I would like to begin with a note of thanks to Ms Wai Chi Poon who had kindly invited me to this panel. I have heard of the ISSCO for many years and have met some of its members on many other occasions, but to sit at the same panel and talk about Chinese Overseas resources with its members, am for me a rare opportunity and a great honour. I first thought of sharing some information about the writings of new Chinese migrants in Singapore and Malaysia (1990-2002), but Wai Chi suggested that I should insert a section to discuss the Chinese Overseas resources and Liren Zheng, another panelist from the Ohio University, was of the idea that the panel should discuss the Chinese Overseas and the Internet to keep abreast of modern technology. Hence, I finally decided to cover both of these aspects.

This paper would first give a bird’s eye view of the major Chinese overseas resources in Singapore and Malaysia now available to researchers, both historical documents and current literature, and then outline the current means and nature of information sharing via the Internet among the institutions and libraries in these two countries. I would use the examples of Huayinet, and other web sites of major resource centers in Singapore and Malaysia to illustrate the present situation and its future trends of information sharing in the region. Last but not least, I would talk about a proposed digital resource on historical documents on Chinese in Southeast Asia initiated by the Chinese Library, National University of Singapore as part of the NUS digital projects.

I. Chinese Overseas Resources
II. Sharing information through the internet: OPAC, databases, web pages
III. The Huayinet
IV. NUS Digital Library Projects
V. Conclusion
I. Chinese Overseas Resources

For more than a century since the emergence of Chinese Overseas Studies in the second half of the 19th century(1), research on Chinese overseas tended to focus on the Chinese in Southeast Asia. However, in response to the keen interest in the study of the Chinese and their communities in this region shown by the British colonial administrators, officers, missionaries, historians, and occasional European visitors, institutions and libraries here have been collecting documents and research materials on Chinese in the region as well as other relevant information about their home land since early 19th century. During the last two decades when Chinese Overseas Studies gained a world-wide interest due to increasing importance of the Chinese Overseas in economic development and their professional contributions made over many areas, the scope of Chinese Overseas resources here have also extended to cover Chinese in other parts of the world. A national survey done in 1999 by the Interagency Committee on Chinese Overseas Data Bank and Research Materials (COCOD) revealed that there was a total collection of 51,616 titles related to Chinese Overseas collectively hold by 15 major institutions and libraries in Singapore. (2) In a paper (in Chinese) presented in March 2003 to the second International Conference of Institutes & Libraries for Chinese Overseas Studies held in Hong Kong, 13-15 March 2003(3), I have outlined the scope and nature of the major Chinese Overseas resources in Singapore, by giving a description of the strength of the various collections in the National Reference Library, National Archives of Singapore, the National University of Singapore Libraries, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library, the Chinese Heritage Centre Library, Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations and the Information Resource Centre of the Singapore Press Holdings . In another paper (in Chinese) presented to the same conference, Dr Soo Khin Wah of the University of Malaya, shared with us his observations on the Chinese Overseas collections in the University of Malaya (UM), the Centre of Malaysian Chinese Studies (CMCS), the Southern College, the Taode Library and Sarawak Chinese Cultural Centre. These Libraries were reported to have a combined collection of about the same size as their counterparts in Singapore, if not more (4).
In this paper, I would not repeat what had been presented in the last two papers, which would be published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong soon. Rather, I would outline the Chinese Overseas Resources available in Singapore and Malaysia by type of documents and try to fill in the gaps that have not been previously covered.

In his keynote address delivered at the same Conference (5), Professor Wang Gungwu enlightened us with three large groups of Chinese Overseas documents that he called: the formal, the practical and the expressive. I shall borrow his terms and classification to illustrate my observations regarding the Chinese Overseas Resources in Singapore and Malaysia.

**A. Formal Documents**

Formal documents refer to the official archives that provide the backbone of all documentary collection for historian. These include administrative records registering arrivals and locating where the immigrants live and work, and the speeches and the acrimonious debate about immigrant issues. They may be found in dusty files, printed collections, political tracts, or recorded and quoted in magazine articles and newspaper accounts. Outside of archives and libraries, such formal documents would include buildings and monuments, and the memoirs of all those public figures who were involved in the management of migration matters, and also all the scholarly writings that have tried to immortalize the migrant sagas (6).

**Formal Documents in Singapore**

In Singapore, the formal administrative records, printed collections, artifacts pertaining to the study of Chinese immigrants are well preserved in the National Archives of Singapore, the Singapore History Museum, the National Reference Library (NRL) and two academic libraries, namely the National University of Singapore Libraries (NUS Libraries) and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)Library. I have dealt with the scope and strength of the Chinese overseas collections in NRL, NUS Libraries and
ISEAS Library in my previous paper mentioned above, I shall only give a brief account of their resources here.

