



THE MADRAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1928

16, Karpakambal Nagar, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

MALA NEWSLETTER

vol. 16

April / July 2003

Nos. 2 & 3

Platinum Jubilee year 2002-2003

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Like all landmark events in the life of an institution, the recently held Platinum Jubilee of the Madras Library Association (MALA), including its 2-day seminar entitled "Information Professionals for the Digital Era" had conveyed certain clear cut messages for the library profession. The central message, however, is that the external environment is changing, changing much faster than we realize and with it, the societal needs are changing. The main catalysts driving this change are the combined forces of the information and communication technologies (ICTs). The ostrich-like attitude of some of the colleagues is extremely dangerous and detrimental not only to the profession, but also to the society at large. Readers of our Newsletter will no doubt recognize that through this official organ, MALA had been reiterating and reemphasizing this message repeatedly for quite some time in the past.

Resistance to this fundamental change comes in various ways. The most apparent one is complacency. Many of our professional colleagues, some of them very senior, in their heart of hearts still believe (and perhaps are afraid to give vent to their feelings openly, because of their inability to defend their stand in the light of what they see around) that the protagonists of the ICTs exaggerate the effects of the advances in technologies on society. Next in the line is ignorance. Some of us hold on to whatever we were taught and we learned during our student days. We do not bother to keep ourselves up to date. We do not go deep into the matter. Diffidence born out of fear is the next negative factor contributing to this resistance to change. Some of our colleagues are overawed by the happenings they see. They feel unable to catch up with the fast changing scenario of

the LIS drama. They lost touch with the field sometime in the past and since then the gap between their state of knowledge and the knowledge of continuing developments in the field has been widening further and further. Indifference i.e. the feeling that I am not affected by the changes wrought by ICT and I am too small to be affected by this. When it finally comes to me, I'll try to do something about it, as the old saying goes, we shall cross the bridge when we get to it. For people of this short-sighted mental disposition, there is nothing like preparing for eventualities well in advance. They do not believe in the golden principle of pro-activity. This high list cannot be exhaustive.

The Platinum Jubilee seminar tried to grapple with these crucial questions. It also cautioned the profession against undue obsession with the technology. LIS profession is essentially a service-oriented profession and this tradition should never be lost sight of. Technology is not an unmixed blessing; but that does not mean that we can throw away the baby with the bath water. On the other hand, as Prof K.S. Raghavan in the background paper he had prepared for the seminar mentions "given both the quality and the quantity of the human resources India has, the right approach should place India in an advantageous position in terms of its share of the global information industry". Instead of making the best use of the favourable conditions, we should not allow ourselves to get into a defeatist mindset and lose a golden opportunity which is beckoning us.

K. Sankaraiah

NEWS DESK

New Members

Life

G. Velumani

Ms. Esther Ravi

Annual

P.K. Samikannan

IGCAR

New Office Bearers

At the 60th Annual General Body Meeting, held at the MALA building on the morning of 27th July 2003, the following office bearers have been elected/re-elected for another term of two years.

President : *K. Sankaraiah*
Vice Presidents : *R. Samyuktha*
R. Seshadri
Secretary : *Vijaya K. Sundaram*

Treasurer: *M.K. Jagadish*

Executive Committee Members:

H.R. Mohan *K.S. Raghavan*
M. Ramanan *M. Mymoon*
L.R. Gowri *A. Krishnan*
R. Ramaswami *S. Sitarama*
R. Venkata Kesavan *J. Kotshwara Rao*

Congratulations to the office bearers and MALA wishes them an enjoyable and successful tenure of office.

NB: Any correspondence regarding membership and other matters pertaining to MALA may be addressed to the Secretary either by phone (2490-1851) or letter or email (vsundaram20@hotmail.com).

New Membership Fees

At the 61st Extraordinary General Body Meeting that followed the AGM, the following new Membership fees have been officially confirmed.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Till 26th July 03</u>	<u>Revised fees</u>
	(in Rupees)	(in Rupees)
Patron	5,000.00 (minimum)	No change
Life Member	300.00	500.00
Ordinary	50.00 (annual)	100.00
Institutional	250.00 (annual)	3,000.00 (one time payment)

MALA Platinum Jubilee celebrations

In continuation of the news item on the same subject in the previous issue, the 2-day Platinum Jubilee celebrations had a brilliant start, with the Governor of TN, Sri Rama Mohana Rao inaugurating the celebrations on the evening of 29th January 2003. Two highlights of the inaugural function were A) a tripartite digital video conference involving India, the USA and the UK on the theme of the conference and B) honouring Dr Suseela Kumar, the doyenne of librarianship in the South, who served the MALA as its President for an uninterrupted period of 16 years. The following day was fully devoted to paper presentations and discussions. There was a Panel Discussion entitled "*Balancing Tradition and Technology: Strategies and Implementation*" as the penultimate and the last was the Valedictory function. Full details of the the celebrations may be had either from the Secretary, MALA or Venkatesavan Manager, Library and Information services of the British Council south India, who was the Rapporteur-General of the PJ.

