

Reflections on Writing ERFP Grants Proposals

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ERFPO Talk

1 April 2026



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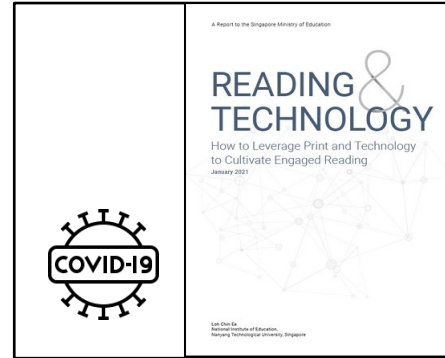
About My Projects

OER 5/15 Building a Reading Culture Study

6 Secondary Schools



MOE Reading & Tech Report



DEV0220 Designing School Libraries of the Future

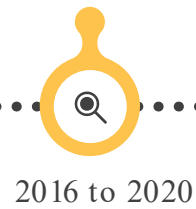
3 Secondary Schools



ERFP11/23 Reading Futures Study (2024 – 2029)

2020 to 2024

2014 to 2015



2016 to 2020

2017 to 2019



2020

School Libraries Steering (2023-2024) & Implementation Committees

SUG 8/13 A Study of the Reading Practices of Adolescents

1 secondary School



SUG 5/ 17 School Libraries Perspectives Study

13 secondary schools



Cedar Girls Secondary School

Library completion: 2021

Queensway Secondary School

Library completion: 2022

Yusof Ishak Secondary School

Library completion: 2021

01

Connecting Research + Policy Goals

02

Demonstrating Research Expertise

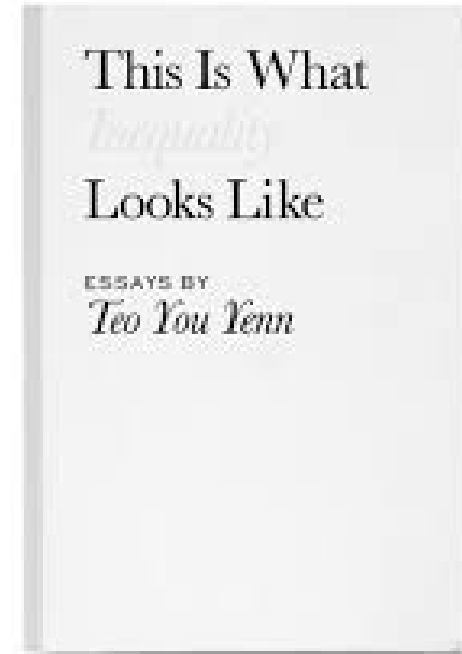
03

Planning for Impact



NATIONAL
READING
MOVEMENT

Read more. Read widely. Read together.



2018, Ethos Books

01

Connecting Research + Policy Goals

Relevance to MOE/NIE/OER's GOALS

This study is in line with OER's 15th Request for Proposal (RFP) with a special focus on **language and literacy, bilingualism and communication** .

School libraries have been under-studied as a potential space for language and literacy learning, and using a socio-spatial approach provides **a fresh lens** with which to identify **innovative ways to improve learning** . Attending to social class and reading practices provides insight into how schools can customize their reading programmes and school libraries to better **close the reading gap** between students from different social backgrounds.

Relevance to MOE/NIE/OER's GOALS

The study is **aligned to MOE goals** to better understand how reading can be cultivated in school and to improve secondary school libraries. The study will inform policy and impact current practice, particularly through the development of **Professional Development (PD) courses** for Library coordinators and teachers.

Extracted from Building a Reading Culture Case for Support (Tier 2 Grant, 2016-2020)

Relevance to MOE/NIE/OER's GOALS

The focus on school libraries is timely given **NIE's key strategic thrusts** to focus on growing knowledge capital. It is a large-scale national project that will result in the **eventual design of an intervention study** (design of an exemplary school library) which can be replicated by schools. If necessary, the study can be **replicated** at primary and junior college levels. Findings from the study will be translated into ongoing **PD opportunities** and inform **policy development** .

Extracted from Building a Reading Culture Case for Support (Tier 2 Grant, 2016-2020)

Objectives of the Research Project

Large-scale, systematic changes in the Singapore educational context such as the launch of the **Student Learning Space (SLS)** in 2018, **Personal Learning Device (PLD)** initiative since 2021, implementation of **Full-Subject-Based Banding** in all schools by 2024, and rapid development and increasing use of **machine learning technologies** have led to seismic changes in everyday practices of teaching and learning.

