

25 years of progress of the Celluloid Industrial Culture Research Group

Celluloid, known as the world's first synthetic resin, was a typical industry in which Japan accounted for about 40% of the world's production during the pre-war period. At present, however, domestic production has already ceased. But still a comprehensive study on the history of celluloid industry has not yet appeared (Masayuki Tanimoto: Native development and Large Cities).

It was not a coincidence but inevitable that Isao Iwai, who was worried about this situation, received a letter from the United States. Keith Lawell was the sender, and he asked for collaborator of celluloid research in Japan. In 2000, Iwai accepted the proposal and started the Celluloid Industrial Culture Research Group by calling parties involved in the manufacture of celluloid fabrics and processing companies. Therefore, this year (2024) will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and we will follow the trajectory of this research group.

The research group at the time of its inception was never monolithic. Some researchers were enthusiastically involved in celluloids until recently, while others were considering why we should be interested in the celluloids which were already a product of the past. There were also people who were like amateurs, while there were people who were just like living dictionary of celluloid.

As a matter of course, there were some people saying that they should dissolve the association, but in October 2000 Iwai invited Lawell to hold the first celluloid conference under his leadership.

First Celluloid Conference in 2000

(Keith Lawell in the middle of the front row and Isao Iwai in the third from the right of the front row.)



The conference that was held in this way has since come to be called the "Gathering". While making a presentation of the research results, they made effort on activity to make the celluloid (which had already been forgotten) known to the people.

To do so, it was to open a website and announce various topics about celluloid. Fortunately, the announcement activity named Celluloid Salon has been well received, and the number of Salon has been over 250 until now.

Another important task was the collection of celluloids that were being dissipate. It was March 2005 that the exhibition facility which gathered about 100 thousand collections such as literature, dough, products, and manufacturing equipment was opened in Yokohama.

Interior of the exhibition facility in Yokohama



This exhibition facility named “Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama” was destroyed due to aging, but in 2025 it is scheduled to change its location and set up a new exhibition facility. However, it is also exhibiting at the Osaka Celluloid Hall which is a registered tangible cultural property, and at the Daicel Ijin Hall which is located in Aboshi, Hyogo Prefecture to carry out enlightenment activities.

In the course of these activities, exchange with the other museum was created. First, in exhibition "Thousand Technology that changed Japan" conducted in 2018-2019 at the National Museum of Science, our collection was introduced as "celluloids: from daily goods to toys."

At the same time, there were cooperation in an exhibition on synthetic resins held at the Matsudo City Museum.

Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama also fully cooperated in the "Celluloid Town Katsushika" held at the Museum of Katsushika Folk and Astronomy in Katsushika Ward, where the celluloid industry (especially toy manufacturing) was thriving.

Since celluloid were used as films, Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama had a relation with Yoneo Ota, a former professor at Osaka University of Arts and the founder of the Toy Film Museum in Kyoto, and ask to give a lecture on celluloid.

Osaka Celluloid Hall, a registered tangible cultural property of Japan



Former museum, which is now an exhibition facility



As a result of such an interaction activities, a network which spread laterally was formed. There was also a pleasure to be certified as a Chemical Heritage No. 009 of the Chemical Society of Japan.

Certified as a Chemical Heritage of Chemical Heritage No. 009



Production facility that has been certified



Unlike current petrochemical synthetic resins, celluloids are naturally derived. So they have unique softness and gentleness, and since there are still many lovers we intend to carry out activities in the future.

Over the past 25 years, former Daicel Vice President Manabu Kai, Kiyoshi Nakajo, Koji Tsukada, Shozo Wakui of Taisei Kako, Junzo Miyamoto of Omakeya ZUNZO, and Minoru Nagamine of Osaka Celluloid Kaikan who was the original member has all passed away. We would like to express our condolences to these people and hope that they will watch over our future activities.

I would also like to thank Masayoshi Tachikawa, Masazo Nogimura, and Shintaro Hishikawa for their efforts from the beginning of the activities.

For reference, I have attached a table of the title of lectures which have been made recently.

Lecture Year	Title	Publisher
2009	History of Osaka Celluloid Hall	Minoru Nagamine
	Celluloid and Higashinari Ward	Kazuhiko Matsuo
	Century of the celluloid business	Manabu Kai
2010	Ten years of dreaming	Manabu Kai
	Thoughts towards celluloid houses	Isao Iwai
	A decade of progress	Akira Oi
	Elder brothers' cellulose nitrate and younger brothers' cellulose acetate	Toru Shibata
2011	Celluloid of Meiji and Taisho	Akira Oi
2012	Manufacture of fountain pens	Kiyoshi Kawakami
	Blow molding	Hiroshi Miki
	Marketing of celluloid	Yoshihiro ono
	Celluloid in life	Kazuhiko Matsuo
2013	Manufacture of golf club neck socket	Keiichi Hashimoto
	Literature activities in the Tokyo area	Eiichi Hirai
	Celluloid marketing (2)	Yoshihiro Ono
	Celluloid (2) in life.	Kazuhiko Matsuo
2014	About celluloid toothbrushes	Shinichi Inada
	Manufacturing process of celluloid toothbrushes	Katsumi Noguchi
	Transition of celluloid combinations	Yoshihiro Ono
In 2015	History of the Takiron Industrial conversion	Shu Collection
	Molds from Kansai Kosan	Isao Sato
In 2016	Solar brush history	Yoshio Ogura
	Celluloid Industry Trajectories	Kazuhiko Matsuo

	History of Osaka Celluloid Association	Yoshihiro Ono
In 2017	Looking ahead to the Sawayaka Exchange Meeting	
In 2018	Celluloid industry during the Korean War	Eiichi Sadanobe
	150 from the celluloid invention and Daicel 99	Akira Oi
In 2019	From video to digitization of nitrified cotton and cotton acetate films	Yoneo Ota
	Report on the progress of mold survey	Isao Sato
2023	The history of celluloids and Osaka	Kazuhiko Matsuo
	Of the Kansai Celluloid Plastics Industry Cooperative History and future prospects	

Founding members of the Celluloid Industrial Culture Study Group: Isao Iwai, Akira Oi, Hiroshi Miki, and Kazuhiko Matsuo.