Review of the Libraries for Tomorrow Conference 2014 (LFT2014)

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Abstract

The Libraries For Tomorrow Conference 2014 (LFT2014) organized by the Library Association of Singapore (LAS) was held on 14 October 2014. It brought together the librarians in Singapore and was a platform for them to share ideas and discuss on issues pertinent to the library industry in Singapore. This year's event saw 14 presentations and 5 posters covering the 3 areas of the theme of conference of People, Places and Possibilities. It was attended by 333 participants. This paper is an attempt to summarize and review the information that had been shared by presenters to the participants. This paper will also attempt to demonstrate the power of using embedded links to link to the various papers/presentations that have been referred to – as a first attempt towards new style publishing.

Keywords: Libraries For Tomorrow, LFT2014, Library Association of Singapore, LAS, Singapore Librarians.

Introduction

Since 2011, LAS has been organizing the LFT conference on an annual basis. An exception was made in 2013 as the IFLA general conference made its way to Singapore. In 2014, LFT was organized on 14 Oct 2014 as a single-day event for the librarians and associated personnel working in the library industry of Singapore. Compared to the LFT2012 event, which had about 8 presentations, the LFT2014 had 14 presentations + 5 posters – this was more than double the participation rate in terms of contribution of presentation to the event. As the event had 3 main sub-thematic areas plus posters, this paper will cover each of the sub-thematic area in their own sections and highlighting key findings and ideas for discussion.

This paper will also attempt to embed URL links behind the papers/presentations covered, as a trial for the new model of publishing that makes good use of capabilities that are empowered by web technologies.

LFT 2014 conference sub-theme: People

There were 4 presentations in this segment, amongst which 2 of the presentations represented works that were inter-institutional – involving library workers from different institutions collaborating with each other for their experimentations. This represented a breakthrough for Singapore Librarians, as in the past it was the norm for each institution to present their own findings and studies.

The first presentation [“A day in the life of … Staff Development, Singapore Style”](#) was a collaborative work of 4 officers from 3 institutions – Shameem Nilofar Maideen & Sumita Govindan (Singapore Management University's Li Ka Shing Library), Ng Mee Ling (Nanyang Technological University Libraries) and Lee Seok Hong (National University of Singapore Libraries).

They jointly presented the special arrangement made by these 3 institutions to provide a staff exchange and attachment programme that allowed their librarians to learn from each other their different approaches and work by providing exposure and learning about best practices hands-on. By sending the librarians to be attached to each institution, networking and relationship building opportunities were created.

The good news reported by the team is that the programme has been expanded for the next round and had attracted the interest of 3 other institutions – Singapore University of Technology and Design, the National Institute of Education and the Singapore Institute of Management. This bodes well for the development of better relationship between the institutional libraries as well as demonstrates the willingness for collaboration between the institutions.

The second presentation for this segment was titled "Stretching the boundaries to enhance library user experience and self-services" – this was authored by Ramachandran Narayanan, Kia Siang Hock and Choo Thong Tiong of the National Library Board of Singapore (NLB). One of the authors, Choo, presented at the event.

He covered all the new services that NLB had introduced for the past year (more details can be found in his presentation slides please refer to the link by clicking on the title of presentation above) in its drive to empower its end users to be able to self-serve themselves. The key learning points the project team shared with the attendees of the conference was that in such implementations it was important to prepare staff well to allay worries. When gathering information about tasks, don't simply relying on questions and answers from staff, but there is a need to observe on site how staff behaves when they perform those tasks to obtain more information. It was also important to use pilot projects (mini-scale attempts) and there was always a

need to guide end users on how to perform the self-service activities to kick start the habit in them.

The third presentation was titled "Collaboration & Partnerships with Different Stakeholders to Strengthen Patent Information Literacy Programmes at NUS Libraries" – authored by Loh Mee Lan, Stephanie Ng, Iftikhar Hayat and Chew Shu Wen.

