PENANG HOUSE OF MUSIC

Inspiring a Community Through Access to its Musical Heritage

PENANG CHALLENGES

- Cataloging a unique multimedia collection
- Small staff, unfamiliar with an ILS
- Limited IT support
- Ease and speed of implementation

"SydneyEnterprise is purpose-built for managing multimedia collections, implementation was fast, it covers all the bases and is ready for even novices to get started. It's all in!"

BRIAN KWAN,
Development Manager

The Penang House of Music is a gallery and library dedicated to documenting the diversity of the local community's cultural and musical traditions, including popular music in Penang. It came into being as part of the Penang Musical Heritage Project (PHMP), with the support of the Penang State Government.

A PASSION PROJECT

When authors and music fans Paul Augustin (also the Festival Director for the Penang Island Jazz Festival) and James Lochhead wrote the book *Just for the Love of It: Popular Music in Penang, 1930s-1960s*, they created an archive of multimedia content resulting from their research. They interviewed and tape recorded anyone related to popular music in Penang, and collected instruments, old audio recordings, videos, photographs, concert and album posters—many of which were discovered in flea markets, or through the serendipity of knocking on doors.

Leveraging this treasure trove, they were inspired to transform their book from a paper resource to a walk-in experience for the community, and a tourist destination—in support of the Penang State Government's vision of establishing a heritage and creative arts city.

The Penang House of Music's Resource Centre acts as a focal point for musicians, scholars, academicians, students and others interested in Penang's cultural history. With a collection of over 20,000 mixed media objects, including thousands of photos,

over 10,000 mixed genre vinyls, audio files (including rare oral histories), print books and journals, and even musical instruments, the House of Music needed software that could handle unique requirements for cataloging their materials and making them accessible to the public.

ALL-IN WITH SYDNEYENTERPRISE

Development Manager Brian Kwan explained that without a collections manager or curator, and only 7 staff, it was crucial that their ILS be easy to use, with just-in-time training support, and a quick implementation. After a vendor comparison, they selected SydneyEnterprise because it's purpose-built for multimedia collections, doesn't require IT skills to implement and maintain, and is easy to customize. Per Mr. Kwan, "[they] save time because [they] don't have to speak with several service providers to make the system work, and the Client Services team is extremely helpful and responsive." SydneyEnterprise is also cost-effective, with many free resources, and the vendor-hosted solution (SaaS) means no server or IT consulting expenses.

Visitors to the gallery and Resource Centre "enjoy the experience of finding things" using the available terminals, with assistance of a tour guide who quickly shows them how the catalog works. The Resource Centre is the heart of the House of Music; their goal is

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to make it available for research by a global audience, and they are now engaged in putting collection information online via their website. Mr. Kwan stresses the importance of documentation and appreciation of a community's cultural history and harks back to a time when "people were listening to the radio and learning how to play music on their own…and were passionate about their work… stories about musicians and how they approached their lives can be very inspiring to people today."

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Among the many fascinating memorabilia are a 78 vinyl recording of Malaya's national anthem Negaraku by Tony Soliano (member of an influential Malayan music family), with Tony Soliano playing the piano, accompanying the Merdeka Choir. This was likely recorded in the late 1950s after Malaya achieved independence, but before Malaysia was formed in 1963 and adopted the Malayan national anthem. Another item that Mr. Kwan especially appreciates is a poster advertising a venue in Penang where everybody (all ages, all ethnicities, all walks of life) used to go for popular entertainment; it even offered boxing matches, live music and an amusement park for children.

PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT

One museum visitor commented on Facebook, "The utilization of modern technology into the gallery allows a deeper and immersive experience."

Another wrote, "A walk down Memory Lane for those who lived in Penang during its swinging years, and also for those who enjoyed the golden age of Malay cinema, with its talented musicians and songwriters. It's an amazingly rich gallery which gives visitors a glimpse into Penang music's storied past, and the many personalities which came out of the island to play significant roles in Malaya, and subsequently Malaysia's music world."

Mr. Kwan and everyone at the Library and Museum would like to extend their utmost gratitude to the following people for providing them with the funds to start the Penang House of Music:

- Lim Guan Eng, Chief Minister of the State of Penang who approved the funding.
- Dato' Ir. Jaseni bin Maidinsa, CEO of PBA Holdings Bhd (PBAHB) and Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) who brought the two authors together to develop a proposal for the funding request
- Board of Directors of PBA Holdings Bhd (PBAHB)

With over 12,000 visitors since their opening, and no other collection quite like it in Asia, the House of Music's staff and sponsors are well on their journey to instill awareness and encourage pride in the talent and beauty of Malaysian music and musicians. Lucidea is grateful that SydneyEnterprise was chosen to support this unique and special mission.

ABOUT

LUCIDEA

Lucidea is the premier knowledge management software company, helping people navigate the ever expanding universe of information, turning it into actionable knowledge. We achieve this by providing tools that accelerate access to knowledge resources, while simplifying their management.

To learn more about SydneyEnterprise and how it can help solve your library management and automation challenges, visit lucidea.com/sydneyenterprise.

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

1115 - 13560 Maycrest Way
Richmond, BC V6V 2W9 Canada
Phone: 604-278-6717
Fax: 604-278-9161
Email: sales@lucidea.com

USA HEADQUARTERS

500 Unicorn Park Drive, 5th Floor
Woburn, MA 01801 USA
Phone: 781-938-4444
Fax: 781-938-4446
Email: sales@lucidea.com

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