Collection Management System of Tokyo National Museum

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The presentation will introduce some ideas of information model for museum objects and a collection management system developed by Tokyo National Museum.

Tokyo National Museum (TNM) launched Museum Informatics Research Project in 2005, which had members not only from TNM but also other museums and IT specialists of private companies. Then the project published "Structured Model for Museum Object Information" which aims to support daily museum operations and enable future information sharing among museums in Japan. This model defines 34 attributes and 5 types of entities. International guidelines or standards for museum domain were referred to as sources of basic ideas in the development of the model, but we tried to make the model easily applicable for Japanese museums.

After releasing the model, TNM has been developing its own collection management system based on the model. TNM collection management system is a web application with a database. Core data of objects are integrated into the database, which were distributed among divisions until then. End users are museum staff including curators, registrars, conservators or librarians. Users can search object data with images and can update them. Some of central operations such as regular exhibitions, loan out, preparing meetings for accession are assisted through the system by listing up the objects, arranging and checking schedules of use of objects, printing documents and so on.

The essential concept of the system is that the collection management system should be designed to motivate users to utilize it in daily operations. Then data will be accumulated in the database and can be kept up to date, and then, the users will be motivated to use the system with latest data. This positive cycle is very important to maintain and improve data continuously in long term. Enrichment of data and positive cycle of maintenance must be a solid basis for various future application and information sharing.