



**Unleashing the power of QUEST:
two innovative projects to reap the rewards of reading**

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Abstract:

In an ideal world, libraries would be valued as treasure houses of knowledge, all parents would always promote reading and children would always choose the library as their Sunday place of choice. In reality, however, we do not live in an ideal world where the library's value is acknowledged and appreciated universally. Reading, despite its importance, is but one past time in a buffet spread of television programmes, exciting computer games, sports and all other forms of entertainment competing for that precious free time in between work or school.

Challenged to maintain the library's appeal to the young, Public Libraries Singapore has come up with two innovative projects, "Quest" and "Read & Reap", the first to attract young readers to the library and the second to add value to the experience of reading. Both projects are very different in terms of their feel and how they are executed but both simultaneously use a simple idea that involves visual appeal and the repackaging of traditional text in a way that speaks to a digital generation.

This paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will cover the project titled "Quest". "Quest" is a project that is primarily targeted at boys who have fallen or are about to fall into the reluctant readers category. With the rise of graphic novels and the unceasing popularity of trading cards among boys, "Quest" uses the trading cards

format to re-ignite an interest in reading with manga- styled illustrations on one side of a card and a story on the other.

The second part of the paper will cover the project titled “Read & Reap” which introduces readers to interesting extracts from books. Along with each extract are provocative questions for their readers to think about, in a bid to encourage critical and reflective thinking. Utilising various levels of interactivity, both online on a blog and offline through beautifully designed posters, this initiative reaches out to the generation of people who are used to social networking and have little time to digest a full book.

INTRODUCTION: THE QUEST FOR VISUAL ENGAGEMENT

In the beginning of 2008, Steven Paul Jobs, co-founder and chief executive officer of Apple made an observation on Amazon’s Kindle ebook reader. He commented that it would not be successful because the American population was not reading. In his exact words, he said: “It doesn’t matter how good or bad the product is, the fact is that people don’t read anymore. Forty percent of the people in the U.S. read one book or less last year... The whole conception is flawed at the top because people don’t read anymore.”¹ This statement was quoted repeatedly by netizens and critics of Apple and it attracted discussions both from those who agree and those who find his source dubious—but agreement aside, from the discussions that arose out of it, we can deduce two things: 1) there is a widespread perception and a genuine fear that people do not read anymore; that the whole act of reading is slowly becoming endangered and 2) the world of mass media is a much more attractive option when compared to reading.

In place of reading, people find themselves watching television, playing computer games, surfing the Internet, fiddling with their iPhones, or otherwise engaging in physical activities like sports or other common social hobbies. One thing these activities have in common is that they are either visual or kinesthetic or both. Reading on the other hand, has been commonly associated with work and as leisure time is precious, more people tend to prefer activities with a higher perceived entertainment value.

Taking all these into consideration, public libraries have an uphill task. It is no longer enough to promote reading and the National Library Board, Singapore (NLB), believes that more than simply promoting reading, it was also important to change the perception of reading. With this vision in mind, NLB made a concerted effort to make reading fun; ensuring that the newer projects targeted at the new generation of young people who are digital natives had a strong visual element as well as a digital front. This is essentially the repackaging and rebranding of old content to make it attractive to those who are more comfortable with a computer than a book. It is in this context that Quest and Read and Reap were born.

¹ Markoff, J. (2008, January 15). *The Passion of Steve Jobs*. Retrieved 26 May 2010 from <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/the-passion-of-steve-jobs/>

1.1 QUEST FOR THE PERFECT “BOY’S PROJECT”

It started with a vision. NLB wanted a reading programme for children that would make them come back to the library time and again. This programme would be fun and innovative, which in the eyes of the children, would be an exciting adventure waiting to unfold. Something of this nature would ensure that children would proactively choose the library. It was also important that this programme would focus on older children who are more prone to becoming alliterate. We polled children, members of the public, teachers and looked into reading trends and some of these things came up.

Firstly our loan data showed that boys were reading less than girls and this gap widens the older they grew. This is consistent with worldwide trends. In the U.S. Department of Education reading tests, “girls scored higher than boys in reading in every year in every age category for the past thirty years” (Sullivan: 14). With this data, NLB noted that it was exceptionally important to help young male reluctant readers. It was then decided that whatever the outcome of the programme was, it had to have a “boy” focus.

