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**FARMER EDUCATION: A
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

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This paper is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

I. MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIFE OF FARMERS

From the autumn of 1930 to the end of 1931, when I was between 20 and 21, I first went into a rural village and lived together with farmers. It was a time when Japanese farmers were engulfed in the violent storm of the World Depression and found it more unbearable than ever before to cope with the oppression of the landlord-tenant system with landlords taking it for granted that extremely high farm rents were to be paid. To cope with the hardship, farmers' unions were being formed everywhere. I was a volunteer secretary for one of these unions — Zenkoku Nōmin Kumiai Tokyo-fu Rengō-kai [All Japan Farmers' Union Tokyo Prefectural Association] — and I was stationed at a rural village in the Katsushika region adjacent to the east of Metropolitan Tokyo until March 1931. From late March until the end of December 1931, I lived at Tsurukawa Village, South Tama County, a purely rural zone in the west of Tokyo.

One half of approximately 6 million hectares of cultivated land in Japan at that time was tenant land, and those farmers who tilled the tenant land had to supply about one half of the crops to landowners as rent for tenancy. In the case of paddies, the rent was paid in spot rice whereas that for fields was mainly paid in cash.

Under this system, if a landlord owned 5 hectares of paddy which was cultivated by a tenant farmer, the landlord could maintain a humble living for his entire family just on the income from farm rent. If he had 10 hectares, it was possible for him to live like a well-off salaried man of the time. Moreover, the extent of leased land was the most important criterion in determining the rank of people in the region, and the landlords who lived comfortably on the basis of farm rents were guaranteed a multitude of public and private activities.

The fact that landlords had such advantages directly meant that tenants were extremely disadvantaged. As a result of high farm rents, tenants could not keep the surplus crop even in a year when they had an abundant harvest. Since it was impossible to pay the farm rents completely in a lean year, tenants either entreated for a decreased rental individually or demanded it as a group. This, however, was often used as a reason for "land expropriation" (the cancellation of a tenant contract) by landlords, and as a rule the tillage was fairly unstable.

In addition to the oppression of the landlord system, farmers were faced with another burden, namely, debts. This burden was rather greater on independent farmers (because tenant farmers were unable to incur debts of more than a certain amount due to a lack of collateral). Although many farmers naturally went into debt with the main objective of acquiring land in order to facilitate their conditions of production, there were many cases of farmers borrowing simply in order to live. Furthermore, the interest rate was so high that it was quite difficult to repay the principal and interest of the debt at ordinary times. In 1930 the oppression of debts suddenly doubled because the prices of agricultural products in the aggregate were almost halved due to the agricultural depression which involved all crops. As a consequence, the total debt incurred by farmers at that time was estimated to have reached ¥5 to ¥6 billion when one koku of rice was valued at around ¥20. This figure was almost twice the amount of annual agricultural production (naturally including the amount consumed domestically). The settlement of such debts for both creditors and debtors was already hopeless, and before long semi-compulsory measures by the debt readjustment union were enforced throughout the country. However, these measures were not particularly effective in the settlement of debts which had grown to be, by far, too colossal a sum. The debtors were also greatly burdened psychologically by the heavy debts. Even if they had been endowed with an abundant crop or with high sales prices for crops, any forthcoming leeway had to be first allotted to the repayments of debts. They could not possibly be allowed to postpone repayments by the acquisition of dairy cattle, the purchase of machinery, or the opening of an orchard.

It was not just agricultural development which was sacrificed as the result of the repayment of debts. As long as farmers had debts, they only provided education up to the higher elementary grades for their children. They had to feel constrained to their creditors even on issues such as subscribing to a newspaper or buying a radio receiver. Naturally, there was no room for any cultural expenditure to be included in their living expenses, and there was not a single copy of anything like a book at any farmhouse that I lived in. Because the farmers not only were unable to afford to buy books but also found it difficult to make time to read books, it was rather natural to live without books. Nevertheless, when I experienced rural life for the first time, I found it strange. This became one of the factors that made me think of establishing a library in a rural village.

II. PLANS FOR THE RURAL LIBRARY DEVELOP

My rural life at that time was terminated at the end of 1931 due to the stiffening attitude of the Machida Police Station which included Tsurukawa Village in its precinct. After leaving the village in this manner, I joined illegal anti-authority activities in the very ordinary course of events of the time, and was arrested in September 1933 for violating the Peace Preservation Act. During imprisonment for one year and ten months, I became determined to carry out my future plan with an indomitable spirit. The basis of the resolve was to reside at a rural village and live as one of the villagers. This derived from severe self-criticism that previously I had stayed at a village in a rootless manner.

In order to meet my objective, I decided to acquire at least a minimum amount of agricultural knowledge, to get married and make efforts together with my wife in the improvement of the farmers' life, and to establish a rural library, and these plans I carried out steadily.

First of all, with regard to agricultural studies, I was enrolled at the second department of Tokyo Prefectural Horticultural School for one year starting from April 1936. This school was of course an agricultural middle school then. However, the second department existed for those who had finished ordinary middle school education and taught in one year general knowledge regarding each branch of agriculture. Because I had been one of the most eager and positive students for that year, after graduation I was employed as a staff member of the school to give practical training to the students even though I was still placed on probation. Moreover, my great objective to settle in a rural village was actualized while I was being employed by the school. This happened in January 1939 at Tsurukawa Village with which I was already acquainted due to the farmers' movement pursued there in 1931. It was quite possible to commute to the horticultural school by taking a train between Tsurukawa and Kyōdō on the Odakyū line and by relying on bicycles to get to both stations.

My wife, who had become qualified as a midwife before we were married, began to practice midwifery at the village after living there for a while and continued to work for about 35 years. It was evident that the greatest factor that led my former comrades from the farmers' union to accept us at Tsurukawa Village was due to my wife's midwifery qualification. As far as the villagers were concerned, her qualification was incomparably more attractive than a rural library.

It seemed meaningless to be settled in a rural village if no activities on behalf of the villagers could be carried out. In the autumn of 1935 I decided to make concrete plans to open a rural library for I judged that for someone like myself the task would be appropriate and that it could achieve a measure of effectiveness. I then devoted all my time to the collection of books keeping in mind the opening of a library in the future. In view of the fact that I had neither wealth nor special income, I decided to put aside ¥5 a month for the purchase of library books, an amount which many of my friends at the time spent on cigarettes.

