

30th General Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania
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Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Country Report
[Period Coverage: 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023]

Name of Country : Singapore
Name of Library : National Library, Singapore
Name(s) of National Librarian, Director-General and/or Director : Gene Tan (Chief Librarian and Chief Innovation Officer, National Library Board, Singapore)
Alicia Yeo (Director, National Library of Singapore)
Contact Person :
Contact Person's Email Address :
Mailing Address : National Library Board, 100 Victoria Street, Singapore 188064
Telephone Number : +65 6718 3993
Facsimile Number : +65 6332 3611
Website Address : www.nlb.gov.sg

1 National Library, Singapore, Facts and Figures

Sn	Item Description	Figures
a	Operating Budget i. Government ii. External Sources	SGD\$2.5 million
b	Total Staff (FTE) i. Graduate or Postgraduate with library qualifications ii. Other Qualifications	90*
c	Collection Size i. Physical collection ii. Digital collection preserved	i. 2.57 million ii. 1 million
d	Visitorship (Annual) i. Physical visits to reading rooms ii. Digital visits to websites	i 1,586,712 ii. 17,069,682
e	Inter Library Loans provided (Annual)	548

**Note: No. of total staff (FTE) is as of Sep 2024*

2 Overview of Major or New Developments in Library Buildings, Collections, Access or Services [Please provide a maximum of 5 highlights]

2.1 Contemporary Collecting: Singapore Makan & Young Singapore

Contemporary Collecting provides the National Library Board (NLB) the opportunity to collect materials that represent culture in its current form. It also documents first-hand experiences and preserves real time events that will become important historical references later.

In 2023, the National Library of Singapore (NL) embarked on a two-year project - the *Singapore Makan* and *Young Singapore* initiative to collect materials related to the food and youth culture in Singapore today to be remembered by the future generations.

In 2023, NL received 437 items from 42 contributors. These include donations of social media accounts, websites, manuscripts, music scores, audiovisuals, photographs and ephemera from *Singapore Makan* (food heritage bloggers, e-commerce wet market sellers, home-based cooks, private fine-dining chefs) and *Young Singapore* (prominent youth in the arts, heritage and sustainability sectors), as well as from the public via NLB's new online crowdsourcing platform, Singapore Memories: Documenting Our Stories Together.

The platform is an effort by NLB to enrich Singapore's collective documentary and published heritage by roping in the wider community to contribute, and to inspire generations of Singapore Storytellers. Launched on 1 October 2023, everyone can share their stories about Singapore via formats such as images, documents, video and audio clips, and even social media accounts

Through the platform, the public could help to enhance our Singapore collections by describing and transcribing materials to make our content more accessible. The platform can be accessed via: www.singaporememories.gov.sg





2.2 National Library Online

As part of NLB's efforts to consolidate and integrate the National Library's digital collection, the new National Library Online (NL Online) was released on 4 October 2023. NL Online allows for a more seamless search for resources across format. Providing access to over 1 million digitised items within the National Library, patron can easily search for, and access content categorised by their respective formats, such as articles, books and magazines,

documents and manuscripts, images, as well as audio and video recordings. To access NL Online, please visit: <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/nlonline>.

2.3 BiblioAsia: Diverse Content Offerings

To connect audiences with Singapore's heritage, culture and history, the National Library has launched diverse new content offerings – taken from its quarterly journal BiblioAsia, which brings the nation's rich history to life in accessible, enjoyable formats:

