

Preservation Programmes at the National Library Board Singapore

by

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INTRODUCTION

- **Under the NLB Act 1995, NLB is to provide a repository of materials published or produced in Singapore**
- **Also to acquire and maintain a comprehensive collection of materials related to Singapore and its people.**
- **NLB has the statutory obligation to preserve materials deposited with the Board.**

BACKGROUND

- **Prior to 2003, conservation work was done as and when necessary or when there were funds**
- **Opening of new building in Nov 05, provided impetus to reorganize the collection and to fulfill our obligation**
- **Also to support the need to establish NLB as a premium centre for Singapore heritage materials, improve access to these materials and to minimise deterioration and prolong their shelf life**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **Since 2004, NLB has carried 3 preservation programs**
- **Two of them deal with paper-based materials**
- **Digital Resources Services has an on-going program to archive and preserve online resources**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **2003 saw the birth of PCA Project and completed in Mar 07**
- **Involved the fumigation, conservation, microfilming and digitization of about 100,000 rare and heritage materials, including major donor collection**
- **Huge undertaking due to size, fragility and the various formats involved**
- **Big challenge as new skills had to be learnt**
- **Outsourced to National Archives**

LONG-TERM GOALS

- **Establish NLB as a premium & one-stop reference centre for Singapore rare/heritage materials**
- **Improve and facilitate access to rare/heritage materials**
- **Prolong shelf-life of rare/heritage materials**
- **Preserve historical & social memory, and the literary heritage of Singapore**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **Show photos of various conservation work done!!**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **In 2004, another project, Singapore Pages, was launched aimed at preservation over 200,000 rare and heritage materials.**
- **Due to be completed in Mar 08**
- **Similar job scope as the earlier one**
- **Outsourced to several vendors**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **NLB has not started on full-scale AV preservation**
- **Began consultation with National Archives in Apr 07**

DIGITAL PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- Since 2006, NLB has an ongoing programme to harvest Singapore-related web resources from the Internet for archiving
- Plan for whole domain archiving of all dot.sg websites from 2007, estimated to be around 70,000 registered domains
- Also requires publishers to deposit 2 copies of their publication distributed online

DIGITAL PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **NLB has put in place a digital preservation infrastructure for a long-term access and usage and to preserve the integrity of the contents through generations of transformation.**
- **Comply with ISO standard for Open Archival Information System (OAIS) and meet the Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) requirements.**
- **Targeted to be ready by end 2008**

PRESERVATION PROGRAMMES

- **In late 2006, put up a Preservation and Conservation Policy and Strategy Paper**
- **Covers general preservation strategy that include acquisition, physical environment, disaster planning etc.**
- **Also preservation strategy for specific material format**
- **Still an internal document**
- **Excludes digital resources**

CHALLENGES

Knowledge and Expertise

- **None with formal training on preservation and conservation**
- **Outsourced all conservation repair works**
- **Basic knowledge is still important to communicate and deal with vendors effectively**

CHALLENGES

Identifying the Collection

- **Selection criteria**
 - **Heritage, historical & literary values**
 - **Unique & irreplaceable**
- **Include various collections**
 - **Rare books, Legal Deposit, Closed Stacks, Donor Collection**
- **Other collections**
 - **Maps, posters & literary manuscripts**
- **Need to engage a Consultant**

CHALLENGES

SORTING THE COLLECTIONS

- **Sort by treatment types : fumigation, conservation, microfilming**
- **Engage a professional Conservator to advise on treatment types**
- **Decided to fumigate all**
- **Items for digitization sent to another vendor for color scanning**

CHALLENGES

IDENTIFYING & SELECTING A VENDOR

- **Local vendor for better supervision**
- **All-in-one, excluding digitization, to minimize handling**
- **Quantity of items – needs vendor with adequate resources**
- **Outsource to a vendor with good track record**

CHALLENGES

LOGISTICS AND OPERATIONS

- **Local vendor for better supervision**
- **All-in-one, excluding digitization, to minimize handling**
- **Quantity of items – needs vendor with adequate resources**
- **Outsource to a vendor with good track record**

LOGISTICS & OPERATIONS

Tracking

- Account for each item

Workflows

- Within NLB
- Within Archives
- To ensure no bottleneck

Space

- Large work area
- Quarantined area
- Warehouse storage
- Proper climate control

ISSUES

- **Convincing management – for fund and to microfilm as a preferred preservation method**
- **Outsource *OR* Do In-house**
- **Logistics & operations – identify/sort materials, transportation, tracking, workflow, work spaces**

