

Museums in the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami

Museums are not limited to those of history or art: numerous types of facilities act as museums, including aquariums and zoos. During the Great East Japan Earthquake, many museums too suffered all kinds of damage. Of course, museums have no direct impact on life or death. Perhaps their experiences of the disaster do not necessarily need to be publicized. However, that is precisely why it feels important to provide future generations with proper accounts of the hardships regional museums experienced and how they did or didn't prove to be useful, especially in thinking about the future of what museums should be.

In 2012, the Sendai Miyagi Museum Alliance (SMMA) conducted an inquiry into reopening procedures following the disaster at museums in disaster-stricken areas. The resulting report can be found on the alliance website (<http://www.smma.jp/survey/english/>). SMMA also plans to set up a panel exhibition entitled "Museums and the Great East Japan Earthquake" on the second floor of sendai mediatheque for the duration of the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction this coming March. There is much that should not be forgotten, such as how it was a race against time to protect the animals and cultural assets in museums cut off from crucial infrastructure, how museums deliberated over evacuation procedures in the wake of the possible spread of radioactive contamination, how curators and specialists nationwide gathered to rescue items washed away by the tsunami and investigate the damage on regional cultural assets, and how although many museums have reopened and one-by-one have put on large-scale exhibitions in the name of supporting the restoration, there are also museums that were hardly able to restore



Plywood boarding up the entrance of the disaster-ravaged Ishinomaki Mangattan Museum, covered with messages of encouragement (May 2012)

their facilities, much less resume operation.

The Great East Japan Earthquake made it clear that unexpected events are bound to occur and that we humans only have a grasp of a fraction of what can happen in this world. Yet in prioritizing the efficient communication of conventional knowledge and values, we feel that many museums were inadequate in functioning as venues for contemplating the unknown. If the most important lesson learned from the disaster is the need to stop relying on authority and for each of us to constantly question issues, listen to others, deliberate, and use our imaginations, perhaps new roles and functions will be demanded of museums in the future.

Panel Exhibition

Museums and the Great East Japan Earthquake
March 14-18 10:00 a.m.-20:00 p.m.
sendai mediatheque

We recommend the following exhibitions for their English presentation, or because they are easy to appreciate even if you don't speak Japanese.

Feb. 20- Mar. 18	Recording In Progress Archives Exhibition and Screenings: the center for remembering 3.11 sendai mediatheque
Mar. 1-31	Disaster-Stricken Location Exhibition: Life in Rokugo and Shichigo, Wakabayashi-ku Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore
Mar. 14- 18	Archives of the Great East Japan Earthquake for the Future Kawauchi Hagi Hall and the Tohoku University Museum (Museum of Natural History, Tohoku University)
Mar. 14- 18	The Sendai Design League All-Japan Architectural Thesis Competition Archives, 2003-2015 sendai mediatheque
Mar. 17- Jun. 17 Preview Mar. 14-15-16	120th Anniversary Exhibition: The World of Designer Keisuke Serizawa Tohoku Fukushi University Serizawa Keisuke Art and Craft Museum

Mar. 28- Apr. 12	Reopening / Special Exhibition: "DAIMYO" Masterpieces of Sendai-Han and the DATE Family Sendai City Museum
Apr. 24- Jun. 7	Seasonal Museum Collection Spring 2015 Sendai City Museum
Apr. 24- Jun. 21	Kichijo-Tenno, the Goddess of Mercy: Special Exhibition of Yakushi-ji Temple; Praying for the Future Sendai City Museum
Apr. 25- Late June	Special Exhibition: The Life of Morio Kita—"Doctor Manbou" Sendai Literature Museum
Apr. 25- Jun. 14	Featured Exhibition: Recycling in Daily Life; Meiji / Taisho / Showa Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore
May. 2- Jul. 26	Exhibition: Hiroshi Sugito The Miyagi Museum of Art

3M Sendai City Science Museum
スリーエム仙台市科学館
4-1 Dainohara Shinrin Koen, Aoba-ku, Sendai 981-0903
Tel: 022-276-2201 Fax: 022-276-2204
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (last admission 4:00 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays, the 4th Thursday of every month, except for December *†
URL: <http://www.kagakukan.sendai-c.ed.jp/>

