



Singapore Book Publishers Association Reports on Activities 2023-2024

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1. President's Overview

It has been a very busy year for the Singapore Book Publishers Association. The Association has worked tirelessly throughout the year to organise new projects such as the inaugural Singapore Children's Book Festival, jointly organised with NAFA, as well as maintaining the quality of our ever-present projects such as the Singapore Book Awards. This partnership with NAFA ensures that the SCBF will continue to be a core part of the Association's activities in the future.

These activities have been organised with the purpose of fostering creativity and to highlight and uplift the role of publishers here in Singapore. I am excited and proud to provide a list of these activities from our secretariat and subcommittees who had worked tirelessly over the course of the year:

- The inaugural Singapore Children's Book Festival
- The Singapore Book Awards
- SBPA Internship Programme
- Frankfurt Book Fair 2024 literary national pavilion
- Edtech delegations to Frankfurt Book Fair
- Member's night at AFCC
- Book fair preparatory workshops and introductory publishing courses
- Engagement with the government, stakeholders, and online retailers
- Read For Books charity drive with NLB
- Talks with NLB around AI
- Talks between industry partners and the government around licensing issues and AI

As one can see from the list, the association is committed to maintaining and refining our projects for the current publishing landscape in Singapore and continuing discussions around issues that plague our members such as the current big note issue of AI and licensing problems.

Thank you to the ExCo and the Secretariat, who continue to work hard for the association and our members, as well as members who have given their time and support for various projects.

Edmund Wee
President (2022-2024)

2. General and Trade Publishing Council

Report on completed events up to September 2024

The General and Trade Publishing Council looks after the interests of our members involved in general or trade publishing.

The activities of the General and Trade Publishing Council in 2023-2024 were:

Singapore Children's Book Festival

Together with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), SBPA jointly organised the inaugural Singapore Children's Book Festival (SCBF) held from Friday, 21 June to Sunday, 23 June 2024. The SCBF aimed at promoting homegrown talent in writing and illustration through the celebration of local children's literature as well as to generate conversations around the children's book industry in Singapore. The Festival received positive feedback and excitement from participants and smaller publishers about having a dedicated platform for local children's books and illustrators in the local arts scene. Notably, the Festival also created Singapore's first book illustration prize, and collaborated with NAFA and local publishers to offer 6 students professional commissions to illustrate a picture book for publication.

3. Educational Publishing Council report

Report on completed educational publishing events as of 28th August 2024

There have been no significant new developments. MOE will continue to execute strategy based on previous year's discussion and work with individual educational publishers. Publishers are also invited to bring new proposals and pitches to the annual MOE Pitch Day.

Reported by
Yeoh Cheng Poh
Educational Publishing Council

4. Professional & STM Council

Report on activities from September 2023 – 2024

The Professional Publishing Council did not conduct any formal activities in the past year. However, conversations continued on developments in copyright, book piracy, and AI, and members were attendees and speakers at various professional conferences.

5. Secretariat Report

Reporting on 19 September 2023 – August 2024

Secretariat movements

2023-2024 was a period of transitions for the Secretariat. While the Secretariat has relocated to its current address at Kewalram Hillview, the operations have primarily been held at the Epigram offices in Toa Payoh.

There were also movements within the team. Lim Fangying joined the Association as Senior Manager on 11 October 2023 and departed 11 December 2023. Luqman Hakim joined the Secretariat as Junior Executive on 19 February 2024.

Project Management

With the Committee's oversight, the Secretariat continued to execute the Association's core projects, including the Book Awards and Internship Programme, as well as continuing to organise the Frankfurt Book Fair National Pavilion Programme. The Secretariat was also a key figure in the organisation for the inaugural Singapore Children's Book Festival in June 2024.

Members' Meetings and Events

The Secretariat organised the following members' meetings and outreach events:

- AI talks regarding licensing
- Sponsored networking session at Asian Festival of Children's Content, organised by the Singapore Book Council, with guests from Asia, abroad, and guest-of-honour The Philippines.

See the Membership report for more details.

Conclusion

The Secretariat is committed to providing services and events that benefit our members and facilitate important industry engagements. We remain open to suggestions and proposals.

6. Subcommittee reports

6A. Membership

Report on events up to September 2024.

