

Mass Communication In Japan

by

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Population:	103,521,912
Circulation of major dailies:	36,303,928
TV licenses:	22,087,548
Radio sets:	40,000,000
	(1970 figures)

1) The NSK newspapers

In 1946, 62 newspaper publishers got together to uphold the principles expressed in the Canons of Journalism, and organized the Nihon Shinbun Kyokai (The Japan Newspaper Publishers' and Editors' Association).

The membership of this organization increased to include 110 newspapers, 8 newsagencies, and 47 broadcasters, in 1971. This is the main group of the Press in Japan, and when we discuss problems of mass communication in this country, we have to refer to this group first.

These 110 newspapers can be classified into four groups; nationals, regionals, locals, and others.

a) National newspapers

There are three national newspapers; Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri. These papers are published in five centers throughout the country, and their circulations range from 4,6 to 5,9 millions. Each of these has its English edition, is related closely with a sports paper, has a weekly news magazine section and a large book publishing department, affiliated with radio and television stations, and sponsors many sports and cultural activities.

Next, comes the Sankei Shimbun, published in Tokyo and Osaka, with the total circulation of two million. It has a sports paper, and has begun to publish a tabloid evening paper in Tokyo since 1969. Sankei has also been publishing a weekly news magazine, and has a very close relation with a television network.

Nihon Keizai Shimbun is a financial paper read by everybody. It is published in three major cities, with the circulation reaching 1,2 million. It has a publishing department, and operates a television station in Tokyo.

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b) Regional newspapers

Chunichi, Hokkaido, and Nishi Nippon are called regionals. Chunichi, the biggest among them, is published in Nagoya (circulation; 1,4 million), and owns a paper in Tokyo, another in Kanazawa, and has two sports papers. Hokkaido is circulated in Hokkaido island, and is printed in four cities. Nishi Nippon is circulated in Kyushu island, and has a sports paper.

c) Local newspapers

Other NSK papers are mostly called local papers, being circulated mainly in one prefecture. But some of them are fairly big, and we may call them metropolitan papers. For example, Kobe Shimbun has a circulation of more than 438,000, and affiliated with a sports paper and a television station. Kyoto Shimbun is publishing more than 380,000 copies, and affiliated with a television station.

d) Other newspapers

Several papers which are devoted to special interests, such as agriculture, photography, education, and industry, are also members of NSK.

Sports papers are making good business. Most of them are post-war ventures, and are related to nationals or regionals. Ten papers are published in twenty two printing plants in six cities, and the largest has a circulation of more than 733,000.

There are four English dailies, three mornings and an evening. Japan Times is the oldest, being established in 1897. Others are owned by three national papers.

It should be noted that these NSK papers consume more than ninety per cent of newsprints sold in Japan.

2) Non-NSK newspapers

There are two giants among non-NSK papers. One is Akahata (Red Flag), the organ of the Communist Party. It came to be published daily in 1947, and was reported to be publishing 450,000 weekday editions, and 1,450,000 Sunday editions.

Another paper, the Seikyo Shimbun, an organ of the Soka Gakkai (a Buddhist sect organization), has been publishing more than four millions, and its sister paper, the Komei Shimbun, more than a million.

Political parties, trade unions, and other organizations are publishing their organ papers. But no reliable data are available as to their numbers and circulations.

There are many community papers. But data are lacking in this case, too. When the Institute of Journalism, Tokyo University, tried to make a survey in 1967, 449 newspapers responded to the questionnaire. Of these papers, 114 were dailies, 8 triweeklies, 19 biweeklies, 118 weeklies, and others were published less often.

In March, 1971, the Asahi Journal, a weekly news magazine, made a survey on so-called "mini-komi", meaning very small papers. This kind of papers are far smaller than community papers, and most of them are devoted to some cause or creed. Eight hundreds of mini-publishers responded to this survey. Their publishing regularities were not clear at all, some were monthlies, some weeklies, and at least one a daily. One paper, which responded to this survey, was published in a local city, and had a history of more than a quarter of a century, and was known nationally.

