

# English Schools and School Libraries before the Second World War: A Singapore Perspective

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## Abstract

This study attempts to uncover the beginning and development of English schools and school libraries in Singapore since 1819 until 1941. The growth of English schools from four before 1872 to 22 by 1938 was made possible by the reform of the Grants-in-aid system whether they were missionary or privately run schools. Although the first policy to initiate school libraries in an English schools occurred in 1899, the growth of school libraries was sporadic and gradual since many government-aided schools encountered difficulties to import textbooks and reference books into Singapore in the absence of a local publishing industry in Singapore.

## Introduction

The beginning and development of schools and school libraries since the founding of Singapore in 1819 until 1941 appeared to have two distinct historical trends. The beginning and development of Malay schools and school libraries has already been documented (Lim, 2008). This paper attempts to investigate into the beginning and development English schools and school libraries in Singapore, starting from the founding of Singapore in 1819, although Lim (1970) was of the view that school libraries in Singapore was a post-war innovation. Later, Ho (1998, p. 2) mentioned that there was only published records on school libraries “between the late 1960s to early 1980s.”

Since 1819, immigrant communities that came into Singapore were from China, India and the Netherlands East Indies. One feature of the population of Singapore that stands out very clearly is the multi-racial character of the people, which was seen to exist even in the early days of the island’s history (Saw, 1969). Shown in Table 1 is the population mix of Singapore in 1871, 1891, 1911 and 1931. The Chinese were the majority racial group consisting of 75 per cent of the population, followed by the Malays with 11 per cent and the Indians with 9 per cent in 1931. The English speaking Eurasians made up of about 1.5 per cent to the total population.

Table 1: Population of Singapore by race

Year	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Eurasians	Europeans	Others	Total
1871 <sup>o</sup>	26,148	54,572	11,610	2,164	1,946	671	97,111
	27.0%	56.2%	12.0%	2.2%	2.0%	0.6%	100%
1891 <sup>1</sup>	35,992	121,908	16,035	3,589	5,254	1,776	184,554
	19.5%	66.0%	8.7%	2.0%	2.8%	1.0%	100%
1911 <sup>2</sup>	41,806	219,577	27,755	4,671	5,711	3,660	303,321
	13.7%	72.3%	9.5%	1.5%	1.8%	1.2%	100%
1931 <sup>3</sup>	65,014	418,640	50,811	6,903	8,082	8,275	557,745
	11.6%	75.1%	9.1%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	100%

Sources: <sup>o</sup>MacNair, Waller & Knight, 1871, p. 7; <sup>1</sup>Merewether, 1892, p. 47; <sup>2</sup>Marriott, 1911, p. 360; <sup>3</sup>Vlieland, 1932, p. 120-121.

### First Education Policy for the New Settlement

Education was recognized by Raffles as one of the first needs of his new settlement (Neilson, n.d.). In 1819, Raffles wrote in his minutes on shaping his education policy:

1. To educate the sons of higher order of natives and others
2. To afford the means of instruction in the native languages to such of the Company's servants and others as may desire it
3. To collect the scattered literature and traditions of the country, with whatever may illustrate their laws and customs and to publish and circulate in a correct form the most important of these, with such other works as may be calculated to raise the character of the institution and to be useful or instructive to the people (Raffles, 1991a, p. 33; Raffles, 1991b, p. 79).

As a follow-up to Raffles' education proposed plans a meeting of principal inhabitants of Singapore was held at Farquhar's residency, on 1 April 1823 (Philips, 1908). The modified proposed Singapore Institution shall consist of three departments. Raffles suggested the advantage and the necessity of forming an institution in the nature of a college embracing the following objectives:

1. A scientific department for the common advantage of the several Colleges that may be established
2. A literary and moral department for the Chinese, which the Anglo-Chinese College affords
3. A literary and moral department for the Siamese, Malay, &c., which will be provided for by the Malayan College (Raffles, 1991b, p. 75)

A proposed plan of the building drawn by Lieutenant Jackson was approved and plans were made to purchase printing presses with "English, Malayan, and

