

# Riding the **Beast**

*Are we at the mercy of  
**Generative AI?** hmmm*

**Gene Tan**

Chief Librarian & Chief Innovation Officer  
National Library & Archives Board (NLB)

# National Library and Archives Board, Singapore



## Public Libraries

Network of 28 Public Libraries,  
Reading Programmes and Initiatives  
Programmes and Exhibitions targeted at  
Singapore communities



## National Library

Preserving Singapore's Print and Literary  
Heritage, and Intellectual memory  
Reference Collections  
Legal Deposit (including electronic)



## National Archives

Custodian of Singapore's Collective Memory:  
Responsible for Collection, Preservation and  
Management of Singapore's Public and Private  
Archival Records. Promotes Public Interest in our  
Nation's History and Heritage



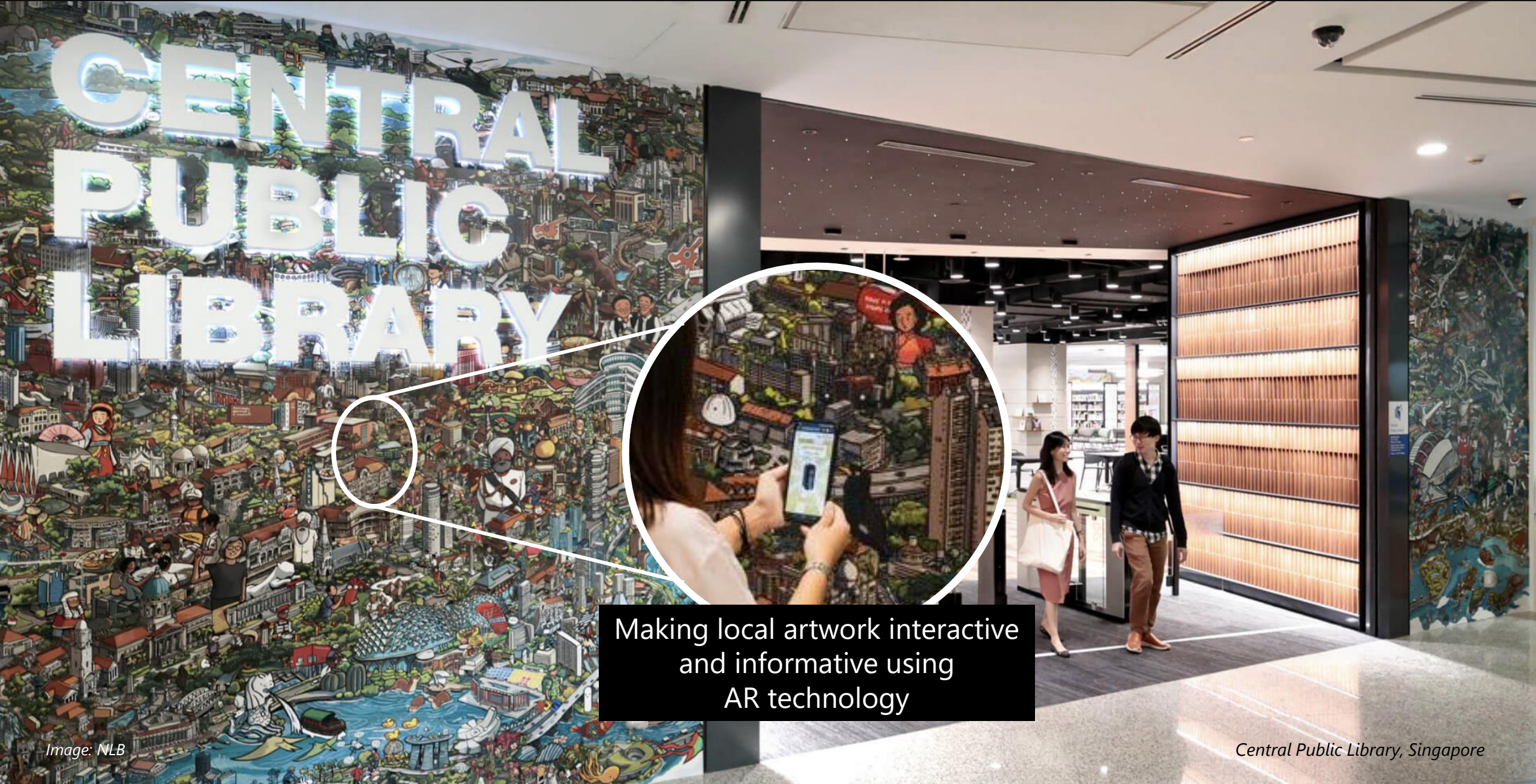
# WHAT IS LAB25?