Further research and observation of trends also revealed that the fantasy genre saw a revival with the release of Harry Potter and overnight, non-fantasy readers found themselves fans of the fantastical world. This interest was fuelled by movies like *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), *The Dark is Rising* (2007), *Golden Compass* (2008), *Spiderwick* (2008), *Inkheart* (2009), all of which were either children or young adult novels. This then opened a great opportunity for NLB to leverage on, as having something that was fantasy-themed would be inline with current genre preferences.

When the focus was narrowed to boys, their preferred interest in graphic novels and comics was evident. When all of the above, the target group, the genre and the format were grouped together, all that was left was the delivery. “One of the biggest reason boys fail at reading is that we turn reading into work” (Sullivan: 36). A team of male children’s librarians got together to relive and rediscover what young boys are interested in playing with and other than the obvious computer games, trading cards surfaced, from *Dragon Ball* to *Pokemon* and the even more mature cards like *Magic: The Gathering*, trading cards have not ceased to be popular, largely because children love collectibles and trading cards allowed them to both collect and play.

Quest is all of the above, a reading programme that aims to convert reluctant readers, particularly boys, as lifelong learners. Children borrow books to redeem specially made trading cards which can be collected and played with. These cards are based on a fantasy story written by NLB and collecting all sixty cards will allow the child to read the story which is printed on the back of the card. This programme supports the vision of the National Library Board, Singapore, which put simply, is to bring about knowledgeable, creative and imaginative individuals. The next section shows how this is achieved.

1.2 QUEST THE PROJECT

Quest officially started in June 2009. Its main highlight is the highly visual, brightly coloured and beautifully illustrated cards done in the same style as Japanese manga comics. Through the cards, NLB attempts to give back the enjoyable parts of reading back to children that is the joy of discovering a story through play as opposed to reading for purposes of schoolwork.

The cards are based on a story, titled *Quest of the Celestial Dragon*, which is a fantasy story with an Asian setting. A male protagonist, Ethan, steps out of Singapore into a new fantasy world where his task is to retrieve the eyes of a dragon statue and free the people of that world from evil doers who threaten to plunder them of their magic and culture. Like most children's fantasy, it is an adventure with twists and turns as well as a growing up story of a city boy who is bored with his life.

The mechanics of Quest is simple—borrow books and collect cards. With all 60 cards lined back to back, children would be able to read part of the story.² In addition, the cards can be played like any ordinary trading card set as each card has points and power values which gives children the incentive to collect multiple cards. The Quest format is instantly recognisable to children and no additional effort or publicity is required to get their support and understanding of what to do. What worked out in NLB's favour was that children took it upon themselves to encourage their friends to take part in the programme to facilitate their opportunities for card trading. Peer to peer recommendation, in this case, was more effective than any poster or publicity campaign.



Boys at Woodlands Regional Library showing off their collection of Quest cards with the Quest poster in the background

Quest is also a vehicle for additional one-time activities that encourage creativity. To date NLB has organized a creative writing competition, a drawing competition and other activities that encourage children to contribute back to make Quest multi-dimensional in its reach. For the creative writing competition, children were invited to submit alternate endings to the story and children took up the challenge, creating their own version of how they thought the story should end. Over the two week period that the

² The Quest poster and sample images of the Quest cards are available in appendix 1.1.

competition was held, entries from children streamed in and it was a positive affirmation for the team that children were not just playing the cards but were also fully engaged with the actual reading of the story. It then became the gateway for the recommendation of additional fantasy books to those who were thirsty for more.

Writing is not everyone's cup of tea. For those who preferred to use other ways of engaging their imagination, there was a drawing competition titled "Hunt for the rain Dragon". It was held to create anticipation for the second installment of Quest and children, youths and adults were invited to draw a new dragon associated with rain. This was warmly received and the winning entry has since been incorporated into the design of the new dragon.



Winning entry from Tan Zheng Yang
(Age 11)

His idea of how a rain dragon should look like has been drawn into the design of the official rain dragon to be released in June 2010.

1.3 QUEST IN THE DIGITAL REALM

The space between the physical world and the virtual world is rapidly being eroded. At home, children continue their interactions with friends from school via online social platforms like Facebook. Quest needed a digital face. It is necessary to make headway with the children of today. On the website, children can read the full story with additional comic illustrations, download bookmarks and colouring pages, discover more about the characters of the story as well as receive book recommendations and updates on Quest-related information. With an average of 150 hits a day, the website has passed the 30,000 hit mark since it first went live. The Quest website can be found on <http://quest.pl.sg>.