Sendai Astronomical Observatory
仙台市天文台
29-32 Nishikigaoka 9-chome, Aoba-ku, Sendai 989-3123
Tel: 022-391-1300 Fax: 022-391-1301
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Saturday until 9:30 p.m., exhibition room until 5:00 p.m.)
Last admission is 30 minutes before closing time.
Closed Days: Wednesdays, the 3rd Tuesday of every month*†
URL: <http://www.sendai-astro.jp/>

Sendai City Museum
仙台市博物館
26 Kawauchi, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-0862
Tel: 022-225-3074 Fax: 022-225-2558
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (last admission 4:15 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays *†
URL: <http://www.city.sendai.jp/kyouiku/museum/>

Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore
仙台市歴史民俗資料館
3-7 Gorin 1-chome, Miyagino-ku, Sendai 983-0842 (in Tsutsujigaoka Park)
Tel: 022-295-3956 Fax: 022-257-6401
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (last admission 4:15 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays, the 4th Thursday of every month, except for December *†
URL: <http://www.city.sendai.jp/kyouiku/rekimin/>

sendai mediatheque
せんだいメディアテーク
2-1 Kasuga-machi, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-0821
Tel: 022-713-3171 Fax: 022-713-4482
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. (some services may have varying opening times)
Closed Days: The 4th Thursday of every month, except for December †
URL: <http://www.smt.jp/>

Tohoku Fukushi University Serizawa Keisuke Art and Craft Museum
東北福祉大学芹沢圭介美術工芸館
8-1 Kunimi 1-chome, Aoba-ku, Sendai 981-8522
Tel: 022-717-3318 Fax: 022-717-3324
Opening Hours: 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (last admission 4:00 p.m.)
Closed Days: Sundays and national holidays, exhibition changing periods †
URL: <http://www.tfu.ac.jp/kogeikan/>

* Open on national holidays, even those falling on the museum's closed days; if open on a national holiday, the museum will be closed on the following day.
† Closed from the end of December to early January. Please inquire for further details.

SMMA Museum Map Online
www.smma.strikingly.com

Sendai City Jomon Site Park
仙台市縄文の森広場
10-1, Yamada Uenodai-cho, Taihaku-ku, Sendai 982-0815
Tel: 022-307-5665 Fax: 022-743-6771
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (admission until 4:15 p.m., workshop reception hours: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., 12:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays, the 4th Thursday of every month, except for December *†
URL: <http://www.city.sendai.jp/kyouiku/jyomou/>

Sendai City Tomizawa Site Museum (Chitei-no-Mori Museum)
仙台市富沢遺跡保存館(地底の森ミュージアム)
3-1 Nagamachi-minami 4-chome, Taihaku-ku, Sendai 982-0012
Tel: 022-246-9153 Fax: 022-246-9158
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (last admission 4:15 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays, the 4th Thursday of every month, except for December *†
URL: <http://www.city.sendai.jp/kyouiku/chiteinomori/>

Sendai Yagiya Zoological Park
仙台市八木山動物公園
43 Yagiya Honcho 1-chome, Taihaku-ku, Sendai 982-0801
Tel: 022-229-0631 Fax: 022-229-8419
Opening Hours: From March to October 9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m. (last admission 4:00 p.m.)
From November to February 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (last admission 3:00 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays *†
URL: <http://www.city.sendai.jp/kensetsu/yagiya/>

Sendai Literature Museum
仙台文学館
7-1 Kitane 2-chome, Aoba-ku, Sendai 981-0902
Tel: 022-271-3020 Fax: 022-271-3044
Opening Hours: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (last admission 4:30 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays, the 4th Thursday of every month, except for December *†
URL: <http://www.sendai-lit.jp/>

The Tohoku University Museum
東北大学総合学術博物館
6-3 Aramaki Aza-Aoba, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-8578
Tel: 022-795-6767 Fax: 022-795-6767
Opening Hours: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Closed Days: Mondays, the Obon period(mid-August), the last Sunday in August *†
URL: <http://www.museum.tohoku.ac.jp/>