Siamese founts of types” on the account of the Institution; “and also to employ, on the account of the Institution”, a printer. LMS missionary Samuel Milton will take charge of the presses and superintend the printing. “Mr. Maxwell, as Secretary to the Institution, is requested to take charge of the Library and Museum of the Institution, until suitable buildings may be erected, and to act as Librarian”. (Raffles 1991b, p.84)

The First Resident of Singapore was Colonel William Farquhar (1819-1823) and the Second Resident was John Crawfurd (1823-1826) (Nunn, 1927). On 7 February 1826, Resident Crawfurd, reported to Bengal (Philips, 1908) that “the native inhabitants of Singapore have not yet attained that state of civilization and knowledge which would qualify them to derive advantage from the enlarged system of education held up by the Singapore Institution and that to prosecute under present circumstances that establishment on the footing originally contemplated would be to incur heavy expense without any prospect of corresponding and adequate benefit” (Chelliah, 1947, pp. 19-20). Raffles left for England in 1824 and passed away on 5 July 1826 (Sweet, 1993).

On 5 January 1827, the trustees of the Singapore Institution were informed that the Government subscription was to be appropriated solely to the establishment of elementary schools for the natives. For many years the monthly allowance was withheld, and, when repeated applications were made, it was reduced for a time to 100 dollars, later raised to 200 dollars, and never paid in full. Funds being exhausted, the building ill-constructed from the outset, was left in an unfinished state and unused. In 1832 a local paper referred to it as “a ruin”

and “an eyesore to the inhabitants” (Philips, 1908, pp. 269-270).

Singapore’s political links with Penang and Malacca began with the amalgamation of the three settlements to form the Straits Settlements in 1826, under one government, consisting of a Governor, with one Resident Councillor in each station, but still continued an Indian Presidency (Braddell, 1921). In 1832, the seat of government of the Straits Settlements was transferred from Penang to Singapore (McKerron, 1948).

### *First English School and First School Library*

This lack of a school of any standing moved the new Chaplain in 1833 to apply to the Government for a grant to establish a free school. A place was given to him near the foot of Fort Canning, by High Street (Bazell, 1991). The Chaplain, Mr Darrah, proposed to establish elementary schools in different places with native masters, with a central school at which the descendents of Europeans could attend, with some of the more advanced boys from the minor schools. The school was opened on 1 August 1834. The school had 32 boys in the English classes, 18 boys in the Tamil classes and 12 in the Chinese (Buckley, 1902).

When the building fell into disrepair, the Committee thought of applying for the use of the buildings of the neglected Raffles Institution. The formal application was made on 15 September 1837. Meanwhile on 1 January 1836, a meeting of subscribers to the monument to be erected to the memory of Raffles decided that they

would best perpetuate the remembrance of the eminent services rendered to the Settlement by completing the Institution founded by him for the purposes of education. Repairs were started, and in December 1837 the Singapore Free School was removed from High Street to the Institution, then for the first time used for its original purpose (Bazell, 1921).

The earliest accessible record of the proposed Singapore Institution and its library and Museum was in the third annual report (1836-37) of the Singapore Free School (Hanitsch, 1921). There was a short list of books presented to the school, with the remark: "The few books which form the School Library are in constant circulation among the boys and their friends." It was reported that "funds will be required to furnish a library and museum, in which books given to the institution and all such specimens of the natural history of these regions as can be collected shall be kept" (Singapore Free School, 1837, pp. 8-9). This is the first known record of a school library for the English classes of the Singapore Free School. In 1835, the Singapore Free School was known as the Singapore Institution Free School.

In the fourth annual report (1837-38) of the Singapore Institution Free School: "The number of volumes already in the Library is 392. The principle upon which the Library is founded is as follows: Free admission is given to anyone. All subscribers and donors to the Institution, and the teachers and scholars therein, are entitled to remove books from the library for perusal, and any other party may acquire the same right on a monthly payment to the Librarian for 25 cents" (Singapore Institution Free School, 1838, p. 13).