As stated previously, during this preparation period I had studied

agriculture for a year as a student and then taught it for about three years. On the basis of this experience, I realized that learning was very important as well as beneficial for agricultural production. It was natural, therefore, that among the books to be collected the proportion of books and magazines related to agriculture gradually dominated.

I believe that during the preparation period prior to opening I purchased the majority of agricultural books sold publicly at that time since the publication of agricultural books in general was not great. I collected several years' copies of such magazines as Nōgyō Oyobi Engei [Agriculture and horticulture], Jissai Engei [Practical horticulture], and Nōgyō Sekai [Agricultural world].

Let us briefly examine the conditions of town and village libraries of that time in Japan (there was then a clear demarcation between urban areas and town and village areas). The information is based on the report of a survey conducted 1 April 1936 by the Ministry of Education which was fortunately reprinted by the Japan Libraries Association in 1978.

There were 130 cities, 1,703 towns, and 9,673 villages throughout Japan at that time. The cities, towns, and villages with libraries (including private libraries) were as follows: 121 cities (93.1 per cent), 837 towns (49.1 per cent) and 3,143 villages (32.5 per cent).

There were in total 4,609 libraries, which comprised 3,245 public libraries including prefectural ones and 1,364 private libraries. However, the book stock reveals that as many as 3,055 libraries (66.3 per cent) contained less than one thousand volumes. When 1,238 libraries (26.9 per cent) with more than one thousand volumes but less than five thousand volumes are added to the above figure, the total reaches 93.2 per cent. There were more than five thousand volumes at 316 libraries of which 41 were prefectural, 137 city, and approximately 40 to 50 prominent private libraries. Judging from these figures, it is presumed that town libraries with more than five thousand volumes totalled at most about 10 per cent.

Although libraries in general were of low standard, this was particularly pronounced in the rural areas. In addition, much of the meagre stock consisted of books which had already lost their value. This survey did not look into the number of volumes purchased. However, according to the Ministry of Education survey of 1950, the average stock of town and village libraries and the number of purchased volumes per year were as follows: while 244 town libraries had an average of 2,967 volumes and purchased on the average 238 volumes (8 per cent of the book stock), 418 village libraries had an average of 773 volumes and purchased on the average 93 volumes (12 per cent). It must be said that the number of books purchased was hardly enough to maintain the status quo of the extremely poor stock of those libraries.

There was no survey with regard to the number of volumes on agriculture and the kind of agricultural books in these libraries. On the basis of my personal observations of libraries in various places that I visited after the war, I surmise that it was extremely rare for libraries to make an effort to accumulate books and magazines on agriculture. In view of the fact that the basis of library management in the rural area centred on moral training and healthy entertainment, and that, as stated below, agricultural books were not meant to be read by farmers, the above situation should not be regarded as being strange.

Therefore, I am of the opinion that my library which especially emphasized agricultural books was unique. I stated as follows: "South Tama Rural Private Library aims at the enhancement of village agricultural production to the standard of applied science."

III. THE RURAL LIBRARY IN THE INITIAL STAGE

On 21 September 1939 I opened the South Tama Rural Private Library. Nevertheless, a structure exclusively for library use was not built,

and a permit from the governor of Tokyo had not been granted yet. But by the end of January 1940 all conditions were facilitated due to the completion of a small but exclusive building of 36.3 square metres and the arrival of notification of the permit from the governor. The book stock at this stage including magazines comprised 2,590 volumes. The majority of the volumes (663) were on agriculture, followed by 580 volumes made up of novels and the like. Although children's books comprised only 130 volumes, they were collected on the basis of advice given by my close friend who was well acquainted with children's literature. After settling down at Tsurukawa Village and while I was in the process of preparing for the opening of the library, I had donated 223 volumes of children's books to Tsurukawa Ordinary Upper Elementary School. Although they comprised over 90 per cent of my entire collection of children's books, I decided that it was better for the school to open a library room rather than to keep them at my place which was shorthanded.

However, when the library was finally opened, the number of youths I had expected to see did not come, and yet children frequented the library even though there were so few children's books. I thus purchased additional volumes and finally came to own 130 volumes.

As far as the operation of the library was concerned, I had adopted a method according to which services given by my wife and myself would be sufficient without hiring anybody from the beginning, since it was financially impossible to hire personnel. However, a small library can be managed with minimum manpower, if it is operated solely for lending purposes. Because there was the prospect that such an operation was possible, I made up my mind to settle in a rural village permanently and took up the establishment of a rural library as the first social activity to be pursued there.

The library was open twice every week (once on Sunday and again on a weekday) only in the afternoons, with lending as the standard form of service. Apart from research done by the users, books were not read at the library but were lent out of the library for reading at home.

Although the majority of libraries at present make lending their basic service, for a long time many of the libraries in Japan were primarily for reference use. Thus, in those days when I opened the library, it was rather exceptional to have the service centre around lending.

Because lending was the primary service, users were registered as members. The term "members" is still used today. However, at the time of its founding, the membership fee was 5 sen per month, the price of a popular brand of cigarettes being 7 sen for a pack of ten.

According to the record kept of the number of members at the end of January 1940, there were 72 persons in total consisting of 12 boys and 21 girls in upper elementary school; 17 young men and 5 young women, 16 adult men and 1 adult woman. The adult woman, if I am not mistaken, was a primary school teacher. Housewives in rural villages at that time were placed outside the range of using libraries.

Even if 72 members completely paid up the membership fee, this came to only 3 yen 60 sen. However, Nōgyō Oyobi Engei [Agriculture and horticulture] which was the most representative agricultural magazine cost 60 sen per copy at the time. The income from membership fees thus covered no more than a fraction of the operating costs of the library.

When the opinion was expressed that the membership fee was perhaps too inexpensive, I replied as follows in the mimeographed newsletter Shiritsu Minami Tama Nōson Toshokan-hō [South Tama rural private library news], No. 2 at the beginning of February 1940:

Rural villages supply cities with many things. Is it not proper for cities to supply rural villages with at least some cultural facility? Take the minimum from the users. Get most of the expenses from urban supporters! Is this wrong?

