

Book swop may go annual

boon chan

Over 9,000 books went to new homes over the weekend at the second Book Swop held at Orchard Central.

For every used book that was deposited at the shopping mall between March 25 and May 29, one Book Swop coupon was given in exchange. These could then be used to redeem books at the Book Swop event. A total of 556 people turned up to drop off their books.

Some books will be travelling all the way to Africa. Full-time volunteer Iris Tay, in her 40s, was looking for titles that would be suitable for a rural community library in Kenya. She says: "I don't take pulp fiction and romances."

Instead, she was looking for classic fiction titles for young adults and children as well as relevant non-fiction books such as those on motherhood. She picked up titles such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Agatha Christie mysteries and books on the health care of mothers.

Books left over after the shopping mall's event will be donated to the Tana River Life Foundation, the organisation behind the library project. It was set up in 2005 by Ms Tay's junior college classmate, Mr Gabriel Teo.

There was certainly a wide range of material to choose from at the event as titles ran the gamut of fiction and non-fiction for adults and children in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Some of the more commonly dropped off titles include Mitch Albom's fictional *The Five People You Meet In Heaven* (2003) and Roald Dahl's classic children's story *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* (1964).

The champion book swopper was Westwood Secondary School teacher Joy Chen, 32. She collected 429 coupons but gave most of them to students at the school. Half the books were donated by her as she was moving home while the rest came from the school's staff.

She says: "Our focus was to reach out to the less fortunate students to show that we cared and also to encourage them to make good use of their time by reading during the school holidays."

There was another charity component to the Book Swop. About 100 titles were donated by local personalities such as former Nominated Member of



Picking up books over the weekend. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

Parliament Eunice Olsen and radio deejay Mark Van Cuylenberg, better known as *The Flying Dutchman*.

Proceeds from a silent auction of these books – with a minimum bid of \$20 – would go to the Presbyterian Community Services' Andrew & Grace Home for troubled youths.

The book exchange also attracted a number of people attending such an event for the first time.

Student Alex Soo, 23, says: "This is a good opportunity to recycle stuff." He had dropped off some "serious fiction" and was looking for fantasy titles.

Madam Suzanna Yasin, a customer service associate in her 40s, found out about the event when it took place for the first time in June last year but missed the deadline to drop off books. She says: "I made sure I took part this year."

She was there on Saturday with her daughter Sarah, eight, to use the 80 or so coupons she had. She had dropped off a variety of books, including *Ladybird* titles her daughter had outgrown.

Asked what she was looking for, Sarah says: "Children's books. I read them myself."

The number of books dropped off this time is more than double the 3,513 tomes collected last year. Given the strong response, Orchard Central may consider making this an annual event.

An unexpected bonus for Madam Yasin was getting to make new friends through the event. She says: "We might even conduct a book swap among ourselves."