The team presented that having looked over existing literature – they had not found examples of collaboration with partners from non-teaching departments as well as no examples of integrating the patent searching info-literacy programmes (ILP) for non-Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) students.

As such, the team started to work with the Industrial Liaison Office, the Division of Industrial Design at the School of Design and Environment and the Design-Centric Programme at the Faculty of Engineering from the National University of Singapore (NUS) to develop the ILP for non-STEM students.

Based on the feedback received, the team shared that the participants felt that the ILP should have been organized for Year 2 students and reinforced for Year 4 students so as to better help them in their studies.

The fourth presentation of this segment was titled "Research Data Management and Curation Aspirations at NTU and SMU Libraries" – and was another collaborative effort between Cheng Wei Yeow & Goh Su Nee (of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Libraries) and Tint Hla Hla Htoo (of Singapore Management University (SMU) Li Ka Shing Library).

The authors highlighted a trend that data management is slowly becoming important – crafting a proper data management policy and making them discoverable will therefore become vital. There are many challenges and the

current proposed approach is to make it easy for the producers of research data to lodge them into the institutional repositories and provide simple means and instructions for them to tag them to assist retrieval and discovery later on.

LFT 2014 conference sub-theme: Places

The second sub-theme of the conference covered the topic of places or spaces related to libraries. These could be both physical and virtual space (on the web). This segment had 5 presentations.

The first presentation under this sub-theme was titled "HistorySG: an online resource guide" was presented by Gladys Low and Ang Seow Leng of NLB. This represented a virtual place created for the purpose of helping users discover the resources that cover the history of Singapore.

The authors introduced how the website was conceptualized and how the sub-topical areas were categorized. Two kinds of views were incorporated - a timeline view and a thematic view to facilitate discovery using time or theme as angles for researchers to approach the topic of their interest.

The librarians involved gained important knowledge about historical events and had the opportunity to work with diverse groups of stakeholders. There was also a learning point with regards to sensitive topics (which are unavoidable when one works with historical information) and how to present them taking those sensitivities into consideration.

The second presentation was titled "Sharing on NIE 'Library As Space' Project" by Chew-Ooi Lian Ping, Hilary Ho, Jacky Wong & Douglas Lau. The authors had also introduced a video component for their presentation.

In this presentation, the authors shared the experience of the National Institute of Education's (NIE) Library in transforming the use of their library space

both physical (Service Space, Collaborative Space and Knowledge Space) and virtual (Library Portal and LibGo) for their users.

In this exercise, NIE managed to create 22% more seating capacity as well as introduced 300 more electrical power points for its users.

The third presentation was titled "Copyright clearance for MOOCs at NTU Libraries" and was presented by Goh Su Nee and Tham Jing Wen of NTU Libraries. The authors explained how NTU Libraries approached their support for the creation of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) – which involved MOOC instructors, Learning designers as well as Librarians (Communications and Subject Librarians).

There was great variation in the requirements for copyright clearance between different MOOCs. The value-add from Librarians were not just from assisting in getting clearance but also in suggesting alternatives to the MOOC instructors to consider using for their course.

The reported challenges faced by the team trying to perform their tasks included the lack of knowledge and experience, the difficulty to use materials that were taught in non-MOOC settings, and some sources for images found on the net were very hard to track down.

The fourth presentation was titled "MusicSG: Charting the development of the National Library's digital music archive" by Joy Loh of NLB. This was a presentation about a niche content space that is specific to Singapore Music created by the national agency to deliver on its role at safekeeping knowledge and information of relevance to the nation. The details of how to best use this site is presented in another paper in this issue of the SJLIM, as such, I will not dwell on the details.

Overall, the author highlighted the challenges faced by her that included trying to get clearance, defining the scope for a new genre of music (indie music) and in Singapore – the difficulty to get the right vendor to support such a project.

