

Collaborative 'kaizen' practice for better space and material design in a Japanese SAC

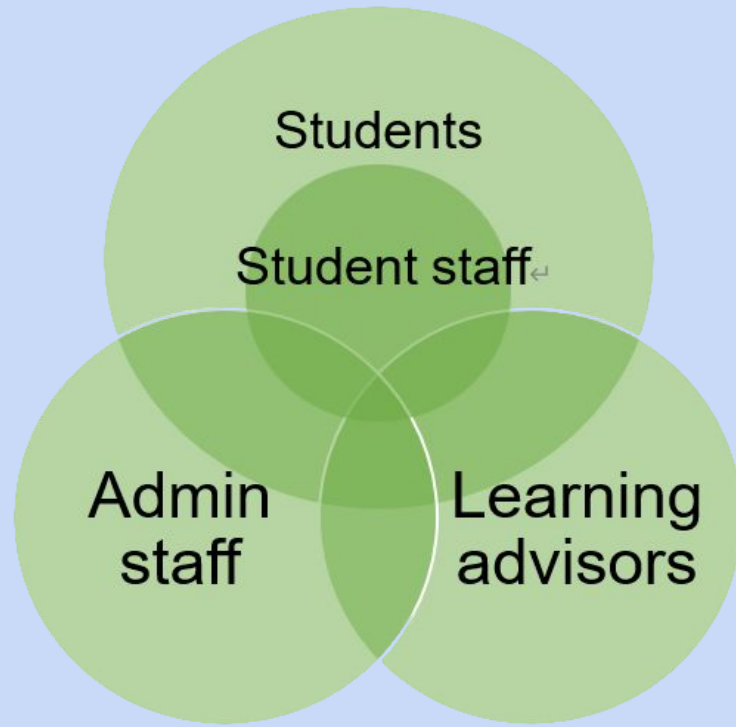


Haruka Ubukata, Emily Marzin, and Kayo Namaizawa
Kanda University of International Studies, Chiba, Japan • salc@kanda.kuis.ac.jp



Background • Context

- Self-Access Centers (SACs): facilities that support learners with diverse needs and interests with the aim of promoting their language learning autonomy
- Kanda University of International Studies: **4,000** undergraduate students majoring in languages, international cultures, and liberal arts / **1,000** users per day in our SALC
- Collaboration in terms of managing the space and resources:
 - SAC student staff:** managing material lending; recommending resources
 - Admin staff:** managing student staff; requesting/evaluating materials
 - Learning advisors:** requesting/evaluating materials; recommending resources



'Kaizen' (改善) practice

- Japanese business philosophy of the practice of continuous improvement to maximize productivity and efficiency at a worksite
 - Applied to a range of fields (e.g. healthcare, psychotherapy)
- Some of the kaizen principles:
- Every task, process, or operation has room for improvement
 - See for yourself to grasp the current situation
 - Take action to contain and correct root causes of problems
 - Kaizen is everybody's business

Material/space changes suggested in our recent kaizen practice

- Technology use and online materials:** e.g. Study/travel abroad information (replace outdated resources with QR codes and online option)
- Inclusiveness:** e.g. Graded readers (replace colors to indicate levels with numbers)
- Multilingualism:** e.g. Conversation materials (add cards and games in different languages)
- Management of space:** e.g. Display resources (consider users' needs to adapt materials and how they should be displayed)

Illustration of our recent collaborative kaizen process (From Oct 2022)