Except for the annual reports of the Singapore Institution Free School there were no annual review produced on the Straits Settlements until 1855/1856, although it was formed in 1826 (Jarman, 1998). Officers of the Indian Civil Service, the elite corps of Britain's overseas cadres, were never interested in the straits, and, from 1830 to the end of company rule in 1867, recruits came mainly from the Indian Army, with occasional entrants being nominated by company directors from business firms or from the clerical ranks in India. General speaking, the straits service in this period stood at the bottom of the imperial ladder, reflecting the stepchild status of the settlements it worked in. For Governors, too, the straits were seen as the end of the line, a place with no future. That reputation was to haunt the colony for the rest of the century (Heussler, 1981).

## First School Reform

On 1 April 1867, the Straits Settlements were transferred from the control of the Indian Government to that of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London (Jarman, 1998). In 1870, Sir Harry Ord, appointed a Select Committee, under the Chairmanship of Colonel R. Wolley, 'to enquire into the State of Education in the Colony'. The Committee recommended:

1. To appoint an Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements.
2. To reform the existing Grants-in-aid system, which mainly applied to English schools whether they be missionary or privately run.
3. To greatly extend and improve vernacular education, especially Malay vernacular education.

In 1872, Mr A. M. Skinner, a young British official of the Penang Administration was appointed to the newly created post of Inspector of Schools, Straits Settlements. Skinner held the post until 1879 (Wong & Gwee, 1980). He devoted his main energies to the establishment of Malay schools and by the foundation of a Malay College – a training college for Malay schoolmasters – in 1878 (Cheeseman, 1955). Malay vernacular education is free. English education as a rule is paid for. The Government English schools and all the Malay vernacular schools are directly controlled by the Education Department (Elcum, 1968).

### Government-aided English Boys' Schools in Singapore

Raffles Institution began as a Protestant English boys' school in 1834 (Bazell, 1921). St Joseph's Institution is a Roman Catholic educational establishment opened in a disused church in 1848. It became a grant-in-aid school in 1863 (Bazell, 1921). A mixed school was opened by Father Jose Pedro Santana da Cunha in 1879, in a small house in Middle Road. In 1893, the school became known as St Anthony's Boy's School for the boys and St Anthony Girls' School remained for the girls (Teixeira 1963). Our Lady of Lourdes Anglo-Tamil School was founded in 1885 for Tamil boys. It became an aided school in 1886 and ceased to exist by 1904 (Bazell, 1921). St Andrew's School was founded in 1872 in connection with the St Andrew's Church Mission. In 1872, it became a grand-in-aid school (Kovilpillai, 1963). The Eastern School was founded in 1891, for the purpose of teaching Chinese boys English, and

was conducted by Eurasians under an advisory committee of Chinese. In 1895, Rev. A. Lamont took it over in 1895, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. The school was closed in 1902 (Bazell, 1921). On 1 March 1886, Rev. W. F. Oldham of the Methodist Episcopal Church opened a school at No. 70 Amoy Street. It became an aided school in 1887 (Bazell, 1921). The American Mission Anglo-Tamil School was opened for boys in 1889. It became an aided school in 1890. In 1913, the school became Serangoon English School. There was also an aided school at Gaylang belonging to the mission (Bazell, 1921).

A free school was opened in Havelock Road by Cheang Jim Hean, the son of Cheang Hong Lim, and received a Government Grant in 1893. Upon the death of its founder 1901 was closed suddenly, without notice to its teachers and pupils (Bazell, 1921). See Table 2 for a list of nineteenth century government-aided boys' schools and enrolment of each school by race.

### Government English Boys' Schools in Singapore

In dealing with the teaching of English the Government was greatly helped by the fact that other schools had done the pioneer work. The policy adopted was to afford the various nationalities the opportunity of learning elementary English through their own language. The first two schools erected in 1874, at Cross Street and Kampong Glam. (Bazell, 1921). In 1906, a new building was erected at Outram Road and the Cross Street School was known as Outram Road School (Bazell, 1921).