The fifth and last presentation for this sub-theme was called "Thematic Library Spaces and Makerspace" by Kamludee Mohamed Rafi and Wan Ho Wah of Singapore Polytechnic (SP) Library. The authors shared SP Library's journey in their creation of their creative space (Da Vinci Level) and how they embedded discovery spaces throughout their library.

It was also important to provide space for library users to connect and co-create. SP Library also introduce the concept of STEAM (instead of STEM) – introducing the Art element into science, technology and engineering, and positioned their makerspace as a Tinkerer's space – for experimentation and tryouts without the fear of failure – which can later feed potentially useful ideas into the Fabrication Labs that are in the schools. In this manner, the creation of makerspace by the library was seen by the schools as a supporter rather than a competitor of the schools' own makerspace or fabrication labs.

LFT 2014 conference sub-theme: Possibilities

The third sub-theme of the conference explored on possibilities – here, new ideas and projects that were tried and tested by the libraries were shared with participants.

The first presentation for this sub-theme was titled "New Workflows for Research Publications and Repository at SMU" by Yeo Pin Pin from SMU's Li Ka Shing Library. She shared the development of the Integrated Research Information System (IRIS) project in SMU – how the library helped to set up and maintain the information flow cycling through the needs of Publications,

Faculty Curriculum Vitae, Reporting & Analytics, Institutional Review Board, and Grants & Project Management.

SMU had tackled the issue of updating their research records and information by utilizing a batch job to update to the Digital Commons (InK) but have made it easier for its own staff to deposit and update their research records within one environment (IRIS) and added the ability to pull records from Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed to their system.

The second presentation was called "[E-journals usage and its implications on the possible development of evidence-based librarianship and library research studies in a community college in Hong Kong – An exploratory discussion](#)" by Fai-Kim LAU of Yew Chung Community College, Hong Kong. This is the only overseas presenter at this conference.

The author highlighted the challenges faced by the library of a smallish community college and shared that despite the promotion of e-journals only specific topical areas enjoyed an increment of usage (of particular – Business, Social Science & Humanities, and Technology). This is of importance to small libraries as space is a premium resource and their dependence on electronic journals as a means to save space also meant a pressure to ensure such resources are well-utilized otherwise there would be pressure from stakeholders to withdraw support for subscription to them.

The third presentation covered the topic of "[Evolving Services of NUS Medical Library to meet the ever-changing needs of its Community](#)" was authored by R Sukanya Naidu, Chew Shu Wen, Jonathan Pradubsook and Lee Seok Hong of the NUS Libraries. The NUS Medical Library introduced 2 new services – one to support the systematic review research and the other to use mobile applications to support medical education.

Systematic Reviews are studies of studies – an analytical method to survey the research in a particular topical area and summarizing the findings. New research requires users to do extensive search across many different resources – this is where Librarians can help users to organize their search strategies and approaches to get more fruitful results with less effort spent and time wasted. For mobile applications, the library had introduced various tools to support medical education – these are BrowZine and a planned inclusion of relevant applications to the Library's Information Literacy Programmes.

The fourth presentation was titled "Collaborating with Faculty in Information Literacy Classes Works!" by Rajen Munoo and Elizabeth Su from SMU. Rajen, a librarian had collaborated with a faculty, Elizabeth to create Research Guides that are of relevance to the courses taught by Elizabeth to her students. The 2 authors shared how it was important for both the Librarians and Faculties to work hand in hand in co-creating the resource. By involving both parties, there become an attachment and ownership to the product created. The faculty member benefits from having help from the Librarian to overcome the high learning curve of creating a research guide for his/her students but once done, the maintenance of such a guide becomes a breeze for the subsequent courses – with the faculty either having a free-hand to update more relevant or latest research information with minimal fuss or only needing less amount of help from the librarian to improve on the resource. The Librarian benefits from being able to be freed up to support other faculties in their research guides once they are able to help them kick-start their own course related guides. The students obviously benefits from having a well-prepared reference source ready for their use in support of their studies. Being able to collaborate resulted in the expansion of the capability of the library to support more users.