1. Students' opinions of resources in annual survey

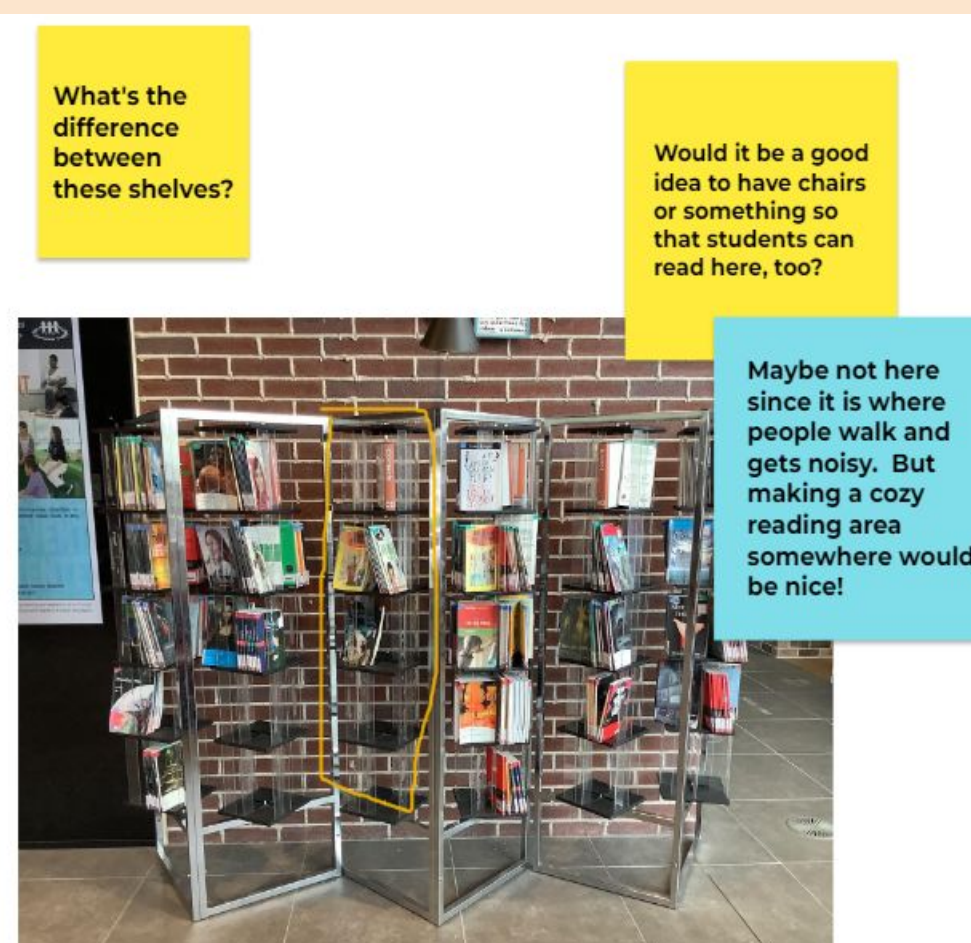
Q24: Please indicate whether you have used these services this semester.

	Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	6 or more times
Materials in the SALC	54.90%	16.18%	11.27%	5.39%	12.25%

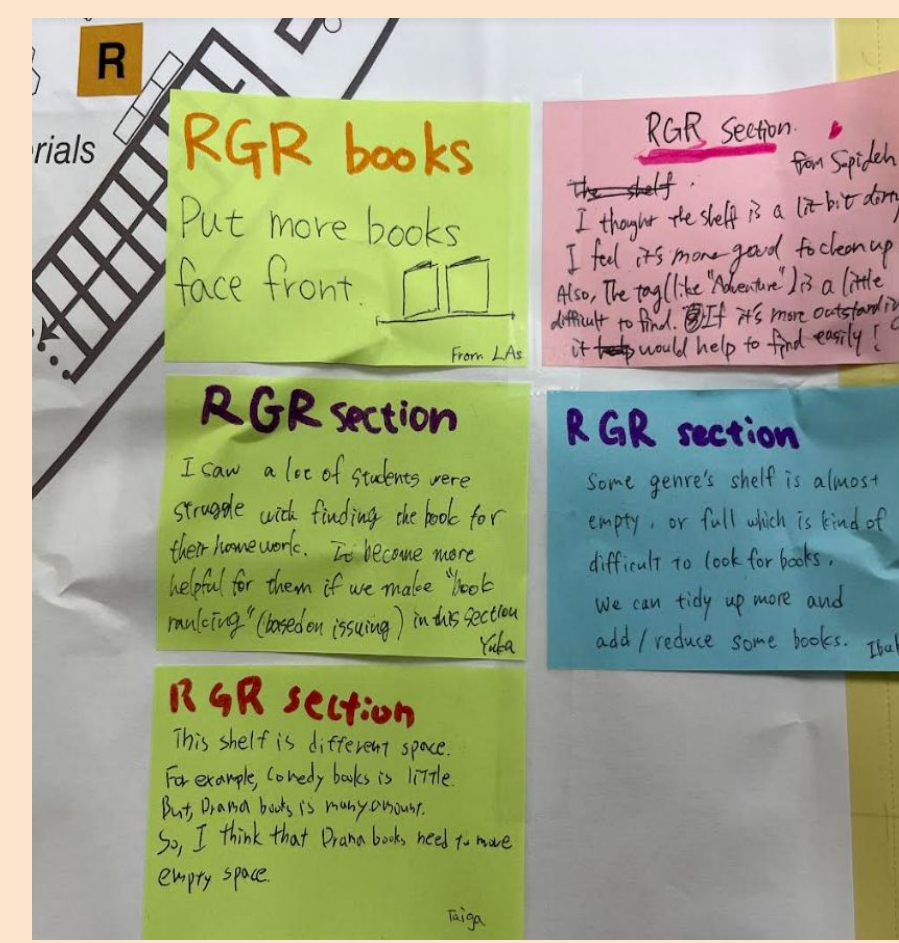
Q25: How would you rate the effectiveness/usefulness of each service this semester?

