

# SINGAPORE

## NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD

### DR N VARAPRASAD — CHIEF EXECUTIVE

#### ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2007

#### IFLA REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND OCEANIA

The National Library Board Singapore (NLB) was appointed the Regional Office for Asia and Oceania on 1 January 2006, with Ms Tan Keat Fong as the new Regional Manager. The inauguration of the IFLA Regional Office took place on 6 April 2006. On that same day, Mr Peter Lor, Secretary-General, IFLA and Ms Ngian Lek Choh, Deputy Chief Executive, NLB also signed the "Joint Collaboration Agreement for the Location of the IFLA's Regional Office for Asia and Oceania in the Republic of Singapore".

On 19 and 20 March 2007, NLB hosted the IFLA Regional Standing Committee for Asia and Oceania (RSCAO) mid-year meeting. The meetings planned the future activities for the region and discussed the conference papers and programme for the World Library and Information Congress: 73rd IFLA General Conference Programme, Durban from 19 to 23 August 2007. The committee members also reviewed the projects and selected the candidates for scholarship and training attachment for Asia and Oceania sponsored by IFLA Action for Development through Libraries Programme Core Activity (ALP) 2007.

In 2006, two issues of the IFLA Asia and Oceania Section Newsletter produced by the IFLA Regional Office for Asia and Oceania were made available on IFLANET: <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s26/index.htm>.

#### COLLECTIONS

##### Developing an Asian-Centric Collection

Recognising the growing importance of Asia and the increasingly important role it will play in the 21st century, coupled by the development of national initiatives, one of the key deliverables outlined in the Library L2010 Report is to develop NLB as a first stop for Asian content and collection services - the gateway for knowledge on Asia.

The Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (LKCRIL), in collaboration with the Library and Professional Services (LPS) Group and the Digital Resource Service Group, has developed a set of Asian-centric collection profiles to be implemented. The development of the profiles was triangulated using three major sources, namely user demand, viability of collection development and national directions.

##### Donor Collections

The Lee Kong Chian Reference Library's Donors' collection holds 25,000 items; the Asian Children's collection (20,000 items); and the Singapore and Southeast Asian collections (240,000 items).

On 28 September 2006, the National Library Board (NLB) entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with Professor Edwin Thumboo for the donation of his personal collection. The collection comprises, approximately, 4,000 items that span the fields of poetry, literary criticism, religion, nationalism and history. Professor Thumboo, an Emeritus Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore is an academic, poet and critic. In the 2006 National Day Awards, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in his capacity as a Distinguished Poet and Literary Scholar. He is also one of the National Library (NL) Distinguished Readers appointed this year. The NL Distinguished Readers initiative pays tribute to local experts and prominent personalities in Singapore, for their outstanding achievements and service to the nation.

The late Masuri S.N. was one of Singapore's pioneers in modern Malay poetry and a founding member of Angkatan Sasterawan '50 (Asas '50). In September 2006, his family donated his private collection consisting of over 600 items, to NLB. His personal works and artefacts are on loan to NLB with the possibility of digitising his manuscripts are being negotiated.

The late Naa Govindasamy was one of Singapore's prolific literary pioneers who wrote several plays, dramas and short stories. A writer, educator and Internet researcher, he was one of the major contributors to the Tamil digital renaissance of the 20th anniversary, taking the Tamil language online. His family has donated about 600 books on Singapore and Malayan literature from his personal collection.

The family of the late Li Rulin, a well-known Singaporean writer and literary editor, donated about 500 items to NLB along with an agreement allowing the digitisation of his manuscripts.

Other notable donations include:

- The family of Lin Chen, a prominent Chinese playwright who died in 2004; donated about 3,000 items on theatre to NLB.
- Catholic Resource Centre, which provided NLB the digital rights of the Catholic News (from 1939-1968) comprising news and pictures of old Singapore as well as Catholic missions and churches in Singapore.
- Hok Tek Chi Loke Yah Teng Clan Association, which donated five volumes of documentary records covering the period 1887 to 1970, with digital rights provided to NLB.
- The family of Kouo Shangwei, a well-known Singapore photographer who passed away in 1988, donated more than 6,000 photographs, slides and artefacts featuring mainly Singapore scenes from 1950s to 1980s.

### **Loan of private collections**

An agreement was made with the family of the late Mr Kuo Pao Kun, Singapore's prolific playwright, for a long-term loan of Mr Kuo Pao Kun's private collection of about 1,000 items of material. The collection includes books, manuscripts, letters, etc.

The family of the late Mr Harun Aminurrashid, one of Singapore's Malay literary pioneer, has loaned us his private collection of over 1,000 volumes of material. The collection includes books, manuscripts, letters, etc.

Selected items from the above collections which have been donated or loaned to NLB will be featured in the upcoming Donors Gallery at the National Library.