LAB25 is NLB's invitation to partners and the community to collaborate on this journey of innovation and experimentation to reimagine libraries and archives. The goal is to be an even stronger companion to patrons as the society navigates an evolving social, cultural and economic landscape. Through four distinct roles, NLB seeks to work with the community to co-create products and services for our next generation of libraries and archives.

Been There. **Done** That



# An Interactive Augmented Reality (AR) Experience





# The Singapore Alcove - An Immersive Heritage Experience

Blending thematic collections with exhibition space, the Singapore Alcove interweaves cultural heritage with literature. It offers a multi-sensory journey through Singapore's past and present, making learning both interactive and reflective.

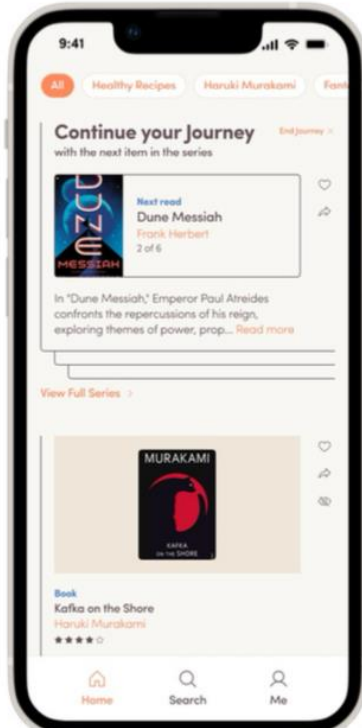


Visitors can engage with curated displays showcasing evolving local lifestyles and related collections on leisure, history, and social spaces.

