

CONTENTS

- 1 Message from the Chief Editor
- 2 NIE Goes Wireless
- 2 Sharing on Bb@NIE
- 3 Accessing the LIBRIS Chinese Catalogue
- 4 Macintosh Laboratory
- 4 Special Display at LIBRIS
- 5 ACIS Workout-For a Healthier Mind and Body
- 6 CIO Award
- 6 NIE WIT Convention Awards

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Message from the Chief Editor

A long time ago, probably before I started working (did I hear you say that doesn't sound like very long ago? - Thank you!), I remember listening to a general knowledge quiz, *Brain of Britain*, in which a contestant was asked what IT stood for. Unfortunately for him, he got the answer wrong. Now, of course, the abbreviation has so entered our vocabulary that I believe the newspapers don't bother putting "Information Technology" after IT anymore.

A browse through previous issues of *ACIS Plug-In* also serves to highlight the rate of technological progress. Our first article on Blackboard (Bb) appeared in April 2002, we had an item on the Bb cartridges in the October 2002 issue, and now in this present issue Mdm Diana Chong and Ms Seow Chow Loon from the Centre for IT in Education (CITE), update you further on the benefits that can be derived from Blackboard.

In the IT world, what's a more trendy word than "wired"? Wireless! Asst Prof Tan Seng Chee from Instructional Science (IS) and Mr Peter Chuah from CITE track down the latest wireless developments on campus for us.

If you are puzzled about how to search for Chinese titles in the Library and Information Services Centre (LIBRIS) catalogue or WebOPAC, Ms Loi Sai Bay gives us some tips and explanations about searching and how to view the Chinese character display.

We have had write-ups about the T-Room and the Teaching and Learning (T & L) Environments, and now we bring you the latest about the second Macintosh laboratory.

The NIE WIT Convention was held on 12 March 2003, and congratulations are due to all who bravely took part (many, many years ago, I did take part, and I thought it was a feat not to black out). LIBRIS participated in the Achiever Category and won a gold medal with its "Reducing time spent in generating book spine labels" project.

And, finally, if I should sound slightly more energetic than usual, this is probably thanks to the ACIS Health Programme pilot project, which started in late February. Staff may choose between walking/jogging and sessions at the gym. We would really like to thank the NTU Healthy Lifestyle Committee for their help, support, advice and funding.

Keep healthy and well!

Yvonne Yin
Chief Editor

NIE Goes Wireless

*Tan Seng Chee, Instructional Science (IS)
and Peter Chuah Chin Kah, CITE*

Finally, the long awaited wireless infrastructure project in NIE is near completion. From end April 2003, NIE campus will have a new addition in technology infrastructure - wireless local area network (LAN). We will have campus-wide wireless coverage, including tutorial rooms, laboratories, the library, meeting rooms, and the canteen. What's more, our system includes a new technology that offers connection speed of up to 54 megabits per second (mbps), which means a larger bandwidth for streaming audio and video files, while maintaining downward compatibility with the previous technology based on the 802.11b wireless standard that limits data-transfer rates to 11 mbps.

While some of our more 'techno-savvy' staff might be eagerly waiting to whip out their latest multimedia Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) once the wireless infrastructure is ready, others might still be wondering what this wireless technology can do for us. Basically, wireless LAN offers greater mobility, accessibility, flexibility, and productivity in teaching and learning. Carl Berger, a professor of Science and Technology Education and the Director of Advanced Academic Technologies at the University of Michigan, highlighted some of the possible implications that wireless might have for teaching and learning:

- Better realisation of 'anywhere, anytime'
- Freedom of organisation in and out of the classroom
- Collaboration among students separated geographically
- Transparent connections to the Internet
- Remote sensing and integration of information
- Shift from 'anywhere, anytime' to 'everywhere, everytime'

Imagine this - you prepare your instructional presentation materials on your wireless laptop, bring your laptop into a tutorial

room and beam your presentation via a projector. Your trainees use their wireless laptops or PDAs in class to take notes, surf the Internet, or exchange information (depending on your instructional activities). You know what you have done? You have just transformed the tutorial room into a computer laboratory! Simple, neat, brilliant.

Another scenario - a trainee walks into NIE and feels his PDA vibrating. He takes it out and finds a message waiting for him. It is an announcement from his tutor that the venue has been changed. With a few 'taps' on his PDA, he forwards this message to his classmates.