The website is one digital face but through collaborations, the potential of Quest was greatly stretched. Recently, NLB worked with the Media Development Authority, Singapore, and the animation company PICO to allow children to write about Quest or another fantasy story and animate their story through a simple animation software. The children who took part in the trial truly enjoyed it and again, it proves that the experience children have with reading does not have to be a passive one. If they had the tools to animate a story that they read or write their own story graphically, the whole reading experience for the child changes drastically.³

³ An example of a child's work that came out of using the animation software for Quest can be found in the link below. The animated story in the link is done by Nicole Chua, age 7, Mayflower Primary School. <http://www.koobitsedu.com/web/Website/app/koobitsviewer.aspx?bookid=hKrPDHNSlQ1p>

1.4 QUEST IN NUMBERS AND WORDS

As of 31 March 2010, less than a year since the launch, 1.33 million Quest cards have been redeemed by the children of Singapore, generating in excess of 2 million loans from the public libraries of Singapore. There are 70,000 unique participants of which 75% are boys. Public libraries saw the loans for the 9 to 12 age group increase by 30% over the same period last year. All in all, the hard figures show that as a project, Quest was successful in its aim of attracting young male readers who otherwise might not have used the library.

Hard figures have their limitations so to get a better sense of whether Quest was really encouraging children to read, we polled their parents and the response from parents have been equally heart-warming.

“My little boy was so keen on this that he keeps on borrowing and reading, keeping all the borrowing receipts with hope, end up myself as his secretary filing receipts. Hope the cards can arrive ASAP and act as a driving force to keep little children continuing with their reading habits. Quest cards worth nothing to an adult but it act as a form of invincible positive force to build children with good reading habit. Please do take care of this and help to build our future generations with more knowledge, quality, refined as well as graceful citizen for the next decades.”

- Chan Chunjin, parent

“Hi, I would like to really appreciate your efforts in encouraging people to read more and more of books in this Computer age. In your latest step to give away the quest cards, you would be glad to hear that my 6 year old son in bringing 16-32 books and reading them day and night to return and collect more and more quest cards. So, thanks for all that effort.”

- Neeta, parent

Quest has also received mentions in the local news and also in the ALN, Australia’s independent weekly library newsletter.⁴ Most recently, Quest was selected as a semi-finalist in the CAPAM (Commonwealth Association for Public Administration & Management) 2010 International Innovation Awards and results will be announced in July 2010. Indeed the year of Quest has been an exciting one for NLB and it will continue with the release of the second story and accompanying cards in June 2010.

2.1 THE READ AND REAP PROJECT

Think of a movie advertisement or maybe a movie trailer with a caption that catches your attention. You move closer to take a look at the poster and what you read inspires you to buy a ticket to watch the movie. The Read and Reap project works on a

⁴ Images of newspaper articles featuring Quest are available in appendix 1.2.

similar premise. A short extract is taken from a book and highlighted with a caption. It is a visual hook that draws its reader in to read what it offers.

Read and Reap came about when NLB considered how, in this digital age, people expect information to be easily available. Therein lies a problem, firstly information, while plentiful, may not always be reliable and secondly, moving through huge quantities of information rapidly means that there is less time to actually process and reflect over things that are being read. This is often the case for books. A book is sometimes daunting because people perceive that they do not have time to read something and are not willing to make the effort. People want instant gratification and unfortunately, when it comes to children, television or video games are often more attractive. Therefore, Read and Reap was founded upon the need to capture a reader's attention as quickly as possible with something that had impact and would make a lasting impression.

At its heart, Read and Reap is about promoting reading in bite-size portions but at the same time, the project endeavours to create opportunities for conversation. All Read and Reap extracts come with a thought-provoking question for people to think about and hopefully talk about. It is crafted in such a way that allows the reader of the extract to reflect—be it about social norms, controversial issues or about personal experiences. Like the movie that is being talked about and discussed, Read and Reap hopes to have the same effect on its readers on a smaller scale.

This project is in line with two of NLB's Library 2010 Master Plan outcomes, which are to develop self-sustaining and self-renewing learning communities and to create a vibrant network of public libraries as social learning spaces.