ISSUES

➤ **Extent of Conservation Repair**

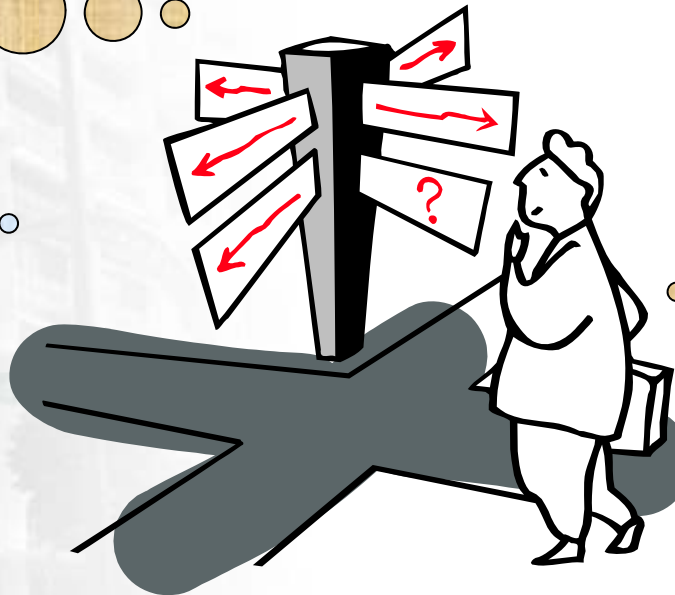
EXTENT OF PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION

**Preserve
the
original
look?
Artifact?**

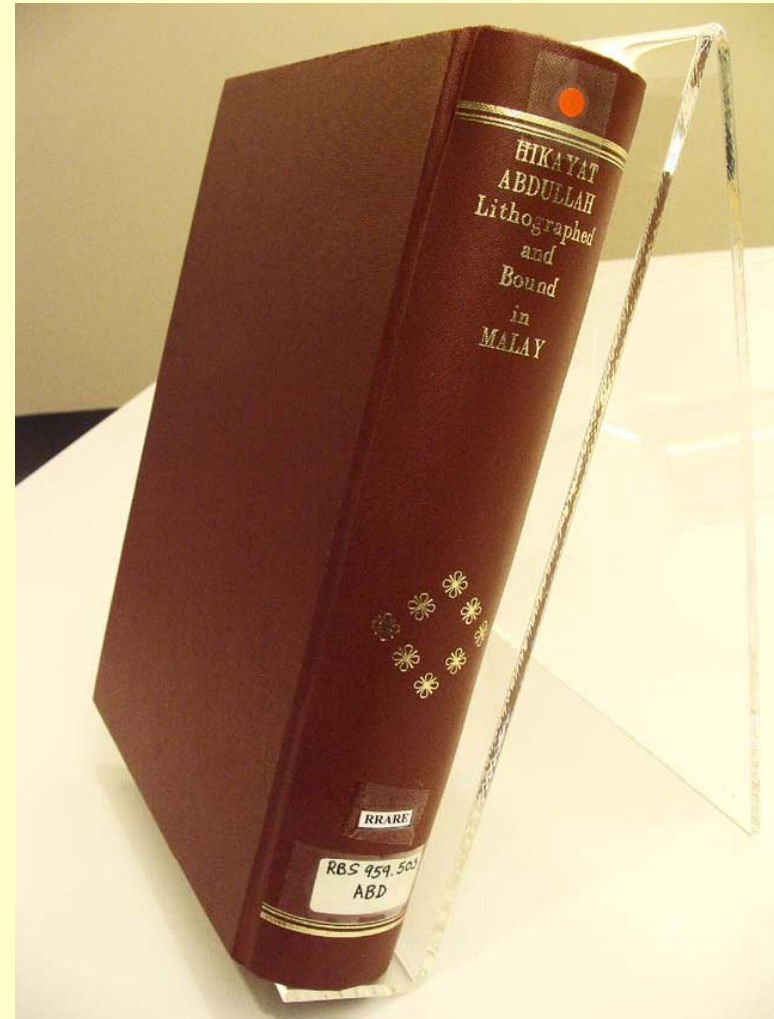
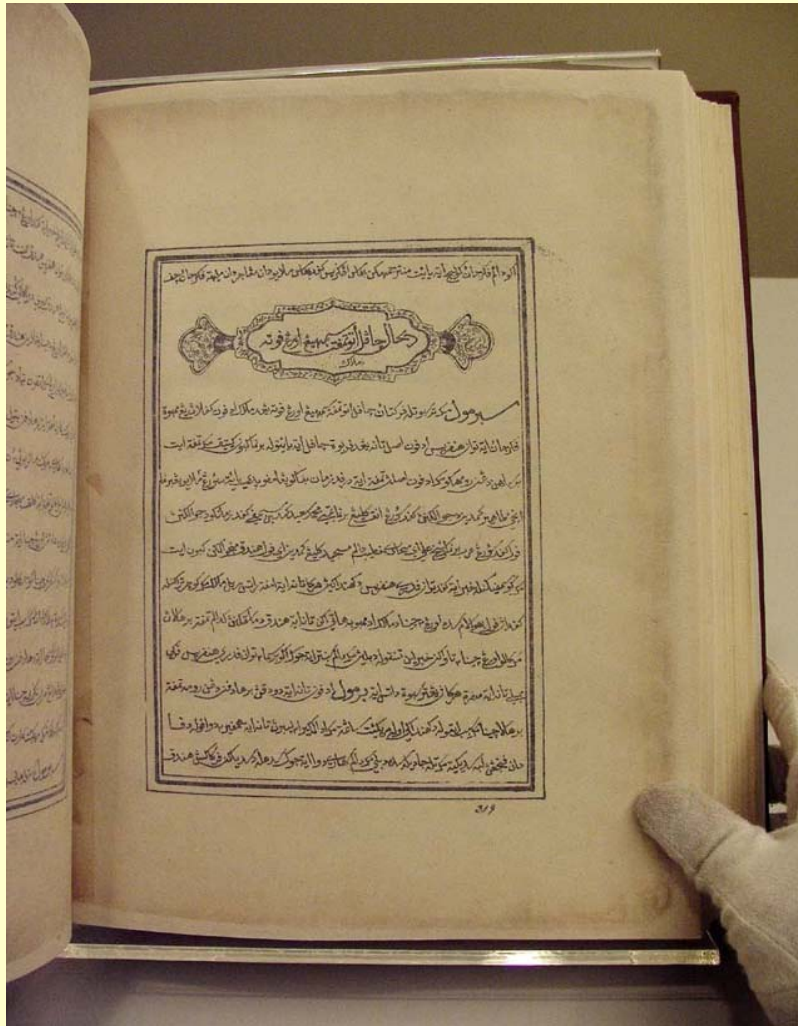
**Preserve
the
content?**