3) Government Public Relation Sheets

There are approximately 3,200 local governments, from prefectures down to cities, towns, and villages. More than 98% of these administrative bodies publish some kind of public relation sheets, about half of them take the form of tabloids. Most of them are monthlies, and a few of them weeklies. They are distributed free, and usually go to every household.

4) Weeklies and monthlies

Weekly news magazines have been published by Asahi and Mainichi since 1922. In 1956, a book publishing company began to publish the Shukan Shincho, and opened the era of Shukanishi (weeklies). In 1970, there were about 46 titles. Some of them are newsmagazines, but there are some solely for women, teenagers, and comics, and some are degenerated into mere scandal sheets.

Monthlies have traditions much longer. There were 1,315 titles published in 1970. Circulations of the weeklies and monthlies are not available.

5) News agencies

There are eight news agencies among NSK members. Kyodo is a cooperative organization of the Press, and Jiji is a commercial news agency. Both agencies are represented by correspondents all over the world. Two agencies cater for television stations.

6) Broadcasting

a) NHK

There are two systems of broadcasting in Japan. Nihon Hoso Kyokai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) is the public system and has 1,146 TV stations, and 618 UHF stations. They have two channels, general program and educational. Radio stations amount to 170 stations with two channels too. There are 250 FM radio stations used mainly for stereo music and cultural programs.

b) Commercial broadcasters

Another system is commercial. There are 77 TV companies operating 912 stations, and 45 radio companies with 151 stations. There are three FM stations, too. National news and entertainments are supplied by three networks. One of the problems for commercial broadcasters is the beginning of UHF television. UHFs can open a new channel for the audience, but it makes competition more severe at the same time.

7) CATV problems

Community Antenna TV used to be a collective receiving system for areas remote from the transmitting stations. But the concentration of higher buildings in the metropolitan area, and some recent technical innovations, changed the character of CATV. By concentration of buildings, it became more and more difficult to get good TV images in the center of cities. On the other hand, technical progress opened possibilities of two way communications by a single coaxial cable.

Thus, in 1970, a CATV system began its business right in the middle of Tokyo to get better reception.

Another CATV system, called the Japan Network Service, began operation, in 1970, in Kofu city, more than hundred kilometers away from Tokyo. Its main purpose, for the time being, is to rebroadcast the programs of Tokyo TV channels, otherwise not accessible. It is planning, however, to broadcast an original educational program of its own, and to distribute that program to other CATV systems.

A housing estate is planning to use the same system for other purposes. It is possible to use the same coaxial cable for telemetering and even for shopping. And when you are going out for a travel, you may be able to notify night watchman or a fire station. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry is going to make an experiment of a multi-purpose CATV system in a new town near Tokyo.

8) Problems for communicators

One of them problems for the national newspapers is how to be really national and resourceful. By using computers and facsimile system, they will be able to have a tight control on contents and makeups of papers published in distant centers. At the same time, the computers can make editorial work much easier. Reporters will retrieve necessary informations quickly from a computerized morgue. Art editors and subeditors may be operating a cathode ray tube for their editorial jobs in a few years.

Computers, however, can not take the place of newspaper boys. Since most of Japanese newspapers are delivered to each subscribers every morning and evening, it is essential to work out some substitutes of the newspaper boys, whose number is decreasing rapidly.

All three national papers made demonstrations of their own systems of home facsimiles to send newspapers direct to subscribers in the Expo '70. There are business problems, however, to be solved before this system can be a reality.

Local papers have their problems, too. Railways and highways are making transportation easier with more speed. The basic structure itself of local communities is changing day after day. Moreover, local papers have to be true guardians of community life, especially as to protect citizens against pollutions and to prevent destructions of natural environments. At the same time, they have to survive against the overwhelming pressures of nationals for advertisers money.

