

## [Announcing the "Disability and Japan in the Digital Age" Program - Podcast Episodes and First Lecture](#)

Discussion published by Benjamin Dorman on Thursday, November 26, 2020

Dear colleagues,

This is to announce the launching of a new project - "Disability and Japan in the Digital Age" - being run through the Anthropological Institute, Nanzan University.

The project includes Asian Ethnology Podcast episodes and lectures. A publication is also being planned.

### **Podcast Episodes**

In [this episode of Asian Ethnology Podcast](#) convenor Mark Bookman (University of Pennsylvania) discusses the project.

Mark interviewed Frank Mondelli (Stanford University) [in this episode of the podcast](#) regarding his research on hearing aids, assistive technologies, and accessibility in Japan.

### **Lecture**

Details of the the first lecture in the "Disability and Japan in the Digital Age" series are as follows:

**Title :** "Feed/back: How the Hearing Aid Molded a Regime of Rhythm in the Postwar Period"

**Lecturer** Frank Mondelli, PhD Candidate, Stanford University

**Commentator** Mark Bookman, PhD Candidate, University of Pennsylvania

**Host** Benjamin Dorman, Professor, Nanzan University

### **Program**

08:00-08:05 Introduction (Benjamin Dorman)

08:05-08:45 Lecture (Frank Mondelli)

08:45-09:00 Comment/Response (Mark Bookman)

09:00-09:30 Q&A

### **Abstract:**

As the Occupation of Japan was drawing to a close in late 1951, a small crowd gathered within the Hirosaki University Hospital in Aomori Prefecture for a unique double-feature concert: a lecture on the personal benefits and possibilities of hearing aids, followed by a curated listening experience of

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folk and other popular music genres on the latest record players. Touted as the first such gathering in the country, the “Meeting of Listening to Sounds” (Oto o kiku kai) brought together national officials, local politicians, and representatives from two of the largest domestic hearing aid manufacturers to demonstrate the future soundscapes that hearing aids could bring not only to deaf and hearing-impaired persons, but also Japanese culture at large.

How did the hearing aid and record player end up being showcased side-by-side? And how did manufacturers get caught up in larger concerns over “listening” devices beyond the classroom at this crucial postwar moment in which Japan would regain more national autonomy?

In this talk, Frank Mondelli argues that the hearing aid was deeply intertwined in the Japanese politics of postwar (re)building, deaf school pedagogical practices, and the development of commercial sound hardware in 1940s and 1950s. Contributing to what Mondelli calls a “regime of rhythm,” group and individual-use hearing aids within these settings played an outsized role in propagating pedagogical expectations of musical and rhythmic listening. Ultimately, Mondelli shows that hearing aids served as a nexus between deaf school populations, elite industrialists, and the commercial soundworld, structuring sensoria to promote ideals of individual self-actualization and national prosperity through collective listening.

**Date and Time** □ December 11, 2020 (Fri) 08:00□09:30 Japan Standard Time

**Format:** Zoom webinar. Free attendance, max 100 participants, pre-registration necessary.

**Language** □ English, with real-time captioning (CART)

**To register for the lecture, please click [this link](#).**

Kind regards,

Benjamin Dorman, Anthropological Institute, Nanzan University