

The Electric New Paper :

NLB archives websites that track Singapore's cultural heritage

S'pore's history goes DIGITAL

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05 October 2007

LOCAL women, it seems, are becoming more forward - online, at least.

If their messaging habits on dating site Romancing Singapore (www.romancingsingapore.com) are any indication, women are becoming less shy about making the first move.

Mr Andrew Chow, the site's managing agent, says women are increasingly making the first move by sending online messages to male users.

Social changes like this can be studied by tracking the website.

And an archiving project of the National Library Board (NLB) aims to do just that.

Romancing Singapore began as a government initiative in 2002, but is now entirely commercial.

It is one of some 17,000 websites - including social networking sites, forums and blogs - which are gradually being added to Singapore's archives.

ARCHIVING SINGAPORE WEBSITES

Since last year, NLB has been archiving websites with content related to Singapore's heritage.

Snapshots of such websites are taken periodically. These snapshots are then indexed, catalogued and stored to be made available for viewing later.

In addition to permanent sites, some sites set up for specific events will also be archived.

One example is Yourfilm.sg, the site set up for a youth film competition organised by the South West Community Development Council.

The competition kicked off in June together with its website, where users can view all 40 entries based on the theme 'Youthniquely Singapore'.

Said Mr Gerald Giam, chairman of the competition's organising committee: 'The entries reflect the different aspirations of Singaporean youth - we have entries from youths of all races and from a range of schools.'

Mr Giam said he feels it is important to archive the websites of one-off events, because they are easily forgotten once they are over.

He added: 'History is being created every day. It's important to archive it, especially in this age of new media, where anybody with a digital camera or handphone can record a video.'

So what makes a website a part of Singapore's heritage?

Mr Raju BLN, director of digital resources and services at NLB, said there are three main criteria.

They must be authoritative and credible sources of local information, be of local social and cultural interest, or focus on local events.

Said Mr Raju: 'Websites of social and cultural interest are those that have information on policies, events, programmes that shape people's social behaviour and their interaction with the larger society.'

Mr Raju added that blogs are increasingly of great social value, as some contain commentaries by bloggers on events or Singapore-related news.

'Due to the social relevance and impact, blogs that are related to Singapore heritage will be archived too,' he said.

In addition, NLB partnered the National Grid office to begin archiving all websites in the .sg domain this year.

'This is to get a more comprehensive picture of the Singapore Webscape,' Mr Raju said.

He added that the next step is to begin archiving overseas websites that will be of interest to Singaporeans.

'This will provide an invaluable source of documented heritage for Singapore's present and future generations,' he said.

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