

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR  
**Towards Excellence in Higher Education in Kerala through IT – enabled  
Library & Information System)**

Held at Trivandrum on 5-7 May, 2005

Organized by

**Kerala Library Association**

&

Co-Sponsored by

**Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, Kolkata**

The Seminar was held at Priyadarsini Auditorium, Science & Technology Museum, PMG Junction, Trivandrum.

The inauguration of the Seminar was held at 4 PM on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005. In the absence of the Minister for Education, who could not be present due to an emergency programme, the Seminar was inaugurated by Dr.M.K.Ramachandran Nair, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kerala. Prof. K.A.Isaac, Former University Librarian and Head, DLIS, University of Kerala presided over the function. Prof. P.K.Rajan, Former Vice-Chancellor, Kannur University and Dr.George Onakkoor, noted literateur and Member, RRRLF, Kolkata offered felicitations. The inaugural function itself turned out to be a discussion forum of the topic of the seminar. Prof. Isaac in the presidential address exhorted for a holistic approach of the Library and information scene in the State. The Vice-Chancellor hinted at the negative mentality of Keralites who resist any change even without weighing the pros and cons. The professionals should have a professional approach to the problems, he said. Prof. P.K.Rajan also pointed out the peculiar mind set of people in Kerala who resist anything new. He advocated that the access gap to information should be remedied through the induction of modern technology. He attributed the lack of imaginative leadership as one of the reasons for the tardy progress in our libraries.

Dr. George Onakkoor raised the need for empowering the public through information and knowledge through public libraries. Sri.N.Parameswaran, President, KLA welcomed the guests and Shri. K.P.Sadasivan, General Secretary, KLA offered vote of thanks.

The first business session of the seminar started at 9.30 am on 6.5.2005 with a keynote address on the topic Information Systems for Knowledge Enterprises by Dr.K.R. Srivathsan, Director, IITM-K, Trivandrum. Extrapolating the Five Laws of Library Science enunciated by Dr.S.R.Ranganathan, he presented how we can go about building the structure of future information, collaboration and computing services in the institutions of tomorrow. As an example, he

presented the police portal for community interactions implemented by IITM-K in detail.

Dr.Srivathsan also chaired the first session dealing with the Status Papers of the various types of libraries in Kerala. Four status papers on University Libraries, Medical College Libraries, Agricultural University and Agricultural College Libraries and Management School Libraries by Dr.M.C.K. Veeran, Sri.G.S. Harikumar, Smt. B.Leela and by Sri.M.G. Sreekumar respectively, were presented in the session. This was followed by a few clarifications and questions. The second session on Collection Development and Management started at 12.00 noon. It was chaired by Sri.K.Ravindran, former University Librarian, M.G.University, Kottayam. The first paper entitled "Public Libraries in Kerala and their academic function" was presented by Sri.N. Sukumaran Nair, former State Librarian and Member of the Kerala State Library Council. He extensively dealt with the new programmes taken up by the Kerala State Library Council mainly to help the academic programmes.

Dr.Sr.Merciamma Mathew of Assumption College, Changanassery dealt with the collection development and management of e-publications. She mainly concentrated on the advantages and disadvantages of electronic publications and tools and techniques of collection development.

Digitization of Ph.D. Theses at Kerala Agricultural University Central Library was the topic of Sri. Kunjumammed. It is the first venture of the type in Kerala which is highly appreciated by users. The scenario of Ayurveda College Libraries in the State was the topic of the paper of Sri.N.Vijayakumar, Librarian of Govt. Ayurveda College, Trivandrum. He also dealt with the initiatives aimed at the digitization of old books and manuscripts.

Dr.C.Beena of Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) dealt with the knowledge portal developed in the Dept. of Physics of CUSAT. She illustrated how a knowledge portal can improve the quality of library service in higher education. Each paper was followed by a vigorous question-answer session.

Services was the theme of the third session chaired by Dr.G.Devarajan, Prof. & Head. Dept. of Library and Information Science, University of Kerala. The session started at 2.30 pm. There were five papers. The first paper by Dr.T.P.O. Naziurdeen, Head. Dept. of Library Science, Farook College, Feroke was a comparative study of Infonet Services (e-journal consortium) in ten major Indian Libraries, including University of Kerala. He concentrated his study on the use of four services. Some clarification on the methodology and outcome of the study followed.

Sri. P.K. Sureshkumar of Kerala University Library in his paper titled “Information search and Retrieval by students of Economics in the IT-environment” brought out several interesting findings including the observation that information seeking behaviour does not vary with seniority of the student.

