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1. Background to Asean (South East Asia) countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Burma, Laos, Cambodia. Each one unique and different. Singapore is not representative of Asean. English is the medium of instruction and literacy rate is high. Unlike Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam etc., that teach in the mother tongue and English is only one of many subjects offered.
2. Textbook publishing largely determined by the governments, who also decide on their syllabuses and curriculum planning. Publishers will then have to put together a suitable suite of materials and go for either tender method or compete in the open market. Some subjects are more controlled than others. The countries in Asean do value education. However public spend in education in recent years tend to be on technology and especially hardware like tablets and computers which have yielded very little result.
3. Singapore is bilingual for education. Medium of instruction is English and the students have to learn their mother tongue as well. Most other countries in SEA treat English as EFL or ESL. Fiction in English is mostly imported from abroad. Nonfiction in English? Mostly textbooks for private schools.
4. The publishing scene is still vibrant. People want books, but the books have to serve a specific purpose, textbook prices are low, so volume matters. Some publishers do license from others but mostly home grown.
5. The e-initiatives have not taken off because of a variety of reasons, geography, network, lack of accessibility, costs etc. Singapore has embraced the internet and e-contents wholeheartedly but even then, the returns are low for the publishers. The Ministry of Education started multi-media projects in 1998 but till today, textbooks lead the way.
6. Sales of children's books are healthy, but publishing of children's literature is not lucrative. Probably because of the low reading population and the appeal of literature from abroad.
7. Good quality contents is still very much in demand but thanks to the internet, people are reluctant to pay for e-materials. This will be a challenge to many of the publishers in this region.