

Jim Kahny
(1990~2002)
LIOJ Director: 1996~2002

Before becoming director in 1996, I worked with four previous directors and two office managers at LIOJ, and held the positions of Community Program teacher, Community Program supervisor, Junior High (Team Teaching) Program supervisor, and Special Programs coordinator. My essay will focus on LIOJ from 1996 to the present, though written from a longer perspective.

LIOJ's human resources have not changed much over the past six years. Currently, we have a teaching staff of seven: a director, a program developer (PD), four in-house teachers, and one ALT; and a Japanese office staff of three: an office manager, a full-time office staff member, and a part-time office staff member. The LIOJ teacher's room/office/lounge occupies the corner of the second floor above the lobby opposite the front desk. Our five permanent classrooms and student lounge are in the basement below.



By the spring of 1996, LIOJ had fully evolved from a school where teachers taught in a specific program to a school where teachers participated in all its disparate programs. PD Abet Carbonilla (Business) and I (Community) were the only teachers remaining who had originally been hired for a single program. Today, instructors teach classes in all our in-house programs, including the Community Program (CP), the Business Communication Program (BCP), and the High School Intensives (HSI), which are carefully integrated into the yearly calendar. The ALT teaches in the BCP, the HSI, and short-term children's classes at LIOJ, in addition to duties at three public junior high schools. The diverse schedule for teachers has obvious ramifications for hiring: LIOJ teachers must be capable of handling a busy workload (always the norm at LIOJ!), and equally comfortable and competent teaching phonics to elementary school children, presentation skills to business professionals, or a role play to a large group of high school students.

Looking outside of LIOJ, three external factors, I feel, have had the most impact on our programs. The first factor—far above all else—is the ongoing recession that has plagued Japan's economy through the 1990's and so far in the current decade. Unemployment has crept well above 5%, the Nikkei index is at its lowest point in two decades, and a continuing malaise pervades about the prospects of recovery. Company and household budgets are tight, and many would-be LIOJ customers are less inclined to spend money on training. The second factor is the increased competition for English language educational services in Odawara and around Japan. Language schools exploded onto the landscape in the last decade, and there

are now more choices than ever for individual students and companies as the competition has become more firmly established. The third factor, to a lesser extent, is the demographic shift that is taking place in Japan. The population is growing older, and the number of babies born in Japan is decreasing each year. For example, two of our HSI schools, including nearby Jyonai High School, will close in 2004, casualties of the declining birth rate. All of these factors have underscored the need for LIOJ to adapt and provide relevant programs and find the best teachers in order to remain in operation.

The Community Program is clearly LIOJ's "main" program today in terms of staff time and school income. Some students have studied here for a number of years, and teachers speak of them as if they are part of the LIOJ family. Although enrollment has held steady over the last few years, this has been the result of redoubled efforts. PDs Mark James and Daina Plitkins-Denning led the faculty in revamping the CP curriculum for adults and teens, and Jon Collier and Stephen Shrader led/are leading us through a revision of the children's curriculum. Many teachers dedicate a lot of time toward preparing interesting, imaginative, personalized lessons. The introduction of English education into Japanese public elementary schools in April 2002 was a catalyst in boosting enrollment in children's classes. Another was the efforts of a top-notch teaching staff which led to a high rate of re-enrollment among students.

The Business Communication Program, resurrected in 1995 and now fine-tuned as a two-week course, continues to limp along. The curriculum borrows heavily from the reforms that were introduced when the BCP reopened as a three-week program in 1993. Job and company presentations are the culminating project of week one, and the St. Gerard simulation is the climax of week two. All faculty members teach in the BCP, with the PD, ALT, and director involved most heavily. The course is offered in May, September, and February, and runs concurrently with the CP, resulting in a busy two-week stretch for teachers. The class is held in the classroom next to the LIOJ lounge and faculty room, so students have constant contact with teachers, both in and out of class. Satisfaction among students in the BCP is consistently high, and we have some loyal client companies. However, although offered only three times a year with a maximum of eight students per course, the course does not usually fill.

I was asked to coordinate the first High School Intensive course for students from Jyonai High School in 1992. From the beginning, this program struck me as a service that LIOJ and Asia Center could do well together. Each "camp" brings groups of students from a single school to Asia Center for two or three days of activities in English. Over the years, teachers have enjoyed working with thousands of high school students and have developed a menu of creative activities for the course, including (deep breath): Action Picture Drawing, American Sign Language, Crazy Olympics, Dance Lessons, Games-Games-Games, Going to the Movies, Horsing Around, International Role Play, I Spy, Jenga English, Lucky Numbers, Magic Lesson, Mr. Bean-glish, Music Station, ¡Olé! Spanish, Puzzlemania, Quiz Show, Shopping Spree, Telephone Calls, Travel English, Treasure Hunt, TV Commercials... Since 1996, the courses have run six or seven times a year; and for the last two

summers, we've conducted the program in Nagano for junior and senior high students.

