

Opening Address

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Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information
Dr Ingrid Parent, President of IFLA
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen
Good morning

Welcome to this year's 79th International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) 2013. To all who have come a long way to join us, I would like to welcome you to our warm and sunny island with equal warmth in our hearts.

The Library Association of Singapore and the National Library Board are honoured to have the opportunity to host this Congress for our friends and colleagues from around the world. Our theme "Future Libraries: Infinite Possibilities" was chosen because we believe many exciting ideas will surface when over 3000 delegates talk passionately with each other about libraries of the future.

Libraries have enriched the lives of many people around the world; I am among those who have memories of happy times spent in libraries, and learning through libraries. But there are still many people who have no access to a library and the knowledge that such access represents. Today, the pervasiveness of technology presents both challenges and opportunities for libraries. How libraries look and what libraries do will keep changing, however, our desire to create better lives for people everywhere through discovery, learning and creation will endure.

For today's opening ceremony, we are delighted to have our Minister, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, grace this occasion. We are also very pleased to have Ambassador Chan Heng Chee as our keynote speaker, sharing her thoughts about libraries and the future. Ambassador Chan is Chairman of the Lee Kwan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities - a think tank for urban innovation. In addition to being an intellectual giant, Ambassador Chan is an inspiration to many Asian women, having succeeded in traditionally male dominated fields.

Parag Khanna and Cherian George, our plenary speakers, are thought leaders whose provocative and insightful perspectives I hope you will enjoy over the next two days.

In Singapore, we not only love our libraries, we also love to enjoy ourselves. Our cultural evening will be held at Tanjong Beach Club in Sentosa so to those of you who are looking forward to experiencing the hospitality of a tropical island, be sure not to miss this.

Many Singaporeans will tell you that Singapore is a food paradise - do try some of our national dishes. We have lovely museums and beautiful gardens so please find time to enjoy these after the congress. Shops that open late are everywhere, so do visit them at night.

The IFLA National Committee, and all friends and colleagues from libraries around Singapore have put in many months of hard work to ensure that the congress runs smoothly and all delegates have a memorable time. We could not have done this without the strong support we have received from our sponsors and partners.

I would also like to give my heartfelt thanks to our volunteers from all walks of life who have come forward to support this event in many ways. For the library goers of Singapore who have supported our libraries so steadfastly, we have organised public talks so that they can also benefit being the congress being in Singapore. My deep appreciation to the speakers who have generously taken the time to give talks at our public libraries.

Finally, our greatest reward would be knowing that all of you had a meaningful and enjoyable time at this conference. I wish you an inspiring time at this year's Congress and a wonderful time in Singapore.

Thank You.