Table 2: Types of English Schools in Singapore in 1899

	Government-aided Schools	Europeans and Eurasians	Chinese	Malay	Indians and other Asiatics	Total
	Protestant					
1.	Raffles Institution (1823)	96	209	15	12	332
	Presbyterian					
2.	Eastern School (1891)	1	146	-	-	147
	Church of England					
3.	St Andrew's School (1871)	2	92	1	-	95
	Roman Catholic					
4.	St Joseph's Institution (1852)	171	180	-	14	365
5.	St Anthony's Boys' School (1886)	77	46	-	14	
6.	Our Lady of Lourdes Anglo-Tamil School (1885)	-	6	-	7	13
	Methodist Episcopal					
7.	Anglo-Chinese School (1886)	81	233	6	41	361
8.	American Mission Anglo-Tamil School (1889)	3	-	-	18	21
9.	Gaylang Mission School		12	-	-	12
	Undenominational					
10.	Anglo-Chinese Free School (1885)	-	153	-	-	-
11.	Cheang Jim Hean's Free School (1893)	-	64	-		
		431	1,141	22	106	1,700
		25.4%	67.1%	1.3%	6.2%	100%
	<b>Government Schools</b>					
12.	Cross Street School (1874)	3	181	4	14	212
13.	Victoria Bridge School (1874)			61	12	73
14.	Kampong Glam Chinese Branch School	-	44			44
		3	235	65	26	329
		1%	71%	20%	8%	100%

Source: Wilkinson, 1900, p. 143

The Kampong Glam Malay Branch School was established in 1876 (Murray, 1971) as a ‘feeder’ school to Raffles Institution (Doraisamy, 1969). In 1897, the Kampong Glam Malay Branch School and the Kampong Glam Malay School, “known as the Kampong Glam English Class” were combined into one school, Victoria Bridge School, in a new building erected close to Victoria Bridge (Elcum, 1898, p. 210). The Victoria Bridge School functioned as “a separate and entirely English school (Wilkinson, 1899, p. 87). See Table 2 for a list of government boys’ schools and enrolment of each school by race.

### Government-aided English Girls’ Schools in Singapore

The Raffles Girls’ School was opened in the Institution buildings on 1844, with 11

pupils. In 1877, the school was moved to Beach Road. The Convent School was first opened in 1842 with one class attended by European and Eurasian girls. It became an aided school in 1881 (Bazell, 1921). The St Anthony’s Girls’ School was opened in 1879, in a small house in Middle Road. The girls’ were chiefly Malacca Portuguese (Bazell, 1921). In 1887, the Methodist Mission Anglo-Tamil Girls’ School meant for Tamils was set up at a house in Short Street. It soon attracted children of all races, and its name was changed to the American Mission Girls’ School (Ho, 1964). The Methodist Mission started a small school for girls in the Telok Ayer district in 1888. In 1912, a new school was opened as the Fairfield Chinese Girls’ School (Ho, 1964). See Table 3 for a list of nineteenth century government-aided girls’ schools and enrolment of each school by race.

Table 3: Types of English Girls’ Schools in Singapore in 1899

	Government-aided Girls' School	Europeans and Eurasians	Chinese	Malay	Indians and other Asiatics	Total
	Protestant					
1.	Raffles Girls' School (1844)	135	1	-	-	
	Roman Catholic					
2.	Convent School (1854)	135	15	-	5	
3.	St Anthony's Girls' School (1879)	79	2	-	-	
	Methodist Episcopal					
4.	American Mission Girls' School (1887)	34	14	-	10	
5.	American Mission Chinese Girls' School or Fairfield Chinese Girls' School (1888)		7	-		
		383	39	-	15	437
		88%	9%	-	3%	

Source: Wilkinson, 1900, p. 143.

## Initiation of the Cambridge Local Examinations

In 1891, arrangements were made with the University of Cambridge for the introduction of the Cambridge Local Examinations. A Local Committee was formed, with a Secretary and Presiding Examiner. The first examination was held in December the same year (Hill, 1892).

