

WINDS FROM JAPAN

The Licensing Executives Society Japan

A Memoir of LES Activities

By Chikao Fukuda *

Congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of the Licensing Executives Society of Japan (LESJ). At the request of LESJ's Information Committee, I have tried to think back to activities concerning LESJ and its parent Licensing Executive Society International (LESI).



Personally, I started my legal career at a Tokyo-based law firm in 1971. After three years of legal practice, I moved to New York to study US commercial laws and intellectual property laws at New York University School of Law for the period from 1974 to 1975. I joined LESJ in the 1980s and engaged in various matters as a head of various committees.

Shortly thereafter I started to work with LESI as an international delegate on behalf of LESJ. The first international meeting which I attended was the USA and Canada annual meeting held in Maui, Hawaii in 1989. Incidentally, there was a big earthquake in the San Francisco area on the very first day of the meeting. By this disaster, I remember I eventually missed chances to meet in person there. Since then, I have tried to participate in the official meetings of LESI as much as possible. My participation in LESI gatherings has continued until the Covid-19 pandemic.

I became the President of LESJ in 2002 when the international meeting sponsored by LESI was held in Osaka, Japan. As the LESJ President, I assisted Thierry Sueur, the LESI President and

we had a successful meeting. It was a valuable occasion for me and LESJ. We have learned many things, especially how to plan and open international meetings in Japan.

One year before the Osaka meeting, I attended the LESI meeting in South Africa with my colleague of LESJ. I still recall that there were heated debates among the participants as to whether the suspension of then effective patents against HIV diseases should be allowed in favor for the developing countries in the age of the HIV crisis. Interestingly, similar debates have been held 20 years later at the coronavirus prevalence.

When I was a Vice President of LESI, I received a call from Willy Manfroy, then LESI President. He told me that LESI's committee had decided to recommend me as the LESI President for the term 2007-2008 and asked for my acceptance in advance. I was perplexed at first, but I accepted it finally as I thought that it would be, if so elected, a precious opportunity for an Asian member. I determined in my mind, however, that I would not call for new projects during my term of LESI presidency, as one year is too short as a time span to achieve a meaningful objective. This might sound a bit strange for leaders in the western cultures. However, I thought that the pending matters should be given a priority and such policy would be acceptable to many LES members at that juncture.

While serving as the LESI President, what was most impressive was the improved awareness of practitioners on licensing in Asia and Chinese Taipei. I visited these regions and understood continued support was needed. Asia and Chinese Taipei were not exceptional. I still

remember a tour to South America where the US and Canada committee initiated a first seminar program. I joined the seminar held in Brazil, Argentina and Chile, which were successfully accepted by the local LESs.

The international meeting at my presidency was held in Chicago, USA. It was jointly held with the annual meeting of USA and Canada. Such a joint meeting was quite exceptional. Jim Sobieraj made a tremendous contribution to the meeting, and he was elected as the LESI President in 2016.

Among colleagues with whom I worked for LESI, Yvonne Chua was an unforgettable figure. She was a bright and thoughtful attorney from Hong Kong. She had a sense of balance and I believed in her qualification as the LESI President. After some years passed from my term, with internal procedures completed for recommendation, I relayed to her the intent to recommend her as the next LESI President, as was made by Willy to me. However, her first reaction was not positive. Some time later during the international

meeting, I approached to her and after a chat I said in a whisper “LESI needs you as the president.” She looked embarrassed for a while, but finally accepted it. I still recall the scene where she quietly nodded to express her acceptance.

She took the chair in 2014, she started to launch a campaign of “Joining Hands” (a stronger LES family). Now, it is an established logo of LESI. She has also contributed to foster female followers from Asia such as Patricia Bunye (Philippine, for 2017) and Andy Yap (Singapore, for 2021). Unfortunately, Yvonne passed away in 2021. We lost an invaluable leader from LESI.

For the past 50 years, several LESI Presidents have been elected from LESJ including Mitsuya Okano (1977), Michiko Ariga (1985), Akira Mifune (1992) and Ichiro Nakatomi (2023). I do hope that international leaders will continue to appear from LESJ in the next 50 years.

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\* Past President of LES International & LES Japan, Attorney-at-law, FUKUDA and KONDO

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## 2023 LES Japan Annual General Meeting

**By Yasuo Fujii, Ph.D.\***

LES Japan held its Annual General Meeting on February 15th 2023 both in-person and online. Kenichi NAGASAWA, President of LES Japan, after giving his opening remarks, reported LES Japan activities in 2022, its 50th anniversary year, including: the Annual Conference as the first in-person Annual Conference in three years; the 50th Anniversary Memorial Symposium; three Round-Table Discussions (1st: Chief Judges of the Intellectual Property High Court, 2nd: Commissioners of the Japan Patent Office, and 3rd: Presidents of LES Japan); and publication of the 50th Anniversary Magazine.

Then Mr. Nagasawa announced the plan of LES Japan activities in 2023 based on the following policies.

1. LES Japan will plan and hold its Annual Conference 2023 to provide its members with the opportunity for sharing the latest IP trends and LES Japan activities, as well as in-person networking.

2. LES Japan will actively join LES International events and interact with other LES societies to kick off the next 50 years of the organization.

3. LES Japan will promote preparation for introducing a new group membership to enhance merits that its members can enjoy.

4. LES Japan will facilitate vigorous activity of committees and working groups, and dissemination of their activity results.

5. LES Japan will continue to hold monthly seminars and licensing practice courses to provide its members opportunities for study and research.



Mr. Kenichi Nagasawa,  
President of LES Japan



Cover of LES Japan 50th  
Anniversary Magazine



Finally Koji SAITO (ASICS Corporation), a new Vice President of LES Japan, and six new Board members were introduced. Mr. Saito and some new Board members gave short speeches expressing their enthusiasm.



Mr. Koji Saito, new Vice President of LES Japan

After the meeting, Akihiro SAKO, Chief of Organizing Committee, announced that the Annual Conference 2023 will be held on July 14th-15th in Hamamatsu city, which is located halfway between Tokyo and Osaka. The LES Japan members are looking forward to gather in-person at the Annual Conference this year!



Venue in Hamamatsu city for 2023 LES Japan Annual Conference

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Editors' Note

This issue includes articles "A Memoir of LES Activities" by Mr. Chikao Fukuda, and "2023 LES Japan Annual General Meeting" by Mr. Yasuo Fujii.

Thank you for supporting "*WINDS from Japan*." This newsletter will continue to provide you with useful information on activities at LES Japan and up-to-date information on IP and licensing activities in Japan.

If you would like to refer to any back issues of our newsletters, you can access them via the following URL:

<https://www.lesj.org/en/winds/new.php>

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