Lecture in memory of K. Viswanathan

MALA organized a meeting on the evening of 21st July 2003, at Hotel Palmgrove, Chennai, in memory of K Viswanathan, who served the MALA as its Secretary for a long time. He passed away on the 18th July 2002, at the age of 58. Vichu, as he was known to many of his friends and relatives was a Senior Librarian in the British Council Library in Chennai for over 30 years. He was a great professional who served the profession, with distinction and zeal. He was loved by a large number of satisfied customers throughout South India. Randor Guy, the well-known freelance journalist of the city spoke on the subject, "*Books, Writers and Libraries*". As was expected he regaled the audience with a series of witty anecdotes. The talk was not only humorous, but equally, thought-provoking. At the end of the talk there was lively discussion. By any standards, it was a highly successful function, well-attended and well-received. Many close relatives of Vichu also attended the function.

Open Access of Information

Computer Society of India, Chennai Chapter and the Madras Library Association jointly organized an evening lecture on "*Open Access of Information using Open Source Systems*" at the Connemara Hotel, on 8th Feb 2003 by Prof John Willinsky, the Pacific Press Professor of Literacy and Technology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Prof. Willinsky spoke on the current situation around electronic access to research and its potential for the future under different models.

He demonstrated the capabilities of new open source systems, some of which have been developed by him, in assisting the existing and new Indian journalism moving into an online environment in ways that improve both the scholarly and the public quality of research. The open access project is making the information available to researchers using open systems which are free. It is a move towards information handling and sharing and to bridge the digital divide. It also deals with knowledge creation, IPR issues, self-archiving and digital libraries. According to him Open Access publishing, using the internet could prove a turning point in the history of scholarship.

Web-based library resources in women' studies

Office of the Public Affairs, the US Consulate General for South India joined by MALA hosted two events, a seminar in the morning and a talk in the evening, both on womens' studies on 22nd May 2003, at the American Consulate Auditorium in Chennai. Dr Phyllis Holman Weisbard, Womens' Studies Librarian, University of Wisconsin, Madison, participated in the Seminar and she also delivered the evening talk. Representing the Indian perspective in the Seminar was Dr K. Shanthi, a Fulbright Scholar, Professor of Econometrics and also Coordinator for Gender Studies, University of Madras. Both the events attracted a sizable number of discerning audience, who took active interest in the proceedings, as evidenced by the discussion that followed both the events. Clearly, the US was way ahead of India in promoting and pursuing and creating web-based resources But, India was like the proverbial tortoise. It was, however, hoped that eventually and may be sooner than later, the tortoise will catch up with the rabbit.

STOP PRESS

In celebration of Librarians' Day, Prof. K.S. Raghavan, Head of the Department of LIS, University of Madras, will speak on "My IFLA Experience" at the Maxmueller Bhavan Library on 27th Sept. 2003 at 6-30 p.m. This talk is being jointly organised by the Bhavan and MALA. Invitations will be sent to all members of MALA in due course of time.

In Memoriam :

DR Suseela Kumar

MALA records with profound regret the passing away, on 19th May, 2003, of Dr Suseela Kumar (1923-2003), a long time President of MALA. At a condolence meeting jointly organised by the Madras Book Club and the MALA a few days later at the Connemara Hotel, speaker after speaker paid glowing tributes to the yeoman services she rendered to LIS profession, and to the scholarship at large. She, along with her late husband and a few friends brought the literati of Chennai together for the purpose of scholarly exchange of views. Although qualified as a mathematician, she was destined to be a librarian. She was the founder-librarian of the British Council Regional Library in Chennai in 1950 and she developed it in to a great institution and gradually extended its sway to entire South India by establishing branch libraries in Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad. She was a role model for generations of practising librarians. She was an Associateship of Librarianship of the University of Leeds 1956-57. She became a consultant to many libraries and universities, served on many govt committees, national and international. She delivered prestigious lectures like the Sharada Ranganathan Endowment Lecture. She was awarded the MBE, by the Queen of England. She always stressed that the true hallmark of librarianship was service to the user, no matter what gadgets were used. At the recent Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the MALA, held in Chennai, She was honoured by a grateful profession for her services over a period, spanning more than half a century.

