

NEWS

MRS LAURA BUSH, FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, VISITS THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

In a two-day official visit by President George W Bush and First Lady Mrs Laura Bush to Singapore on 16-17 November 2006, Mrs Bush, a former librarian, who is passionate about the importance and pleasures of reading, chose to visit the National Library.

Upon arrival, Mrs Bush was taken on a tour of the Singapore and Southeast Asian collections, and viewed rare titles and manuscripts such as a letter written by Sir Stamford Raffles and *The History of Trauayle in the West and East Indies* (1577), the oldest title in the collection which described the archipelago during pre-British colonial times.

As camera shutters snapped away, Mrs Bush graciously signed the National Library Board (NLB) guestbook and proceeded to the Children's Section



(from left) Mrs Wong Kan Seng, Ms Denise Phua, Member of Parliament, Mrs Laura Bush, First Lady of USA, Dr Varaprasad, Chief Executive, NLB and Ms Judy Ng, Deputy Director, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library



Mrs Laura Bush reading a story to children from the KidsRead Programme and Jamiyah Children's Home

of the Central Lending Library, where a group of children were eagerly waiting for her arrival. The children, aged seven to nine years old, were from the KidsREAD programme at St Anthony's Primary School and from the Jamiyah Children's Home. As Mrs Bush arrived, the children gave a warm hello in unison, and Mrs Bush's beaming smile put all present at ease.

Reading from David Kirk's *Miss Spider's Tea Party*, Mrs Bush kept the children rapt with attention and interspersed her reading with questions to the children, such as whether there were fireflies in Singapore. At the end of the reading, there was a Question & Answer session with the children and the First Lady sportingly fielded their innocuous questions with much aplomb. One particular question and answer that stood out was on Mrs Bush's hobbies. She said her hobby was reading and that it was the love for reading that led her to pursue a master's degree in library science and also to work as a librarian before she became the First Lady.

The session ended with Mrs Bush taking photographs with the children and presenting NLB with the autographed copy of the book she had read to the children.

DIGITAL TERRORISM CONFERENCE

by Ronnie Tan, Reference Librarian,
Publishing and Research Services

A one-day conference on digital terrorism organised jointly by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, was held on 14 November 2006 at the National Library. The aim of the conference was to educate and heighten awareness of the use of the Internet by extremist groups to influence public thinking. To this end, the five conference speakers touched on topics such as the use of the Internet by various militant and religious groups to spread their hate messages and Jihadi beliefs. The speakers also pointed out that the use of the Internet for such infernal purposes was not confined to militant Islamic groups alone but was also pervasive among some racist groups too. About 60 researchers attended the conference.



Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, sharing on militant propaganda on the Internet

PARTNERING WITH LIBRARIANS IN VIETNAM

By Ivy Lee, Reference Librarian, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

Hot on the heels of our Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's visit to Vietnam to explore partnership opportunities in September, the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library (LKCR) collaborated with the General Sciences Library (GSL) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to establish a reference service delivery workflow. Singapore is one of Vietnam's major investment and trade partners. The other countries include Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea.

The objective of this collaboration is to enable LKCR to tap on GSL's resources and expertise, especially when handling enquiries on Vietnam where print and digital resources in English are scarce. This collaboration also applies to GSL for enquiries that can be better handled by LKCR when the enquirer is located in Vietnam. In time to come, GSL may promote its newly minted reference services to its blossoming business community who can then benefit from the two libraries' co-operation.

In order to communicate LKCR's reference delivery standards with the Vietnamese librarians, one of the LKCR reference librarians visited GSL in late September. Ms Le Thi Thanh Thuy, Deputy Head of Professional Research & Guidance at GSL and LKCR Reference Librarian, Mrs Bonny Muliani Tan, initiator of the collaboration and currently working from Ho Chi Minh City, were there to provide a warm welcome.

The suite of reference services offered to the public by LKCR, especially dealing with business enquiries about Vietnam, was the focus of a sharing session. A tour of GSL also revealed a rich collection of local newspapers and periodicals providing rich information about the Vietnamese economy.