2.2 READ AND REAP FROM THE BEGINNING

In August 2007, the pilot phase of the Read and Reap project was launched in 15 primary (elementary) and secondary schools. The extracts were placed on simple posters that were designed internally and had a reflective question as well as a separate accompanying "Spill It!" poster that is essentially an expression space for students to write their thoughts. Teachers were provided with facilitation toolkits of recommended activities and discussion questions to stretch the potential of the posters in a classroom setting. Testing the project out in a controlled environment allowed us to determine whether reading in bite-sizes would help the students engage more enthusiastically with the act of reading.

The feedback from the pilot phase was positive and encouraging. This is an example of a comment we received from the Head of English in an elementary school.

"This is to share with you how excited my pupils are in response to the poster (Read and Reap - Are you suffering from Freckles?). The pupils were fascinated by the extract from the poster and decided to pursue more about freckles. They decided to read the book, *Freckles Juice*, so that they can respond accordingly to the thought provoking question."

Besides being ecstatic about the project, teachers and school library coordinators found that their students enjoyed the toolkit sessions that their teachers conducted. It was a breath of fresh air to them, away from the usual classroom lessons. Discussions were generated and students had numerous opportunities for self-expression.

Moving forward from the pilot phase, improvements were made based on feedback from teachers and students. The design of posters was outsourced to a design house and font sizes were increased for easy reading. Shorter extracts were used to ensure that the printed text on the poster would be large and visible and the extracts will be rotated on a monthly basis. Additionally, a blog was created at <http://ReadandReap.sg> as an online repository of all extracts and a platform for students and members of the public to post their thoughts and comments. This will allow the community to view different opinions and engage each other in discussion, in line with NLB's aim of encouraging self-sustaining communities via user driven activities.

Read and Reap was officially launched on 30 May 2008 at the local School Library Symposium held in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Singapore. The focus was on students from primary and secondary schools. Each of these schools in Singapore received monthly extracts in A2-size posters, A2-size expression sheets and accompanying toolkits.⁵ At the same time, clear instructions and the purpose of the project was communicated in a letter and email to relevant parties in the schools. Teachers had the option of printing additional posters via the blog as well as a variety of other different extracts with varying themes that were uploaded at regular intervals to keep information fresh. Librarians and members of the public who wanted to play a more active part in the project contributed these additional extracts. This created a culture of sharing and intellectual exchange that extends beyond physical library spaces and formed a valuable resource for people looking for good reads, educators and anyone facilitating book clubs.

Complementing the distribution of posters to schools and the online platform, all public libraries also displayed the posters and expression sheets to log down comments from public. The posters in the library were also a form of publicity for the programme and they encouraged people to explore the blog which contained more extracts.

Feedback from the launch was positive. In addition to a number of requests from teachers for more posters to be sent to their schools, others had commented that they had chanced upon the blog serendipitously and felt that something this good should be more widely publicized. Many when surveyed mentioned that they would tell their friends and family about the programme. Below is a snapshot of some of the feedback received from the various groups who participated in the programme.

⁵ A sample Read and Reap poster is available on the following page and more samples of posters distributed to schools can be found in appendix 2.1. They can also be downloaded at our website at <http://ReadandReap.sg>.

A sample of a Read and Reap poster

READ & REAP

A brain or a heart?

Both Dorothy and the Scarecrow had been greatly interested in the story of the Tin Woodman, and now they knew why he was so anxious to get a new heart.

"All the same," said the Scarecrow, "I shall ask for brains instead of a heart; for a fool would not know what to do with a heart if he had one."

"I shall take the heart," returned the Tin Woodman; "for brains do not make one happy, and happiness is the best thing in the world."

Dorothy did not say anything, for she was puzzled to know which of her two friends was right, and she decided if she could only get back to Kansas and Aunt Em it did not matter so much whether the Woodman had no brains and the Scarecrow no heart, or each got what he wanted.

What worried her most was that the bread was nearly gone, and another meal for herself and Toto would empty the basket. To be sure neither the Woodman nor the Scarecrow ever ate anything, but she was not made of tin nor straw, and she could not live unless she was fed.


Which do you think is more important, to be able to think intelligently or to be able to feel with your heart?

Extract from the book
The Wizard of Oz
By L. Frank Baum
All Rights Reserved
London: Puffin, 2008
Call Number: J English BAU

RECOMMENDED READS Available at NLB

Title: Ella enchanted By Gail Carson Levine Call Number: J English LEV	Title: Leven Thumps and the gateway to Foo By Obert Skye Call Number: J English SKY	Title: The Pinhoe egg By Diana Wynne Jones Call Number: J English JON
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For more great reads from Read & Reap, please visit
<http://ReadandReap.sg>. Thoughts and rambles welcomed!