Global flows of information mean that literacy expectations for our students are higher than before, with students expected to possess reading as a basic literacy skill for information-gathering, higher order thinking and independent learning. They must be able to navigate complex digital texts (**Coiro, 2020**) as well as utilise print and digital resources for deep reading and critical thinking (**Baron & Mangen, 2021; Wolf, 2018**). Reading is a continuing skill to be developed over the lifetime, for 21st century competencies (**MOE, 2015**) to “learn for life” and “pursue skills mastery” (**SkillsFuture, 2023**).

Objectives of the Research Project

Although many studies of reading focus on early childhood and primary education due to the perception that reading skills are primarily acquired at an early stage, researchers have highlighted the need for more studies of adolescent reading (**Loh, 2015; Rutherford et al., 2017**). **Adolescence offers another “window of opportunity” (UNICEF, 2018)** to influence developmental trajectories. It is a time for them to deepen their reading proficiency and widen their reading repertoires.

Extracted from Reading Futures Study (Tier 3 Grant, 20242029)



02

Demonstrating Research Expertise

Pilot or previous studies



Literature or systematic reviews

Changing English, 2015
Vol. 22, No. 2, 209–221, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2015.1022509>

Building a Reading Culture in a Singapore School: Identifying Spaces for Change Through a Socio-spatial Approach
Chin Ee Loh*

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Research tells us that reading is correlated to academic achievement but how do we motivate students to read? How can schools build reading cultures? Through the case study of a government secondary school in Singapore, I examine how attention to the invisible network of resources that support reading can provide insight into students' resources for reading, both at home and in school. Additionally, I explain, through the mapping of the school library as a reading space, how a socio-spatial approach that maps the physical, social and affective spaces of the library can provide a framework for strategic and focused action to cultivate a school's reading culture.

Keywords: readers; libraries; Singapore; habitus; reading culture

Introduction
Research studies have shown the correlation between leisure reading and reading achievement (Kirsch et al. 2002; Samuels and Wu 2001). In a comparative study of the reading practices of the Netherlands, China and South Africa, Broeder and Stokmans (2013) discovered that despite cultural and situational differences between the countries, one of the most important determinants for reading was a hedonic reading attitude, or the habit of reading for leisure. What this tells us is that one key factor for successful reading programmes is getting students to *want* to read, and not only read when they are told to. Thus, one criterion for schools attempting to cultivate a reading culture is to know that their students have developed a desire to read, and see reading as part of their identity. In classrooms and schools with strong reading cultures, children and adolescents should 'author rich literate selves' and 'want the life of a reader and envision that life for themselves' (Calkins 2001, 8–9).

Through the case study of one Singapore school, this article explores how we can build a strong reading culture in our schools by examining student identification as readers and the resources they have for becoming readers. Through a school-wide survey, the library was located as a specific area that did not sufficiently support students' development of identities as readers. Thereafter, using a social-spatial approach, I mapped the physical, social and affective space of the school library to understand how a place typically associated with reading did not in actual fact support the building of a reading culture within the school, and to identify how to

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Literacy UKLA

Literacy Volume 50 Number 1 January 2016 3

Levelling the reading gap: a socio-spatial study of school libraries and reading in Singapore
Chin Ee Loh

Abstract
This article takes a comparative socio-spatial approach at the intersection of social class and reading politics to provide a fresh way of examining school reading policies and practices, unearthing previously hidden spaces of inequity for reading intervention. The juxtaposition of two nested case studies in Singapore, one of an elite all-boys' school and another of a co-educational government school with students in different academic tracks, revealed inequitable practices, specifically in the designs and uses of school library spaces between schools serving different social classes. The study argues that attempts to design reading interventions should move away from the view of student-as-problem to structure-as-problem in order to discover new perspectives for reading intervention. Additionally, this study demonstrates how foregrounding social class in educational research is necessary for effective design of educational strategies that aim to transform education and society by narrowing the gap between students from different social classes.

