



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

NLB partners SMU and SUTD to strengthen community co-creation and lifelong learning experiences

Singapore, 4 June 2025 – NLB has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the Singapore Management University (SMU) and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), to deliver a number of projects that will enable academic and research expertise, as well as NLB's wealth of resources to be more accessible to all. In particular, it will enable communities and individuals to tap on the network of experts and material to work on solutions for issues of national significance, such as healthcare and education. The signing was witnessed by the Guest-of-Honour, Minister of State for Digital Development and Information Rahayu Mahzam.

The event took place at the finale event of the pilot edition of the Catalyst programme, a National Library initiative designed to boost public engagement on national issues by encouraging collaboration across the private, public and people sectors. The strategic partnerships will offer the following over the next few years:

1. Residency programmes where students and faculty members can collaborate with NLB and community partners to co-create public education initiatives and strengthen the roll-out of innovative solutions that will address critical social issues;
2. Collaboration in development of digital content such as videos and vodcasts to raise awareness on topics of national interest;
3. Research opportunities that could be open to academia and student researchers in the digital humanities field by leveraging the National Library's rich digital and print collection;
4. Curated learning experiences that encourage lifelong learning and the development of critical and future-ready skills for working adults.

In addition to Mdm Rahayu, other witnesses to the signing were Professor Alan Chan, Provost of SMU, and Professor Chee Yeow Meng, Provost, Chief Academic & Innovation Officer (CAIO) of SUTD. The MoU was signed by Ms Catherine Lau, Deputy Chief Executive of NLB, Professor Lim Sun Sun, Vice-President of Partnerships & Engagement at SMU, and Professor Tai Lee Siang, Deputy President and Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer at SUTD.

Following the MoUs, NLB will be collaborating with SMU and SUTD at Thrive@Libraries, NLB's signature event focussed on supporting working adults in their personal and professional growth. This year's Thrive@Libraries will take place from 16 August to 30 September in support of lifelong learning. To kick off the series of activities, a pop-up will be held at SMU on 16 August, featuring exhibitions and programmes by international speakers, business leaders and local education practitioners, including esteemed professors from SMU. NLB will also be supporting SMU's promotion of Continuing Education



and Training programmes to encourage lifelong learning through tasters delivered as part of the Thrive@Libraries programme lineup.

NLB will also be supporting the launch of the Festival of Funny Machines (FOFM) led by SUTD to inspire a new generation of engineers, designers, and innovators to design and build "creative machines" that inspire joy and humour, with the first FOFM workshop being conducted during Thrive@Libraries. After which, NLB members can also access workshops curated by SUTD to learn how they can combine Generative AI and humour to build prototypes for a competition to be held later this year. Selected prototypes may then be showcased at public libraries and other community spaces for more members of the public to experience.

The MoUs build on the success of the Catalyst's pilot edition, which kicked off in January 2025. Jointly organised with SUTD and various supporting industry partners, the pilot was centred on the theme "Trust in an AI-Supercharged World" and aimed to spark thoughtful discussions on the responsible development and use of AI and empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to public conversations and ground-up initiatives, leveraging NLB's extensive resources and networks.

The pilot yielded more than 4,000 online and in-person engagements through activities such as panel discussions that explored AI's influence on education, healthcare and retail and a co-solutioning forum where participants pitched ideas to foster responsible AI practices. The programme's interactive approach curated and facilitated by NLB librarians drew strong interest, and saw high levels of engagement, networking and collaboration among participants.

The pilot's finale event that took place today at the National Library Building featured booths by Institutes of Higher Learning, industry partners and ground-up initiatives showcasing innovative applications of AI. It offered a platform where practitioners experienced in AI prototyping and interested newcomers could connect. Attendees experienced several prototypes first-hand, such as an AI-powered revision platform, a wellness chatbot application, among others.

An expert speaker sharing and interactive panel discussion led by faculty members of SMU and SUTD also provided attendees valuable insights on the evolving dynamics of communication in an increasingly AI-supercharged world.

Mr Ng Cher Pong, Chief Executive Officer of NLB, said: "Catalyst marks a significant milestone in NLB's ongoing efforts to nurture an informed citizenry through creative and impactful public engagement initiatives. Through Catalyst, we have explored a new way of bringing people together to engage meaningfully on issues that shape Singapore's future. This is part of our ongoing efforts to work with partners to create a vibrant learning marketplace. Our partnership with SUTD and SMU will allow us to extend this effort, as we navigate an increasingly complex world and nurture informed, active citizenry."

Professor Alan Chan, Provost of SMU, said: "This partnership reflects SMU's belief that knowledge should not remain within the walls of classrooms, but flow purposefully through



communities. As NLB's inaugural Knowledge Partner in Residence, we are excited to translate our university's strengths in applied research, public programming, and cross-sector partnerships to co-create knowledge that is more accessible, inclusive, and impactful. Together with NLB, we aim to serve as a gateway between academic insight and everyday relevance."

Professor Chee Yeow Meng, Provost and CAIO of SUTD, said: "Our conviction to raise human potential is why SUTD made the pivot earlier this year to be the world's first Design AI university. This is more than a label, and also more than whether AI is under- or over-hyped. Design AI is how SUTD slices through the hype because as our students show, we know how to make trusted and safe AI concrete, creative, and empowering. This small success seeds a fantastic start to our partnership with NLB. Together – and with AI as our mutual teammate – we can make designing with AI come alive, ignite imaginations, and co-create possibilities."

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About National Library Board

The National Library Board (NLB) nurtures Readers for Life, Learning Communities and a Knowledgeable Nation by promoting reading, learning and history through its network of 28 libraries, the National Library and the National Archives of Singapore. NLB also forges strategic partnerships that encourage awareness, appreciation and greater discovery of Singapore's history through its rich collections in Singapore and the region.

NLB achieves excellence through innovation, focusing on citizen engagement and co-creation, resource and digital innovation. This creates learning opportunities, greater access to library resources, services, and archival collections, as well as a continual development of innovative library spaces. Established on 1 September 1995 as a statutory board, NLB is under the Ministry of Digital Development and Information (MDDI).

For more information, please visit the [NLB website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#) channels.

About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, SMU is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative, and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative, and project-based approach to learning. Home to over 13,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU comprises of eight schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Computing and Information Systems, Yong Pung How School of Law, School of Social Sciences, College of Integrative Studies, and



College of Graduate Research Studies. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors', masters', and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with its schools, as well as in multidisciplinary combinations of these areas. SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and interdisciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government, and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

SMU celebrates its 25 years of meaningful impact this year, and remains committed to its vision of driving innovation, transcending boundaries and transforming lives.

About Singapore University of Technology and Design

www.sutd.edu.sg

The Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) is the world's first Design AI university. With Design AI, artificial intelligence is treated as a partner and a member of the team – not just a tool. As a result of this unique SUTD treatment, AI and humans brainstorm, spar and prototype together, resulting in solutions that are elevated several-fold. This human-AI team concept has been made possible because of SUTD's unique cohort-based interdisciplinary pedagogy – which has been in place since the University's formation in 2009.

As a trailblazer in the field of design and technology education and research, SUTD has been pioneering innovative programmes and initiatives since our inception – including launching the world's first Design and AI degree in 2020 – well before AI was even a buzzword. The success of that pioneering degree has set the stage for a new growth strategy called SUTD Leap, which was launched in March 2024. Here, SUTD aims to redesign higher education with an even greater focus on design and AI, whilst nurturing the next generation of human-centric design x tech innovators and innovator leaders.

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