Although the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) was established in 1968, it has inherited some 7,000 items of archival material transferred from the National Library, which has a long history that could be traced back to 1823 when the Founder of Modern Singapore, Sir Stanford Raffles, initiated a subscription Library for interested persons. The Library became a museum and public library in 1887 and acted as an archive for the Colony Office of the Straits Settlements. As such, the NAS has a complete collection of the Strait Settlements Records dating from 1818 to 1946 and the public records prior to Singapore attaining self-government (1947-1959). Its resources constitute a continuous series from 1800, going back some 20 years before the actual founding of Singapore in 1819 (7). These valuable materials are important historical resource pertaining not only to Singapore but also to Malaysia, particularly Penang and Malacca, as well as Indonesia, Brunei and other countries of Southeast Asia, which provide a wealth of background information relevant to the study of early history of Chinese in Southeast Asia. The public records also consist of documents of government and statutory boards transferred to the NA as required by the National Archives and Records Centre (NARC) Act. The following files contain useful documents for the studies of Chinese in this region:

- Straits Settlements Record, 1800-1872
- Straits Settlements Despatches, 1867-1915
- Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States, 1888-1949
- Straits Settlements Legislative Council Proceeding, 1867-1939
- Annual Reports, bulletins and other government publications

NAS became part of the National Heritage Board (NHB) of Singapore in August 1993. It is mandated by the NHB Act 1993, to be the official custodian of the government’s corporate memory and is responsible for the permanent preservation of the nation’s records which are of national and historical significance. Under the NHB Act, the term “Public Record” includes all papers, documents, records, registers, printed materials, books, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, microfilms, videotapes, films, machine-
readable and electronic records, sound recordings, and other forms of records of any kind whatsoever, produced or received by any government office in the transaction of official business, or by any other officer in the course of his official duties, and includes public archives (8). NAS also acquired historical documents from other government and non-government sources. For example, it has acquired a complete microfilm collection of historical archives from China on the Overseas Chinese in Singapore and Malaya during the period from 1908 to 1941.

For formal documents outside archives and libraries, the Singapore History Museum (SHM) has played a very important role in collecting and preserving them. The predecessor of SHM was initiated as a double entity, Raffles Library and Museum, in 1887 by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Frederick Weld. Back then, Singapore was a part of the British Settlement. Before long, the Museum soon became known for its natural history collection of Southeast Asia as well as its ethnology and archaeology collections. The Museum separated from the library in 1960 and was renamed the Raffles Museum, and in 1965 changed to National Museum to reflect its pivotal role in national building. In 1993, the National Museum became part of the National Heritage Board (NHB) of Singapore and since then it has been known as the Singapore History Museum.

As a history museum, the SHM is active in collecting and preserving artifacts that reflect the social and historical aspects of Singapore and its people. Three significant collections on Chinese immigrants need special mention here:

- **The William Stirling Collection on Secret Society in Singapore**
  William Stiring was an Assistant Protector of Chinese in Singapore from 1921 to 1931. His collection includes paraphernalia used during a Tiandihui initiation ceremony, seals, membership certificates, notices, forms and receipts, three illustrations and three volumes of Stirling’s own writings on secret society activities. A catalogue of the collection was incorporated in a book entitled *Secret Society in Singapore* published by SHM in 1999.

- **The Peranakan Gallery**
  A collection of Peranakan furniture, jewellery, costumes and household Nyonya wares.
• **Artifacts of the Teochew Community in Singapore**, which include a model of the hong tou chuan (red bow junk) the Teochews sailed in when they left their home town, the re-creation of a gambier shed, samples of the commodities the Teochew merchants traded in and original furniture from a tea merchant shop, and more.

While the archives and museums in Singapore place their focus on historical documents of local Chinese, the National Reference Library and the two academic libraries here have a wider scope that cover documents regarding Chinese Overseas in this region and beyond. The following collections contain substantial printed materials on Chinese Overseas, but the retrieval of such materials may need special training and insight about the subject.

• **NRL Southeast Asia Collection**

The National Reference Library was set up in 1960. It inherited from its former institution, the Raffles Library and Museum a very comprehensive collection of primary resources pertaining to the study of Chinese in this region. The Raffles Museum and Library was established in 1887, but it has a history that is linked to the Raffles Library founded by Sir Stanford Raffles in 1823, when the Chinese immigrants in this region stirred great interest among the colonial administrators and officials. Over the years, an extensive collection of archives and publications about Southeast Asia and the Chinese in this region was collected and preserved as the “Q Collection”, which later formed the backbone of the Southeast Asia Collection set up in 1964. It consists of about 7,000 items of maps, Colonial Office records and photographs; about 50 titles of early Singapore imprints; some 1,000 Singapore and Malaysian periodicals; more than 50 local newspaper titles, and about 2,000 books related to Malaysia. The Southeast Asia Collection, partly housed in a separate Southeast Asia Room from 1964 to 1997, has been well used by scholars and research workers from local and overseas libraries. This excellent reference collection was, unfortunately, dismantled to give way to a Singapore Collection in 1997. Most of the materials are now scattered in the Rare Book Collection, the Singapore Collection, and in closed stacks of the National Library Board.