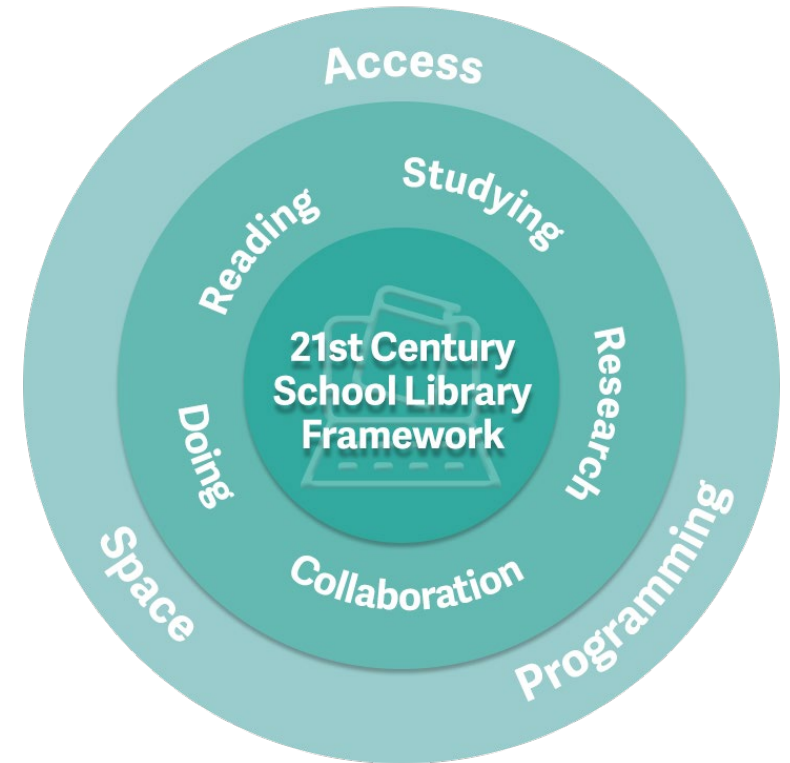
Key words: reading, social class, Singapore, socio-spatial, case study, school libraries

Although Singapore is lauded internationally for its excellent education system, particularly as a top scorer on the international Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA) tests administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010a), official educational policies have been criticised for the tendency to sideline socioeconomic status (SES) as a factor for school success (Gopinathan & Abu Baker, 2013; J. Tan, 2010) – a real concern in Singapore where intergenerational income elasticity registered at a relatively high rate of 0.58% (Ho, 2011). This local concern mirrors international concerns with rising educational inequality exacerbated by the market-driven logic of neoliberalism driving educational policies and practices (Singh, Kenway, & Apple, 2005). In the current context of global and local disparities between the rich and poor where the flows of technology, media and migration may further serve to exclude some while including others (Bauman, 1998), there needs to be renewed sociological attention to social class and education (Weis & Dolby, 2012).

To understand the complex space of schooling and how inequity is worked out in practice, I turn to the space of the school library in two contrasting Singapore schools to examine how the organisation of space can contribute to or inhibit the kinds of learning desired. I argue in this paper that there is a need to address educational inequity through grounded and localised comparative analyses of reading policies and practices that aim to wards genuine social change through "intentional and focused emphasis on the spatial or geographical aspects of justice and injustice" (Soja, 2009, p. 2). Using a comparative socio-spatial approach, I map the library spaces of an elite all-boys' school and a co-educational government school in Singapore to understand how a space typically associated with the cultivation of reading habits and critical information literacy (McKechnie & Rothbauer, 2006; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005) may in practice serve as a space for differentiated education.

Socio-spatial perspectives on reading and social class
Sociocultural studies of reading illustrate how differentiated upbringing and resources lead to different ways of using words that benefit middle-class children who learn from home practices that conform to school preferred ways of reading, writing and talking (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003; Loh, 2013). Students, thus, come to school with particular predispositions towards reading, established as a factor for school success (Kirsch et al., 2002). For example, in Heath's (1983) seminal study on the home and school literacies of working-class and middle-class children in Piedmont Carolina in the 1970s to 1980s, she illustrated how children from different social classes learn different ways of using words that prepare some better than others for learning in school. For the 'Maintown' children from middle-class families, the children learnt how to read in school-accepted ways from their daily interaction with parents through home-literacy practices which could be as innocuous as bedtime reading. On the other hand, students from non-mainstream homes were socialised into different ways of 'saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing' (Coe, 1996, p. 127) that may not be aligned to school literacies. These classed ways of relating to language at home and school intersect with gender and race (Moss, 2007; Solsten, 1993), and serve

