

2001 JETAA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Thursday, Nov. 1, to Saturday, Nov. 3
Matthew Gillam

Thursday, November 1

Arrived in London. With Otani-san, met with staff of CLAIR London and representatives from CLAIR Tokyo. Attended Welcome Reception, hosted by Ambassador Orita at the Japanese Embassy.

Friday, November 2

Friday was devoted to individual chapter issues.

Opening speakers included Professor Bownas, who spoke on his involvement with Japan and the JET Program, Ms. Kia Cheleen, who spoke on what she thought alumni should be doing to publicize and support the JET Program, and Ms. Sophie Branscombe, Administrative Director of the Japan 2001 celebration, who encouraged alumni to make good use of their experiences in the program and, by doing so, to promote it further.

This was followed by a breakout session to introduce chapter activities. The delegates split into three groups, to make the session more manageable.

After lunch, Otani-san and I split up to attend the afternoon workshops. I sat in on Developing Communications, Promoting the JET Program, and Smaller Chapter Issues. Discussion in the session on Developing Communications mainly concerned use of the Internet and email, and ideas on putting together newsletters. Promoting the JET Program was a forum for participants to exchange ideas specifically on what their chapters had been doing to locate and attract potential recruits for the JET Program. These included things like wine and cheese parties, t-shirts and happi coats, promoting the study of Japanese language and culture, and looking at job forums and other venues to target people thinking of a career change. Discussion of Smaller Chapter Issues centered around four main topics for the smaller chapters: Comparing themselves to larger chapters; finding members; working with a small number of members, often scattered over a large geographical area; and funding.

We attended the Welcome Reception hosted by CLAIR in the evening. I had a chance to talk with Eric, Sam, Libby, and Victor Bonacci about how we would like to proceed on the database update proposal and how to approach the next day's session on database review. I think this proved very helpful, given how intense the debate was on Saturday regarding what we all thought was a simple North American initiative to offer advice to CLAIR on its database project.

Saturday, November 3

Saturday was devoted to JETAA International.

The day started with speeches by Mr. Ueda, from CLAIR Tokyo, who spoke twice; once on CLAIR's support for JETAA activities, and the second time on the need for "clearer positioning of conferences." In between his talks we heard from Ms. Kato, who discussed MOFA support for JETAA and very clearly laid out the limits of funding for any future international conferences. She emphasized that MOFA sees its primary focus of support going to efforts to fund publicity and recruitment for the JET Program, and to efforts to introduce Japanese language and culture to local communities around the world. After this, Ms. Paula Kelly spoke about her perspective on the bylaw debate and the significance of the 1999 bylaws, positioning

JETAAi between the Japanese government and chapters as a representative body and support resource, the difficulties of ensuring reliable communications in an all-volunteer organization, and on the need to reexamine how conferences are structured and scheduled.

The rest of the morning was spent in breakout sessions to brainstorm about alternative ways to set up conferences and promote comprehensive dissemination of information. The nine groups then reported back on what they had discussed regarding these topics. There was a long list of both very general and very specific suggestions on how to improve information dissemination and conference activities.

Regional sessions took place after lunch. I helped out with the Country Representative elections for the U.S. Tracy Suzuki of US 12 / Portland and So-Young Kang of US 2 / New York were elected the new Country Reps for the coming year. US delegates also discussed things like using standardized email addresses and listserves for better communication.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in the parliamentary session for adopting bylaw amendments and electing new officers for JETAAi. The first amendment adopted states:

In the case where a country has more than one Country Representative, Country Chapters will self determine a National method of establishing a representational district or population.

The second amendment adopted states:

In the event that there is no Conference on a given year, elections shall still be held via email. Elections for Executive Committee members...shall be held four weeks prior to elections for Executive Officers.

Discussion then moved on to the effort to consolidate the two existing sets of bylaws. Opinions were split between those people who were obviously upset by finding out about the 1989 bylaws during the debate over the proposed JETAAi bylaws in Atlanta in 1998, and those people who saw this as a practical matter to be dealt with and moved beyond. There is obviously still quite a bit of misunderstanding regarding the original 1989 set of rules and regulations. A sub-committee was formed to investigate the matter of bylaw revision and amalgamation and report back in six months. It is chaired by Bill Higgins.

After this, Brazil was formally recognized as a new chapter by JETAAi. Then a group was formed to study how best to set up new chapters and grant them formal recognition, since there are still 27 countries that don't have any representation in JETAAi.

Next, there was a very heated discussion regarding the initiative that came out of the North American Workshop to review the databases used by CLAIR Tokyo and the various North American chapters and perhaps find a way to allow easier sharing of information. European countries especially were concerned that any new system would violate strict, new EU laws pertaining to protection of privacy. A sub-committee, chaired by Eric Nyhus, was formed to look into the feasibility of an international database.

Finally, a funding sub-committee was formed, chaired by So-Young Kang.

After this, the JETAAi Executive Officers stepped down and elections were conducted for new ones. Paula Kelly of Ireland is the new Chair. Antony Ridders of Australia is the new Vice-chair. Julian Paisey of the UK is Treasurer. So-Young Kang is Secretary.

There were no volunteers for hosting next year's conference.

Sunday, November 4

I met briefly with Libby Wolfensperger at 8:00am to touch base and wrap up our discussions over the course of the conference. I especially wanted to keep in touch, since she is on the bylaw sub-committee with Bill Higgins. I also had a chance to meet Ms. Kato, from MOFA, at this time, since I had not had the opportunity to speak with her during the other events.