**Full
restoration
?**

**Minima
|
repair?**



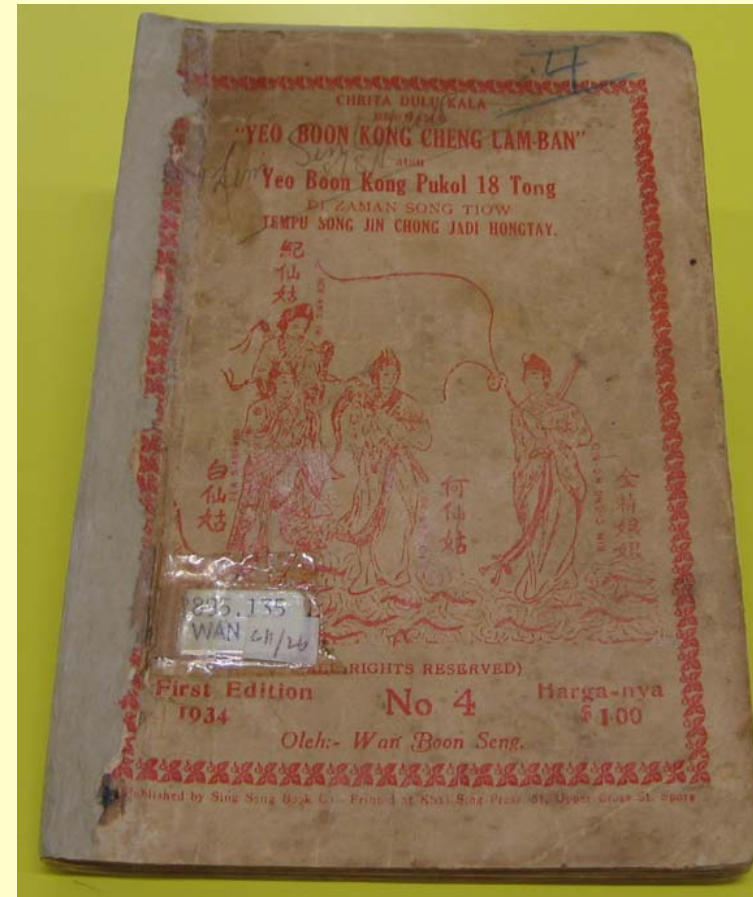
A FULLY RESTORED RARE BOOK



PICTURES OF A RARE BOOK CONSERVED NOW...

