An Analysis of Contributions Made from Singapore at the IFLA WLIC 2013 Conference

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Abstract

Organizing IFLA WLIC 2013 was a major milestone for libraries and librarians in Singapore. It provided an opportunity to researchers and practitioners in Singapore to share their research, ideas and initiatives with the participants from other countries. This analysis attempts to capture the flavour and essence of the presentations made by representatives from Singapore. It aims to provide a synopsis of selected papers to those library and information professionals who might have either missed the opportunity to attend this prestigious conference or had missed certain sessions as some of these sessions held concurrently. This analysis would help them discover more about the directions, initiatives and research undertaken in Singapore.

Keywords: IFLA, WLIC 2013, Singapore, Analysis, Library Practice, Library Research.

Introduction

In August 2013 - Singapore, for the first time in its history, hosted the 79th International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) World Library Information Congress (WLIC). It was the third time this event has reached Southeast Asia – previously it was held in the Philippines in 1980 and Thailand in 1999. This event naturally garnered the support of the library community in Singapore and many of them got involved in its organization. As many sessions of the conference were held concurrently, some participants found it challenging to listen to all papers they were interested in. We hope this analysis of selected papers by Singapore participants would help highlight the diversity in their presentations and offer some insights into the types of library initiatives undertaken in Singapore. It is also likely to motivate and encourage readers to delve more into the full papers which are archived by IFLA (please follow the URLs provided in the References section to gain access to these papers).

Scope and Objectives

Our review is not comprehensive, as it is restricted to only those papers which were presented by Singapore representatives and made available through IFLA conference archive website. In addition, we will only present the key points discussed in these papers and try to point out areas where further exploration and deliberations are desirable.

As this analysis only covers selected papers from Singapore, matching the themes of the main conference, certain other important areas of library and information research and practice in Singapore may not be fully reflected here. Moreover, this analysis also excludes the presentations made by Singapore contributors in pre-conference satellite meetings. Many of these satellite meetings did not require written papers and, as a result, we do not have access to their content.

Opening speeches and keynote

The organizing chair of the National Committee for the event was Mrs. Elaine Ng (2013), Chief Executive of the National Library Board, Singapore. In her welcome speech she thanked the Minister for Communications and Information for gracing the occasion and highlighted the rationale of the conference theme which was "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities".

She reported that over 3,900 delegates from 122 countries were participating in the conference. She also introduced the keynote speaker of the event – Ambassador Chan Heng Chee. Ambassador Chan is the chairperson of the Lee Kuan Yew Centre of Innovation for Cities and well known as a highly successful working woman.

In her keynote speech, Ambassador Chan recalled her early experiences of using libraries and highlighted the important role played by librarians in a society. She also pointed out the changes brought by e-readers but at the same time noted that she still prefer using physical books wherever and whenever possible.

She discussed the technological and social challenges faced by libraries and asked if libraries are ready for a big change. It is particularly important as at our current pace of technological progress, it is estimated that around eight billion people on the Earth will be online by 2025. She also pointed out that by 2020, libraries are expected to handle a mix of 5 generations of people, i.e. the Traditionalists (pre-1946), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Gen Xers (1965-76), the Millenials/Gen Ys (1977-1997) and the Gen C (the digitally connected). It will be a big challenge and libraries should be ready for it.

She noted that according to a Pew Internet & American Life Project; the nature of information has changed from scarcity to pervasiveness, from restricted to openness. Cell phones have become an integral part of our lifestyle and social networks are considered an important element of the

internet use. Ambassador Chan emphasized the need for more studies to understand users' behavior of using mobile phones and their consumption of information through this platform. She urged librarians to consider how libraries and librarians fit into the changing information landscape and how to serve their users more effectively.

She also recommended librarians to consider different measures to enhance the social value of libraries as "sacred places" for seeking information. This change in the perception of users of the new role of libraries is then likely to enhance their image thus resulting in their continuous existence.

In his opening speech, the Minister for Communications and Information, Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim (2013) highlighted the role and importance of libraries in providing access to quality information. To further elaborate his point he quoted writer Neil Gaiman who once said that *"Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one".* He noted that libraries, due to IT advancements and certain other factors, are going through an era of continuous change. Looking ahead, he hoped that libraries would become centres of knowledge creation and librarians would develop themselves into a key information resource for the community.

