nagatsuka, 2023).



Figure 6. Different Restrictions on Municipal PR Magazines published by Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Osaka Prefectural Government in WARP

Restrictions on the Use of Municipal PR Magazines

Table 2 was calculated by using data on 1,788 municipalities nationwide from the National Diet Library which includes the information about the access restriction to their past municipal homepages at WARP. As can be seen here, 16% of all municipalities, or 290 municipalities' homepages cannot be viewed without going to the National Diet Library.

Table 2. Percentages of municipalities with restricted access to WARP within National Diet Library

Type of Municipalities	Municipalities	WARP	%
Prefectures	47	20	43
Cities	815	98	12
Towns	743	130	17
Villages	183	42	23
Total	1,788	290	16

- 1) The number of municipalities is data as of March 2023 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- 2) The numbers in the column of WARP show the number of municipalities with restricted access to WARP within National Diet Library which was surveyed on March, 2023.

Table3. Percentage of municipalities with restricted access to WARP within National Diet Library in each prefecture

Name of Prefectures	No	WARP	Cities-Towns-Villages	WARP	%	Name of Prefectures	No	WARP	Cities-Towns-Villages	WARP	%
Hokkaido	1	0	179	29	16	Kyoto	1	1	26	4	15
Aomori	1	1	40	9	23	Osaka	1	0	43	2	5
Iwate	1	1	33	7	21	Hyogo	1	1	41	5	12
Miyagi	1	0	35	10	29	Nara	1	1	39	9	23
Akita	1	0	25	3	12	Wakayama	1	0	30	4	13
Yamagata	1	1	35	4	11	Tottori	1	0	19	4	21
Fukushima	1	0	59	13	22	Shimane	1	1	19	4	21
Ibaraki	1	0	44	3	7	Okayama	1	0	27	4	15
Tochigi	1	0	25	3	12	Hiroshima	1	0	23	4	17
Gunma	1	0	35	5	14	Yamaguchi	1	0	19	1	5
Saitama	1	0	63	2	3	Tokushima	1	1	24	5	21
Chiba	1	1	54	5	9	Kagawa	1	0	17	3	18
Tokyo	1	1	62	11	18	Ehime	1	1	20	3	15
Kanagawa	1	0	33	7	21	Kochi	1	0	34	8	24
Niigata	1	1	30	3	10	Fukuoka	1	1	60	7	12
Toyama	1	0	15	3	20	Saga	1	0	20	5	25
Ishikawa	1	0	19	1	5	Nagasaki	1	1	21	3	14
Fukui	1	0	17	3	18	Kumamoto	1	0	45	0	0
Yamanashi	1	0	27	5	19	Oita	1	1	18	1	6
Nagano	1	0	77	12	16	Miyazaki	1	1	26	8	31
Gifu	1	0	42	5	12	Kagoshima	1	0	43	13	30
Shizuoka	1	0	35	4	11	Okinawa	1	1	41	15	37
Aichi	1	1	54	4	7	Total	47	20	1,741	271	16
Mie	1	1	29	5	17						
Shiga	1	1	19	3	16						

- 1) The number of municipalities is data as of March 2023 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- 2) The numbers in the column of WARP show the number of municipalities with restricted access to WARP within National Diet Library which was surveyed on March, 2023.

The PR magazines of municipalities that we cannot access to their past websites in WARP without going to the National Diet Library, are a major restriction for citizens when planning local activities. At the prefectural level, nearly half of the prefectures (43%) restrict access to past their websites within the National Diet Library, which is a significant problem for citizens and researchers.

Table 3 shows the status of restrictions on viewing municipal PR magazines and municipal homepages for each prefecture. The three prefectures with more than 30% of the total number of municipalities restricting access to their websites within the National Diet Library are Miyazaki, Kagoshima, and Okinawa. Looking at prefectures with more than 20% of the respondents, it is clear that many prefectures (12 prefectures, namely, Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Kanagawa, Toyama, Nara, Tottori, Shimane, Tokushima, Kochi, and Saga) have

been restricting access to their websites within the National Diet Library. We hope that more local governments will become to change their homepages being able to view on the Internet in the future.

Discussions

Local materials are important resources for public libraries in each region, as they are unique to that region. Many municipalities seem to consider digital versions of their PR magazines to be the responsibility of their public relations departments. However, few municipalities' PR departments have the same idea of preserving digital versions of their PR magazines for posterity as libraries do.

