

Annual meeting of 2018 – at the National Library of Myanmar (Naypyitaw), Myanmar

Annual report of National Library Board, Singapore

Period covered by this report: 2017

Name of country: Singapore

Name of library: National Library Board (NLB)

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1. RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT:

1.1. National Library Board Act

The National Library Board Act establishes and incorporates the National Library Board (NLB) as a statutory board and transfers to it the National Library and all matters connected therewith. The NLB Act also sets out the functions and powers of the NLB.

The National Library has been working to amend the NLB Act to extend the Legal Deposit collection scope of physical materials to digital and internet materials. Stakeholders, which includes publishers, writers, researchers and academics, were invited for focus group discussions and a dialogue session in November 2017 to share their feedback on the proposed amendments. A public consultation paper was also published on the website of the Singapore government's feedback unit, REACH (www.reach.gov.sg), from 13 November to 13 December 2017 to seek feedback from the members of the public.

The National Library will be tabling the proposed Bill to the Singapore Parliament in 2018.

1.2. Special Libraries

The National Library provides professional library services to manage four Special Libraries for government agencies, namely Parliament, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG).

The SSG library, i.e. the LLiBrary, is Singapore's first Continuing Education and Training library. It is located at the Lifelong Learning Institute and integrated with NLB's network of public libraries. The LLiBrary epitomizes a self-access paradigm that encourages self-reliance and self-directed learning.

1.3. Research Services

The National Library provides professional and customised research services to government ministries and statutory boards. A team of researchers reports on the latest market trends and new developments in topical areas of interest to the respective organisations that subscribe to its services. The team continues to provide customised research services to nine government agencies, including the Ministry of Communications and Information, Ministry of Manpower, and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and statutory boards such as Skillsfuture Singapore and Workforce Singapore.

The National Library continued its collaboration with the government's feedback unit, REACH Singapore. In 2017, the research team provided REACH with a curated resource guide on selected public policy issues to enrich the readings of Singaporeans participating in a programme organised by REACH.

2. FACTS AND FIGURES:

Size of Singapore Collection (Physical)	331,702
Physical Visitorship	1,250,126
Digital Visitorship ¹	4,536,113
No. of Interlibrary Loans	919
Compliment to Complaint Ratio	247:1
Annual Operating Budget ²	\$3.9m
Total Staff	127

3. A BRIEF GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RECENT MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS:

3.1. Librarian's World

The National Library's programme "A Librarian's World" started in 2016 to promote librarians as thought leaders with their sharing on the National Library's collections and their significance. In 2017, due to popular demand, the quarterly programme was changed to a monthly event and was shared via social media through live streaming in FaceBook Live, and photos to increase the programme's reach.

Highlights of topics in the talk series include:

¹ For Singapore content only.

² Excluding manpower budget.

- *Historical Sources on the Japanese Occupation* by Fiona Tan, Assistant Archivist, and Gracie Lee, Senior Librarian
- *Cover to Content: Magazines from the National Library's Legal Deposit* by Barbara Quek, Senior Librarian
- *Greening of Singapore Through Time* by Lim Tin Seng, Librarian
- *National Library's Newspaper Collection and Services* by Mazelan Anuar, Senior Librarian

3.3 National Library Prominent Speaker Series

The National Library Prominent Speaker Series started in 2014 bring in notable speakers across different fields. This is part of the National Library's direction to be a premier public knowledge institution to support the nation's and citizens' knowledge aspirations.

Prominent Speakers in the talk series include:

- Dame Lynn Brindley (former British Library CEO);
- Nicolas Barker (Author and Renowned Book Collector);
- John van Wyhe (NUS Researcher and Expert on Darwin);
- Siew Hock Meng (prominent Singaporean Artist);
- Dayne Cowan. Dayne is a Director of Film VFX at VHQ Post and has worked on blockbusters such as *Batman Begins*, *10,000 BC*, *The Bourne Ultimatum* and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*;
- Al Taylor (ex-RAF Airman who survived WW2);
- David Parry (Soil Scientist, Environmental Development Consultant and Curator);
- Leo Suryadinata (Sinologist and ISEAS Senior Research Fellow);
- Nigel Taylor (Director, Singapore Botanic Garden);
- Peter Overy (Creative Director, IDEO);
- Dr Farish Noor (Associate Prof, RSIS)
- Dr Evelyn Hu-Dehart (Prof, Brown University, USA)
- Ong Tze Boon (Group Executive Chairman, Ong & Ong)
- Prof Wang Gungwu (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy)
- Lim Siong Guan (Group President, GIC Pte Ltd)
- Dr Shashi Jayakumar (Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security)
- Jason Lai (Principal Conductor, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music)
- Prof Low Teck Seng (CEO, National Research Foundation)
- Tan Swie Hian (Cultural Medallion)
- Ismail Gafoor (CEO, P&N Holdings and PropNex Realty Pte Ltd)
- Chris Reed (Founder and Global CEO of Black Marketing)
- Tan Yongshao (Prime Group International)
- Liew Mun Leong (Chairman, Changi Airport Group)

These talks were shared in social media through photos and videos (including interview sessions) to spread the awareness of the programmes.

