



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Visiting Japan Program for AJS Young Researchers

(Visit & Study Japan Grant Program 2025)

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

The Visit and Study JAPAN Grant Program 2025 (VSJ2025)^(Note) is a program jointly implemented by the America-Japan Society, Inc. (AJS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan's (MOFA) KAKEHASHI Project. The program aims to promote exchanges between Japan and the US by fostering a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and encouraging participants to share their experiences and discoveries within their networks in both countries.

Note: "Visit and Study JAPAN Grant Program 2025 (VSJ2025)"

THE VSJ2025 is one of the programs funded as a part of the commemoration of the centennial of the America-Japan Society, Inc. (AJS). This grant program invites students in master and doctoral courses in the United States to visit Japan for the purpose of encouraging their research and study of Japan and/or the bilateral relationship between the two countries and further contributing to the higher intellectual level of their research. The AJS consequently expects the students who pass the selection process (the Participant) to become indispensable catalysts to promote the understanding of Japan in the US in various fields. The KAKEHASHI Project provides support for the visit to Japan under this program, particularly covering airfare, partial accommodation, and commuting expenses in Japan.

【Participant】 Total: 1 graduate student from the U.S.

【Locations】 Tokyo, Aichi, Gifu, Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Kanagawa, Saitama

【Schedule】

■ Invitation Program:

Nov. 30 (Sun)	Arrival at Narita International Airport
Dec. 1 (Mon)	【Post-arrival Orientation】 with AJS
Dec. 2 (Tue)	【Observation】 SHIBUYA TSUTAYA, PASSAGE by ALL REVIEWS SOLIDA, Jimbocho Book Center
Dec. 3 (Wed)	Travel from Tokyo to Aichi 【Observation】 TSUTAYA BOOKSTORE (Meitetsu Nagoya)
Dec. 4 (Thu)	Travel from Aichi to Gifu 【Observation】 "Minna no Mori" Gifu Media Cosmos Travel from Gifu to Aichi
Dec. 5 (Fri)	【Observation】 TSUTAYA, Aichi Prefectural Library

	Travel from Aichi to Osaka
Dec. 6 (Sat)	【Observation】 TSUTAYA EBISUBASHI
	Travel from Osaka to Kyoto
Dec. 7 (Sun)	【Observation】 Kyoto International Manga Museum
Dec. 8 (Mon)	Travel from Kyoto to Osaka
Dec. 9 (Tue)	【Observation】 Nakanoshima Children's Book Forest, Osaka Prefectural Nakanoshima Library
	Travel from Osaka to Hiroshima
Dec. 10 (Wed)	【Observation】 Hiroshima City Central Library, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum
Dec. 11 (Thu)	【Observation】 HIROSHIMA TSUTAYA BOOKS
Dec. 12 (Fri)	【Observation】 Hiroshima City MANGA Library
Dec. 13 (Sat)	Travel from Hiroshima to Tokyo
Dec. 14 (Sun)	【Observation】 DAIKANYAMA TSUTAYA BOOKS
Dec. 15 (Mon)	【Observation】 Books and Coffee Fukuroshosabo
	Travel from Tokyo to Kanagawa
Dec. 16 (Tue)	【Observation】 Ebina City Library
Dec. 17 (Wed)	Travel from Tokyo to Saitama
	【Observation】 Kadokawa Culture Museum
Dec. 18 (Thu)	【Observation】 International Library of Children's Literature, National Diet Library, Kita-ku Chuo Library
Dec. 20 (Sat)	Preparations for the Reporting Session
Dec. 21 (Sun)	Preparations for the Reporting Session
Dec. 22 (Mon)	Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans (AJS)
Dec. 23 (Tue)	Departure at Narita International Airport

2. Program Photos

Invitation Program

	
December 2 【Observation】 Jimbocho Booktown	December 4 【Observation】 “Minna no Mori” Gifu Media Cosmos

	
December 7 【Observation】 Kyoto International Manga Museum	December 12 【Observation】 Hiroshima City MANGA Library
	
December 16 【Observation】 Ebina City Library	December 17 【Observation】 Kadokawa Culture Museum

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

During my stay in Japan from November 30 to December 23, I visited various book centers and libraries to study them as models for reimagining the future of U.S. public libraries. This project was initially conceived on the notion that Japan's Culture Convenience Club Co., Ltd. (CCC) had pioneered “bookshop-libraries,” innovative, privately funded, hybrid spaces that combine library and bookstore functions. These are creative solutions to some of the current issues libraries in the United States face, such as budget cuts, understaffing, book bans, and more. However, after numerous site visits across different regions in Japan, I observed several aspects of Tsutayas, bookstores, and libraries that could help enhance library and book services in the United States, offering valuable lessons for both countries.

I used my observations from Japanese libraries to answer the following questions:

1. How do patrons navigate and inhabit these spaces — individually, socially, or as families?

The answers I found for this question can be roughly categorized as such:

- a. Quiet participation: I observed that Japanese users often find subtle methods to engage in library spaces. For instance, they frequently use suggestion boxes, bulletin boards, and shared notebooks for communication. Spaces
- b. Behaviors and Lingering: Besides the typical behaviors of reading, studying, and scrolling on their phones, I found that Japanese library users tend to “linger” in these spaces. Many users I observed stayed for 2-4 hours, and many felt comfortable enough to sleep in these spaces.

