

Migrating Seniors to eNewspapers – Our Journey to Bridging the Digital Divide

Amongst the many services provided by the public libraries, access to news is one of the most sought after by public library users. With the advent of technology, newspapers are being moved to digital platforms allowing readers access via their desktops or mobile devices. Over at the public libraries in Singapore, the journey towards digitalisation includes provision of digital versions of eNewspapers through dedicated eNewspaper stations and onsite access of local eNewspapers via patrons' mobile. As the pandemic hit our shores, the partnership with local news media extended to include mobile access of local eNewspapers beyond the constraints of the library space. As the doors of the public libraries reopened, library spaces were also refurbished to make room for more updated Multi-Media stations to cater to more access to eNewspapers.

However, through these efforts to digitalise, one group of patrons at risk of being left behind in the digital divide are the seniors. As the public libraries embark on a journey towards digitalisation, efforts towards bridging the digital divide for the seniors cannot be spared. Through inter-division collaborations to develop user education packages to inter-agency partnership with local media development agency on guiding seniors to access news on their mobiles, the path towards upscaling seniors required multi-stakeholder collaborations. This presentation will detail the process of how the public libraries team in Singapore addressed the challenges of moving the seniors, who are well used to the comfortable tactile physical newspapers, to reading eNewspapers on Multi-Media stations and mobile devices remotely in the comforts of their homes.

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Melissa Kawasoe is the Manager of Central Public library, and Project Manager of the Public Libraries' eNewspaper Transformation Journey. She joined NLB as the Film Librarian in 2011, and subsequently became the Manager of the library@esplanade from May 2019 – Mar 2021. During her time at the library@esplanade, she was integral to the development and curation of the film collection and programmes. She also spearheaded the Arts Ambassadors' Programme, a senior education programme for volunteers interested in the performing arts. Melissa is passionate about serving the community, and creating awareness of the libraries' offerings.

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Sheila Jang is Manager at library@esplanade, taking care of the performing arts collection and programmes at the library@esplanade. Driven to break down barriers to understanding and appreciating the performing arts, Sheila is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to make the library an accessible entry point for performing arts enthusiasts. Apart from breaking down barriers to the performing arts, she also advocates for digitalisation at libraries, notably with her role as Deputy Project Manager for the Public Libraries eNewspaper Transformation Journey.