Apart from the rich Vietnamese historical and statistical resources in GSL, GSL has a strong outreach programme to the visually handicapped. Spearheaded by the vivacious Mrs Nguyen Thi Bac, Director of GSL, its services boasts of two well-equipped recording studios for recording audio books and a unit where staff hand-craft 3D tactile books and publish their own Braille books for visually handicapped children and adults. The vision that Mrs Bac shared for the visually handicapped library users was inspiring, especially for a library that runs on a very tight budget.

This collaboration is one of the partnerships that LKCR is attempting to establish with libraries in the region. Our common objective is to ensure our customers receive the best reference services from a greater pool of experts and library specialists.



General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Librarians from GSL

General Sciences Library (GSL), Ho Chi Minh City

GSL is one of the key branch libraries under the library system of Vietnam, where the National Library in Hanoi is the premier institution. GSL, however, has an established history, having inherited the collections of the Library for Admirals and Governors established by the French in 1868 and controversial American resources prior to the reunification of Vietnam in 1975. It used to be the National Library in South Vietnam.

It serves 270,000 patrons annually, ranging from students to businessmen and government agencies, although these figures exclude the users of 24 provincial libraries under its wings. With renewed business interest in Ho Chi Minh City and a central location in the heart of the tourist and business district, the library has recently launched a new Reference Service (September 2006) and is planning to open a Children's Library (December 2006). Many expatriates from the business and educational sectors actively participate in the library's programme as volunteers and partners.

Ho Chi Minh City

Since Vietnam launched its economic reformation "Doi Moi", Singapore has been one of its earliest and largest investors despite the island's small size. On 7 November 2006, Vietnam became the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) 150th member, a privileged position that enables it to enter the global market on an equal footing.

This makes information all the more important, particularly for business investments. Much of this information is still not published, and those that are, are in Vietnamese. Thus, a collaboration between relevant agencies can serve to aid investors in both Vietnam and Singapore.

HERITAGE ROAD SHOW @ THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

by Damien Wang, Librarian, INVENT; inputs from Mr Lai Yeen Pong, Consultant, Heritage & Asia Division and Mdm Azizah Sidek, Reference Specialist, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library

The National Library held its very first Heritage Road Show on 11 and 12 November 2006, in conjunction with the "Explore Singapore!" campaign co-organised by the National Heritage Board (NHB), National Library Board (NLB) and Media Development Authority (MDA) to spark a desire among Singaporeans to rediscover their heritage.

Underlying the carnival-like atmosphere was a serious effort to collect our local print heritage for preservation and conservation purposes. In particular, print resources which were rare, historically significant and in sufficiently good condition to fill NLB's collection gaps were most sought-after. The challenge was in getting Singaporeans to part with their family heirlooms.

One of the unique features of the road show was the option for participants to either donate the physical copy of the print material to NLB, or to make a 'virtual donation'. The latter procedure involved the instant capturing of an entry or its first page (for multi-page documents) via digital photography or scanning. This provided an avenue for Singaporeans who were reluctant to part with their family treasures to come forward and share them everyone. This will also enable NLB to approach each and every owner if a follow-up was necessary.

The subject on cash prizes totalling \$10,000 was hardly broached. Donors were more concerned about the use of the items after donation. Some of the donations were done in good faith, with a firm belief that NLB would be in a better position to conserve them for posterity. There were also some donors who were second or third-generation owners unable to make sense of artefacts.

Fortunately, there were some experts who were willing to lend a hand. Mr Lai Yeen Pong (Consultant, Heritage & Asia Division), Mdm Azizah Sidek (Reference Specialist, Lee Kong Chian Reference Library) and Mr Leong Sek Choon (Specialist, SILAS Secretariat), were some of the busiest staff members on duty, zipping from booth to booth to help appraise the rarer artefacts brought in by potential donors. Mr Lim Chen Sian, a NUS graduate research student specialising in colonial archaeology, was one of the volunteers who lent his expertise at the Road Show. The para-professionals from Lee Kong Chian Reference Library also played a crucial role in transcribing Chinese and Malay bibliographic details for record-keeping purposes.

So what happens to the donated print material? Suitable physical donations will be processed and made available for research purposes. Plans are also under way to digitise some of the rarer items for preservation and conservation purposes, so that more users will be able to access the digitised copy without having to handle the original.

