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Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Yatiman Yusof, 17 Jan 2000, 7.30pm

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road,
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**SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND THE ARTS, AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF
"FACT FINDERS" ON 17 JAN 2000 AT 7:30 PM AT NATIONAL LIBRARY
COURTYARD**

Mr. Lim Siam Kim, **National Archives of Singapore**
Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage Board,

Dr. Christopher Chia,
Chief Executive, National Library Board,
Members of the NLB and NHB Boards,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Evening.

Thank you for joining us here today as we mark another milestone in serving
the information needs of society. I am very pleased to be here at this event as it is

an area close to my heart - reading, learning, discovering and research. I was particularly pleased to hear how three information rich agencies have come together to collectively serve the knowledge and learning needs of our citizens and eventually the global market by providing access to the reservoirs of rich heritage information.

In this new millennium and the competitive knowledge-based economy, the creation, sharing and leveraging of knowledge becomes critical. This, I'm told is the discipline of knowledge ecology. To put it simply -- Knowledge ecology comprises a variety of knowledge nodes and knowledge exchanges or knowledge flows. What would be a critical success factor for the successful collaboration between such knowledge nodes would be that they be able to 'relate' to one another under an overarching mission or theme. The emphasis is on the relationship and synergy between people and their tools for working with knowledge.

Just as natural ecologies thrive based on species diversity, knowledge ecology thrives based on the diversity of knowledge. Such diversity rests on strong interrelationships and co-operative competition where the various knowledge nodes collaborate *as well as* compete based on their differentiating characteristics. Knowledge creation is a dynamic *evolutionary* process in which knowledge gets created and recreated in various contexts and at various points of time by different groups of people using different kinds of tools. In a healthy ecology, the different parts tend to work together in a complementary way to enrich the environment.

We see such ecological process as we witness the launch of the first outputs of a knowledge alliance among the archivists, the librarians, the information professionals and technologists to provide a convenient passport to the realm of knowledge on Singapore history and heritage. They have together fulfilled this unique and challenging task of surfacing the memories of our past and created a knowledge base which otherwise could remain hidden for generations to come.

The output of this collaboration is seen in the two CD-ROMs being released today. One serves as a resource guide to the historic event of Singapore's merger and separation with Malaysia and the other on campaigns launched by the Ministry of Information and The Arts. Working alone, no single entity could have produced it in as complete a manner. There would have been a knowledge gap. It is through the successful knowledge partnership that they had been able to surface information

and create a useful memory of our past for the general public, students, researchers and academics and future generations. Both the CD-ROMs capture all available records of information pertaining to the aforementioned. The sources cited in the CDs can be retrieved from the National Archives of Singapore or the National Reference Library. Where copyright rules permit, the information is made freely available in the CD-ROM itself. The CDs, I am pleased to add, will be distributed to schools and institutional libraries and will be accessible by the public in the National Library Board's Singapore One network.

The pace of new technology development ensures that school, work and home settings continue to be offered newer, faster, and different tools and services - not merely once but repeatedly, a situation metaphorically understood as a "permanent whitewater." This means that people must be prepared to participate in an ongoing development of their knowledge and information ecologies. Knowledge ecologies are filled with people who learn to adapt and create. Even when tools remain fixed for a time, the craft of using tools with expertise and the social and technical aspects of an environment co-evolve. Therefore specialists represent keystone species whose presence is necessary to support the effective use of technology and for the survival of the ecology itself.

The NLB's National Reference Library has also been enhanced to facilitate the evolution of sustainable knowledge ecologies. With the introduction of customised information services in April last year, the librarians now proactively service customer accounts -- one such account being targeted at serving researchers and academia. The library staff will work in concert with others -- be it the archivists, publishers etc to satisfy the wide ranging needs of its users.

Clive Mather, CIO of Royal Dutch Shell once said "To capture knowledge you need two things: the enabling infrastructure must be in place, and you also need the right culture. Building the infrastructure is easy compared with building the right culture, and our organisations have not typically had cultures where these intangible qualities of information and knowledge have been nurtured and revered."

I take this opportunity to commend and congratulate the National Heritage Board, the National Library Board, and the Ministry of Information and the Arts for

taking the first steps in building this conducive culture of co-operation for the larger benefit of society and their collective effort in initiating the “Fact Finders” Service. This is indeed a fine illustration of a collaborative effort that would result in greater awareness and returns on government's investment on building a rich knowledge base. I encourage others, especially our local researchers, writers, historians and publishers, to follow suit to tap the rich historical information we have, to plant the seeds of knowledge to continuously create, share and maintain our memories to share and educate others in the new knowledge millennium.

I am pleased to launch the “Fact Finders” Service.

National Archives of Singapore