The Miyagi Museum of Art
宮城県美術館
34-1 Kawauchi-Motohasekura, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-0861
Tel: 022-221-2111 Fax: 022-221-2115
Opening Hours: 9:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (Tickets sold until 4:30 p.m.)
Closed Days: Mondays *†
URL: <http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/site/mmoa/>

Inquiries **Sendai Miyagi Museum Alliance Secretariat**
2-1 Kasuga-machi, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-0821 (Inside sendai mediatheque)
Closed on weekends and national holidays
Tel: 022-713-4483 Fax: 022-713-4482
URL: <http://www.smma.jp> (available in Japanese only)

Welcome to Sendai's Museums



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Sendai Miyagi Museum Alliance (SMMA)

SMMA is a joint project wherein various museums from the Sendai and Miyagi area put together their intellectual resources to achieve better functionality for the region. SMMA aims to create a new-era museum network that meets the needs of the region. To achieve this, SMMA intends to gather knowledge and know-how from each museum's curators and specialists through joint events spanning several fields.

www.smma.jp

KEN KEN GAKU GAKU 旬の見験楽学便

The "Seasonal Ken Ken Gaku Gaku Newsletter" is a museum news flyer that delivers noteworthy updates from curators and other staff at SMMA member museums. It offers fresh information from local museums. This special English issue is prepared for overseas visitors, especially at the time of the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.



Discovering Sendai's Museums

We interview three foreigners on the Sendai museum experience

How does Sendai's culture reflect in the eyes of non-Japanese visitors? We asked an international student and two Coordinators of International Relations* living in Sendai what they think of the city, its people, and its museums.

*CIRs: City employees who facilitate international exchange through activities such as translating municipal information for foreign residents, managing visiting groups from abroad, interpreting at events, and teaching foreign language and culture.



Our Life in Sendai

How many years have you lived in Sendai?

Monica: This is my third year in Sendai, but before that I was an assistant language teacher for three years in Ehime Prefecture. I returned to the United States once after Ehime, then came to Sendai as a CIR.

Alise: It has been about two and a half years since I started living in Sendai. Before that, I was a researcher at a university in Osaka. I've gotten pretty used to how people talk in Sendai. I interact with old ladies in my classes at university, so I'm slowly learning to understand the Sendai dialect.

David: I came to Sendai about a year and a half ago, but about 4 years ago I studied abroad at a university in Kobe for 9 months, so altogether I've been living in Japan for just over two years.

Do you have any problems living in Japan?

Monica: The apartments are so small. When I came to Sendai after the disaster, people told me to hide under a desk in case of an earthquake. But I didn't have a desk. So I bought one to be prepared, and now my room is so cramped I can't move!



"The Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore tour is full of surprises. I recommend it!" -Monica

Everyone: (laughter)

David: My room is small too, but I don't spend much time there, so I don't really find it a problem.

Alise: I live in an old Showa-period-style apartment with my husband and daughter. All three of us really like its atmosphere. My daughter is happy whenever she sees tatami mats perhaps because she's been in a tatami room since she was born. We also have a table to hide under during an earthquake. (laughs)

The museums' charm is their approachability!