Since 1996, LIOJ's work in nearby public schools has shifted and expanded. Our twice-a-week participation in team teaching classes in two Matsuda town junior high schools ended in March 2001 after seven years. The following April—as a result of an introduction by former LIOJ office manager, Masami Takahashi—LIOJ began providing English classes in Hakone town elementary schools. From the start of the Matsuda program in 1994 and through my tenure as director, I have taught in public schools two days a week for 26 to 30 weeks a year. In April 2002, a new LIOJ team teaching position was added for Hakone town junior high schools. The ALT is also involved in other LIOJ programs, except for regular CP classes. LIOJ has also taken part in other "outreach" programs involving young people, including monthly classes at Shiroyama Kindergarten, cultural assemblies for public elementary schools, extracurricular programs with local junior high students, and the Lions Club speech contest for high school students.

Our experimental Thailand-Japan Team Teaching Exchange, begun in 1993 in partnership with the Srinakharinwirot University (Bangkok) Department of Linguistics, continued through 1999. In all, sixteen Japanese teachers of English and seventeen Thai teachers of English took part in the program that introduced a non-native team teaching partnership to thousands of students in both countries. The program, which was scheduled for two weeks in August in Thailand and two weeks in October in Japan, was well-received by teacher participants, their colleagues, and their students. Several Japanese teacher alumni of the program followed up on their Thailand experience: Junko Yuki ('93, '96, Oita) participated twice in different schools in Thailand; Teruhiko Takei ('94, Kanagawa) published a book on education in Asia in 2002; Shuko Kataoka ('94, Nara) and Junko Mukainakano ('95, Aomori) co-presented with Thai teachers at the second Pan-Asian Conference Seoul in 1999; Hideo Shimamura ('95, Kanagawa) married a teacher he met in Thailand in 2002; and Terutoshi Goto ('99, Osaka) returned to Thailand to teach music in 2000. Sadly, the time and expense of recruiting even a few teachers in Japan, coupled with the demand for HSI courses in the summer, led to our decision to suspend the program.

In 2002, LIOJ hosted its 34th International Summer Workshop for Teachers of English. The six-day Workshop faces increased competition from an array of teacher training sessions in Japan and overseas. The program is designed to be relevant for participants, most of whom are secondary school EFL teachers interested in brushing up their English and getting ideas to use in their classes. These days, the program must also be budget-friendly on LIOJ. The number of invited speakers and international scholars corresponds to lower enrollments over the decade, and LIOJ has sought and accepted financial assistance from organizations such as Oxford University Press for overseas speakers and the Mitsubishi Bank Foundation for Asian scholars. Recent speakers from overseas have included J.D. Brown, Richard Day, Carolyn Graham, Colin Granger, Charlie Hadfield, Jill Hadfield, Alan Maley, Susan Stempleski, Peter Watcyn-Jones, and Penny Ur; and, from within Japan, Kip Cates,

Donna Fujimoto, Marc Helgesen, Kathi Kitao, Kenji Kitao, Aleda Krause, Sen Nishiyama, David Paul, and Rob Waring. LIOJ has recently established partnerships with regional ELT organizations for the Workshop, including FEELTA (2001), Lao TESOL (2001), and MELTA (1999), in addition to partners Korea TESOL (1996) and Thailand TESOL (1988). Not to go unmentioned are the wonderful participants that attend the Workshop every year and give the event its special character.

To mark LIOJ's 30th anniversary in 1998, we organized a Symposium that was held on the eve of the 30th Summer Workshop. That same year, LIOJ also made a return to ELT publishing with the commemorative book, *Perspectives on Secondary School EFL Education (POSSEE)*, a collection of chapters from "friends of LIOJ," including former teachers, Workshop presenters, and *Cross Currents* contributors. The entire faculty was involved in the project (Mark, Daina, Natalie Williamson, Laurie Sansone, and Lisa Brickell; plus in-coming teachers Margaret Hearnden and Jaimie Scanlon), and I think everyone enjoyed the experience.

Mark created our homepage in 1997. Daina added a lot more information to it and worked with LIOJ student Toru Hara to have much of it translated into Japanese. Since then, Jon and Stephen (English) and office manager Kazumi Masuda and staff member Kazuko Mizukami (Japanese) have had the task of keeping it up to date. We can be found at www.geocities.co/lioj.geo.

Every June, LIOJ hosts a meeting of the Yokohama Chapter of JALT. Chapter President Yoshio Mochimaru makes a point of reminding participants that LIOJ is the place where JALT began. LIOJ has been involved with other training organizations: We support ETJ (English Teachers in Japan), and have started an Odawara chapter of the organization for teachers of young learners; and we back AYF (the Asian Youth Forum), which aims to bring together college-aged people from different Asian countries to discuss various issues.

That about sums up LIOJ activity over the past several years and to the present day.

In closing,

LIOJ at the dawn of the twenty-first century could not survive without the efforts of hardworking, multitalented teachers and staff; and over the years, I have had the pleasure of working with many outstanding people. The future of LIOJ is as bright as the faculty and staff that will come on board.