



Photo: Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library

One of Japan’s Largest Manga Libraries Operated by a University in Central Tokyo

A dedicated manga library operated by a university sits in a district of Chiyoda City, central Tokyo. It boasts a comprehensive collection of manga volumes and valuable resources for researching Japanese manga, with a collection numbering approximately 410,000, one of the largest in the country. We spoke with a member of the library’s staff about its features.

(Text: TANAKA Nozomi)

In a corner of Meiji University’s Surugadai Campus¹ in Chiyoda City, Tokyo, is the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library operated by the university. The current library had two predecessor facilities. In October 2009, the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library, housing a collection of a manga critic, was opened at the Surugadai Campus. In March 2021, the Contemporary Manga Library, previously located elsewhere, was relocated to the same site, marking the start of integrated operation, which con-

tinues to this day.

In June 2022, Prime Minister Kishida visited the library, inspecting the facilities. Following his visit, a gathering with prominent Japanese manga artists, including CHIBA Tetsuya², SATONAKA Machiko (see “Originality of Japanese Manga Creation Fascinates the World”), and HIROKANE Kenshi³, was held. The event was marked by lively conversations on a variety of topics, according to Serena STOKES from the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library.



Photos: Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library

Manga magazines are wrapped in plastic bags, preserving them in excellent condition.



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View of the reading room, where visitors can read the manga they want.

She explains the background of the library's establishment. "NAIKI Toshio⁴, a former rental bookstore owner, established Japan's first dedicated manga library, the Contemporary Manga Library, in 1978. In 2009, he donated his collection to Meiji University, leading to the launch of the Contemporary Manga Library in 2010." She added, "Currently, the library boasts approximately 270,000 volumes. Meanwhile, the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library established at Meiji University's Surugadai Campus, houses a collection of 140,000 volumes donated by YONEZAWA Yoshihiro, a manga critic and one of the founders of Comic Market (Comiket) (see "Comic Market, The World's Largest *Doujinshi* Convention"). These two libraries were combined to form the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library, which was established in March 2021 as a specialized manga library with a total collection of around 410,000 volumes."

The collection includes not only manga volumes and manga magazines but also valuable rental manga⁵ from the 1950s to 1960s, collected by NAIKI over a span of 50 years. In addition, YONEZAWA's collection features rare materials such as fanzines (*doujinshi*), magazines on social trends, and anime magazines, which are also available for viewing.

"Although the library is small in terms of its building, the number of manga volumes it holds is unparalleled. We regularly host exhibitions of original artwork and sketches by renowned manga artists. We receive many requests from international visitors for access to Japanese manga magazines and fanzines that are difficult to find in their home countries, as well as requests for copies of these materials. Some even read up to 50 fanzines in a single visit. The number of group tours from foreign schools is also increasing. One international user described our collection as being 'like

a wonderland of manga,' due to our extensive range from widely circulated magazines to rare and hard-to-find manga, which has left a lasting impression on me," says STOKES, who was born and raised in Japan.

As part of Meiji University's Tokyo International Manga Library project, which aims to become one of the largest archives for manga, anime, and games in the world, this library serves as the foundational facility. "We aspire to be a key institution for the scholarly exploration and cultural utilization of Japan's famous subcultures," comments STOKES.

This valuable specialized library in the heart of the city attracts manga enthusiasts from both Japan and abroad.

You can spend your time exploring the exhibitions at a relaxed pace or browsing materials on your favorite authors and genres. We encourage you to visit and immerse yourself in the world of manga. **■**



Above: Special exhibitions are held approximately three times a year on the first floor of the library.

Below: The library holds many valuable materials and operates as a closed-stack library where items must be requested for viewing. These boxes are packed tightly with materials.

1. Located in the northern part of Chiyoda City, near the center of Tokyo.
2. Born in 1939, CHIBA Tetsuya is a Japanese manga artist with notable works including *Ashita no Joe* (original story by TAKAMORI Asao), *Harris no Kaze*, and *Ashita Tenki ni Naare*.
3. Born in 1947, HIROKANE Kenshi transitioned from a company job to become a manga artist. His notable works include the *Kosaku Shima* series and *Ningen Kosaten*.
4. NAIKI Toshio was born in 1937 and died in 2012. At the age of 18, he started a rental bookstore. In 1978, he established the Contemporary Manga Library, dedicating his personal wealth to collecting manga with the philosophy to preserve all types of manga semi-permanently. In 2009, he donated his collection to Meiji University, leading to the opening of the Contemporary Manga Library in 2010. The library is now known as the Yoshihiro Yonezawa Memorial Library of Manga and Subcultures/Contemporary Manga Library.
5. Refers to the books and magazines lent by rental bookstores. Around the 1950s, there was a boom in rental manga, and rental-specific manga were also published. At its peak, there were approximately 30,000 rental bookstores across Japan. (While rental bookstores still exist online in Japan, physical stores have almost disappeared.)