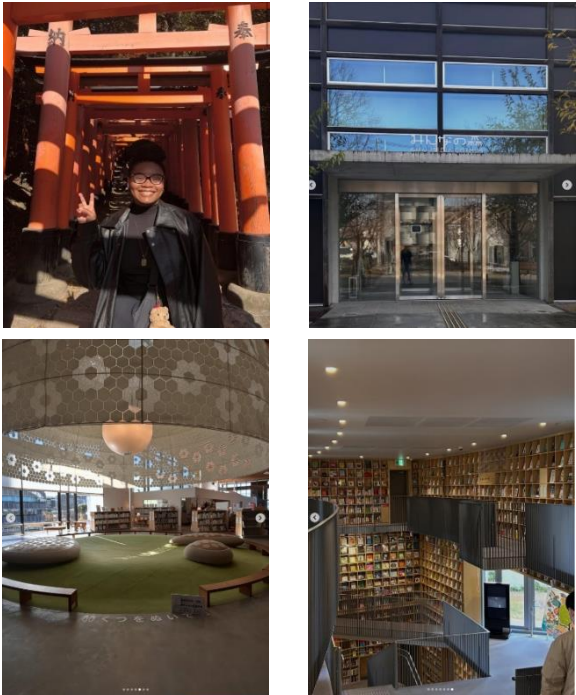
- c. Spaces/Places: Japanese libraries and book spaces often designate specific areas for various activities. For example, they have separate spaces or places for reading, studying, smoking, and making phone calls.
- 2. How do Tsutayas, bookstores, and public libraries in Japan function as community, educational, and recreational spaces?
 - a. Convenience Culture: Almost all the spaces I observed followed the “one-stop shop” model; many of the libraries included a library/book space and either a convenience store, a café, or a restaurant, sometimes all three.
 - b. Design & Aesthetics: Design and aesthetics play a crucial role in Japanese libraries. Each space is beautifully unique and welcoming, encouraging users to linger and enjoy their environment.
 - c. Respect: Respect was demonstrated for other users, books, and spaces in various ways, such as removing shoes in designated areas to maintain cleanliness and sanitizing books before returning them.
- 3. What insights from Japanese book centers and libraries could inform more inclusive and innovative practices in U.S. libraries and vice versa?
 - a. Japan à US:

Some lessons US libraries can learn from Japan include enhanced accessibility and signage. Incorporating innovative designs, aesthetics, and designated areas that encourage escapism and lingering. Quiet spaces and alternative participation methods to include more introverted users. Additionally, fostering partnerships, including possible Public-Private collaborations, is crucial.
 - b. US à Japan

Some lessons Japan could learn from the US include building intentional communities and revitalizing the “community” aspect within the library by relaxing some rules, tolerating noise, encouraging personal interactions, and creating opportunities for growth toward a more “modern” library—both in appearance and in function. During my visits, the libraries and book spaces felt a bit lonely and unfriendly—the design and aesthetics of the buildings were beautiful, but staff and other patrons felt unapproachable.

Although Japanese and American libraries share many similarities, significant differences merit further study and research. This includes conducting in-depth interviews with library patrons, librarians, and LIS professionals. Additionally, exploring the direction of Japanese LIS education and how it contrasts with American LIS education is important. Attitudes and stereotypes surrounding libraries and bookstores also warrant examination. Finally, due to time and resource constraints, I only visited libraries and bookstores in major cities during my study. In the future, I would like to visit more remote spaces, such as Miyakonojo Library and the Takeo City Library.

4. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt)

	
December 15, 2025 (Instagram) Summarizing the first half of my time traveling and visiting sites in Nagoya, Gifu, Kyoto and Osaka.	December 16, 2025 (Instagram) Summarizing the second half of my time in Japan – site visits in Osaka, Hiroshima, Tokyo and shinkansen travel.
	I'm grateful to share that I've officially completed my Visit and Study Japan (VSJ) grant with the America-Japan Society, Inc. (AJS) in Tokyo. On December 22, 2025, I had the opportunity to present my research at the AJS office as the 2025 VSJ awardee. My presentation, "Imagining Otherwise: Cross-Cultural Models for Inclusive Library Futures in Japan and the U.S.," shared findings from an intensive field study examining bookstores and libraries across the Kanto, Chubu, Kansai, and Chugoku regions. This project involved on-site visits and close observation of libraries' unique initiatives, community roles, and operational approaches, with the goal of understanding how Japanese models might inform more inclusive, community-centered library practices in the United States. Through these visits, I explored both current challenges and future possibilities, identifying insights that may be valuable to library professionals in both Japan and the U.S. I'm thankful to AJS for the platform to share this work and for supporting cross-cultural research that bridges public services, community spaces, and international exchange. The findings from this study will continue to be analyzed after my return to the U.S., and I hope to publish them soon. Deep thanks to the AJS team and everyone who made this experience possible. This grant has shaped how I imagine the future of libraries — and I'm excited to carry these insights forward. https://lnkd.in/eMf8gvMW Program detail The America-Japan Society, Inc. – The America-Japan Society, Inc. ajstokyo.org
December 23, 2025 (Instagram) Celebrating the conclusion of my research and travel in Japan.	December 23, 2025 (LinkedIn) LinkedIn Post celebrating the conclusion of my research in Japan, thanking AJS and looking forward to next steps.

5. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

- Submit findings for article submission and conference presentation
 - Potential Places for submission:
 - 2026 American Library Association (ALA) International Relations Round Table (IRRT) Pre-Conference
 - Empirical Studies in Libraries Summit (ESiLS)
 - International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Journal
- Present findings to UNC SILS upon return
- Incorporate findings and photos from research into the comprehensive exam and final doctoral dissertation.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)

Cooperating Organization: America-JAPAN Society, Inc. (AJS)