

2016 Ishikawa Internship Report  
北國新聞社 The Hokkoku Shimbun  
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This summer, I interned as a journalist in the “Society” section (社会部) of Hokkoku Shimbun, the largest newspaper in the Hokuriku region with daily circulation of over 300,000 copies. I had the chance to publish 10 articles in the morning newspaper on local industry, culture, and education. After completing Princeton in Ishikawa last summer as a rising sophomore, I applied to the internship program hoping to solidify my Japanese ability through immersion in a professional environment, and to understand Ishikawa’s culture from an inside perspective.

I commuted to the office building, the headquarters of Hokkoku Shimbun near the Korimbo bus stop, between 9:00 and 10:00am, depending on the time agreed upon the previous evening. For the duration of the internship, I was assigned a desk near journalists who had recently entered the company after graduation. The office area itself is quite large, with desks divided by section, ranging from Economics and Politics to Editing and Layout. On the typical day, I went to gather information for articles twice a day, in the morning and early afternoon. Returning at about 3:00pm, I wrote articles on either of these two events. My day formally ended at 6:00pm, though I sometimes voluntarily stayed to finish up articles so that I could be assigned to new topics the following day.

My daily schedule changed over the course of my internship. At first, I accompanied journalists to the events or venues they were assigned to write about, ranging from the start of the local *ayu* fishing season to board meetings on the future capacity of Kanazawa port. At many of these events, there were reporters from other local newspapers and radio channels, and I was surprised by the efficiency of these reporters in extracting information and writing articles in time for the evening newspaper. After the reporter I accompanied had asked the questions needed to write an article, he/she gave me the chance to ask further questions directly to the interviewee or spokesperson for the event. Through these initial experiences, I became better not just at formal Japanese, but also at rephrasing complicated questions I might have into simpler words I knew, and thinking of questions on the spot.

As the internship progressed, my section head gave me the chance to express the areas of Ishikawa I was interesting in exploring: the Awazu factory of Komatsu Ltd., the second largest construction equipment company in the world, the modernization of Kanazawa port, the Yamato shoyu factory in Kanazawa, and more. My curiosity centered around the relationship between traditional artisanship and modern industry in Ishikawa prefecture, and the Hokkoku Shimbun reporters were very supportive in arranging opportunities to explore this theme firsthand. I was able to visit the Awazu factory and meet with a manager there to learn about the technological innovations with which Komatsu competes globally. Further, I had the chance to attend a

meeting attended by Ishikawa Governor Tanimoto on plans for the expansion of Kanazawa port, and to attend a reception on board the cruise ship Costa Victoria marking the start of the cruise's docking operations in Kanazawa. I was also able to meet the president of Yamato Soysauce and Miso Co., Ltd. at the brewery in Kanazawa.

The most interesting and unexpected part of the internship was discovering the way in which these separate topics overlapped. I learned that in the past, ships called *kitamaebune* carried rice from the Kaga Domain in present-day Ishikawa prefecture for sale in Osaka. With the development of railroads and improvement of land transport, the importance of Kanazawa port waned, but efforts to deepen Kanazawa port in recent years have allowed Komatsu Ltd. to consider shipping construction equipment overseas through Kanazawa harbor. Costa Victoria is only one reflection of the effort to expand access to Kanazawa, which Governor Tanimoto called, “レール・アンド・クルーズ” in his speech, referring to the newly constructed shinkansen as well. Apart from these aspects, the section head introduced me to completely new aspects of Ishikawa I had not known before, such as the election season (which happened to take place while I was there) and Abare matsuri, an exciting and vigorous festival in Noto peninsula.

From a language-learning point of view, there were naturally a number of times when I did not fully understand what either other reporters were saying, or what the spokesperson for an event was saying. At first, I would often stop the flow of the conversation and ask the person I was speaking to what a certain phrase or word meant. Later in the internship, I learned to balance stopping the conversation for critical words or phrases and letting the conversation continue, writing down or recording (on my phone) parts that I did not understand. On days when I did not have many assignments, I read articles in the newspaper and online.

However, the two language skills that improved the most during my experience were my use of honorific language and my writing ability. After writing articles on topics that I either suggested or was assigned, one of the senior reporters looked over my work and often went over mistakes or places to clarify in the article with me, much like a professor would. The feedback I received was always constructive, and I would say that this is the highlight of the internship experience. I was awed by the speed with which the more experienced reporters could acquire information on an event and write about it in terms understandable across Ishikawa prefecture, while considering whether readers would be interested or not.

Finally, my experiences outside of work were fantastic, as was my experience at Princeton in Ishikawa. My host family was very encouraging and always friendly. As subscribers to the Hokkoku Shimbun, they enthusiastically let me know over breakfast when my articles appeared in the morning paper. Visiting Noto peninsula and the Wajima Asaichi morning market with my host family was nostalgic, but the beauty of the area seemed even greater after discovering new aspects of Ishikawa prefecture at Hokkoku Shimbun.

Altogether, I think that the internship with Hokkoku Shimbun grounded my studies of Japanese with a sense of place. The program showed me that increased Japanese proficiency grants access to the rich culture and history underlying daily life in Ishikawa prefecture.



Abare Matsuri, Ushitsu, Ishikawa Prefecture



Abare Matsuri, Ushitsu, Ishikawa Prefecture



Oyama Shrine, Political Candidate Victory Ceremony



Hokkoku Shimbun Headquarters



Fisherman checking the population of ayu fish