3.2. Four Conversations

The National Library conducted the inaugural "Four Conversations" over the first weekend of June 2017. Four international and local speakers shared valuable insights based on the theme "New Thinking for a New World". While their topics were varied, they all centred on how Singapore can be future ready and the need for individuals to take personal responsibility and ownership to shape the future we want for ourselves

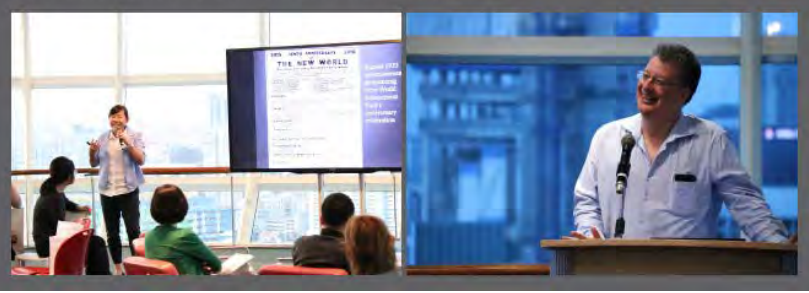
and our community. Close to 500 participants from all walks of life attended the sessions.



3.3. Researchers' Networking Session

Jointly organised by the National Library and National Archives of Singapore, this event aimed to advance knowledge, connect like-minded researchers and raise awareness of research challenges and opportunities as well as inspire the next generation of researchers. The inaugural session was held on 21 July 2017 and was attended by over 100 researchers from various academic and research institutions. The Researchers' Networking Session will be conducted annually.

Sharing by Assoc Prof Peter Borschberg (George Lyndon Hicks Research Fellow) and Mrs Adeline Foo (Lee Kong Chian Research Fellow) on their research experience with the National Library.



Researchers of different subject interests at the dialogue session facilitated by our librarians, archivists and senior management.



4. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN BUILDING AND MANAGING COLLECTIONS:

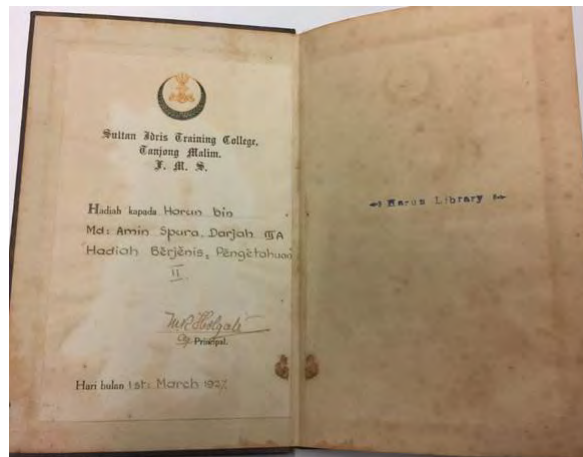
4.1. Heritage Collections

The National Library has acquired the autograph letter handwritten by the famous English novelist Graham Greene. It is a valuable primary source, which gave a vivid first-hand account of the conflict during the Malayan Emergency.



*Autograph letter written on the back of three photographs by Graham Greene
Malacca, 17 January 1951*

Other notable acquisitions include:

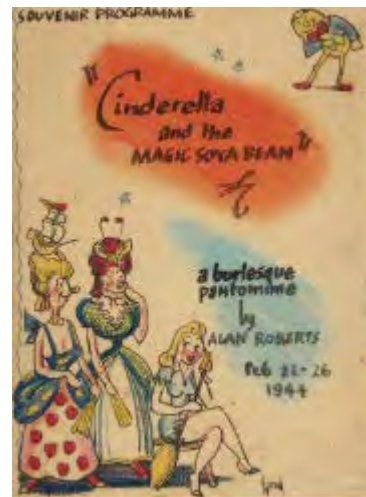


*Misa Melayu (Malay Literature Series 15) by R. O. Winstedt
Singapore: The Government of the Federated Malay States, 1919*

This copy belonged to the Malay literary pioneer, Harun Aminurrashid, who received it as a book prize in 1927. This is the only known translation of a very rare manuscript that chronicles the Perak royal family.



