

The Legacy Exhibition Experience: a multi-perspective view of Tan Kah Kee and Lee Kong Chian

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While many libraries and research institutions had created exhibitions with Overseas Chinese as the theme, there are little literature written on their experience, let alone the conceptualization and creation processes for such exhibitions. This paper is an attempt to summarize the experience of the author in the development of the exhibition held at the National Library, Singapore in 2008 on Tan Kah Kee and Lee Kong Chian, two well-known Chinese pioneers.

The exhibition features four galleries dedicated to Tan and Lee's roles as entrepreneurs, promoters of education and community leaders and the legacy they left behind. To engage the interest of the younger generation, photographs and artifacts were carefully chosen and designed to weave the stories of both men together. A fair use of videos, oral history recordings and newly created audio interviews add to the multi-sensory experience for the visitors, and the interactive features for public to participate in a poll and a quiz on what they can do for others as well as for the future generation add to the fun of visiting the exhibition. A classroom gallery that depicts a classroom of the 1950s comes with interesting discoveries hidden inside each of the 40 desks, making it refreshing to the youth, while bringing back nostalgia and memories for those who have attended classes in rooms with similar furniture.

Related programs include a Symposium, tours for visitors to the places of significance to the two men, public talks and a students' contest.

This paper aims to highlight the issues and lessons learned in the research for the exhibition, the planning and setting up of such an exhibition, the collaboration with overseas and local organizations, as well as the organization of related programs.