

Date : Wednesday, November 6, 2024 Venue : YAMAGATA CREATIVE CITY CENTER Q1

Yamagata City, a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of film, has hosted the Yamagata Creative Cities International Conference, an annual symposium envisaging the future and potentials of creative cities with other member cities.

The theme of this year's conference is literature. With the participation of specialists of literature from Yamagata as well as UNESCO City of Literature Okayama and Bucheon (South Korea) as panelists, a discussion on how creativity deriving from literary activities will contribute to the sustainable urban development and on what its potentials and significance would be unfolded, notably through sharing experiences of each city.

【Program】

Part 1 Introducing initiatives undertaken by the City of Yamagata, Okayama and Bucheon

Part 2 Discussion

Theme 1 How to create new values through literary activities

Theme 2 Industry-academia-government collaboration in the field of literature

Theme 3 Building sustainable cities and communities by promoting creative city approaches in the field of literature

Part 1 Introducing initiatives of each city

All the guests made presentation on the initiatives implemented by each city.



INOUE Hiroyuki, chairman of the Yamagata City Library volunteer group

Activities to offer access to books for as many citizens as possible vary from book rental service to open reading space called Book Plaza run by the Yamagata City Library and storytelling events organized by our volunteer group.



IGARASHI Yudai, vice president of Hachimonjiya

Hachimonjiya not only sells books but also develops its original merchandise and make a collaboration with entertainment events and movie theaters. We always keep it in mind that we will bring about something new that only the long-established shop like us can do.



YAMAKAWA Takayuki, president of Kibito Publishing Co., LTD.

Okayama City, UCCN City of Literature, has held the Okayama Literature Festival since 2023 and issued a promotion magazine titled “Uttate” this year.

We are going to further promote creative city projects to link citizens with other creative realms to ultimately revitalize our city using literature as a tool to that end.



Jung Seoyoung, focal point of Bucheon

In the wake of industrialization and economic growth in South Korea, creative industries such as film, animation and comics thrived in Buechon. Against the backdrop of all the developments, Buechon endeavored to join a circle of the UNESCO Creative Cities of Literature. The Buechon Residency, the Bucheon International Forum and the Bucheon Diaspora Literary Award have taken place as a part of creative city initiatives.

Part 2 Discussion

Panelists discussed what kind of industry-academia-government collaboration in the field of literature is feasible and what influence that collaboration would have on achieving sustainable creative cities.

YAMAKAWA Takayuki, president of Kibito Publishing Co., LTD.

In Okayama City, library programs, literary awards hosted by city government and bookstore events used to be held independently. But a common goal of “creating a place where people can encounter new books” brought different occasions together, leading to the launch of the Okayama Literature Festival in 2023 initiated by the Okayama Creative City of Literature Promotion Council by adding new features to respective predecessors.

New local publishing companies and bookstores emerged from this festival. We aim to facilitate publishing and selling not only books for mass-market but books which have roots in Okayama to make our city more sustainable.

INOUE Hiroyuki, chairman of the Yamagata City Library volunteer group

I realize that library volunteer activities and library events that we have consistently carried out are related to the concept of Creative City. Raising awareness of Yamagata City being a member of the UCCN and making the fact visible, we would like more people to know the presence of creative city.

Reading books nurtures the capability to think by oneself and makes us independent citizens. We need to further spread our activities to build a bridge between people and books through libraries.

IGARASHI Yudai, vice president of Hachimonjiya

Culture Pass campaign promoted in France is an example that the national government has come up with a mechanism to encourage young people to take part in cultural activities. I hope that there are some approaches to connect bookshops and citizens. Take the case of collaboration with education. If reading at least one book other than textbooks is incorporated into the school curriculum especially at junior high and high school, students will make it a habit to read books.

Even though our lifestyle centers on smart phones and social media, we recognize that face-to face interaction and not virtual but physical events are vital. Government-led programs, library programs and bookstore events were initially held individually like small dots. I believe these scattered dots are connected to a line over time, causing a big wave affecting many aspects in the society.

Jung Seoyoung, focal point of Bucheon

The Residency project aims to invite writers from overseas and support their creative activities. For example, when we welcome writers from France, we organize workshops in which university students and high school students who learn French are invited to communicate with writers participating in the Residency. These opportunities have positive impacts on young people, leading to sustainable city making. I can say that the creative city programs make it happen.

Last but not least, KUROKI Aruji noted that “We tend to pay attention to authors when it comes to literature. But literature can’t exist without publishing companies, bookstores, libraries and readers. Let’s

work together and pursue sustainable development in the capacity of creative city.”

Facilitator
KUROKI Aruji
Author living in Yamagata City