I attempted to establish a supporters' group several times in order to make this "aid of urban supporters" something stable and continuous. The first attempt was made in February 1940, and the second in August 1951. In both cases, quite a number were kind enough to become promoters for the supporters' group and to appeal widely. Nevertheless,

the office work for the supporters' group fell into my hands, and I could not continue it for long.

Meanwhile, however, I came to realize that I could gather considerable donations in books and money as long as I solicited for voluntary aid through reports on the conditions of the library. Therefore, I gave up the idea of forming the supporters' group, and the library has been assisted by the goodwill of considerate individuals and publishers to this day. It can be said that ultimately the initial approach has been more or less actualized although it diverged from the "urban-supports-rural" plan.

Now what was the "quality" of library use at first? Ordinarily speaking, the quality was not at all low because serious and keen users mainly came to the library. However, to my disappointment, producing farmers rarely used agricultural books.

IV. A SETBACK AND NEW PLANS

The South Tama Rural Private Library had a smooth start although the production farmers did not use any of the agricultural books as I had hoped. Nevertheless, before long I was hit by an extremely hard blow. Because the oppression against the anti-government organization to which my elder brother belonged had started in May 1940, I also came to be arrested. Although it was made evident that I was not part of the organization, I was in the end sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour and forced to live in confinement until February 1944. After my arrest my wife continued running the library until January 1941 when it became too difficult to continue any longer.

During my relatively long period of imprisonment, I was able to reconsider the correct way in which a rural library should be run. I

underwent severe self-criticism regarding my way of thought thus far and arrived at a conclusion which could be publicly declared with conviction, as follows:

First of all, a rural library should be such that it can prosper in any rural village in Japan. A library which is established as a result of devoted effort put in by a so-called volunteer is not normal in this sense. My library is not a model type of rural library because it is impossible for such volunteers to emerge in every rural village in Japan and open libraries.

The second point seems to pertain not only to libraries but also to the basic principles of democratic cultural movements. The correct way is for those who are bound to benefit materially and spiritually through the use of rural libraries to create one with their own efforts. This does not of course mean that they must do it 100 per cent by themselves. However, the main figures who establish and operate the libraries should at least be farmers themselves. Then for the first time libraries have the possibility of being founded throughout Japan.

In truth, it was not at all rare for enthusiastic farmers to create very small reading facilities or reading groups. Nevertheless, these were rarely long lasting.

I focused my examination on this point. How would it be possible to make these reading groups at various places develop little by little and last a long time without somehow disappearing so that they could germinate new ones in succession? I saw the key to a solution of this problem in a "parent library." This is the third idea.

Poor farmers co-operate and buy books and magazines and they all read them by turns. When a small village library is created in this manner, it is possible for hand-made village libraries to replenish their stock gradually through the existence of a "parent library" which would supply books and other assistance while being considerate enough not to affect their independence. In due course these would grow to be miniature

libraries with a substantial number of books (at least several hundred volumes). The accumulation of a certain number of books makes the library attractive to people and that in itself makes fine rural libraries.

Although this parent library should basically be a public library, public libraries in rural Japan at that time could not have been expected to fulfil the role immediately. I contemplated that I would like to try it with my library even if it only could be done modestly. Although on a small scale, if South Tama Rural Private Library could play the role of a parent library and be successful in nurturing village libraries formed by farmers in the neighbouring villages, this library could accomplish a brilliant social mission. I had no choice but to admit to myself that the library that I had so far created with great effort was not, in a true sense, a rural library. Therefore, if it could not carry out the role of a parent library, it could not go beyond the range of work made on an experimental basis which was not in accordance with the resolution. This was not only the fourth idea that I arrived at after long meditation, but also a conclusion which guided my subsequent activity.

I returned to society on 1 February 1944 keeping in my heart this important conclusion. Japan was already running downhill toward a defeat at that time. People were deprived of various freedoms, and publishing was placed under strict wartime control. I wrote down all the plans that I had thought out in the prison into a manuscript which had no prospect of being published, and it was in this state that I faced Japan's defeat in 1945.

V. REOPENING OF THE LIBRARY IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE WAR

The library itself was reopened in November 1944. I kept in my heart

the aforementioned grand plan. Enshrined with a new mission, South Tama Rural Private Library had to go on developing. Why was it possible for a person with a past like mine to reopen the library in Japan at that time when most of the free and voluntary activities of people were suppressed? My request to use my agricultural books, which reached one thousand volumes, for "the benefit of food production increase" was approved.

From the time of the reopening to the end of the war and several years afterward was the golden era of South Tama Rural Private Library. I will write about the period up to the end of the war in this chapter and the postwar accounts will be given in the following chapters.

The reopening was welcomed and, first of all, more members than anticipated joined the library. In a five-week period until the end of the year, the membership rose to 118 persons, and 519 volumes were loaned. Many of my acquaintances who wished me well on the reopening gave me donations of over ¥400 (an amount which could buy about 200 new books) and over 200 volumes.

Upon entering the new year of 1945, as many as 50 persons were taking up memberships every month. Because there were quite a number who withdrew from membership, it was not as if the total number was increased by the new membership. Nevertheless, the library was extremely popular. First of all, Tsurukawa Village at that time became an "evacuation site" accepting many new residents from the urban area. I heard from scores of members such impressions as "upon arriving here on evacuation, there was a library. Nothing made me happier than this."

Tsurukawa Village was also known as a place of foraging for Tokyo residents. As it was a time when libraries in Tokyo not only were air raided one after another, but had evacuated their books to safety, there were some who came to this village with the purpose of shopping for food and using the library.