- *BiblioAsia+*, a podcast on stories about Singapore's past was launched on 20 June 2023. The podcast features interviews with BiblioAsia's talented writers and researchers, including NLB's own librarians Janice Loo, Lim Tin Seng, Toffa Abdul Wahed, Dahlia Shamsuddin and Foo Shu Tieng. Available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#) and [melisten](#), each episode uncovers fascinating historical narratives and little-known stories about Singapore's past. The podcast garnered more than 7,500 downloads in 2023.
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- The image shows the cover for the 'biblioasia+' podcast. The title 'biblioasia+' is in white and yellow text on a blue background. Below it, the subtitle reads 'A podcast on stories about Singapore's past'. At the bottom, there are logos for Spotify and Apple Podcasts, and a stylized orange and white map of Singapore on the right side.
- *BiblioAsia Reels* is a video series that transforms captivating BiblioAsia stories into engaging five-minute videos. These in-house productions, based on BiblioAsia articles, cover various aspects of Singapore's heritage and include writer interviews, piano recitals, and collection spotlights. The series provides a convenient and captivating way for viewers to discover Singapore's rich history through visual storytelling. To watch the videos, visit: <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/videos/reels/>. The video series received more than 200,000 views in 2023.
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- The image is a YouTube video thumbnail for 'BiblioAsia Reels'. It features a woman, Rachel Heng, speaking. On the left, there is a book cover for 'THE GREAT RECLAMATION' by Rachel Heng. The 'biblioasia' logo is visible at the bottom left of the video frame.

2.4 Punggol Stories

Punggol Stories was launched at Punggol Regional Library's Singaporium on 5 April 2023. The showcase presents selected stories and histories on Punggol, based on material from the National Library, to enable patrons to learn more about the neighbourhood.



About Singaporium

Singaporium is a permanent exhibition space conceptualised and developed by the National Library. It is integrated with the Singapore Non-fiction collection at Punggol Regional Library, Singapore's largest public library. Singaporium also has a special centrepiece called The Memory Map, a multimedia interactive that takes the form of a map of historical Punggol. Patrons may post their personal stories and memories of Punggol on social media using the hashtag #PunggolStories.

2.5 Acquired & Donated Singapore and Southeast Asia items (Highlights)

The National Library continues to acquire and collect materials on Singapore and Southeast Asia that present rich and diverse perspectives on Singapore's history and heritage, revealing some lesser-known details about the nation's past. Among the recently acquired and donated items in 2023 are:



Francisco de Sá de Meneses (b. circa 1600- d. 1664)
Malaca Conquistada, por o grande Af. o de Albuquerque : poema heroico de Fran.co de Sá de Meneses com os argumentos de Dona Bernarda Fereira
Lisbon: Mathias Rodrigues, 1634

This is the first edition of the Portuguese epic poem *Malaca Conquistada* (The Conquest of Malacca) composed by Portuguese poet, Francisco de Sá de Meneses and printed in 1634. The poem is centred on the capture of Malacca in 1511 by the Portuguese admiral, Afonso de Albuquerque and describes the battle between the Portuguese forces and the army gathered by the Sultan of Malacca, Mahmud Shah to defend the city.




 <p>Interior of a rubber factory .F.M. S-.</p>	<p>Robert Fyffe <i>Travels in Malaysia and Indonesia; Botanist Report with Photographs; Primary Source; Rubber Trade Survey with Observations of Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, Cocoa, Rice, 1911</i> Java, Federated Malay States, Ceylon: 1911</p> <p>This expedition report, a folio containing 46 pages in typescript and 73 original photographs, was prepared by botanist Robert Fyffe, 1st Assistant Forestry Officer of the Uganda Botanical, Forestry & Scientific Department, when he went on a special tour to Java, British Malaya, and the British Colony of Ceylon to examine the production of para rubber especially, as well as other valuable plantation crops.</p>
	<p>Group of 9 glass stereoviews of Singapore, housed in an elegant green morocco case. Circa 1870s</p> <p>A collection of nine glass stereoviews of Singapore, showcasing early views of Singapore, including the local residents, local trees and places of habitat.</p>
	<p>P. J. Jenkins <i>Album of 203 photographs and 24 postcards recording the cruise of HMS Terror from Devonport, England to Singapore and Selangor</i> Circa 1933-1940</p> <p>The photographs document the journey from England to Aden via Gibraltar and Malta, to India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Singapore. The album contains 109 original silver print images of Singapore, including a substantial photographic record of the construction of Seletar Naval Base (i.e. Singapore Naval Base, later Sembawang Naval Base) – about 67 unique images of the massive project</p>



Photo of Lotus Club's beach picnic at Changi in the 1930s.