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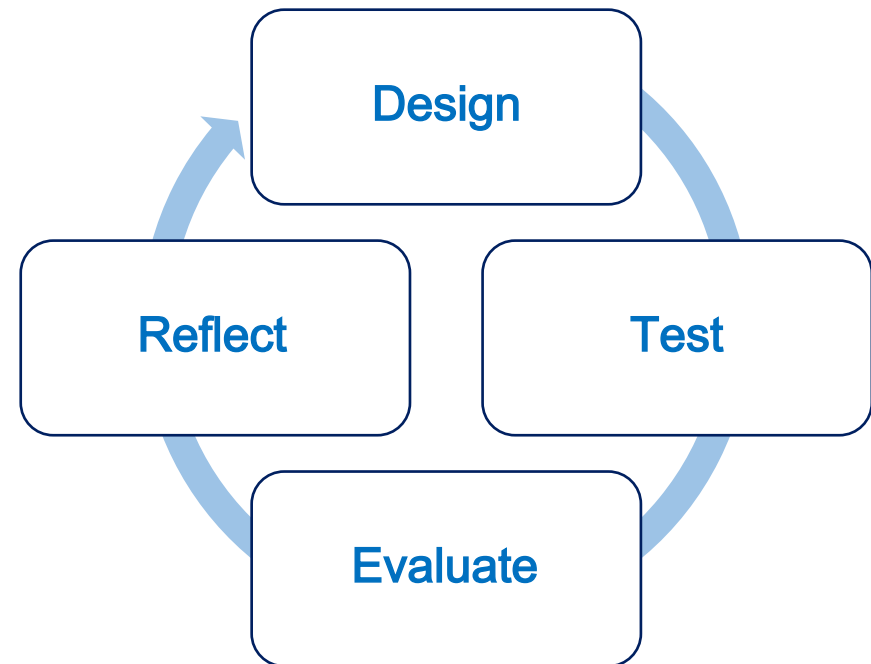
Literature Review for Building a Reading Culture Case for Support (Tier 2 Grant, 2020-2024)

Rigorous Methodology + Clear RQ + Feasible Research Plan

Methodology for LOTF Developmental Grant Proposal Design-Based Research

Design-Based Research (DBR) is a methodology designed **by and for educators** that seeks to increase the **impact, transfer, and translation of education research into improved practice** .

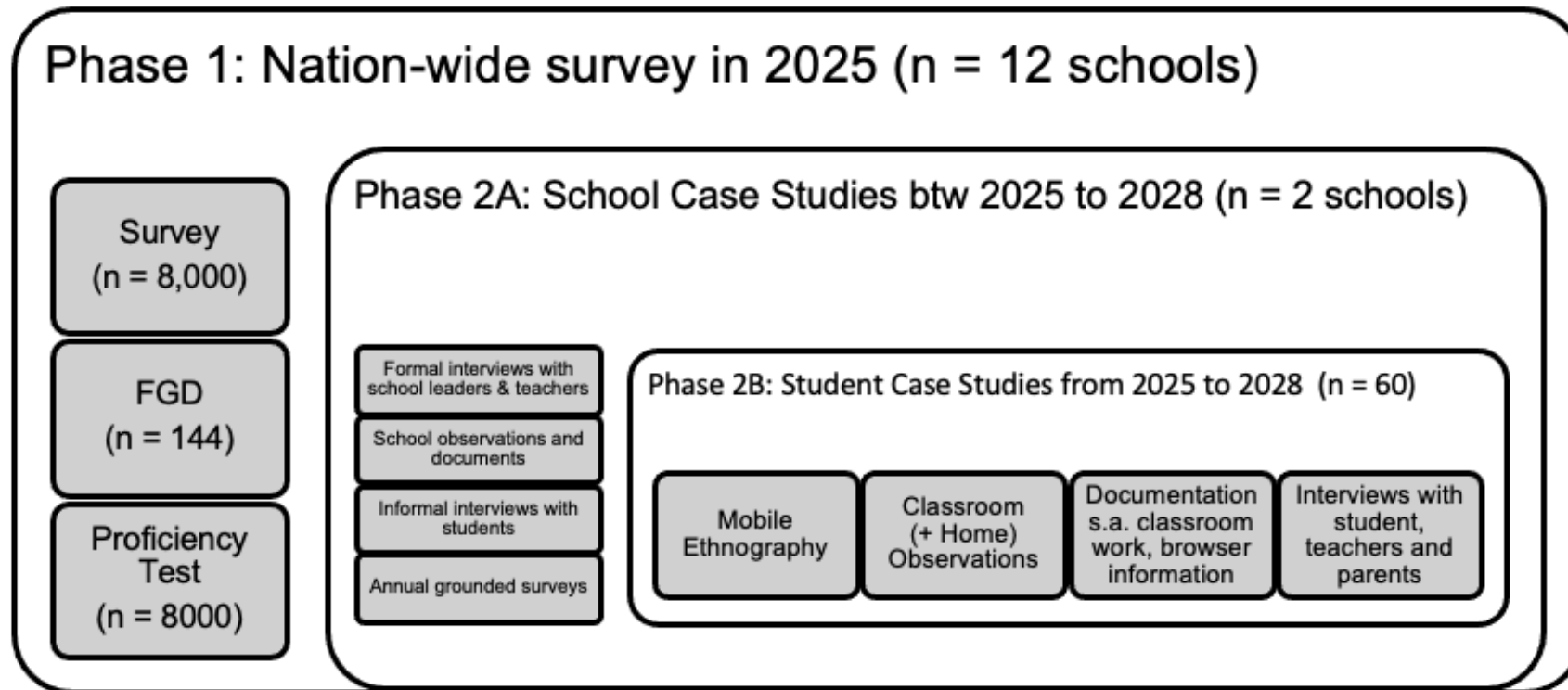
Anderson, T. & Shattuck, J. (2012) Design-Based Research: A Decade of Education in Education Research? *Education Researcher* 41(1), 16-25