• **NRL Printers and Publishers Act (PPA) Collection**
As a depositary library for the Straits Settlements and British Malaya since 1887, the National Library also has the privilege of collecting and preserving local newspapers and other publications produced in the area. An extensive collection of English, Chinese and Malay newspapers, such as *Singapore Chronicle* (1827-1837), *Singapore Free Press* (1835-1962), *Penang Gazette and Straits Chronicle* (1838-1934), *Straits Time* (1845-), *Straits Singapore Daily Times* (1865-1882), *Straits Chronicle Straits Chinese Herald* (1894-) *Straits Echo* (1903-1931), are now preserved in microfilm.

- **NUS Singapore and Malaysia Collection**
  This collection has over 30,000 titles of monographs, conference proceedings and journals on subjects relating to Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and ASEAN. It is particularly strong in source materials tracing the various aspects of the development of Singapore, Malaysia and Borneo from their founding through the period of colonial government up to the independence and thereafter.

- **NUS Thesis Collections**
  This collection comprises over 19,000 academic exercises and higher degree theses submitted to NUS and their predecessor institutions. These are deposited in the NUS Central Library and Chinese Library. NUS also acquire foreign thesis pertaining to Singapore and Malaysia. About 500 titles are related to Chinese Overseas in this region and beyond.

- **ISEAS Southeast Asian Collection**
  The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library has 470,000 titles. Despite a collection development policy which places emphasis on current materials relating to contemporary social development in Southeast Asia, there is no lack of archival material of Southeast Asia on microfilm and in its rare book room.

**Formal Documents in Malaysia**

Similarly, the formal records of Malaysia are preserved in the National Archives of Malaysia (Arkib Negara Malaysia) (ANM) and the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur.
and in some states museums. The Sarawak Museum, especially, has a good collection of oral history materials about Chinese there.

Set up on 1st December 1957, the National Archives of Malaysia was first known as the Public Records Office. In 1963 it assumed its present name in accordance with the national usage. The National Archives Act was passed by Parliament in 1966, legally entrusting the National Archives with the custody of public records of national and historical significance. Besides acquiring records from government agencies, the ANM also acquire records from economic and business organizations, sports organizations, ecclesiastical institutions, political bodies and private individuals. The materials acquired may be in the form of manuscripts or print and audio-visual materials, microform, and newspapers. Materials are made available to researchers on attaining 25 years as stipulated under the National Archives Act (9).

The strength of the ANM collections for the studies of Chinese in Malaysia cannot be under-estimated. The following files are particularly useful:

- **High Commissioner’s Office (Chinese Affairs)**
  In 1888 Great Britain’s Foreign Office established a protectorate over Northern Borneo (embracing Brunei, Sarawak, and British North Borneo – now Sabah) and the governor of the Strait Settlements became the High Commissioner for the Borneo Protectorate. For the period 1897 through 1914, Files relating to Borneo form a separate series in the collection of the ANM. The High Commissioner’s Office also maintained a separates series of correspondence relating to Chinese Affairs. Some 150 files covering the period 1923 through 1948 have been listed in the Paul H. Kratoska’s *High Commissioner’s Office (Chinese Affairs): a select list of files*, (Pulau Pinang: Perpustakaan Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1990).

- **British Colonial Office Files Pertaining to Malaysia**
  This contains files that deal with Malay Peninsula and Northern Borneo, the territories that now make up Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The documents are housed at the Public Record Office in Britain and the following series can be consulted on microfilm at ANM:
– CO273 Strait Settlements. Original Correspondence (1838-1946). Complete
– CO531 British North Borneo. Original Correspondence (1759-1955). Complete
– CO537 Straits Settlements: Original correspondence, 1873-1898.
– CO717 Malay States, Federated. Original Correspondence (1920-1950). Complete
– CO855 Borneo British North: Herald and official gazette, 1883-1940
– CO874 British North Borneo Co. Papers

● Files of the Office of the High Commissioner for the Malay States

Files from the High Commissioner’s Office exist from its inception in 1896 through 1941. The collection is reasonably complete until 1922 (with the exception of 1902 and 1903), but thereafter the survival rate drops sharply. Of the files that survive, many contain reports and papers on a variety of issues, including issues that affect the Chinese community.

The University of Malaya Library (UML) also holds a similar collection of the administrative records of the former colonial rulers in microfilm and a comprehensive collection of the government publications of Malaysia. Under the Malaysia Preservation of Book Act, 1966, the UML is entitled to receive on demand a copy of all items published locally. It’s Dissertations and thesis collection, both local and foreign, contains some interesting titles on Chinese Overseas. The National Museum Library and the Taiping Museum Library have notable research collections relevant to ethnographical and archaeological studies. It must also be mentioned that the Taiping Museum Library has a strong collection of pre-war government publications. In East Malaysia, the Sarawak Museum Reference Library (SMRL) has a notable collection of Borneo materials, including Chinese publications and dailies. The main bulk of SMRL archives collection consists of Brooke papers principally covering the period 1868-1917.

