FACT SHEET – COMMEMORATIVE PUBLICATION

About Innovationation: 25 Years of Infocomm in Singapore

The publication entitled, "Innovationation: 25 Years of Infocomm in Singapore", takes you on an Infocomm journey down memory lane, through to present day. The first book starts you off with a story about Singapore's early computerisation efforts in the '80s. Then, in the last book, you will see how "convergence" brought "information" and "communication" together to give you "Infocomm" today.

The commemorative publication features interviews with pioneers and those who kept the faith in Infocomm – that it will transform the way we live, work, learn and play. Along the way, you will be treated to little-known anecdotes (Computers in the early days were so big, they had to hack off a window in the Central Provident Fund building to get it into the complex.) and stories from Infocomm visionaries who were instrumental in laying the foundation of Singapore's Infocomm landscape.

The commemorative publication will be available at all libraries by 16 October 2006.

Book 1 (Title: "The Big Switch")
National computerisation efforts in the early 80s saw a 'Big Switch' from manual processes to computerisation. This book covers Infocomm developments during the 'computerisation' period between 1981 and 1985. It was written by Ms Lulin Reutens, a journalist with more than 20 years' experience writing for magazines and newspapers.

Book 2 (Title: "The Great Campaign")
From the mid-80s, the 'Great Campaign' saw the convergence of computers with communication which led to the information technology era. Hence, large-scale IT projects were developed to minimise paper work, such as those in the trade and logistics sector. This book covers Infocomm developments during the 'Communication' period between 1986 and 1991 and is written by Ms Tan Ee Sze, former editor of ComputerWorld Singapore.

Book 3 (Title: "The Amazing Journey")
The 'Amazing Journey' began with the arrival of the Internet which saw the formation and corporatisation of new companies; and influenced the way people communicated. This book covers Infocomm developments in the 'Connectivity' period between 1992 and 1999 and is written by Mr Jimmy Yap, a veteran editor and writer who has worked with newspapers, on websites and trade magazines for over a decade.

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Book 4 (Title: "The Next Frontier")
At the dawn of a new century, the buzzword on everyone's lips was convergence – and that has become the next frontier for Infocomm. This book covers Infocomm developments during the 'Convergence' period between 2000 and 2006 and is written by Ms Grace Chng, deputy news editor of The Straits Times / Digital Life.

Key Highlights

Book 1: Learn about the first real computer in Singapore and computerisation in the government

"The first real computer in Singapore, an IBM 1401 arrived one afternoon in September 1963 under the watchful eyes of Robert Iau, the data processing manager of the Central Provident Fund (CPF). His were not the only ones. A cluster of office workers had gathered to gawk as the lorry inched its way through the narrow alley behind the CPF Building on Anson Road. The crates had been too large to go through the front door. Taking the back road, the lorry driver manoeuvred his fully laden vehicle directly below a window on the third storey. While the crates were being unpacked in the alley, workmen hacked off the third-storey window to enlarge the opening. The boxes were then hoisted through the gap and into the 60 sq m office. Inside the boxes were the components, with input, output, programmed control units-and 4,000 bytes of memory-of the IBM 1401."

"I found that the Government was operating essentially as OCBC was operating in 1969. There were files and files, huge filing cabinets. Papers were being passed back and forth and the only computer available at the time was in the Ministry of Finance. So I discussed this with Mr Goh Chok Tong who was then the Minister of State for Trade and Industry. I said that the private sector was way ahead of the Government. They were using computers. We should do the same. He agreed and appointed me as the chairman of the Committee of National Computerisation to implement a programme for the whole of the Government." – Dr Tony Tan

Excerpts from Book 2: TradeNet – How it all began and made Singapore proud

"Chan attributed the success of this multi-agency effort to then Trade and Industry Minister Lee Hsien Loong. He managed to get all the Government agencies to agree to work together. This, I believe, was the key success factor – getting everyone's agreement to collaborate." – Pearleen Chan (A member of the pioneering TradeNet team)

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"···codes for trade items had to be in line with international standards. At the same time, the Customs & Excise Department (C&E) had six types of trade declaration forms which it had been using for many years. Our challenge was how to converge all six coloured forms into one single form. We also had to convince both users and C&E that you did not need all six colour-coded forms for one transaction. And so trade declaration documents of multiple hues converged into a single online form to serve nearly all trade documentation needs in Singapore. This form became the core of the new computerised system." - Rosina Howe-Teo (TradeNet team member)

Excerpts from Book 3: Learn how Singapore got connected to the Internet

"I was pressured... I had to personally drive out to far-flung places like Lim Chu Kang to persuade biotech fish farmers who were deemed to be R&D organisations to connect to Technet. (I also had) to set up experimental Internet access for the Singapore School for the Deaf, the first primary school in Singapore to have access to the Internet in September 1994." - Dr Tan Tin Wee (NUS Lecturer in Biochemistry and Internet enthusiast who headed Singapore's first Internet service provider, Technet)

"I immediately entered Visible Man into the search engine and we got a hit! I surfed over to the page and in moments we were looking at full colour pictures of human anatomy. Someone also mentioned the Kobe earthquake and within minutes found footage of the disaster. I think it was the immediacy of information, that we could access things so readily that won the day. After that it was a slam dunk. The Cabinet wanted the internet. We set them up with full internet access after that." – Jek Kian Jin (who headed the digital media group at NCB in the mid-90s)

Excerpts from Book 4: Read what it took to deregulate Telecoms in Singapore and efforts to promote the Industry

"One day, Singapore woke up to find that Singapore Telecom's monopoly had been broken. The Government had brought forward the full liberalisation date by a good seven years. Liberalisation, explained former IDA Chief Executive Officer Yong Ying-I in early 2000, was driven essentially by Singapore's desire to be one of the largest Infocomm hub in Asia."

"In 2004, Microsoft's chief technology officer Craig Mundie, visited Singapore. He was using a Tablet PC when he called on IDA's chairman Lam Chuan Leong. Intrigued by the tablet PC, Lam asked how it could be used in education and that started the BackPack.NET project rolling. It became a joint IDA, Microsoft and Education Ministry project."

Concept & Style
The commemorative publication is packaged like novels and covers four different periods of Infocomm development over the past 25 years. Each

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book's distinctive style and illustrations evoke imageries from the respective eras.

The Big Switch for instance has retro-looks and is filled with psychedelic colours – an almost bohemian-quality reminiscent of the early 80's.

The Great Campaign borrows from the comic genre, using 'super heroes' to represent the champions behind the initiatives, programmes and Infocomm implementation during that time.

The Amazing Journey gets a contemporary look with a retro twist to reflect the 90's. Pencil-drawings combined with strong colours convey a sense of bravado inspired by the birth of the Internet. The mix of black and white with colours represents the transition from the early to late 90's.

The Next Frontier highlights Infocomm today while also offering a glimpse into the future. Thus the illustration depicts a cityscape bristling with Infocomm. This forward-looking and jaunty-feel lend a sense of optimism for the future of Singapore's Infocomm - a fitting way to wrap up this special commemorative publication.

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