Rigorous Methodology + Clear RQ + Feasible Research Plan

Methodology for Reading Futures Study Research Proposal
Multiphase, Mixed-methods Longitudinal Comparative Case Study

Figure 1. Diagrammatic Representation of Study Phases.



Library of the Future Schools

Three Prototypes, in collaboration with MOE colleagues and schools



Queensway Secondary School



Cedar Girls Secondary School



Yusof Ishak Secondary School

If my goal is to get MOE, educators and the community to invest in school libraries for more equitable reading and learning opportunities, what do I need to do to make things happen?

Straits Times Opinion
3 June 2014 Tuesday

THE STRAITS TIMES



For children from lower socio-economic backgrounds whose parents may not have the time to take them to public libraries (above), it is especially important to have well-resourced libraries in schools. Having teacher-librarians in all schools would also be helpful. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

School libraries levelling playing field

By LOH CHIN EE
FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

ties and thus become an effective way to effect social change. Of Information Capital. They observed that children visiting two of managing knowledge. In many libraries in other

03

Planning for Impact

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Literacy UKLA

Literacy Volume 56 Number 4 October 2022 107

The impact of technology use on adolescents' leisure reading preferences

Chin Ee Loh and Baoqi Sun

Abstract

There is worldwide concern about the decline in children and adolescent enjoyment of reading, as documented by international and national surveys, with smartphones and other technologies often blamed for the decline. Yet, with recent rapid improvements in technologies for reading, the accelerated adoption of devices for learning during the pandemic and increased access to e-books through the public library system in Singapore, the relationship between adolescent technology use and reading may be more complex than is typically painted in popular press. This mixed-methods study seeks to make current understanding of adolescent reading in relation to technology by exploring adolescents' preferred reading devices, their use of technology for reading, and their use of public e-resources for reading. In situ, adolescents preferred using their smartphones over print forms for reading and preferred to read social media online. E-books accessed freely through the public library were underutilised, and adolescents reported lack of knowledge or experience about it to look for reading resources online. Findings suggest an intentional and nuanced approach is needed to create an ecosystem of opportunities for adolescents to have meaningful reading experiences in print and digitality.

Key words: leisure or independent reading, adolescent reading, print and e-reading, technology

Introduction

Leisure reading is associated with reading, proficiencies, academic achievement, student well-being and life learning (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Kistner, 2004; Schleicher, 2018; Sullivan and Brown, 2019). However, the recent 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey report highlights that even as literacy demands have risen, 15-year-olds across the world are reading less for leisure, and buying fewer books of fiction, magazines or newspapers.