Papers by Singapore Representatives

The key points of papers contributed by authors from Singapore are presented in the following sections, in alphabetical order of their last names. A complete list of papers presented in the main IFLA-WLIC conference by authors from Singapore is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: List of presentations at the IFLA-WLIC 2013 conference by authors from Singapore

Authors	Paper	Remarks
Ambassador Chan Heng Chee	Are Libraries Ready for the Big Change?	
Dr. Cherian George	The Fate of the public in the Age of Individual Choice	No paper available on IFLA site
Timothy Pwee and Mages Periasamy	Mapping Dreams to Pin the Future to: Access Ideas for the National Library Singapore	
Veronica Boudeville	Library, Information and archives work-in-progress	No paper available on IFLA site
Margaret Tan	Implementing Agile Management Through Collaborative Social Computing	
Zhe Benedict Yeo, Varshini P. Muthu and Idzhana Kailani	A Corporate Climate for Learning: Practices from the National Library Board, Singapore	
Jacky Wong Kae Perng	Library Services for Mobile Devices: the NIE Library Experience	Poster presentation
Jillian Lim	I 'like" my Library: User Engagement Via Blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram	Poster presentation
Chui Suet Fen	Time of Your Life: Service for 50plus	Poster presentation
Chia Wai Ying	Mobile 3D Library Map	Poster presentation
Wan Wee Pin, Jaclyn Teo, Sara Pek & Damien Wang	S.U.R.E.: A Nation-wide Campaign to Promote Information Literacy awareness to Singaporeans	Poster presentation
Emerald Leung	Redesign Your Future – Students Reinvent Libraries, Control Their Reading Journeys	Poster presentation
Raneetha Ratnam	For the Love of Reading! New Strategies to Engage the Next Generation of Readers	
Andy Heng	Leveraging Organizational Expertise and Subject Taxonomies in Collection Development	
Kia Siang Hock and Wang Zhi Liang	Content-as-a-service Platform with the Alfresco Open-source Enterprise Content Management System	
Soh Lin Li and Lo Wan Ni	My Tree House: World's 1st Green Library for Kids	
Charlotte Gill	Researching Singapore Law	No paper available on IFLA site
Gulcin Cribb and Yuyun Wirawati Ishak	Using Social Media to Build an Engaged Community	No paper available on IFLA site
Lena Sam, Ramaravikumar Ramakrishnan and Kannadasan Venkatachalam	Information Services for the Engineering Community; Explorations in the Hybrid Environment	
Lim Chee Kiam and Balakumar Chinnasamy	Connecting Library Content Using Text Analytics and Data Mining on Structured and Unstructured Data	
Yeo Wei Wei	The Value of an Archive in the Digital Age	No paper available on IFLA site
Lim Tin Seng	Campaign City: Life in Posters	
Brendan Luyt	The Makiling Echo: the Multiple Functions of a Staff Magazine in the American Tropical Empire of the Early Twentieth Century	No paper available on IFLA site (Abstract only)
Zahra Aljunied	The Genealogy of the Hadhrami Arabs in Southeast Asia – the 'Alawi Family	
Ngian Lek Choh	Libraries in Southeast Asia: a force for social development!	
Chris Tang	Acquiring, organizing and providing access to digital content: The Singapore Memory Project experience	

(Contents mainly abstracted from the Congress Programme of the event with tallying of IFLA website for final details of authorship for published papers).

The genealogy of the Hadhrami Arabs in Southeast Asia – the 'Alawi family – by Ms. S. Zahra Aljunied

Whilst on a personal journey to discover and trace her family roots, the author presented a system for organizing genealogical recording, already set up by her ancestors. The new challenges faced by her family included the training of future caretakers of the records to continually maintain and update them as well as to consider how to make use of new technologies to preserve and provide access to this family heritage.

Encounters with the public archives & collective memory: Researching the Indian Community in Singapore – by Nalina Gopal

In preparation for the opening of Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) in 2015, the author reported examining documents and archives related to the Indian community in Singapore. She explained that five permanent galleries are planned to cover history of the Indian community in Singapore – the connection between south and south-east Asia through religion and trade; journeys of migration; settlement and pioneering efforts; anti-imperialist and reformist activities; and contributions to the making of a post-colonial country. For the purpose of exhibitions, the author reported focusing on useful narratives captured from the available records.

She shared that instead of just relying on official records, the IHC would also leverage on getting information from personal records of the Indian community. Such information would be captured from the news, oral recordings and interviews with senior citizens who have had lived and witnessed important national events. As a result, she claimed that history will no longer be just told as a set of statements of the facts rather spiced it up with the flavor of personal experiences.