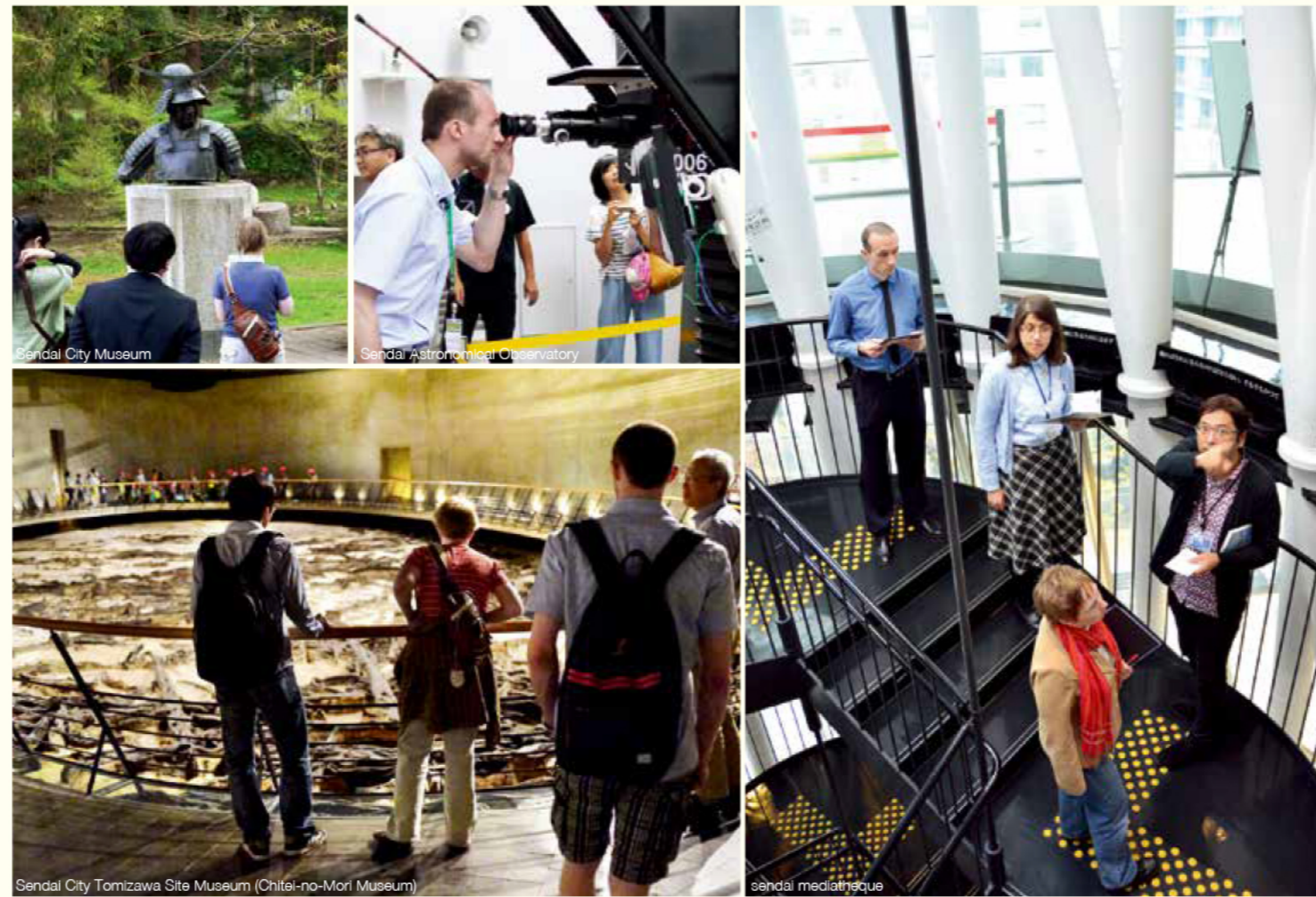
Sendai Museums have "Warmth"

What caught your attention at Sendai's museums? Are there any differences between them and museums in your home country?

Alise: I discovered in Sendai that museums can be enjoyable places. The explanations are easy to understand, and more than anything there are lots of interactive experiences to enjoy. For example, a museum might have a "touch and discover" corner, or videos to watch. They make even the genres I'm not interested in easy to understand. Museums in Latvia are much more conservative. So having lots of interactive elements is really appealing. The only thing is I wish there were more explanations in English, even if they're simple.

Monica: I also thought more English signs would be nice. But aside from that, Japanese museums have a lot to offer. First, I really feel that they're considerate of visitors with no prior knowledge of the subject. They put a lot of thought into the details, and . . . how should I put this . . . there's something very warm about that! I think museums in America are more academic and formal. But Japanese museums are friendly and welcoming for beginners. They often have cute mascots, too.

David: While the content in Japanese museums is good, I was surprised that entry costs money since the museums in London are free. Artifacts like the truncated statue of Date Masamune† at Sendai City Museum are well



Sendai City Tomizawa Site Museum (Chitai-no-Mori Museum)

preserved, and were very interesting to see.