Introduction

The Membership Committee investigates, processes and recommends applications for membership. The aims of the Membership Committee are:

1. To oversee an active membership recruitment drive to attract new members to the Association
2. To ensure that the membership growth remains healthy; and
3. To promote the benefits of being a SBPA Member.

Summary of 2023-2024

Kathy Low and Christine Chong are Co-Chairperson of the Membership Subcommittee.

Supported by the rest of the Executive Committee, the new members recruited into the Association were:

- Global Influencers
- Poppet's World
- Confucius Institute NTU
- Nawa Books
- Skool21
- Pepper Dog Press
- Eterno Press

Please see the table below for the movement in membership numbers in SBPA from the last report on 31 July 2023 to 31 August 2024.

<u>MEMBERSHIP</u>	
Members as of 31 August 2023	75
<u>Members left in 2023-2024</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Accscience● Adept Learning● Fairfield Book Publishers Pte Ltd● Whioce Publishing● JSIM● Chips & Toon● SCH Education● Nurture Craft● Educational Publishing House	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">● MXR International Pte. Ltd● Trio Star● Page to Print● Webnovel● Storytel● Oxford University Press	
<p><u>Members joined in 2023-2024</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bubbly Books● Skool21● Pepper Dog Press● Confucius Institute, NTU Pte Ltd● Eterno Press Pte. Ltd● Nawa Books● Poppet's World● Global Influencers Publishing House	
Current Members (as of 1 September 2024)	69

Next Steps

The Membership Subcommittee is open to proposals and suggestions from members on how to improve the value of SBPA membership, to retain existing members and encourage more companies to join. Please feel free to approach the Secretariat with your proposals.

Reported by
Kathy Low and Christine Chong
Co-Chairperson
Membership Subcommittee

With input from Wen-yi and Luqman, Secretariat

6B. Training and Professional Development Report

Report on completed events as of 12 September 2024

Introductory publishing course

As part of the annual summer internship programme, SBPA organised weekly training seminars covering various sectors and core roles in the publishing industry. These seminars were open to public attendance, and registered 10 students, general public, and junior publishing staff. Over 7 weeks, the seminars covered:

- Publishing sectors
- Editorial
- Design
- Sales & Marketing
- Publishing partners

Please see the Internships report for more details.

Book fair preparatory workshops

Continuing on last year's programme at the Singapore Pavilion at Frankfurt Book Fair, SBPA is once again supporting 12 professionals across 10 Singaporean publishers to attend the fair and develop capabilities.

Workshops were organised for delegates and other professionals in the topics of networking, rights, book fair preparation, and thinking about IP. The workshops were as follows:

30 Aug: Unlock Your Success at the Frankfurt Book Fair, by Barry Clarke

Join our interactive workshop to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Frankfurt Book Fair and elevate your presentation skills where you will learn how to effectively showcase your company and key titles to potential buyers and partners Refine your pitch to make a lasting impression Navigate real-world scenarios and receive actionable feedback from our expert speaker

Additionally, we will dive into the critical aspects of copyright and rights management, ensuring you're equipped to understand and protect your intellectual property Confidently negotiate rights and licensing agreements

By the end of the workshop, you'll be empowered to:

- Successfully present your company and titles
- Build meaningful relationships with industry professionals
- Navigate the complexities of copyright and rights management with confidence

2 Sept: Mastering Book Distribution, Contracts, and Sales at the Frankfurt Book Fair, by Peter Schoppert

Join our expert-led workshop to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key aspects of book distribution, contracts, translation management and sales meetings. You'll learn effective strategies for:

- Managing international book distribution channels
- Overseeing translation processes
- Negotiating and drafting contracts
- Conducting successful sales meetings with publishers, agents and other industry professionals

Our experienced speaker will guide you through interactive sessions, providing valuable insights and practical tips to help you navigate the complex publishing landscape at the Frankfurt Book Fair. By the end of the workshop, you'll feel confident and equipped to:

- Optimise your book distribution channels
- Successfully manage translation projects
- Negotiate favourable contracts
- Close deals and build lasting relationships with industry partners

Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your skills and make a lasting impact at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

6 Sept: Unlock the Power of Networking at the Frankfurt Book Fair, by Usha Menon

Join our interactive workshop to master the art of networking and make meaningful connections in the publishing industry. We'll dive into the fundamentals of effective networking, exploring key principles and industry-specific strategies to help you:

