Singapore seniors to remain digitally connected

Sim Ann, Minister of State of Singapore Ministry of Communications and Information and Ministry of Education spe...

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According to Sim, seniors account for over 50 per cent of the borrowers for iPads at Bedok and Bukit Merah Public Libraries, as part of the National Library Board's eDevice loan service. With the iPads, they can access more than 3 million eBooks, as well as e-

magazines and e-newspapers from around the world, and 130 eDatabases for online news and other information.

To encourage more seniors to discover the brand new experiences using infocomm skills, the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore or IDA has put in place a suite of infocomm initiatives. IDA has placed 124 Silver Infocomm Hotspots (SIHs) at community clubs, public libraries, self-help group centres and Residents' Committees island-wide for seniors to access the internet and e-services.

Sim announced the introduction of two new infocomm courses, as part of the Silver Infocomm Curriculum. These courses will be conducted at the 12 Silver Infocomm Junctions (SIJs) island-wide such as Woodlands Regional Library. "Our seniors will learn to perform tasks such as managing their CPF accounts and applying for passports online. It is exciting that they will also learn how to use cloud-enabled services like Dropbox to send and share photographs with their families and friends! Besides these, existing workshops also teach them to use their smartphones on the iOS and Android platforms," she said.

Since 2007, more than 77,000 training slots have been filled at the SIJs and many of the seniors who have benefitted from these infocomm courses and workshops have volunteered as course trainers.

Sim cited an inspiring example of Lam Tuck Choy, a 57-year-old volunteer and certified IT trainer at the Organisation for Senior Volunteers or RSVP. Lam uses social networking tools such as Whatsapp to stay connected with his children and accesses his emails on his smartphone and tablet. Till today, he continues to upgrade his infocomm skills by taking courses, including learning how to use tablets such as the Microsoft Surface.

To encourage more seniors to pick up infocomm skills, a new project which is a tripartite collaboration between IDA, RSVP and the Council for Third Age (C3A) called Silver IT Care will be launched in October. RSVP will set up a dedicated IT helpdesk to help their peers who require assistance in solving technical infocomm problems, such as software and hardware issues. This helpdesk will be managed by senior volunteers and 20 seniors have been trained so far as call agents.

"The Government remains committed to equipping seniors with IT knowledge and skills to improve their quality of life, as they remain connected in today's digital age and lead an active lifestyle. We cannot do this alone – we need to continue partnering community groups and individuals to achieve this goal together. We encourage seniors with IT skills and knowledge to continue in stepping forward to help their peers in their ICT journey," concluded Sim.