Alise: Yes! You really feel a connection between the past and present. What I found interesting was an exhibit of items handcrafted by the museum's staff. It was labeled "Modern people made these using ancient techniques," and I was amazed to know that people alive today can create the exact same things that people did back then.

Monica: At the Sendai City Tomizawa Site Museum, we made spearheads by chipping away at a rock with a



"Making stone tools using ancient techniques was exciting!" -Alise

† The bust of a statue of Date Masamune on horseback that stood at the main section of Sendai Castle before the war. During World War II, the statue was melted down to make weapons and ammunition, but citizens rescued the bust of Sendai's founder, which can be seen in the museum garden at Sendai City Museum, labeled "Bust of Date Masamune."

What's wonderful are all the interactive elements



That really made me think!

Alise: That's right, we had to write our names on the finished spearheads!

Monica: The tour at the Sendai City Museum of History and Folklore was fabulous as well. They really painted a picture of how conscripted soldiers and their families felt, and there was a censored textbook from the immediate post-war period on display.

David: I thought it was really interesting that part of the building has been preserved from the Meiji Era. The exhibits also displayed actual articles from the war period and before it without long explanations, letting the pictures do the talking.

Alise: I was really excited at how all of the tables and chairs at The Thinking Table in sendai mediatheque are made from blackboard material. It's so cool that you can take notes on all the surfaces!

Monica: It was also interesting taking a tour of the whole facility from inside a tube.

David: The tubes are made of glass, so you can see what events are happening on each floor, allowing you to feel closer to the special projects that are going on. It was a refreshing and unique experience. The Sendai Astronomical Observatory is another very interesting museum. The telescope is huge, and being able to observe stars in the daytime was great.

Monica: I also liked how you could move the huge telescope using a touch screen! For example, if you touch the moon on the screen, the telescope moves to point in the direction of the moon. And while it's moving, it plays cosmic-sounding music. I thought that was a very Japanese touch.

It's interesting to see things that survived from the past



"There are many hands-on activities, and it's nice that you can take home what you've made as a souvenir!" -David

At Sendai Museums, Tours are the Thing to Do!

Do you have any advice for overseas visitors on how to enjoy Sendai?

David: Public transport in Sendai has English signs, so getting around is easy even if you don't understand Japanese. Please don't hesitate to go and visit the places that interest you!

Monica: Definitely visit the museums. And take the tours. Don't be shy just because you're in Japan. If you get over your

hesitation and go on the tours you'll learn a lot of fascinating things. The guides make the Japanese easy to understand too, so don't worry!

Alise: I recommend going on walks. Walking around the city will lead you to discover many distinctive aspects of Sendai and Japan. If you venture further outside of the city, you can experience a different side of Japan that's also nice.

Follow us through the SMMA!

"The Sendai Museum Experience" pamphlet is now available!

SMMA now has an English guide to member museums starring David, Monica, and Alise. The trio checked out each museum and offer helpful comments and recommendations. The pamphlets can be found at SMMA member museums and elsewhere. Volume 2 is on its way!



Available at SMMA member museums, as well as other locations in Sendai City, such as community centers and libraries.



Museum Universe: Wonderful, Mysterious, Interesting

December 19 (Fri.) -20 (Sat.), 2014
sendai mediatheque

"Museum Universe" is a major annual event where the SMMA member museums all gather from across Miyagi at sendai mediatheque to deliver talks, workshops, and special exhibits. In line with the significance of the event, parts of it are focused on making museums feel more accessible, with talks by curators describing their work, and by university students doing museum-related volunteer work explaining their activities. The event also offers a chance to casually interact with curators and staff from each museum. The 2014 Museum Universe was a busy two days, with a wide demographic of visitors, as you can see in the following images.



▲Visitors became Sendai warrior Date Masamune by donning a helmet replica at the Sendai City Museum booth.



▲Christmas card making, using animal fur and bird feathers at the Sendai Yagiya Zoological Park booth.



▲A look at tiny organisms using mobile microscopes designed by university teacher and students at the Tohoku University Museum booth.



▲Participants at the Sendai City Jomon Site Park talk event made stone accessories using Jomon period techniques.