## First Policy to Initiate English School Libraries

Richard James Wilkinson (1867-1941) was appointed to an Eastern Cadetship in Ceylon, Hong Kong the Straits Settlements and (from 1896) the Federated Malay States. He arrived in Singapore in 1889 and went from a district office in Province Wellesley to audit work, the charge of the local office in Penang, and then to the duties of sheriff (court officer) before becoming magistrate (Gullick, 2001). In 1895, Wilkinson was sent to act as Superintendent of Education in Penang; as a result he also deputized for the Inspector of Schools (head of department) in Singapore (Gullick, 2001). In 1899, the Inspector of Schools noticed that: "No suitable library exists; the funds of the Raffles Library are all absorbed in the purchase of literature for adults. The boys have therefore no opportunity of acquiring the habit of reading." Therefore he allocated a small vote \$250 for each of the two larger settlements, Singapore and Penang for the initiation of a school library (Wilkinson, 1900, p. 137). It is not certain which school the library was meant for since there were three government boys' English schools in 1899, Cross Street

School, Victoria Bridge School and Kampong Glam Chinese Branch School (Wilkinson, 1900).

By 1900, there were also two known school libraries among the 11 Government-aided English boys' schools, the school library of the Raffles Institution (formerly known as the Singapore Free School) and the school library at the Anglo-Chinese School. The school library was formed as early as 1888, the gift of Tan Beng Guan as stated in the school's annual report the same year by Rev Oldham. It was enlarged by A. J. Watson and supported by school principal E. S. Lyons and was run by a committee comprising M. G. Miller, J. A. Supramaniam, Chew Cheng Yong, A. Hoosen, Khoo Wee Chye and Syed Abdul Hamed (Lau & Teo, 2003). There were no known school libraries among the five nineteenth century government-aided English girls' schools.

Wilkinson wanted to have more reading materials for the pupils in English boys' schools because he noticed the "most of the boys attending the Straits Schools are not of the English race and know no English when they come to school. Indeed they come to learn it. They often (but not invariably) have a knowledge of a Malay *lingua-franca* which lacks copiousness in vocabulary and precision in grammar. Hitherto they received their instruction through the medium of the patios" (Wilkinson, 1900, p. 137). See Table 2 for the races enrolled in the government-aided boys' schools and government boys' schools. About 67 per cent and 71 per cent of the total enrolment of the government-aided and government boys schools were Chinese respectively. It is unlikely that Wilkinson was referring to the government-

aided girls' schools since about 88 per cent of its total enrolment were European and Eurasian girls with English as their mother tongue (see Table 3).

### Growth of English Schools and School Libraries in 1900-1938

In the beginning of the twentieth century there were several types of government-aided schools, other than the government schools, functioning separately based on their different religious affiliations and their ability to gather money to run their schools. The availability of school libraries in English boys and girls schools from 1921 to 1932 was gradual. In 1921, about 51 per cent of the total 19 boys' and girls' English schools had school libraries as shown in Table 4. It only reached the above 60 per cent mark in 1928 and 1929 and finally increased to 79 per cent in 1932. Below are known records of school libraries in two government and three government aided boys' schools.

Table 4: Staff and School Libraries in English Boys' and Girls' Schools

Year	Staff library	School library	Total schools	%
1921	8	10	19	51%
1922	8	10	19	51%
1923	8	10	19	51%
1925	13	11	20	55%
1928	13	14	22	64%
1929	13	15	22	68%
1930	14	17	22	77%
1931	15	18	23	78%

Sources: Wolff 1922, Winstedt 1924, Shelley 1926, Winstedt 1927, Winstedt 1928, Winstedt 1929, Watson 1930, Winstedt 1931, Morten 1933.

### Government English Schools and School Libraries in 1900-1938

#### *Raffles Institution*

In 1 January 1903, the Government assumed the direct management and control of the Raffles Institution (RI), making it a secular school. In October 1906, RI stopped admission to Standard IV. From October 1907 instruction was confined to Standard V and upwards and secondary classes relying chiefly on the Government branch schools, where instruction was limited to Standard IV, for its supply of material (Elcum, 1908).

The idea of establishing the Hullet Memorial Library at Raffles Institution was mooted in 1923 to mark the centenary of the Institution. While the fund had risen to \$6,617.27 nothing was done until 1949 to rename and upgrade the school library. It was officially opened in 1950 by Dr Lim Boon Keng (Wijeysingha, 1989).