- Build valuable relationships with authors, publishers and industry professionals
- Prepare for and navigate the Frankfurt Book Fair with confidence
- Develop a strong personal brand and elevator pitch
- Engage in productive conversations and follow up with new contacts

Through engaging role-play exercises, you'll practise real-world scenarios, receive actionable feedback and refine your networking skills. Leave the workshop feeling empowered to achieve your goals and make a lasting impact at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Additional programmes at Frankfurt Book Fair

Under the same programme, publisher-delegates are also being supported for up to 250SGD to attend capability development programmes organised by the Frankfurt Book Fair, such as the Frankfurt Rights Meeting.

Reported by

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Luqman Hakim, Secretariat
Lee Wen-yi, Secretariat

6C. Internship Programme

Report on completed events up to September 2024

Launched in 2015, the annual 10-week SBPA Publishing Internship Programme comprises a centralised training programme organised for university students in tandem with work attachments at SBPA member companies. The 2024 internship programme took place from 13 May to 19 July. 17 interns, chosen from 103 applicants by 10 member companies, participated in the programme.

The ten sessions of the internship programme were:

1. Welcome session
2. Publishing Part 1: Academic Book Publishing, Academic Journals, MTL Publishing
3. Publishing Part 2: Children's Books Publishing, Educational Publishing
4. Publishing Part 3: Comic Books & New Media
5. Publishing Part 4: Trade & General Publishing & Editorial
6. Design: Art Books, Cover Art Design, Singapore Children's Book Festival
7. Sales and Marketing
8. Publishing Partners: CLASS, NAC Literary Department
9. Site visits and tours: Punggol Library, Markono Printing, Book Bar
10. Closing event

These sessions were also open to public registration, with both a SBPA members' discount and a student price. This registration saw a strong turnout from students, supporting the application numbers in showing healthy interest in joining the industry from current undergraduates and encouraging this initiative to be kept on and refined for next year.

Feedback from participants

Feedback from the interns was primarily positive, reporting that the programme had been beneficial, taught useful skills, insight into the industry, provided guidance, and would be recommended to peers interested in the industry. Interns also responded saying that they would be interested in continuing looking for further opportunities and engaging further with local publishing.

SBPA will continue refining the seminar courses' syllabus and delivery as we adjust to returning to post-pandemic events, as we see the value in the programme as an introduction to the structure of and varied opportunities within the industry. We will also continue to work with tertiary institutions, including the new NUS College, to match students and member companies.

Acknowledgements

The SBPA Secretariat would like to thank the following persons/organisations for lending their time and support to this meaningful and educational initiative.

- Mr Edmund Wee and Ms Priti Sharma of Epigram Books
- Mr Yeoh Cheng Poh of Marshall Cavendish Publishing Group
- Mr Peter Schoppert of NUS Press
- Mr Sam Foo of Copyright Licensing and Administration Society of Singapore Ltd
- Mr Anil Chandy of Springer Nature
- Mr Ang Jin Yong of TrendLit Publishing
- Mr Farihan Bahron of Unggun
- Mr Vijayanand Thamocharan of Crimson Earth
- Ms Mindy Pang of Marshall Cavendish International
- Mr Peh Shing Woei and Ms Andrea Kang of Shing Lee Publishers
- Ms Lalitha Ayer of Difference Engine
- Mr Vaidhav Sidapara of Tusitala Books
- Mr Ng Kah Gay of Ethos Books
- Ms Ong Zhen Min of National Gallery
- Ms Nikki Rosales of Epigram Books
- Ms Aditi Shivaramakrishnan of Difference Engine
- Ms Melyani Yousri and Ms Lynn Ng of Taylor and Francis
- Mr Melvin Choo of ALKEM
- Ms Christine Tan of the National Arts Council
- Ms Katie Peace of Taylor and Francis Asia Pacific
- Mr Kendrick Loo of Taylor and Francis
- Mr Alex Chua of Book Bar
- Ms Averil Tan, Ms Barbara Quek and Mr Mervin Ang of NLB
- Ms Tan Pei Woon and Mr Edwin Ng of Markono, and all other colleagues on the day for their time and effort in organising site visits and presentations for the interns,

As well as World Scientific, Times Distribution, Taylor & Francis Routledge, Epigram Books, Alston Education, ilovereadingsg, JSim Education, NUS Press, Tusitala, Scholastic, and Singapore Asia Publishers for taking on interns.

