

Designed for Use

library@orchard Makes a Comeback



Sufyan Alimon is an Associate Librarian with the National Library Board. He is part of the library@orchard team and manages the Visual and People Design Collection.

Eunice Ang is an Associate Librarian with the National Library Board. She is part of the library@orchard team and manages the Fiction and Lifestyle Design Collection.

(Above) Patrons enjoying the environment and collections at the newly opened library@orchard.

Patrons who have missed the old library@orchard at Ngee Ann City will be pleased to know that the new library@orchard opened on 23 October 2014, making it the 26th branch in the National Library Board's (NLB) network of public libraries. Apart from a prime location in the heart of the city's premier shopping district, library@orchard is the first public library with a collection focused on Lifestyle, Design and the Applied Arts. Located on the third and fourth levels of Orchard Gateway – a brand new shopping mall straddling both sides of Orchard Road and linked by a striking tubular glass bridge – the library not only serves the needs of those interested in design but also caters to the general public with its fiction and lifestyle collections. library@orchard complements the existing Central Public Library and library@esplanade, which focus on the Literary Arts and Performing Arts respectively.

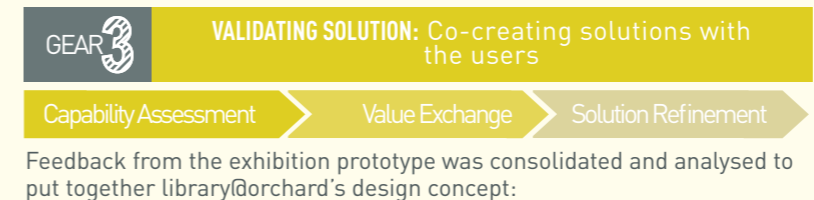
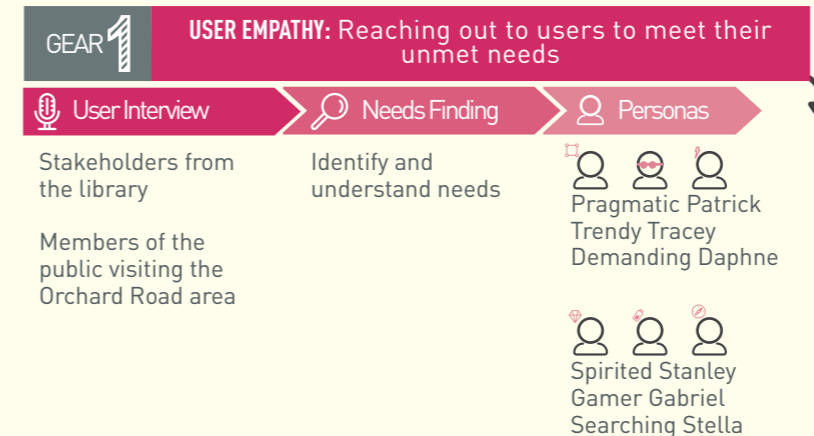
Not surprisingly, design and the creative use of space was a major consideration when the idea for library@orchard was first mooted. It is the first public library in Singapore that is based on the concept of Design Thinking, a problem-solving and solution-based methodology used by designers to create products, services and experiences. In Design Thinking, meeting the needs of the user is of prime importance, with user inputs taken into consideration at every step of the design process. Such user inputs have been incorporated as much

as possible in the design of library@orchard, resulting in a specially customised space that is tailored to the needs of the library user.

As Singapore Polytechnic (SP) is one of the pioneers of Design Thinking in Singapore, it was natural for NLB to team up with SP when it came to conceptualising the new library@orchard. As the methodology of Design Thinking is never a linear process, the team had to balance the needs of users and test the viability of several prototypes. After much discussion between the SP and NLB teams and potential users, the feedback from the exhibition prototypes was used to formulate library@orchard's design concept.

Guided by broad themes such as "Learn and Discover", "Engage" and "Escape", library@orchard has spaces dedicated for different uses – reading and exploring books in cosy cocoon-like spaces; learning and thinking by literally plucking from the tree of learning; or just sitting and pondering or sharing ideas with fellow library users. A library has to be more than just a repository of books, and to this end, library@orchard is equipped with features that allow users to enjoy a library experience like no other. Magazines, audio-visual materials and fiction titles are found on the lower level of the library, while the upper level is where the bulk of the library's collection is held.

Here are some design elements that make up the library@orchard experience.



Using the principles of Design Thinking, the National Library Board worked closely with Singapore Polytechnic and the public to develop library@orchard. *Courtesy of Annusia Jaybalan.*

PLUCK AND PONDER

Once you are done with your reading, head over to one of the library's tall and commanding bookshelf structures. Stretching from floor-to-ceiling, these stunning book trees are a series of shelves containing information waiting to be perused. The book trees integrate various content channels and customers are free to "pluck" books, magazines and audio-visual materials off these trees. The book trees are permanent fixtures found on the upper level of the library, next to their respective collections: Visual, Product, People and Space.

The interactive screen growing out of each book tree allows users to read about design personalities and iconic products featured for the month. Content will be strategically "planted" by library@orchard staff but customers can help to nurture these trees by "fertilising" them with their own book recommendations, a process as simple as scanning the physical copy of the book. Other users exploring the display will be able to see this same book in the user-recommended list. To download the list of book recommendations, just scan the QR code on the display with your phone and it will be downloaded onto your eBookshelf.

Communities can go one step further to take charge of planting, growing and taking care of their very own book tree. They can adopt a tree and curate their own collection of books at library@orchard and hopefully be able to nurture a community of loyal readers over time.