Leveraging organizational expertise taxonomy for collection development
– by Andy Heng

The author shared the experience of developing an organizational taxonomy at Defence Science & Technology Agency (DSTA) by leveraging the expertise available within the organization to provide additional terms to complement the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) to help make its collection more discoverable. He reported that DSTA has created a Competency Development Framework (CDF) to develop staff expertise in one or more areas that were important to DSTA. The purpose was ensure that at least one subject matter expert (SME) should be available to cover these areas. One key role of an SME was to define a learning roadmap that staff can follow involving training courses, on-the-job training, and access to information resources for consultation.

He also discussed the key challenges faced by DSTA including less than one full-time equivalent librarian onsite, a heavy dependence on patron-driven acquisition at the point of need which led to a lack of coordination between departments for library acquisitions, and supervisors who were not necessarily the right experts to make best judgment for a purchase request. He explained that these problems were largely resolved by having the SME identified through the CDF, and the request for purchases were routed to the right experts to make decisions or highlight information resources already available in the organization.

Content-as-a-service platform with the alfresco open-source enterprise content management system - by Kia Siang Hock and Wang Zhi Liang

The authors shared the experience of National Library Board (NLB), Singapore in utilizing the Alfresco Enterprise Content Management system as a platform to provide access to its Uniquely Singapore materials. By making

its resources friendlier to search engines, NLB was able to make these resources easily findable over the web.

The authors highlighted that NLB has also made a decision to view content delivery as a service – dispensing the traditional viewpoint of content being associated with a particular container/platform. It was considered important to take the end-consumer viewpoint of how they would like to receive the content: through their mobiles, personal computers or tablets. It also drove NLB to make a system architectural decision to adopt the Responsive Web Design (RWD) framework.

The authors reported that many options were studied by NLB before choosing Alfresco as its content management system. The primary considerations were that it was an Open Source Software (OSS) with commercial support as well as an extensive Application Programming Interface (API) library to support interfacing with multiple platforms.

The authors cautioned that though the learning curve for any organization trying to implement a similar setup would be quite steep but the returns would be very rewarding as NLB has discovered.

Connecting library content using data mining and text analytics on structured and unstructured data – by Lim Chee Kiam and Balakumar Chinnasamy

The authors shared NLB's experience of using data mining techniques to provide a title recommendation service for its patrons (using structured data) and text analytics to help recommend related resources in the Singapore Memory Project and the Infopedia pages (using unstructured data). By connecting resources with data, it was possible to make resources discoverable without requiring end-users to go hunting for them.

The authors pointed out that the linked data technique is still under development but shows a great deal of promise. They agreed that as the net is

basically a group of connected pages, the extension of this concept to linked data is likely to show a similar promise by enhancing resource discovery, thus expanding the capabilities of the existing internet.

Singapore: a city of campaigns - by Lim Tin Seng

The author reviewed nearly five decades of campaigns undertaken by the Singapore government in its drive to educate and encourage its citizenry towards more desirable values and behaviors. The author presented an interesting aspect of Singapore living and provided a glimpse of the growing phase of the nation.

The author also pointed out a shift from top-down approach to a more social collaborative model due to maturing society and extensive use of new media by the citizens. The author also highlighted the development of nostalgia for previous campaigns which still remain as an integral part of the memory of the residents in Singapore.

Libraries in Southeast Asia: a force for social development! – by Ngian Lek Choh

The author presented an overview of the developments occurring across Southeast Asian libraries to improve literacy of their respective countries. Besides the cultivation of traditional reading habits, libraries in Southeast Asia have also embarked on providing better information literacy skills to their citizens as well as training them to connect and make good use of the internet resources.

She noted that libraries in ASEAN countries have also started digitizing their heritage resources and making them available to the interested users. As a

result, we can see an overall improvement in access to library resources and services.

Mapping dreams to pin the future to: Access ideas for the National Library Singapore – by Timothy Pwee and Makeswary Periasamy

The authors outlined the challenges faced by NLB in handling its map collection. The efforts to preserve and provide easy access to the physical maps were highlighted. The authors also shared their experiences of making the maps digitally accessible thus enhancing their discovery. They reported the use of new technologies like Geo-tagging to help users traverse time (comparing maps of the same locality but produced at different years) by using the concept of co-location.

For the love of reading! New strategies to engage the next generation of readers – by Raneetha Rajaratnam

The author shared different strategic approaches used by public libraries in Singapore to encourage good reading habits across different age groups. The key approaches were to lay a foundation for toddlers and pre-schoolers; ensure that reading is fun for children; let the young adults find that reading is cool; for adults to know that reading is useful; and for senior citizens to discover that reading enables them to stay engaged with rest of the society.

The author also highlighted various initiatives undertaken by public libraries in Singapore such as kidsREAD, Read@School, Young Read! Singapore, and the introduction of gaming into reading habits with Quest and Conquest.

