

Yasuko Ito Watt

Associate Professor, and Director of Undergraduate Studies of East Asian Languages and Cultures

Yasuko Ito Watt is retiring from the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC) after 16 years at Indiana University. Professor Watt came to Bloomington as EALC's first Japanese language coordinator, and during her time at IU she has built a program that is now among the strongest in the country, while herself becoming a distinguished national leader in the field of Japanese language pedagogy.

After graduation from International Christian University in Tokyo, Professor Watt obtained a master's degree in library science at Rutgers University. She returned to Japan and undertook advanced study in classical Japanese poetic manuscripts at Kyoto University, but ultimately elected to come back to the United States to pursue degrees in applied linguistics at Columbia University, where she received her doctorate in 1991. Professor Watt's initial appointment in the state of Indiana was at DePauw University, and she joined the IU faculty in 1992.

At IU Professor Watt has overseen a period of phenomenal growth in the Japanese language program. She has implemented several generations of curriculum development and been a guiding force in the advancement of professionalized training for associate instructors and the establishment of a degree program in Japanese language pedagogy at the master's level. She has carefully nurtured overseas study programs, and administered with great success a complex language program in a constant state of change and development. Professor Watt would be quick to point out that these accomplishments have been group efforts by EALC's faculty in Japanese, which includes colleagues at all ranks. What has most distinguished Professor Watt's tenure as coordinator has been her ability to sustain the high energy and cooperative harmony of a collegial team in maintaining perpetual improvement in the Japanese program, qualities that equally characterized her two successful terms as director of IU's East Asian Summer Language Institute. Professor Watt's care and engagement in the life of the department have also led to several extremely successful terms as director of undergraduate studies, and students who have majored in EALC during these periods have experienced an exceptional richness of academic community as a result of Professor Watt's commitment and warmth.

Apart from Professor Watt's outstanding leadership as program administrator, she is even better known for her skills as a teacher. The combination of demonstrated learning among her students and their warmly expressed appreciation of her teaching has led to numerous teaching awards. Included among these are the All-University Distinguished Teaching Award, membership in IU's Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching, the Indiana Association of Teachers of Japanese Teacher of the Year Award, and the Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association Collegiate Teacher of the Year Award. Professor Watt's teaching contributions have gone well beyond the language classroom, including courses in Japanese language and culture, as well as specialized courses in classical

Japanese and in advanced reading and writing. Moreover, Professor Watt has been a frequent member of master's and Ph.D. committees, where her literary sensitivity, critical attentiveness, and mentoring skills have had profound influence on graduate students.

Professor Watt has published numerous articles on Japanese language and pedagogy, co-authored two books with colleagues from IU and Wisconsin, and been a leading national and regional figure in the field of Japanese language. She has played an instrumental role in setting national standards for Japanese language and teacher accreditation, serving on many national committees and program review panels. She served two terms on the board of directors of the Association of Teachers of Japanese, including a term as chair of the program committee for the association's annual convention. She has served for five years as head judge for the Japanese consulate's Midwestern Speech Contest, held annually in Chicago. In Indiana, she was a leader in the vanguard effort to articulate the state's K-12 instruction in Japanese with college-level curricula. Moreover, Professor Watt's broad intellectual engagement has led to roles beyond the area of Japanese language, as a nationally elected member of the Council on Conferences of the Association for Asian Studies, and this past year as the president of the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs.

These national and regional roles have led to a year-round academic schedule of travel, but Professor Watt's departmental commitment has been such that she has seemed always to be here. Her daily presence, early to late, in EALC's departmental offices has become essential to the life of the department and her IU colleagues' sense of community. For EALC students at all levels and in all languages, she is the faculty member most likely to represent for them the character of the department, and we have been extraordinarily fortunate that this is so.

Professor Watt is looking forward to returning her focus to engagement in Japan's literary culture. She plans to spend next year in Japan and, after many years primarily devoted to advancing the study of modern Japanese, to begin a new phase of life translating literature in classical Japanese, a language that has attracted her since her earliest studies. Professor Watt has forged strong ties to many departments, especially those involved in foreign language teaching and research. Her retirement will be deeply felt by EALC colleagues, staff, and students, and by many in the campus community.

Bob Eno