In the period from the reopening to the end of the war, the book stock

doubled from 3,000 volumes to 6,000 volumes. This was due to the fact that four of my friends entrusted their books into my care — in a sense they evacuated their books. It was already impossible to transport books to remote places. My friends in Tokyo were placed in such a situation that their books would sooner or later be burned to ashes, and they independently thought of depositing their books at my library. As I had to carry the heavy books, I made the counter condition that the books become part of my library's stock while being kept there. We discussed and decided the order of books to be moved out since there were many, and naturally "good books" were given priority. This book transportation began in January 1945 and ended in the middle of April when all of these friends' houses were burned down due to air raids. In the interim, however, I was able to move out approximately 2,000 selected books. Because there were other book donations and purchased books, my library stock around the time of the defeat numbered 6,000 volumes. I presume that not many libraries in the rural areas at that time had this many volumes.

In the Three Tama region of Tokyo, Hachiōji City Library founded in 1911 was the only public library, but it was completely burned down by an air attack on 1 August 1945. (Although evacuated books were saved, they were no more than 2,000 volumes.) Therefore, the only library which was in operation in the Three Tama region on 15 August 1945 — a day to be commemorated by the Japanese as a day of historical demarcation — was South Tama Rural Private Library.

At present, this region comprises the most advanced library region throughout Japan and has fairly complete libraries in all 26 cities and 4 towns. When three Tokyo prefectural libraries are added to the above, there are in total 121 libraries (counting annexes and moving libraries as one library). They have an aggregate of 5,560,000 volumes and 14,500,000 books were loaned out in 1981. Starting from zero, the libraries have developed to this level in 36 years.

It is true that in the same period the population of this region has increased fourfold from 780,000 to 3,230,000 people, but the development of libraries in this region can be said to be absolutely remarkable.

VI. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HAMLET LIBRARIES AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE RURAL LIBRARY

As a result of the defeat in August 1945, the people in Japan were liberated for the first time from a militaristic and police-like bureaucratic government. The release of 3,000 political prisoners was also actualized in October. Immediately after this, I was full of hope that the time had come for me to do as I wished freely, and I thus made an appeal regarding the activities which should be carried out by South Tama Rural Private Library and sent this to many acquaintances.

I stated in the appeal that several hamlet libraries were about to emerge in the village and that I was determined to create the model of an ideal relationship between a parent library and hamlet libraries. This would be done through the nurturing of hamlet libraries and the treatment of them as "annexes" which would be loaned a substantial number of books.

In actuality, as early as 15 October an annex library had already germinated, i.e., a hamlet library at Kami-Miwa in Tsurukawa Village. This annex library started off with 200 volumes given by volunteers and 300 volumes lent out by my library. Four months later, the book stock grew to 800 books (450 volumes were lent out by my library), and the annex was lending 200 books per month.

The second annex emerged on 19 December at Ōaza-Shinkōji (which is located about 2 kilometres from my library in the opposite direction from Kami-Miwa). The third one was opened in the following February at Ongata Village about 30 kilometres from my library (Ongata Village is west of Hachiōji City). Two hundred volumes were also loaned out to this library.

My library had been used very frequently since its reopening in November 1944, and this continued after the end of the war. It was obviously too much of a burden for South Tama Rural Library with barely 7,000

volumes to cater to the services of the users as well as to make substantial loans to annexes which were being opened in succession. Furthermore, the wish to open annex libraries or, if not to this extent, requests to borrow several score of books were made constantly by youth groups and agricultural study groups. I met these requests at all costs. Speaking of the achievements up to 1949, a substantial number of books were loaned to four annex libraries, three youth groups, one reading circle and one agricultural study group. In addition, more than 500 volumes of children's books were donated to a local elementary school run by Tsurukawa Village, and a total of 101 volumes were lent out on two occasions to Tsurukawa Junior High School which was newly established on the basis of the new educational system.

I was convinced that the plan I envisaged while imprisoned was not wrong: one meagre private library run by an individual on the side could do this much. It was the kind of activity which ought to have been developed and pursued throughout Japan, had the nation, prefectures, cities, towns, and villages been determined to see the "rebirth of a cultural state." However, despite the fact that a fair effort was made by many people to start hand-made libraries, unfortunately libraries at large exerted very little effort to support them through a parent library activity. The library circle neither thought of the ideal nor the practical activities which should be pursued by libraries in the democratic society which was being materialized in the postwar period.

While carrying out the above-mentioned activity to cultivate hamlet libraries, I made necessary revisions, additions, and subtractions to the manuscript on the question of rural libraries that I secretly had written at the end of the war. It was published in January 1949 as a volume in Kawade Publishing Company's "on education" series in which my appeals and thoughts to the general public were expressed extremely frankly. In addition to the main title Rural Library, it was subtitled How It Was Born and Nurtured, and included a verse of dedication at the back of the front cover which stated "To many friends whom I have not yet met."

The content of this book could be summarized as follows: "A hamlet library is the genuine rural library. It should be created by you and can be set up if there is a will." It was almost identical to the idea stated in Section 4 of this paper, and my book appears to have received a positive response from many people.

VII. NO AGRICULTURAL BOOKS FOR FARMERS

After the war, the activity of South Tama Rural Private Library was thus developing according to my plan. However, the library was at the same time confronted with an unsolved serious problem — the farmers' apathy to reading books. Upon entering a new era, farmers were enthused by the desire for increased productivity and very anxious to hear about knowledge related to agricultural production, but they were still not at all interested in reading agricultural books.

As stated in the beginning, I placed emphasis on agricultural books and made an effort to collect them from the days when I had been preparing for the library's opening. I was confident from the start that the most important activity of a rural library is to provide producing farmers with books and magazines which would contribute to the development of agricultural production, and my conviction has been reinforced since then. In particular, my passion was to provide poor peasants and ex-tenant farmers with opportunities to read truly useful books and magazines. They had been so far deprived of chances to have access to agricultural knowledge and, even if they could manage to do so, were in no condition to utilize it. Now they had a remarkable drive for increased productivity due to the multiplying effect of the land reform and Government's encouragement to enhance agricultural production in view of the severe food shortage.