Letter to Morley Stuart Esq Changi Gaol, Singapore, 21 September 1945



Cinderella and the magic soya bean: A Burlesque Pantomime by Alan Roberts: Souvenir Programme, 1944

The letter by Ronald Searle (British Prisoner-of-war and budding artist) was sent to his publisher in England (Morley Stuart) after the Japanese surrender in 1945. This letter and the drawings captured his feelings of being liberated after 3.5 years of captivity by the Japanese. Meanwhile, the souvenir programme was drawn by George Sprod, a budding artist, while being interned as Prisoner-of-war in Changi camp. It provided insights of life in the camp, as theatrical productions were regularly staged to bring cheer and raise the morale of fellow internees.



Album pittoresque de la fregate la Thetis et de la Corvette l'Esperance. Collection de dessins relatifs a leur voyage autour du monde en 1824, 1825 et 1826 Paris: Bulla, 1828

This book is the first edition of Baron Hyacinthe-Yves-Philippe Potentien de Bougainville's 19th century circumnavigation, and the first artistic and iconographic rendering of Bougainville's historic expedition that was issued nine years before his official account of the voyage published in 1837. The book contains twenty-eight lithographic plates with fine views of Singapore, Malacca, the Philippines, the Bourbon Islands in the Pacific, Australia, Brazil and Argentina.

The expedition visited Singapore between 30 August and 4 September 1824 with the purpose of gathering information about trade and administration. This book contains

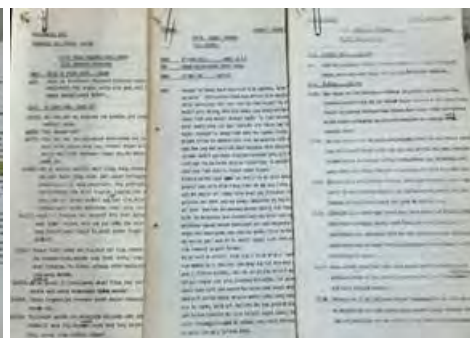
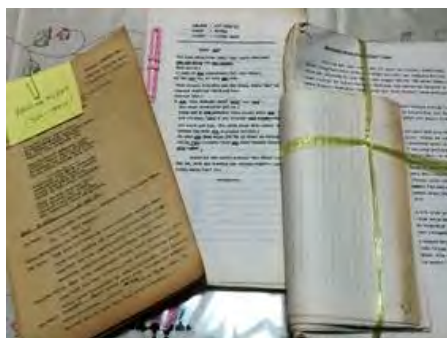
one of the earliest views of Singapore town, five years after the British East India Company set up a trading post here. It also contains a very rare view of the early structure of the Chinese temple dedicated to Admiral Zheng He at Malacca, which is of historical significance.

4.2. Significant Donations

- i. **Lim Shao Bin**, a private collector and researcher, who has been regularly donating materials relating to World War II in Singapore and the region to NL. The donation received this year largely comprised historical postcards which added to the body of research materials on the Japanese diaspora in pre-war Singapore. Most of these are Japanese produced postcards depicting scenes of Singapore, and bear handwritten messages by Japanese and Europeans living in Singapore then. The messages are of research value as they reveal the writers' perspectives of Singapore, and through the addresses on the postcards, one can derive information such as the hometowns of the writers.



- ii. **Patimah Jaludin** is a retired Malay language teacher who writes under the pen name, Rosemala or Mala. She began writing for radio in 1965, short stories from 1972 and poetry from 2013. Patimah donated her collection of radio play scripts and short stories. These included her award winning works covering radio drama scripts entitled *Delima Gadis Masturah*, *Kerana Cinta dan Kasihku*, *Hatiku Di hatimu* and a short story, *Abang Long*. The latter won the *Hadiah Sastera (Literary Prize)* in 1993, 1995 and 1999 and 2009, awarded by the Malay Language Council.



- iii. **Mr P. Krishnan**, also known as Puthumaithasan, is regarded as one of Singapore's Tamil literary pioneers. He is a prolific short-story writer, playwright, poet and radio broadcaster, with an oeuvre comprising more than 40 stories, 100 essays and 360 plays. He was conferred the Cultural Medallion for Literary Arts in 2008. Mr Krishnan donated 117 manuscripts and typescripts of plays that he wrote for broadcast when he was a producer with Radio Television Singapore and Singapore Broadcasting Corporation in the 70s and 80s. The plays cover a wide spectrum of genres such as stories based on Tamil classics, comedies based on the social fabric of the Tamil community, thrillers and discourse on community issues.



5. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS:

5.1. National Library Exhibitions

The National Library's exhibitions in 2017 included a showcase 'Shakespeare in Print: The First Folio' (11 March – 23 April 2017) where NL presented the Shakespeare First Folio from the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford. The First Folio is the earliest imprint anthology of Shakespeare's works published in 1623. The exhibition marked the first time a copy of The First Folio had been on display in Southeast Asia. The exhibition also included a roving exhibition to the Public Libraries which featured a play on Shakespearean plots as posts on social media.