Reported by

Luqman Hakim, Secretariat

Lee Wen-yi, Secretariat

Katie Peace, Internships Chairperson

Yeoh Cheng Poh, Internships Chairperson

6D. Book Fairs

Report on completed trade events as of 13 September 2024

Frankfurt Book Fair 2023

In October 2022, the National Arts Council funded a study trip in preparation for a national pavilion in 2023. Exco members Edmund Wee and Christine Chong and publishing consultant Chong Lingying were supported to investigate and explore the potential for a Singapore pavilion, including establishing relationships with other associations, studying other pavilions and receptions, understanding the programming and speaker opportunities for Singaporean publishing professionals, and gaining an overview of the business and capability development opportunities available.

Following the study trip, SBPA and NAC supported a delegation of 10 representatives from 5 literary publishers: Difference Engine, Ethos Books, Epigram Books, Marshall Cavendish International, and World Scientific Education.

The Singapore Pavilion showcased around 200 Singapore titles (encompassing fiction, nonfiction, children's books, and graphic novels), and a dedicated rights website was also built to facilitate the event. This successful initiative exposed publishers to the international publishing scene, forged international collaborations, and cultivated business partnerships for Singapore publishers, driving growth and global connectivity in the industry. The SBPA also organized preparatory workshops for delegates and industry professionals, focusing on key topics such as networking, rights management, book fair preparation, and intellectual property (IP) monetization strategies.

Prior to the fair, SBPA also organized three training workshops for the delegates and member publishers: on networking, with Usha Menon; a Frankfurt 101 session, with Malaysian rights agency Rimau Rights; and on leveraging IP opportunities, with Bret Ong from SuperToughFriends. An online networking event for Asian publishers was also co-organized with Frankfurt Book Fair on 14 September 2023, fostering relationships and introductions ahead of the fair.

On the first day of the fair, there was a national reception at which Ambassador Lee Chong Hock, Singapore's Ambassador to Germany, was the Guest of Honour.

Frankfurt Book Fair 2024

This year, following the success of the previous iteration of the delegation to the Frankfurt Book Fair, SBPA will be once again organising two delegations to attend Frankfurt Book Fair from 16 - 20 October 2024: an educational publishers and edtech collective stand and the literary Singapore Pavilion supported by the National Arts Council. The delegates are as follows:

Educational publishers and edtech companies

- Alston Education
- Casco Publications
- Marshall Cavendish Education
- NUS Press
- Shing Lee Publishers
- Singapore Asia Publishers
- Star Publishing
- Times Printers
- World Scientific Publishing Co

NAC-supported literary delegation

- City Book Room
- Crimson Earth
- Difference Engine
- Epigram Books
- Ethos Books
- Pepper Dog Press
- TrendLit Publishing
- Unggun Creative
- Ungu Pen
- World Scientific Education

Other book fairs

In 2024, SBPA and SBPA members were present at KL Book Fair and regional events such as the ASEAN Rights Fair. Through building connections with international book fair organisers, SBPA also received invitations to the Chennai and Sharjah International Book Fairs, SBPA also received an invitation to the Busan International Children’s Book Fair.

Reported By

Christine Chong, Chairperson, Book Fairs Subcommittee

Luqman Hakim, Secretariat

Lee Wen-yi, Secretariat

6E. Book Data & Information

Report on as of 15th August 2024

The BookData system is a national database and provides information on more than 200,000 local books. It aims to support the domestic book market and enhance the dissemination of information regarding books published in Singapore. The platform enables publishers to generate various marketing materials, such as listing of titles using the internationally recognised ONIX file format, which facilitates the electronic representation and communication of product information.

Singapore BookData was created with a grant from Enterprise Singapore (ESG) and in partnership with the National Library Board (NLB). The initiative is backed by the Singapore Book Council (SBC), Copyright Licensing and Administration Society of Singapore Ltd (CLASS), and the ASEAN Book Publishers Association (ABPA).

