

Preface and Acknowledgement

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Editorial

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The SHIP project is a research project for studying and constructing a platform system for social science database based on Extensible Markup Language (XML) technology. This project is funded by Meiji University and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan.

In this project, we have been engaged in developing a legal information system, which functions as a demonstration system. Now, we have almost completed compiling judgments from the former Supreme Court in the Meiji era to store them in a database. Some of the compiled data will be processed for publication, and then, be used in an evaluation experiment with monitors, which will start by the end of this year. Also, for some laws, we are digitizing texts of the provisions from their original version to their latest revision in order to construct a system that can search and refer to provisions effective at a certain point. By combining these two systems, it will be possible to create links of provisions effective at the time when a judgment was delivered. In recent years, laws are frequently revised or abolished, and some are revised several times a year. XML technology is very effective in constructing a system which can automatically search laws being effective at a specific time.

As the research activities of SHIP project, we have taken up various legal problems and technical issues that need to be examined in constructing a legal information system, while developing those systems mentioned above. Some of the achievements from the project are published on the Web as retrievable documents. Also, we hosted report sessions and discussions as a truly significant joint research on a global basis, inviting a number of researchers, legal practitioners, and government and corporation officials from both Japan and abroad. The SHIP symposium is one of the most important public events for such report and discussion.

This Review is separated to two parts.

Part I of this review involves programs and agendas of SHIP Symposium 2003. The main aim of this conference is to discuss about the Public Aspects of Legal Information. There is a severe contradiction between free access and privacy protection relating to court rulings. This privacy interests consist of action party's interest, witness's interest, victim's interest and other person's interest. These are sometimes conjunction with each other. Also practical traditions on court ruling publication are fundamentally different, for instance between the US and Japan as well. Public Access should be superior to privacy protection, or not? This is a very difficult problem to be resolved.

On the other hand, there are some different problems on this area; the problem of commercialization of

legal information is one of such problems. Especially legal information which may be distributed by a private company is a private property for such private company, but the legal information itself should be a public common property that was made by officials or judges on the basis of TAX. If such legal information would be distributed with any fee, the problem of double charge would be taking place. This is a sort of problem relating to a public aspect of legal information.

Part II of this review involves 3 Articles; My “*Legal Information: Basic Structure and Legal Issues*”, “*Legal Information and XML – An Introduction –*” by Hiroshi KOMATSU and “*How to Conduct a Search for Japanese Translation of Foreign Laws*” by Osamu MIURA. All articles have tight relation to the main Theme of our Symposium.

We hope that this symposium will play a significant role in order to move toward a better future for human beings as well as to realize a society in which people's rights to access to legal information are guaranteed as extensively as possible.

The complete record of our 6th conference will be published on the Web.

<http://ship.mind.meiji.ac.jp/>

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