

Recommendation

Materials, Records, and Memories related to the COVID-19 Pandemic : How to Preserve and Hand down them to Future Generations



26 September 2023

Science Council of Japan

This recommendation is largely the outcome of the deliberations of the Subcommittee on Preservation, Management and Public Access to Historical Materials of the History Committee of the Science Council of Japan, and is issued under the auspices of the Science Council of Japan.

Subcommittee on Preservation, Management and Public Access to Historical Materials of the History Committee

Chair	WAKAO Masaki	(Section I Council Member)	Professor, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University Executive Director, Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities
Vice-chair	OTOMO Kazuo	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, National Institute of Japanese Literature, Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities
Secretary	OKUMURA Hiroshi	(Associate Member)	Executive Vice President, Kobe University / Professor, Faculty of Letters and Graduate School of Humanities, Kobe University
Secretary	YANAGIHARA Toshiaki	(Designated Associate Member)	Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University
	KURITA Yoshiko	(Section I Council Member)	Professor, Graduate School of Humanities, Chiba University
	SANO Masahiro	(Section I Council Member)	Professor, School of Business Administration, Meiji University
	HAGA Mitsuru	(Section I Council Member)	Professor, Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, Tohoku University
	IIJIMA Wataru	(Associate Member)	Professor, College of Literature, Aoyama Gakuin University
	ISHI Hitonari	(Associate Member)	Professor, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University
	OHASHI Yukihiro	(Associate Member)	Professor, Faculty of Education and Integrated Arts and Sciences, Waseda University
	OSA Shizue	(Associate Member)	Professor, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University
	KURAKAZU Masae	(Associate Member)	Professor, College of Bioresource Sciences, Nihon University
	KURUSHIMA Noriko	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo / Professor, Cross-Cultural and Japanese Studies, Kanagawa University

TAKANO Toshihiko	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, Gakushuin University
---------------------	-----------------------	---

The following members have contributed to this Recommendation.

MOJI Kazuhiko	Dean of School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences
SAOTOME Kenji	Associate Professor, Osaka International University
NAKAZAWA Minato	Professor, Graduate School of Health Sciences, Kobe University
SEKI Naomi	Chief of Infection Control Section, Ota-ku Public Health Center, Tokyo / Doctor
GOTO Makoto	Associate Professor, National Museum of Japanese History, Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities
HASHIMOTO Yuta	Associate Professor, National Museum of Japanese History, Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities
YOSHIDA Masateru	Director, Public Records Management Division, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office
SUGANUMA Daiki	Assistant Director, Public Records Management Division, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office
KOMIYAMA Toshikazu	Senior Archivist National Archives of Japan
ICHIKAWA Tomoo	Associate Professor, Okinawa International University
INOUE Hiroki	Lecture Tokyo Medical University
ISHI Masahiro	Principal, Yotsuya Elementary School, Tokyo
YOSHIDA Mitsuo	Associate Professor, Institute of Business Sciences, University of Tsukuba
TAKIGAWA Yuki	Associate Professor, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, the University of Tokyo
ISO Hiroyasu	Section II Council Member, Chair, Subcommittee for Public Health Science, the Science Council of Japan Director of Institute for Global Health Policy Research, Bureau of International Health Cooperation,

TAKAKURA Hiroki	National Center for Global Health and Medicine, Tokyo Professor, National Institute of Informatics, Research Organization of Information and Systems/Committee Member, Second-Department Subcommittee for a national program proposal to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases, the Science Council of Japan
AKIBA Suminori	Chair, Second-Department Subcommittee for a national program proposal to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases, the Science Council of Japan/ Special appointed professor, Hirosaki University/Professor Emeritus, Kagoshima University
NAKAGAWA Shinichi	Head, Research Institute of Information Communication Medicine/ Committee Member, Second-Department Subcommittee for a national program proposal to prevent and control large-scale infectious diseases, the Science Council of Japan
MOCHIDA Makoto	Curator, Historical Museum of Urahoro, Hokkaido
KUDO Kohei	Associate Professor, National Museum of Japanese History, Inter-University Research Institute Corporation National Institutes for the Humanities
OKUBO Noriko	Section I Council Member, Professor, Graduate School of Law and Politics, Osaka University Committee Member, Committee on Law, the Science Council of Japan
KAWASHIMA Shiro	Section I Council Member, Professor, Faculty of Law, Doshisha University Vice-Chair, Committee on Law, the Science Council of Japan
MITSUNARI Kenji	Section I Council Member, Professor Emeritus, Osaka University Committee Member,

OTAKE Fumio

Committee on Law, the Science
Council of Japan
Section I Council Member,
Distinguished Professor, Center for
Infectious Disease Education and
Research, Osaka University
Council Member, Council for
Promotion of Countermeasures
against Influenza Pandemic,
Cabinet Secretariat

Staff members responsible for preparation of Advisory Report.

Secretariat	MASUKO Noriyoshi	Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (until April 2023)
	NEGORO Kyoko	Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (from May 2023)
	YAMADA Hiroshi	Deputy Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (until March 2023)
	WAKAO Kimiaki	Deputy Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (from April 2023)
	SAKUMA Misato	Unit Chief, Division for Scientific Affairs I

This English version is a translation of the original written in Japanese.

Executive Summary

1 Background

The pandemic of the COVID-19 has swept the world since 2020 and now how to converge it is becoming clearer. The world, including Japan, is simultaneously seeking to establish a resilient society against emerging infectious disease threats while resuming activities necessary for social life, through coexistence with the COVID-19. To this end, it is necessary to establish new principles and institutions, and to aggregate knowledge from diverse academic disciplines beyond medicine and public health.