(B) Practical Documents

The practical documents are much more varied. They would include appointment records, account and receipts, legal briefs, business notes, correspondence of all kinds, the
meeting minutes of social and cultural organizations, and the daily newspapers that people depended for local and useful information. Also included are family papers like genealogies and biographies and other clan records. Outside archives and libraries, the practical documents would also include the household goods, the essential tools and instruments used by the Overseas Chinese. Public festivals, temple operas, and social events like weddings and funerals; medical shops, societies, cemeteries that are connected to the day to day living of the Chinese Overseas, all belong to this category of the practical. (10)

**Practical Documents in Singapore**

As it has rightly pointed out by Professor Wang Gungwu, these documents were not always recognized and consciously preserved. In Singapore, the practical documents that have been collected and preserved are scattered in various government and non-government institutions, with the National Heritage Board being the statutory body overseeing the preservation, presentation and promotion of cultural heritage of Singapore, including Chinese Singaporean heritage. Public as well as academic libraries and private institutions, clan associations are also playing an active role in the collection and preservation of such documents.

The **National Heritage Board** (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993, bringing together the National Archives, the National Museum and the Oral History Department previously under the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA). The Board’s National Museum arm comprises three component museums – the Singapore History Museum, the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian Civilization Museum. Collectively, they present the heritage of Singapore through the display of the country’s materials culture, comprising over 100,000 artifacts. They are stored in the climate-controlled environment of a custom-built Heritage Conservation Centre. The building is Southeast Asia’s first state-of-the art repository for collection care with special conservation facilities. (11)
As mentioned before, the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) is mandated by the NHB Act 1993, to be the official custodian of the government’s corporate memory and is responsible for the permanent preservation of the nation’s records which are of national and historical significance. It is also mandated by the same act to collect and preserve records of private organizations, such as clan organizations, clubs, associations, religious organizations and individuals which provide insights into the social and cultural heritage of a nation. Since 1972, it has been building up the following practical archives:

- **Private Textual Records** – Records of private organizations, such as clan associations, clubs, associations, religious organizations and individuals provide insights into the social and cultural heritage of Singapore. These include:
  - Chinese Clan Associations Records, 1876-
  - School Records (including Chinese-Medium Schools), 1876-
  - Church Records, 1870-
  - Chinese Cemetery Records, 1888-
  - Personal files of Division I and II government officers;

- **Oral History Records** – To date, the NAS holds a total of 10,000 hours of interviews that capture the social, political and economic fabric of Singapore. The following themes, in particular, are useful for the study of Chinese in Singapore:
  - Pioneers of Singapore,
  - Japanese Occupation of Singapore,
  - Vanishing trades and communities of Singapore, education.

- **Building Plans and Map**
- **Photographs**
- **Audio-Visual collection**

**Special Collections**

There are a number of special collections in government and non-government institutions that collect and preserve practical documents of Chinese overseas. Among them are the following collections worth our attention:
**NUS Microform Collection:** This includes newspapers, serials and archival materials on microform, reproduced in-housed or purchased from external sources. NUS has a total of 380 Chinese, English and Malay newspaper titles published in this region and other part of the world, including the following Chinese newspapers: *Tung hsi yang kao* 东西洋考每月统计传 (1800-1912), *Lat Pau* 吭报 (1887-1932), *Thien Nan Shih Pao* 天南新报 (1898-1905), *Chinese Australian Herald* 广益华报 (1895-1923), *Chung sai yat po* 中西日报 (1900-1946, *Penang sin pao* 槟城新报 (1995-1941), *Kwong Wah Jit Poh* 光华日报 (1927- ), *Miri Daily News* 美里日报 (1960- ), *Great China Press* 大中华日报 (1961-1972), *Sin Sian Jih Pao* 星暹日报 (1959- ) and many other. Together with some 50 current newspapers from the region, the NUS newspaper holding is second to none in the region.

A similar, but much smaller in scale, is the newspapers archive of the **Information Resource Centre** of the Singapore Press Holding. It has a total of 4,837 bound volume of Chinese, English and Malay newspapers dated back to 1845, some of them in microform. It also has about 20,000 volumes of press cuttings files, as well as hundreds of thousands of photographs.

The **Southeast Asia Collection of NUS Chinese Library** has a collection of more than 11,000 volumes of travel records 游记, regional descriptions 方志, family genealogies 家谱, epigraphic materials 碑铭, as well as the so called Grey Literature” -- publications of various Chinese institutions in Southeast Asia, such as huiguan 会馆, school, temples, religious associations, shangtang 善堂, clan and lineage associations, funeral associations 互助会, political parties, trade unions, and professional associations. Most of this grey literature is collected from Singapore, East and West Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia. As pointed out by Wolfgang Franke, only in recent years have scholars and librarian begun to appreciate the great importance of these publications as source materials for the investigation of most aspects of Chinese in
Southeast Asia (13). In addition, the NUS Chinese Library has the following three special archives:

- **Bai Yan Archive** – includes newspaper cuttings, photographs, personal documents, hand-written play scripts, books and periodicals about drama collected and preserved by Mr. Yan Bai Yan, a veteran of the dramatic circle of Singapore and Malaysia for more than 40 years.