In all, over 700 physical and virtual donations were received over the two days, of which 400 were Chinese textbooks dating between 1915 and the 1980s. These were donated by a 67-year old bookstore owner, Mr Yeo Shan Chai.

The panel of judges comprised Mr Iskander Mydin (Senior Curator, National Museum), Mr Lai Yeen Pong (Consultant, Heritage and Asia, NLB), Dr David Chng (Research Fellow, Centre for Chinese Language & Culture, Nanyang Technological University) and Mr Lim Guan Hock (Senior Archives Officer, National Archives).



Volunteer appraiser, Mr Lim Chen Sian, examining an old photograph.



Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive of NLB, launched the 2-day Heritage Road Show by striking a traditional Malay gong.



Two 'virtual donations' being processed at the on-site digital studio. The original items were then returned to their respective owners.

Some of the winning entries:
 (An asterisk* denotes donation of a physical copy to NLB)

Mr Yeo Shan Chai*

Mr Yeo donated over 200 old school textbooks used in Singapore published between the 1910s and the 1980s. One of the oldest dates back to 1915.

Title: Outlines of Chinese Grammar

Author: Commercial Press (China)

Year: 1915

Significance: Used as Chinese textbook in Singapore. The Commercial Press was founded in China in the late 19th century.



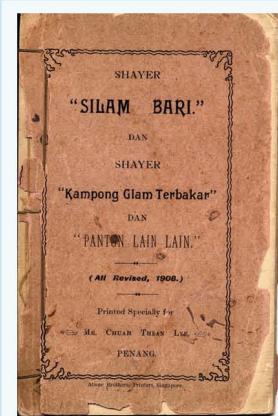
Mr Tan Lai Huat*

Title: Shayer "Silam Bari" dan Shayer "Kampong Glam Terbakar" dan "Pantun Lain Lain"

Publisher: "Printed specially for Mr Chuah Thean Lye, Penang, by Alwee Brothers, printers, Singapore." (as printed on cover)

Publication date: 1908

Significance: Malay syaer on "Kampong Glam Terbakar". Early history of Singapore & Kampong Glam.



Additional notes: Shayer, shaer, syaer and syair = they are the same. It means "Poem" or "Poetry". Terbakar means "on fire". Thus Shair Kampong Glam Terbakar means "Poetry on the Inferno/Fire at Kampong Glam"

Mr Wong Han Min*

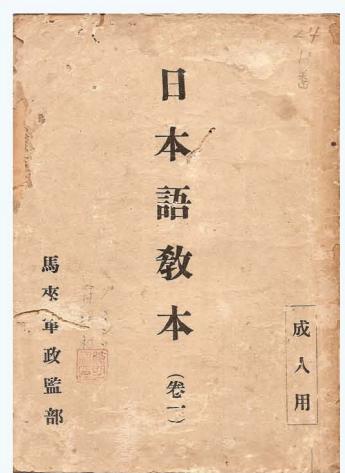
Title: Japanese language textbook for adults

Author: Japanese Military Administration

Publisher: Syonan publisher

Year of publication: 1940s

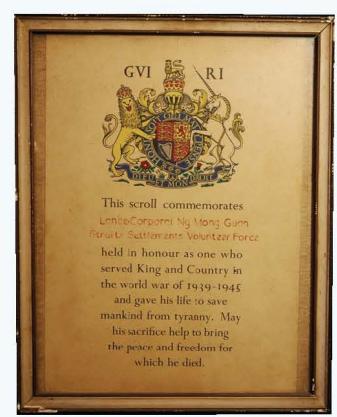
Significance: Very few textbooks used during the Japanese Occupation are found today.



Ms Shermeen Ng*

Title: Scroll bearing text:

"This scroll commemorates Lance-Corporal Ng Mong Guan, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, held in honour as one who served King and Country in the world war of 1939-1945 and gave his life to save mankind from tyranny. May his sacrifice help to bring the peace and freedom for which he died."



Year: 1940s

Significance: Awarded posthumously to family of the late Lance-Corporal Ng Mong Guan, who was the donor's grandfather. Unlike medals, very few paper scrolls survive over 50 years.