The marquee exhibition of the year was 'Tales of the Malay World: Manuscripts and Early Books (18 August 2017 – 25 February 2018), which explores traditional Malay literature captured in ink on paper – from handwritten manuscripts to early lithographed

books. The exhibition also features precious manuscripts on loan from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, shown in Singapore for the first time, providing a unique opportunity to see these collections together. The exhibition has received many positive comments from visitors and several complimentary reviews in the media. The attendance for the exhibition programmes such as Curator's Tour and talks has also been enthusiastic.



Additionally, two displays of the National Library's Legal Deposit were set up at the Tampines Regional Library (TRL) and Bedok Public Library (BEPL). The display at TRL featured a curated display of vintage fashion publications, tracing evolving fashion trends over the years. The display at BEPL presented a selection of Legal Deposit publications related to the Bedok community on various aspects of life in Singapore. Both displays were intended to educate the public on the National Library's mandate as the nation's depository for print and digital publications.



5.2. Publications

In 2017, the National Library published the following publications which serve to increase the awareness of the National Library's collections as well as to encourage discovery and research into Singapore content:

- *BiblioAsia*, a quarterly journal
- *The Rare Materials Collection: Selections from the National Library, Singapore*
- *Pages that Opened our Minds: A Pictorial Catalogue of Chinese Textbooks in Singapore (1902–2015)*
- *Singapore's Social & Business History: Through Paper Ephemera in the Koh Seow Chuan Collection*

BiblioAsia is the National Library's free quarterly journal on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context. Print copies are distributed to local and international libraries, academic institutions, government agencies and the general public. The journal is also available online, in both web and pdf formats.

Showcased in the publication, *The Rare Materials Collection: Selections from the National Library, Singapore*, are 50 specially curated items from the National Library's Rare Materials Collection. The collection comprises books, periodicals, manuscripts, maps, photographs, art prints, illustrations, letters and documents focusing on Singapore and Southeast Asia.

Pages that Opened our Minds: A Pictorial Catalogue of Chinese Textbooks in Singapore (1902–2015) documents the Chinese textbooks found in the collections of the National Library, the Ministry of Education Heritage Centre and the Wang Gungwu Library at the Nanyang Technological University. The publication offers a glimpse into the rich repository of textbooks used in Singapore schools and traces the evolution of Chinese language education here since the 1850s.

Singapore's Social & Business History: Through Paper Ephemera in the Koh Seow Chuan Collection features research essays on the early commercial operations of the Eu Yan Sang enterprise, the business practices of the Chettiars and the role of remittance letters in maintaining family ties for overseas Chinese.

Besides books and journals, the National Library also published articles on Singapore Infopedia, an electronic encyclopedia on Singapore's history, culture, people and events. Containing more than 2,000 articles, Singapore Infopedia covers topics ranging from economy, geography, politics and government to heritage and the arts.

6. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER SERVICES:

6.1. Digital Archive of Singapore Tamil Theatre

The Digital Archive of Singapore Tamil Theatre (DASTT) is a collaboration between the National Library and the Tamil Digital Heritage Group to digitise and make available materials from the Tamil theatre community in Singapore, such as play scripts, posters, photographs and programme booklets. The collection was launched on 25 November 2017 in the portal NORA (eresources.nlb.gov.sg/arts) with over 3,600 items.

7. NOTES ON COLLABORATION WITH OTHER LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS:

7.1. National Union Catalogue

The National Union Catalogue (NUC) is a comprehensive record of the collective holdings of publicly funded libraries in Singapore and is a useful tool for resource-sharing locally and internationally. To date, 13 libraries have their catalogues opened to the public via the NUC.

7.2. Council of Chief Librarians

The National Library is part of the Council of Chief Librarians, a committee of library directors (i.e. from institutes of higher learning, government and private organisations), and the President of the Library Association of Singapore. The Council meets every quarter to share best practices, collaborate and build up the library profession and the library community in Singapore. There are 16 members in the Council as of 2017.

8. NOTES ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION:

8.1. ASEAN Digital Library

The ASEAN Digital Library (ADL), a project partly sponsored by ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information, is a platform that provides users with a seamless way to search for and to gain access to the wealth of digital materials held by the National Libraries in ASEAN. The website (www.aseanlibrary.org) is managed by the National Library Singapore and there are over 80,000 records to-date.

As part of NLB's ASEAN 50th anniversary celebration, a curated display to showcase the collection highlights contributed by each ASEAN national library was put up at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library Level 11 from 3 July to 31 August 2017. The National Library will continue to work with the ASEAN partner libraries to enrich the website content.