 **Public Libraries**
Singapore

Feedback from teachers:

“My school has received a set of the posters from NLB and our reading team is delighted to see the wonderful texts which can serve our pupils well. We hope that you could provide our school with another 28 sets of posters so that we could help promote the initiative through a school-wide event. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you so much!”

“For the better classes, it will encourage them to read related books. Thinking skills are very essential for Humanities subjects like Social Studies where students are required to state views and substantiate them. So this will be a good platform to get them to think critically and voice out views.”

“It encourages pupils to think and express their opinions and is another way of improving their English. It gives pupils opportunities to write about their opinions on issues related to them.”

Feedback from students:

“Interesting Material. Thought provoking as well. It is very interesting and made us think out of the box. It makes us think further.”

A comment by a student after attending a toolkit lesson - “The right environment (library) and the nice and slow activity made this a winner.”

Feedback from members of the public:

“I am supportive of this initiative. It encourages readers to ask questions about what they read and try to apply what they have learnt in their lives. And I would inform family, friends and relatives about the initiative.”

“I think it's great, I saw the extract just now but didn't have time to pen down my thoughts yet. But the effort's really great, non-conventional method, very refreshing and I'm sure it will be engaging if placed at a more prominent location.”

“I like your project. It delves deeper (into a person's mind) than any other projects that I've seen so far.”

“I think this reading initiative, Read and Reap, really benefits the society. This reading initiative uses an incentive to motivate the public to read more. By making use of book vouchers, which share a close relationship with the purchase of books, it encourages the public to read even more. If they read a book and actually win vouchers then they would be able to purchase more books, and perhaps even participate in 'Read and Reap'”

several times! I hope that NLB could create more of these types of reading initiatives to motivate the public to read even more. The other benefit is that it enables frequent readers to have a platform to share their reading experiences. When you've read something in a book that's really enjoyable, you would definitely want to share it with your family members, which is what I always do. When I find an interesting excerpt/ paragraph/ essay, I would read it aloud to my mother, and she would listen, immersed in the interesting plot of the story. Sometimes, since it doesn't tell the full story, it actually has a moral of the story at the end. As we read books, we learn from the author's writing style and also learn from the meaning hidden within the words printed on the surface of the page. In the future, NLB could create a reading initiative to ask the public to analyse book excerpts, since when I read, I always analyse the text in detail to get a richer, fuller understanding of the text.” – From Alex (11 years old)

“I think Read and Reap is the perfect platform for youths to share tips and good reads, and the Read and Reap motion has done perfect job in attracting youths to start reading and reaping from books.” – From Jia Wei (14 years old)

One year from the launch of Read and Reap, a competition named “The Power of Fiction”, was organised for young people in 2009. It was open to all student members of the library, aged 13 – 19 years old. Students could choose to work individually or in a team and had to come up with a full Read and Reap poster, complete with an extract of their choosing, a thought provoking question, recommended reads and an eye catching caption.

The aim of the competition was to encourage young people to enjoy fiction and discover in the process, discover that fiction is a powerful platform for intellectual stimulus. Students of winning entries were given book vouchers and their works and schools were both publicised on the Read and Reap website and printed for distribution. The intention here was to show these students that what they gained from reading had wide reaching effects; what they imagined was a powerful talking point from a piece of fiction would eventually inspire different conversations island-wide.

“The Power of Fiction” competition was well received, with a total of 239 participants, of which 65 submitted as individuals and the rest belonging to one of 20 teams. The students came from 20 different schools and submitted works with topics that ranged from war to women's sizes, feminist concerns and even library behaviour. Some were funny and others serious. The winning works⁶ can be viewed at the Read and Reap website, the direct link being <http://blogs.nlb.gov.sg/readandreap/general/the-power-of-fiction-winners/>.

⁶ Best few entries from students are attached in appendix 2.2. The rest can be viewed at the website at <http://readandreap.sg>.

Here are some of the comments from participants of the competition.

“Thank you for organising such a great event, and I really enjoyed making this poster, as I got to ponder more deeply about the book”

– Cho Soo Min

“I like the creative aspect and thought process which one would go through when selecting an extract and question. The extract selection was especially tough yet interesting because you have to pick a concise part of the book to illustrate the full essence or point of the story, without compromising on its content and meaning.”

