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Dialogue Beyond Borders

During elementary school, I lived abroad for four years. During my second and third year abroad, I went to an American school. Sometimes, we used the Internet during class to look up information on other states' websites, or to communicate with a famous adventurer, etc.

From America, I moved to Russia, where I finished my fourth and fifth years of elementary school. In my city, there was an Internet café where everyone could get online very cheaply. I also went there from time to time to look up foreign websites for my school presentations.

Even after taking up my life in Japan again as a sixth grader, I have been exchanging e-mail with my friends who live abroad, and I also access websites made for American kids. I also communicate with friends that I play games with online. In other words, although I live in Japan, I am still connected with people in overseas countries through the Internet.

The only thing I can't do, however, is read Japanese websites, since my computer is a foreign model and doesn't have Japanese software installed in it. Because of this, I have come to realize that many Japanese businesses and administration and entertainment agencies don't provide any English information on their websites. I am sure this is a big obstacle for foreigners who live in Japan or persons who are interested in Japan, since it restricts their freedom to search online for information about Japan.

People say that because of the vast leap in information technology, the 21st century will be characterized by ever expanding "internationalization," which will result in a "world without borders." When Japanese people talk about "internationalization," however, I think they should realize that the flow of information is still very much taking place in one direction only; Japan absorbs a lot of information from abroad, but it does not sufficiently provide (English) information to foreign countries. In order to establish a true "Dialogue beyond Borders," people need to bear in mind that they should not only receive but also send out information. It hope that such a mutual flow of information will soon be realized through an international social network that will include Japan.