

National Library (NL) Distinguished Readers

By Rokiah Mentol, Reference Specialist, Publishing and Research Services

NLB is launching the National Library (NL) Distinguished Readers initiative to local experts and prominent personalities in Singapore. NLB is honoured that eight personalities have accepted these titles. They are Ms Meira Chand, Dr Andrew Chew, Ms Jennie Chua, Prof Tommy Koh, Mrs Jean Marshall, Mr Ngiam Tong Dow, Mr J Y Pillay and Prof Edwin Thumboo.



Ms Meira Chand, of Indian Swiss parentage, is the author of seven novels whose themes examine the conflict of cultures and the position of the outsider. Five of her novels, *The Gossamer Fly*, *Last Quadrant*, *The Bonsai Tree*, *The Painted Cage* and *A Choice of Evils*, are set in Japan. *House of the Sun* was set in India and was adapted for the stage in London where it had a successful run and was voted Critic's Choice. Her latest book, *A Far Horizon*, is also about India in the early days of the Raj. A volume of her short stories, *The Pink White and Blue Universe*, will be published next year by Weidenfeld and Nicolson/Orion, London. She is currently working on a new novel. Ms Meira Chand is an associate member of the Centre for the Arts, National University of Singapore and was Chairperson for the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the region of South East Asia and South Pacific 2000 – 2002. She has been involved with the Creative Arts Programme for gifted children under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the National University of Singapore since 1997 and was recently a Visiting Fellow and Writer in Residence at Mansfield College, Oxford University. She was born and educated in London, studied art at St. Martin's School of Art and later specialised in textile design. She lived in Japan from 1962 to 1997, with a break of five years in India, and moved to Singapore.



Dr Andrew Chew Guan Khuan is currently Chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC) since 1 August 1998 where he was appointed Member in 1997. He has had over 40 years of experience in Singapore's Civil Service. Before he retired in 1994 as head of the Civil Service (1984 – 1994), he was concurrently the Permanent Secretary (Finance) (Public Service) in the Ministry of Finance and Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Prime Minister's Office. He was Chairman of the Central Provident Fund Board, Pro-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore, Chairman of the Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship, Lee Kuan Yew Scholarship Fund, Dr Goh Keng Swee Scholarship Fund, Institute of Defence and Strategies Studies and a Member of the Presidential Council for Minorities Rights and the Legal Service Commission. Dr Chew was conferred the Distinguished Service Order in 2002 in recognition of his outstanding contributions to Singapore and the public service. In 1994, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Dr Chew attended St Andrew's School and graduated from the University of Malaya in Singapore with an MBBS.



Ms Jennie Chua Kheng Yeng is currently President and CEO of Raffles Holdings Ltd and Chairman of the Community Chest. A very successful woman in the corporate world, Ms Chua has received more than five awards and recognition for work done in the corporate and voluntary fields since 1997. She was one of the 25 Stars of Asia, 2003 (Business Week); Woman of the Year 1999 (Her World magazine); Singapore Repertory Theatre Champion of the Arts Award, 1999; 1999 Hotelier of the Year, Travel Asia magazine and Independent Hotelier of the World 1997 (1st Asian woman & 1st Singaporean). During the same period, she was Director of more than 15 companies. She was the first woman Board Member appointed to the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce in 1998. Ms Chua was the Chairman of the Media Development Authority Board in 2003, Co-chairman, ERC Subcommittee on Domestic Enterprises, and Committee on Singapore's Competitiveness (Subcommittee on manpower and Productivity). In the academic sector, she was a lecturer at the Asian Institute of Tourism, University of Philippines, President's Council of Cornet Women, Cornell University, and Councillor, Cornell University Trustees & Council, USA.



Professor Tommy Koh Thong Bee is an Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1990. He is currently Chairman of the Institute of Policy Studies, Chairman, National Heritage Board and Chairman, Executive Committee of the Chinese Heritage Centre. He was appointed Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (concurrently accredited as High Commissioner to Canada), New York from 1968 to 1971 and again from 1974 to 1984 (concurrently accredited as High Commissioner to Canada and Ambassador to Mexico). He was Ambassador to the United States of

America from 1984 to 1990. He was President of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea from 1980 to 1982. He was appointed the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to lead a mission to the Russian Federation, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1993 and was a member of three WTO dispute panels, chairing it twice. He was the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and Singapore's Chief Negotiator for the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement. He was the founding Executive Director of the Asia-Europe Foundation. Professor Koh was the Dean of the Faculty of Law in National University of Singapore (1971 – 1974) and the founding Chairman of the National Arts Council (1991 – 1996). Professor Koh has received numerous awards from the government of Singapore and overseas governments and organisations.