About our Members

Dr KS Raghavan

Dr K S Raghavan, Professor and Head of the Dept of Library and Information Science, University of Madras was recently invited by the Federal Government of Brazil for a teaching assignment. He spent over 4 months in Brazil and about 10 days in the US before returning to India early July. While in Brazil, he was attached to the School of Information Science of the Federal University of Minas Gerais where he taught a special course on facet analysis to Masters and Doctoral students and also a faculty member. He was later invited by the Maxmueller Bhavan to attend the International Federation of Libray Associations, (IFLA)'s conference in Berlin, Germany, 1-9- August 2003.

Dr Harish Chandra

Dr Harish Chandra, Librarian, IIT, Chennai, attended between 31 Oct. and 9 Nov. 2002 the UNESCO Regional Consultation Meeting on the preservation of Digital Heritage for Asia and the Pacific at the National Library of Australia, Canberra and also visited a number of major libraries.

Ph D awardees

The following members have recently been awarded Doctoral degrees by the Madras University : Dr. R. Parameswaran, Librarian of Madras School of Economics on Bibliometric analysis of air pollution research using "E-CD". and Dr N. Subramanian, Librarian, Kongu Engg College on Information needs and information seeking behaviour of faculty of engg institutions in Tamilnadu. Supervisor for both was Dr B. Ramesh Babu of Madras University.

LOCAL

Digital Information Exchange

The Central Library of the IIT, Madras and Society for Information Science, New Delhi are jointly organizing SIS 2004, Digital Information Exchange: pathways to build Global Information Society, 22nd National Convention and Conference during 21-23 August 2004, and the following two Tutorials at the Central Library: on 21 Jan. 2004.

Tutorial 1: ISO 9001:2000 Application in libraries and information centres.

Tutorial 2: Development and management of digital resources.

For more details, please contact :

Dr Harish Chandra,

Organising Secretary (SIS 2004), and Librarian,
Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai 600 036.

E-mai : hchandra@iitm.ac.in

American Library reopened

A new-look American Information Resources Center (AIRC) i.e. the American library in popular parlance, at the Gemini Circle in Chennai, has been recently reopened, much to the joy of book-lovers and information seekers in South India, particularly people of Chennai. Some sections of the library, as readers know, had been closed to

the public for some time for carrying out the required renovation. Although, the earlier two floors have been merged into one, the stock and services have not been reduced. The whole library being on one floor has its attractions and advantages. More new services may be offered later on, the authorities say.

NATIONAL

Bridging the Digital Divide in action

Here are a couple of notable initiatives at bridging the digital divide in rural India. At a recently held national conference in Bangalore on Wireless Networking, by the Manufacturers Association of Information Technology (MAIT), the audience were pleasantly surprised to hear from a panel discussion that India's rural masses are taking advantage of Wi-Fi, the technology to wirelessly connect to the Internet by way of bridging digital divide. Rural people across the country – in Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, UP, Kerala, etc are harnessing the new technologies. A silent revolution in making use of the new technologies is sweeping across the country. In Kerala, the govt has a scheme, whereby at least one person in each family is given 15 hours of IT training. Some districts have already either completed their quota or about to do so. When this scheme is through, at least 20% of the State population, it is claimed, will be computer literate.

Vidya Nidhi

The Library and Information Dept of the Mysore University deserves to be complimented for taking up an ambitious project which aims to create an online database of all doctoral theses and dissertations published by the Indian universities. Having successfully completed the pilot project sponsored by the NISSAT Programme of the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, the University has begun work this month on the task of digitizing around 30,000 theses in English and Indian languages published every year by about 300 universities and autonomous institutions. Aptly named, Vidya Nidhi, the project has received a grant of \$155,000 (Rs.71,50,000) from Ford Foundation for a period of 3 years and is further assisted by Microsoft in using industry standard tools such as Unicode for handling non-Roman scripts and the Web language, Extended Markup Language, XML.

Edited by:

Associate Editor :

K. Sankaraiah

Padmalaya, 58, Fathimanagar, Valasaravakkam,
Chennai – 600 087.

Tel : 2486 1240 email : ksankaraiah@vsnl.net

Vijaya K. Sundram

Flat 6, Samarpan, 25, Urur Olcott Road,
Besant Nagar, Chennai – 90.

Tel : 2490 1851 email : vsundaran@hotmail.com