[The copyright line for this article was changed on 12 April 2023 original online publication.]

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Edited by Chin Ee Loh

The Reading Lives of Teens

Research and Practice

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

LEARNING, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2023.2209325>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

'Because I'm always moving': a mobile ethnography study of adolescent girls' everyday print and digital reading practices

Chin Ee Loh, Baoqi Sun and Fei Victor Lim

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, Singapore

ABSTRACT

With increased access to technologies for reading, more understanding is needed about how adolescents engage with print and digital reading across school and out-of-school contexts. In this study, mobile ethnography was used to document the everyday print and digital reading practices of adolescent girls from one all-girls' school. They responded to real-time researcher prompts about their reading across various timings, locations, and devices over four days, and participated in photo-elicitation interviews. Findings showed that as students moved between locations, they also transitioned across devices, platforms, and formats, making use of different print and digital resources for varied ways of reading. Their ability to 'style-shift' flexibly across the boundaries of school and personal spaces, various devices and platforms allowed them to independently optimise reading as a resource for their everyday leisure, information seeking and learning purposes. Insights, implications, and challenges for learning in a post-pandemic digital age are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 May 2022
Accepted 3 April 2023

KEYWORDS

Library; technology; reading; mobile ethnography; adolescent girls

Reading Habits of Singapore Teenagers 2021

Loh Chin Ee
Sun Baoqi
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



DESIGNING SCHOOL LIBRARIES OF THE FUTURE TOOLKIT 2024

DEV20/20 Designing School Libraries of the Future (LOTF) Study



Loh Chin Ee
Wong Yew Leong
Daniel Wong

Designing School Libraries of the Future Study REPORT 2024

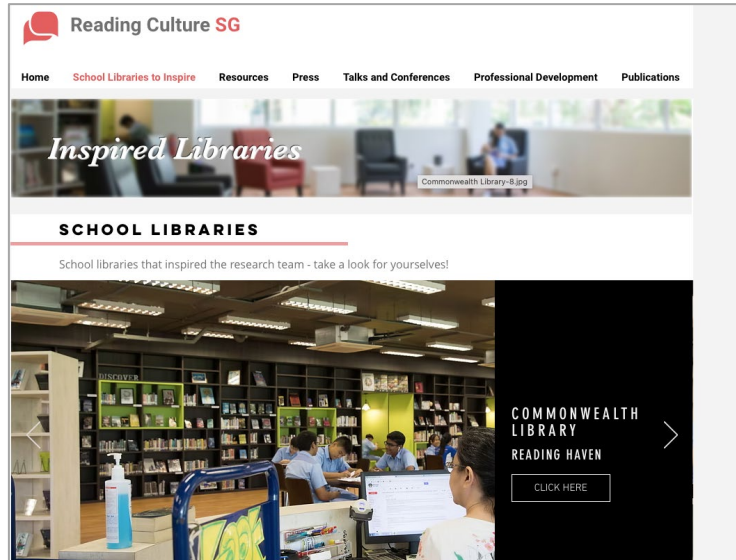


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DEV20/20 LCE
Designing School
Libraries of the Future
Study

Loh Chin Ee
Erna Sia
Wan Zhong Hao
Sun Baoqi
Victor Lim Fei
Elizabeth Pang

Deliverables from Designing School Libraries of the Future (Tier 2 Grant, 2020-2024)



If my goal is to get MOE, educators and the community to invest in school libraries for more equitable reading and learning opportunities, what do I need to do to make things happen?

OER KNOWLEDGE BITES

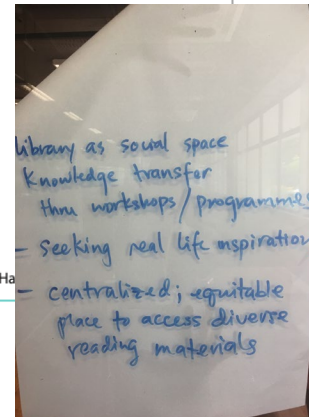
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SINGAPORE

The Building a Reading Culture (BRC) Project
Roundtable on School Libraries and Design:

How Design Can Help Us Rethink Library Spaces

by Loh Chin Ee, Agnes Paculdar and Wan Zhong Ha

VOLUME 3
2017



Initiatives from Building a Reading Culture (Tier 2 Grant, 2016-2020)

Reflections on Writing ERFP Grants Proposals

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