- **Chinese Opera Scripts Archive** – includes 160 titles of Chinese opera scripts acquired from a local drama group. These manuscripts reflect the kind of opera performed in Singapore during the past 50 years.

- **Chinese Movie Scripts Archive** – contains 265 volumes of Chinese movie scripts filmed by the Shaw Brothers Film Company based in Hong Kong. Some of the movie with Southeast Asia setting; others reflect the kind of entertainment enjoyed by Chinese in this region for the past 50 years.

The **Wang Gungwu Library** of the Chinese Heritage Centre (CHC) is comparatively a new resource. The CHC was set up in 1995 with an aim to be a leading research and resource centre on the Chinese outside China. On 13 September 2003, the Resource Centre at CHC was named after Professor Wang Gungwu in recognition of his scholarship and significant contribution to the field of Chinese Overseas Studies. The Library, which housed mainly resources on Chinese Overseas subjects, has also benefited from Professor Wang’s generous donation. (14) The Library has about 21,000 items in five special collections:

- **Wang Gungwu Collection** – contains mainly books on Chinese history and Chinese Overseas;

- **South Seas Society Collection** – contains books and serials published by the South Seas Society and its resource centre deposited in HCH;

- **Chui Kwei Chiang Collection** – Contains books and serials on Chinese Overseas;

- **Ou Rubo Collection** – contains press cuttings on clan association as well as their publications;

- **Chinese Textbooks collection**: contains mainly school textbooks used by Indonesian schools.
The **Hsu Yun-tsiao Collection** 许云樵藏书，now housed at the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Association Resource Centre, is one of the oldest private collections that specialized in Southeast Asian Studies and Chinese in Southeast Asia. It contains some 30,000 volumes of books and journals. Another precious collection, the **Yeyin Guan Collection** 椰阴馆文库，built up by Tan Yock Siong almost during the same time and donated to the National Reference Library in 1964, is now housed in the warehouse of the National Library Board. Professor Hsu Yun-tsiao (1905-1981) and Mr. Tan Yock Siong (1900-1984) were two founder members of the South Seas Society and scholars of Nanyang history well known for their works on Southeast Asia and the Chinese in the region.

Two private paper archives, the **Tan Cheng Lock Archive** as well as the **David Marshall Archive**, housed at the Library of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies should not be overlooked. Tun Dato’ Tan Cheng Lock was a Founder member of the Malaya Chinese Association and David Marshall was the first Chief Minister of Singapore; both of them have a lot to do with the Chinese communities in the two countries.

**Practical Documents in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, practical documents are mainly found in National Archives of Malaysia, National Museums, state museums, academic libraries and private resource centres.

The **National Archives of Malaysia** (ANM) has the following notable archives of practical documents:

- **Private Papers** -- This collection consists of files, photographs, publications, newspapers, articles, diaries of private individuals. Among the collections are the private papers of Tun Tan Cheng Lock, Tun Tan Siew Sin, Tun Leong Yew Koh and others.
● **Oral History Records** -- These records comprising recordings of reminiscences of personalities like Tan Sri Lim Swee Aun, Tan Sri Wong Pow Nee and others prominent Chinese leaders who have played an active role in the country’s development.

● **Newspapers Collection** -- There are more than 90 titles (4,000 volumes) of newspapers dating back to the 19th century and include newspapers in Chinese, English, Malay, Hindi and Tamil. Among them are *Malay Mail, Malai Sinpo, Penang Shimbum, Perak Times, Syonan Times and Syonan Sinbun.*

In academic libraries, the **East Asian Library** of the University of Malaya has a collection of more than 1,000 items of “Grey Literature”, partly in microfilms. It has been built up primarily with the support of the Utah Genealogical Society by Tay Lian Soo 郑良树, who has compiled a catalogue of this collection, plus his own collection and of a few smaller collections kept by Chinese newspaper archives in Peninsula Malaya. Tay also helped to build up a library collection of about 10,000 volumes of research materials at the **Institute of Chinese Ethnic and Culture**, Southern College, which includes ‘grey literature’, clan associations records, family genealogies, newspapers, books and periodicals.

Apart from the Southern College, there are two more private colleges run by the Chinese community, namely, **New Era College** in Selangor, and **Han Chiang College** in Penang. The New Era College is mainly sponsored by the United Chinese School teachers Association 教总 and the United Chinese School Committees’ Association 董总的 Malaysia, whose Resource Centre has a very comprehensive collection of school magazines and historical documents of Chinese education in Malaysia. The Han Chiang College in Penang, on the other hand, is more interested in collecting and preserving practical documents of Chinese heritage. Its Chinese Heritage Centre was officially declared open by the Chief Minister of Penang on 29 June 2003.