Donated by Family of Mrs Checha Davies.

The photograph, taken by Toyo Studio in the 1930s, shows members of the Lotus Club at a beach picnic in Changi. Mrs Checha Davies, the president and founder of this club, is the one holding a parasol. She was a social worker, women's activist and community volunteer. In 1930, she founded Singapore's first Indian ladies' club, the Indian-Ceylonese Club, which later became the Lotus Club. After the Japanese Occupation, the Lotus Club merged with the Ladies' Union to form the Kamala Club in the early 1950s. This photograph also features other prominent women personalities from the Indian community in Singapore such as Mrs S. C. Goho and Mrs Namazie.



Member Register and Rules and Regulations of Keng Teck Whay, 1831

Donated by Keng Teck Whay.

Founded in 1831, this member register documents the society's origins. Listing 36 founding members, including prominent figures like Yeo Kim Swee, Seet Boon Tiong and Tan Boo Liap, this document provides a glimpse into the founding of this Chinese Peranakan society.

2.6 Launch: Business Resource Centre

Launch is a service by the National Library Board, which aims to support freelancers, solopreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurship journey and upskilling efforts by connecting them to resources, programmes, and networks. Service offerings include:

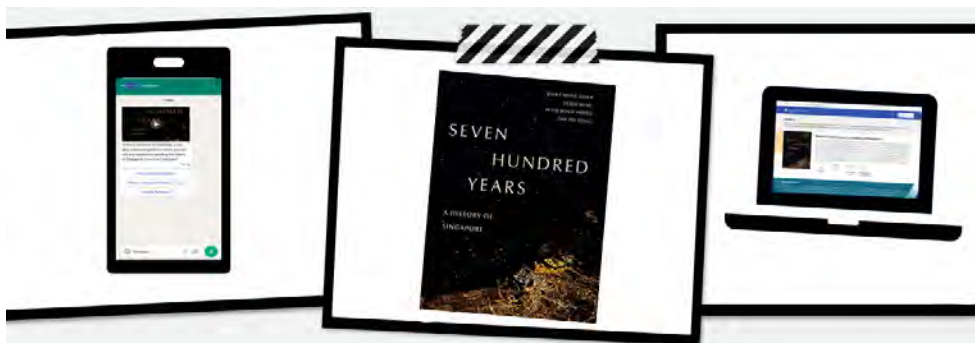
- Business info-advisory through online or face-to-face consultation at Launch sites at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, Punggol Regional Library and Jurong Regional Library
- Access to NLB resources including print and digital materials, subscribed business databases, and more
- Curated list of resource guides, eBooks, business databases, and articles related to business, entrepreneurship, and upskilling
- Curated programmes and workshops



In line with the goal of providing a space for Launch users and our staff to consult, connect and collaborate, users can organise meetings, discussions and attend events at Launch.

2.7 ChatBook: Enjoy books like never before!

In December 2023, NLB launched its first Generative AI-powered prototype, ChatBook, for user testing. ChatBook is a Generative AI-powered chat service that allows users to “converse with books”.



The first iteration of ChatBook was based on the book “Seven Hundred Years: A History of Singapore” by Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, Peter Borschberg and Tan Tai Yong. It comprised two versions targeted towards different demographic groups. A web-based version tailored for academics and researchers included detailed citations and previews of sources to encourage independent exploration, while a WhatsApp version provided the public with a light and conversational experience. User testing for the first prototype concluded in May 2024, and attracted a diverse group of testers, including academics,

students, teachers, librarians, youth, and members of the public. More than 1,100 patrons expressed interest in the prototype, with over 700 eventually coming onboard as testers. User satisfaction with the first prototype was generally positive; more than 80 per cent of testers shared that they had enjoyed the prototype. Multiple users found ChatBook a useful service to better understand Singapore history, particularly for younger generations.