#### *Victoria School*

The Victoria Bridge School functioned at Victoria Street from 1901 to 1932 (Old Victorians' Association, 1991). In 1930, Mr A. M. Alsagoff gave the Victoria Bridge School \$1,500 to be spent on extending its library (Watson, 1930). From 1931, the school was elevated into a secondary school (Old Victorians' Association, 1991), becoming the second oldest government secondary school in Singapore (Cheong 1988). The school presented its candidates for the Junior Cambridge Examination in 1933, and for the Senior Cambridge in 1934. On 18 September 1933, the school moved to its premises in Tyrwhitt Road

and the school came to be known as Victoria School (Old Victorians' Association 1991).

### *St Joseph's Institution*

In 1927 the Senior Cambridge classes at St Joseph's Institution were initiated. The school library consisted of three bookshelves occupying a room next to the Director's office (Brown, 1987). During the late 1930s the school library and the science laboratory was sadly lacking (Tan 1986). In 1940, the Director created a new school library (Brown, 1987; Balan, 1977) located along the west wing of the building (Tan, 1986). Mr Koh Cheng Yam, an Old Boy of the school, who worked for the architect firm of Swan & McLaren, supervised the work (Brown, 1987).

### *St Patrick's School*

In 1932, St Patrick's School was built to relieve the congestion at SJI (1977). The school was opened on 16 January 1933 and Bro Stephen assumed its Directorship in 22 January 1934 (St Patrick's School, 1983). Frank James who taught English literature, started the school library (Alfred, 2002). On 5 June 1934, the new school library, "a rarity in Singapore at that time", was opened by Bro Stephen (St Patrick's School 1983, p. 20). In 1941, the school was turned into a military hospital after World War II broke in Europe (Alfred, 2002).

### *Anglo-Chinese School*

In 1923, it was decided to build a new Anglo-Chinese School at Cairnhill and in 1928 the building was opened as a secondary school (Dhoringam 1991). Subsequent to the early years no records which deal with reading or library was mentioned until the revived ACS maga-

zine in 1929 referred to a *Straits Times* article that "ACS was setting a fine example...that her students by far outnumbered the students of any other school as members of the Raffles Junior Library". This may, perhaps explain the apparent absence of a school library at Cairnhill: boys who wanted to read have a ready source near the school.

However, small, specialized libraries were started during the 1930s for athletics, geography, history and photography. As an illustration, the history library began with 37 volumes, growing to 62 in 1937, including works of both fiction and non-fiction. It was in the Principal's report that the importance of reading was first made, "one of the aims of our school is the broadening of the mind and the cultivation of interests that are not purely of the textbook character...". There was evidence that the class library was being profitably used: in standards 6 and 7, all boys except eight took out at least two books and the average taken was nine, indicating that a number of boys had developed a real taste of reading for pleasure, while considerable number augmented their reading by being members of the Raffles Junior Library.

In 1938, in addition to the specialized libraries there were four class libraries. During the year, 159 new books were added, making a total of 950 volumes, as well as eight copies of the daily newspapers available on reading stands that were always crowded before and after school, and during the interval. The most popular fiction authors among the seniors were Alexander Dumas, Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare. In the non-fiction category, biographies, religion and scientific writing were preferred by the seniors

(Lau & Teo 2003). During World War Two, all schools in Singapore were requisitioned by the Japanese forces. The ACS was no exception (Teo 1976). The Cairnhill school was used as a “comfort station” for officers and other ranks (Lau & Teo, 2003, p. 75).

By 1937, there were a total of 21 English boys’ schools of which 80 per cent had school libraries as shown in Table 5. Among the 21 English boys’ schools, 12 were government schools and 9, government-aided school (Keir, 1938, p. 86).

**Table 5: Growth of English boys’ Schools and School Libraries in the Straits Settlements, 1933-1937**

	Total Schools	Staff Libraries	School Libraries	Class Libraries
1933	39	31 (79%)	29 (74%)	15 (38%)
1934	41	36 (88%)	35 (85%)	13 (32%)
1935	42	36 (86%)	34 (81%)	18 (43%)
1936	42	38 (90%)	32 (76%)	23 (55%)
1937	41	NA	33 (80%)	26 (63%)

Note: NA means information was not available. Information for each of the three Settlements was not available.