One of the biggest private collections on Chinese Overseas Studies in Malaysia is the **Jixian Library** 集贤图书馆 which support the research needs of the **Centre for Malaysian Studies** in Kuala Lumpur. It has a strong archive of press cuttings related to
the study of political, economic and cultural development of Chinese in Malaysia and a sizeable collection of clan association publications, books and periodicals. Another private collection that came into existence recently is the Taode Library in Johor Bahru, which has an initial collection of about 10,000 volumes of press cuttings, books and periodicals on Chinese in Southeast Asia. (15)

Over in the East Malaysia, the Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association in Sibu is the only private body that is committed to the collection and preservation of historical documents of Chinese in Sarawak and in Southeast Asia. To date, it has about 1,500 files of press cuttings that cover more than 350 subjects of historical interest; about 8000 volumes of books and periodicals; about 300 titles of clan association publications; old Chinese newspaper of Sarawak and photographs. (16)

(C) Expressive Documents

These are the most closely linked to desires and have not always been easy to recognize as the other two kinds. They go beyond the recording of facts and data that are usually found in formal and practical documents, although the expressive bits may also be located in the formal and practical document, for example, accounts relaying specific examples of heroism or cowardice, greed or generosity, ingenuity or criminality brought about by strong desires.(17) Most obvious examples of this kind, however, could be located in prose or poetry, letters written home, memoirs, short stories, novels, plays, etc. written by the Chinese Overseas themselves. Hence, expressive documents could most likely be preserved by libraries that collect newspapers, literary periodicals and creative writings.

In Singapore and Malaysia, expressive documents are found in most public, academic, and private library collections. The NUS Chinese Library has a strong collection of over 3,000 titles of creative works of Chinese who had returned to China and of those who had settled down in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and elsewhere as well as by their descendants. The National Reference Library of Singapore has set up
an archive of *Research Materials on Chinese Authors in Singapore, 1920-1965*; the **Malaysian Chinese Literature Library** 马华文学馆 of the Southern College has the most comprehensive coverage of the creative works of Malaysia Chinese. The **Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association**, is known to have the most complete collection of Sarawak authors.

**II. Sharing Information**

It has been a long tradition that archives and libraries in Singapore and Malaysia would share information and resources through various means. In those days when computers and Internet were not in place, these institutions were sharing information and resources through union lists, printed catalogues, and joint projects. For example, a union list of local holdings of Malaysian newspapers has been prepared by Patricia Lim (18) for this purpose; in 1965, she also initiated a consortium to microfilm a series of records from the Public Record Office in London and as a result these documents were made available in local libraries and archives.

Now that the ubiquitous information communication and technology (ICT), and Internet have created new opportunities for speedy information sharing and document delivery, major institutions here have discontinued the traditional means and use Internet instead. To meet the increasing demand for research and to remain relevant in knowledge age, they share information and documents through online public access catalogues (OPAC), supplemented by databases and CD-ROMs and information web pages. Most of the archives and libraries have discontinued the publication of printed catalogues.

**The National Heritage Board**, for example, maintains a combined web site for the national archives and museums. Visitor can access the catalogues of a rich resource of formal and practical documents held by the National Archives of Singapore, Singapore History Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Heritage Conservation Centre and Asian Civilisation Museum at [http://www.museums.org.sg/](http://www.museums.org.sg/). The National Archives of Singapore has developed a one-stop portal site called Access to Archives Online
Singapore (a²o), which allow users to seamlessly search information across NHB’s various independent databases and view selected photographs, maps and plans, listen to oral history interview samplers and watch snippets of audio-visual recordings, round the clock. In addition, the portal site also provides information on collection and services, recent acquired materials, online exhibitions, publications, etc. The National Archives of Malaysia maintains a similar portal site at http://www.arkib.gov.my/. Other libraries that provide online public access catalogues through the internet include the National University of Singapore (http://www.lib.nus.edu.sg/), the National Library Board (http://www.nlb.gov.sg), the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library (http://www.lib.isseas.edu.sg), and the University of Malaysia (http://www.umlib.edu.my/). Some smaller institutions, such as the Chinese Heritage Centre (http://www.chc.ntu.edu.sg), Singapore Federation of Clan Associations (http://sfcca.org.sg/), Singapore Press Holding, Information Resources Centre, (http://www.sph.com.sg/contact/irc.html), Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association (http://www.intet.com.my/scca/), Malaysian Chinese Research Centre (http://huayan.net.my), Southern College (http://www.sc.edu.my/lib/index.htm), Chinese Heritage Centre, Han Jiang College (http://www.hju.edu.my), are providing information on their activities and publications through their information portals.

