

## Singapore chronicles: a local Encyclopedia Britannica?

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*The Middle Ground*, 11 December 2015

THE first 10 titles from a series of publications that record, explain and offer insights into the evolution of Singapore as a nation, were launched yesterday morning at the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Law. The Singapore Chronicles series are a 50-volume range featuring 50 topics from the economy to governance, to topics such as Singapore's flora and fauna.

The book launch was attended by Guest-of-Honour, Chairman of the SG50 Steering Committee and Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, who said that the series are defined by four significant themes: Singapore's historical watermarks, institutions which have aided Singapore's growth as a nation-state, Singapore's relation to the outside world as well as her sense of identity.

In his opening speech for the event, director of Institute of Policy Studies Janadas Devan said that the Chronicles were meant to be primers. That is, they were meant to be brief and succinct insights into topics, like his favourite childhood books the Encyclopedia Britannica, which were the "ultimate primer".

But are the Chronicles as comprehensive yet readable as the Encyclopedia Britannica?

The range of topics certainly is broad, and the target audience is said by Mr Devan to be the "intelligent lay reader" as the book is written non-academically and "does not strive to have the last word on any particular subject".

In fact, it was a challenge for the editorial team to edit the volumes so that they would be accessible to the non-scholar. Compressing the long historical accounts into 100 pages without losing crucial details was also a challenge. But the team seems to have succeeded, as they said the books are written at an "optimal level" and post-secondary school students will be able to read them. "We are confident the books will be accessible to them." said Mr Arun Mahizhnan, editorial team leader.

Diversity was "immaterial in this instance", said Mr Arun, as "each author is an expert in her or his field and is telling a different story". That means that each book is written in the style of the author, whether they are public servants, academics or journalists.

Readers who plan to pick up one of these books for light reading might still find that some may contain more academic lingo than others, depending on the books' topics and authors. If you're interested in reading up on other topics like food and literature, you'll have to wait till next year. Here is a table of the list of the ten books that have been launched for the 50-volume Singapore Chronicle series:

No	Topic	Author (s)
1	Colonial Singapore	Dr Nicholas Tarling
2	Constitution	Dr Kevin Y L Tan
3	Defence	Mr Ho Shu Huang, Dr Samuel Chan
4	Diplomacy	Prof Evelyn Goh, Dr Daniel Chua
5	Education	Prof Saravanan Gopinathan
6	Eurasians	Dr Alexius A Pereira
7	Heritage	Mr Kennie Ting
8	Indians	Prof Vineeta Sinha
9	Law	Associate Prof Goh Yihan
10	Presidency	Prof Thio Li-ann

As manuscripts for the other 40 books are going through blind reviews and an approval process, the authors for those books will not be revealed until the books are ready to be published. The table of topics for the 40 books can be seen here:

No	Topic
1	Architecture
2	Chinese
3	Civil Society
4	Confrontation
No	Topic
5	CPF
6	Demography

7	Economy
8	Energy
9	Environment
10	Emergency
11	Finance
12	Food
13	Flora & Fauna
14	Gateway
15	Governance
16	Housing
17	Healthcare
18	Japanese Occupation
19	Language
20	Literature
21	Malays
22	Media
23	Merger
24	Multiculturalism
25	Opposition
<b>No</b>	<b>Topic</b>
26	Pre-colonial Singapore
27	Policing

28	Politics
29	PAP
30	Religion
31	Separation
32	Social Services
33	Sports
34	Theatre
35	Trade
36	Trade Unions
37	Transport
38	Urban Planning
39	Visual Arts
40	Water