### **Preservation and conservation of heritage collection**

NLB has started preservation and conservation of its heritage collection in a concerted manner since 2003. As of February 2007, about 200,000 rare and heritage materials have been restored or conserved through fumigation, conservation repair, microfilming or digitisation. The work was outsourced to external vendors, including the National Archives of Singapore.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **New Perspectives and Sources on the History of Singapore: A multi-disciplinary approach**

This collection of papers provides an unusual insight to the history of Singapore. Instead of going with the usual descriptions of macro-level history, major events and well-known heroes and their struggles, these papers tell Singapore's history from the ground level, and explore how the contributions of sub-groups and less-known cultures made their impact on modern Singapore. Made up of papers that were presented at a conference entitled New Insights into Singapore History: Perspectives of Emerging Scholars, this book explores a different approach to understanding history. Some give a twist to the usual thinking about decolonisation, while others look at how global perspectives have made their mark on the education of Singapore history.

### **The National Directory of Scholars: Humanities and Social Sciences Research**

This 700-page collaboration of NLB and the Arts, Humanities and Social Science faculties of universities and academic and research institutions in Singapore lists over 2,350 titles of research publications and papers by about 320 researchers. By aggregating a list of researchers in the humanities and social science disciplines in Singapore, the directory will help create awareness of the local research landscape.

### **BiblioAsia**

The first issue of BiblioAsia, a news journal to promote the collection services and programmes of the new National Library, was published in August 2005. To date, four issues have been published. BiblioAsia is available in print and electronic formats.

### **Ya Yin Kwan Collection Catalogue**

This 217-page catalogue lists the collection donated by Mr Tan Yeok Seong, a pioneer publisher and educator in Singapore, to the National Library in 1964. The items in the collection include rare items such as calligraphies and early Chinese publications printed on wood blocks. The catalogue provides access to such items and includes short descriptions of several highlighted items. The book, which is distributed free, also includes write-ups of the life of Mr Tan Yeok Seong, his achievements and his interest in the history of overseas Chinese. The references are categorised by English and Chinese titles.

### **Resource Guide for the Exhibition, "Lim Boon Keng: A Life to Remember"**

Documenting the life and achievements of early pioneer Lim Boon Keng, the exhibition was accompanied by various events and activities including talks and a musical. It drew great interest among students, teachers, educators and researchers. A resource guide was published in conjunction with the exhibition, and features a list of recommended references for research and further reading. Targeted especially at students, the guide is meant to raise more awareness among Singaporeans of the life and times as well as contributions of Singapore's founding fathers.

### **Gallery and Resource Guides for the exhibition, "Aksara: The Passage of Malay Scripts"**

The exhibition, "Aksara: The Passage of Malay Scripts" (18-30 January) featured original and copies of rare items that document the history and development of Malay script in the region. The gallery guide forms an accompaniment to the exhibition, with colourful pictures and extracts of some of the key items in the exhibition, and is distributed for free at the exhibition site. Similarly, the accompanying resource guide offers interested viewers, researchers and students references for further reading, and points to resource material and sources where they can find more information about the history of Malay scripts.

### **Singapore National Bibliography**

Two issues of the CD-ROM were produced in September 2006 and March 2007 respectively. The December 2006 issue contained a cumulative total of 85,586 bibliographic records for both print and non-print materials added to the database. From January to December 2006, about 4,831 bibliographic records in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil were added to the Singapore National Bibliography database for both print and non-print materials.

### **Singapore Periodicals Index**

The Singapore Periodicals Index (SPI) CD-ROM 1981-2006 was produced in March 2007 and contained a cumulative total of 102,065 records. From January to December 2006, a total of about 3,782 citations in English, Chinese and Malay were added to the SPI database, to provide more current access to periodical literature published in and on Singapore.

## **SERVICES**

A team of six reference librarians from the Lee Kong Chian Public Library has joined the Shanghai Library's Collaborative Online Reference Services (CORS) as part of the team of the network of experts. This partnership as of 29 September 2006 has fostered a stronger collaboration with the National Library Board's Shanghai counterparts.

On 28 November 2006, NLB and the Singapore Exchanges (SGX) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate in the development of investment resources for the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library's Business collection, as well as organising user education programmes. The Investment Resource Information Service (IRIS) was also launched on the same day.

## **DIGITAL LIBRARY**

The Web Archives Singapore (WAS) was launched on 18 October 2006. It currently has a collection of around 1,200 websites, featuring many facets of Singapore's history and culture. These are being archived by the NLB to enable exploration of the web heritage of Singapore and archives selected websites for posterity, to provide access to local websites that are no longer "live" and allow research on the past digital life of Singapore. This national web archives project is a joint collaboration between the NLB and the Nanyang Technological University.

WAS is accessible at:

[http://www.nlb.gov.sg/CPMS.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=CPMS\\_page\\_eResources\\_eArchive](http://www.nlb.gov.sg/CPMS.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=CPMS_page_eResources_eArchive).

