



Country Report

[Period Coverage: 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2019]

Name of Country	:	Singapore
Name of Library	:	National Library Board
Name(s) of National Librarian, Director-General and/or Director	:	Tan Huism (Director, National Library)
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1 Facts and Figures

Sn	Item Description	Figures
1.1	Operating Budget a) Government b) External Sources	250m Nil
1.2	Total Staff (FTE) as of 31 Dec 2019 a) Graduate or Post Graduate with library qualifications b) Other Qualifications	156 staffs 852.3 staffs
1.3	Collection Size a) Physical collection b) Digital collection	8.8m 0.9m
1.4	Annual Visitors a) Physical visits to the National Library and 26 Public Libraries b) Digital visits: the number of downloads from NLB's websites, subscribed databases and eBook	26.6m 94.6m
1.5	Annual Inter Library Loans	1,048

2 Overview of Major or New Developments in Library Buildings, Collections, Access or Services

2.1 Amendments to the National Library Board Act

The National Library, Singapore (NL) has been working to amend the National Library Board (NLB) Act to extend the Legal Deposit collection scope of physical materials to digital and internet materials. On 31 January 2019, the amendment bill came into effect, providing NL the mandate to collect digital publications under the scope of legal deposit and archive Singapore websites. NLB received 1,050 digital publications between February and December 2019, an increase by 313% prior to the changes in legislation for the same period in 2018.

2.2 Singapore Biographical Database on Chinese Personalities



In collaboration with the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS), and NUS Libraries, NLB launched the Singapore Biographical Database on Chinese Personalities on 1 February 2019. The database mapped out relationships between 200 Chinese men and women who made significant contributions to Singapore from the 19th to 21st century, such as Eu Tong Sen, Kwa Geok Choo, and Lim Bo Seng. The database is accessible at sbdb.nus.edu.sg.

2.3 "From the Stacks" Video Series



From the Stacks is a collection of videos highlighting rare materials of historical significance in NL's collection, presented by the librarians. First released in April 2019, the videos cover rare materials such as *The Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, a five-volume series detailing about 700 species of birds found in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. It also include *Malaca, l'Inde Méridionale et le Cathay*, a 1882 French translation of a Portuguese manuscript containing one

of the earliest maps to depict 17th century Singapore; and *Fotoalbum Singapur*, a collection of photographs of early Singapore, taken by G. R. Lambert and Company. Twenty videos are on NL's [Facebook page](#) (@NationalLibrarySG) in 2019.

2.4 “On Paper: Singapore before 1867” Exhibition



On Paper: Singapore Before 1867 features rare maps, illustrations and manuscripts that trace the history of Singapore from the 17th century to 1867 – the year when the Straits Settlements including Singapore, became a British Crown Colony. NL also published a book featuring articles on selected materials from the exhibition and the history of early Singapore.

The exhibition opened on 28 September 2019 and will run until 22 March 2020 at the National Library Building, while a smaller complementary display *An Island by Any Other Name*, will travel to eight Public Libraries until 24 March 2020.

2.5 Highlights of New Collection

2.5.1 Rare Materials Collection



Voyage autour du Monde par les Mers de l'Inde et de Chine exécuté sur la Corvette de l'État La Favorite pendant les Années 1830, 1831 et 1832
Paris, 1833-35

This is the first edition of a significant French circumnavigation from 1830 – 1832 led by Cyrille Pierre Théodore Laplace (1793 – 1875), a French navigator and naval officer. The mission was to re-establish French influence in Indo-China in the midst of rivalry among European powers, gather trade and military information, and conduct hydrographic surveys and natural history studies. The voyage included a stopover at Singapore in August 1830 and the account describes the bustling port, multi-ethnic population and town layout of Singapore.



Singapore from Fort Canning
Singapore, 1900

This is a five-part gelatin silver print panoramic photograph of Singapore. The photograph provides a broad view of Singapore from Fort Canning, with the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd visible at the central point.

2.5.2 Donors' Collection

Michael Chiang

Michael Chiang is a prolific playwright and screenwriter who is well known for his contributions to the artistic scene in Singapore. His donated collection comprised typescripts and ephemera relating to his stage productions and screenplays such as *Army Daze*, *Mortal Sins*, *My Lonely Tarts*, as well as magazines and newsletters. This donation helps researchers to understand Singapore society in the 1980s.



Typescript/screenplay and related ephemera on *Army Daze*

Professor John Ernest Gardiner

Professor John Ernest Gardiner was the Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Singapore from 1966-1981, and a keen amateur photographer who developed his own prints. His family has donated more than 400 photographs of streets and places, and everyday life in Singapore, particularly in the Singapore River and Chinatown areas, during the period of 1960s-1980s.



Singapore River scene

2.6 Programmes and Outreach (National Library)

2.6.1 Signature Programmes

Four Conversations

Four Conversations features drivers of change who re-think the conventional systems and chart new paths of interacting with the world. 2019's theme focuses on the impact on society through technology.



A Librarian's World

The monthly series started in 2016, promote librarians as thought leaders with their sharing on NL's collections and their significance.



Histories

This series started in August 2018, highlights research on historical and related matters in Singapore and Southeast Asia, creating an appreciation of the role of humanities and social science research in contemporary society.



Education in the City

A quarterly series that presents perspectives from researchers with experience in Singapore schools, providing parents and educators with a greater understanding of education issues.



The Arts Space series

A monthly programme series where invited speakers from the local arts scene share their works in conjunction with The Arts Space to showcase NL's Arts collection.



2.6.2 National Information Literacy Programme (S.U.R.E.)

NL worked with partners such as Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth, Ministry of Education and SkillsFuture Singapore to conduct information literacy talks and train-the-trainers workshops for military personnel, religious leaders, working adults and the wider community on digital threats, online falsehoods and evaluating online information.