The Science Council of Japan is a domestically and internationally representative body of Japanese scientists that brings together scientists from various academic disciplines. Based on the first part (Humanities and Social sciences), the second part (Life Sciences), and the third part (Science and Engineering), it is a multidisciplinary organization that can make an academic contribution to building a resilient society against infectious diseases by aggregating knowledge for coexistence with infectious diseases. The foundation of this organization is to accurately understand the overall picture of the COVID-19 Pandemic from 2020 to the present. To this end, it is required to establish a system to appropriately preserve and hand down the various materials, records, and memories created and accumulated in the course of the pandemic. Furthermore, the results must also be opened to and shared with the entire nation. Based on the recognition mentioned above, the Science Council of Japan initiated discussions on "what, who, and how to preserve" the materials, records, and memories related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, mainly by the Subcommittee on Preservation, Management, and Public Access to Historical Materials of the Committee on History, Part I, whose academic approach is to preserve materials, records, and memories.

2 Current Status and Issues

It is often understood that the materials, records, and memories related to the COVID-19 Pandemic subject to this proposal are stored in medical institutions that took charge of countermeasures against infectious disease. Certainly, they should be preserved and handed down, and it is necessary to establish a system for this purpose. In fact, discussions at the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, the Cabinet Office, and other councils have led to the establishment of a system to preserve medical and public health data. While paying attention to such data, this proposal aims to point out the importance of preserving and handing down various materials, records, and memories accumulated in society, regions, and individuals from public institutions such as the national government and local governments, which have not taken up full-scale discussions so far, and to propose ways to do so.

More than three years have already passed since the outbreak of The COVID-19 Pandemic from 2020. The materials, records, and memories are enormous, as all people living on the earth were involved. Of course, it is impossible to preserve and handing down all these materials, but if no action is taken for them, many materials, records, and memories would be discarded and would result in only a few being preserved and handed down. In order to avoid such a situation, we must discuss "what, who, and how to preserve" in accordance with a clear strategy, and immediately start working on it.

3 Recommendations

(1) Documents, Records, and Memories Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In accordance with national policy, **each government agency** is required to transfer its official documents to the National Archives of Japan and other archives for permanent preservation. In light of the importance of the designation of the COVID-19 Pandemic as a "Historical Emergency," we strongly request that such materials, records, and memories be appropriately preserved and handed down, including expansion of the scope of materials and records to be transferred.

Based on the April 2023 "Notice" by the Director of the Public Records Management Division, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office, local governments should take immediate measures to transfer documents related to "historical emergencies" in local governments to local archives, etc., for permanent preservation, in accordance with the efforts by the national government. In addition, it is an important task to digitally archive the activities of local governments, etc., so that they can be preserved, handed down, and widely used by citizens, and to compile a collection of records and materials on the pandemic of the new coronavirus (tentative name: "Record of the Pandemic and Its Countermeasures (Pandemic and Countermeasures)").

It is more unlikely to be preserved for the documents and records of **public health centers** which were at the forefront of countermeasures during the pandemic of the new coronavirus, because some public health centers are under jurisdiction of multiple local governments, which makes unclear where the responsibility for their preservation lies. The "Notice" of April 2023 by the Director of the Public Records Management Division, Minister's Secretariat, Cabinet Office stated that "documents should be properly prepared, managed, and preserved after clarifying the attribution of responsibility for document management," and requested that the materials and records of health centers be preserved. It is also necessary to start discussions on the public health centers under jurisdiction of multiple local government as to which local government will manage their documents.

Organizations and groups including companies, schools, media, universities and academic societies, museums etc. should also establish a system to preserve and hand down materials, records, and memories that show how they respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The materials, records, and memories accumulated by **the Science Council of Japan** must also be properly preserved. In addition, it is expected that the Science Council of Japan serves as a platform for collecting information for which related academic societies organized and verified the measures taken.

(2) To record "society": Establishment of "Archives of Materials Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic" (tentative name)

As a system for preserving and handing down materials, records, and memories, we propose establishment of a digitized "Archives of Materials Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic" (tentative name). Referring to the "Hinagiku: Archive of the Great East Japan Earthquake" of the National Diet Library, we propose to build a cloud-based digital platform for the COVID-19 Pandemic, digitize materials, etc., arrange them chronologically, add geographical information to them, and operate them as a spatiotemporal database. The database should be equipped with the function to aggregate personal memories with consideration for personal information, and its membership should be expanded quantitatively while making it more clear.

While it is an important issue to consider which organization will operate the "Archives of Materials Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic" (tentative name) in the

future, it could be one option to establish such organization in National Institute of Health Risk Management to be newly established (established by merging NIID (National Institute of Infectious Diseases) and NCGM (National Center for Global Health and Medicine), which have been taking countermeasures against new coronavirus).

(3) To preserve "objects": Expanding museum functions

Regarding the preservation of materials, it is not enough to preserve only digitized data. It is also necessary to preserve various objects that record social phenomena caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic which cannot be understood by digital data alone, and through their display, to deepen understanding of infectious diseases and to raise awareness to preserve materials, records, and memories widely. The role of museums is particularly important. The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the fact that the control of infectious diseases is a social issue that goes beyond medical care and public health. It is important for museums to preserve objects as materials accumulated over the COVID-19 Pandemic, exhibit them, return them to society, and contribute to preserving and handing down the records, materials, and memories, and there is an urgent need to expand their functions. Even if it is difficult in the short term to establish a new facility, we propose that the existing RIT (The Research Institute of Tuberculosis) and JATA (Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Association) be utilized to preserve and hand down materials, records, and memories.