## **NORA (NLB's Online Repository of Artistic works)**

NLB launched Singapore's only Online Repository of Artistic Works, known as NORA on 27 January 2005. NORA is currently an online platform containing literary works by prominent Singapore writers, and serves as a source of reference for people interested in Singapore literature and arts.

As at March 2007, NORA has about 240 unpublished, out-of-print-works, and excerpts from published works in English and Malay, including poetry, plays and works of fiction by more than 30 prominent Singaporean writers.

Works of other genres, such as visual and performing arts, will also be included in future. Currently work is in progress to include visual and performing arts works of Singapore's Cultural Medallion Recipients in the collection.

NORA can be accessed by members of the public via NLB's Digital Library at <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/> or <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/nora>.

## **COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS/RELATIONSHIPS**

The National Library Board (NLB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Singapore Exchange (SGX) to collaborate in the development of investment resources, including e-content, for the Business collection, as well as organising user education programs.

### **Collaboration with the Asian Film Archive and the Singapore Film Commission**

As part of the National Library's efforts to preserve and make accessible Singapore's film heritage, the National Library (NL) and the Asian Film Archive (AFA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 16 January 2007 to produce and build a collection of unpublished films made by Singaporean and Asian filmmakers.

A tripartite collaborative agreement between the NL, AFA and the Singapore Film Commission (SFC) was also established to preserve and promote Singapore's film heritage.

Under the NL-AFA MOU, AFA undertakes to evaluate, collect, document and catalogue films for research or viewing by library users. The public and film researchers will have access to the AFA film collection at the [library@esplanade](mailto:library@esplanade). This collection will comprise culturally important films from Singapore and the region. The collaboration will also ensure that unpublished local films as well as rare and significant Asian-centric films can now be archived, preserved and shared among the community.

AFA and NL will also organise a series of film literacy seminars, film screenings and workshops on the film heritage of Singapore and Asia to publicise and encourage the community to access the collection.

As SFC provides funding for local film producers to produce films in Singapore, this initiative ensures that its sponsored collection of short and feature films will be documented, catalogued, preserved and promoted. NL will receive two copies of the converted films in DVD format for preservation and access by library users and researchers.

### OTHER EVENTS

#### Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship

In its first year, the Lee Kong Chian Research (LKC) Fellowship attracted 16 applications from distinguished scholars from Singapore and the Region. Lasting six months each, these candidates would undertake collection-related research on NLB's Singapore and Southeast Asian Collections, with the aim of creating subsidiary works. The National Library Board (NLB) awarded its first three research fellowships in April 2006. In December 2006, the LKC Research Fellows from the first batch have given two presentations of their research findings: one to NLB staff and another for the general public. Four candidates were successful in the Selection process of the second run of the LKC Research Fellowship in October 2006. They commenced their research with LKCRL at different intervals in December 2006, February 2007 and April 2007.

#### Distinguished Readers Initiative

This initiative was launched on 24 April 2006, to recognise the contribution of eight prominent senior Singaporeans, for their leadership and professional success in their respective fields and outstanding contribution to the nation's success, whether in government, business, academia or the arts. These Distinguished Readers (DRs) will be granted privileged access to all the resources and the support of reference and research librarians of the National Library, along with full support to those who wish to record their knowledge and experiences for the benefit of future generations. Six more DRs have been appointed and their access cards are in the process.

#### "Aksara: The Passage of Malay Scripts Exhibition"

NLB's second large-scale exhibition was launched on 18 January 2007. Located on Level 10 of the National Library, this six month exhibition is part of NLB's efforts to preserve national memories and build shared history. The exhibition traced the different writing systems used in the Malay world, from the ancient Indic scripts of Pallava and Kawi to the more modern Jawi and Roman scripts. It also showcased digital books, unique scripts and artefacts, including an 1895 Baba-Malay translation of the Chinese classic, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, 19th century translations of the *Bible* in the Malay language as well as the works of Munshi Abdullah, widely regarded as the father of modern Malay literature.

In addition, the National Library brought in 43 exhibitions curated by external agencies to enrich visitor experience and also to encourage research in topics like photography, design, heritage and technology to name a few. From April 2006 to March 2007, the National Library worked with 85 partners to bring in a total of 556,730 visitors to these exhibitions.

#### Heritage Roadshow to Source for Heritage Materials

NLB held its first Heritage Roadshow on 11 and 12 November 2006. The objective of the roadshow was to network with the public to source for heritage materials that might fill in the gaps in our collection. An estimated 700 volumes of material were collected during the roadshow and many more presented. Some rare finds include Shayer "Silam Bari" dan Shayer "Kampong Glam Terbakar" dan "Pantun Lain Lain" published in 1908, and the hand notes of teaching methods and pedagogy of Professor Wang Shiow Nan, a prominent personality.

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