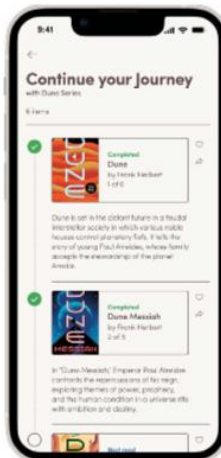


First they  
came for our  
**Social Media**

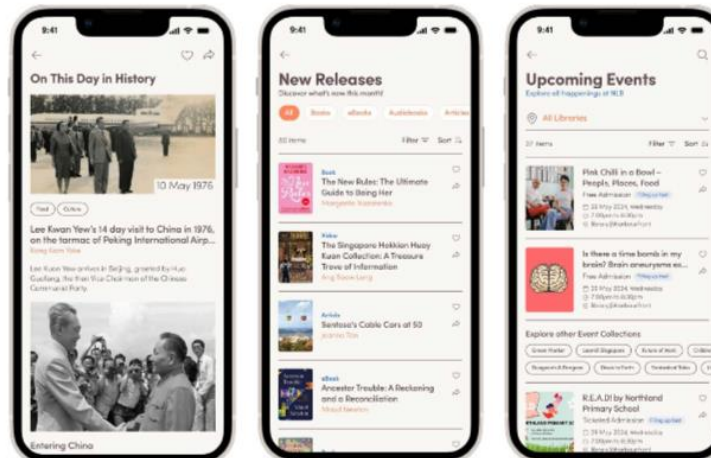
## Feed page



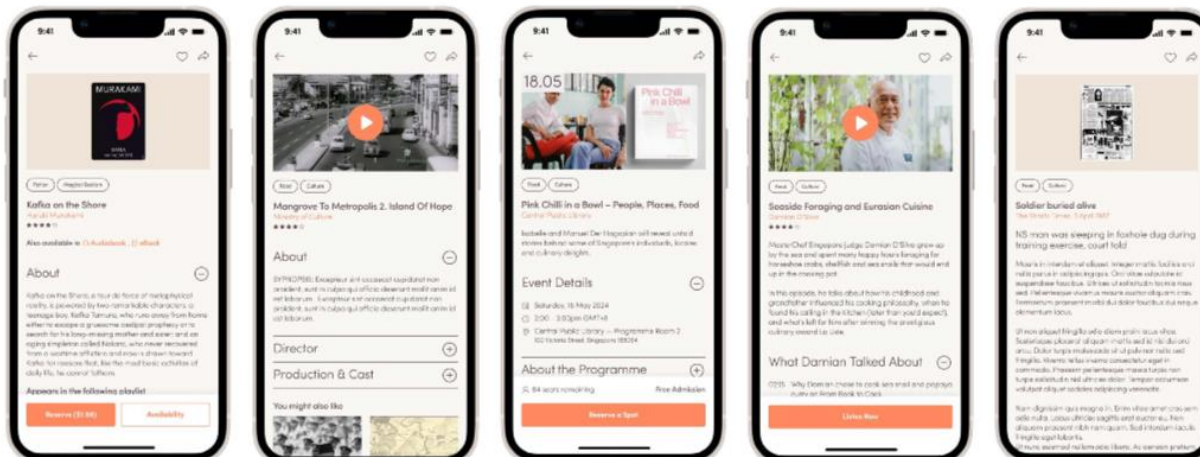
## Personalised journey



## Curated content listing pages



## Content detail pages



# Riding the Beast Episode ONE

Leveraging the  
concept of the  
Infinite Feed

In our new  
Mobile App.

Prototype Stage.  
It worked!!!





**Generative AI**

A large, solid yellow circle is centered on a black background. Inside the circle, the text "GenExperience" is written in white. The word "Gen" is underlined with a thick black line.

**GenExperience**

# StoryGen

## An AI-Powered Storytelling Experience

Reimagining classic tales, including Singapore folktales, by transforming text into immersive visual experiences where users can explore different genres and endings.



### HOW DOES IT WORK?

1

#### Choose your story and put your own twist

Users select a base story and receive prompts to modify the genre, characters, and endings, generating a personalised five-page story (with a book cover). They can further enhance it with humour or make it more "Singaporean".

2

#### Enjoy an immersive experience

The finalised story comes to life on immersive screens in the library, and users can download their customised stories to their personal devices.

### HOW DID WE DO?

**Over 95%** of 690+ survey respondents enjoyed the prototype, finding it fun, creative, and an effective way to introduce technology to children. **More than 85%** also indicated that they learned more about Gen AI in the process.

### HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

5 months from conceptualisation to launch (Sep 2023 to Jan 2024).

### HOW HAS IT SCALED?

With minor tweaks and enhancements to the backend and infrastructure, variations of StoryGen (e.g. horror version at Haw Par Villa, part of a Rediffusion node at Chinatown Point) have been deployed.

***Fail Fast  
Fail Small***





**Generative AI**

A large, solid yellow circle is centered on a black background. Inside the circle, the text "Gen Discover" is written in white. The word "Gen" is underlined with a thin black line.

**Gen Discover**

# ChatBook: 700 Years

## An AI-Powered Content Discovery Experience

ChatBook invites users to have interactive conversations with a book's content, making the experience self-directed and personalised. The first prototype was based on *"700 Years: A History of Singapore"*.



### HOW DOES IT WORK?

#### A WhatsApp version: For the Public

The WhatsApp version caters to the public, providing responses by drawing from published books and NLB's extensive online resources.

#### B Web Version: For Academics and Researchers

The web version caters to academics by providing detailed responses, including references to primary historical resources.

### HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

6 months from conceptualisation to launch (Jun to Dec 2023).

### HOW DID WE DO?

Over **80%** of survey respondents enjoyed the prototype. Users liked the links to primary sources and preferred the WhatsApp version. Some requested for multi-modal materials (e.g. images, audio-visuals).

***Fail Fast  
Fail Small***



# ChatBook Featuring S. Rajaratnam

## An AI-Powered Content Discovery Experience

ChatBook invites users to have interactive conversations with a book's content, making the experience self-directed and personalised. The second prototype features *Mr S. Rajaratnam*, one of Singapore's Founding Fathers.



### HOW DOES IT WORK?

1

#### Ask a Question

Users can type, speak, or select a question on the screen.

2

#### See and Hear a Response

ChatBook provides answers based on NLB's resources, read aloud by a "digital archivist."

3

#### Explore Sources

Users can access primary sources or related materials about S. Rajaratnam.