Information services for the engineering community: explorations in the hybrid environment - by Lena Sam, Ramaravikumar Ramakrishnan and Kannadasan Venkatachalam

The authors highlighted a need to introduce different formats of e-books which are different from introducing a physical book resource to readers. For the purpose of promotion, they found that Facebook was the top-choice of the social media platforms and it was preferred by about 84% of the survey participants. As such, they were able to utilize Facebook as a promotion channel to increase access to their blog pages by about 30%.

The authors reported that Nanyang Technological University (NTU) libraries have also incorporated a library workshop into Engineering and Innovation Design module, which is usually taken by 600 to 700 students. . They stressed that more work is required to create a seamless user experience although they were encouraged by the reception of reference services, using social media platforms, by the students.

My tree house – World's 1ˢᵗ green library for kids – by Soh Lin Li and Lo Wan Ni

The authors shared the journey of developing a special library for children by inculcating skills to become "environmentally literate" individuals. The library was a joint initiative undertaken by a private company and a public institution. Even the construction of the library used a green approach and it was awarded the Green Mark Platinum award by the Building and Construction Authority of Singapore.

The authors pointed out that different approaches were executed to try and achieve reduction in construction wastage as well as to develop new library space. It used carpets made from 70% recycled materials, energy saving

lightings, low volatile compound paints, and the existing book shelves. The library also reduced its physical collection size by increasing e-content. The library collection and programmes were also planned with a theme to encourage protection and care for the environment.

Implementing agile management through collaborative social computing – by Margaret Tan

The author shared the experience of developing a platform for knowledge creation, development and engagement to be used by librarians of Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Various features of this blog were tested by NTU libraries. Although the blog page was the main platform to generate postings, NTU libraries extended its connectivity to other popular media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to retain people interested in the topics being discussed. However, the author argued that more is not necessarily always better and it is vital for organizations to think through and be clear of what they intent to achieve by increasing the level of engagement and collaboration.

Acquiring, organizing and providing access to digital content: The Singapore Memory Project experience – by Chris Tang

Singapore has embarked on a national initiative to capture memory of the nation and NLB was tasked to champion this project. The author presented a state of the affairs report, highlighting achievements of Singapore Memory Project (SMP) during the last three years. The author also reported that two separate approaches were used for capturing institutional and personal memories. The institutional approach was based on specific priorities and

negotiations held with different institutions. The crowd-sourcing approach was employed to capture the memories of individuals.

The author reported that at the point of his presentations about 830,000 personal memories have been collected. There was also another initiative to allow owners of personal blog pages to pledge their contents to the SMP. He revealed that SMP has also started collecting tweets that were relevant and identified by the hash tag #SGMemory as well as photographs available via Instagram.

A corporate climate for learning: practices from National Library Board, Singapore – by Benedict Yeo Zhe, Varshini P. Muthu and Idzhana Kailani

The authors discussed NLB's approach to staff training and provided details of the operation and strategic approach adopted by its NLB Academy (NLBA). The authors identified three groups of initiatives for learning, namely: Core Learning Infrastructure (CLI); Formal, Quasi-formal and Informal Platforms (FQIP); and Beyond-the-position learning and other avenues for attaining knowledge.

Under the CLI approach, NLB made use of its staff performance measurement programme to review and reflect on the training needs of its staff and NLBA was tasked to organize courses to address these training needs. For the FQIP approach, NLB used professional talks (inviting guest speakers to speak on occasions), professional sharing (when NLB staff go on official trips, they are expected to share their experiences with their colleagues), one learning hour (informal learning), and emails to share interesting information and news with other staff. The beyond-the-position learning made use of Work Improvement Teams and has also organized an innovation competition called the Blackbox competition to encourage staff to go beyond their normal scope of work and try out new ideas.

However, the authors concluded that learning cannot be simplified or classified into different categories and that learning approaches and preferences are likely to vary amongst individuals within an organization. It is thus important for organizations to present a variety of options to increase the number of opportunities for its staff to learn and develop.

Conclusion

It was very hearting to note that contributors from Singapore wrote their papers on a variety of topics including testing of new technologies, making good use of collaborative initiatives, staff training and development, techniques for content discovery, promotion of literacy, and development of a green library. These papers effectively showcased different initiatives and ideas being implemented in Singapore libraries. The IFLA WLIC was a rare opportunity for librarians in Singapore to present their achievements to an international audience as well as learn new techniques and approaches used by libraries in other countries. It is with great pleasure for us to say: "Well done, Singapore!"

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