From Editor's Desk

Most libraries today are hybrid libraries with a significant proportion of their documentary resources in the form of digital resources. Libraries in India – especially the special libraries and large academic libraries have made great strides in terms of applying information technology not only to manage their housekeeping operations, but also to solve some of the major problems that libraries are facing. The severe budget cut of the 1990s and early 2000s, which had made it difficult for libraries to provide access to needed resources, especially journals, is now largely a thing of the past. The formation of several library consortia led by major agencies including INFLIBNET, CSIR, etc have been able to extend access to a large number of digital resources - particularly e-journals- to libraries and, through them, to end users across the country thanks to networking technologies. To complement these, many libraries have also initiated programmes to build institutional repositories to make accessible the research output of their institutions to a wider community. Libraries, which were at one time primarily concerned with identifying and acquiring resources largely generated outside their own institutions, and considered to be of value to their customers, have now assumed additional responsibilities. The building of institutional repositories (IRs) is one such major activity. Looked at from a slightly different angle, it does indeed appear that building of IRs essentially represents an activity that seeks not only to capture and preserve research output of an organization, but also is an effective means of making visible to the outside world the research output of an institution. IRs should certainly contribute to enhancing the visibility of the research output of an institution – especially an R & D institution or a university – to the outside world, given that there are reasonably effective search mechanisms such as DOAR. Marchionini talks of additional roles that research libraries in the developed countries have assumed such as long-term preservation of research data as funding agencies insist that the entire research data generated in the course of a research project should be maintained [1]. While research libraries in India are yet to initiate efforts to collect and maintain research data, it does appear that the scenario, in so far as a research and special libraries in India are concerned, presents a reasonably comfortable situation in that these libraries have been able to

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make a large number of resources accessible and to many more end users. These libraries have helped their parent organizations achieve their goals; they have been in the forefront in user education and in teaching end users how to use search tools of the digital age to be more successful as students, teachers and as researchers.

However, an area that needs immediate attention of LIS professionals and planners relates to the deteriorating situation in so far as public libraries and school libraries are concerned. In fact these institutions are the ones that will nurture and encourage information seeking and reading in the young minds and general public. Unfortunately very little attention is being given to these institutions. One should only read the report on the Delhi Public Library by P.B. Mangla (based on a survey carried out by him as Tagore National Professor), published in 2016 by the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation. Based on this report the *Hindustan Times* carried an item with the caption: "*Delhi's historic libraries are in a monumental mess*" on November 14, 2016 (November 14th incidentally marks the beginning of the National Library Week in India). If this were to be the state of public libraries in the national capital, one can imagine what it will be like in other cities and in rural areas.

The situation is even worse when it comes to School libraries in India. School libraries, if they do exist, face a number of problems – lack of space, lack of trained staff, lack of funds, lack of furniture, etc. Rural schools are even worse. The school librarian has hardly any incentive or opportunities to demonstrate her skills and capabilities and to involve herself in the learning and teaching activities of the school. Even against such odds some school librarians have shown exemplary dedication and commitment and have demonstrated what a school library could mean in the learning life of children. The most recent example that comes to my mind is the work done by Mr. S.L. Faisal, a librarian at the Kendriya Vidyalaya, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, who, in recognition of his achievements has now been conferred with an international award instituted by the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) [2]. The award is a clear recognition of the services rendered by Mr. Faisal to the school library movement internationally. Mr. Faisal realized the utility of digital technology and pioneered the diversification of the school library into e-books and blogs, something, which, I am sure, other school librarians can and should emulate.

I strongly believe that the real library movement begins only when our public libraries and school libraries become integral parts of our communities and begin playing useful roles in the learning and continuing education process of children, youth, housewives and all other sections of our communities. Thanks to the new technology there are now no boundaries for information resources; education for all is a real possibility through public and school libraries. Young librarians like Faisal do not merely watch the developments taking place elsewhere but seek to make a difference to the communities they serve by making

valuable contributions through their own initiatives. They are creating exciting and new services for children. Information technology is the key player. Marcum has attempted to relate the ten guidelines that management specialists have offered for digital leadership based on what successful digital organizations are doing to librarianship [3]. Libraries are at crossroads and a mindset to ensure the utilization of digital technology in making learning both effective and a pleasurable experience is a very necessary pre-requisite for the continued relevance of the library. Libraries' survival and continued relevance depend largely on making this transition from being a mere collection to becoming a service connecting users to information resources everywhere.

The year 2017 marks the 125th birth anniversary of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan, the father of library movement in India. The most fitting tribute that we as a profession can pay to this great man who did so much for the cause of our profession and to making librarianship a science is to focus on improving the quality of school and public libraries in the country.

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