Doing more with limited resources
~ a case study of the Singapore public library

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WHERE WE COME FROM... SINGAPORE
A little something about Singapore

• An island: 710 sq km large
• Population size: 5 million
• Official languages: English, Chinese, Malay & Tamil
• Four official races: Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasians
• Founded by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1819
• Gained independence on 9 Aug 1965
Network of public libraries

24 Public Libraries
Quick facts

• 24 public libraries
  – Operated 7 days a week
  – From 10am to 9pm (Regional & standalone libraries)
    11am to 9pm (Mall libraries)
  – Closed on public holidays; but open on mondays of substituted holidays

• 389 public library staff (total PLSG)
  – 126 managers & librarians (Graduates)
  – 186 Library officers (Diploma / Para-professionals)
  – 46 Team leaders (GCE N levels)
  – 37 PLSG Corporate groups (Reading initiatives, Language council etc)

• 5 day work-week
  – Staff are given their days off & rest days though not necessarily on the weekends
Three-tiered Public Library System

- Collection of 400,000 to 500,000
- Advisory counters
- Exhibition & programme spaces
- Small reference section
- Large seating capacity

Regional Library

- Collection of 150,000 to 200,000
- Minimal programme spaces
- Pick & Go concept
- No librarians situated at the library

Three-tiered Library System

- Collection of 250,000 to 300,000
- Limited exhibition & programme spaces
- Some seating capacity

Mall library

Midsized library
Staffing on site at the public libraries

**Regional Library**
- 8 Professional librarians
- 16 Support staff
- TOTAL: 24 Staff

**Midsized Library**
- 5 Professional librarians
- 10 Support staff
- TOTAL: 15 Staff

**Mall Library**
- No professional librarians
- 9 Support staff
- TOTAL: 9 Staff
Current concerns of the present day government: Improving public transportation services & public infrastructure
Loading on staff has been increasing over the years but the number of professional librarians and support staff have not increased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loans per library</td>
<td>1,361,710</td>
<td>1,510,202</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitorship per library</td>
<td>1,363,449</td>
<td>1,580,085</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmes &amp; Outreach activities per library</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference enquiries handled per library</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>1,301</td>
<td>74%</td>
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Government allocates budget equals to 0.2% GDP to Ministry of Information, Communication & the Arts (MICA).

Ministry redistributes budget to
1. Public Libraries
2. National Library
3. National Heritage Board (Museum & Archives)
4. Infocomms Development Authority
5. Media Development Authority
6. National Arts Council
7. Design Singapore in-charge of creative industry

Difficult times
Proposed solutions

• Resource sharing across libraries

• Best sourcing non-key function of shelving

• Greater use of volunteers

• Seeking partnerships and collaboration under the 3P model
RESOURCE SHARING ACROSS LIBRARIES
Resource sharing

• Libraries “share” staff across the regions
  – 1 Library Manager manages 2 libraries

• Librarians are expected to support 2 public libraries per person, doing the following work at the assigned two libraries:
  – Undertake collection work e.g. analysis of collection gaps, weeding, ordering duplicates or replacement copies
  – Programmes organisation & hosting
  – Curation of exhibition works at libraries
  – Conducting user education & class visits by schools
Organisation of Public Libraries into 4 regions that support each other

Regional Libraries

Midsized Libraries

Mall Libraries
BEST SOURCING NON-KEY AREAS OF WORK TO VENDORS
Government initiative to best source services

TRIPARTITE ADVISORY ON BEST SOURCING PRACTICES

Service buyers who practise best sourcing, rather than cheap sourcing, award service contracts based on performance and quality rather than solely based on price. In doing so, they achieve more reliable and better value-for-money services. At the same time, workers benefit because the service providers focus on delivering quality services instead of offering the lowest price, and provide better employment terms and conditions for their workers so that their workers are more motivated to perform well.

~ Ministry of Manpower’s Tripartite Advisory on Bestsourcing Practices
Best sourcing strategy

• In 2008, shelving function was outsourced to 2 private companies to manage.
• Deal was brokered for existing library attendants to be given priority interviews with new vendor companies.
• These staff were given special package to stop work with NLB.
Productivity gains

• For same budget used:
  
  **Before:**
  3-5 staff per library to do shelving per shift
  
  **After:**
  Vendors: 10-12 vendors to do shelving per shift

• Shelf-reading productivity:
  – 100% shelf-reading order
  – 2 hours or less for returned items to be re-shelved

Vendor sorting out returned books
GREATER USE OF VOLUNTEERS
Friends of the Library – Using Volunteers as resources

• First beginnings in 2002: 200 senior citizens

• Started off as a project to engage senior citizens to keep them mentally agile

• Re-strategised under Library 2010 blueprint to promote active citizenry in Singapore
Volunteer Profiles
(as of May 2012)

Total Number of Volunteers: **35,000 volunteers**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Volunteers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (12 &amp; below)</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults (13 - 19)</td>
<td>21,649</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults (20 - 50)</td>
<td>11,981</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors (51 &amp; above)</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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## Manpower Cost Savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total No. of Volunteering Hours</th>
<th>Manpower Cost Savings (Source: Business Times – based on median wages per hour)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>51,620</td>
<td>$722,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>78,680</td>
<td>$1,101,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>89,406</td>
<td>$1,251,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>92,221</td>
<td>$1,291,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>98,160</td>
<td>$1,374,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>84,488</td>
<td>$1,588,374</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>494,575 Hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7,329,592</strong></td>
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To conduct programmes
But WAIT! There's More... You Heard of Book Crossing?

