WAN-IFRA sets up newsroom training facility at NTU

By ANNA LEE

COME September, students at Nanyang Technological University’s (NTU) Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCI) can make use of Asia’s first newsplex, jointly set up with NTU and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

This was announced yesterday at the signing of a memorandum of understanding between NTU and WAN-IFRA. The organisations were represented by Freddy Boey, NTU provost, and Thomas Jacob, deputy CEO of WAN-IFRA.

The 160-square-metre facility, costing over half a million dollars, will be located within WKWSCI and boast a prototype newsroom of the future.

This newsroom, termed “Newsplex Asia”, will facilitate the integration of various news media platforms and enhance the delivery of news. It will also be the fourth newsplex in the world.

“Newsplex, or multiplexing of news, (encapsulates) the core idea to use the possibilities of media convergence and cross-media print journalism to ensure that the story, which is the central (purpose) of the newsroom, will reach the audience irrespective of place, time, and platform,” said Mr Jacob.

The evolution of the newsroom is particularly pertinent as “the 21st century has seen a shift of journalists and editors from being gatekeepers to gate- watchers, from being content creators and producers, to being content architects and distributors on a variety of platforms”, said associate professor Benjamin Detenber, chair, WKWSCI.

This also includes the changing media landscape, where “with the proliferation of mobile Internet, social media, and tablet devices, consumers not only want to choose how and when they want to access information, but they also want to decide on what is relevant to their world, at the same time... they want to be integrated with the whole communication process”, said Mr Jacob.

Patrick Daniel, editor-in-chief for Singapore Press Holdings’ English and Malay newspapers division, agreed: “The news industry is alive and well and media companies are undergoing change, the business itself will change... but the demand for news is undiminished and as long as it is undiminished, the demand for journalism education will remain undiminished.”

Accordingly, the newsplex seeks to bridge the chasm between traditional news and technological advances, with the main beneficiaries being the students from WKWSCI who will use such facilities during curriculum hours.

WAN-IFRA will use the facilities during vacation periods to provide short training programmes for traditionally trained journalists in the region.

“It is a new way of teaching and learning and brings together new facilities in one location, and it also creates new operational capacities... it really opens things up in terms of how news media is produced,” said Prof Detenber.