

## Project Report

*Information about recent project activities*

### We Created Original Books!: Report on the Camp Workshop Creating Picture Books

In Thailand, Nomad International has been conducting a "Story Telling Project" as a way to promote reading activity. This project was for children to create their own stories and illustrations and ultimately put together original picture books. From November 29 to December 1, 2004, thirty-six students from five schools in the province of Phitsanulok participated in a three-day camp workshop and created five new picture books. The Japanese staff also joined the workshop and observed the achievement of this project. Here is the report of how the camp workshop went and about the voices of the children.

#### Seeing the Sea for the First Time and Newly-Met Friends

The children who joined the camp workshop this time were from elementary schools in the province of Phitsanulok, aged from ten to twelve years old. They took a bus for eight hours to the southern coastal city of Hua Hin where the workshop was held. Children living in the farming areas in Thailand rarely have the chance to make school trips to distant places like Japanese students do before graduation, or to take excursions with their families, so the workshop gave them a great opportunity to know about the different world outside of their community.

Most of the children in the workshop saw the sea for the first time in their lives and jumped into the sea with their clothes on. Some tasted the seawater and grimaced at how salty it was. Others were surprised by the sand beneath their feet being swept away with the tide. All these first time experiences at the sea must have left enduring memories in the minds of the children. It was also an impressive experience for them to collaborate with other students from different schools, although they sometimes faced difficulties in working with friends they had just met. Some students were shy in the beginning, but later on they made friends with other participants through the activities such as games and sing-alongs, and began to express themselves well.

#### Constructing Stories Using Their Creativity

On the first night at the camp, the participants immediately started to work on the stories. Everyone picked up books in the meeting room and wrote down the scenes, events and words that they thought impressive. Then, they separated into groups of six to eight and introduced to the others what they had put down. Next, they chose the words and phrases that would be key to the story-making (for example, words that express the character's personality and emotion) and, inspired by those words, created their own stories, stretching their imagination and creativity. This process took about 30 minutes for each group. The children enthusiastically discussed their ideas and made a lot of new stories at once.

#### Creating Illustrations in Various Ways

After making the stories, the students created the illustrations to express each scene. At the previous workshop, the participants drew sketches, scanned them into the computer and colored them using the graphic software. This time, in addition to this method, the students tried two other ways to make illustrations. One way to create characters was to use play dough, and other way was to use balloons filled with

#### *The Voice of the Children*

Let us introduce the comments from the children who participated in the camp workshop.

The camp workshop was fun and helpful. I made a lot of new friends. I felt pleased with myself when I first created the book. (boy, 10 yrs old)

I was happy and so excited to see the sea for the first time. I am going to bring some seashells and seawater for my mom. (girl, 12 yrs old)

I would never have dreamed that I could see the sea in my life. I was so happy and almost cried. I had fun swimming with my new friends. I will bring back the balloon doll that I made at this workshop for my teacher. (girl, 12 yrs old)

Making stories, handicrafts and editing the work using computer are valuable activities that the children can't experience through their daily lives. Their achievements in the shape of the picture books and their memories will be unforgettable.

flour. In either way, the children put those dolls in front of scenes made of colored drawing paper and took pictures, and then scanned them into the computer for editing. Using these methods, the children who were not so good at drawing could enjoy creating illustrations together with other students. Everyone turned white with flour and proudly showed the dolls they created to the staff.

Each group conducted a presentation to introduce their own books on the last day of the workshop. It was impressive that the children eagerly listened to each story they had created, and they all looked delighted. Each of them seemed to have little more confidence after completing one big project.

These books made through the workshop will be distributed to all twenty schools participating in the library project. It will be inspiring for other students to read the books that their friends created.