The last presentation in this segment was "User Analytics: First Steps for TP Library" by Julinah Sabria and Loh Hui Hong of Temasek Polytechnic (TP) Library. The authors shared on TP Library journey at exploring the use of User Analytics.

TP Library chose to focus on analyzing and collecting data that could help it to make decisions on marketing, detect trends in visitorship, track the usage of facilities and who are the users whom downloaded the e-Exam papers.

Having explored the functionalities – the authors advised that libraries in tending to start this journey should first develop a capability to consolidate data from different sources. They would also need to be mindful that different vendors retain data in different formats and their interpretation of data types could be different from each other. There is also a potential need to clean up data before comparisons could be made. It is preferable if the library staff concerned have some basic understanding of data analytics.

LFT 2014 conference: Posters

There were 5 poster presented to the conference and they represented interesting projects that had some preliminary data that libraries were interested to share with each other.

The first poster was presented by Stephanie Ow of NIE Library was on "Assistive Technology Solutions for the Visually Impaired". NIE Library visited the Singapore Association for the Visually Handicapped (SAVH) to learn about the needs of people with vision challenges and piloted a small set up at their library to support such needs. NIE Library had also made an effort to convert their online guides and webpages to be more visually-friendly to such users.

The second poster was by Norlisa Binte Othman, Quek Kia Yong and Serene Cai from Temasek Polytechnic Library titled "Promoting Library Resources Through Apps". Where there was a collaboration between the library and the students and staff of TP's Diploma in Infocomm & Network Engineering and Diploma in Media & Communication Technology to create the mobile applications.

The third poster was by Cheng Eng Aun, Ng Peck Suan, Ong Hong Kiat, Geraldine Kwang & Wong Suei Nee of NUS Libraries titled "Visual Basic for Applications: Limitless Possibilities".   The team used an in-built application within the Microsoft Office Suite to automate a machine-checking of OPAC titles – which is 5 times faster than a manual approach to perform the same task.

The fourth poster by Hanna Hussein of NLB was on "Linked Data @ NLB". The author described how NLB has set up its Linked Data Management System (LDMS) and the need for a Data Model to be developed. The use of link data could enhance the discovery of related resources beyond the standard cataloguing linkages of subject categorization.

The last poster was by Liw Yi Ling and Lim Xiu Ru of the Singapore Polytechnic (SP) Library titled "BINGO! The Short, Sharp Way to Engaging Millenials at Singapore Polytechnic Library". SP Library had used the game of Bingo (in short 10 minutes sessions) to reach out to 92% of its year 1 cohort in 2014 over 3 days.   They also introduced short video clips in their promotions to students that featured other students sharing about bite-sized information about the library offerings. They also had merged a previous multiple different email outreach into a single consolidated email outreach. All the efforts have a single aim – which was to minimize the time the users

had to spent being "touched" by the library outreach approaches – this approach is closer to the natural behavior of the millenials, whom have a much shorter attention span compared to their predecessors.

Conclusion

LFT 2014 can be considered a successful event as the participation rate of presentation has improved compared to previous years and the collaborations between Singapore librarians with each other and with non-librarians is an encouraging sign for better things to come in the future.

The sole foreign presenter whilst not totally irrelevant, unfortunately appeared to be out of place in this conference and as such, future conference organizers may want to reconsider if foreign delegates or presentations could fit into the program before accepting their presentation proposals.

An interesting idea for consideration would be for LAS to consider webcasting its LFT conference – thus, making it accessible to librarians in the region to attend virtually, as the cost of sending someone to Singapore for its neighboring countries is rather prohibitive.   The benefit of webcasting includes allowing other librarians (whom although are in Singapore, but could be desk-bound due to the call of duties) to be able to visit the web and still listen in to the presentations. There are of course technical issues as well as potential impact on physical attendance to the future conference that may need to be addressed.

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