

NEWS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER LEADING INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXPERTS

By Jaime I-Lyn Goh, Corporate Communications Department; Damien Wang, INVENT

More than 270 delegates and speakers converged in Singapore in January to meet fellow information and knowledge professionals to discuss the future of libraries and librarians.

Over two days, they joined leading researchers, scholars, librarians and information professionals from Singapore, the US, Germany, Philippines and Australia in discussions covering such topics as knowledge and information management trends, the impact of the Infocommunication revolution on the role of libraries, and how to attract Generation Y to libraries.

Titled "Librarians: Learning -> Strengthening -> Moving Forward", the conference was organised by the Library Association of Singapore (LAS) from January 29 to 30, and served as a timely platform for the exchange of ideas and deliberations on issues and challenges faced by libraries.

Ms Sylvia Yap, President of LAS, said the conference was significant given the rapidly changing global environment and rising need for continuous learning. She added:

"It is also a great opportunity for information and knowledge professionals from Asia and beyond to foster international relationships and engage in insightful exchanges on the future of the knowledge world."

The two-day conference was kicked off by Singapore Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, who noted in his keynote address that many successful Asian countries and economies faced one major challenge: To climb to the next peak, and go from being middle-income to high-income countries and economies.

He said: "Working harder is no longer enough. We have to learn to work smarter. This means major investment in education and training. It means embracing the KBE or knowledge based economy, in which innovation and creativity will be the new drivers and creators of wealth."



Librarians and professionals packed the hall to hear about the latest trends and practices

Prof Koh's pertinent message was followed by a series of presentations and discussions by leading information experts.

Ms Leigh Watson Healy, Chief Analyst of US company Outsell, Inc., started off by discussing markets in the information industry and top technologies, trends and the actions that libraries could undertake in 2007. She was followed by Mr Chris Palma, Strategic Partner Development Manager at Google, who spoke about how libraries could become fully-optimised search engines. Professor Daniel Seng, Associate Professor in the Department of Law of the National University of Singapore, then shared about copyright laws and rights management. Greater awareness of these, he noted, was needed to ensure that the library and information services sector remained relevant.

Several speakers also touched on the development of library professionals. Associate Professor Gillian Hallam from the Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and Professor

Antonio Santos, Chief Law Librarian of the University of the Philippines, shared case studies of how librarians' standards of professional service were maintained and regulated in their home countries.

Mr Choy Fatt Cheong, University Librarian in the Nanyang Technological University, meanwhile, spoke about local efforts to encourage professional librarians in Singapore to continuously upgrade

themselves and keep their skills relevant. He presented and described the "Certification of Continuous Professional Development for Librarians in Singapore", a scheme developed by the National Committee on Library & Knowledge Professionals in Singapore.

The second day of the conference saw another keynote speech being delivered by Dr Claudia Lux, President-Elect of the International Federation of Library Associations and Director-General of the Foundation Central and Regional Library in Germany.

With the virtual and physical world blending together, a greater emphasis is placed on the role that libraries can play in connecting people and resources around the world. In her speech, "Libraries: Connecting People to People and People to the World's Resources", she stressed the role that libraries play in connecting people with each other, and people with

the world's resources. Libraries in developing countries, she noted, provided a link to the outside world for those living in rural areas.

Ms Ulla Wimmer from the Coordinator Network of Excellence for Libraries in the German Library Association followed up with a presentation on the BIX Library Index, a nationwide benchmarking system for public and academic libraries in Germany. Ms Wan Lye Tim, Deputy Director of Technical Services in the Singapore Polytechnic Library, then gave a local perspective, sharing the Singapore Polytechnic experience in benchmarking.

The conference then turned an eye on the future, focusing on the library users of the future – Generation Y. Mr James Soh, Executive Director of the National Youth Achievement Award Council, and Mr John Johnson, High School Librarian in the Singapore American School, joined two student representatives in a lively and insightful discussion on how to make libraries attractive to Generation Y users.