Figure 7 shows the status of distribution and publication of municipal PR magazines from the users' perspective such as citizens and researchers. As is clear from this figure, the preservation and publication of digital versions of PR magazines are very inadequate, and future improvements are needed to enable their preservation and publication in a wider range of areas.

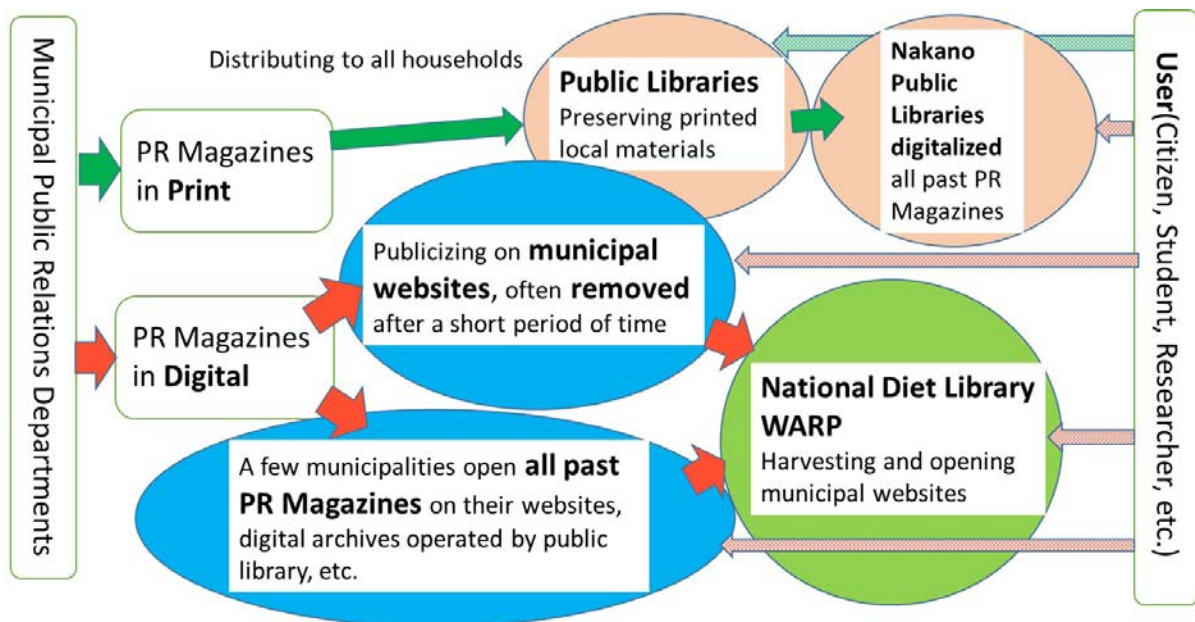


Figure 7. Circulation Process of Municipal PR Magazines

It became clear that the attitude of the departments in charge in each municipality toward the digitization and openness of PR magazines, one of the important local resources, differs greatly among municipalities. This is one of the reasons why the progress of digitization and openness of PR magazines differs greatly from municipality to municipality. In the future, we expect to promote the digitization and openness of PR magazines in more municipalities by identifying the factors that cause such large differences in the way of thought among municipalities.

Many municipalities that have not yet digitized or opened their PR magazines up to the first issue have indicated that they believe they are responding to the needs of residents by making their printed PR magazines available at local public libraries. This may be one of the reasons for the lack of progress in the digitization and opening of PR magazines.

The digitization and open publication of PR magazines on the web will enable more residents and citizens to easily access information on past local initiatives and make comparisons with other local governments easier, thereby promoting greater participation in local government.

On the other hand, in terms of digitization and openness of PR magazines, there has been progress in attempts to utilize all nation's local government PR magazines as open data. My koho shi¹ aggregates municipal PR magazines nationwide as open data. The website of My koho shi currently collects approximately 1,000 PR magazines from across the country. It has been pointed out that attempts to utilize the PR magazines across the country in a cross-search are important in terms of the future utilization of open data (Honda, 2017). This is also an important future attempt from the aspect of digitization and openness of PR magazines.

While digitization of local materials has been progressing, printed PR magazines are continuously archived in public libraries, but digital versions of PR magazines are available on municipal websites in most municipalities, and in many municipalities, public libraries have little interest in opening or archiving digital versions of PR magazines, as evidenced by the present study. Further discussion is needed on who should oversee the archiving of digital local materials, in what form, and by what organization, which will increase in the future.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 □ My koho shi [My City PR Magazine] <https://mykoho.jp/>

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