One of the limitations of such internet portals is that most online OPACs provide only a general search facility which allows the user to check if a library has a certain item of interest from a wide range of resources. However, they do not provide a bird’s eye view of library holdings on a particular subject. The OPAC of the National University of Singapore Libraries, nevertheless, provide a scoping function which limits a user’s search to Chinese Overseas subjects only.

In addition to their OPACs, some major libraries also provide specialized online databases and CD-ROMs to supplement their online catalogues, either produced in-house or acquired from external sources. Examples are the Past Exhibitions Online maintained by the Singapore History Museum and the Singapore History Museum – An Interactive Exploration CD-ROM produced by SHM; Today in History maintained by the National
Archives of Malaysia; PERIND and Southeast Asian Studies Database produced in-housed by the National University of Singapore Libraries and Bibliography of Asian Studies subscribed by University of Malaya Library and more.

The Past Experience Online focuses on some exhibitions that were organized at the Singapore History Museum, such as the Teochew Experience: an Exhibition on the Teochew Community in Singapore, I do, I do – An Exhibition on Weddings and Marriages in Singapore and Beyond Coffee Tables – The Hainanese Community in Singapore. The Interactive Exploration CD-ROM incorporating a host of multimedia features is even more interesting. It not only tells interesting stories and facts about the Museum, its permanent exhibitions and artifacts but it also helps viewers gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Singapore history and heritage.

PERIND is the Index to Periodical Articles relating to Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and ASEAN. There are over 57,000 citations from more than 250 core English and Malay titles of local, regional and international journals. The subjects covered range from the humanities and social sciences to business, management, architecture, building, law and medicines. The Southeast Asian Studies Database is a similar indexing database that includes articles from Chinese sources. It also has a wider scope that covers the areas traditionally known as Nanyang compared to PERIND. NUS Libraries also launched a SMC Ondisc in 1996 for information sharing. The CD-ROM provides easy and fast access to over 100,000 bibliographic citations on the Singapore and Malaysia Collection of NUS as mentioned above.

All information portals have link facilities that allow linkage of one portal to another, which in turn would form a very powerful information network. And most of the Chinese Overseas information portals in this region have provided links to as many related web sites as possible. This is a very convenience way of sharing information of common interest. For instance, the NUS Chinese Library maintains a specialized portal on Chinese Overseas at http://www.lib.nus.edu.sg/chz/chineseoverseas/ which has a linkage to major Chinese overseas web pages around the world.
Hence, it is very obvious that the information sharing regarding Chinese Overseas Studies through the Internet in this age of ubiquitous ICT is more varied, interesting, effective, efficient and widespread than the traditional mode of communication. It is no surprise that archives, libraries, and institutions in Singapore and Malaysia, large and small, have opted for this new mode of information sharing.

III Huayinet

Huayinet ([http://www.huayinet.org](http://www.huayinet.org)) is an information portal initiated and maintained by 13 institutions and libraries interested in promoting the studies of Chinese Overseas and information sharing (19). It was initiated by an Interagency Committee on Chinese Overseas Databank and Research Collection (COCOD), with the advice of the eminent scholar Professor Wang Gungwu. A detailed account of the setting up of the COCOD and the purposes of the Huayinet has been given in Ms Ch’ng Kim See’s paper presented to the First International Conference of Institutes and Libraries for Overseas Chinese Studies at Ohio University, Athens in March 2000 (20) and my paper mentioned above, I shall only highlight here the special features of the Huayinet and discuss its latest development in regard to information sharing.

As an information portal, the contents of Huayinet focus primarily on Chinese in Southeast Asia, but it also includes information of Chinese communities elsewhere. Special features include Culture & Language, Biography Series, Resources, Happenings and Chinatowns. A new and up-coming feature would be union lists of holdings of Singapore’s major archives, libraries and institutions.

The Resources Section lists and established links to libraries, institutions, associations, (cultural, clans, and guilds) and museums in Asia, North America, as well as Europe that are interested in the study of Chinese Overseas. It also provides information on recent titles, and list recommended readings, bibliographies, Chinese newspapers, and e-
resources that are related to the study of Chinese Overseas. In a way, this serves as a
guide to resources on the study of Chinese Overseas.

The **Happenings** Section provides information on the latest and recent events, news
about research projects, conference calendar, exhibitions and activities on Chinese
Overseas.

The Huayinet Editorial Committee has recently approved a project to compile union lists
of holdings related to Chinese Overseas Studies in major libraries and institutions in
Singapore. The union lists will collect together information regarding documents and
publications related to Chinese Overseas available in order to:

- inform researchers and members of the public about the availability and location of
  such documents and publications;
- promote research on Chinese Overseas in general and in South-East Asia Chinese in
  particular;
- enrich the content of HuayiNet.

Guidelines for the compilation of union lists of library holding have been drawn up and
approved by the Editorial Committee. A few union lists by type of document, including
*Theses and Dissertations List, Clan Association Publications List, School publications
List*, are under compilation. They would be posted on Huayinet as soon as they are
completed.

