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My kind of library: services and programmes with a difference for children and young adults

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1.) Since its formation in 1995, the Singapore National Library Board has invested much resources in upgrading and improving its infrastructure, facilities and services to the public. More community libraries and children's libraries were built in various shopping malls and housing estates to make library visits more pleasant and convenient.

2.) The Singapore Library 2002 report also recommended that fast prototyping of new services be adopted as a basis for the of testing new ideas and concepts. The prototyping approach is an important step as it allows the NLB to gauge the response of the users, test price sensitivities and assess feasibility before deployment on a system-wide.

3.) This approach is essential as the National Library Board administers a network of 21 community and regional libraries and 46 Community Children's Libraries throughout the nation. Thus, learning and innovating through fast prototyping is necessary to ensure optimal use of resources and returns on investments.

Services

4.) This paper will cover the various services for children and young adults which have been prototyped at the community libraries and the Community Children's Libraries.

Community Children's Libraries (CCL)

5) The concept of the Community Children's Libraries was first mooted by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Goh Chok Tong, in 1992- to reach out to children up to the age of 10, to inculcate and promote the reading habit from young. A target of 100 CCLs was set. To date, 46 CCLs have been set up at the void decks of the Housing and Development Board's block of flats. Tremendous response was received from children who attended the Storytelling sessions, puppet shows, reading competitions and excursions organised regularly at the CCLs. The children also enjoyed surfing the internet via the multimedia stations and using the educational entertainment CD-ROMs provided there.

Enhanced Children's Services

6.) Enhanced Children's Services were prototyped at Woodlands' Regional Library where a professional team of Children's Librarians provided reference and advisory services relating to Children's literature as well as conducted more extensive children's reading programmes both for children and care-givers.

Kids Discover

7.) Kids Discover is a prototype on an experiential learning service that provides hands-on learning opportunities for children in an informal and unstructured environment. It enhances learning through discovery and focuses on a few themes, namely water, light and sound.

Music Posts

8.) Music was another drawing point so with music posts, children and young adults could enjoy a selection of music, famous soundtracks as well as stories, nursery rhymes while flipping through book.

Multimedia Services

9.) Multimedia services were set up to provide a lifestyle library and offer entertainment and information through CD-ROMs, Internet Virtual Communities, electronic databases, Video-on-Demand and CD-Rom-on-Demand via the multimedia stations. Users can print materials from the Internet. Some 3,000 participants took part in the "Be Info Smart" an user education programme held at 12 libraries in 2001.

Virtual Libraries

eLibraryHub

10) Launched in September 2001, the eLibraryhub is NLB's latest initiative to building knowledge-ware in the digital economy. It is a one-stop integrated library for immediate access to the vast information resources from around the world. Teenagers can access to the huge digital resources for a low subscription fee, e.g. resources from the Polytechnic and Colleges to help them in their school projects. Besides fee-based resources, there are some, which are provided free for eLibraryHub members such as the ebook collection, and some news channels on promotion.

Student Virtual Community (SVC)

11.) The Student Virtual Community is a value added service by the National Library Board. It cater to students and teachers in Primary, Secondary and Junior College levels engaged in Project Work . Available are resource files with references to books, newspaper articles, websites, AV materials, book reviews, quizzes for project work and also project skills, online resources, online debates and virtual workspace.

InfoXpress

12.) The InfoXpress offers students a quick information resource about Singapore via 2 services: a searchable database and an electronic enquiry service. This is a good first stop if students are looking for a particular place, person or topic related to Singapore or the region.

library@orchard

13) library@orchard was designed as a lifestyle library that was hip and happening that would appeal to young adults. Located in the heart of the city - Orchard Road, it is a place where young adults hang out. By bringing the library to the target group, the NLB brings the pleasure of reading and learning closer to them with a more focused and popular collection of titles. The 400 titles of magazines and the comics are very popular.

Proposed Library just for Teens

14) Come April 2004, this library will be up and managed by teens and young adults for teens at the Jurong East Regional Library. NLB invited students from the National University of Singapore, LaSalle Design-School of the Arts, Temasek Polytechnic and Singapore Polytechnic, to participate in a competition to come up with the concept of the interior for this Library for Teens. A Teens Management Committee was formed to brainstorm and conceptualize ideas on the services for Teens.