I was concerned about the fact that agricultural books and magazines

were never written in an understandable way. I was well aware of a lack of easy-to-understand, good books on the basis of my experience as a student for a year and as a teacher for about three years at the horticultural school. I had also seen that toward the end of the war while I was serving for about a year as a member of the editorial staff of the Industrial Books Company where I was involved mainly with the editing of agricultural books. Therefore, I felt hesitant about making farmers in the village who were highly zealous about increased production become library users immediately. I thought libraries should not be forced on the farmer. In January 1946, a study group called "Tsurukawa Agricultural Discussion Group" was formed, and its first gathering was held at my library. The second meeting was held in February at Mr. Nakamura's house where the Shinkōji Annex Library was located. Those who attended these meetings listened to the lectures given by specialists whom I had arranged to come, but I told those who came to the meetings that "these activities were really not directly related to the library." Although I was extremely anxious to correlate farmers with the library they were so distant from books that I had to forgo this possibility. However, I gave it deep thought and was resolved to eradicate this condition as soon as possible.

At first, I put my hopes in several agronomists who seemed to have grasped the significance of the new era that Japan had entered. Actually these people were already setting out to write books. The following three volumes were the most representative ones, and their publication was evaluated highly (however, not by producing farmers): Kin'ichi Yoshioka, Shin Nōhō no Riron to Jissai [The theory and practice of new agricultural methods], Yakumo-shoten, July 1946; Yakichi Noguchi, Nō no Kagaku [Science of agriculture], Kawade-shobō, May 1947; Yōichi Fukushima, Nōgaku no Gakkō [A school of agronomy], Yakumo-shoten, September 1947. I, of course, bought them for my library and read them carefully, but I had to conclude that these books could hardly be said to be approachable by producing farmers of the time. I wrote a detailed criticism of these three books in November 1948 in a magazine entitled Akarui Kyōiku [Bright education], in the hope that my comments might provide not only these three scholars whom I respect but also many more

scholars to come to write truly comprehensible books.

At about the same time I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to become familiar with about ten agronomists who were progressive in thinking and positive toward the farmers. I met them in 1947 at the Agricultural Section Committee of the Democratic Scientists' Association when we were undertaking preparation of textbooks for use in the new-system junior high schools. (Regarding the editing of textbooks, one of the postwar democratization policies stipulated that the school textbooks used in compulsory education be made by civilians and that the Ministry of Education simply give official approval.) I took part in this task as I was a member of this section committee, but all the other participants were experts in one area of agriculture or another. Naturally, the task took the form of my rewriting the manuscript written by experts into comprehensible sentences for junior high school students. This was indeed a very valuable experience for me. Through this work I was able to recognize very clearly the fact that agricultural specialists then were not used to, and thus incapable of, writing easily understandable sentences, even if they tried to do so.

When the bulk of this task was over, I became a member of the board of directors of the Cultural Association for Farming, Forestry, and Fishing Villages. I went to work at the association almost every day from the autumn of 1948, and became involved in the editing of a monthly magazine Nōson Bunka [Rural culture] and books meant for rural villagers published by this association. The first job that I pursued in this organization as the person in charge was to write and edit Tsūshin Nōmin Kōza [A correspondence course for farmers]. The objective of the publication was to provide the farmers throughout Japan who were most eager to increase productivity with a truly understandable and useful textbook. From my experience as an editor of the junior high school textbooks, I was fully aware of the fact that the writing could not be entrusted to specialists if the text were to meet the objective. Thus Tsūshin Nōmin Kōza was mainly written jointly by myself and the specialists. We experimented with several methods such as my rewriting what was first written by the specialists, or the specialists revising

what I first wrote. I feel that a fairly comprehensible textbook was compiled ultimately. I must add that, during this course of textbook preparation, I myself conducted "A Survey on Agricultural Common Sense among Farmers" as will be stated in the next section. Through the survey I vigorously endeavoured to grasp accurately the knowledge and comprehension capabilities of the readers of the Correspondence Course. The survey turned out to be of great help in making the textbook truly understandable.

VIII. A SURVEY ON AGRICULTURAL COMMON SENSE AMONG FARMERS

Japan from the Meiji period onwards eagerly endeavoured to spread compulsory education and accomplished excellent results. Much effort was also put into the improvement of educational institutions other than compulsory education. From these facts one might be able to conclude that Japan was a country eager in education. However, there was no attempt to survey agricultural common sense among Japanese farmers. The survey was really needed because it was a period of social change, particularly on the rural scene. The completion of the land reform had effected a shift in the status of the tenant farmer, which was abolished, and, as a result, independent farmers were created en masse throughout Japan.

In prewar days, "agriculture is the foundation of a country" had been the motto of this country whose population distribution according to occupation revealed that the overwhelming majority of the people were engaged in farming. Also, in view of the fact that the majority were landholding farmers despite being poor, there was need of a detailed and concrete survey of the actual conditions to understand the level of agricultural common sense that individual farmers held. What was surprising was the fact that neither the Ministry of Education which compiled Nōgyō Kyōkasho [Agricultural textbook] for use in upper

elementary schools throughout rural Japan, nor the Ministry of Agriculture which advocated aid for allocating one to several agricultural technical staff members at towns and villages (the total number of towns and villages at that time was about 10,000) had ever carried out any survey of this sort.

Therefore, I pursued the survey on agricultural common sense among farmers in order to obtain reference for my writing activity. The result was so lamentable that I continued surveying whenever possible for over ten years as a way of showing the need of enlightenment rather than solely for my own reference. However, only a fraction of the survey pursued in the initial period shall be mentioned in this paper.

The survey was made of those who came to listen to my lectures. Because I gave lectures on a fairly wide range of topics, those who came also consisted of various types. However, the bulk of those who came in the first six months when an intensive survey was conducted were mainly the young and adult males who comprised the core of agricultural production. Being attendants of lectures, they can be regarded as having been more eager to acquire knowledge than the average farmer.

The primary method of the survey was to give them a quiz before the lecture and let them write down answers on a piece of paper. I limited the questions to two or three formulated from important areas on which those who came to the lecture would perhaps not have definite knowledge. As the surveys were continued repeatedly, it became clear that the by-products of the quiz were very valuable. In other words, because they came to realize before the lecture that they had been unaware of important areas they listened to the lectures more intently.

Below are some examples of questions that I gave and the outline of their responses. I asked the following question on eleven occasions:

How many times the amount of water do you need in order to make a solution of ammonium sulphate which is more or less equal in strength to human excrement (in terms of nitrogen component)?