BEFORE

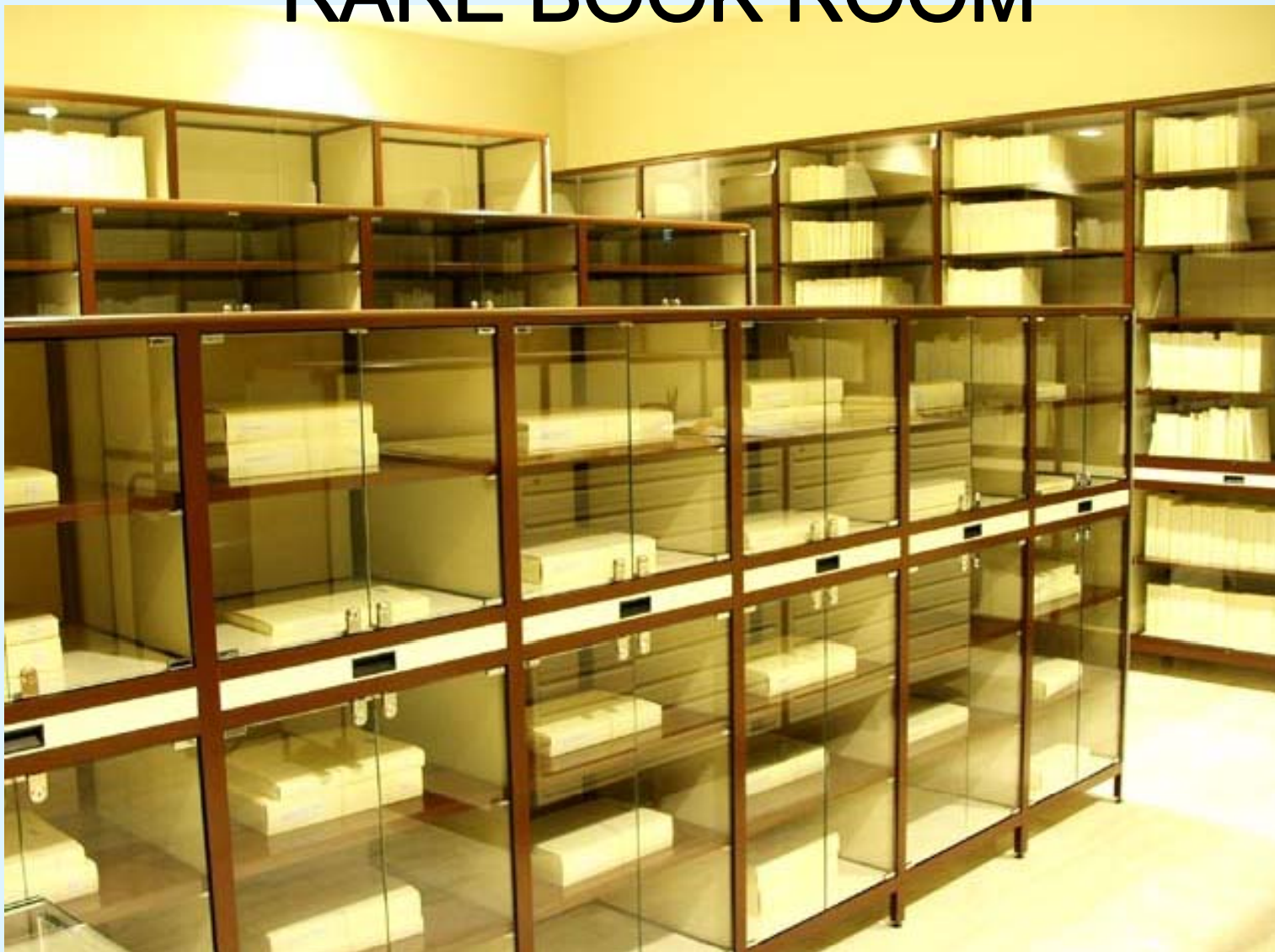
AFTER



RARE BOOKS IN ARCHIVAL BOXES



RARE BOOK ROOM



OTHER ISSUES

- **Need to maintain clean & pest-free work areas**
- **Manpower – use of casual staff to be supervised by a full time staff**
- **Open & effective communication channel**

LEARNING POINTS

- **Dedicated staff to ensure continuity – full time Preservation Librarian since Oct 05**
- **Good supervision and management skills**
- **Good tracking mechanism to manage such a big project**
- **Strategic partnership to ensure success**
- **Overall preservation strategy for all workflow– ready in Apr 06**

CONCLUSION

- **Preservation – a continuous process not just to salvage existing collection**
- **Need to implement preventive programs**
- **Preservation strategy should include staff & customers**
- **Allow staff to acquire “new” skills and knowledge**

THANK YOU ...