Wrapping up the conference was Ms Ngian Lek Choh, Director National Library. She said, "We are heartened by the huge turnout at the conference. After this conference, we feel that we are in a better position to meet the challenges of the emerging trends and chart our journey in this new age of interactive and digital media."



Many lively and interesting panel discussions were held to flesh out issues and trends

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING WITH THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION, NTU

By Hameedah Mohamed Ibrahim, Reference Librarian, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

The Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (LKCRIL) recently conducted a session on Sharing of History Enquiries with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) MSc Students at NTU.

Mr Neo Tiong Seng and Mr Timothy Pwee, Reference Librarians from the LKCRIL, conducted the January 23 sharing session for seven students, which complemented a module in the MSc Information Studies course called "Reference Sources for Humanities and Social Sciences: Sources for Historians on Southeast Asian History: H6602".

Apart from introducing and promoting the collections and services at LKCRIL, the session also facilitated networking among fellow information professionals to share and exchange ideas.

Associate Professor Brendan Luyt from the Division of Information Studies, School of Information and Communication, NTU, kicked off the session with a lecture on primary, secondary and tertiary information sources in print and electronic formats.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr Timothy Pwee on reference works, during which he shared examples of enquiries received on the historical aspects of Singapore and Southeast Asia. Search strategies, query formulation and refinement in retrieving high precision results were also covered, accompanied by numerous examples demonstrating the process of research in handling history enquiries.

Mr Neo continued with a presentation on reference enquiries on Asian history, giving examples of enquiries on the history of China, India and countries in the Middle East. The session rounded up with a lively and interactive question-and-answer session.

All in all, the participants found the session useful: They said the sharing session gave a good insight into the work of reference librarians and helped them gain a better understanding of reference work at LKCRIL.

AKSARA: THE PASSAGE OF MALAY SCRIPTS EXHIBITION

By Mazelan Anuar, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

The Aksara: The Passage of Malay Scripts Exhibition was opened on 18 January 2007 to much fanfare and excitement. The opening of the exhibition was marked by a grand launch, which took place on the ground-floor Plaza of the National Library.

The opening ceremony was officiated by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Minister-In-Charge of Muslim Affairs. In his opening speech, Dr Yaacob marvelled at the openness, dexterity and dynamism of the Malay language and encouraged all to reflect deeper on Singapore's shared past. Meaningful cross-interactions, he noted, have enhanced Singapore's heritage and multi-cultural identity.

This was followed by a vibrant dance item, performed by local dance troupe Sri Warisan. Dr Yaacob and guests then visited the exhibition on Level 10 of the National Library, and was taken on a tour of the exhibits which traced the different writing systems used in the Malay world.

The exhibition included some of the oldest races of Malay script, found on ancient, valuable and rare manuscripts, letters and artifacts. Some of the artifacts are from private individuals, local and overseas libraries, museums, institutions and organisations such as the National Library of Indonesia, National Museum of Singapore, the Malay Heritage Centre, the Bodleian Library in the United Kingdom, the British Library Board and the Vietnam History Museum.

They include a stone edict which dates back to 686 and was found in Sumatra, a fourth-century stele with Sanskrit script from Vietnam, and a 14th century manuscript believed to be the oldest existing Malay manuscript in the world.

Visitors can also see the originals as well as replicas of rare and valuable manuscripts and artefacts, such as a 1895 Baba-Malay translation of the Chinese classic, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, 19th century translations of the Bible in the Malay language, and the works of Munshi Abdullah, widely regarded as the father of modern Malay literature.

The Aksara exhibition is part of a series of exhibitions organised by the National Library, starting with the Zheng He & Maritime Asia Exhibition in 2005. It will be followed by one on Indian Influences on Southeast Asia.

'Aksara' is Malay for 'alphabet' or 'system of writing'. The exhibition, which will be on till 30 June 2007, will take visitors through the influences that different cultures had on the Malay system of writing. Scripts used in the Malay World reflect the illustrious and rich cultural history of the region that witnessed a blending of indigenous, Indic, Islamic and Western influences.