From 2024, all book covers contributed to BookData has been shared with NLB to enhanced the OPAC/Search Engine resulting in higher discovery and visibility of Singapore Books

Reported by
Melvin Choo
BookData project head

6F. Government Relations

6F. Government Relations

Report on Government engagement activities from July 2023 to September 2024

An important function of SBPA is to communicate about our industry to the government, to ensure that the legal and regulatory environment protects copyright creators and copyright holders and contributes to a vibrant, active books ecosystem that supports Singapore's diversity and values.

Our policy agenda has been quite consistent over the past seven years. We have had six points to pursue:

1. To give industry feedback to Singapore's law- and policymakers on the operation of copyright in Singapore, so as to amend and adjust Singapore's copyright regime to make a more healthy reading and publishing ecosystem in Singapore and to continue to attract publishing investment to Singapore. This has become even more important given Singapore's position on copyright and generative AI.
2. To seek strategic dialogue with the Ministry of Education to have a better, more functional and forward-looking partnership between MOE and our educational publishers
3. To seek support for continued digitalisation of our industry — at all points of the value chain, with the understanding that print books remain essential, especially for young learners, and are anyway, the outcomes of digital processes and affordances
4. To find ways to ensure the continued health of local writing and reading ecosystems in vernacular languages and English
5. To continually be vigilant of the health of the book retail and book supply chain; and
6. To work with government partners to further promote literacy, reading, reading for pleasure and reading to satisfy curiosity.

[GenAI and Copyright/ Responding to IPOS/MinLaw call for submissions on aspects of the new copyright law](#)

Please see the Copyright Committee report for more on this, including our submission in an important call for comment and feedback. In addition to engaging IPOS and MinLaw we also reached out to IMDA on their efforts to use local literary content to train local AIs. They have answered our emails, but no follow up as of yet.

Engaging with NAC

We've continued to engage positively with NAC, and our President and Secretariat succeeded in agreeing for another year of an NAC-funded national stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair, as well as a financial contribution to the Singapore Children's Book Festival this year. The challenge in working with NAC is that they only really take a "literary arts" perspective and do not look at the industry holistically. There has been some thought that this might change, if NAC steps up to look after creative industries more broadly.

Expanded and continued collaborations with NLB

We identified several themes to keep discussing with NLB, and have been able to move forward on *some* of them.

Book Futures. How do we best work together to respond to new technologies in our ecosystem. AI of course, but others too. We've agreed a series of sharing sessions, once or twice a year, to discuss new technologies as they apply to publishing. NLB presented to the Exco their AI-RAG projects on Singapore heritage, and has promised to share further technical and editorial details in their presentation at our AGM. Next in line would be a meeting to discuss emerging standards for content identification.

Bolstering Creation. How to best leverage the dominance of the NLB on the reading landscape to bolster the publishing ecosystem and encourage more Singaporean writing and other creativity? During the year, the writing community in Singapore raised in the media the way that an active and potent NLB may act to suppress demand for book buying in Singapore. NLB is aware of this critique, and is very open to find new ways to help the ecosystem. Here are some of the points on the table:

- NLB has agreed to share loans data with quite a high level of detail, so as to help publishers understand reading preferences of Singaporeans. A working group on this has been convened and we have agreed a data standard for exchange. The issue now is for SBPA to create a web infrastructure to receive this data and present it to members.
- Our attempt to create a "buy button" on the NLB catalog page has been shelved, due to the difficulty of ensuring that the buy button would only appear on catalog pages of books that actually are available in the market. We should revisit the viability of this project in future.
- NLB is offering publishers use of their video walls for book promotion videos, subject to their requirements.
- This year's Book Awards were also held at the National Library Building, with CEO Mr Ng Cher Pong as Guest-of-Honour. We continue to work with NLB to promote the award winners through displays in their libraries, etc.

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- Other promotional venues that NLB will relook to give more space to local publishers includes the Libby app and their mobile app.
- For example, the NLB has given the Book Awards exposure on their mobile app, but only three of the shortlisted titles are available in ebook versions... While 34 print books are listed.

Potential areas for future development

Reading for all Singaporeans. European regulation requires publishers to make their ebooks fully accessible if they want to sell them in Europe from next year. NLB is showing increasing attention to the needs of differently-abled readers. Singapore has signed the Marrakesh Treaty enabling access to works for print disabled readers, but how is that actually working? This could be an opportunity to develop.