The use of information portals such as Huayinet to facilitate information sharing on
Chinese Overseas Studies has been highly commended by scholars and researchers
working in this field. The World-Wide Web Virtual Library of the Institute of Chinese
Studies, University of Heidelberg rates Huayinet favorably.

**IV NUS Digital Library Projects**

Since the emergence of Internet, sharing bibliographic and other information on Chinese
Overseas has became increasingly popular among curators and librarians. It helps
scholars and researchers a great deal by providing timely information and a time saving method of information retrieval; scholars and researchers are, however, not satisfied with just that as they would like to read the actual document at their desk top whenever possible. This would not only save time from having to hop from one information portal to another to find a piece of useful document, but also save cost of document delivery or even traveling to the library or archive. In view of this, some archives and libraries have embarked on digital projects to make available some of their valuable artifacts and documents online.

Besides the national archives and museums in Singapore and Malaysia which provide online exhibition of heritage artifacts, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is one of the pioneers in posting on the Internet some precious documents held by the Library. The following Chinese dailies are among some completed projects:

— Lat Pau (188-19327) – It is an invaluable historical source for research into pre-war Singapore as well as Chinese in Southeast Asia during that period.

— Sin Kok Min Jit Poh (1919-1933) -- This Chinese daily is one of the most influential official newspapers and journals published by the Kuomintang in cities where many overseas Chinese were residing. It is an invaluable historical source for the study of modern Chinese revolution and Chinese overseas during that period of time.

NUS has recently drawn up a 5 year plan to undertake a digitization project which aim to bring together available documents of research value and relevant to the historical studies of Chinese in Southeast Asia, in one database, for the purpose of preservation of primary resources and for wider circulation(21). The proposed project includes historical documents from two sources:

— The NUS Libraries Collection;

— Collections of other libraries, archives, government and private organizations as well as individuals in Southeast Asia.

Under this proposed project, primary and secondary materials in all languages (Chinese, native and colonial languages) with research value will be digitized. Primary resources such as newspapers, periodicals and magazines, commemorative publications, school
magazines, text books and syllabuses, epigraphic materials, manuscripts, travel and
descriptions, clan or family histories, genealogies, auto-biographies or personal accounts,
private correspondences, photographs and pictures, creative writings, art works and
music scrolls, monograph and essays by Chinese in SEA, are given priority; secondary
materials such as important historical writings by Chinese in SEA on their own
community, which are out of print and had not been widely circulated before will also be
included.

The number of documents involved in this 5 year project is estimated at about 30,000
titles. This is based on 50% duplication of the figure of 51,616 titles available in 15 major
Singapore institutions plus about 5,000 titles available elsewhere. This estimated title
includes 2,000 titles of newspapers and serials published between 1815 and 1995.

The total estimated cost for the 5 year project is about S$ 550,000. This is not a small
sum that NUS Libraries could easily to absorb. Hence, it is necessary to find financial
support from external funding and collaboration for the project to be viable.

V Conclusion

Indeed, there is no dearth of historical and current documents of Chinese in Southeast
Asia available for research. In part one of this paper, I have outlined some major
collections and resources relevant to this field of study. The main problem is that all these
documents are scattered in various archives, libraries, government and private
organization as well as in the hands of individuals. Many of them are not well preserved
and are not made known to researchers and students interested in doing research. These
invaluable historical documents face a great danger of being damaged or lost to posterity.

One solution of easing the problem is information sharing. With the aid of IT, curators
and librarians could keep scholars and researchers informed about the availability and
location of documents through Internet. In parts two and three, I have, using the Huayinet
and other information portals as examples, discussed the usefulness and limitations of
this means of communication and cooperation.

A more desirable means of dissemination and preservation of valuable information is,
obviously, document sharing by digitization and making them available through the
Internet. It is the hope of this writer that more curators, librarians, scholars, researchers
and members of public at large interested in and committed to the study of Chinese Overseas could come forward and work together to have more documents digitized for preservation and made available through the virtual environment.

End Notes:


(2) The survey result has once been posted on the huayinet, the web site of the Committee at http://www.huayinet.org.


(4) 苏庆华, 马来西亚中文文献的收藏和出版现况 (Present situation of the collection and publication of Chinese documents), presented to the same conference as mentioned in (3).


(10) Wang Gungwu, op, cit., p.142.

(11) National Heritage Board web site at http://www.museum.org.sg/About_NHB/About_Us

(13) Franke, Wolfgang, “Epigraphic materials and “grey literature” as sources on the Chinese in Southeast Asia”, in *Collected Essays on Local History of the Asian – Pacific Region: Contribution of Overseas Chinese* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 19), p.488

(14) Chinese Heritage Centre web site at [http://www.chineseheritagecentre.org/infocentre/lib.htm](http://www.chineseheritagecentre.org/infocentre/lib.htm)


(21) The writer’s working document, “Historical Documents of Chinese in Southeast Asia: a digitization project”.

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