For the broadcasters, the open university and the CATV are two big problems. The open university by television has come to be a topic since the days of student troubles. NHK is going to begin a TV university soon, on an experimental basis.

The problems of CATV are much more serious, because so many problems are involved. Not only broadcasters, but newspapers, both local and national, are deeply concerned, and public and private interests are focused on the possibilities of this revolutionary medium.

9) Teaching and research

A systematic research and education on journalism began in 1929, when a research center was opened in the Tokyo University by Professor Hideo Ono. He used to be a journalist, and studied the Zeitungswissenschaft in Germany, visiting American schools of journalism on his way. Research and teaching centered, however, on history and ethics of journalism, and extended to studies of public opinion and propaganda in later years.

In 1946, the Nihon Shimbun Kyokai set up an Educational Committee, and announced that it was prepared to donate funds for courses of journalism in Japanese universities. The Waseda University opened a course of journalism, and the Keio University established an Institute of Journalism in the same year. Several universities followed suit, either by setting up courses, or offering lectures. And in 1949, the Institute of Journalism was established in the Tokyo University. In 1971, at least twelve national universities, two public universities, and 37 private universities have departments or courses on mass communication, or offering lectures on mass communication.

The Institute of Journalism, Tokyo University, has two functions, that of research and of basic instructions on mass communication. The staff consists of seventeen regular members, and several lecturers including active members of mass media. The research activities are divided into six sections; Theory of mass communication, History of mass communication, Analysis of communication processes, Media of mass communication, Public opinion and propaganda, and Radio and television. The Institute admits fifty students every year for two-year course, and a few graduate students, both for M. A. and Ph. D. degrees.

The Japan Society for Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication held its first general meeting in 1951. The regular members in 1971 are 418, associate members 20, and 38 newspapers and broadcasters are contributing members.

Main topics taken up by this society and discussed in its general meetings were as follows;

- 1961; Freedom of the Press.
- '62; Methodology of studies on mass communication structure in Japan.
- '63; Research on broadcasting.
- '64; Newspapers in Japan.
- '65; Social responsibility of broadcasting.
- '66; The role of theory and survey research in mass communication studies.
- '67; Local politics and mass media.
International politics and mass media.
- '68; Advertising in Japan.
- '69; Critical review of journalism.
- '70; Mass media in "Information Age".
- '71; Reporting on pollution problems.

10) A review

The trends of studies on mass communications in Japan may be summarized as follows.

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The studies on journalism started when the practical necessities for the training of journalists led to historical reflections on the developments of newspapers.

When the World War II ended, and everybody in Japan is looking for new principles of the freedom of the press and its responsibilities, inquiries began on the basic concepts of the Press.

Discussions sprang up among practitioners of journalism, and soon sociologists and psychologists joined them. Theories on "mass society" were introduced from overseas, and by 1953, when television broadcasting began, all kinds of studies on mass communication were in full swing.

Everybody tried field surveys, and talked about the meaning of numbers. Pollsters were rampant, and advertisers were frantic looking for market research data.

At the end of 1950s; some of the scholars in Japan began to be critical of the methodologies imported from foreign countries. Field works concerned mainly with the effects of communication, and may not be able to lead to a successful construction of a theory applicable to the peculiarities of our society. There had to be a new theory, workable not only in our own country, but in socialist countries and developing areas as well. These were some of the reasons why the problems of methodology, and the role of theory and survey research, were discussed in 1962, and 1966.

When 1970s opened, we were recovering from the shock of the noisy discussions on "The Future". But the arrival of the so-called "Information Age" is a reality, and we have to renew our reflections on practical problems of reorganizing the basic structure of information industries. At the same time, we have to reconsider the possibilities of inventing some kind of new theory, workable all through the total processes of communication.

And to make these attempts really meaningful, we urgently need cooperation of scholars, and free exchange of ideas and informations.

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