Multimedia Content for a Special Exhibition
“Musical Instruments Tell Stories”

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This article explains the multimedia content developed for the special exhibition “Musical instruments Tell Stories” held by the National Museum of Japanese History (also known as Rekihaku) in summer 2012. Focusing on five contents incorporated in the exhibition, this article describes what information it has and how it is related to the exhibition. Moreover, with regard to the experimental attempt at the exhibition to distribute information content to visitors’ mobile devices with Wi-Fi function such as smartphones and tablets, this article reports the tendency of the visitors who used this service based on the questionnaire answers from visitors and the access log to the content.

The questionnaire survey of visitors discovers the following three points: young women are particularly interested in mobile devices; there are more visitors than expected who cannot set up Wi-Fi connection; and visitors can access the content without any problems once they can set up Wi-Fi. Moreover, the analysis of WWW access log turns out to be more effective for evaluation of the design of a user interface, such as whether or not it enables preferential access to important content, than evaluation of visitors’ understanding of the content.

The technology that enables visitors to use their own mobile terminal devices to view exhibition information can be useful, especially for small and mid-sized museums with relatively fewer human and financial resources. A challenge ahead is to develop and put to practical use a simple auto-generation tool for Web content, such as audio and visual guides with buttons to call up contents.

Key words: museum information service, multimedia content, Japanese court music (gagaku), Japanese ancient musical instruments, visitors’ Wi-Fi mobile devices, smartphones, tablet PCs