Mrs Jean Marshall (nee Gray) was born and brought up in UK. After studying at the London School of Economics she was trained in medical social work. In 1953 she took a job in Malaysia, in Pahang and then in Kuala Lumpur. Around this time professional training of social workers was starting at the University of Malaya in Singapore and in 1957 Jean was appointed to the staff. After her 1961 marriage to the former Chief Minister David Marshall Jean continued to contribute to social welfare development as a volunteer, mostly with the Singapore Children's Society. She was also concerned with many other aspects of national development, and her interests now also include aspects of local history.



Mr Ngiam Tong Dow is currently Chairman, Surbana Corporation Pte Ltd. Prior to this, Mr Ngiam had a long and distinguished career in Singapore's public service. He was Permanent Secretary in several key government ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's office, and the Ministry of National Development. He was chairman of various statutory boards and companies, including the Economic Development Board, Development Bank of Singapore, Central Provident Fund Board and Singapore Technologies Holdings Pte Ltd. He was the director of numerous companies including Yeo Hiap Seng Ltd, United Overseas Bank Ltd, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd, Precious Land Pte Ltd, Overseas Union Bank, Temasek Holdings Limited, Health Corporation of Singapore Pte Ltd and Singapore Airlines Ltd. He was on the board of the Port of Singapore Authority, SMRT Corporation Ltd, Post Office Savings Bank, Singapore International Foundation, and Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore. He was awarded numerous public service awards including the Distinguished Service Order in 1999. Mr Ngiam graduated from University of Malaya (in Singapore) in 1959 with a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours) in Economics where he was awarded the Departmental Book Prize in Economics. He obtained a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Harvard University in 1964 and the Public Service Fellowship. In 1985 he was awarded the Eisenhower Exchange Fellowship in USA.



Mr Joseph Yubaraj Manuel Pillay is currently Chairman of the Singapore Exchange Limited Board (1999 –) and Chairman of the Council of Presidential Advisers since 2 September 2005 (member since 2 January 2001). Mr Pillay was one of Singapore's top-ranking civil servants and was one of the pioneers who helped build Singapore's economy. He has served in the Ministries of Finance, Defence and National Development and as Chairman of the board of several government-linked companies including SIA, Temasek Holdings and DBS. He was the Managing Director of MAS and the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation from 1985 to 1989. Some of the organisations that he is currently involved in are the Singapore Indian Development Association, Investment Committee of the United Nations Pension Fund, the Board of Governors of Asia-Europe Foundation, the Assisi Home & Hospice, the Mount Alvernia Hospital, the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, and the Singapore Hospice Council. Mr Pillay obtained a Bachelor of Science (Hons) First Class in Engineering from the Imperial College of Science and Technology in 1965.



Professor Edwin Nadasan Thumboo is an academic, poet and critic. He was conferred Emeritus Professor in 1997 by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and was appointed Professorial Fellow in 2005 with the Dept of English Language & Literature, NUS. Prof Thumboo was the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS for more than ten years, and was the Director of the NUS Centre for the Arts (1993 – 2005). He was awarded the Southeast Asia Write Award (1979), Cultural Medallion (1980) and the ASEAN Cultural and Communication Award in Literature (1987). In the international scene, Professor Thumboo was appointed Chairman, Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, VII Triennium from 1983 to 1986. In 1987, he was a member of the International Advisory Panel, East-West Centre, Hawaii, USA, and Honorary Research Fellow, University College London. In 1993, he was a Visiting Fellow in the Dept of English, Australian Defence Force Academy.



Queen Elizabeth II Tours the National Library

Arriving to the cheers of Singapore and British school students and library patrons, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II of England was indeed a rare sight on a Friday morning, 17 March 2006. On a three-day state visit, the Queen visited the Library, where she met winners of the Singapore Youth Commonwealth Photo Competition. The Queen was also shown the sights of Singapore at the Pod, Level 16, and later, the Library's Rare Materials Collection. She viewed works such as *the History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies*, which dates back to 1577, and an unpublished letter written by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819. Upon reading the letter, the Queen observed that Singapore was a busy port even back in 1819. Eliciting a smile from her, was a StraitsTimes supplement of her coronation in 1953. The library tour ended with her going back through the crowds of students who had been waiting anxiously in The Plaza and along the way, she stopped and chatted with a few of them.



Back: Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Defence
Front (left to right): Ms Lim Soo Hoon, Chairman, NLB; Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II; and Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive, NLB

NLB – NTU Memorandum of Understanding

By Veronica Chee, Senior Librarian, Publishing & Research Services

NLB and NTU SCI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 6 March 2006 to jointly publish an online journal on library and information science practices and management for Singapore. The e-publication aims to facilitate knowledge sharing in the field of library and information science between the academic communities in Singapore.

Over the years, NLB had the privilege to collaborate with NTU on many occasions and projects. Some of these include the Nanyang Business School's case study on the transformation of NLB, engaging NTU SCI faculty to conduct library skills training for NLB staff and jointly developing the curriculum for NTU SCI's Master of Information Studies programme.