	I haven't tried it	Poor	OK	Good	Excellent
Materials in the SALC	58.62%	0%	5.91%	21.18%	14.29%

2. Learning Advisors brainstorming on Jamboard



3. Student staff brainstorming with SAC map



4. Casual chat with students around the SAC

But... SAC doesn't have much variety. I would go to the library.

Not many advanced level books; those advanced level books are mostly mystery etc. only a few genres; wants more fun (e.g. romance) advanced-level books

5. Researchers putting together and categorizing ideas generated in the previous steps in a Word Table

6. Learning advisors and admin staff discussing and prioritising the ideas in printed tables

7. Researchers reorganizing the ideas by priority based on Step 6 on a spreadsheet

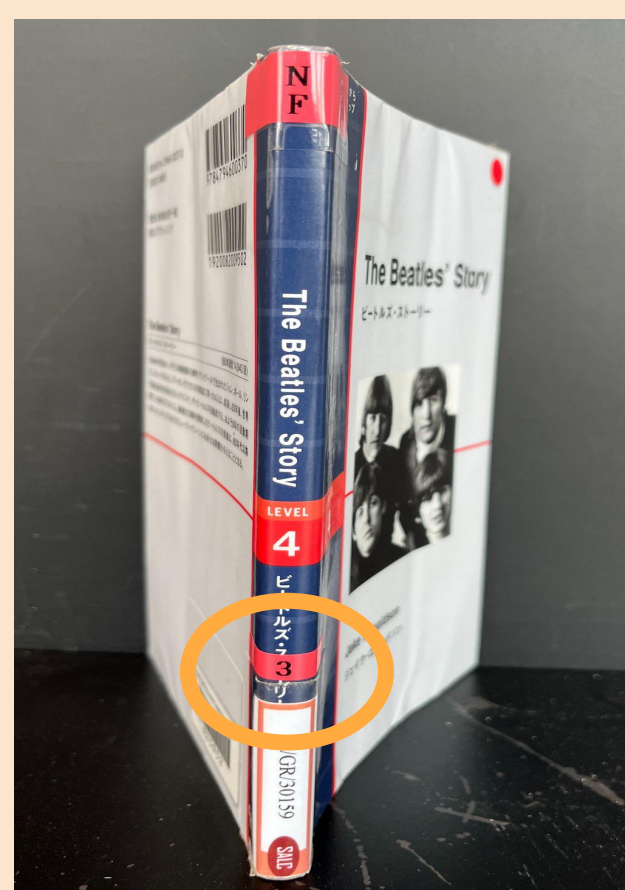
Ideas	4 * or more and volunteers	Graded Readers		
	4 * or more and no volunteers	Allocated LAs/AMs:	"We should do it!" Please put a sticker.	"I want to help!" Write your name if you are interested.
A - Change the display	Less than 4 * and volunteers			
A1 - Level color stickers Make the signage more visible by putting closer to their eyes Use different shapes (color-blind students)	Less than 4 * and no volunteers	*****	H S	Changing to shape (not colors) is important for inclusivity. Get SALCers to help.
A2 - Many unused book stands stuck in the back, change how we display them.		*****	H M	The selves are very deep. The stands in back push the books forward.
A3 - Put more books face front		*****	H	
A4 - What's the difference between these shelves (the ones at the stairs and the ones by the wall)?		*		We can move the section so all the books are on the same selves.

Ideas	Graded Readers		
	"We should do it!" Please put a sticker.	"I want to help!" Write your name if you are interested.	Other comments
A - Change the display			
A1 - Level color stickers Make the signage more visible by putting closer to their eyes Use different shapes (color-blind students)	●●●●●		Changing to shapes (not colors) is important for inclusivity! We can get SALCers to help.
A2 - Many unused book stands stuck in the back, change how we display them.	●●●●●		The selves are very deep - the stands in back push the books forward!
A3 - Put more books face front	●●●●●		
A4 - What's the difference between these shelves (the ones at the stairs and the ones by the wall)? - Differentiate in some way?	●		We can move the section so that all the books are on the same shelves.

Next steps

- Take action on the ideas that have come up so far
- Collaborate more closely with teachers (e.g. kuis8 podcast)
- Collaborate more closely with Learning Communities
- Evaluate the changes with annual survey and casual chats with students

8. Learning advisors and admin staff to take action around the SAC



Before

After

Recommendations

- Involve users in brainstorming ideas
- Use the space yourself to see what could be improved
- Consider different perspectives and needs for inclusivity (e.g. learners with physical or mental disabilities and/or learning differences; students in different departments)
- Prioritize tasks based on your institution's vision, practicability (e.g. budget)
- Decide the deadlines to take action
- Continue observation for future changes