3 Collaborations with Libraries, Archives and Museums in your Country [Please provide a maximum of 5 highlights]

3.1 All Things Singapore (AT SG) 2023

Held from 18 August to 23 September 2023, All Things Singapore (AT SG) engaged festival goers in discovering our island's history and stories via various touchpoints. Through art installations and programmes at the National Library and National Archives of Singapore, participants gained fresh perspectives and insights on the content of the National Library Board (NLB). Highlights included a Plaza Party with craft market, live music performances, creative installation and hands-on activities blending art and technology, as well as sharing sessions by librarians. Taking place during the same period as the Singapore Night Festival (in collaboration with National Heritage Board (NHB)) and NLB's Love Our Libraries and Archives, AT SG attracted a total of more than 72,000 visitors.



3.2 To Draw an Idea: Retracing the Designs of William Lim Associates – W Architects

The Singapore Architecture Collection's first major exhibition – To Draw an Idea – was launched at URA Centre Atrium on 28 Nov 2023 and featured 19 projects from the architecture firm W Architects between the 1980s and 2010s. The exhibition presented more than 500 architectural drawings - from hand sketches to watercolour renderings, construction drawings - as well as architectural models and documentation, to reveal the firm's design process. All of these materials have been donated to the Singapore Architecture Collection.

NLB also launched "*Dare To Design: Singapore Architecture 1960s–2000s*", which highlighted iconic Singapore architecture spanning from the 1960s to the 2000s. The exhibition, held at the National Library Building lobby from 28 Nov 2023 to 9 June 2024, featured eight iconic buildings in Singapore, including books, building plans, photographs of the buildings.



About the Singapore Architecture Collection

Managed by the NLB, Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), and NHB, the Singapore Architecture Collection was an effort announced in August 2023 to document and preserve the country's modern and contemporary architecture by way of photos, drawings, oral history recordings, and other artefacts.

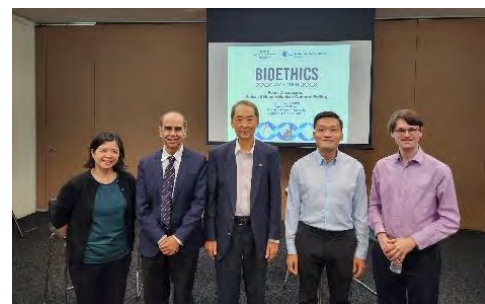
3.3 Children's Season 2023

The National Library held two workshops during the Children's Season, an annual event organised by the NHB and the Museum Roundtable to encourage a museum-going culture amongst young Singaporeans. Through an introduction to the library's Asian Children's Literature (ACL) collection, 70 participants discovered more about the collection and enjoyed intergenerational storytelling followed by hands-on activity. They also toured the ACL collection and learnt about the range of stories, authors, and illustrators from across Asia, as well as the cultural and historical context of each work.



3.4 Panel Programme on 'Ethics of Human Nuclear Genome Editing'

As part of the ongoing collaboration with the Bioethics Advisory Committee (BAC), a panel discussion which focused on the applications of human genome editing and the emerging ethical and social implications surrounding the genetic engineering of humans was organised. About 80 participants attended the event, which featured speakers from the advisory committee and members of the review group.



BAC is supported by the Ministry of Health with an aim to promote greater awareness and understanding of Bioethics in Singapore.

4 International Collaborations such as Formal Arrangements for Cooperation with National Libraries [Please provide a maximum of 5 highlights]

Agreement of Cooperation with National Library of New Zealand



NLB and the National Library of New Zealand has renewed the Agreement of Cooperation at the sidelines of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions World Library and Information Congress at Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 22 August 2023. The five-year Agreement builds upon a partnership that has spanned 13 years between both institutions. Both parties will work together to share expertise on library innovation and technology as well as information on culture and heritage.