Ms. Rusudan Pirveli, a specialist in video and our local collaborator in Georgia, joined this camp workshop and recorded how the children put together their books. She was also inspired and found out some great ideas for the library project back in Georgia. We are planning to introduce this story telling project using the recorded material and to expand international exchanges among

## From the Project Site

*Report on the social and educational situations  
of the regions with which we cooperate*

### Secondhand Bookstores in Tbilisi

(Mr. Yasuhiro Kojima, who specializes in the Georgian language and studied in the University of Tbilisi, contributed an essay about how books were treated in Georgia. He has also provided lots of useful information on his personal website <http://www006.upp.so-net.ne.jp/koji/>)

Last year, a neat bookstore emerged on the main street of Tbilisi. It was kind of a surprise for the people in Tbilisi that a bookstore selling only new books had opened. Of course, there used to be some bookstores selling new titles in the Soviet era. But after the independence of Georgia and the subsequent economic collapse, the new publication itself died out for a while and the bookstores had to sell secondhand books for living. When I was studying in Tbilisi in the year of 2001, there were only about five secondhand bookstores also selling a few new titles in the center of Tbilisi and it was a pleasant and practical custom of mine to look around these stores in turn when I had time.

Quite a lot of new secondhand books would pile up if I didn't visit there for a while because many people had to sell part of their collections to make ends meet. From a Japanese viewpoint, the price of the books was very inexpensive and I just couldn't help buying a whole lot of those secondhand books. But at the same time, I felt a little uneasy about it somehow.

During the Soviet Union era, many books were constantly published in Georgia. The books I bought mostly fell into a narrow range of categories but I couldn't buy up all the books in which I was interested. Georgian people love to read books. When I visited the Georgian families, I was surprised to see a tremendous number of books well arranged in bookcases all over the wall. Many foreign literary works are translated into Georgian; it is another good example of how much they love reading. For many Georgian people, the most known Japanese are Akutagawa and Kobo Abe because their novels were translated into Russian and then into the Georgian languages.

Anyway, some of the books I bought in Tbilisi are now in my apartment in Tokyo, much smaller than a typical living space in Georgia. The biggest trouble so far is the space needed to store these books. Although the space is limited, these books were sold for an unavoidable reason and sent far away to Japan so I must treat them nicely. And that's why I am surrounded by huge numbers of books.

## From the Office

*Information from the executive office*

### Location for Our Activities Report Session

As we mentioned in the previous issue, our activities report session will be held in February. We will report on the library projects and how the site visits and surveys went in Thailand and Georgia.

Date: Wednesday, February 23. 19:00-21:00

Location: Waseda Hoshien Center

### The Picture Books Introduced at Kurashiki Sakuyo University

Know More About Thailand! Mai-pen-rai, an exhibition about Thailand was held in the library of Kurashiki Sakuyo University in November, and the college students introduced and sold the picture books created by the Thai children we had supported. They also helped fundraise for our library project. We appreciate their great support.

### Let's send 1000 books to Thai Kids

This year's library project in Thailand is to send about 1000 books to 11 schools which are the base of the project. However, because of lack of the budget, it has been difficult to carry on our project. Many children are waiting for new books. We do need your support not to take children's reading habit down.

We gladly accept donations from units of 1,000 yen. (We can send four books to kids with 1000 yen.)

### The Voice of a Volunteer

Let us introduce the voice of a volunteer lending a hand in our office. "The colorful picture books created by the children always give me a fresh surprise. I would like to help the kids in Thailand to be able to read more picture books and develop their intellectual curiosity." (Ms. Rina Takahashi, Senior in college)

The support from the volunteers is very helpful for us. We thank all of them for their cooperation.

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Notes from the Staff

- I was moved over and over again by the warm-hearted people when I spent about a month for the survey in Thailand. I would like to report my impression as much as possible in this newsletter. (Fukatsu)
- Great support from many people enabled our fulfilling activities this year. I will work hard again next year for the sake of the continuing growth of Nomad and for myself. (Tajima)
- I tried some new things in Nomad this year. I'm looking forward to make use of this experience next year. We wish you all a wonderful new year. (Ito)

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