I received responses from a total of 190 people on this question. In view of the fact that fertilizers were rationed at that time and that the distributed quantity tended to be insufficient, it was relevant to compare the cost of buying outrageously expensive ammonium sulphate on the black market with that of human manure bought from the city homes. I made the quiz taking the current state of affairs into account. The answers were all random. They ranged from a minimum of 2 times to a maximum of 4,000 times and the other answers in the order of frequency were 100 times by 19 people, 5 times and 20 times by 15 each, and 10 times and 50 times by 10 each. The correct answer was from 40 to 50 times, but most replies were absolutely unreasonable because as many as 30 people put down less than 5 times and as many as 19 people put down more than 200 times.

The following question was asked on 9 occasions and answered by 144 people:

How deeply does the wheat root grow?

Truly divergent replies were given again which ranged from 3 centimetres to 4.5 metres, and in the order of frequency, 17 people answered about 90 centimetres, 12 about 15 centimetres, 11 about 30 centimetres, and 9 about 45 centimetres. The situation was such that their answers were only slightly better than the ones given to the previous question. One out of four farmers who actually grew wheat and put time and effort into fertilizer and cultivation control in order to harvest even the slightest amount more thought that the wheat root grew less than 20 centimetres in depth. It was quite a problem that those who answered "less than 20 centimetres" outnumbered those who, more or less correctly, indicated "over 1 metre."

Various irrational ways of farming must be due to such ignorance. One such example is the case of additional fertilizer to wheat in January and February. Since human manure was then still an important fertilizer, this was often used as the additional fertilizer to wheat. A common way was to dilute human manure with water and many farmers poured it over the wheat leaves with a dipper. They poured it in this manner

because they thought that, as the surface sprouts around that time of year were still small, the roots were also not spread out. In reality, however, the wheat roots spread all over the field and the fertilizer could be absorbed immediately regardless of which part of the ridge it was poured.

Furthermore, since quite a lot of paper was mixed into the human manure, it struck onto the wheat leaves for a long time after the manure dried up even though the paper was dissolved at the time of giving the fertilizer. This was a very pitiful scene which could be seen on every wheat field. I viewed this as a proof of ignorance on the part of the farmers. This was because it revealed not only their ignorance as to the growth of the roots, but also their ignorance regarding the effect on the plants' leaves.

Leaves naturally are the most fundamental organ of the plant and they have the function of synthesizing an organic compound — the most significant function among all the material transformations on the earth. Nevertheless, I saw on many occasions not only the aforementioned case of giving the additional fertilizer to wheat but also other ways of doing things which could never have been done by those who had a proper knowledge of the function of leaves. Thus I gave a number of questions on the function of leaves. Because questions were made in various ways which often required answers in an essay form, it is difficult to analyse the responses quantitatively. However, in every quiz I conducted it was exceptionally rare to find someone who seemed to know the answers well.

What was surprising was the fact that the majority of farmers whose household livelihood depended upon the function of each leaf had no certain knowledge of its effect. This was compounded by the fact that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry did not even examine the situation, and that scholars who were writing agricultural books were totally unaware of it.

IX. WRITING AN UNDERSTANDABLE AGRICULTURAL BOOK

I finally made up my mind and wrote a book entitled Dare ni mo Wakaru Hiryo no Chishiki [A knowledge of fertilizer that everyone understands] and had it published by the Cultural Association for Farming, Forestry, and Fishing Villages in September 1950. This book was later evaluated as "a pioneering agricultural book written for farmers which is understandable and scientific." It was so welcomed by farmers who had longed for an understandable and useful agricultural book that 100,000 copies were sold in ten years (two enlarged and revised editions were issued in the interim).

When I was writing this book, I paid special attention to correlating explanations of the way to conduct farming operations which would be useful for increased production and the correct knowledge of fertilizer. After all, the readers were farmers who had already been using fertilizers for several years to raise crops. An understandable description of reasons alone was never sufficient. It was important to write in such a way that farmers would reflect on what they had been doing while they read the book and think of each instance to decipher whether they had been rational or completely wrong. I would like to cite some "chapter heads" from the initial edition of Dare ni mo Wakaru Hiryo no Chishiki so that the outline of this method of writing can be grasped:

- Chapter 1 Knowledge on how to keep nitrogen from escaping.
- Chapter 2 How can you increase production when you dare to throw away already insufficient potassium?
- Chapter 3 What is the riddle between carelessly made compost and a rich man? As he has no debt, the compost lacks potassium. (Note: The Japanese term for debt is a homonym to potassium.)
- Chapter 4 Fools, scissors and phosphatic fertilizer. (Note: A Japanese proverb says that fools and scissors are equally useful if they are wisely utilized. The same applies for phosphatic fertilizers.)
- Chapter 5 A fool who grumbles about acidity of soil or about the withered plants just prior to the autumn harvest after pouring tons of sulphuric acid onto the field.

Chapter 6 The wonders of lime nitrogen: used wisely it can kill three birds. (Cf. the proverb to kill two birds with one stone; lime nitrogen does even more.)

The publication of understandable and useful books in every field was strongly desired by farmers throughout Japan at that time. As I made a breakthrough with my book, this task was soon on the way. Moreover, since the farmers' reading level had improved quite rapidly, this major problem was more or less solved by about 1960. The last technical book on agriculture that I myself wrote was Dare ni mo Wakaru Tsuchi to Kiryō [Soil and fertilizer that everyone understands] which was published in 1962. Then the focal point of my activity gradually shifted toward the library movement.

X. TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

The lack of libraries in Japan during the period when freedom and democracy were suppressed has already been stated briefly. After the war, the Japanese Constitution based upon popular sovereignty, peace, democracy, and human rights was enacted. In accordance with the spirit of the Constitution such laws as the Local Autonomy Act, the Basic Act on Education, the Social Education Act, and the Libraries Act were established (the Libraries Act was enacted in 1950). Nevertheless, the actual conditions regarding the poor libraries in Japan were not easily eradicated.

