

# History of Japan Exhibition Association (JEEXA)

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## 1) Preface

Founded in 1967, the Japan Exhibition Association celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017. Originally titled “the Harumi Trade Center Users’ Meeting” , or “Harumi Council” for short, it was founded by a group of exhibition organizers who used the Harumi Fairgrounds for their exhibitions. The Council consisted of 10 organizations, including the Japan Management Association, Nippon Office Management Association, Japan Motor Industrial Federation (later merged with the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association), Nippon Omni-Management Association, Nikkan Kogyo Shimbun, Ltd., The Nihon Kogyo Shimbun Co., Ltd., Japan Packaging Institute, and Japan Electronics Association. The purpose of founding the Council was to facilitate negotiations with the Tokyo International Trade Fair Commission and Tokyo International Trade Center Corp. that owned the Harumi Fairgrounds on usage fees and easy use of the venue. The Council was also intended to be a place for bonding and networking for workers in the industry, which was quite typical for Japanese businesses. In addition to the above two purposes, the Council has gradually expanded its roles and activities to make contributions to the development of the exhibition industry.

## 2) Changes in membership numbers

Looking at the changes in membership numbers, although the number as of its foundation is unknown, it shows that the Council was an organization with 23 ordinary members and 27 supporting members, making a total of 50 in 1974. In 1998, the numbers increased to 38 ordinary members and 63 supporting members, making a total of 101. Then, in 2010, the total number exceeded 200 and, as of January 2016, the number reached 314, with 59 organizers, 30 show venue management & service and 225 event supporters, exceeding a much-anticipated total number of 300. It has grown from an organization originally for exhibition organizers only to a much larger-scale association for show venue management &

service and event supporters, including contractors, as well as organizers.

### 3) Name changes

The association originally consisted of organizers only, but, in 1974, a supporting member system was introduced, and the exhibition venues that used to be called venue members became "special members" in 1999.

Its name has also changed several times. From the original name of "Harumi Council" to "Japan Exhibition Organizers Council" in 1974, and its acronym was unified to "JEXA" in 1986. In 1990, the name changed to the "Japan Exhibition Organizers Council", changed again to the "Japan Exhibition Organizers Association" in 1995, before finally assuming the current name of the "Japan Exhibition Association" in 2003.

### 4) Transition in roles and activities

Now we shall look at the association's role and activity changes. As mentioned above, the original purposes were to negotiate with the venue owners for booth usage fees and ease of use, and to network among the members. However, the association has gradually changed to an organization that aims to further develop the exhibition industry. Establishment of the new committees below shows the transition.

1974 Established Traffic Measures Committee

1980 Established Venue Environment Measures Committee

1982 Established PR Committee for Exhibition White Paper

1983 Established Long-Term Vision Committee to Consider Various Issues in Exhibition Industry

1986 Established 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Project Committee

1990 Established Exploratory Committee for the By-law

1994 Established Human Resource Development Committee

1995 Name changed to Venues & Facilities Committee

What we can understand from the establishment of the new committees is that fee negotiations for the use of venues, transportation and environmental issues were the main concerns for the association until the 1970s, but since 1982, its interests gradually shifted to the promotion and publication of its activities, long-term vision development, planning for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary project through revitalization of the association, changing the articles of its by-law and so forth. Of particular importance is that human resource development in the exhibition industry has started to attract serious attention.

#### 5) Commitment to human resource development

Human resource development in the exhibition industry is an eternal challenge. JEXA has gradually started to work on this issue. It was in 1994 that the Human Resource Development Committee was established with the aim of starting a long-awaited training course of the "JEXA Business College". The training course was first held in 1996, followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1997, the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 1998, the 4<sup>th</sup> in 1999, and the 5<sup>th</sup> was held in Kitakyushu in 2001. After that, one-off seminars became the mainstream at the College. In 2005, a new "Exhibition Business Skill Brush-up Seminar" started, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> held in 2006, the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2007, the 4<sup>th</sup> in 2008, and the 5<sup>th</sup> in 2009.

Meanwhile, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) also started an educational program of the "JETRO Trade Show Business School" in 2002 and repeated this annually five times until 2006. We, as JEXA, hope that 3- to 5-day trade show business school programs, rather than one-off seminars, will be organized for young professionals in the industry who will lead the future of the industry. Education in academia is also a future challenge. While increasing the number of departments and courses at many universities now teaching "Tourism" or "MICE Tourism", there are very few that teach about exhibition industry. We at JEXA need to provide some support for this area.

#### 6) JEXA AWARDS

The idea of giving awards to exhibitions and persons that have made remarkable contributions to the trade fair industry was put forward and launched in 2002. Although there have been some changes in the way the awards are given, the selection, the criteria, the name of the awards, etc., the awards have been given to the winner exhibitions, organizations and persons every year since 2002 except 2011 and 2014. A new set of policies from 2016 onward are now under consideration by the General Affairs Committee.

#### 7) JEXA vision

In 1972, a questionnaire survey of the members on our activities was conducted for the first time. After that, the "PR Committee for Exhibition White Paper" was organized in 1982, and the "Long-Term Vision Committee to Consider Various Issues in Exhibition Industry" was established in 1983. Later on in 1995, another "Vision Committee" was established, and then the "New JEXA Vision" was published in 2007.