Programmes/Activities

15) To cultivate the reading habits from young as well as to sustain the reading interest of the young adults and promote the National Life-Long Learning initiatives, NLB conducts the following programmes for children and young adults.

A National Family Reading programme

16) 4,000 families (with 18,500 members) from June to August participated in the programme entitled "Reading It's A Family Activity!" This was jointly organised by the National Library Board and the Ministry of Community Development and Sports to encourage family bonding through reading.

Reading Bear programme

17) To cultivate the reading habit from young, the Reading Bear Programme was launched in Feb 01 for primary school students. This programme received an overwhelming response from 60,000 students from 53 schools and generated about 500,000 loans.

Library Etiquette Activities

18) Launched in Oct 2001, the series of Library Etiquette activities aim to create public awareness of good library etiquette and to assist young customers to cultivate good library behavior from young in a fun way. Activities included Etiquette Path Walk, Etiquette Tree, Etiquette Ride contest and Etiquette Spotlight – to spot the good library customer activities, had received very good response and support from Children.

A Born to Read, Read to Bond Project

19) Launched on 27 Nov 2001, Born to Read, Read to Bond Project is jointly organised by the National Library Board and the Ministry of Community Development and Sports. It consisted of the following activities:

- Distribution of "Born to Read, Read to Bond" bags to parents of newborns at 9 collaborating hospitals to about 50,000 newborns.
- a Membership Drive for 0-3 years old
- a Reading Programme (Read To Me) - designed for 0-3 year old children and their parents

- a Reading Programme (Read with Me) - designed for children between 4-6 years
- a Reading Programme (Let's Read Together) - designed for children and their parents to encourage them to make reading a family bonding activity.
- a Read-N-Bond Parent Groups- prototyped at 2 community libraries.

Raise-a-Reader

20) The Raise-a-Reader programme is helping parents cultivate the love for reading in their children in an interactive workshop. Through NLB's librarians provide tips on how to select books and how to strengthen the parent-child bond through reading

Asian Children's Festival

21) The Asian Children's Festival is an annual event held to honour and celebrate children. The National Library Board and its partners collaborate on a series of programmes to bring joy and knowledge to children, parents and professionals in the field of education. Renowned storytellers from all over the world are brought in to participate in the Asian Storytelling Carnival. The Children Chinese Creative Storytelling Competition is another platform for children to take part in the Festival as well. About 150 children participate in the competition representing 120 schools.

Creative Multimedia Competition

22) NLB is collaborating with the Shanghai Children's Library (SCL) to host the Creative Multimedia Competition for teenagers from 13 to 15 years of age, to enhance cross-cultural understanding between Singapore and China. The competition was launched in 2002 and the results will be announced at the end of the year. Participants from both countries were paired and will submit a joint multi-media project (in both English and Chinese) based on their interaction.

Music@orchard

23) A weekly series of programmes to attract youths and all music lovers to the [library@orchard](#) with live bands and solo performances, dance items, music and arts related forums.

Eco Youth Camp

24) A group of 25 teenagers spent 2 days and a night at the Woodlands Regional Library. Apart from emphasizing the National Library Board's support in educating and aiding our teenage community in their endeavors in preserving the rainforests, the camp allowed the teens to have the library premises and books in Singapore's biggest public library all to themselves.

MODES 2002

25) A fortnight of programmes at the library exclusively for teenagers, wide variety of programmes which included the screening of the World Cup Finals, a quiz pertaining to the World Cup, musical and drama performances, career, health and wellness talks. Called MODES, it enabled teenagers to identify the library as the mode to learning just about anything and everything they were interested in.

Conclusion

26) NLB is committed to explore and experiment with new technologies to provide experiential learning and make learning fun for children and young adults besides providing books and audiovisual materials. More programmes/activities will be conducted to foster early interest in reading to raise a nation of readers as well as to sustain the reading interest in the young adults.