

SPORTING GLORY

Sharen Chua shares highlights of commemorative sports publications from the National Library's Legal Deposit Collection.

Over the decades, commemorative booklets of sports associations, souvenir handbooks of major sporting events and records of competition results – showcasing the achievements of Singaporean sports personalities and sporting bodies – have been deposited with the National Library Board (NLB). Legal Deposit is a statutory function of the NLB that enables it to collect and preserve published works by local writers, printers and publishers as part of Singapore's written heritage.

Everyone knows that Joseph Schooling made sporting history when he won Singapore's first-ever Olympic gold in the 100-metre butterfly at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.¹ But how many young Singaporeans are aware that Tan Howe Liang holds the honour as our first-ever Olympic medallist? Tan overcame cramps in both legs to win the silver in the weightlifting lightweight category at the 1960 Rome Olympics. His win marked the first of several firsts in Singapore's quest for sporting gold.

Singapore on the World Stage

Tan's hard-won achievement in 1960 was Singapore's only Olympic medal for 48 years until 2008 when the women's table tennis team – comprising Li Jiawei, Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu – won the silver at the Beijing Olympics, losing to China in a gruelling final match. That win marked Singapore's first Olympic medal since independence in 1965.²

Singapore's para and youth athletes have similarly done the nation proud. At the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, equestrian Laurentia Tan – who suffers from cerebral palsy and profound

deafness – clinched Singapore's first Paralympic medal and Asia's first Paralympic equestrian medal with her two bronzes.³

At the same games, Yip Pin Xiu, who has muscular dystrophy, bagged Singapore's first Paralympics gold. She won the 50-metre backstroke just two days after achieving the silver in the 50-metre freestyle.⁴

When Singapore hosted the inaugural edition of the Youth Olympic Games in 2010, its young athletes won six medals, with Rainer Ng and Isabelle Li walking away with silvers in swimming and table tennis respectively.⁵ Singapore struck gold in the Youth Olympics in 2014 in Nanjing when Bernie Chin and Samantha Yom won a medal each in sailing.⁶

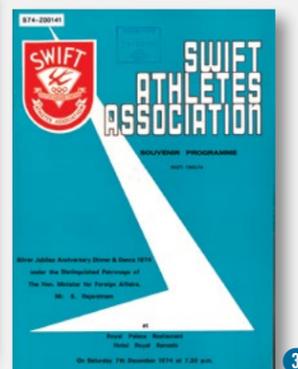
Singapore on the Regional Stage

Singapore first took part in the Commonwealth Games in 1958 when it was known as the British Empire and Commonwealth Games. The nation won its first Commonwealth gold medal – for table tennis – in Manchester in 2002, followed by three more golds at the same games: two for table tennis and one for badminton.⁷

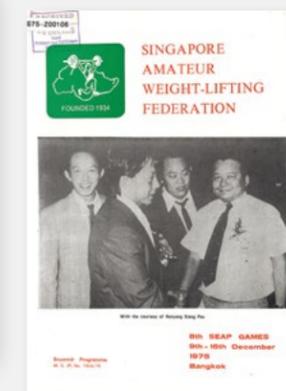
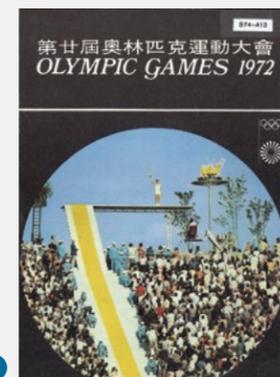
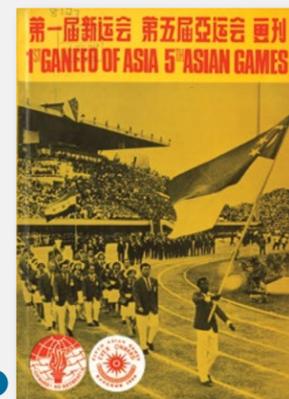
The Asian Games, which began as the Orient Olympic Games in 1913, were first held in 1951 in New Delhi.⁸ Singapore achieved four gold medals in swimming and athletics at the inaugural event.⁹

Closer to home is the biennial Southeast Asian (SEA) Games. The event was launched as the Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games in Bangkok in 1959, and "Peninsular" was dropped in 1977. Singapore first hosted the games in 1973, and won gold in boxing, judo and shooting.¹⁰ Since then, Singapore has played host in 1983, 1993 and 2015.

Featured here is a selection of souvenir publications – highlighting events and personalities in Singapore's sporting history – found in the National Library's Legal Deposit Collection. ♦



- 12th SEA Games Singapore 1983: Opening Ceremony Souvenir** (1983)
The publication provides information on the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games hosted by Singapore in 1983. It includes details such as the official games theme song, the opening ceremony programme, locations of games venues as well as the names of torch bearers for the torch relay. Among the torch bearers was swimmer Junie Sng, who won 10 golds that year.¹¹
- Seventh Asian Games, Tehran 1974: September 1st–16th: Singapore Contingent Souvenir Handbook** (1974)
Singapore's first post-independence gold at the Asian Games was won at the 7th Asian Games in Tehran in 1974. This was achieved by Chee Swee Lee who also made her mark as the first Singaporean woman Asian Games gold medalist.¹²
- Swift Athletes Association Souvenir Programme Silver Jubilee Anniversary Dinner & Dance** (1974)
Swift Athletes Association is the oldest athletics club in Singapore, according to its website.¹³ This souvenir publication was produced to celebrate its silver Jubilee in 1974. It includes a brief history of the club as well as photos of the Singaporean sprint champion C. Kunalan.
- 第一届新运会第五届亚运会画刊 (1st GANEFO of Asia 5th Asian Games)** (1967)
GANEFO, or Games of the New Emerging Forces, was created by Indonesia in response to the country's suspension from the International Olympic Committee after the 1962 Asian Games for mixing politics and sports. There were only two editions of GANEFO: in 1963 and in 1966 when it was known as 1st Asian GANEFO.¹⁴
- 7th SEAP Games: Singapore 1st–8th September 1973** (1973)
This is a record of the results from the 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games hosted by Singapore for the first time. With a final medal tally of 140, Singapore scored the most number of medals at the games.¹⁵
- 第廿届奥林匹克运动会 (Olympic Games 1972)** (1972)
Features articles on various events, the triumphs as well as the disappointments at the 1972 Olympic Games held in Munich, West Germany. The games were overshadowed by the Munich Massacre in which 11 Israeli athletes and officials, along with a West German police officer, were killed by members of a Palestinian terrorist organisation group.
- Singapore Amateur Weight-lifting Federation Souvenir Programme** (1975)
This souvenir programme by the Singapore Amateur Weight-lifting Federation carries a message by Tan Howe Liang, Singapore's first Olympic medallist and then Singapore's national weightlifting coach.



WHAT IS THE LEGAL DEPOSIT?

One of the statutory functions of the National Library Board Act is Legal Deposit. Under the act, all publishers, commercial or otherwise, are required by law to deposit two copies of every work published in Singapore with the National Library within four weeks of its publication. The Legal Deposit function ensures that Singapore's published heritage is preserved for future generations. Legal Deposit also acts as a repository for published materials, providing exposure via the online catalogue, PublicationSG: catalogue.nlb.gov.sg/publicationsg. For more information, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg/Deposit.

Notes

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- 5 Scholarships for medallists. (2010, August 28). *The New Paper*, p. 65. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
- 6 Sazali Abdul Aziz. (2014, August 25). History makers. *The New Paper*, p. 14. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.
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- South-East Asia Peninsula Games, 1973, p. 14A.