So, how does wireless technology change our pedagogy? We shall hold back for now to 'whet your appetite.' Suffice to say, some of our colleagues have already come up with innovative ideas on how we can capitalise on wireless technology for teaching and learning. We cordially invite you to do the same, and we promise we will share some of these ideas in the near future.



Trainee teachers using a wireless Tablet PC to access the network at the LearningHub@LIBRIS

Sharing on Bb@NIE

CITE has been organising regular workshops, sharing and consultancy sessions on Blackboard (Bb) for NIE academic staff. Recently, a number of Bb in-house sharing and consultancy sessions were conducted by Diana Chong, Senior Instructional Designer and Peter Chuah, Instructional Designer.

Enhancing your Bb course with basic instructional design skills

CITE provides one to one or group consultancy sessions on "Enhancing your Blackboard course with basic instructional design skills" on a regular basis. During these sessions, Peter will share with you on how to apply core instructional design skills to plan, design and develop teaching and learning activities to increase students' self-management and independence. You can make an appointment with us to discuss how to use Blackboard to build and manage the teaching and learning activities in your modules.

How to use Bb for lectures and tutorials

The series of "How to use Bb for Lectures and Tutorials" sessions started in February 2003. It gave those who already have hands-on experience with Bb a chance to share and explore with one another how Bb can be used specifically to improve lectures and tutorials. Each session starts with a "proposal of Bb benefits" by CITE and the participants have a chance to be innovative and brainstorm on the advantages of Bb.

Diana Chong and Seow Chow Loon, CITE

How to use Bb for quizzes and surveys

For those who already have hands-on experience with Bb, this is a chance for you to share and explore how to tweak the quizzes and surveys for getting feedback, and how to re-use them in courses. Come and try out the techniques for importing and exploring quizzes, and setting up random questions from a question bank!

If you missed the Bb sharing sessions, just pick up the useful handouts from http://courses.nie.edu.sg/bb_support_lct.htm. The handouts list various ways of using Bb's features for getting feedback and for providing guided learning. The listing is handy if you want to do more than just uploading documents and information on Bb.

Also new to most NIE lecturers is the Bb DIY (Do it yourself) Utilities, where lecturers can create Bb courses and enrol their students from the comfort of their office. This easy-to-use software is found as the bold red link in <http://courses.nie.edu.sg>. The DIY Utilities will be the main way for lecturers to have their Bb courses created from next semester onwards.

The Bb user support site remains open 24/7 at <http://courses.nie.edu.sg>. Check out the very useful and very friendly Bb tutorials.

Accessing the LIBRIS Chinese Catalogue

Loi Sai Bay, Manager/Cataloguing Unit, LIBRIS

Ever wondered how to view the Chinese titles in the library system? You were right if you thought it was not that straightforward. Our library system currently only accepts HZ code for entering Chinese characters, and because of this, common Chinese software such as Chinese Star cannot be used to view the Chinese titles as they support only GB (Guo Biao) and Big 5 (“Da wu ma”) codes.

A partial solution is available via the Internet Explorer encoding function. Due to the current library system’s limitation, only the title can be displayed in Chinese characters. Other information such as the author’s name or publisher can only be displayed in Hanyu Pinyin.

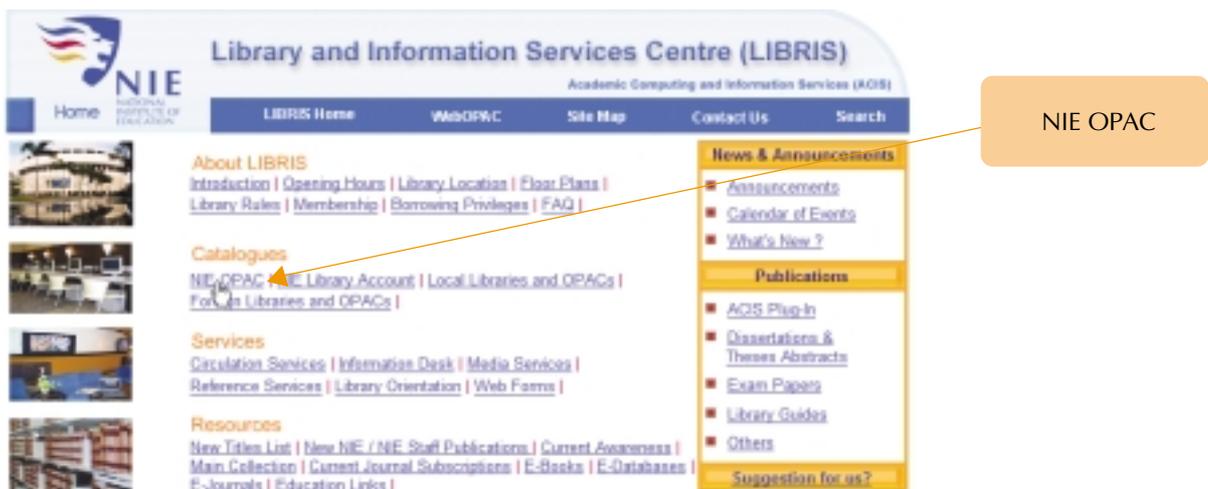
However, this is still better than no character display at all. The following are the how-to steps for searching Chinese titles in the library WebOPAC system:

1. Key in LIBRIS website address:

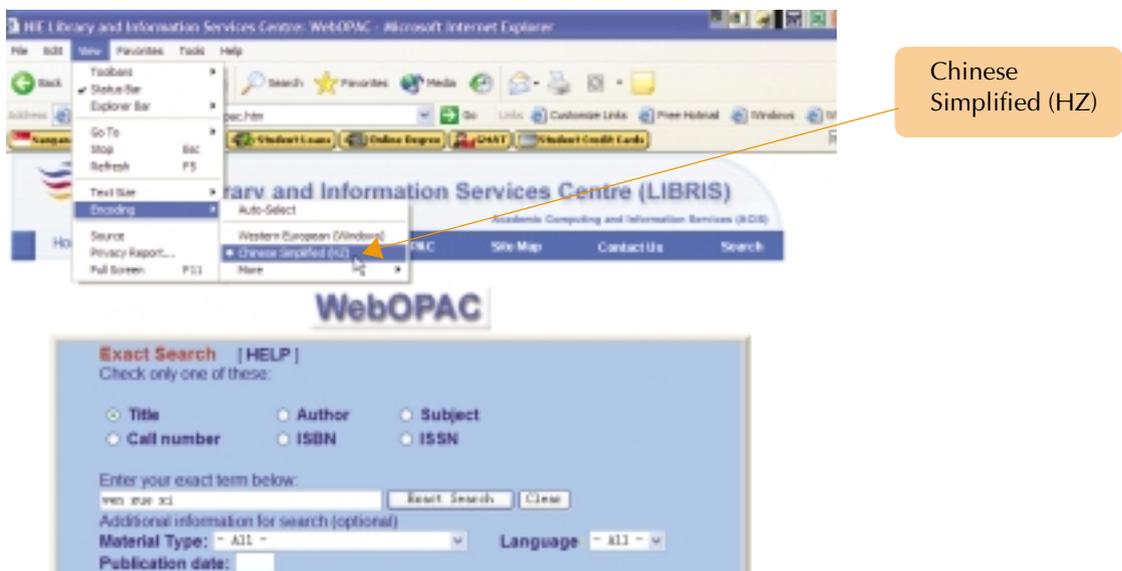
http://libris.nie.edu.sg



2. Click on NIEOPAC:



3. Right click on the mouse and select Encoding (HZ code) and key in the book title in Hanyu Pinyin:



Accessing the LIBRIS Chinese Catalogue (cont'd)

4. The title list will appear:

WEN XUE XI

- [Wen xue xi lie \(Ming bao chu ban she, Xiang gang\)](#) (2 titles)
- [Wen xue xian xiang = Trends and topographies of recent Taiwanese writing.](#) (1 title)
- [Wen xue xian xiang = 文学现象.](#) (1 title)
- [Wen xue Xiang gang yu Li Bi Hua.](#) (1 title)
- [Wen xue Xiang gang yu Li Bi Hua = 文学香港与李碧华.](#) (1 title)
- [Wen xue xian xiang shu.](#) (4 titles)
- [Wen xue xin lun.](#) (1 title)
- [Wen xue xin lun = 文学新论.](#) (1 title)

5. Select the required title to view details:

Wen xue xian xiang = 文学现象.

