

National Diet Library Data for Open Knowledge and Community Empowerment

Presentation

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Abstract

In 2008, the National Diet Library (NDL) established its “Policy of providing databases created by the National Diet Library” with the intention that the data created and provided on the Internet by the NDL would be easily used by third parties. The policy states that any third party can freely search and view the content, copy search results or, provided it is for non-profit purposes, use an API or other means to acquire NDL data automatically. Since then, the NDL has published APIs for many of its major systems, including NDL Search, Web NDL Authorities, and the Great East Japan Earthquake Archive. In keeping with the international trend toward the creation of a Semantic Web, these systems publish bibliographic and authority data as Linked Data in RDF/XML, RDF/Turtle, and JSON-LD formats. This means that the URI to an individual data record will remain unchanged irrespective of changes to server systems, thereby providing persistence for third-party applications. In other words, Linked Data from the NDL is carefully designed to be compliant with a wide variety of implementations on the web by third parties.

Usage of this Linked Data did not exhibit significant growth, however, until the NDL took specific steps to promote its use. We conducted a series of interviews with citizen coders and developers and identified two problems. First, the terms of use for this data are not open enough to encourage diverse reuse. Second, since individual coders were generally unfamiliar with bibliographic and authority data, the provider of this data was required to undertake assiduous outreach activities. The NDL addressed these challenges within the framework of its “Policy of providing databases created by the National Diet Library” by providing bulk download of open datasets that can be used without restriction for either profit or non-profit purposes as well as by taking part in public events related to open data and civic technology, which provided increased opportunities for introducing NDL data in communities throughout Japan. To this end, the NDL has partnered with two of the major open data competitions in Japan: the Linked Open Data Challenge Japan and Urban Data Challenge. The NDL also began to organize ideathons and hackathons to promote its data and services. In addition to these hands-on events, the NDL also hosted a low-key lecture series in 2016 and 2017, called The NDL Digital Library Café, which was open to anyone with an interest in this subject, regardless of the level of their ICT skills.

These outreach activities resulted many interesting and potentially useful initiatives, such as Linked Web NDL Authorities, Visualization of Publishing Trends in Japan from 1950 to 2017, How Active are Our Representatives?, and A Map of 19th Century Villages in the Greater Tokyo Area.

This presentation is a follow-up of our poster on Linked Open Data presented at the DCMI annual conference in 2015. In this year’s presentation, I would like to demonstrate the NDL’s efforts and achievements during the past three years in promoting the use of our data, while showcasing some of the best civic-driven applications and visualizations of library data.

References

National Diet Library. Use and Connect: How to link to NDL LOD. Retrieved August 10, 2018, from <http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/dlib/standards/lod/usecase.html>