Hint: If you find it hard to start conversations with new people or find yourself at a loss of what to talk to people about, then these book trees are made for you. After reading the visual displays, you should be able to take part in a 10-minute conversation on the topic. Given that there are four trees and the topics are rotated monthly, users can gain an extra 40 minutes of conversation material every month!

COSY AND COCOONED

These pod-like cocoons are built to encourage learning and discovering in an intimate setting. Each cocoon has a smooth wood panel that wraps around the seat, leaving an opening at the front. It is perfect for users who wish to immerse themselves in a book and block out distractions while reading. The five cocoons – likely to be favourite hideouts for library@orchard visitors – are scattered throughout the upper level of the library.

Hint: The cocoon with the best view is situated in between the People and Visual collections. It overlooks the park bound by Somerset, Exeter and Killiney roads. With vantage views of such beautiful lush greenery, you can easily spend a whole day reading in this cosy space.



Bookshelves in the revamped library span floor-to-ceiling.

WALK AND WANDER

library@orchard offers magazines, audio-visual materials and fiction titles on its lower level, with five design collections on the upper level: People, Space, Product, Visual and Lifestyle. Wander around the shelves and users will find that the experience of searching for books in library@orchard differs slightly from that of other public libraries.

At library@orchard, books are arranged such that it is easy to browse and explore, with the topics of each collection clearly signposted. Even the labels on the book spines have been re-designed and clearly lay out the three things users need when searching for a book: collection name, subject category and the Dewey decimal classification number. For example, if you are renovating your house and would like some design ideas, head over to the Space Design shelves and look for books under the subject category of Interior Design without having to refer to the library catalogue.

If the upper level of the library projects the vibe of a peaceful and quiet bedroom, the lower level embodies the cheerful buzz of the living room. This is where people of varying backgrounds and interests can come together to build a vibrant and creative community within the library.

Hint: In true library fashion, library@orchard has arranged the books to form a narrative with sections on People, Space, Product, Visual and Lifestyle. It all starts with People. One of the most basic needs besides food, air and water is shelter. People naturally want a Space to occupy and make their own. Then come Products to decorate your space and Visuals to help you to decide on the products you need. After furnishing your space, you will realise that the items you have chosen actually reflect your Lifestyle.



These intimate pod-like cocoons allow undisturbed reading. There are five of such seats in the upper level.

SIT AND SPEAK

Occupying a prominent spot on the first level of library@orchard is a spacious semi-circle shaped open-plan seating area. Channelling the spirit of the agora (meaning “gathering place” in Greek), this is where users can gather in the library to sit and speak to other users. Do not worry that the librarian walking past will start shushing you as soon as you start talking. In this open space, users are encouraged to make conversation and to share their knowledge with one another at selected times. In this vein, library@orchard will host Communities – free twice-weekly self-help sessions where library users can come together to learn by using the resources available in the library.

Hint: This is the place to put those extra 40 minutes of conversation material to good use!

SWIPE AND SAVE

Get ready to stretch your muscles at this station. Located in the lower level of the library, this interactive wall can display up to 20 book titles at once. If print books are not good enough, the eBooks on this panel – known as the Kinect Glass – should do the trick. To start, mimic the pose shown on the screen with your body and start grabbing titles. Grab as many titles as you want and download them using the QR codes. A maximum of two users can use this station at the same time. To make the library a truly social experience, the Kinect Glass also doubles as a digital collaborative space for you to upload your creations. Other users can download and modify your creations, and then re-upload them onto this platform. Through remixing and reusing, the Kinect Glass encourages conversations and creative collaborations between users.

Hint: Remember to stand at least one metre away from the glass in order for it to pick up your movements.

FLIP AND FIND

Imagine a newsstand with an array of magazine titles. Now imagine that newsstand spanning floor-to-ceiling and stretching as far as the eye can see. That is what you will be looking at when you peruse the wall of magazines – filled with a dizzying selection of professional and creative titles that library@orchard has to offer. This is the first public library in Singapore to shelve its entire collection of magazines with the covers facing outward.

Hint: library@orchard holds the largest collection of design magazines of any public library, so get your lifestyle reading fix here!

LOOK AND LISTEN

Featuring a total of six screens pushing content out simultaneously, this video wall positioned at the entrance of the library welcomes visitors to library@orchard. Virtually anything in digital format can be flashed on these screens. The screens will be used to showcase films from the library’s collection or from library@orchard’s partners.

Hint: If this is your first visit to library@orchard, you may not know where to start. Make a quick stop at this wall to get a feel of the layout of the library from the digital library map or to get the latest information on happenings at library@orchard.

DABBLE AND DELIGHT

library@orchard is the first mall library to have three dedicated programme zones for activities and events. Delineated by glass doors, these zones can be segregated into three separate spaces or merged into one big space, making it one of the most versatile spaces in the library.

Hint: If you are curious by nature, head to library@orchard on the last Friday and Saturday of the month to catch the Resident Maker in action. Taking inspiration from the Artist-in-Residence concept, library@orchard will feature talented individuals – such as artists and designers – working at their craft in the dedicated MakerSpace. Visitors can watch as the Resident Maker potters about or interrupt and ask them questions about their work.

With so many new features available at library@orchard, endless possibilities await. We welcome you to keep coming back for more. ♦



Visitors browsing through publications at the wall of magazines, which houses the largest collection of design and creative titles found in any public library in Singapore.