This collaboration on the e-publication marks yet another significant

milestone in the relationship between NLB and NTU. The partnership enables both parties to leverage on each other's strengths to benefit the library and information science community, and also reflects the close rapport and warm ties that NLB and NTU have established so far. It is also timely as it supports NLB's strategic direction for the next 5 years, which is documented in the Library 2010 Report.

Through this collaboration, it is envisaged that Singapore will become the thought leader of library and knowledge education and innovation. At the same time, we also want to promote research in libraries and showcase Singapore libraries. NLB is indeed proud to partner NTU SCI in this e-publication collaboration and we look forward to identifying more opportunities and areas for collaboration along the way.



The MOU was signed by Ms Ngian Lek Choh, Deputy Chief Executive, NLB and concurrently Director, National Library and Professor Schubert Foo, Vice-Dean of the School of Communication and Information, NTU.

Urban Libraries Council Visits NLB

By Stephanie Tan, Senior Executive, Professional and International Relations



Members of the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) visited the National Library Board (NLB) on 20 and 21 February 06. The ULC is a membership association comprised of over 150 of the largest public libraries in the US and Canada. Its purpose is to strengthen the public library as an essential part of urban life.

The visit was part of the council's study trip to Singapore and Hong Kong to learn more about library development in the two countries. The members consisted mostly of directors of public libraries in the USA and Canada. During their trip here, they visited Woodlands Regional Library, Bukit Timah Community Children's Library, Seng Kang Community Library, library@orchard, Library Supply Centre and the National Library.

Martin Gomez, President of ULC, expressed his excitement about the visit in a brief interview. He felt that NLB has done a "tremendous job" with the libraries in Singapore. Mr Gomez was interested to see that NLB has

created different libraries to complement the different communities in Singapore. He was also very impressed with the innovations that NLB has employed and the emphasis NLB has placed on multi-lingualism. When asked, if the members are looking forward to implement what they have learned during the visit, the answer was a resounding "yes".

Besides the visits, some of the council members also participated in an information exchange session with NLB and Library Association of Singapore (LAS) on 21 Feb 06. The themes for the session were Trends and Innovations in Library Buildings, and Trends and Innovations in Library Technology.

F

Do you know that the National Library serves as a reference and research centre for all Singaporeans? The "Find It" campaign aims to bring greater visibility to the reference services and the richness of the Library's collections. The campaign also seeks to enable the Library to build autonomous information discoverers and become the first stop for people to look for information on Asia-centric content. The tag line of the campaign is "Your Trusted Source", which means people can trust the information found in the library and provided by the librarians.

The programmes start with the Find Series in April, which are thematic info-literacy talks, with a *User's Manual* launched during the campaign. Experts and subject specialists will be invited to give talks or panel discussions and specific programmes will target the four sectors of design, education, heritage and business.

The book "What a Stupid Question?" by the National Library Board's very own librarian, Sharmini Chellapandi, will also be launched during the campaign.

The campaign will be launched on 11 April 2006 and is targeted to run till middle of May. FIND IT if you must the programmes that interest you!

F.A.T. – this is a word that is taboo to a lot of people in the modern age, more so the fairer sex. Nobody wants to grow fat would they? So what would your reactions be if you were told that this is to be the theme for the National Library from April to June?

A

By Wan Wee Pin, Acting Manager, INVENT

Arts – a phase that elicits polar reactions from one and all especially here in Singapore. There are those who hail it as a sign of the maturity of a society while others deride it as no more than an excuse for human indulgence. In June, to help you make your mind up, and in conjunction with the Singapore Arts Festival, the National Library will be working with our partners to bring the vibrancy of the art scene to town.

The National Arts Council will be bringing two groups of overseas artists to the National Library. Arts lover will get to interact and enjoy themselves in the workshops with these foreign artists. This will be followed by a display of works by prominent local sculptors, like Han Sai Por, at the Plaza. Audiences will be able to connect with these sculptors during the panel discussions held to discuss about their works, philosophies, inspirations and beliefs. Budding animators and designers will also be joining in by having forum and workshop to showcase their works. All this will end with Mr. Sun Yuli talking about his works, how life and soul is connected to the universe.

T

For football lovers, the month of June can only mean one thing: The World Cup! So join in the fervor as the National Library build up to that big event in May through the theme called "The Beautiful Game". There will be a panel discussion on the event made up of prominent local and foreign football personalities as well as other programmes that will touch on the various aspects of football and examine why it is able to captivate our souls.

Other programmes in May will also cover the new and growing areas of gaming and extreme sports.

So with all the richness and variety of programmes being offered in the coming months ahead, join in the buffet and gorge on the knowledge and information made available. And for the very first time, you will be glad that you are growing F.A.T.!

For more information, log on to www.nlb.gov.sg