Preservation of Singapore's publishing heritage. Can NLB and publisher work together to bring some in-copyright-but-out-of-print books online under the rubric of preserving Singapore's publishing heritage.

This year, SBPA was also NLB's primary partner in the Read For Books charity drive, with members pledging over 10000 books for donation.

6G. Singapore Book Awards

Report on Singapore Book Awards 2024

Overview

The annual Singapore Book Awards organised by Singapore Book Publishers Association aims to honour local publishers and authors. It showcases the talented works of writers, as well as encourages the development of Singapore's publishing industry. The Book Awards (previously known as the Publishing Awards) was initiated in 2012 with five categories, and a gala dinner was held in the Rendezvous Hotel where the winners were announced. The rise in award categories and submissions since is a testament to Singapore's flourishing literary culture.

Singapore Book Awards 2024

The 2024 Book Awards received over 140 submissions from 35 publishers. These submissions were meticulously evaluated by 15 industry representatives, encompassing a wide range of expertise. The Award Ceremony took place at The Pod, National Library, on 24 July 2024, and attracted over 130 guests - a notable increase from the over 100 attendees in 2023. National Library Board CEO Mr. Ng Cher Pong, the Guest-of-Honour, delivered the opening speech.

The shortlisted titles covered a diverse range of topics, including Singaporean history, personal memoirs, business strategies, culinary arts, and children's literature, showcasing the richness and diversity of the local publishing industry.

Submission Criteria

This year's Singapore Book Awards introduced a significant change in submission criteria. Traditionally, submissions were limited to Singapore-based publishers using Singapore-issued ISBNs. However, for the 2024 awards, submissions were also accepted from international publishers with a Singapore office, who published books by Singaporean or Singapore Permanent Resident (PR) authors. This adjustment broadens the scope of the awards, recognising the contributions of local authors regardless of where their works are published, thereby enhancing the inclusivity and reach of the event.

Award winners

In the 2024 Singapore Book Awards, two new categories were introduced to recognise specialised areas in publishing. The **Best Food Book** category acknowledges excellence in culinary writing, highlighting books that excel in recipes, food stories, and gastronomic culture. The **Best Marketing Campaign** celebrates innovative and impactful marketing strategies that successfully promote books and engage audiences.

Additionally, the Best Young Person’s Title was divided into two distinct categories: **Best Young Person’s Fiction** and **Best Young Person’s Non-Fiction**. This change aims to better reflect the unique publishing strengths required for fiction and non-fiction titles targeting young readers. By separating these categories, the awards more accurately honor the diverse skills and creativity involved in producing quality books for young audiences in both genres.

Category	Title	Publisher
Best Non-Fiction Title	<i>Not Without Us: Perspectives on Disability and Inclusion</i>	Ethos Books
Best Literary Work	<i>Catskull</i>	Ethos Books
Best Illustrated Non-Fiction Title	<i>Twenty Years of Wild Rice</i>	Epigram Books
Best Cover Design	<i>A Walk With My Pig</i>	Pagesetters Services
Best Young Person’s Fiction	<i>Escape from Bussorah Street</i>	Epigram Books
Best Young Person’s Non-Fiction	<i>Secrets of Singapore: Spectacular Sports</i>	Epigram Books
Best Picture Book	<i>Miss Jug Finds a Home</i>	Marshall Cavendish International
Best Custom Publishing	<i>The Sentosa Story</i>	Redbean De
Best Professional Title	<i>Leaders People Love</i>	Penguin Random House SEA
Best Educational Title	<i>inspire</i>	ilovereading.sg
Best Marketing Campaign	<i>The American Boyfriend</i>	Penguin Random House SEA
Best Food Book	<i>Chinese Pastry School</i>	Marshall Cavendish International
Book of the Year	<i>catskull</i>	Ethos Books

The prestigious Book of the Year award went to *catskull* by Ethos Books.

The ceremony was sponsored by the Copyright Licensing and Administration Society of Singapore (CLASS) and Markono Printing. It was supported by the National Library Board, the Singapore Book Council, the Infocomm Media Development Authority, and the National Reading Movement. The show was produced by MUSE. Epigram Books, Shinglee Publishers, Alkem and Marshall Cavendish Education sponsored gift bag items.

SBPA is interested in continually refining the Awards to best drive recognition to local publishers. Please reach out with any feedback.