### HOW DID WE DO?

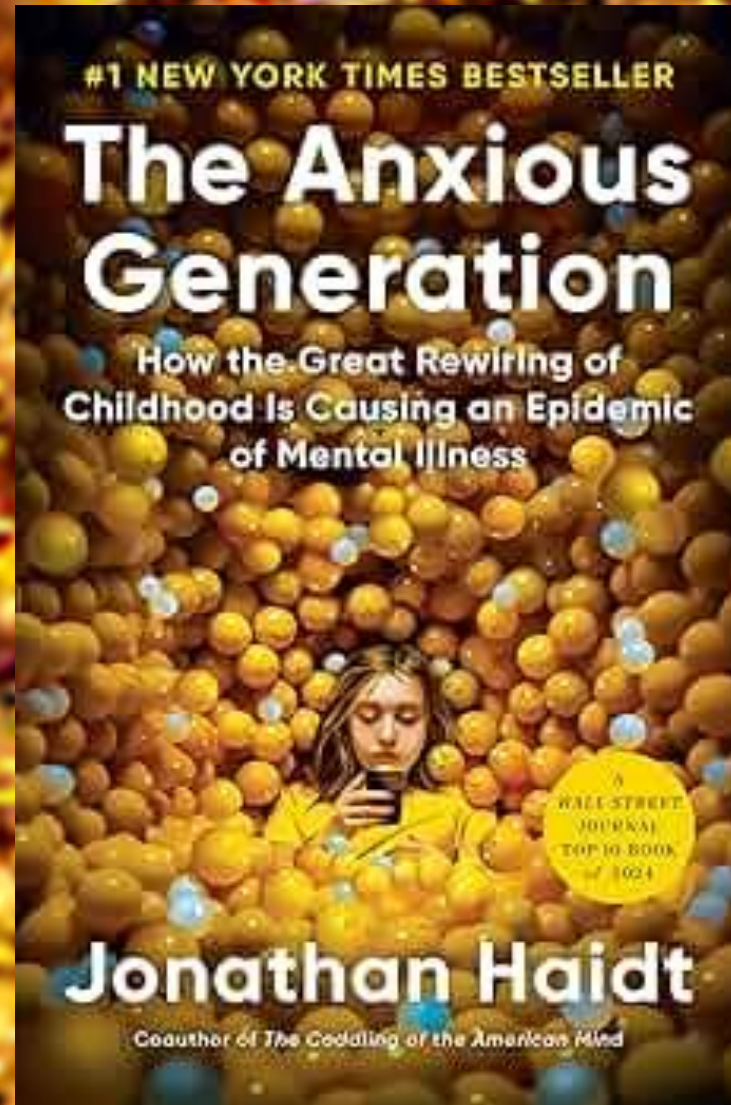
**High (>95%) enjoyment rate** among survey respondents, who indicated that they learned more about S. Rajaratnam and Singapore's history in the process.

### HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

5 months from conceptualisation to launch (Mar to Jul 2024).

***Fail Fast  
Fail Small***





*This was  
on our  
mind.  
Hence...*

*Close to half a **Million***



*This year, we are going big*  
*really **BIG***

# Not on its own but part of the **MOST CONSEQUENTIAL HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE** in Singapore's...ahem..history. Coming in Dec 2025



## 2. ROOM

20-min multimedia show with a “hidden room”, with reenactments, historical footages and oral histories.

## 3. IN CONVERSATION

Listening booths presenting oral history interviews as a radio play.

### Artefacts Showcase:

Original documents displayed in museum-grade, tech-enhanced showcases.

## 4. SINGAPOREANA CHATBOOK

GenAI-powered chat service, drawing from NLB and NAS content collections.

ENTRY  
& EXIT

## 1. ATLAS

Interactive timeline wall and a “spacetime clock”, featuring a comprehensive narrative of key events.

# SINGAPOREANA A LA **LOKI**?





# SINGAPOREANA A LA **LOKI**?

## WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE SEPARATION?

The key factors that led to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia were deep-rooted differences in political ideologies, racial tensions, and conflicting visions for the future of the nation.

The Malaysian government's desire to maintain special privileges for Malays clashed with Singapore's vision of a meritocratic society with equal rights for all citizens. This fundamental disagreement, coupled with rising tensions and racial riots, ultimately led to the Malaysian government's decision to expel Singapore from the federation.

> WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE CONFLICTING VISIONS?



Instructions on the terminal screen will appear to show users how they can toggle between the sources.