Guest of honour Dr Yaacob Ibrahim takes a close look at one of the exhibits

The scripts used in the Malay Archipelago during the pre-Islamic era were ancient Indic scripts such as Pallava and Kawi, or their adaptations. This reflects the process of Indianisation that took place at that time. With the arrival of Islam, *Jawi* script, which was derived from Islamic Arabic-Persian writing traditions, became the dominant form of Malay writing system. The use of *Jawi* was a key factor driving the emergence of Malay as the lingua franca of the region.

The arrival of the European explorers and traders brought a Latinised form of spelling and writing of Malay, which became known as *huruf rumi*. Over the years, this has come to be the more widely used script.

After Singapore was opened as a British trading port in 1819, it became a hub for Malay publishers, writers, educators, religious reformers and journalists. The introduction of printing technology saw many Malay works printed both in *Jawi* and *rumi*. These developments paved the way for a significant phase in the development of the Malay language, boosting the production of Malay works, which had previously been handwritten in manuscript form.

VISIT THE AKSARA: THE PASSAGE OF MALAY SCRIPTS EXHIBITION AT LEVEL 10 OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, ON TILL 30 JUNE 2007, 10 AM - 9 PM.

NLB AND ASIAN FILM ARCHIVE SIGN AGREEMENT

Local film buffs have much to rejoice about: A reference library collection of films made by Singaporean and Asian filmmakers will soon be set up.



Mr Rajendra Gour was honoured as a pioneer in local film-making

Under a Memorandum of Understanding which the National Library Board (NLB) and the Asian Film Archive (AFA) signed on 16 January 2007, library users and film researchers will be able to get access to and view the films in the AFA's collection. NLB will facilitate this access at library@esplanade, while the AFA will evaluate,

collect, document and catalogue films for this growing community.

Director National Library Ms Ngian Lek Choh, who signed the agreement on NLB's behalf, said, "With the MOU in place, NLB will continue in its vision to bolster our audio-visual collection for our patrons while preserving local film heritage with our strategic partners. The collaboration will also ensure that unpublished local films as well as rare and significant Asian-centric films can now be archived, preserved and shared among the community where it was not available commercially before."

She added that the NLB will work closely with the AFA to host film literacy seminars, film screenings and workshops at library@esplanade.

There's more good news for the local film community: In a joint effort to preserve and promote Singapore's film heritage, the NLB, AFA and the Singapore Film Commission (SFC) also signed a tripartite agreement to build a collection of Singapore films and film-related materials, especially those by independent filmmakers.

Laying out the aims of the collection, Chairman of AFA Professor Kenneth Paul Tan said, "A great archive, we believe, is not just an archive of old, dusty and rotting films, but a living archive that not only preserves films but pro-actively makes them available to people to celebrate them as part of our cultural landscape."

Agreeing, Director of SFC Mr Man Shu Sum said the collection will help inspire local filmmakers and aid them in developing their own voice: "It is crucial for the development of our nascent film industry, as young filmmakers can draw on the influence of our own culture and cinematic style captured and shared through the archives."

The signing ceremony was followed by the screening of two short films produced by local filmmaker Mr Rajendra Gour, who was honoured for making the earliest known Singapore award-winning short films screened at overseas film festivals.

The short films were *Sunshine Singapore* (1968-72) and *A Labour of Love - The Housewife* (1974). Mr Gour's first film, *Mr Tender Heart*, was showcased at the Commonwealth UK Festival in 1965. Unfortunately, the print and negative could not be salvaged and preserved.

Mr Gour said, "The last film I made for myself was in 1978. Since then, I have only made films for organisations. It is an honour to be finally recognised and I am planning to make another personal film again."



DNL Ms Ngian and AFA chairman Prof Tan sign the agreement

A GREAT ARCHIVE, WE BELIEVE, IS NOT JUST AN ARCHIVE OF OLD, DUSTY AND ROTTING FILMS, BUT A LIVING ARCHIVE THAT NOT ONLY PRESERVES FILMS BUT PRO-ACTIVELY MAKES THEM AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE THEM AS PART OF OUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE.

– AFA Chairman Prof Kenneth Paul Tan