Reported by:

Kathy Low

Singapore Book Awards Chairperson

With input from Wen-yi and Luqman, Secretariat

6H. Copyright Committee

Report on Copyright committee activities from August 2023 to September 2024

Copyright is the foundation of the publishing business. Attending to the environment for copyright in Singapore, the region and the world, remains a key priority for the SBPA.

Given the strong overlap of concern for copyright with our rather more well-resourced member, the Copyright Licensing and Administration Society of Singapore (CLASS), we have not felt it necessary to have a formally constituted copyright committee to duplicate the CLASS committee, but rather are pursuing matters in a more adhoc manner. Among the companies and individuals who have participated in our online or in person discussions on copyright include:

- Anil Chandy, Springer
- Kaushik Bora, Mcgraw Hill Education
- Tan Chor Meng, Wiley
- Andrew Fong, CLASS
- Goh Eck Kheng, Landmark Books
- Yeoh Cheng Poh, Marshall Cavendish
- Peh Shing Woei, Shing Lee Publishing
- Rick Lee and Tai Tone Lim, World Scientific Publishing
- Syed Ali Semait, Pustaka Nasional
- Hansen Lim of Taylor and Francis

If you would like to engage on any of the points related to copyright, please reach out to Peter Schoppert at schoppert@nus.edu.sg. Any members who have not yet joined CLASS should do so. Membership is free, and it gives you a platform to benefit from collective licensing.

The main issue on our radar screen: the debate around copyright and AI.

Copyright and AI

You may recall that Singapore's 2021 Copyright Act creates one of the world's most liberal regimes for allowing "computational data analysis" of material legally accessed online, for commercial purposes as well as research ones. See previous reports for more background on this. Your Copyright Committee chair has continued to be deeply involved in advocacy for publishers on this topic, giving a series of webinars for members of the International Publishers Association, and making an appearance on behalf of publishers at the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) of the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

In Singapore, in November 2023, I brought Caroline Sutton, the incoming President of the STM Association (which represents scientific, medical and technical publishers) to meet the MinLaw and IPOS copyright officers, to express the global industry's concerns over Singapore's outlier position in the international landscape. In December 2023 and April 2024 I participated in

closed-door sessions hosted by the Singapore Management University Centre with tech company and government representatives discussing IP and AI issues.

One of the few comforts in Singapore's 2021 Act is the requirement that anyone seeking to do text and data mining or computational data analysis needs to have legal access to the content. Now the definition of legal access was not clearly made, but in practice we have assumed that it means you cannot copy content within a paywall, or by cracking Digital Rights Management (DRM) encryption.

So imagine our surprise when MinLaw/IPOS, in a call for consultation in April 2024, asked for comment on the suggestion that companies be able to circumvent such "technical protection measures" in order to copy works for the purposes of computational data analysis. We gave strong feedback, and worked with the International Publishers Association and others to give feedback in the call for comment. Our submission is attached.

There is no doubt that Big Tech companies are looking to open the door further to access content for the purpose of training models. The Asian Internet Coalition made a submission to the government saying

"The absence of an exception for computational analysis creates a disjointed regulatory landscape where conflicting laws may grant Text and Data Mining (TDM) rights but simultaneously prohibit their exercise. This ambiguity risks stifling investment and innovation in AI technologies. We emphasize the need for clear and coherent TPM laws that explicitly allow circumvention for fair use and TDM exceptions, ensuring legal certainty for stakeholders."

Text of our submission

Intellectual Property Policy Division
Ministry of Law
100 High Street, #08-02,
The Treasury Singapore 179434

by email: MLAW_Consultation@mlaw.gov.sg

2024 Public Consultation on Prescribed Exceptions in Part 6, Division 1 of the Copyright Regulations 2021

Thank you to IPOS and MinLaw for initiating a public consultation and inviting comment on the prescribed exceptions for Copyright Regulations 2021.

The Singapore Book Publishers Association represents the book publishing industry domiciled in Singapore, with 70 locally- and foreign-owned members contributing some S\$ 2.7b to the local economy.

The activity of our members undergirds Singapore's knowledge-based economy: our educational publisher members partner parents, teachers and the Ministry of Education; our STM publishers provide the infrastructure that creates and maintains trust in research communications; our trade publishers are a pillar of the creative economy, publishing local voices in fiction and children's literature.