–Vincent Lee

The response from the competition was an affirmation that Read and Reap had youth appeal. It was able to reach out to people of different age groups and as a programme, was powerful as a tool to promote fiction.

2.3 REAPING THE SUCCESS OF READ AND REAP

Read and Reap owes its success to visual appeal and innovative repackaging of traditional text. It is essentially one single engaging extract from a book made colourful through a poster with an additional “value” outcome—that being the question which bridges the text to a personal experience of the reader.

Read and Reap works on multiple levels: it recommends a book, gives options for additional reading materials and gets people to reflect and discuss themes—all in one piece of paper or blog. It is flexible because it allows different reading elements to be utilised at the same time and reaches out to different audiences simultaneously. Children, young people and adults can view the same question and answer them differently. While the original intent was to have specific extracts for different age groups, the team has discovered that age is no barrier when some themes related to universal values are discussed.

Unlike a programme where the library gives and only the reader benefits, in Read and Reap, readers come forward to give their thoughts and comments and sometimes, even extracts from other good reads. This is a “pay it forward” mentality and a social behaviour that should be encouraged. While readers benefit, they return the favour by helping others benefit. In the age of new media, such exchanges are facilitated by online social networks, blogs, Youtube and more. This makes Read and Reap an idea that will easily catch on in the public imagination.

Read and Reap is very much the project of the new generation. It allows itself to be integrated smoothly into the time-compressed lives of readers. It “speaks” in the language of a generation that uses the Internet by its online presence and at the same time, uses traditional print media to engage those who prefer otherwise.

2.4 READ AND REAP IN NUMBERS AND WORDS

Just two months after the launch of Read and Reap, 400 schools and 21 public libraries took part in the programme. The blog garnered 2229 page views and visitors were not limited to Singapore but also came from the U.S., U.K., Japan, Germany, Bahamas and Taiwan. Now the list has grown to include visitors from Canada, India, Australia, Philippines, Netherlands, Indonesia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Sweden, UAE, Ireland Spain and Belgium. There are close to 100 extracts on the blog and as of November 2009, there are 437 comments posted.

Over 100 extracts have been submitted by members of the public. Of these some are not suitable. Those that are suitable are posted on the blog. Enthusiastic members of the public have also submitted multiple extracts and the youngest contributor is 8 years old. Forming a substantial portion of the followers are members of the public who prefer to read extracts rather than submit their own. As of March 2010, there are more than 2300 subscribers on the email list. These subscribers get updates on new extracts that are posted on the blog as well as activities that are related to Read and Reap. Collectively, these people form a loose community of what the team affectionately terms “Reapers”, referring to followers of the Read and Reap movement.

3.1 DUELING WITH THE COST CHALLENGE

No project is ever without its challenges. One of the major challenges of both Quest and Read and Reap is funding. From the printing of trading cards to Read and Reap posters, setting up of websites and publicity, the projects are relatively costly in the scheme of things. These costs are justifiably necessary as these projects rely heavily on the visual. To get attractive trading cards, professional illustrators had to be engaged. To get beautiful posters for extracts; a professional design house was required.

Moving ahead, Quest is continuing for another season with a new storyline and an additional sixty trading cards. As to whether Quest can continue beyond the second season, it remains something that NLB is exploring and is dependent on whether funding can be secured. Currently Quest is a free programme for all children library members.

Read and Reap, on the other hand is made self-sustaining, cost-wise, by two methods. The first is the reusing of poster designs. New extracts replace older extracts on the posters, which have already been pre-designed. The other way was through inviting students, through competitions to submit their works and designs and that has proven to yield a fairly high standard. Printing of posters, however, is still an unavoidable cost unless it is left to schools to carry out on their own on a need basis.

CONCLUSION: READING IS ALIVE

Going back to Steven Job’s statement that people do not read anymore, NLB believes that that is not true. As one netizen puts it, “people read, even those in the

younger generation, they just prefer to do it online.”⁷ When considering the reading market, it is also necessary to consider the reading of non-print media. If that is what appeals to the up and coming generation as well as those who come after, then the strategies that the organisation takes as a whole have to take on a different approach.