For those who were not too fanatic about queuing up 2 hours before opening it is also a more relaxed way of going about getting some pretty cool books to read you return them after reading.

Yes yes yes, I know. I hear people say "So what's the difference from Library you can keep the book as long as you can for you to finish reading it without t to return it too quickly. Some people don't read fast so why pressure your enough as it is.

Check out the URL and start hunting for those books?

http://bookcross.sg/
Cabbies deliver books to the disabled for free

JOY FANG

TAXI drivers, managers and executives joined hands recently to make sure that the disabled are not denied their love for reading.

Volunteers from welfare organisations picked books according to the beneficiaries’ likes. Then, with the help of Cabby-Care Charity Group, they delivered the books right to the beneficiaries’ doorsteps.

The group, made up of taxi drivers from ComfortDelGro, was formed nine years ago and has been serving over 200 members since then.

Its latest effort was Project Deliver Me, a home-delivery service of library books and reading and visual materials for the disabled, which was launched two weeks ago.

The initiative was launched by the National Library Board and aims to give those with physical disabilities easy access to reading materials.

One of the beneficiaries, Mr Mohammad Rafi Jurami, 26, who was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy when he was just eight years old, said he was happy to get his hands on his favourite mystery books.

One of the volunteers, 30-year-old cabby David Teo, told The Star that doing good for the disabled brought joy in itself.

“I feel satisfied that we’ve offered assistance to others.

“The small sacrifice is worthwhile. Whether it is good or bad times, our charity work will still continue,” he said.

THRILLED: Mr Mohammad Rafi Jurami with the books delivered by cabby David Teo (left) and volunteer Ho Liem Giek. (PHOTO: WEE KIOH)
Using Junior Reading Ambassadors to reach the young
Facilitate bookclubs & learning communities

Heartland bookclub for literary lovers  Taxi drivers book club  Travel-log book club
Inter-generational bonding activities

Pairing youth volunteers & seniors to engage them in IT gaming together
First green library for kids taking root here

By Leslie Kay Lim

Preschoolers from My First Skool reading books at the children’s area in the basement of the National Library Building yesterday. The area will be redeveloped into My Tree House, a 500 sq m library that will be built with green materials and practices. ST PHOTO: LIM WU LIANG

The library aims to familiarise children with the environment and green practices. Lighting as well.

The design firm for the project, ADDP Architects, has a track record with green buildings; its leading design consultant Tang Kok Thye was recently named Green Architect of the Year by the Building and Construction Authority.

Mr Tang said the challenges in the project came in the retrofitting of the library’s space, and the changes made to

PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PEOPLE (3P) MODEL OF PARTNERSHIPS
Partners are important in helping the public libraries delivering library services.
Marriage Central: Government department to promote value of marriages and married sustainability.

2008: Two libraries to have a dedicated space allocated to a programme partner.

The Marriage Central space is operated by staff from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.
Synergy: Book Reviews done by libraries are placed in Marriage Central’s publications; in return they curate programmes for married couples at the public libraries.
United States Embassy of Singapore

Partnership with the US Embassy of Singapore

• Annual donation of 200-300 items to the collection under the American Corners programme

• Provision of some 12 programmes per year offered to the public libraries
Sponsorship of renovation of Central Public Library’s Children Section to become a Green Children’s Library
PERSPECTIVE

Entrance to “My Tree House”
Corporate sponsorship from train company allowed us to give children from low income families special storytelling sessions on the public transport system.
Mobile Library Service (Molly) reaching out to disadvantaged children & special needs schools

Fully sponsored by private companies

a. 15 year old bus from Comfortdelgро (Bus company)

b. RFID system & computers donated by software companies
People: Artists & Cultural Groups

Under the Arts & Culture Strategic Review Programme, public libraries are mandated to curate some 1,344 arts & culture programmes with the aid of arts interest groups and artists.
• **Exposure**
  - Experiential Journeys
  - Exploration Tours & Excursions
  - Within & Without Library Spaces

• **Experience**
  - Series of instructional / method workshops
  - Outcome: personal interpretations / comparisons

• **Education**
  - Talk / Multimedia Presentations
  - Broad Scope / Overview
  - Pre-Prog & Post-Prog Feedback

• **Excitement**
  - Artistes / Artists / Personalities
  - Tea-Talk-Meet

“Walk with Us”

“Art in 90 mins”

“Appreciate the Method”

“Up Close & Personal”
Chinese Opera - Masks & Craft

Description
- What is Chinese Opera?
- Character Differentiation

Tools
- Props / Weapons
- Instruments

Craft
- Movements
- Masks
Print-Making

• What is Printmaking?
• Common Uses

Description

Techniques
• Overview
• Selected

Process
• Materials
• Colours
Chinese Couplets-Writing

- Calligraphy
  - History
  - Forms

- Culture
  - Customs
  - Etiquette

- Composition
  - Techniques
  - Style
Conclusion

• It is especially essential that when times are hard that public libraries need to embrace the value of relationship building & marketing.

• There is a need to set aside time to ensure that the government and community stakeholders as well as the general public are all aware of the programmes being offered at the libraries.
The End