

Speech by Minister Josephine Teo at the official reopening of Choa Chu Kang Public
Library on 27 October 2021

Reimagining and Transforming our Libraries for the future

Mr Lee Seow Hiang, Chairman, National Library Board (NLB),

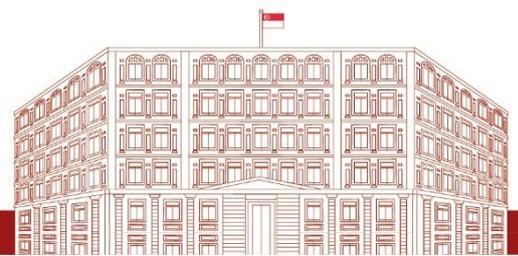
Ms Rahayu Mazam

Colleagues and Friends

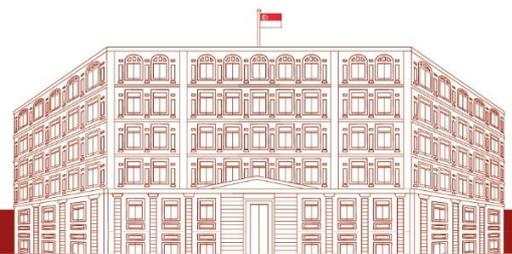
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

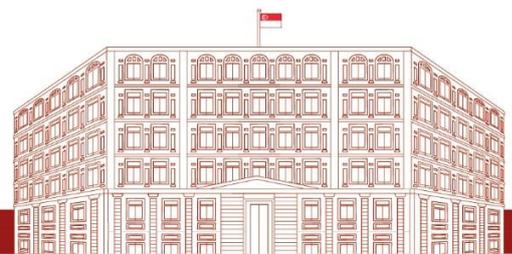
1. A very good morning. Thank you for inviting me for the launch of Choa Chu Kang Library.
2. The library has a special place in many people's lives, myself included. My first recollection of the library was in fact, a modest corner in my P3 classroom in St Hilda's Primary School. My form teacher had asked for volunteers to serve as class librarian. I had no idea what it was really but I put up my hand anyway. It was my first job in life, and an incredibly satisfying one.
3. Somehow, the libraries keep featuring in our lives even as we grow. It's a meeting point for young people, to study or hang out together. Often, it is where a date or relationship starts. When we become parents, we take our children to the libraries. Partly just to keep them occupied, but mostly, to impart values through books and other materials and also in the hopes that they will become curious about the world and learn about all its wonders. Today, the library has also become a place for our seniors, to stay connected with friends; with our fast-changing society.
4. Our libraries, therefore, have many touchpoints with people. It plays a vital role in our society, as gateways to knowledge and culture.



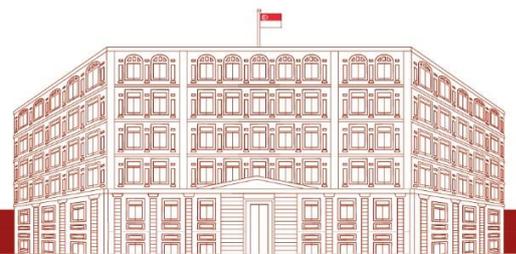
5. Over the years, our libraries have also evolved and transformed to meet the changing needs and interests of Singaporeans. Since 2017, NLB has revamped and reopened six libraries. Choa Chu Kang Public Library is the seventh and newest next-generation library. And we remain strongly committed to refreshing our libraries, which we all love, to ensure that they continue to keep up with times.
6. In their first year of operations, we get a sense of the impact of the revamp. On average, the visitorship increases by more than 70 per cent. The number of loans grows to 1.5 times.
7. With each revamp, our libraries seek to capture the spirit of our times and our people's aspirations.
8. It is therefore not a big surprise that Choa Chu Kang Public Library has been redesigned with a focus on sustainability. It is the first public library in Singapore to do so. Probably one of the few globally too.
9. Choa Chu Kang Public Library celebrates the theme: "Reconnect with Nature." Let me briefly share how it has been transformed. More importantly, how patrons can enjoy this library's offerings.
10. First, NLB has made learning come to life through the use of technology and hands-on activities. For example, in the past, when learning about the endangered Samba deer or how rubber tapping was done in 19th Century Singapore, we could only look at pictures. Now, with the Augmented Reality Learning Trail, we can get up close and personal, learn in interesting new ways.
11. NLB is also doing its part to bring the community closer together. Patrons can learn more about different neighbourhoods through the Community Walls in every library. Residents of the area can contribute stories unique to the neighbourhood.



12. In this library, the Community Wall features Choa Chu Kang's rich agricultural heritage. This farming heritage is also reflected in the new indoor garden, the first at any library where patrons can read, relax and soak in the greenery.
13. Second, we want to empower patrons to learn as a community, not just individually. Through volunteering and learning opportunities, patrons can meet like-minded partners to share knowledge and ideas, and bond over common interests.
14. One good example is Mr Ong Chin Tiong, a retired lecturer and gardening enthusiast. For over a decade, he has been taking care of his "farm" outside his HDB unit. Through self-learning, research and experience, Mr Ong has been sharing his harvests with his neighbours. As part of Choa Chu Kang Public Library's reopening, Mr Ong will conduct workshops to impart his knowledge and skills to the library community.
15. In November, two of our local firms, will also be sharing their knowledge on food innovation. They are Shiok Meats and Amplefresh. This is very much in keeping with the library's theme on sustainability.
16. I want to thank Mr Ong, Shiok Meats and Amplefresh for their contributions. Hopefully, many others will also participate actively in our libraries' activities to share their experiences and learn from each other.
17. What I have shared is a glimpse of NLB's LAB25 – or the Libraries and Archives Blueprint 2025. At the heart of it all, our purpose is the same – and that is to bring the love of reading and learning to everyone.
18. But our libraries will be refreshed, so they continue to feature strongly in the lives of citizens as places of reading, learning and discovery. The Blueprint also reinforces our commitment to work with partners and the community, to innovate, experiment and reimagine libraries and archives.



19. This is just the beginning. Under LAB25, we will redouble efforts to: Promote lifelong learning, empower our people to be more discerning towards misinformation and disinformation, tell our Singapore Story, and play the role of a Social Equaliser - helping everyone regardless of background to learn; and leaving no one behind.
20. The wheels have already been set in motion. For example, NLB aims to pioneer integrated services for persons with disabilities in our first fully inclusive library, Punggol Regional Library, slated to open in 2022.
21. 过去4年，我们已翻新了7间公共图书馆。
22. 我们今天所在的蔡厝港公共图书馆就彻底展现我们创新及实验的决心。它结合了科技和设计，以及社区参与，充分体现它的环保主题。
23. 我们将努力不懈，推陈出新，确保国人喜爱的图书馆继续与时俱进，提供各个阶层的国人所需及最优质的服务。
24. 通过国家图书馆管理局的努力，我有信心，我们全岛27间图书馆将继续是：
一个让孩子们启发好奇心的书海，一个让乐龄人士快乐掌握数码科技的课室，一个
激发全国上下“活到老，学到老”的场所。



25. To sum up, our libraries have been and will continue to be institutions that are intertwined with our citizens' lives.
26. Our team at NLB is filled with passion and seized by the opportunities. I want to thank them for that.
27. We aim to always inspire in our people a sense of curiosity about the world, a sense of hope about what life can be, and the belief that through learning, through knowledge, we can improve ourselves, our communities and our nation.
28. Thank you once again for inviting me!

