

**Margaret Hearnden
(1998~99)**

I joined LIOJ in the March of 1998, having already been in Japan for nearly 18 months. I was teaching in a very small school in Odawara and was looking for wider experience. A friend told me about LIOJ and it sounded like just the kind of place that would enable me to expand my teaching career.

At the time I began teaching at there, there were three other teachers, as well as a program developer and Jim Kahny, director. In addition to teaching Community classes to children and adults on a regular weekly basis, I was involved in teaching High School Intensive Programs, Business Programs, and the International Summer Workshop in August 1998.

It would be hard to enumerate here all that my experience at LIOJ brought me or how it has continued to influence my life and career, but there is hardly a day when I don't think back to that incredible time in my life and what it was like being in Japan then. I made friends for life in the other teachers who were my colleagues. I now count friends in almost every continent of the globe. I also still remain in contact with some of the students I taught, enabling me to maintain a sense of connection with a country I came to love, and continue to deeply miss. When I think of my time at LIOJ I think of laughing with colleagues, the way I learnt something new about my host country every day from the students, how I managed to live on very little sleep! The intensity of being involved in the Summer Workshop, the thrill of meeting some of the authors of books that had saved me in the midst of many a teaching "crisis," and being part of such an incredible event which brought people together from all over the world, are probably some of the strongest memories I have of my time at LIOJ.

The experience in course and curriculum planning has greatly helped me in my current position as a French teacher in a Toronto school. However, I constantly think of my time teaching EFL in Japan, and am now actively seeking to become part of the ESL teaching community in Canada.

I left LIOJ after a year because I knew my time in Japan had to come to an end. I was about to turn thirty, a psychological turning point for me. I regretted not finding Japan sooner in my life, and LIOJ sooner in my career, but know that my year there has and will continue to influence me for the rest of my life.