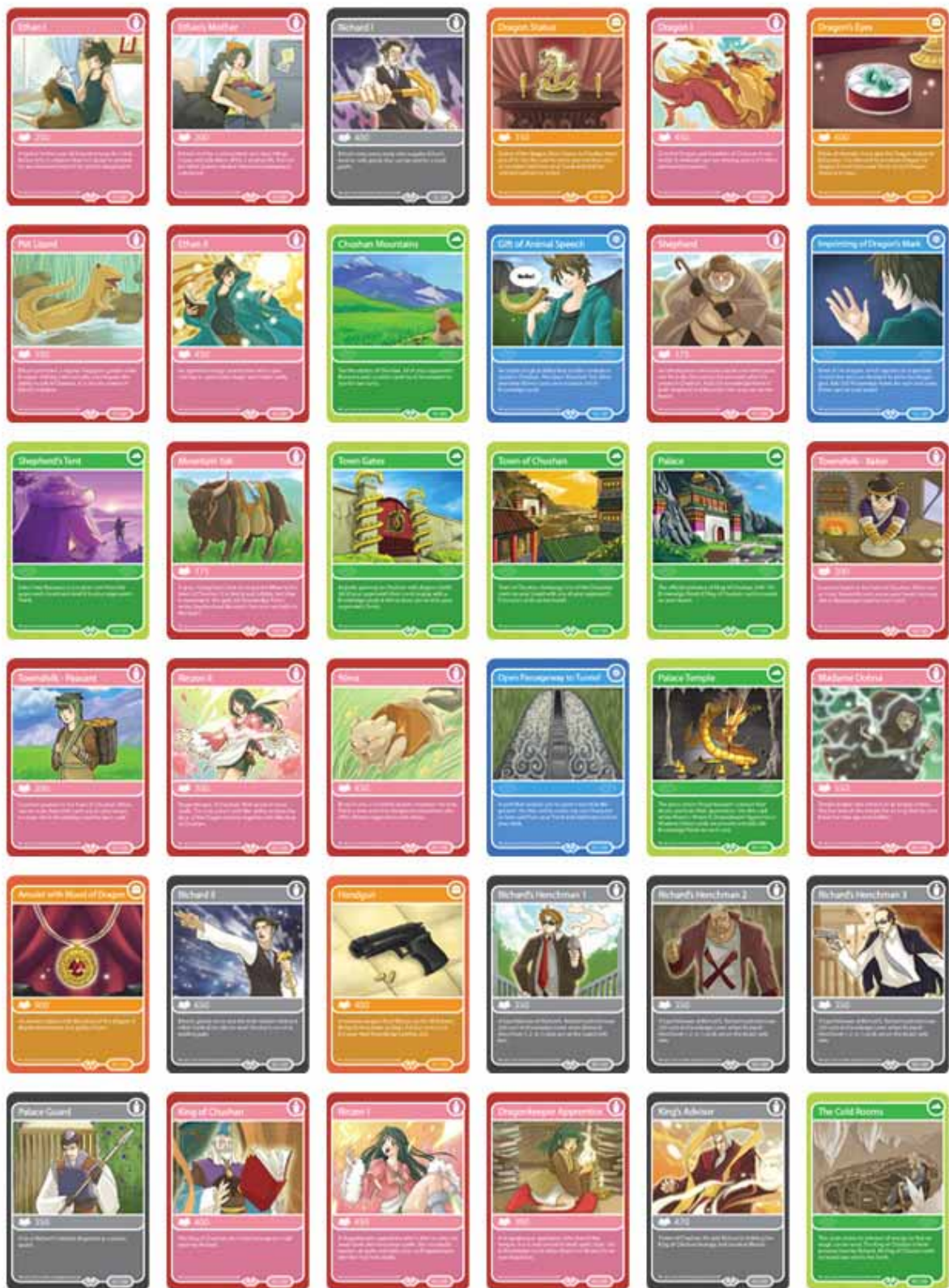
The challenge of engaging the digital natives is real. They do not perceive themselves to be in need of libraries. If one asks them where they get their information, they’ll say Wikipedia or name countless other online databases. In their opinion, the library is not completely necessary. But then again, the question here is whether the Internet is really a perfect substitute and if people are reading online, are we as libraries simply worrying needlessly about reading becoming endangered?

Perhaps it is early to say but the world of reading is a huge one and online content may only present one form of reading or a limited representation of all the print media that is out there. Quest and Read and Reap are like bridges, using a preferred method of delivery to present something that has existed since the printing press was invented. In the scheme of things, these two projects are still young but it is the hope of NLB that the reading seeds have been planted through them and eventually these will flourish into a lifetime of avid readers.

Reference:

Sullivan, M. (2009). *Connecting boys with books 2*. Chicago: American Library Association.