Records 1 to 1 of 1

- [Wen xue xian xiang = Trends and topographies of recent Taiwanese writing / shu bian, Lin Yao De, Tai bei : Zheng zhong shu ju, 1993.](#)

Holdings:

LENDING

- CALL NUMBER: PL3031.T3D96 -- BOOK -- Available

Macintosh Laboratory

Seow Chow Loon



Trainee teachers busy preparing their projects using the Macintosh.

Good news for Macintosh (Mac) fans! A new Mac laboratory has been set up in NIE. This is the second Mac laboratory so far. The first one was set up by the English Language & Literature Academic Group (ELL AG) two years ago. Located at NIE3-B1-06, this second Mac laboratory is equipped with 20 Macs, 2 scanners and a colour poster printer.

The laboratory is frequently used by academic staff from the Visual and Performing Arts Academic Group (VPA AG) for conducting lessons for trainee teachers. The laboratory is opened for booking by other academic staff. However, priority will be given to staff from VPA AG. If you are interested, please email Asst Prof Guy La Pointe at glapoi@nie.edu.sg to make a booking.

More information on other computer facilities...

Apart from the Mac laboratory, there are other common computer labs which academic staff could utilise for their lessons. Some of the computer laboratories are available for booking at <http://www.nie.edu.sg/html/fass.htm>.

These laboratories are used to teach trainee and in-service teachers attending the foundation course module in instructional technology as well as those attending course modules on the integration of IT into the school curriculum subjects. When these laboratories are not being used for teaching, some of them are available to trainee teachers for project work such as the creation of computer-based teaching and learning materials.

Special Display at LIBRIS

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA

In collaboration with Natural Science Academic Group, LIBRIS is holding a 4-week mini display on DNA to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA. Starting from 25 April 2003, you will get to see the display at the LIBRIS Lobby. A concurrent display will also be held at the DNACentre@NIE.

The themes of the exhibits are as follows:

Week 1 : Introduction to DNA

Week 2 : Post Watson and Crick: major discoveries and other milestones

Week 3 : Applications in Medicine and Genetic Engineering

Week 4 : Ethics and policy

Interested? Come and journey through the exhibition at LIBRIS and DNACentre@NIE to find out more!

ACIS Workout – For a Healthier Mind and Body

ACIS Health Programme Committee

The ACIS Health Programme Committee was formed recently to organise a three-month pilot health programme for ACIS staff. The programme is a collaboration with the PE & Sports Science (PESS) Academic Group and the NTU Healthy Lifestyle Committee. With Director, NIE, as the Guest of Honour, the programme started with a launch held on 19 February 2003. Following the briefing by Mr Ng Aik Song, chairman of the committee, staff enthusiastically participated in the 3 km big walk within NTU campus.



The participants enjoyed the "cool" Big Walk at the launch

The objective of the Health Programme is to get ACIS staff to exercise on a regular basis. We believe that a healthy mind and body makes for a healthier ACIS. To achieve the objective, activities such as Jog/Walk and Fitness sessions are conducted twice weekly, with each session lasting 30 to 45 minutes. The activities were planned based on the feedback from staff through a survey conducted in January 2003. Prior to the sessions, staff were given a general health check and a health history questionnaire to ascertain their suitability for specific exercises.



Raymond, the advisor for the Health Programme, assisted the team in the health check. Shown above, he explained to the staff the meaning behind the results of their blood pressure measurements.

The progress of the staff for the Jog/Walk sessions is measured through assessment tests spread over 3 sessions. The assessments are conducted at the NIE triangle where staff have to do a 2.4 km run or a 1.6 km walk. At the fitness sessions, the progress of the participants is reflected in the record sheets.



Staff progress is recorded at every session

The ACIS Health Programme Committee would like to thank the NTU Healthy Lifestyle Committee, especially A/P Quek Jin Jong and Mr Raymond Loh, for their support and funding for this programme. In addition, we would also like to thank Asst Prof David Waters and his student helpers for their valuable assistance in making the programme a success.

The video footage of our health programme launch is available at <http://videoweb.nie.edu.sg>



Some comments from staff:

"I attend the gym sessions and find them very useful. I used to go to gym during my lunch hours but as I was not properly instructed, I didn't even know if I was using the machines correctly, or worse still, toning the wrong parts of the body. According to Dr Waters, I am ready to proceed to the next phase when the instructor will look specifically into my problem areas and tailor a programme especially for my needs. The one-to-one service and attention I get is even better than joining a private fitness club!"