Sources: Morten 1934, Morten 1935, Morten 1936, Morten 1937, Keir 1938.

### *English Girls’ Schools and School Libraries in 1900-1938*

From 1900 to 1938, the number of English girls’ school increased from five to seven. By 1938 70 per cent of the total enrolment

consisted of Chinese girls. The importance of school and class libraries both in widening general knowledge and in improving the English of the pupils is being increasing and in 1937 there was only one English girls’ school without a library as shown in Table 7 (Keir 1938, p. 60).

### **Problems for School Libraries**

In a school conference in 1925 it was reported that there was no permanent textbook committee nor a central book-buying agency. The adoption of books from the approved school list was entirely voluntary. Therefore English books were ordered from a variety of sources from Europe, Crown Agents, London publishers or from India. Mr C. G. Coleman, Inspector of Schools for Singapore and Labuan, complained that books ordered from Europe or India sometimes failed to reach in time (Winstedt & Watson, 1925). Therefore the procurement of text books and books for school libraries varies between the different types of schools.

In another education conference in 1939, it was discussed that publishers will not published local titles because “there is not a big enough demand to make them a financial proposition. For countries like Africa and India, thousands of copies are printed at one time. For Malaya, an edition of 10,000 copies would be sufficient for several years and no publisher is willing to tie up his money for such a period unless he has some guarantee (Education Department, 1939).

Table 6: Enrolment in English Girls' Schools by Race in 1899 & 1938

		Europeans & Eurasians	Chinese	Malay	Indians & other Asiatics	Total
1899	Five government-aided schools	383 (88%)	39 (9%)	-	15 (3%)	437
1938	Six government-aided schools and one government school	861 (20%)	2,911 (70%)	56 (1%)	369 (9%)	4,233

Sources: Wilkinson, 1900, p. 143; Linehan, 1939, pp. 194-195.

Table 7: Growth of English Girls' Schools and School Libraries

	Total Schools	Staff Libraries	School Libraries	Class Libraries
1933	15	10 (67%)	11 (73%)	9 (60%)
1934	16	9 (56%)	12 (75%)	6 (38%)
1935	16	12 (75%)	12 (75%)	11 (69%)
1936	16	12 (75%)	15 (94%)	12 (75%)
1937	16	13 (81%)	15 (94%)	NA

Note: Information for each of the three Settlements was not available.  
Sources: Morten 1934; Morten 1935; Morten 1936; Morten 1937; Keir 1938.

It was agreed in the same conference that schools can apply to the Department of Education the sum of \$2 a year per pupil to purchase books for school libraries (Education Department 1939a). However, little would have been done considering Europe was at war and there were fears of the impending Japanese invasion which did materialize in 1942.

### Library Services to Schools

The Raffles Junior Library was opened on 21 July 1923, the first of its kind in British Malaya, with the primary objective “to create among children and young people taste for reading healthy literature.” There was an initial stock of 1,000 books, all published in English. (Kloss 1924, pp. 9-10). Through the kind offices of the Inspector of Schools (Mr. H. T. Clark) assistance

has been sought and readily given in connection with the formation of libraries in up-country schools (Johnston 1930). However, such assistance is likely to be basic considering professional librarianship and school librarianship as a vocation and movement did not exist then. In 1921, the Raffles Library was elected to Institution membership of the Library Association (LA) in England “with the object of regularly securing much profitable information in connection with modern library practice and development” (Moulton, 1922). The formation of the School Library Association (SLA), and the School Section of the LA in 1937 in England acted as catalysts. Both had similar aims to promote the development and use of the school library as an instrument of education in schools of all kinds, and to this end, organized branches, published booklists, pamphlets and newsletters (Ellis, 1968).

According to the Education Code of 1936, every school in Singapore was expected to have a library and “have a Committee consisting of teachers and pupils who will take turns at supervising the daily issue of books.” The purpose of having access to good libraries was to improve the standard of English (Education Department, 1936), considering the mother tongue of most of the pupils in English schools consists of Chinese, Malay or Tamil children as shown in Tables, 2, 3 and 7.

