

SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN, CHAIRMAN SPH, AT OPENING OF THE SPH MULTIMEDIA CENTRE IN NEWS CENTRE, HELD ON FRIDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY 2008 AT 11AM

Last year at our scholarship awards ceremony, I spoke on the future of media companies and how SPH must cope with the converging media landscape – one where readers can access news and information whenever and wherever they want, on various platforms like the Internet and mobile devices.

Today, I am pleased to officiate the opening of the SPH Multimedia Centre. It will be our base of operations to tackle the digital challenges ahead.

Currently, both AsiaOne and Stomp are located here. But soon the Multimedia Centre will house a new and exciting online venture, which I will speak about in a moment.

Let me begin by congratulating AsiaOne, Stomp and our other website teams. Last month, our websites hit new heights. AsiaOne's pageviews crossed 10 million – 50% higher than the figure in September, the start of our new financial year. Stomp's pageviews hit 10.5 million – a growth of 30% since September. This is in addition to the 8.8 million pageviews – or 35% growth - for straitstimes.com, the website of our English-language flagship newspaper. These results show that our ongoing efforts in the Internet landscape are bearing fruit.

For AsiaOne, we achieved greater synergy when the team was transferred from Marketing to EMND in September. This led to a more efficient use of resources and avoided duplication in our news gathering.

Stomp, our initiative to encourage citizen journalism and interaction with Straits Times readers through mobile phones and the Internet, has achieved recognition internationally. The latest example is a book commissioned by the International Newspaper Marketing Association, or Inma, titled *Forging Deeper Audience Connections*. Alongside chapters featuring the Washington Post and other leading media, one chapter is devoted to Stomp's innovations and achievements. The book will be released in May at Inma's World Congress in Beverly Hills.

Stomp's chief architect Felix Soh and his staff have been invited on numerous occasions to speak at international media conferences. And last month, we hosted the Head of Internet operations from Switzerland's biggest newspaper Coop (*pronounced as Co-op*). He spent four weeks with the Stomp team. I am pleased to see that other newspapers are visiting us to learn more about our online initiatives.

Today, I have great pleasure to announce SPH's latest new media venture - The Straits Times Razor TV. The Straits Times Razor TV is a novel, free-access, interactive Web TV service, delivering "live" studio content and on-demand videos over a real-time interactive platform. There will be features for studio-to-user, user-to-studio and user-to-user exchanges.

The Straits Times Razor TV will also allow third-party developers to create innovative applications to enhance the website for a more engaging Web 2.0 experience.

The delivery of videos over the Internet has been one of the most significant features of the recent Web 2.0 evolution. The explosion of video websites such as YouTube has led to a rapidly-growing demand for video

content. Large-scale social networking platforms like Facebook also offer a high level of interactivity and open interfaces for third-party applications. Not surprisingly, these sites have enjoyed an explosion in the number of active users.

Despite these Web 2.0 successes, traditional media companies worldwide have yet to successfully adopt and embrace new-media paradigms. While many news portals have adopted technologies such as podcasts, vodcasts and RSS syndication, they are not fully leveraging on the highly-engaging real-time interactivity to better engage their audience. SPH intends to be among the first.

The Straits Times Razor TV will offer news and lifestyle features but with sharp and edgy angles, and delivered by fresh faces from a new web studio to be built here in the Multimedia Centre. Its presentation style will be young and hip, with an informal tone, in tune with the culture of the Internet. Another key differentiator will be its emphasis on the hyper-local, aimed at specific local audiences.

To conclude, SPH's vision is to be much more than just a successful print company. We are keeping pace with the latest online developments and creating an exciting interactive environment across the print, mobile and Internet platforms.

The opening of this Multimedia Centre underlines our commitment to push forward in this direction. In the near future, an Innovation Laboratory will be added to the Multimedia Centre so that the latest, cutting-edge ideas can be nurtured and developed. The laboratory will become a showcase of how news will be delivered and consumed in the future.

I wish EMND's Digital Media Unit all the best as it leads our charge into the digital frontiers. It promises to be an exciting ride. Thank you.