– Pauline Ang, LIBRIS

"I would like to thank the Health Committee for your effort in planning this Programme. This is one of the fun ways to be active as it integrates physical activity into our daily life. Our Health Programme is definitely beneficial to us!"

– Ong Pang Sun, IT Support Team

"Thanks a lot for organising this programme. We love it."

– Derick Ng, CSC

Congratulations!

CIO Award

Tan Hoon Chiang, Head/CSC

NIE is honoured to receive the 2003 CIO 100 award for achieving excellence in strategic enterprise IT deployment.

The CIO 100 is an annual index of Asia's top 100 performing enterprise users of IT that have leveraged the use of information technology to derive the highest strategic value and yield the greatest returns for their businesses. The first CIO 100 and CIO Awards in Asia were organised by CIO Asia in 2001. A CIO 100 listing is not just another business listing. CIO 100 Honorees are chosen as role models for other organisations to learn from and emulate in achieving long-term strategic success. The nominees for the award are required to identify new innovative uses of IT or business initiatives that have made a significant impact on their organisation.

NIE submitted the Secure Single Sign-on Staff Portal Initiative for the award consideration. This initiative began when ACIS conceptualised a one-stop Portal gateway to all NIE services for staff access in a user-friendly and efficient manner. The Portal provides a personalised user-oriented environment which provides accurate and relevant information to the user in a timely manner. The Portal has security implementations such as biometric authentication or fingerprinting in place to safeguard information at all levels.

The Secure Sign-On Staff Portal not only provides a gateway for all electronic services provided by NIE but also provides a platform for staff to interact socially and share ideas. Facilities such as the online forum, instant messaging and video conferencing are all available through the Portal in a simple and convenient format for staff use.



The implementation of the Portal is a strategic initiative as it requires enterprise resource planning to move progressively towards an online and centrally managed information hub. Traditional business processes are periodically reviewed and reengineered to provide better service to staff in a truly customer-centric model. The initiative has impacted even the work culture of the staff as each member becomes more conscious and proactive in serving others. Collaborative efforts between departments have flourished and this promises to become an integral part of the overall work culture of NIE.

In summary, the Portal has increased the efficiency and effectiveness of all electronic services delivered to staff. It has also provided an excellent framework for the delivery of strategic applications such as the e-learning programme. ACIS is proud to have contributed to the NIE standard of an Institute of Distinction through this initiative.

NIE WIT Convention Awards

Yvonne Yin

Congratulations to PAGES (Providing A Good and Effective Service) WIT team from LIBRIS! The team, led by Pauline Ang and facilitator Siti Fauziah, won a gold medal in the NIE WIT Convention held on 12 March 2003. The title of their project was "Reducing time spent in generating book spine labels". The dodderly dot-matrix printer that was used to print the spine labels frequently jammed, and was a source of much frustration to the staff. The problem could not be solved just by replacing the printer, as the spine label program in the library system (acquired many years ago) worked properly only on the obsolete dot-matrix printer. Another problem was that the printer could only accommodate labels of a certain width; books with narrow spines had to have their spine labels typed out manually on a typewriter.

The WIT team chose this spine-label printing problem as their project and brainstormed for solutions. Unfortunately, at that time, the Computer Services Centre (CSC) was very busy with other projects and unable to spare enough time to look into the problem. Happily, however, we happened to be surrounded by IT-savvy people. Student assistants working in the Cataloguing Unit got to hear about the problem and before long, a student assistant was engaged to write a new spine label program that could use a laser printer to print out the labels.

The program was written, tested and fine-tuned and data collected. The big day came and the project was presented. In spite of the rehearsals held earlier, there were still a few butterflies a-fluttering,

but presentation wasn't everything, and PAGES came through with a gold in the Achiever Category!

The program has been working well and since a laser printer is used, the quality is better and darker than the print from the old dot-matrix printer. In short, the labels look more presentable, are definitely easier to read and so make shelving easier.

We would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate Loi Sai Bay, Manager/Cataloguing Unit. Not only was she very closely involved with the winning WIT project, she also won the award for best individual suggestion (Staff Suggestion Scheme). The best WIT suggestion (designing a "roulette" chart to calculate student assistants' working hours more easily) was also successfully implemented with her assistance and support.

Again, heartiest congratulations to all the winners at the NIE WIT Convention!



Well done, PAGES!