

I. Introduction

In 2009, there were two remarkable events that occurred at SPring-8. The first event is that the total number of SPring-8 users visits reached 100,000. The second event is the budgets cuts proposed by Japanese Revitalization Unit. These two contrasting events imply that the importance of SPring-8 has been very clear to researchers, but not so to the public.

It was on June 5, 2009, that the number of total user visits to SPring-8 has reached 100,000. This record demonstrates that SPring-8 has continuously and successfully kept providing researchers with an advanced research platform to pioneer their scientific activities. Materials, life, and environmental sciences are forming the core areas of the academic activities, while the applications towards industrial products, cultural heritages, and forensic cases are exploring the application areas of synchrotron radiation science and technology.

Among the various scientific events held in 2009, the 1st Japan-United Kingdom Joint Workshop on Synchrotron Radiation Industrial Applications was held in Kobe, August 2009. The workshop was organized in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce concluded in 1858. SPring-8 and Diamond Light Source were selected as the representative facilities for Japan and the UK, respectively, because of a MoU concluded between them. Having the pleasure of the company of people from MEXT and the UK embassy, the delegations from SPring-8 and Diamond Light Source reported the current status and discussed the prospects of industrial applications in each facility.

Another important scientific event that deserved to be emphasized was the first SPring-8 Conference held in Tokyo, September 2009. Previously, the SPring-8 Symposium and SPring-8 Industrial Application Symposium were almost independently organized to report and discuss the outcomes from academia and industrial domains, respectively. To cross-fertilize both regions by directly exchanging information, these two major symposia were held at the same venue and the same period this year, and was called SPring-8 Conference. Having the pleasure of the company of people from MEXT, the 1st SPring-8 Conference was

successfully held with more than 400 participants.

Additionally, another milestone activity was the 1st symposium on the SPring-8 Upgrade Plan held in Tokyo, June 2009. The SPring-8 Upgrade Plan with 2019 set as the target year is aimed at further developing and improving not only the accelerator complex and its beamlines but also its effective utilization, and has been examined by a working group comprising the scientists and engineers of RIKEN and JASRI who will lead the next generation. That was the first time that the SPring-8 upgrade plan was revealed to the outside, and it attracted much attention from many users and companies. The working group concluded that the plan should be developed through extensive discussions to meet the needs of the SR research community.

The construction of a new contract beamline of Kyoto University called Advanced Basic Science for Battery Innovation (BL28XU) was approved October 2009. This new beamline will be constructed to promote research and development on an advanced method that can make the *in situ* dynamic atomic-level observation of the structures and basic reaction mechanisms of batteries possible. It must contribute greatly to the rapid progress in high-performance batteries, and lead to the development of electric vehicles for wide spread use. This new beamline will be commissioned in 2011.

On the 30th of November 2009, the Government Revitalization Unit approved the recommendation made by its working group, which stated that the SPring-8 budget request should be reduced by between 1/3 and 1/2 for fiscal 2010. Since it was clear that SPring-8 would not be able to provide X-ray beams to its users with such drastic budgets cuts, the SPring-8 users as well as the international synchrotron radiation community petitioned the Government Revitalization Unit to reverse its decision. After high-level deliberations, the Cabinet decided on December 25 to appropriate 8.49 billion JPY, 170 million JPY down from the previous year, to facility operation and maintenance, with which SPring-8 should be able to ensure the same level of operation hours as currently exist.