Sri.C.Sugumaran, Documentation officer of LPSC, Valiamala, came out with some practical tips as to how internet can be effectively used for providing information services to the customers with a case study, which is worthy of emulation in academic libraries.

The joint paper by Dr.Adarsh.N. Gokul and Smt. Ambili K.S. presented a novel method of offering user education programme in the Library system of the Kerala Agricultural University by making it a part of the curriculum.

The paper by Smt.Mini S. & Mana gai G., titled ‘Customized information and alert services in the academic institution’ was also an attempt to customize information to the needs of users. The session concluded at 4.15 pm.

The fourth session of the day was chaired by Prof. S. Kevin, former Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Kerala. Five papers were presented Dr.A.Gopikuttan in his paper “Management of change in the L & I Services”, tried to give an overview of areas of change, factors responsible for the change and the pattern of modern info. Services.

Dr.Dinesan Koovakkai and Prof. M. Parameswaran made a critical analysis of the human development issues in the University Libraries of Kerala. They have categorized them under seven headings like human factor, technical factor, financial factor, etc. and offered solutions also.

Citing several examples from the international arena like Singapore, Dr.Sivaraman has shown before the audience, how libraries can effectively bridge the digital divide. He also stressed the need for revamping the LIS curriculum by including skills in web design, technical writing, marketing, knowledge management etc.

Certain interesting information seeking behaviour pattern of the users belonging to the IT world was brought out by Mrs. Geetha Gopalakrishnan of Technopark Resource Centre through her paper. Fr. Joseph Jose Viruppel eloquently brought out a case for NAAC accreditation aimed at quality upgradation. He dealt with the guidelines for accreditation and how libraries should prepare themselves to face the challenge.

The session concluded at 6.00 pm

Now, over to the third day. The fifth session on Information Technology started at 9.15 a.m. The Chairman was Sri.N.Krishnan, Additional Director, C-DAC, Trivandrum. It began with a special lecture by Sri.P.Radhakrishnan, former Deputy Director, LPSC and presently Visiting Scientist VSSC, Trivandrum. In the Chairman's address, Shri. Krishnan projected the possibility of incorporating knowledge Portals with the Library Software at the back end. He also spoke on the Learning Resource Centre that was inaugurated at Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) two days back. He also dealt with the extensive broadband connectivity established by the State Govt. connecting Trivandrum to Calicut, which could be later on extended to all Districts and Taluks upto the block level. It is upto the libraries to make use of this facility to interconnect libraries even upto the Panchayat level.

Sri.Radhakrishnan delineated the story of Indian attempts at using satellite technology for education starting from SITE. He gave an impressive presentation on EDUSAT with a blend of its technical and application features.

Sri. Sajeev M. Cherian presented a paper co-authored by himself and Sri.N.Parameswaran, former Deputy Librarian University of Kerala. The paper fully covered the gigantic network available in University of Kerala connecting 700 computers giving 24 hours 7 days service. The presentation was followed by active discussion including suggestions from the chair to use the system more effectively and assurances by Dr.T.A.V. Murthy, Director, INFLIBNET.

Smt. Indira Nair of Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi gave a profile of the services offered by Amrita Institute Libraries with particular focus on Amrita Digital Library which can be accessed from all campuses of their institutions.

Mr. Praveen Raj of Regional Research Laboratory (CSIR), Trivandrum explained Knowledge Management and IPR issues. His crisp presentation invoked a number of questions.

The fifth session on **Consortia Initiatives & E-Journals** started with a talk on 'Changing Landscape of Libraries' by the Chairperson Dr.S.Krishnan, Deputy Director, National Chemical Laboratory (CSIR), Pune. He tried to portray the present state of affairs in libraries, the new obstacles like complex technological requirements, new methods of scholarly communication, new pricing strategies, etc. These obstacles can be overtaken by sharing through consortia, which reduces cost, work and offers better pricing options. He dealt with the different models of consortia available in the country.

This was followed by presentation on products & services by M/s. Elsevier India (S & T Technology), New Delhi, M/s. Edutech, Bangalore, INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad, & M/s. Libsoft Associates, Trivandrum.

The business sessions were followed by the **Panel Discussion**, which brought together the decision-makers, service providers, consumers of information and representatives of the media in the same forum. The Panelists were Dr.T.A.V.Murthy, Director, INFLIBNET, Prof. S.K.Mohan, Director of Technical Education Dr.B. Jayalekshmy, Joint Director of Medical Education, Sri.Perdeep Kumar, Sales Director, Elsevier India, New Delhi and Sri.C.Gouridasan Nair 'The Hindu Daily' Trivandrum. Dr.S.Krishnan, NCL Pune was the Moderator and he put forward a few specific questions to concentrate on.

