



Coordinator, Japan-in-a-Suitcase Project

Name: **Cheryl Ames**
Profession: **Coordinator, Japan-in-a-Suitcase Project**
Washington, DC)
Number of years in this line of work: **Just over 10**
Native Language: **English**
Other Language(s): **French, Japanese**

1) What languages do you know? How did you learn them?

English, French and Japanese. I am Canadian, and English is my first language. I grew up in Japan where I did my Master's in Marine Biology. After returning to the US, I studied Literature.

2) What is your profession?

I am the Educational Programs Coordinator at the Japan-America Society of Washington, DC.

3) Describe a "typical" day at work.

How do you use your languages in your work?

My position deals mainly with creating Japan-related curricula for the Japanese elementary school children in the greater Washington, DC area. I coordinate school activities and dedicated English and Japanese-speaking volunteers, I attempt to illustrate and bring Japan to life in an exciting and educational way. I write a blog detailing our activities at <http://jisdc-jas.blogspot.com/>. I also manage registration for our Japanese Matsuri (February 12, 2007); and answer questions related to our larger annual events such as Matsuri (April 14). In addition, I am a volunteer researcher at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, review papers on jellyfish, and was fortunate enough to participate in a collecting expedition to Japan.

4) What do you like about your job?

I really like my co-workers, and the members of our organization. We have monthly meetings as an excellent opportunity to learn more and to educate others on Japan: the Smithsonian, as it gives me my Marine Biology "fix."

5) Do you think in more than one language? Under what circumstances?

Yes, sometimes. Depending on the language I am working, studying, or just functioning. I translate for visitors to the Japan-America Society or the Smithsonian. I'm constantly switching between English and French depending on what language the caller speaks. Some members are French.

6) What do you think helped you the most in mastering the foreign/second language?

In order to master a new language, I think it is vital to have a basic understanding of the language you are attempting to learn. With a solid background in French I spent a couple of years in France. I also took Japanese classes at university and then eventually taught English in Japan as part of a program at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa. I guess being immersed in the language helped the most with language acquisition.

7) What opportunities have knowing another language provided in your life, or otherwise?

I would not be working at the Japan-America Society if I did not know Japanese, nor would I have participated in the Smithsonian expedition to Japan. I also had several jobs while in Japan that I did not know French. In general knowing English, French and Japanese has allowed me to work with people from various backgrounds and opened thousands of doors to educational and cultural opportunities.

8) If you had the time to learn another language now, what language would you choose?

I am furthering my knowledge of the languages I already know by occasionally taking classes. Working at the JASW. If I had time to learn another language it would be Farsi because of my interest in Persian language.

9) How do you think your life would have turned out if you had never learned a second language?

Very differently. For starters I would not know the all wonderful people for all over the world.

received a Monbusho scholarship to complete a Masters degree in Japan, where I met an opportunity to discover the francophone areas of Québec – a huge part of Canada's 1

10) In your opinion, are there more career opportunities for people who
I think so. I say this because almost every job I have had (even part-time or internshi

11) What do you think you would be doing if you weren't an Educational I
I would probably work full-time as a researcher or an aquarist.

12) What advice would you give to somebody who wants to have a job lik
languages they should learn?

You will need a background in teaching to some extent, but a degree in teaching is n
and able to create fun and educational presentations that will teach children about .
important to also be outgoing because you will be required to lead the group in Japa
interest of the students and teachers. In addition to making friends with people that
language is Japanese), taking a few language courses will be a plus! To help facilita
visit the JASW website to hear more about our Japanese Language School. The Jap
volunteers to do festivals and classroom visits. Check us out at: <http://www.us-ja>

13) Anything else you'd like to add?

Learning a new language is more than just a linguistic experience. It provides you w
learn how people from different cultures and geographical areas think, feel and live
explore the world through language. I have met many life-long friends with whom I
communicate, let alone build a friendship, if it weren't for our common languages.