

An overview of publications import and retail business market in Japan, 2009, a brief summary

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It is now the time to look at and analyze the 2009-2010 foreign publications import market because fiscal year 2009 for the government and most private industry ended on March 31st.

Also note that publications defined here covers not only books and periodicals but also those in digital contents traded in licensing transactions. Also library software products having links with those digital contents are included.

In the first place, you need to note that there is no comprehensive and reliable data and statistics of imports and retails of imported publications. The figure quoted here is not more than a kind of estimate gathered from sources from importers and distributors engaged in this industry. Therefore, on a very rough estimate, the total volume of retail sales are estimated to be around 80 billion Yen or little more of which periodical sales including e-contents is estimated to be 75% of the total. And about 10% of the total book sales is supposed to be English language text books. Nevertheless, we hope this is the first kind of our market assessment and analysis which we hope will help publishers and their intermediaries to plan their marketing programs for the year of 2010.

A global recession hit the world economy which also hit the Japanese economy. Furthermore, the current yen appreciation has made industries cut down their research budget substantially.

The strong yen, however, helps libraries to keep the present title holdings at governmental and educational libraries. In most major libraries of scientific and medical research and education, the shift from print subscriptions to online subscriptions has almost been completed. Also, to reduce their costs further, consortia purchasing programs are popular among national and private university libraries.

In general, during the last quarter of our government fiscal year which ended this March, distributors have contacted libraries to find if they have their leftover budgets due to appreciation of yen with which they achieved sales of one-off items such as books and online archive products.

And with the start of the new Hatoyama regime, which has replaced Liberal Democratic Party holding their regime for 50 years, active measures are being taken to cut off unnecessary spending and to trim budgets during the fiscal year of 2010 budget plan, including national educational and scientific research activities. We are hoping the government spending for fiscal year 2010 for research and education will remain the same level as that of 2009.

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