Prof. S.K. Mohan started the discussion with the option of 'bombarding students with information'. Let them choose what they want. He was of the opinion that librarians are made to work like library clerks. This calls for extensive training on new methods of information dissemination. The proposal of networking the engineering college libraries was also mooted by him.

Prof. Jayalekshmi has a rosy picture of a library in her mind. In 2002, there was a Grant from Govt. of India for linking the libraries with National Medical Library, New Delhi. The Learning Resource Centre, presently operational in three Government Medical Colleges in Kerala, is a contribution of Overseas Medical Graduates from the State, with an investment of \$ 15000 and has proved to be a boon.

Networking of libraries figured as an important item in the discussion. From the HRD perspective of the LIS functionaries, the need for change from caretakers role was considered essential. Dr.T.A.V. Murthy observed that e-Learning and e-education are the two areas where Kerala can excel. He highlighted the favourable features of Kerala and urged to exploit these for the State's advantage. It is high time that all the seven Universities in the State are networked. The changes that are taking place elsewhere can be easily implemented with the enlightened public and availability of basic infrastructure.

Sri. Perdeep Kumar stated that the librarians should take the lead in educating the users on the variety of information sources available. They should start information literacy programmes. As the volume of business increases, the prices of products would automatically come down. He offered a constructive contribution from the publishers' world for the initiatives in this direction.

Sri. Gouridasan Nair tried to view the other side of the glorious scenario portrayed by the previous speakers. He was of the opinion that compartmentalized

change is ineffective. However, it is possible to come up with models, wherever possible. He lamented that the Virtual University proposed by the Swaminathan Commission still remains as a 'virtual' University. This is how we bring about changes!

The participants actively took part in the open forum that ensured the panel discussion.

The presentations, discussions and debates were then analysed, consolidated and formulated in the form of a set of Resolutions based on the following guidelines.

- Effective utilization of funds and support received from UGC and other agencies.
- Enabling and empowering Librarians to play their roles more efficiently.
- Equipping the Library & Information System with the state-of-the-art systems facilities and services.
- Ensuring the role of Libraries in enhancing the quality and standard of Higher Education in Kerala.

#### **Resolutions:**

1. The Seminar urges the Govt. of Kerala to form a High Power Committee consisting of Administrators from the fields of Higher Education, Technical Education, Medical Education, Ayurveda Medical Education, representatives of the library profession, representatives of Kerala Library Association, Management experts and representatives of the Universities in Kerala to study the modalities or means of equipping the academic libraries in the State to function effectively as Knowledge Resource Centre.
2. Opportunities shall be provided to professionals at all levels to attend Training Programmes, Workshops, Refresher Courses, Conferences, etc., for enhancement of their professional competence, as part of re-engineering the staff. Training Programmes like the Refresher Courses organized by Academic Staff Colleges shall be made compulsory to all such categories of staff.
3. Leadership plays a major role in making things happen, but out of the five major University Libraries in Kerala, only one is having a University Librarian. Therefore, the Seminar resolves to request the Universities concerned to take urgent steps to fill the vacancies of University Librarians.

Similarly, there are a number of College Libraries which are not led by professional librarians. The seminar resolves to urge the govt. to take urgent

steps to ensure that there are professionals in all college libraries irrespective of the grade of the libraries. The recommendations of the Joy Committee shall be adhered to in fixing the norms.

4. The Higher Education Dept, Dept. of Medical Education, Dept. of Technical Education and Dept. of Ayurveda Education have to initiate formation of domain specific networks of libraries in the State. Resource sharing/Consortia initiatives shall be inducted into the system thereby facilitating INFLIBNET/INFONET, INDEST, DELNET, OCLC and other national and international services easily accessible to the academic community of our State too.
5. Networking of affiliated Colleges with the respective Universities shall be planned and implemented in order to make available the INFLIBNET/INFONET, DELINET and similar facilities and services to the colleges too.
6. In order to equip the new generation professionals to carry out their jobs effectively, there is an imminent need to revamp the Curriculum and Syllabi of the Library schools in Kerala. The Seminar urges the University of Kerala, Calicut University and Mahatma Gandhi University to take urgent steps to restructure the Curriculum and Syllabus, in consultation with the major stakeholders of the profession.
7. The Government and the departments/agencies concerned shall take up all possible measures to ensure speedy compliance of quality and sustained standard of all the academic libraries in Kerala as stipulated by NAAC, AICTE, MCI, etc.