

Japan academics sorry for 'robot' cleaning woman cover

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A Japanese academic society has apologised for the front cover of their journal, which used a drawing of a cleaning woman with a cable in her back to depict the idea of artificial intelligence.

The Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence (JSAI) was hoping to make "Jinkou Chinou (Artificial Intelligence)" more appealing to potential readers with a cover illustration on the first edition of the new year.

Out went the dense tracts of text and complicated diagrams that have adorned the front for the last few decades, and in came an attractive, doe-eyed young woman holding a sweeping brush and with a thick cable plugged into her back.

A red-faced JSAI admitted Thursday that its attempt to popularise its small-circulation magazine may have misfired and apologised for any offence it had caused.

"The front-cover design is not intended to discriminate against women," the group said in a statement on its website.

The design "gave... room for the interpretation that women should clean," it said.

"We deeply regret that, as a public academic group, this matter was not considered more carefully," said the statement issued under the names of

the journal's chief editor and his deputy, both of whom are scientists.

The group noted, however, that [artificial intelligence](#) is not an easy thing to depict as it has no physical form.

"The appearance of any future robot that uses artificial intelligence to perform everyday tasks is a difficult issue," it said, adding the society would continue to explore the problem.

The journal, which sells 3,000-3,500 copies, is published every two months and the January cover design was selected from about 100 ideas submitted to a public competition JSAI held.

No decision has yet been made on the look of the March issue, the society said.

While attitudes are changing, especially among younger people, housework remains overwhelmingly the responsibility of women in Japanese homes.

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