



Research Administration Japan

A Day in the Life of a
Japanese University
Research Administrator
(URA): *A Kyoto URA
Explores Wild Animals
in the Kalinzu Forest in
Uganda, with Researchers*

By Tadashi Sugihara

The Kyoto University Research Administration Office (KURA) is a unique URA office as the office designs, plans and manages “SPIRITS,” an internal research fund of the university, independently from other administrative offices. In December 2014, I attended a symposium at Makerere University, Uganda, organized by the Kyoto professor who is the SPIRITS project leader and who assigned me to be the project coordinator. The following description of my trip to Uganda gives a glimpse of the variety of tasks performed by the KURA staff.

Chasing “them” in the forest— why did a URA go to Africa?

Following an experienced Ugandan guide, I walked along the rough unpaved paths in the Kalinzu Forest of Uganda, trying not to be a burden on the rest of my party as my eyes scanned the green wall of vegetation in front of me. I could only guess where the echoing calls



ABOVE: JSPS Symposium on the Ecology and Conservation of Great Ape Populations held at the Makerere University, Uganda. Lively discussions occurred among participants from universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations.

of the monkeys and chimpanzees originated. Listening to the leaves, I could hardly tell whether the rustling was caused by the wind or by the movements of “them.”

Before I go any further, I should explain why I ventured into this country.

On the 9th of August, 2014, I received an email from Professor Takeshi Furuichi of the Kyoto University Primate Research Institute, KUPRI (<http://www.pri.kyoto-u.ac.jp/>), in the city of Inuyama, Aichi, Japan. The professor was replying to my inquiry related to the progress of his research project funded by SPIRITS. In that email, Professor Furuichi said, “It would be really great if you could join the symposium that I am organizing at Makerere University in Uganda.” The symposium, “JSPS Core-to-Core Program Symposium: Ecology and Conservation of Great Ape Populations,” was co-funded by the Japanese Society of Promotion of Science, JSPS

(http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-c2c/adapted_b.html, see List of FY2012 Projects, No. 6), and SPIRITS. Kyoto University has a long history of conducting field studies in Southeast Asia and in Africa, and the KUPRI has been one of the most active research institutes in the study of wild primates worldwide.

Making a trip to Uganda with Professor Furuichi to support his SPIRITS project is part of my responsibility as a program coordinator of this project. However, something else was drawing me to venture to Africa. In May 2013, I was asked to help write a proposal for the “Program for Leading Graduate Schools” supported by JSPS. One of the researchers at KUPRI who was in charge of writing the proposal, Professor Tetsuro Matsuzawa, had conducted pioneering research on the emergence of intelligence in chimpanzees in a project known as the “AI Project” (<http://langint.pri.kyoto-u.ac.jp/ai/index.html>). In August 2013, we received the notification that our proposal had passed the first round of review. I visited Professor Matsuzawa at the KUPRI, where we worked closely to prepare the presentation for the second round. Fortunately, our proposal titled “Primate and Wildlife Science” was accepted (<http://www.wildlife-science.org/index-en.html>). As Professor Matsuzawa was listed as one of participants in the symposium at Makerere University, my trip to Uganda was two-fold in purpose.

Primateology by Africans, for Africans, in Africa

The day I flew out to the JSPS symposium, I was also running a workshop titled “Responsible Conduct of Research,” facilitated by Tony Onofrietti, from the University of Utah, USA. I had met him at the annual NCURA 2014 meeting and had invited him to Kyoto University for this workshop. After the three-hour morning workshop and after finishing several tasks, I left my office and headed for Kansai International Airport (KIX).

Traveling through Hamad International Airport in Qatar, I finally arrived at Entebbe International Airport, Uganda, 21 hours after I had left KIX. Joining a group of symposium attendees at the hotel, we briefly discussed the schedule for the next day with Professor Furuichi, the chair of the symposium.

The following morning, prior to the symposium, an important meeting organized by Professor Furuichi was held. At this meeting, representatives from various African research institutes discussed how they planned to continue and strengthen the collaboration among Africans and researchers from Kyoto University. Professor Furuichi suggested the development of an African Primateological Consortium through which research collaboration and communication could be facilitated in a bottom-up fashion,



ABOVE LEFT: Visiting Kalinzu forest with researchers. From left to right: Muruhabare (Research Center for Natural Science, Democratic Republic (DR) of the Congo), the author, Monkengo-mmpenge (Research Center for Ecology and Forest, DR Congo), Prof. Matsuzawa (KUPRI) and Dr. Hashimoto (KUPRI). **ABOVE RIGHT:** Natsumi Aruga, a graduate student in the Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science, Kyoto University, observing the behavior of chimpanzees in the treetops with binoculars.

meaning that researchers would voluntarily form casual connections. The phrase provided by Professor Matsuzawa, the current President of the International Primatological Society, spoke to the hearts of all the attendees:

“Primatology by Africans, for Africans, in Africa!”

