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1.1.	<p>This is the second edition of the Arts Research Symposium organized by NAC. I am very impressed with the turn out today with representatives from the arts community, arts institutions, academia, arts companies, government agencies, civil society, business and industry and our international collaborators. I am told 200 signed up. Last year we had approximately 80 participants. Your support encourages and gives us confidence to carry on along this track.</p>
1.2.	<p>Why do Arts Research, you may well ask? What can Arts Research achieve? Of course we have to define what we mean by Arts Research. And that depends on where you sit. Arts management and the Arts Councils will have one understanding of Arts Research, something that fills our gaps in knowledge with social and functional insights; artists and academics will see Arts Research differently - inspiring and perhaps helpful in creation and deepening their understanding of a topic or subject, and the arts industry will look for more utilitarian and economic angles. All these end-goals are legitimate reasons for Arts Research. Our theme for the symposium today is “The impact of the Arts on Spaces, People and Community” which will generate discussion on the roles and benefits of the arts including audience interests and tastes, and the social impact of the arts.</p>
1.3.	<p>Let me begin with how the NAC sees Arts Research and the value it has for us. You have read reports of the Arts Research we have commissioned. Quite straight forward really. We want to understand the impact of arts and culture on our society. We try to find out if people believe the arts is important to them, if important how the arts play a role in their lives and development, do they attend arts events and how often? What explains their not attending as many events as they wish, and how do they see our arts scene? Any change, good change, bad change? From our research we know that Singaporeans of all ages, education and income levels, from diverse communities enjoy the arts. We were happy to note that 3 in 4 Singaporeans feel that the arts scene in Singapore has become more vibrant in the past 5 years. The answers help us understand if we are effective in our outreach, who are attending our programs. We want to know if we are doing our job well, and if not why not and how we can make a better arts and culture policy and programming.</p>
1.4.	<p>We also need data to make the argument to the public and to government that money spent on the arts is as crucial to a nation’s development as it is to spend money on education or defence. In fact, I believe there is a symbiotic relationship between arts and education, and arts and defence, strengthening resilience. Fortunately, our government leaders get it. They have been quite generous with the money for the arts. In the context of Singapore, in a multi-ethnic society, it is crucial that the role of the arts in bridging ethnic understanding and tolerance should be better understood. I remember the Aneka Ragam Rakyat which the PAP government introduced in 1959. It was S Rajaratnam’s idea. He was then the Minister of Culture.</p>

	<p>He believed in the multiracial, multicultural variety show. The Aneka Ragam Rakyat taught Singaporeans to be familiar with dance and songs of another ethnic community. My mother wanted to watch a Cantonese act in the show but had to sit through the Indian dance and Malay song before we came to the Chinese item. You did not know when it would be scheduled. The show was eye-opening. This was in 1959/1960. We got used to watching programmes of a different language, a different race and a different culture. Through the arts we can promote greater tolerance and acceptance of differences. I know today in the context of Singapore some political scientists and sociologists say we have only achieved tolerance. Well, tolerance is a big deal! Many societies cannot achieve even this. It is acceptance of differences. Visitors to Singapore tell us that they are amazed at the multi-racial harmony here. They do not sense tension in the streets. In some countries and cities, you cannot enter certain streets because of the social tensions.</p>
1.5.	<p>The Arts Research that academics undertake can help us evaluate the impact of arts on society and on people. There have been various studies on arts and health, arts and the ageing and arts and its synergy with technological innovation. These impact studies are useful and can help shape social policies to harness the arts. Of course there are many other ways academics can contribute to deepening the understanding of the arts scene. They can document the development of an art form - be it dance in Singapore, a particular school of music, the kind of plays written in our country; what can the research tell us about the quality of our writing, our performance arts and the issues and concerns they reflect. Similarly, through a history or literary criticism of our literature or plays, the academic and the critic will help us find the words, the language to describe our national character and identity. Or it can fall on the poet, the writer, the musician and or choreographer to capture the soul of the country or character of the people. All these efforts add richness to the arts and culture scene and would be useful even to the practitioner to know this knowledge is curated, that there is data and information archived and available if they need it. We build a deep background and develop a history of ourselves in the arts. That is the beginning of building a tradition and a culture around the arts which we hope will be embraced by everyone.</p>
1.6.	<p>Then there is the Arts Research done by arts practitioners themselves. This is practice led research. Artists speak of Research, Practice and Creation, where Research is part of the creative process. This is a very personal journey and it is hard work but very fulfilling. For this kind of Arts Research, these artists can be helped with greater availability of video documentaries capturing how past dances were performed, past plays were acted or old films that were made. Together with the resources in our libraries, we can start to build up a stronger environment which hopefully can inspire our practitioners and help them in their creation. Finally, the research of the artists may take them to other countries which can further expand their imagination. NAC should look into facilitating this.</p>

1.7.	In conclusion, I would like to share with you that many arts councils around the world also do arts research. They increasingly prioritise topics aligned with social research. I have already mentioned the role of the arts in social integration. Arts help to foster or create the sense of identity of home, arts and well-being. And like NAC their research interests include the application of technology for reaching out to audiences and growing audiences, the long term sustainability of the sector, building artistic excellence and cultivating public engagement with the arts.
1.8.	So there is a great deal on the agenda. I now you will have an interesting and stimulating discussion during the Symposium.