

Abstract to the session “Archives, Accountability, and Democracy in the Digital Age”

Record Management and Organizational Culture in Japanese Central and Local Governments

Gentaro MIZUGAKI

Associate Professor

Dept. Sociology, Nara Women's University

genta@cc.nara-wu.ac.jp

The information disclosure and record management of the central and local governments in Japan, its political and social background, and its mutual influence on the organizational culture are discussed in this report.

Record and information management of governmental or corporative activities is fundamental for democratic or ownership governance, while it causes some dilemma between governance and discretion for efficiency. In Japan, which attained its catch-up modernization with continental-style powerful bureaucracies, efficient mobilization of public resources for national development had often taken priority over legitimate governance. Legislation of information disclosure started from local governments in the late 1980's, followed by the central government in 1999: Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs Act (No. 42 of 1999). Two topics will be discussed:

First, in the background where the Act was approved was a rise of social concern to democratization by accountability. Purpose of the record management has changed from internal management like streamlining paperwork to the adducing evidence accountability: "Paradigm shift of the record management." How and why did such a trend occur in the 1990's?

Secondly, one of the characteristics of the Act is that it targets not only disclosure of the consequences of policy making process but disclosure of the process itself. This leads to consistent management of information flow from generating, collecting, arranging, preserving through abandoning information. Also it leads to intervention on and resistance from the established decision making styles of each organization. Mutual influence and some problems between the legislation of information disclosure and conventional organizational culture are examined.