⁷ Perez, S. (2008, March 17). *Steve jobs was only half-right: people do read - even kids - they just do it online*. Retrieved 26 May 2010 from http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/people_do_read_they_just_do_it_online.php



APPENDIX 2.1 – THE POSTERS OF READ AND REAP



READ & REAP

R

That was the problem.....
I didn't know

"Are you... after the jewels in Dad's shop? Is that the d-delivery you were all talking about?" I asked.

Quill took some thin plastic rope out of his jacket pocket before nodding. My heart sank to my toe nails at the sight of it. Dad used the same kind for wrapping parcels at home. It was thin but very strong, almost unbreakable.

"Once we get the jewels, we'll let you go. I promise," said Quill.

"And if Dad doesn't hand them over?"

"He wants you back, doesn't he?"

And the question turned my blood cold, because that was the problem. I didn't know. Dad loved his shop and his jewels. Dad always retreated to his shop when the quarrels between him and Mum became too bitter. Many times I'd watched him dust the displays of gold and silver necklaces, lovingly polish the gold rings, dust off the expensive gem stones. It had actually made me feel jealous. Then I felt foolish and incredibly angry for being jealous of bits of metal and fancy glass.

Extract from the book Hostage
By Malorie Blackman
All Rights Reserved
Edinburgh: Barrington Stoke, 2001, c1999
Call Number: J English BLA

Can you love an
object more than
your family?

Recommended Reads
Available at NLB

Operation Gadgetman
By Malorie Blackman
Call Number: J English BLA

Abigail's gift
By S.G. Potts
Call Number: J English POT

Tracking daddy down
By Marybeth Kelsey
Call Number: J English KEL

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IF HE COULDN'T PASS FAIRLY, HE DIDN'T WANT TO PASS

Reynie had a sudden insight: Rhonda was calling attention to herself on purpose. It was a trick. No one would suspect her of cheating, because who in her right mind would make such a spectacle of herself if she intended to cheat? The green hair (it must be a wig), the poofy dress, the whispering – they were all meant to distract. Most people assume that if a child intended to cheat, then surely she would call as little attention to herself as possible, would be as quiet as a mouse and as plain as wallpaper. Reynie had to hand it to Rhonda: She might not be smart enough to pass the test, but she was clever enough to get away with cheating on it. He felt a pang of jealousy. Now Rhonda would move on to experience those special opportunities, while Reynie would move his way back to the orphanage, defeated.

As Rhonda passed by him on the way to her desk, she winked and let fall a tiny slip of paper. It drifted down like a feather and settled lightly upon Reynie's desk. The test answers. Reynie peeked over at the pencil woman, but she hadn't noticed – she was busy grading Rhonda's test now, making check mark after check mark and nodding her head. So the answers were indeed the right ones. And here they sat on his desk.

If he'd felt tempted before, when he'd had no idea how hard the test would be, that temptation was nothing compared to now. No matter that he'd resisted, no matter that he'd chosen this seat precisely to avoid this situation, here he was, staring at a slip of paper that contained the key to his hopes. All he had to do was turn it over and look at the answers. The other children were too busy sniffing and biting their fingernails to notice, and if he hurried, he might even copy the answers down before the pencil woman looked up again. She had finished grading Rhonda's paper and was concentrating on the nearly empty jar of pickles, trying to fish out the last one. Reynie stared a long moment at the paper, sorely tempted.

Then, he reached out and flicked it from his desk and onto the floor.

What good would those opportunities do him if he wasn't qualified to be given them? And where was the pleasure in cheating? If he couldn't pass fairly, he didn't want to pass. He thought this – and mostly believed it – and felt his spirits boosted by the decision. But even so, a few seconds passed before he could tear his eyes from the paper on the floor. All right, he told himself, returning to the test. Get a move on, Reynie, and don't look back. There's no time to waste.

Extract from the book *The Mysterious Benedict Society*
By Trenton Lee Stewart
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New York: Little, Brown, 2007
Call Number: J English STE

Would you cheat if you knew
you could get away with it?

RECOMMENDED READS

Available at NLB

Title: The Penderwicks on Gardam Street
By Jeanne Birdsall
Call Number: J English BIR

Title: The Willoughbys
By Lois Lowry
Call Number: J English LOW

Title: Horns & wrinkles
By Joseph Helgeson
Call Number: J English HEL

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APPENDIX 2.2 – READ AND REAP POSTERS BY STUDENTS

