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Factsheet

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD

The National Library Board (NLB) was established as a statutory board on 1 September 1995, marking a major milestone in the transformation of libraries in Singapore. In 2012, the National Library Board Act was amended for the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) to come under NLB. This marked another inflexion point, given the important public service role of both organisations as custodians of knowledge and information for the community at large.

Today, NLB manages the National Library, 26 Public Libraries (including three Regional Libraries) and the National Archives of Singapore.

Figure a. NLB’s key statistics at a glance (as of 2017)



NLB’s efforts to reach out to Singaporeans have been successful.

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National Library

The National Library seeks to build and preserve a National Collection and has in place a comprehensive Reference Collection to support the nation's reference and research needs.

National Archives

The National Archives of Singapore oversees the collection, preservation, and management of public and private archival records, including government files, private memoirs, maps, photographs, oral history interviews and audio-visual materials.

Public Libraries

Our libraries promote reading, learning and information literacy by providing a trusted, accessible and globally-connected library and information service through the National Library and a comprehensive network of Public Libraries. Beyond this, our goal is also to create a network that connects people to the wider community and for citizens to have an appreciation and awareness of Singapore's history through a wide range of programmes and collections on Singapore and the region.

NLB's public libraries are popular with Singaporeans. In one busy day, about 68,000 people visit the libraries, 84,000 loans are made, and 300 new members sign up¹. Beyond physical spaces, NLB also reaches out to the public through various community partnerships such as the Mobile Library(MOLLY) buses, which bring library services to the underserved in special education schools, community homes, orphanages and welfare associations. NLB also partners with community organisations to provide reading hotspots in the heartlands. NLB has supported 44 community reading hotspots thus far. NLB also launched 3 digital kiosks to further promote reading and lifelong learning using NLB e-resources. Set up in the heartlands, shopping malls, and learning institutions, these virtual touchpoints encourage users to browse NLB's e-resources and borrow them on their NLB Mobile App.

To meet changing reading, information and consumption needs, NLB continually revamps and rejuvenates its libraries, aiming to enhance the overall library experience of its patrons and usage of new and upgraded library spaces.

This includes strategically locating libraries at more accessible locations, such as shopping malls near MRT stations or integrated developments, and transforming library spaces and services to be one-stop destinations for personalised and customised experiences, opportunities for collaborative learning, and seamless access to library collections and programmes.

As of 12 January 2019, a total of six libraries have been upgraded. These revamped libraries have each showed increases in loans and library visitorship during the first year after the

¹ In 2017, NLB has achieved 26 million visitorship, 30.9 million total loans, and 2.4 million library membership.

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revamp. The newest library to be opened is library@harbourfront, which opened in Vivocity on 12 Jan 2019. Other recently revamped libraries include:

Library	Date Opened
Sengkang Public Library	Mar 2017
Bukit Panjang Public Library	Jul 2017
Tampines Regional Library	Aug 2017
Bedok Public Library	Oct 2017
Yishun Public Library	Feb 2018

NLB's Digital Efforts

Besides keeping its physical collections updated and interesting for its readers, NLB is also moving towards making resources accessible online, to cater to Singaporeans' changing lifestyle needs. These include making continuous enhancements to existing and introducing new services such as:

- **NLB Mobile App:** Users are able to engage in integrated searching and borrowing of physical content, eBooks, and audiobooks. Since its launch in 2016, the app has had 570,000 downloads.
- **eBooks collection:** 0.7 million (as of 2017) eBooks over 12 collections in all 4 official languages, such as OverDrive, TumbleBooks, and Apabi.
- **eDatabases:** 74 databases covering various subject areas cater to NLB users' information needs. These include content digitised and created by NLB or provided by partners, such as NewspaperSG, PictureSG, HistorySG, Archives Online, MusicSG, Web Archive Singapore (WAS), Singapore Infopedia, Singapore Digitized Books (BookSG), National Online Repository of the Arts (NORA).

NLB's concerted digital efforts have seen a significant increase in digital visitorship, which refers to the number of downloads from NLB's websites, subscribed databases and eBooks over the past few years. Correspondingly, the number of digital loans has also increased from just 0.93 million in 2016 to more than 5 million in 2018.

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD – 2018 SINGAPORE QUALITY AWARD WITH SPECIAL COMMENDATION WINNER

1. An international leader among libraries. The National Library Board (NLB) has been successfully managing the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)'s Regional Office for Asia and Oceania for the past 13 years. The Asia and Oceania Regional Office covers 62 countries. With this appointment, NLB has been proactively raising the profile of the libraries in the region. NLB was chosen to host many international forums for the past five years. In 2013, Singapore was chosen by the Library of Congress in the United States as its first international partner to host the 2nd Summit of the Book. In the same year, it hosted the IFLA World Library and Information Congress and received the Singapore Tourism Board's Singapore Experience Awards 2014 for Experience Association Conference Organiser of the Year.

2. Building reading and learning communities through technology. NLB oversees a network of 26 public libraries, the National Library and the National Archives of Singapore. Under its stewardship, around 2.4 million library members benefit from its diverse collection of books, newspapers, magazines, multimedia resources and archival materials. NLB **leverages technology to provide seamless access** and enable patrons to effortlessly navigate library resources and services on their own. NLB has introduced **easy-to-use self-service features** such as the reservation lockers for patrons to collect items at their convenience. The award-winning NLB mobile app also allows patrons to access a wide range of digital content and carry out library transactions on their mobile devices at any time.

3. Empowering a knowledgeable and smart nation. In support of Singapore's Smart Nation vision, NLB offers programmes for people of all ages to equip them with **digital skills for the future economy**. NLB provides innovative facilities such as the immersive storytelling room for children and digital literacy programmes for working adults, and promotes initiatives such as Senior Tech and Read for Seniors to learn digital skills and benefit from technology.

4. Co-creating learning experiences with the community. NLB works closely with the community to **promote reading and learning**. For instance, library@chinatown is run by volunteers while the public libraries in Bukit Panjang, Tampines and Yishun have sections managed by volunteers. Through the Community Oral History Committees, NLB also works closely with different groups in the community to **build and raise awareness on Singapore's heritage and history through oral history**. This follows the successful Citizen Archivist Project, which crowd-sources for the transcription of archival photos and documents.

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5. Elevating staff competencies and service standards through innovation. NLB harnesses technology to improve library operations to deliver better services and make manual work easier and more efficient. The AutoSorter automatically sorts returned books, and incorporates data analytics to identify popular titles for display. Innovations such as the Mobile Bookdrop and shelf-reading robot enhance the book return and shelving processes. These enable staff to channel their time to higher-value tasks such as engaging patrons to support their reading and learning.

6. Benefiting from Business Excellence (BE). Business excellence is part of NLB's DNA – always thinking of creative ways to bring the joy of reading and learning to the community through its libraries and archives. NLB's BE journey has helped it to focus on improving its processes, and encouraged it to look at new ways of delivering its services. NLB has re-designed its services to make them more user-centric and efficient. NLB also co-created with its partners and volunteers to connect and inspire a nation of readers and knowledge seekers.

For more information, please contact the following

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