#### 8) JEXA research activities

Looking at the JEXA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Timeline, it shows that several reports summarizing member opinions have been published. Those included opposition to a proposed increase in fees by exhibition venues, request for improvements in exhibition venues, request for installment of a cafeteria, and request for traffic measures.

1996 Created "Report on Factual Survey of Exhibitions in 1996"

1998 Created "Report on Factual Survey of Exhibitions in 1998"

2000 Created "Report on Factual Survey of Exhibitions in 1999"

2001 Created "Report on Factual Survey of Exhibitions in 2000"

Published "Research on Waste Reduction at Exhibitions and Trade Fairs", subsidiary project

Created "Glossary for Exhibitions, Trade Fairs and Conventions"

2009 Created "JEXA Environmental Policy"

2014 Published a booklet of "Third-Party Certification System for Exhibition Statistics"

#### 9) Globalization of JEXA

Internationalization of Japan's exhibition industry has always been a major issue since the inauguration of JEXA. It was in 1987 that JEXA first made overseas connections. That year, we sent a mission to study exhibition venues in the USA, and the following year in 1988, another mission was sent to study the state of the conventions business in Europe. In 1997, turning our attention to Asia, we held "Overseas Training Sessions in Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore" and sent a delegation to the "Shanghai New International Expo Centre Mission" in 2001. Furthermore, a "Mission to Study the State of the Exhibition and Convention Industry in Las Vegas, USA" was organized in 2003. In 2004, when the foundation of the Asian Federation of Exhibition and Convention Associations (AFECA) was proposed, JEXA joined as its founding member, and the AFECA was established in January 2005. After that, we sent JEXA executives to its Annual General Meeting. In 2006, the "South Korea Exhibition Networking Tour" was organized at the time of the "Korea/Japan Exhibition Forum". In 2009, 20 people from JEXA attended the 4<sup>th</sup> AFECA Annual General Meeting (Daejeon, South Korea). Since 2010, JEXA representatives have been attending the Annual General Meetings. In addition, our Chairman Ishizumi gave a keynote speech about the reconstruction of Japan's exhibition industry after the tsunami disaster at the "UFI Open Seminar in Asia" held in Shenzhen, China in 2012. JEXA has also started to participate in overseas exhibitions and had two booths at the KOREA EXPO in 2009. In 2014, we exhibited at the "6<sup>th</sup> KOREA EXHIBITION EXPO." We also sent our representatives to the "Indonesia Exhibition Organizers Association CEO Forum", the "79<sup>th</sup> UFI Congress" and the "7<sup>th</sup>

AFECA AGM" in 2013. In 2015, we invited Mr. David Dubois, President and CEO of IAEE, an association for the exhibition industry in the USA, and Mr. Walter Yeh, President of AFECA, associations for the exhibition industries in Asia, to the JAPAN EXHIBITION FORUM that we held at Tokyo Big Sight in December, 2015.

#### 10) Exhibition statistics and third-party certification

One of the biggest problems that Japan's exhibitions and trade fairs industry is facing is the lack of sufficient detailed data about exhibition visitors and exhibitors. In Germany, there is a third party certification organization called FKM (Society for the Voluntary Control of Fair and Exhibition Statistics), and also one in France, called OJS (Office for the Justification of Statistics), who examine and publish the detailed data relating to visitors and exhibitors of trade fairs. In some European countries, there is a consensus about disclosing accurate data about exhibitors and visitors, but, in other regions, third-party certification of exhibition data is not so common. Visitor data in Japan has traditionally been somewhat unclear, and usually only the so-called 'organizers' announcement' has been available. Since around 2002, JETRO, the Japan Electrical Manufacturers' Association, and the Japan Association for the Promotion of Creative Event (JACE) have gathered together to exchange their views on the feasibility of third-party certification, and have made a variety of recommendations, including the definition of exhibition booths, exhibitors and visitors; creation of database; and creation of guidelines on data entry for third-party certification. Guidelines for third-party certification were also prepared as voluntary standards of the industry, based on the results of a demonstration experiment at CEATEC. After that, there had been no outstanding movements until the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry launched an Exhibition Industry Revitalization Policy Review Meeting in November 2010. In 2011, the Statistics & Standardization Committee was established within the Japan Exhibition Association and the "Japan Exhibition Certification Council" was established in 2012 in cooperation with three organizations of the Japan Exhibition Association, JETRO and Large Scale Exhibition Site Liaison Council. In March 2012, with the publication of a News Release entitled "Launching of Third-Party Certification System for Exhibition Statistics", the system was put into practice. The number of certified exhibitions was 8 in FY2012, 10 in FY2013, and 8 in FY2014. For FY2015, the number is expected to be around 18, and hopefully it will continue to increase gradually.

It is extremely difficult to explain the Japanese exhibition industry to foreigners, partly because obtaining accurate data about an exhibition is sometimes difficult, but mainly because getting the whole picture of the exhibition industry is even more difficult.

How many exhibitions are held in Japan? What standard is used to allow designation as an exhibition? Is it the scale or the quality of the exhibition? Who takes the statistics? etc. The problem is that there is no data that shows the whole trend measured by unified standards and observed at specific points. In some countries, if you want to hold an exhibition, you have to obtain permission from the national authorities or have to report to the authorities. Some other countries have a system where you have to report to your exhibition industry association. If such a system exists, it would be easy to take exhibition statistics, but for Japan, there is no such system. That is why POP Inc. and JETRO are struggling.

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