

The Special Libraries Section, LAS, and NLB have Launched the Law Librarians Community

Launched on Thursday, 11 December 2008 at the Singapore Management University, 28 eager law librarians and supporters congregated to get the first glimpse of the Law Librarian Community developed by the Special Libraries Section, Library Association of Singapore and the National Library Board.

It had been nearly two years in the making since the idea of a "community of knowledge" for librarians had been raised by NLB and proposed to the Library Association of Singapore. NLB had planned to develop knowledge management infrastructure to support groups of like-minded individuals throughout Singapore. One such group was the library community.

NLB turned to the Library Association of Singapore and asked if it would like to co-develop the infrastructure for such a library community. It was clear from the start that the likelihood of success would increase in relationship to the commonality of the potential members of any proposed community. It is known that librarians are a varied lot. LAS Council decided to get the ball rolling by encouraging the Special Libraries Section to co-develop the project with NLB.

On 22 March 2007, the Special Libraries Section Committee met and decided to take on the challenge. The Committee wanted to create the prototype for an even more focused group of special librarians. Law librarians in Singapore had already developed themselves with frequent communication and had a strong sharing culture. The choice for the initial community was logical – start with the law librarians.

Individuals from several law firms and universities came together and gave their requirements. NLB hired the vendor, CommonTown and more meetings involving LAS, NLB and CommonTown ensued. With months passing and testing completed it was time for the Launch.

The event was successful in terms of several measures. The number of individuals who attended the hands-on session (during a peak travel season) was remarkable. The session also provided another opportunity to strengthen the network of law librarians. Most importantly, the consensus was that the system could be quite valuable. The full extent of success will only be known after a period of usage and whether or not it increases individual's success at their institution.

What's Next?

Members of the law librarian community are actively using the community since the launch and have been providing much feedback. A "wish list" has been added to our wiki and the design team is investigating each of these suggestions.

Scalability in terms of use by other communities and the LAS parent organisation was built into the portal to maximise its usage. After more lessons are learned from the law librarians prototype community, LAS hopes to make it available to other groups who might find it beneficial. One of the members of the Art Librarians Group attended the Launch to get an early view of its potential application for the arts group.

The LAS Council will discuss the portal at its January Council meeting to see how it can be utilized further and may encourage other library communities to be formed.

The overall goal is to support like-minded members of our library community and to enhance the service each librarian is able to provide to their respective clientele.