Collection, Production, and Utilization of Video Materials at the National Museum of Japanese History: The Current State and Challenges as well as Future Prospects

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The National Museum of Japanese History (Rekihaku) has collected 5,378 video materials. When 3,775 master tapes and copies of audio-visual materials for folklore study films are added to the aforementioned videos, there are 9,153 volumes of footage archives at the Rekihaku.

The Rekihaku began collecting audio-visual materials before the completion of the construction, when it was the preparation office. At first, the Rekihaku started gathering by buying mainly folklore-related videos. After the construction was completed, it continued purchase to expand its collections but failed to make them unique to the museum. After its opening, it shifted the emphasis to production, making Folk Culture Asset Film Materials and Folklore Study Films. These were the Rekihaku’s original video production projects, each of which produced a unique collection of audio-visual materials. Despite the value, however, they are not frequently used, so the improvement in this point is the task ahead.

The Rekihaku also uses a variety of videos for its exhibition. They were compiled in a video box, enabling visitors to watch a set of tapes in a single sitting. After the renovation of permanent exhibition rooms starting with Gallery 3 in 2008, however, the renovated or reconstructed rooms were disconnected from the video box system and stopped offering the video box service. The museum has reached the point when it needs to create a new system to provide visitors with an integrated display of audio-visual exhibits.

Key words: Video materials, academic videos, video exhibits, museum, film folklore