Context

Technical protection measures like paywalls and digital rights management systems are the only measures that rightsholders can rely on to protect their exclusive right in a digital environment. This was recognized by the Minister of Law in Singapore's Parliament in the first reading of the Copyright Act of 2004 when the Minister stated that "...new technology has made effective enforcement of copyright in the digital realm therefore a much more difficult undertaking...Copyright owners should reasonably expect their efforts in employing such measures to protect their works from infringement not to be thwarted and not to have those technological measures circumvented."

Our experience in the years since then have shown that a reliance on legal terms alone, on user agreements and copyright statements in publicly accessible material offers very little practical protection as technology companies have created a huge weight of "facts on the ground" by copying for different purposes, including most recently large language model training, in violation of those agreements, copyright statements and terms of use.

Perhaps this is why the IPOS/Minlaw consultation paper's raising of the possibility of allowing circumvention of technical protection measures in pursuit of the CA's exception for computational data analysis (CDA) has excited such a strong reaction from our members in Singapore's local publishing industry.

The issues we see are these.

Prescribed exceptions to TPM circumvention sanctions are meant to be highly limited in scope

The possibility of creating a new "prescribed exception" in connection with the TDM/CDA exception (paragraphs 243 and 244 of the Act) would allow a far broader set of uses than currently allowed under 2021 Act and the relevant subsidiary legislation. In each of the paragraphs 428 to 435 of the Act, and the exceptions set out in the subsidiary legislation, the exceptions are highly limited in scope as to works, beneficiaries and purposes of copying. For example, only six organisations are permitted under the 2021 regulations to circumvent TPMs in pursuit of copying for print-disabled users.

The permitted uses in 243 and 244 set no limits as to works or beneficiaries. While “computational data analysis” could be interpreted in a reasonably narrow fashion (as by Singapore legal scholars Chesterman^[1] and Tan^[2], IPOS officials have argued (albeit in their personal capacity) for a broad interpretation of what might be understood as computational data analysis under the Act, including the full range of Generative AI model-building, a very broad range of activities and purposes indeed.^[3]

The question of lawful access

In the same December 2023 paper analysing the impact of the computational data analysis exception in the Copyright Act (2021), Foo and Ha highlighted the conditionality around the exception, including the point that “crucially, a user must have ‘lawful access’ to the material from which a copy is made. Access would not be lawful if the user accesses the material by circumventing paywalls or is in breach of the terms of use of a database (ignoring any terms that are void by virtue of s187 of the Copyright Act 2021).” This echoes the language of the examples in the Act.

Terms of use that are not void by virtue of s187 would include things like technical protection measures to limit or “throttle” the activity of webscraping software on rightsholders web servers, to avoid degradation of service levels while still allowing copying (subject to lawful access).

If lawful access is indeed a cornerstone of the existing exception, then there should be no further lifting of sanctions against TPM circumvention in regards the CDA exception.

The existing CDA exception already has damaged the incentives for publishers to develop AI licensing businesses, and so participate actively in developing Singapore- and region-relevant AI offerings. The exception has eroded incentives for publishers to invest in their data and work with AI trainers to develop new data sources. Any further widening of the exception through a prescribed exception to TPM protections would damage incentives even further. Given the hunger for more high quality data for AI training efforts, we do not believe that would be a good thing for the responsible development of AI, much less the knowledge economy to which rightsholders are so central.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Peter Schoppert
Chairman, Copyright Committee, Singapore Book Publishers Association

[1] “Yet, analyzing text or images for the purpose of making recommendations or optimizing workflows is quite distinct from using those texts and images to generate more text and images. The difference is not

just the usage, where copying is central to the process, but also the economic impact of that usage.” Simon Chesterman, “Good models borrow, great models steal: intellectual property rights and generative AI”, *Policy and Society*, 2024; <https://doi-org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/10.1093/polsoc/puae006>

[2] Tan D, “The best things in life are not for free: Copyright and generative AI learning”, *Singapore Law Gazette*, April 2023a.

[3] Foo, Gavin, and Trina Ha, “Sustaining Innovation and AI in a Data-Driven Climate: Industry and Critical Reception to Singapore’s Computational Data Analysis Exception”, *Singapore Academy of Law Practitioner*, December 28, 2023.