

10th JDA Symposium – “Using the Japan Disasters Digital Archive in the Classroom: Perspectives from Japan and the U.S.” (January 30, 2025)

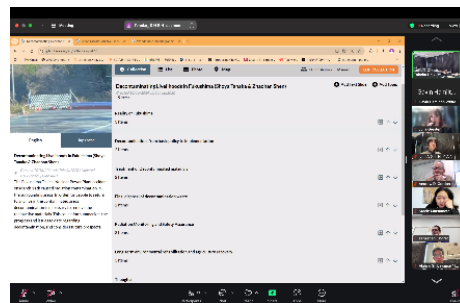
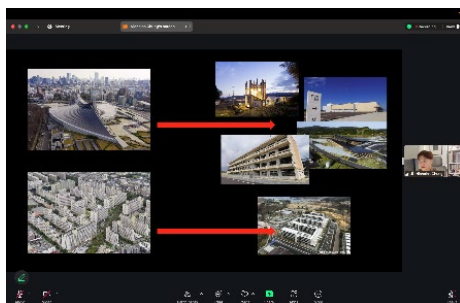
Theme: Disaster Digital Archiving, Disaster Education, International Collaboration
Place: IRIDeS, Tohoku University; Reischauer Institute, Harvard University; Online

On January 30, 2025, the 10th Japan Disasters Archive (JDA) Symposium was held online from 9:00 to 10:30 JST, marking a milestone in this ongoing initiative to foster cross-cultural dialogue and disaster education through digital archives. Organized by the Reischauer Institute at Harvard University and Tohoku University, the event brought together students and faculty to explore how the JDA can be used as a teaching and research tool in understanding the Great East Japan Earthquake and its aftermath. Notably, this year's symposium featured presentations by Harvard University students for the first time, enriching the discussion with diverse academic and cultural perspective

The event opened with welcome remarks from Professor Andrew Gordon (Harvard University), followed by an introduction by Associate Prof. Julia Gerster (Disaster Culture and Archive Studies). As part of the annual JDA seminar, Tohoku University students visited Fukushima to prepare for their presentations. They explored the coastal region, including Futaba and Namie, visited the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum, attended a local community festival, stayed overnight in Tomioka, and joined a disaster storytelling bus tour.

Four student-led presentations followed. Zhaohan Shen and Shoya Tanaka (Tohoku University) presented “Decontaminating Livelihoods in Fukushima,” focusing on how radiation cleanup efforts have impacted local economies and perceptions. Tsukasa Kitahara (Harvard University) discussed the stigma and reputational damage faced by Fukushima residents in the wake of the nuclear disaster. The team of Xiyan Gong, Junho Cha, and Jiaxin Yan (Tohoku University) spoke on “Shifting Realities,” examining the long-term changes in coastal communities affected by the nuclear power plant. Nicholas Chung (Harvard University) concluded the session with a presentation on “Symbolic Architecture of Post-3.11,” reflecting on how architecture has played a role in the physical and emotional rebuilding process.

A lively Q&A session followed the presentations, where students engaged with the audience and each other on topics ranging from the ethics of nuclear energy to the role of memory in disaster recovery. Closing remarks were offered by Professor Gordon, who commended the students' efforts and the deep insight they brought to complex and often personal topics.



Screenshots of the presentations kindly provided by Prof. Gavin Whitelaw