

Sumiyoshi O-Bunko (Book Depository)

Osaka has been an important center for Japan's publishing industry since the Edo period (1603–1867). In 1723, a group of Osaka-based publishers decided to fund the construction of a book depository on the grounds of Sumiyoshi Taisha. They hoped this act of piety would ensure the continued success of their businesses. Given Sumiyoshi's long association with poetry, literature, and entertainment, it seemed a logical place to seek the favor of the gods, and publishers have been donating the first printings of their books to the shrine ever since.

The collection at Sumiyoshi Taisha has grown to some 50,000 volumes, only a portion of which is still stored inside the original depository building. In some cases, the Sumiyoshi O-Bunko has saved rare books from oblivion, when all other known copies were lost in fires or other disasters. It is, in effect, one of Japan's oldest libraries, and the oldest library in Osaka.

Every year in May, books are removed from the depository and archival storage to be inspected and aired. Volunteers leaf through the pages, removing any insects that might have burrowed inside since the previous year.