For the next two days, 11 open lectures and 19 activity reports were given. More than 40 scientists participated each day, and each presentation was followed by enthusiastic discussions and questions. The importance of this JSPS symposium was also recognized by the presence of Mr. Jyunzo Fujita, Japanese Ambassador to Uganda, who gave official remarks and extended congratulations on the success of this symposium.

A thunder of applause closed the symposium with participants agreeing that Makerere University would become the host institution for the symposium and that next year’s meeting would become the first “African Primatological Consortium” symposium. I left Makerere University thinking about how to obtain another small fund for the symposium next year, because the support of the JSPS to Professor Furuichi and his collaborators expires at the end of this fiscal year (March 2015).

Leave your office and see what’s happening

During this trip to Uganda, many opportunities arose that reminded me of the reason why Kyoto

University decided to implement the URA system. “Cultivating an environment where researchers can devote themselves to their research,” is the key reason for our existence. How can we accomplish this important mission?

The KURA office has been playing the role of a central office for research administration at Kyoto University (Sugihara et al., 2014). KURA and the Research Promotion Division of the Research and International Affairs Department worked together to introduce the departmental URA offices with the goal of strengthening the relationship between URAs and researchers. While the KURA office is expected to be the center of the Kyoto University URAs as a whole, the staff

WORKSHOP: Responsible Conduct of Research

From the 15th to 17th of December 2014, a workshop entitled “Responsible Conduct of Research” was held in Kyoto. Tadashi Sugihara and Asa Nakano of the Kyoto University Research Administration Office (KURA) organized this workshop that addressed two topics: “Case Studies in Research Misconduct” and “Collaborative Research and the Roles of the Scientist in Society.”

We invited Tony Onofrietti, Director, Research Education at the University of Utah to facilitate this workshop. Although we primarily designed this workshop for URAs, we also tried to

attract researchers so that URAs could learn the differences in how researchers and URAs think about identical issues. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) has been working to establish guidelines for prevention of misconduct during research, therefore, this workshop covered a hot topic. Each day, about 20 participants gathered, forming several groups. Feedback and comments from the participants were very positive, and we plan to extend this workshop further, aiming at the essential training program for URAs and researchers.

at KURA must “walk” by the side of the associated researchers. Understanding what kind of support the researchers need by learning their research perspectives is essential. From this viewpoint, seeing researchers working on-site during this trip was very beneficial. I could also understand how enthusiastic our researchers are as they work in the forest; they paid me little attention once they became intrigued by the wildlife!

After the JSPS symposium at Makerere University, I visited the basecamp for research in the Kalinzu Forest. There I met several young graduate students. One of them, Natsumi Aruga, is a graduate student in the Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Sciences, Kyoto University. I learned that the graduate students worked in Africa collecting data for many months; one student said that she was planning to come back to Japan only once a year. Despite the fact that the environment is obviously very different from Kyoto, their faces were full of happiness and all of them were very energetic. Since the future of our university is in their hands, it is clear that our support has to reach not only full-time researchers, but also graduate students. Finding a way to fund research is considered a task for full-time researchers, however, many other methods can be used to intensify the competence of the researchers who represent Kyoto University. We at the KURA office should not be considered merely “money men.” ■

References

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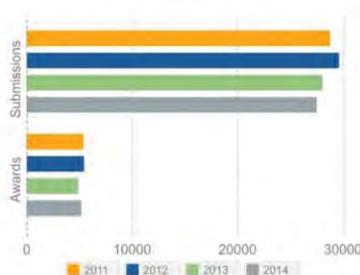


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RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION BY THE NUMBERS

NIH :: ROI :: OUTCOMES

SUBMISSIONS VS. AWARDS



27,502: The total number of RO1-equivalent applications received by NIH in 2014. This is 542 less compared to 2013, 2,125 less compared to 2012 and 1,279 less compared to 2011.

5,163: RO1-equivalent awards made in 2014. This is 261 more than 2013, but 273 less than 2012 and 217 less than 2011.

\$431,177: 2014 average size of RO1-equivalent grants. This is \$25,303 higher than 2013, \$11,856 higher than 2012 and 22,583 higher than 2011.

19%: Overall 2014 success rate for RO1-equivalent applications. This is a 2% increase compared to 2013, a 1% increase compared to 2012 and the same as 2011.

AVERAGE SIZE: RO1 GRANTS



OVERALL RO1 SUCCESS RATE:



SOURCES : <http://report.nih.gov/NIHDatabook/Charts/Default.aspx?showm=Y&chartId=29&catId=2>
<http://report.nih.gov/NIHDatabook/Charts/Default.aspx?showm=Y&chartId=158&catId=2>
<http://report.nih.gov/NIHDatabook/Charts/Default.aspx?showm=Y&chartId=126&catId=13>

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