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Building a Feminist Scholarly Community: Fifty-One Issues of  
*U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*

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# Building a Feminist Scholarly Community: Fifty-One Issues of *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal*

Jan Bardsley

Every time I move to a new office, my collection of *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal* (*USJWJ*) comes with me, and I am happy to see that it takes up ever more space on the bookshelf. Looking at the Table of Contents of each issue as I prepared this essay, I was impressed yet again by the journal’s interdisciplinary scope, accessible style, and rich scholarship. Reading contributors’ names, I realize how many of us have come to know each other well, work together on projects, join in discussions at conferences, help each other navigate academic careers, and have fun together at social gatherings. Building a feminist scholarly community has always been at the heart of *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal*.

For nurturing this community, we owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Noriko Mizuta, Chancellor of Jōsai University from 2004 to 2016, for her longtime support of *USJWJ* and her vision for its continued success. She has ensured that the *USJWJ* community remains a transnational one. As an eminent scholar of Japanese literature, Dr. Mizuta has tirelessly nurtured the careers of successive generations of scholars in a number of Japan-related fields.

This sense of community makes a difference to new scholars. When I was working on the *USJWJ* editorial team (2006–11), it made my day to receive email from graduate students who had just discovered *USJWJ* on a library shelf. They wrote about how much it meant to them to find a journal on Japan that spoke to issues that they, too, felt passionate about, and that introduced them to unusual archives and diverse disciplinary perspectives. As one student remarked, reading *USJWJ* gave her a new sense of what she wanted to

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accomplish in her own research. This comment took me back to my own days as a new assistant professor, when I was asked to complete a short questionnaire about journals that I'd like to publish in. First among my choices was *USJWJ*. I remember writing a note to Editor-in-Chief Sally Hastings about my idea for an article on the Housewife Debate in 1955 Japan, and how her encouragement—and later suggestions on revising the article to work with the reviewers' comments—made all the difference to me. A dedicated/devoted foremother in the field of Japanese Women's and Gender Studies, Sally Hastings has truly shaped the field.

As an active Editor-in-Chief, Sally Hastings has led the way in fostering collaboration and community through *USJWJ*. For decades Sally has been a welcoming, approachable editor, and she has followed up that work by serving as the chair and a discussant for conference panels, writing recommendation letters and reviews, and being the source of invaluable advice for women negotiating academic culture. She's also been active in helping young Japanese scholars gain a foothold in English-language international meetings and publications. Her commitment to feminist research, to making *USJWJ* welcoming to scholars whose first language is not English, and to maintaining excellence has made Sally Hastings an effective and inspiring leader indeed.

*USJWJ* authors have often remarked on the helpful guidance provided by our longtime copyeditor Victoria R. M. Scott. Always the source of warm support, Victoria communicates enthusiasm for our scholarship and does so with the utmost tact ("Okay as lightly edited?"). Graphics expert Natta Phisphumvidhi also works quickly and expertly in preparing the issues for press. We owe much to both of them.

Numerous manuscript reviewers have enhanced the *USJWJ* community with their critical acumen and generosity. Often, after passing on reviews to prospective authors, I received messages of thanks for the advice they had received. One author, a graduate student, shared the reports with her advisor and told me how surprised he had been at their level of detail and the insight of the editorial suggestions offered. When I passed this on to Sally Hastings, she remarked that she, too, had been continually inspired by the lengths to which feminist scholars would go to help other scholars. *USJWJ* reviewers have made it their mission, also, to develop the journal as a community.

Special issues of *USJWJ*, guest-edited by leaders in our field, have fostered scholarly collaboration, bringing attention to the newest research. By my count, there have been sixteen special issues (counting the special double issue nos. 30–31 as one), beginning with Sandra Buckley's guest-edited "Writing Japanese Women/Japanese Women Writing" (no. 9, 1995). These issues are often built on successful conference panels and encourage further teamwork among the authors with the aid of reviewers and editors. Special issues also enable scholars to share their expertise on specific issues, such as a particular writer,

genre, or social topic. As the titles of the other fifteen *USJWJ* special issues show, they include a range of disciplinary homes and archives: “Gender and Imperialism,” Brett de Bary, ed. (no. 12, 1997); “Speculating on Spin: Media Models of Women,” Laura Miller, ed. (no. 19, 2000); “Women for a New Japan: Sex, Love, and Politics in the Early Postwar,” Jan Bardsley, ed. (no. 23, 2002); “Pregnancy and Childbirth in the Context of Modernity,” Susan J. Burns, ed. (no. 24, 2003); “Special Issue on Manga,” Sharalyn Orbaugh, ed. (no. 25, 2003); “Special Issue on Tamura Toshiko,” Joan Ericson, ed. (no. 28, 2005); “Leading Women in Meiji Japan,” Jan Bardsley and Sally Hastings, eds. (nos. 30–31, 2006); “Special Issue on Itō Hiromi,” Jeffrey Angles, ed. (no. 32, 2007); “Aestheticization of Women and Politics in Japanese and Korean Works from the 1900s to 1940s,” Mamiko Suzuki, ed. (no. 35, 2008); “Kitchen Tales: Recipes for Resistance and Renewal,” Jan Bardsley, ed. (no. 36, 2009); “Shōjo Manga: Past, Present and Future,” Tomoko Aoyama, Hiromi Dollase, and Satoko Kan, eds. (no. 38, 2010); “Women and Socioeconomic Management of the Household in Early Modern Japan,” Cheryl Crowley, ed. (no. 39, 2010); “Women Writing, Writing Women: Essays in Memory of Professor Satoko Kan,” Amanda Seaman, ed. (no. 43, 2012); and “Women’s Voices, Bodies, and the Nation in 1930s–40s Wartime Literature.” Michiko Suzuki, ed. (no. 45, 2013).

Looking over article titles from the first fifty issues, I see that *USJWJ* has been an incubator for work that gave rise to numerous book projects. I started to list these but soon gave up because there were so many! *USJWJ* has also proved to be an excellent source of course readings across disciplines and on a range of topics in the arts and humanities and the social sciences. I am always happy when a student working on a class term paper comes up with a *USJWJ* article and cites it at length.

The new cover design of *USJWJ* is truly a delight. We have an outstanding leadership team in Alisa Freedman and Miriam Murase, experienced scholars with creativity and vision for the future. We have much to anticipate with the next fifty issues of *U.S.–Japan Women’s Journal*.