

KOBEnet Activities in IIS – An Earthquake Disaster Information Network for Researchers –

by

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1. Introduction

The Great Hanshin–Awaji Earthquake on January 17, 1995, caused paradigm shifts in various aspects of Japanese society. After a period of reflection on the extensive damage of the quake, the authors and their colleagues have started a voluntary organization called "KOBEnet". The objectives of KOBEnet are 1) information transfer among worldwide researchers related to earthquake engineering, 2) promotion and support of technical voluntary activities related to the disaster, and 3) international cooperation among researchers. In this paper, activities of KOBEnet after the earthquake are briefly described.

2. Setup of KOBEnet

The Great Hanshin–Awaji Earthquake had a great impact on researchers related to earthquake engineering. The authors asked themselves "What should we do now? What can we do now as researchers?" Since extensive damage and a vast range of diverse activities taking place after the earthquake caused difficulties among earthquake engineering researchers in grasping correct and comprehensive aspects of the disaster, the authors came to a conclusion that a human network to transfer information among researchers and to support various activities concerning restoration operations in affected areas was most needed. Addressing this point, a voluntary group called "KOBEnet" consisting of staff and students of the Institute of Industrial Science (IIS), The University of Tokyo, was established on January 30 at IIS. *Table I* shows start-up members of KOBEnet. The purpose of KOBEnet is to facilitate transfer of information among researchers worldwide and to support technical activities related to the earthquake. KOBEnet has set up its headquarters office and an exhibition room to respond actively to incoming requests.

Table I: Start-up members of KOBEnet

Representative	Prof. Tsuneo OKADA
Vice-Representative	Prof. Tsuneo KATAYAMA
Secretary General	Prof. Fumio YAMAZAKI
Secretary	Profs. Ken-ichi OHI, Yoshiaki NAKANO and Kimiro MEGURO
Members	Profs. Koichi TAKANASHI, Fumio TATSUOKA, Ryosuke SHIBAZAKI, A. S. HERATH and Ken-ichi KAWAGUCHI Drs. Takayoshi KAMATA, Akemi NISHIDA, Yukihiro KOHATA, Huanan TONG and Masataka TAKAGI Messrs. Fumitoshi KUMAZAWA and Atsushi MIKAMI

3. Activities

KOBEnet acts as an IIS's window for worldwide communication between IIS and other organizations as described in the following:

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- (1) KOBEnet collects information on the activities of academic societies, non-government organizations, national and local government. The up-to-date information is made available to the public at the exhibition room as shown in *Photo 1*. *Fig. 1* shows the number of visitors to the exhibition room. To date, approximately 600 people visited the room, excluding about 300 visitors during the 2-day IIS OPEN HOUSE on June 8 and 9. The exhibition room will be open until at least December 31, 1995.

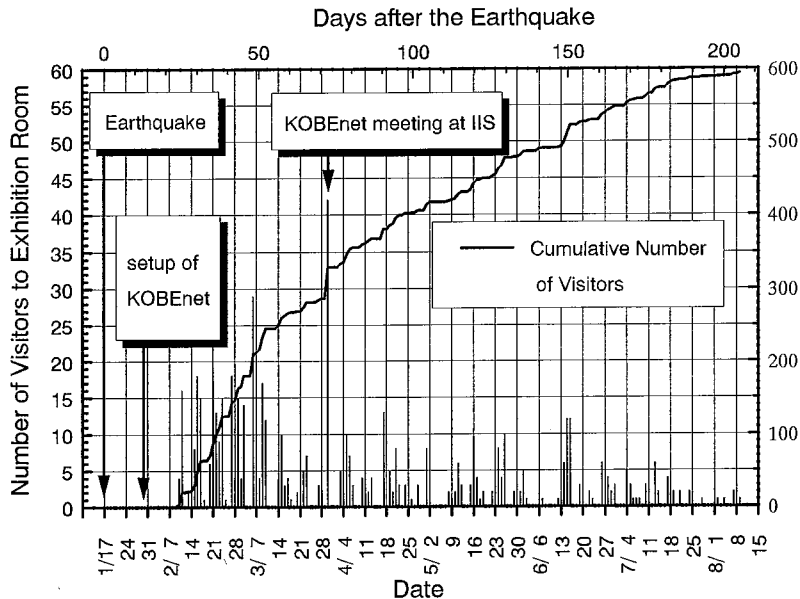


Fig. 1: Number of visitors to the exhibition room

- (2) KOBEnet distributes information through various media such as Internet, fax, newsletters etc., to foreign and Japanese engineers and researchers belonging to different professional associations, cooperating with the International Center for Disaster-Mitigation Engineering (INCEDE) of IIS. KOBEnet has accepted reconnaissance teams from more than 15 countries (as of May 1995); France, Switzerland, Korea, USA, Israel, China, Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, Italy, Russia, Croatia, New Zealand, UK, etc.; and provided them briefings on up-to-date and comprehensive information on the quake to help their field survey (*Photo 2*).
- (3) KOBEnet provides the members of the net with information to join the activities of other technical voluntary organizations. Several members of the net actively participated in building damage inspections by voluntary engineers. Voluntary students also participated in technical and social activities through KOBEnet to support the affected areas.
- (4) KOBEnet supports development of technical databases such as GIS database on the earthquake damage and strong ground motion database. Cooperating with the Japan Meteorological Agency, strong motion database is delivered to researchers by e-mail.

(5) KOBEnet also supports researchers' network setup in other regions. Several regional meetings were initiated by KOBEnet (*Photos 3 and 4*), and regional networks such as KOBEnet-Nagoya, KOBEnet-Chugoku and KOBEnet-Shikoku started.

4. Closing Remarks

Once a large scale disaster attacks a certain region, local researchers there may be too busy to respond to various and flooding requests. It is also difficult for a single researcher or researchers involved in a single specialized association to respond quickly even if they are required to provide accurate information. This situation is especially so when the disaster scale is large and extensive. Following the devastating disaster due to the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the importance of human resources network was strongly recognized. Such a network which can link different professional associations needs to be established and be available at the time of a disaster.

KOBEnet is the first attempt in Japan and may be a pilot case in researchers' community to establish and utilize a human network for transferring and exchanging disaster information. The authors hope that researchers may understand the importance of such network and that a network like KOBEnet can be promptly established in the most appropriate region when a next disaster may unfortunately occur in the future.



Photo 1: Information Exhibition Room of KOBEnet-IIS



Photo 2: Briefings to Reconnaissance Team of the Italian Government



Photo 3: Regional KOBEnet Meeting in Tokyo



Photo 4: Regional KOBEnet Meeting in Kyoto