See next slide for input terminal functions



# Heart&Soul Experience

The Flagship Event of Singapore's 60<sup>th</sup> Year of Independence



<https://www.heartandsoul.gov.sg/>





ARRIVAL / BOARDING

After viewing books of future lives illustrated by artists with disabilities, the experience begins at **Boarding** where visitors converse with a digital librarian about what they love, available in any of the four official languages. The info provided is used for their future in the making.



WHEELS OF TIME

Through the turning **Wheels of Time**, travel in warp speed from our inception and immerse in the stories of through the oral history of of people who were eye-witnesses of Singapore's becoming. And it turns until we come face to face with a dramatic COVID-pause and a question about our tomorrow.



## LEVEL 4 HIGHLIGHTS: TIMED EXPERIENCE

### WINDOWS IN THE SKY



This is the high point of the visitors' generative journey to their future. They are transported to a future Singapore where they will literally see themselves in a surprise twist. The future scape as well as their personalized futures are drawn from a dataset of assets developed by young librarians and design students working with scenarios from partners from all sectors of Singapore. The finale is when all the aspirations come together in a collective tapestry of dreams rising above a skyline that is past, present and future Singapore.



## LIBRARY SUPERSTORE

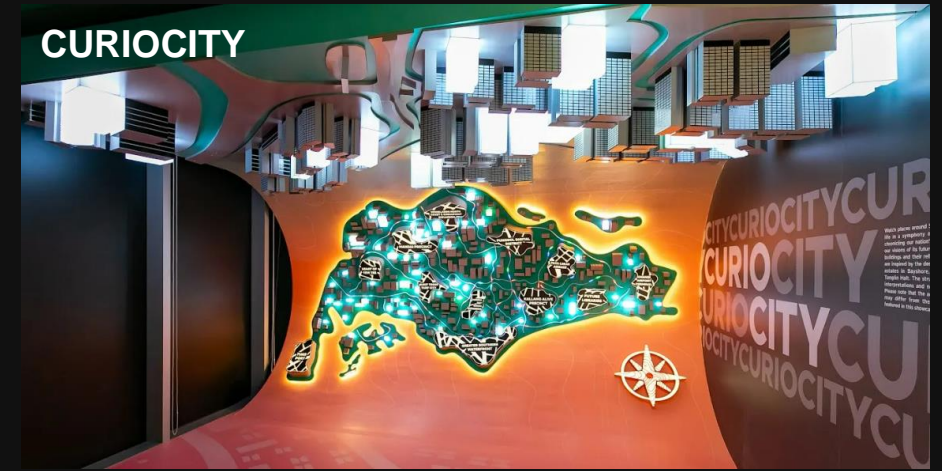
Enter a zany emporium (think Toys 'R Us) where ideas from the future come alive. Browse and interact with real and conceptual products that showcase tomorrow's possibilities in how we live, work, play, learn and care. Masterplans and visions of sustainability, inclusivity & more reimagined as dollhouses, terraria and board games!

There is even a library where every book causes a digital **Book Explosion** for more books to explore. Get your list of favs to borrow after the visit.

**Call Me in the Future:** Send a voice message to your future self, share your hopes for the Singapore of tomorrow and hear back what it is going to like from yourself!

LEARN  
& PLAY

## CURIOCITY



**Curiosity:** Experience Singapore's past and future places through augmented reality. Features tomorrow's housing estates, while color-coded legends showcase our future transportation, water, and sustainability plans.

## WORLD60



**World60:** Inspired by newsstands, this showcases 61 historic newspaper headlines since 1965, spotlighting key local and global events.



# HOME IS A FEELING



THE BOOK OF  
சின்னத்தம்பிராஜரத்னம்

Download  
your video  
reel ▶



Discover  
an author ▶

THE BOOK OF Eric Tan Ee

Download  
your video  
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Discover  
an author ▶

THE BOOK OF 章晨曦

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Discover  
an author ▶

THE BOOK OF  
Princess Aura Nurr Emily Amara Auliya  
Bidadari Nawal El Zendra

Download  
your video  
reel ▶



Discover  
an author ▶

As visitors leave the ticketed experience, they check out their mementos (bookmarks). The mementos will contain QR codes that visitors scan for their personalised future trailers and discover pioneer writers and their works. As they do so, they see their books fly into the public housing blocks to join a

library of lives in the city



We are building the engine for GenExperience.

**EXPERIENCE YOUR LIFE** (future) with content created/curated by librarians and archivists and assisted with Gen AI. Replace future with past.

Rinse and repeat later with **city, community, country**.



**Thank You**