Mr Lim Soon Hoe

Title: On the Trade To China and the Indian Archipelago with Observations on the Insecurity of the British Interests in that Quarter

Author: Charles Assey, Esq. (Secretary to Government of Java)

Year of publication: 1819

Significance: Charles Assey was adamant in the British having a settlement in Singapore.



XIMEDIALAB COMES TO THE LIBRARY

by Leslie Koh, Senior Manager, Publishing and Research Services



Great ideas and great advice flowed freely at the two-day XIMedialab.

The buzz, excitement and sounds of high-tech games turned the National Library into a games arcade of sorts in early December, when a gaming workshop was held at the Pod over two days.

But this workshop was like no other: the games were educational, the players had much more than mere entertainment in mind, and there were mentors on hand to help them improve the games that they had designed themselves.

On December 7 and 8, 14 groups came together at NLB to take part in the recent XIMedialab, to work on projects that involved game-based education. Standing alongside were mentors from around the world, international experts who had designed best-selling games and were on hand to help the designers improve their games. The National Library Board hosted a two-day session at the Possibility Room.

Although XIMedialab's latest gathering was themed "Learning from Games", mere play was far from the only thing on the participants' minds. The Lab was in fact an intensive creative

workshop that allowed project teams to tap on the expertise and experience of top digital media experts from around the world. The aim: To help local firms, entrepreneurs and institutions commercialise their brilliant ideas and enter the digital market.

This is the third time the Lab has been held in Singapore.

Over two days, the teams sought their mentors' views and help on how to market their project ideas for commercial use. Not only did they get one-on-one personal consultation from these mentors, but they also got to tap on the digital experts' international networks.

The Lab was organised by XIMedialab, an internationally-acclaimed digital media think-tank. It counts among its network a range of top digital media practitioners, innovators and power-brokers.

Ms Megan Elliot, a director of XIMedialab, said the economic potential of game-based learning was huge. "Game-based learning completely re-configures the economics of all forms of education, corporate training, health services, all science and visualisation, and all forms of simulation."

Likewise, Mr Siddarth Jain, a mentor at the Lab and the chief creative director of games designer Playware Studios Asia, also believes that Singapore has a huge potential for educational games. "The market potential for games round the world runs into the trillions of dollars. And as much as 60 percent of education materials have the potential for some form of game-based learning."

LEE KONG CHIAN RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SERIES: PIONEER BATCH SHARE THEIR FINDINGS

by Leslie Koh, Senior Manager, Publishing and Research Services



Ms Adeline Koh discussing her research findings on old colonial English textbooks

The Lee Kong Chian Research Fellowship passed a significant milestone in December 2006, with two of the pioneer batch of Research Fellows presenting their findings at the first of a series of talks. Mr Chan Chow Wah and Ms Adeline Koh were the first two to be offered the LKC Research Fellowship in May 2006.

The same month also saw the Fellowship Series welcome its fourth Fellow, Ms Chiam Ching Leen.

Established by the National Library of Singapore, the Fellowship awards researchers who are making use of the Library's archived and preserved collections. It reflects the National Library's efforts to be the preferred stop for Asian content scholarship.

Mr Chan and Ms Koh shared their findings at a seminar on 11 December 2006 at the National Library, following a welcome address by Dr N. Varaprasad, the Chief Executive of the National Library Board.

Mr Chan, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and Member of the American Anthropological Association, detailed

the historical background of the Shuang Lin Monastery, a historical landmark in Singapore. His research, *Storms in Shuang Lin: Ethnography of Social Actors in the Political Climate of 1939-1942*, showed how the monastery and Singaporeans had played a great part in the Sino-Japanese war.

Ms Adeline Koh, a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature, The University of Michigan, then presented her findings on the motivations behind British colonial education in her talk, *Educating Malayan Gentlemen: Establishing an Anglicized Elite in Twentieth-Century Colonial Malaya*.

The same day, the National Library also signed an agreement with the fourth Fellow, Ms Chiam, a doctorate candidate at the National Institute of Education. She will be researching into knowledge sharing in Singapore's post-secondary institutions.



Mr Chan Chow Wah presenting his topic on the Shuang Lin Monastery