

SINGAPORE

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD OF SINGAPORE

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ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2001 – 2002

INTRODUCTION

The National Library Board (NLB) was established on 1 Sep 1995. Its mission is to expand the learning capacity of the nation by bringing information to the people. The NLB oversees the management of the National library, two regional libraries, 18 community libraries, 46 community children's libraries, as well as libraries belonging to government agencies, schools and private institutions. NLB also administers the Singapore Management University Library.

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS

LIBRARY RENOVATION

The National Library Board continues to upgrade the facilities of its existing libraries to cater to the changing needs of users. The Bedok Community Library (BECL) was upgraded and re-opened in November 2001. It has a café, multimedia stations, self-servicing borrowing stations, a 24-hour bookdrop service and a special Malay collection. The collection is housed in a specially designated room with 30,000 print and non-print materials. A special health corner called the "Discover Health @BECL" has exercise, health and weight machines, body fat analyzer and blood pressure machine for users to check their individual fitness levels. Health talks and activities are organised for members of the public as well.

SERVICES

Loans, visitorship, enquiries and membership continue to increase at the National Library in 2001. The number of loans increased from 25 million to 27.7 million and visitors to the library reached 26 million compared with 21.1 million in 2000. The number of enquiries increased from 0.65 million to 1.1 million and membership rose to 1.96 million from 1.86 million.

On 18 October 2001 the National Library Board launched a service that allows patrons the convenience of managing their library accounts by using mobile communication technology. With this service, called the Mobile Services via SMS, library members can check their loan status, renew items, pay outstanding fees/fines and receive reminders to return library materials anytime, anywhere even when they are on the move.

A Born to Read, Read to Bond Project, aimed at promoting the reading habit among parents and their children from birth to three years old was launched by the National Library Board and the Ministry of Community Development and Sports on 27 November 2001. Parents of newborn babies were given "Born to Read, Read to Bond" bags consisting of tips on reading and parenting, a list of nursery rhymes, a library guide and membership registration forms at participating hospitals. A series of reading programmes throughout the year to promote reading and family bonding will be organised in 2002. Talks on parenting were conducted at hospitals and public libraries. A parent support group called the Read-N-Bond Group will be formed at selected public libraries to give parents an opportunity to share experiences and cultivate a love of reading in their children.

A remote bookdrop at the Maybank Auto Lobby at Capital Towers was introduced in May 2001 to enable members of the National Library Board libraries to return the books borrowed from any community or regional library.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The National Library Board launched eLibrary Hub on 7 September 2001. eLibrary Hub allows registered patrons to carry out a host of online library transactions, submit enquiries remotely as well as make epayment via ecommerce infrastructure. eLibrary Hub also offers patrons econtent and services that suit their personal interests and caters to their professional needs.

NEW NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING

The National Library Board held the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new National Library Building on 30 October 2001. The new National Library building, situated at Victoria Street, is scheduled to be opened in 2004. The new building will house the National Reference Library, the Central Regional Library and the headquarters of the National Library Board.

REGIONAL EVENTS

National Library Board organised the inaugural World Library Summit 2002 (WLS 2002) from 22 to 26 April 2002. The theme for WLS 2002 was "Global Knowledge Renaissance" and it had an attendance of over 1,000 professionals in information and knowledge related fields to meet and exchange ideas during the event.

The National Library Board organised the second Asian Children Festival from 2 to 11 November 2001. Over 50 activities were organised at public libraries and other public venues. The key highlights of the festival were the Asian Congress of Storytellers, the Asian Congress of Children's Librarians, Asia Children's Expo and Asian Children's Film Festival.

INNOVATION AWARD

The National Library Board was awarded the Innovative Organisation Award in recognition of its 'exceptional efforts in innovation'. The award was organised by the Economic Development Board, the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office, Public Service Division and the Productivity and Standards Board. Singapore's Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, presented the award on 16 November 2001. The judges cited the transformation of the traditional library into a lifestyle product with its many innovative services and technology applications, especially the world's first patented Electronic Library Management System.

CDNLAO

The 10th Meeting of the Conference of Directors of National Libraries of Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) was held on 21 April 2002 at the National Library Board of Singapore. The meeting was attended by Directors and representatives from 14 member countries. The members updated each other on national developments in the area of librarianship and libraries. A total of 14 country reports were submitted and presented at the meeting.

Members were informed that the National Diet Library would stop producing the printed copies of the CDNLAO Newsletter by the end of 2002. The Newsletter will only be produced in electronic format only.

The meeting agreed that Brunei and Philippines host the CDNLAO 2003 and 2005 respectively as these two countries will be hosting the CONSAL in 2003 and 2005 respectively. China would then host CDNLAO 2004.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act 1998 and its implications for CDNLAO members were discussed at the meeting. There was also a presentation and demonstration of how digital library services can be deployed to remote communities.

CONSAL SECRETARIAT

The Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL) Secretariat was established in April 2000 and is hosted by the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore. The functions of the Secretariat are to plan and execute programmes and activities in accordance with the objectives of CONSAL.

The CONSAL Executive Board approved 5 collaborative projects with Singapore, Thailand and Philippines as coordinators. Projects were chosen based on their relevance to the current state of development in the region and also what members felt are important areas of concern in the respective countries.

The 3rd and 4th CONSAL XII Executive Board Meeting was held on 6 Feb 2002 in Brunei and 21 April 2002 in Singapore, respectively. CONSAL XII, which will be hosted by Brunei Darussalam, will be held on 4-8 May 2003. The theme of CONSAL XII is "Information Resources Empowerment: Enhancing Knowledge Heritage".

The CONSAL Secretariat initiated the inaugural CONSAL Academic Librarians Meeting on 22 Apr 2002 in Singapore. Among the agenda of the meeting were: Terms of Reference for CONSAL Council of Chief Librarians and Cooperation in Resource Sharing.

As part of the projects endorsed by the CONSAL Executive Board, a guidebook entitled "Guide to Regional Intellectual Property Laws for Librarians" was published and launched during the World Library Summit Gala Dinner on 24 April 2002 in Singapore.

In April 2002, the CONSAL Executive Board awarded a CONSAL Outstanding Librarian Award to a Philippines librarian who has made significant contributions to the library profession or to improving the relations among libraries of CONSAL member countries. Six nominations were received from the member countries. The announcement and the presentation of the first CONSAL Outstanding Librarian Award was made on 24 April 2002, during the World Library Summit Gala Dinner in Singapore. Mr Antonio M Santos, Chief Law Librarian from the University of the Philippines College of Law Library was selected as the CONSAL Outstanding Librarian for year 2002. The award included sponsorship and participation at World Library Summit in Singapore, as well as airfare, accommodation, registration fee, commemorative plaque and cash prize of S\$1,000. The first award was sponsored by Blackwell's Book Services.

ISSUES

As in other countries, NLB continues to be affected by the changes brought about by the rapid advances in information and communication technologies and the emergence of the Internet and knowledge economy. The major issues are in:

- Preservation/digitization
- Copyright
- Legal Deposit of non-print materials
- Payment for services – mechanism
- Permanency of digital publications
- Print versus electronic; physical library versus virtual library
- Ownership versus access
- New skills and knowledge
- Career track for library professionals
- Language publications and collections
- Performance measures or indicators
- Changing role of libraries in the new economy
- Promoting and sustaining reading habit and interest

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