My library was a very humble one operated by one individual on the side with 12,000 volumes as of 1965. In spite of this rather meagre stock, my library counted among the comparatively well-supplied libraries located in cities with a population of less than 50,000 people. I could not remain a passive spectator with such pitiful conditions of libraries in Japan. To do something to improve the situation, I decided to join the Japan Libraries Association from an early period,

and then acted as a trustee for six years from 1959 and from then until now I have been on the board of directors. Together with many fellow members, I have carried out various activities to enable public libraries in Japan to develop in leaps and bounds. I worked in my capacity as an official of the Japan Libraries Association as well as in my capacity of chief librarian of a private library, and I think I could not possibly differentiate the dual roles, nor was it really imperative to do so. In the following I would like to write an outline concerning my efforts put into the development of Japanese libraries which, I think, attained fair results.

The so-called "rapid growth" in Japan from about the end of the 1950s greatly changed Japanese society, thereby arousing divergent people's movements among which there was a movement to demand the replenishment of public libraries.

In my view, this type of people's movement ought to have arisen immediately after the enactment of the Libraries Act in 1950. It was not strange for people to start a movement because the vast majority of libraries were in such a state that they had poor book stocks, bad management, and budgets so insufficient that they could hardly buy books. I did exhort repeatedly that such a movement should be started. Nevertheless, things did not progress accordingly.

Despite the radical change brought about due to rapid growth and the emergence of new residential areas, there still were no educational and cultural facilities for residents. When this situation permeated the entire scene, the residents became motivated enough to do something themselves, and thus there was almost a spontaneous movement where people began to open up corners in their own homes with children's books so that they could provide neighbourhood children with the pleasure of reading.

In Machida City (Tokyo) where I live, this type of "home library" began to emerge from a relatively early period and several came into existence from about 1962. I was made aware of them in the autumn of

1963, and I thought that libraries should take a positive role in order to expand this movement. Thus with the co-operation of my library and the Machida City Library, it was decided that a substantial lending of children's books be made to those who had opened home libraries or who were thinking of doing so.

This proposal was so welcome that it was said that there was a "home library boom" in Machida for some time starting from 1964. Home libraries emerged successively, and they co-operated with one another. At the same time, there was a recognition of the fact that the very poor Machida City Library had to be developed radically, and there was also an awareness that the people themselves were to be the driving force.

There was no other means but to rely upon a substantial book loan from the city library in order for those who operated home libraries about once a week to overcome the paucity of stock. They were confronted with enthusiastic children who would say "Don't you have any new books?" In order for this to materialize, it was necessary to increase the book purchasing expenditure of the city library drastically. Under these circumstances, mothers (who were mainly in charge of home libraries) took the decisive role. For example, about ten representative mothers in Machida appeared at the Mayor's Office in 1965, and each made a request to the mayor. In the following year, they submitted a petition to the City Assembly. The purchase expenditure for the city library thus increased steadily.

In August 1965, there was a truly fortunate happening in Hino City near Machida City, for a person who excelled in his ideals and practice regarding libraries was selected as mayor. Takashi Ariyama had consistently acted as the secretary-general of the Japan Libraries Association throughout the postwar period and had thought up various policies for radical development of the library. The plan concerning Hino City Library which had been decided previously was completely re-drawn and set on its way by him. Tsuneo Maekawa (at present Chief Librarian of Shiga Prefectural Library), the most suitable person, was

appointed chief librarian and, employing as their motto the idea of unstinting service to the residents, the Ariyama-Maekawa team pursued a truly epochal library activity in Japan.

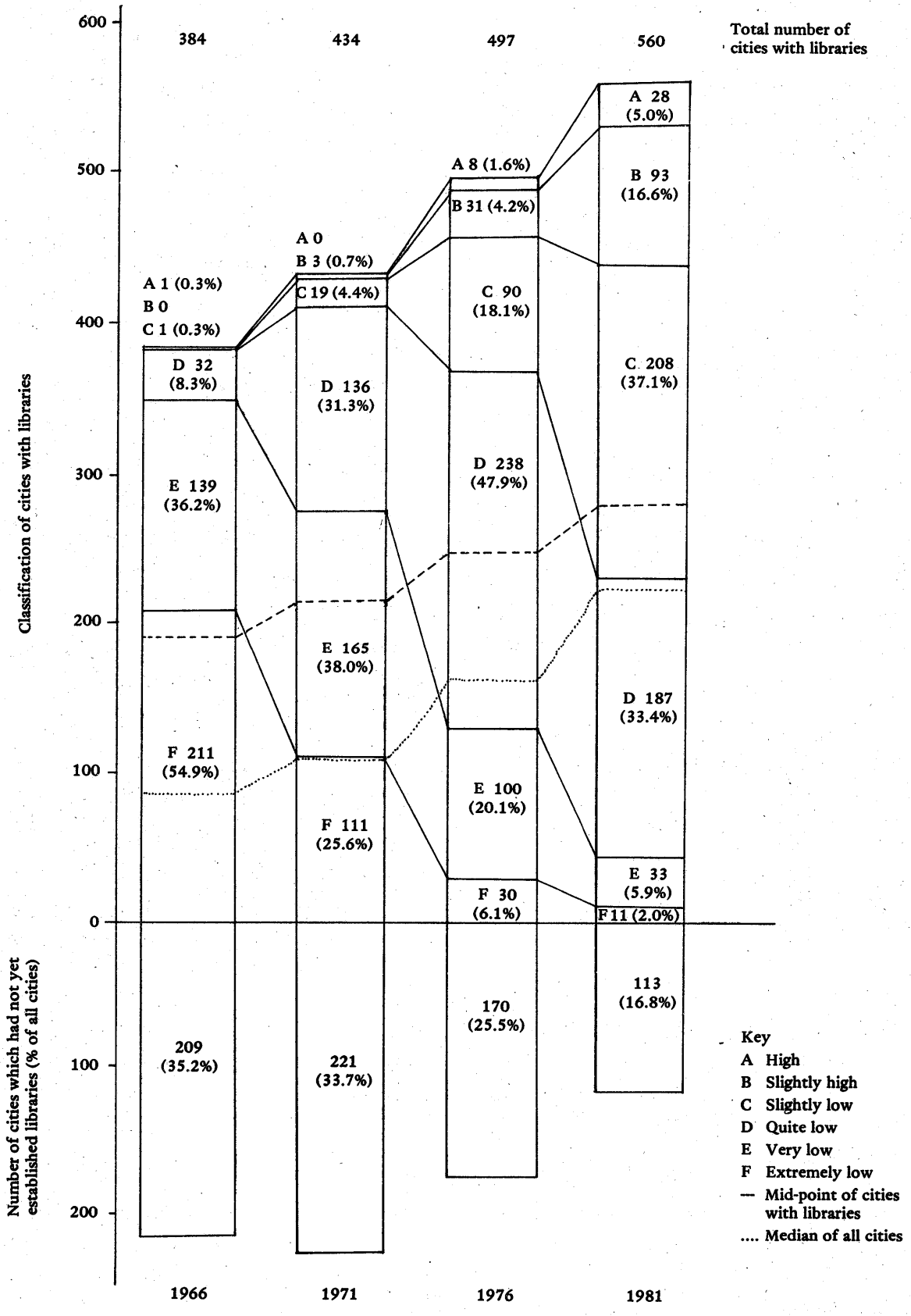
The emergence of this full-scale library greatly enhanced the morale of Machida residents, who were carrying out the movement to demand the replenishment of the city library. It naturally not only gave encouragement to many people in other cities and towns, but also influenced their heads and assemblies. In addition, it was the best encouragement to many librarians who were working at the libraries.

