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Libraries, journals and publishers: a response

The editorial on 'Libraries, Journals and Publishers'¹ raised some important questions of interest to library and information science professionals in particular and academics interested in scholarly communication in general.

Will the traditional libraries eventually become extinct? The form of information is rapidly changing with the emergence of contemporary web technologies but the basic motto of delivering information has not changed much. This transition is inevitable for libraries. The 'paperless society' and 'libraries without walls' of a similar argument that emerged in the early 80s and 90s have not replaced traditional libraries but acted as a supplement for the existing collections. Ease of use, anytime and anywhere access of digital information has resulted in an increase in the number of publications and research output. Libraries around the world, from 1960s onwards, have been involved in designing advanced information retrieval tools which help in accessing information easily with a high precision rate. For instance, the Cranfield indexing experiments.

From the third world perspective, the development of libraries has just started; more emphasize has been given on improving the existing library infrastructure. The recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission on libraries guarantee that traditional libraries will not fade away from our memory. Univer-

sities and research institutes may miss the musty smell of books and journals shelved in large stacks but not public or school and college libraries.

What will the 'librarians' of the future do? The advancement of communication technologies has opened up many new frontiers for librarians to work on. Librarians have been playing a vital role in designing and developing robust, easy to use and contemporary information retrieval tools, web interfaces, search engines and multimedia retrieval tools. The founders of Google search engine Larry Page and Sergey Brin before inventing Google had a brief stint in the Stanford Integrated Digital Library Project. The traditional library classification system-like faceted approach is now being implemented in organizing web contents. Librarians have become an integral part of institutions knowledge management team for facilitating reuse of information and for reducing the information overload. As Balamram has pointed out, the 'librarians of the future' will don the role of information scientists, information analysts, search specialists and content managers. The information literacy training programme for young digital information users will bring back the traditional role librarians play in understanding reading preferences of users. The 'metrics of science' has been a major area of research for library and information science professionals. *Scientomet-*

rics published by Springer and *Annals of Library and Information Studies* published by NISCAIR are examples of journals publishing quality research articles in the field of scientometrics.

It is appropriate to discuss and develop an alternative model for countering the monopoly of major journal publishers and reducing the escalating cost of online journals. To counter the monopoly open access publishing/archiving models (Gold or Green route) have to be encouraged. Except institutions such as IISc, IITs, IIMs and some NITs no other institutions and universities have their own policy for depositing articles in institutional or central repository. Open access journal publishing models like PLoS (Public Library of Science) have to be supported by libraries. The recent announcement by UGC of financial support for publishing journals is an important move. Countries such as India and China have the potential to create alternative models to tackle the monopoly of commercial publishers if open access movement gets widespread support from academics and researchers.

1. Balamram, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 879-880.

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Survey of plant and animal wealth of India

Recent views on the 'Prokaryotic Survey of India'¹, 'Prokaryotic wealth'², and the plea that 'We need Microbiological Survey of India and not Prokaryotic Survey of India'³ are welcome. But why do we need to restrict to a particular group such as prokaryotes or microbes? How many of us are sure that every organism belonging to various groups of plants and animals inhabiting various habitats has been documented? If it is not so, then why should we not try to conduct a complete survey of all such organisms? No doubt, it will be a tough and time-consuming job.

Taxonomists of various groups of organisms agree that significant numbers of organisms remain to be described. If this is true then why should survey be limited to any specific group? An unrestricted survey may be a Herculean task, needing continuous team work for a few years. This may be made possible if the study is restricted to a 'specific locality' or 'habitat' and not a group of organisms. Furthermore, there should be contribution by colleges, university departments, government and non-governmental organizations established in that area.

For such an exercise adequate expertise needs to be built up. Experts in the field of taxonomy must train many students to continue this work in future.

1. Ramana, C. H. V. and Sasikala, C. H., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 287.
2. Vaid, R. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 994.
3. Sarma, V. V., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 994.

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