

Annex E – Key Highlights of NLB's Transformation

NLB has continuously transformed over its last 30 years as a statutory board. Key highlights of NLB's transformation over the past three decades are outlined below, guided by the overarching consideration to always serve patrons better in their reading and learning.

1. Growing the library network and infrastructure

- NLB was formed in 1995 and revolutionised the delivery of library services, introducing new infrastructure like an automated bookdrop and self-service borrowing machines to improve patrons' library experience
- The first library in a shopping mall opened at Jurong Point in 1996, to be followed by others to enhance the convenience and access for patrons

2. Harnessing technology to improve services

- Technology has been an enabler of NLB's transformation over the years - in 1998, NLB was the first library system in the world to use RFID tags on books, so patrons can return their books anytime, at any library
- Library in Your Pocket was a smartphone app launched by NLB in 2009 giving users on-the-go access to library services and digital resources
- Its successor, the NLB Mobile app, rolled out a barcode scanning feature in 2014 that lets users borrow materials directly with their phones

3. Custodian of Singapore's documentary heritage

- NLB has digitised Singapore-related materials including historical newspapers, rare books and digital content, resulting in the launch of Web Archive Singapore in 2006 and NewspaperSG in 2010
- With the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) joining the NLB family in 2012, more opportunities were created to strengthen these collections and promote patrons' engagement with our documentary heritage
- As part of LAB25 (Library & Archives Blueprint 2025), NLB also seeks to enable the discovery and use of content as a connector and inspire generations of storytellers, such as through presenting content in new formats including cooking videos and podcasts

4. Making sure no one is left behind

- Mobile libraries were first deployed in Singapore in the 1960s, reflecting that accessibility for all patrons is a key priority
- Mobile libraries were re-launched in 2008 as Molly – a bus equipped with books and library facilities that travels to under-served communities
- The kidsREAD programme, launched in 2004, works with community partners and volunteers to encourage a love for reading among children from less privileged families
- NLB launched the National Information Literacy Programme in 2012 to help school students navigate the information age. The programme has since evolved to the S.U.R.E. (Source, Understand, Research, Evaluate) initiative, expanding beyond



schools to ensure that Singaporeans of all ages are equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges of the rapidly changing digital landscape

- Punggol Library officially opened in 2023 as the first library in Singapore to offer a suite of services and features for and co-designed with persons with disabilities

5. Inspiring discovery through an omni-channel strategy

- NLB has embraced experimentation with LAB25 to adapt to changing reading habits, introducing new touchpoints like Nodes and themed libraries that make physical and digital resources more accessible
- NLB provides platforms for patrons to engage with new technologies like AI, with the GenAI-powered StoryGen and ChatBook showcased in 2024