

editorial

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce this special issue of the *Art libraries journal*, which illuminates the work of those involved in art documentation in Japan, a part of the world that we have only rarely featured in the past. Two years ago the series of disasters taking place in eastern Japan filled the news media, and the earthquake and subsequent tsunami, followed by the damage to the Fukushima nuclear power plant, are referred to by every author in this edition of the journal. More recently, Hurricane Sandy's path, which caused flooding and destruction along the east coast of America, has reminded us once again of the power of natural forces and the need to take whatever action we can to mitigate the devastation they bring.

After such catastrophes, it is reassuring to learn that normal activities resumed so quickly in art libraries and archives. This issue of the *Art libraries journal* describes the steady development of the Japan Art Documentation Society (JADS) in networking the nation's museums, libraries and archives; the progress made in digitising the country's cultural heritage; the growth of digital archives; as well as the strengths of a selection of education and museum libraries. Particularly inspirational is the account of saveMLAK, a project based on a wiki website which publicised information and requests for assistance from museums, libraries, archives, and community centres (*kōminkan*) that had suffered damage in the earthquake, and facilitated the activities of volunteers who provided assistance.

saveMLAK's work is continuing as it develops new ways of exchanging information that will be essential for salvage and rescue work in the future, and lays the foundations for an emergency organisation to handle tomorrow's disasters, natural or man-made.

I should explain two particular style decisions taken for this issue. The first is the order of Japanese names: we have chosen to use the Western order for

names of Japanese people who were active from the start of the Meiji period (1868-1912), to make it easier for non-Japanese readers to follow up authors. For people active before Meiji, however, the Japanese order of family name followed by personal name has been retained. And secondly, while macrons are used in names of places and people as required to indicate correct Japanese pronunciation (a lengthened vowel), they have not been used for the names of the well-known cities of Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.

This issue on Japan was a twinkle in the Editor's eye even before the events of 2011, and it has given me great satisfaction to bring it into being. But it is due to the generosity and dedication of many people that it sees the light of day. I would like to thank the editorial board of JADS, and our generous sponsors, My Book Service Inc., whose contribution has made possible the translation of the original Japanese papers, and the Foundation for Cultural Heritage and Art Research, whose funding has also helped us achieve publication. Thanks too to Tamako Kitaoka, who has expertly managed the flow of articles – first in Japanese and then in English – and kindly fielded innumerable queries.

And I am of course most grateful to all the contributors to this issue, and to our translator Dr. Lucy North, without whose language skills and editorial perseverance this issue would simply not have been possible and to Asuka McKenna, ARLIS/UK & Ireland member, for her contribution as Lucy's 'back-stop'.

This is my last issue as Editor of the *Art libraries journal*. I am delighted to hand over to the very able team led by Erica Foden-Lenahan. I wish her as much enjoyment as I have derived from producing the journal over the last fifteen years.

Gillian Varley
Editor, *Art libraries journal*