The Education Code of 1939 further emphasize “the full use of libraries as sources of information and pleasure should be encouraged; this can be ensured by regular and properly-organized “library periods” in class. The teacher should occasionally read stories in class” (Education Department, 1939b, p. 1).

## Conclusion

When Raffles founded Singapore in 1819, he wrote the first education policy for the settlement. In 1823 his education policy was revised to include a Museum and Library for his proposed Singapore Institution. Unfortunately, he returned to England in 1824 and passed away two years later (Sweet, 1993).

Although the Singapore Free School was set up in 1834, it was an elementary school and not a Southeast Asian liberal arts college as envisaged by Raffles (Hough, 1933). The earliest accessible record of the proposed Singapore Institution and its library and museum was in the third report (1836-37) of the Singapore Free School (Hanitsch, 1921).

Following the transfer of the Settlement to the Colonial Office in London, the first official enquiry into the state of vernacular education was conducted in 1867. In 1872, the first Inspector of Schools was appointed and Education Department established to extend government funded Malay schools and reform the Grants-in-aid system applicable mainly to English schools. In 1872, there were no government English schools except a few missionary run schools namely the Singapore Institution Free School (established in 1823) (now known as Raffles Institution), St Joseph’s Institution (established in 1848), Raffles Girls’ School (established in 1844) and the Convent (established in 1854) they were funded partly by government grants, fees collected from pupils and private donations.

The first policy to provide a school library in an English school in Singapore and Penang was initiated by Acting School Inspector, Wilkinson. By then there were three government English schools in Singapore and the fund of \$250 was to set up a school library in one of the government schools. By 1900 there were also known school libraries in two government aided schools, one the Raffles Institution (first known in 1836) and the other at the Anglo-Chinese School established in 1888 as a gift from a Chinese businessman.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century the setting up of school libraries was sporadic and gradual, very much depended on the objectives of the missionary schools and funding which, except for the partial government grants, may not be so readily available. In 1921, only 51 per cent of a total of 19 English boys' and girls' schools in Singapore had libraries as shown in Table 5. It was not until 1928 that it was increased to 64 per cent and then 78 per cent in 1932. By 1937 80 per cent of all English boys' and girls' schools in the Straits Settlements had libraries as compiled in Table 6.

Although about eighty per cent of English boys and girls schools in Singapore had school libraries by 1937, it is likely that it was meant to encourage and promote reading and literacy and probably there were not much books made available then given the following circumstances:

1. Almost all English textbooks and all reference English books had to be imported from England since it was not viable for publishers to published books in English in view of its small market when compared to British India.

2. It was not until 1939 that the schools can apply to the Education Department for funding for school libraries at \$2 per pupil (Education Department 1939). By then little would have been done since Europe was at war then, and almost everyone in Singapore was preoccupied with the fortification of Singapore in view of the impending Japanese invasion.

3. Library services to schools provided by the Raffles Junior Library (established in 1923) are likely to be basic and advisory. In England as early as 1911 library services to schools included bulk loans of books from the public library system (Ellis, 1968).

4. The School Library Association and the School Section of the LA in England was established only in 1937 (Ellis, 1968). The *Annual Report on Education in the Straits Settlements* from 1872 to 1939 have no records of schools in Singapore being affiliated to any one of these associations nor were there any local school library association set up in Singapore. The school library movement has not been introduced into Singapore or by the Education Department.

It was not until the formation of the Malayan Library Group (MLG) in postwar Malaya and Singapore in 1955 (Anuar, 1961) that a short course in librarianship was organized for "55 teacher-librarians" for schools in Singapore. It is likely that the MLG was the first to organized a course on librarianship, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, for "teacher-librarians" in Singapore (Lim, 1956, p. 47).

This research attempted to uncover the beginning and development of English schools and schools libraries in Singapore

from 1819 to 1941 from official education reports. The beginning and development of Malay schools and school libraries have also been documented earlier (Lim, 2008). It would be useful to study on the beginning and development of Chinese schools and school libraries in Singapore before the Second World War to study the varied history of schooling and school libraries in Singapore.

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