First regional new-media centre for journalists

Wan-Ifra's Thomas Jacob (bottom row, left) signed an MOU with NTU provost Freddy Boey. (Top row, from left) WKWSCI chair Benjamin Detenber, NTU dean Alan Chan and SPH English and Malay Newspapers' editor-in-chief Patrick Daniel.

By Samantha Boh

From September, journalism students, as well as industry professionals, can learn how to package news content for smartphones and tablet computers.

They will be able to do so at a new centre at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) called Newsplex Asia. It is the first-of-its-kind facility in the region and the fourth globally.

The centre aims to research and test new-media techniques and technologies, and equip journalists and would-be journalists with such skills, while integrating print, broadcast and radio equipment. This was announced yesterday at a Memorandum of Understanding signing between NTU and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Wan-Ifra).

Explaining the need for the facility, Mr Thomas Jacob, deputy chief executive of Wan-Ifra, said: "News consumers are changing. Not only do they want to choose how and when they will access news and information, but they also want to decide for themselves what is relevant to their world."

Newsplex Asia will be housed within NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCI) and will take up more than 160 sq m of space. The facility will cost more than $500,000 and construction work will commence in May.

Under the agreement, NTU will provide the resources and space to sustain the centre, while Wan-Ifra will provide NTU professors and researchers with access to its resources, such as research reports and its global network of publications.

The centre will be used to hold training courses for professional journalists during university term-break periods, and to teach certain WKWSCI courses, such as Online Journalism.

Associate Professor Benjamin Detenber, chair of WKWSCI, said: "A challenge that we face is how to prepare them (students) for jobs that do not yet exist. The Newsplex, with its integrated equipment and operational capacities, will help us to do that."

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