The launching of the Hino City Library was epoch-making and its highly idealistic stance influenced many concerned people whose endeavours ultimately actualized the radical development of public libraries in Japan from 1965 onwards. This growth can be clearly seen in the following graph. This graph shows the actual results of city and ward libraries throughout Japan for every five-year period starting from 1966.¹ They are classified into six categories on the basis of the correlation between the degree of book replenishment and the degree of lending service activities (the method is explained in Appendix A).

As of 1966, among 384 cities (and wards) only Hino City ranked class A (high), none in class B (slightly high), one city in class C (slightly low), 32 cities or 8.3 per cent in class D (quite low), 36.2 per cent in class E (very low) and as much as 54.9 per cent in class F (extremely low).

In 1981, however, 28 cities or 5 per cent fell into A, with 93 cities or 16.6 per cent in B, with 208 cities or 37.1 per cent in C, and the total of these three classes came up to nearly 60 per cent with 329 cities. As the class F cities were almost disappearing, the percentage of classes E and F combined was radically reduced to 7.9 per cent. In addition, the number of cities without libraries decreased nearly by

1. Hereafter the number of wards is included in the number of cities because the term "ward" only pertains to the 23 wards in Tokyo.



Rapid Progress of City Libraries in a 15-Year Period

half from 221 to 113 in a ten-year period. Although the establishment of libraries to this day is not compulsory as far as the law is concerned, it seems that the city authority has come to realize their responsibility for guaranteeing people's right to enjoy library use and their determination appears to be unshakable. (Concerning the rapid development of city libraries, please refer to the actual numbers as well as percentages given in the graph.)

I have been working as the Chairman of the Library Survey Committee of the Japan Libraries Association for the last eight years. My endeavours were directed at ensuring the accuracy of library surveys which have been conducted continuously by the association since 1952. At the same time, I have been undertaking publication of the survey results in various forms. I am making maximum effort so that forward steps taken by Japanese libraries in the past ten years or more can be solidified further.

APPENDIX A: THE EVALUATION METHOD

In September 1972, the Sectional Meeting on Facilities of the Library Experts Committee (organized under the Social Educational Council, Ministry of Education) prepared and submitted a draft on "The Desirable Standard Regarding the Establishment and Management of Public Libraries" which was to be decided upon and publicized by the Minister of Education in accordance with Article 18 of the Libraries Act. Owing to various circumstances, it has remained a draft even to this day. However, since people are completely free to put it to a useful purpose, I contemplated how to make best use of the draft.

Of various quantitative values given in this draft, I decided to pick up (1) the number of volumes collected by libraries in a city in a year (the desirable standard is stipulated as a number equal to one-eighth

TABLE 1

City's relation to standard	City's ranking
Over 4 times	9
Over 3 but less than 4 times	8
Over 2 but less than 3 times	7
Over 1.5 but less than 2 times	6
Over 1 but less than 1.5 times	5
Over 0.5 but less than 1 time	4
Over 0.2 but less than 0.5 times	3
Over 0.1 but less than 0.2 times	2
Less than 0.1 times	1
No value	0

Note: If a city is indexed as "over 0.8 but less than 1" in terms of both degrees of replenishment and activity, the combined value for the city is marked up to 9 points.

of the population of each city) to show the degree of replenishment on the part of libraries, and (2) the number of volumes lent by the libraries per year (desirable standard number: twice the population) to show the degree of activity. The standard for each value is indexed as 1. As shown in table 1, cities are ranked from 1 to a maximum of 9 for each value. The ranking for replenishment and that for activity are then added together, and on the basis of the total the cities are classified into six classes as shown in table 2.

TABLE 2

Combined replenishment and activity rankings	Classification
13-18	A High
10-12	B Slightly high
8-9	C Slightly low
6-7	D Quite low
4-5	E Very low
less than 3	F Extremely low

APPENDIX B: AN OUTLINE FOR TSURUKAWA PRIVATE LIBRARY

In September 1939, South Tama Rural Private Library was opened, and it was renamed Tsurukawa Private Library in January 1968 when the vicinity was definitely turning into a residential area.

The structure was a wooden bungalow initially with 36.3 square metres which was slightly enlarged to 57 square metres in 1961. Since approximately 25,000 volumes are kept there at the present moment, visitors are totally surprised at the high density of 440 volumes per 1 square metre of floor space.

No restrictions such as age or address are imposed upon users. The membership fee is waived for pre-school children, elementary and junior high students, and senior citizens with a low income. Adults pay a monthly fee of ¥100. Admission fee is also ¥100. High school students pay half of the adult's fee.

The library is open only in the afternoons on Wednesdays and the second and fourth Sundays. A member is allowed to borrow up to ten books for up to a month. The period is renewable.

In the past year, the library collected 2,270 books (of which 396 volumes were purchased) and rented out about 3,000 volumes.