On the school front, the Source, Understand, Research & Evaluate (S.U.R.E.) principle was introduced in the primary school English Language STELLAR Reader programme. Besides talks to pre-service and in-service teachers, annual competitions to nurture students' research skills and critical thinking, such as Prove It! Contest (with the theme of Digital Defence) and Historical Scene Investigation challenge were also organised.



2.7 Programmes and Outreach (Public Libraries)

2.7.1 Opening of library@harbourfront

The latest addition to NLB's network of public libraries, library@harbourfront was unveiled to its patrons in early January 2019. As the latest and largest mall library, this library offers scenic reading spaces for patrons of all ages, including over 200,000 titles and more eNewspaper reading stations.

In a separate wing, the Children's section contains an extensive *Early Literacy* collection where families can read together in comfort. Aside from reading, patrons can attend a wide range of programmes such as storytelling sessions, talks and workshops in the immersive storytelling room and programme zone.

2.7.2 Future Skills & Digital Readiness (DR)

To help Singaporeans keep up with changing trends, programming at NLB is shifting gears, moving beyond literary aspirations, to inform workers on what it takes to stay relevant and competitive. The *Future Skills* suite of programmes at the public libraries supports upskilling, and champions opportunities for growth. In partnership with lead workforce agencies, NLB has delivered more than 350 programmes for working adults, including seminars and workshops that help individuals with career planning and job searches, skills-based programmes on soft skills and emerging competencies, and talks and panel discussions on innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

As part of Singapore's move towards a Smart Nation, NLB has also developed a suite of DR services to equip Singaporeans with access to technology and the skills required to use the technology meaningfully and safely. In addition to the promotion of digital literacy through talks, clinics, workshops and interest groups, NLB is also actively promoting the culture of making and innovating with technology at the makerspaces located at the regional libraries. It conducted 1,036 programmes for adults, seniors, and 773 for children, since the inception of the DR program in 2018.

2.7.3 Time Of Your Life Celebration @ the Public Libraries

This annual event in October 2019 celebrated those aged 50 and above, in conjunction with the International Day of Older Persons. A month-long spread of over 150 informative talks and creative workshops in public libraries explored topics such as health, personal finance, technology, and the arts. A key highlight was the spotlight feature on active senior library users who were empowered to contribute their skills and knowledge to benefit the library community.

2.7.4 Services for Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

PLS made concerted efforts to support and empower the PwD to participate in the library community and provide learning opportunities, thereby improving their quality of life. There have been a few initiatives in 2019. Sensory Story time aims to allow children to enjoy stories through sight, touch, sound and movement. Day Activity Centre without Walls invites PwD to come out of their centres and spend a day in the library. Special Time offers modified toys for children with fine motor difficulties to play.

PLS created a pop-up autism-friendly space was to test how children with autism are able to enjoy a common library space with other children.

2.7.5 Kids' Lit Quiz™ (KLQ) World Final 2019

Singapore hosted Kids' Lit Quiz™ World Final, an annual international literature quiz, for the first time in 2019 and welcomed students from 11 countries. Churchill Road Elementary School from the United States emerged as the winner. Founded by New Zealand quizmaster Wayne Mills, this competition encourages students aged 10 to 13 years to read widely for pleasure and to celebrate their knowledge. Since the first national competition in 2014, KLQ has garnered much interest in Singapore. This was evident in 2019 when 132 teams from 74 schools battled it out at four regional heats before the National Final in April for a chance to represent Singapore at the World Final on home ground.

2.7.6 PLAY@Library

Targeted at children aged 6 years and below, Play@Library is a fully self-directed programme where parents and children are free to enjoy a wide range of educational aids like costumes, hand puppets, puzzles and pop-up toys. The programme makes quality educational aids accessible to more children and promotes bonding between parents and children through free play. It reached out to over 46,000 parents and children at 12 public libraries across Singapore.

3 Collaborations with Libraries, Archives and Museums in your Country

3.1 National Union Catalogue

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

3.2 Council of Chief Librarians

NL is part of the Council of Chief Librarians, a committee of library directors (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.

3.3 Collaboration with Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)

NL continued to engage The Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), Singapore's pioneer arts institution established in 1938. NAFA mounted two student showcases of stone sculptures and fashion apparel at NL's Arts Space in 2019. This has helped to cultivate art appreciation by the public and served as a platform to support student creativity. The collaborative relationship between NAFA and NL facilitates the sharing of resources and knowledge about the arts through collaborative projects to jointly promote and build Singapore arts heritage content.

4 International Collaborations such as Formal Arrangements for Cooperation with National Libraries

4.1 Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania

NLB hosted the 27th Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO) on 21 February 2019. Celebrating the 40th anniversary of CDNLAO, the theme of the conference – “What is our future? National Libraries in 2040” – examined the challenges and future of libraries.



Director-generals, directors and observers from 21 national libraries attended the conference. The presentations by the National Libraries of Australia, China, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand and Singapore focused on the future of national libraries, new initiatives and challenges.

4.2 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 gain access to the wealth of digital materials held by the national libraries in ASEAN. NL led the project that coordinates the submission of new content from the ASEAN national libraries and management of the ADL website (www.aseanlibrary.org). There are over 80,000 records available in the ADL website to-date. The website saw 263,248 visitors and 7,495 page views.

4.3 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Indonesia and Turkey

In 2019, NLB signed MOUs with the National Library of Indonesia, National Archives of Indonesia, National Library of Turkey and the The Directorate of State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. These MOUs will bring new collaborations and exchanges with NLB and further strengthen our relationships with these institutions.