Afterword

An epilogue as a concluding part of a work is expected to present, among other things, a futuristic scenario of the developments in the domain and provide possible goals and directions for achieving the goals.

The overall theme of this collection of papers is International Collaboration in the Library and Information Science (LIS) domain. LIS is a supporting service to all other sectors and activities thereof. Therefore to forecast the trends in LIS we need to know or visualize the future world scenario in different domains. In the past, Daniel Bell on post-industrial societies, John Naisbitt’s Megatrend (and other future studies), Alvin Toffler’s Future Shock series, the Club of Rome, Herman Kahn’s future studies, Marc Porat on information economy, Thomas Kuhn on paradigm shifts in science, and other projections have, from time to time, pointed to the changes and paradigm shifts that may impact socio-economic developments and the trend toward international collaboration. Economics Nobel Laureate Ian Timmergen in his paper “Alternative Forms of International Co-Operation: Comparing their Efficiency,” presented the core of his essay under the headings: 1) nine alternative forms of international co-operation; 2) relevant concepts for the study of alternative forms of co-operation; and 3) how to estimate optimal procedures of international co-operation. He noted that, in general to begin with, information and information exchange were respectively the object and means of such cooperation and collaboration (Timmergen, 1978). This holds good for most domains of international cooperation – trade and commerce, education and training, science and technology, entertainment, art, culture and tourism, security and defense, and other domains.

Peoples of most countries of the world—industrialized and emerging economies—envision their future to be or to become an inclusive Knowledge Society (KS). Creation and development of an inclusive KS is a long-term programme involving all sectors and all sections of society. The main forces currently impacting and driving KS development include: Capitalism, globalization, economic liberalization, widespread use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), multilingual, digital knowledge resources, and networked communications. In turn, these impact and change peoples’ lifestyles, and demand “ready information” anywhere, anytime. Other influencing factors are cultural and religious attitudes of people, and the stage and state of development of a society in terms of its natural resources, intellectual resources, education and research capacity, and level of technology development.

A feature of and primary evaluation criterion for a KS will be the extent of participation and contribution of all its citizens, irrespective of their respective economic status, race, caste, creed, religion, educational level, their origins, and other differentiating parameters, to the socio-economic development process and being enabled to benefit in appropriate measures from the development to increase the overall goodness and wellness of everyone in society. A KS will be evaluated not solely by its becoming a knowledge-based economy or by its extensive use of ICT, but it will also be judged by the extent
to which knowledge, including native, traditional knowledge—explicit and tacit—generated, preserved, disseminated, and transmitted through print and other media as well as orally, get effectively utilized to support and enrich activities in all sectors. Efficacy in community knowledge management will be another criterion of evaluation of the future development processes. Here is a quote from Atmarupananda:

We inherit certain basic, unquestioned beliefs from our culture about the nature of ourselves and our world of experience, which in turn determine to a significant degree what and how we experience. This influences all levels of our experience, from the experience of self, time, and space, to our experience of bodily movement.

Cultural presuppositions influence the process of knowing. It is in and through our presuppositions that we experience or ‘know’ the world around us as well as the inner world or self.

These days we speak in terms of the ‘global village’ and ‘multiculturalism’. As a result of this new planetary awareness people are increasingly sensitive to the fact that ‘different’ does not mean ‘wrong’ or ‘inferior.’

A central experiential foundation is, when comparing different cultures, culturally based differences are found in the sense of time, space, self, relationship, and other broad categories of experience. (1995)

Knowledge Management (KM) usually associated with enterprises is mainly concerned with two dimensions: collaborative dimension and semantic dimension. Community knowledge management additionally needs to take into account cultural dimension (which influences the semantic dimension and peoples’ perception and priorities), language, technology, and organizational dimensions, policies, and administrative regulations. These may play an enabling role or create barriers.

How may desirable results be achieved? They could be achieved by promoting and supporting initiatives, programmes, activities, and policies that enhance knowledge capital formation (that is, investing in intellectual capital), access and utilization, minimizing, if not eliminating, those that are impediments. Information professionals have prominent roles to play in this extended arena and they need to prepare themselves for such service (Chester & Neelameghan, 2006).

With the advent of Web 2.0 “… the Web becomes the center of a new digital lifestyle that changes our culture and touches every aspect of our lives. The Web moves from simply being sites and search engines to a shared network space that drives work, research, education, entertainment and social activities—essentially everything people do. This ‘shared network space’ has obviously changed the political and economic realities of the whole world… for the people who have access to it.” Parallel to and utilizing Web 2.0 components is the emergence of Knowledge Management 2.0 and Library 2.0 (Storey, n.d.).

“Library 2.0 is not just a technology …. but a new paradigm and a state of mind. The heart of Library 2.0 is user-centred change. It is a model that encourages constant and purposeful change, inviting user participation.” Library 2.0 calls for recalibration of the processes and the paradigms of library and information services” (Boughzala & Dudezert, 2012).

What does it imply?

- Inter-departmental linking: information access, cooperation, coordination;
- Sub-national level (State, District, Taluq, Village) linkages. Within each domain and with other larger units and nationally and internationally.
- Flatter hierarchies; better access to decision / policy making centres.
Users can directly access on the network publications without the intervening services of editors, indexers, publishers, and perhaps even librarians in their current avatar.

Instant access:

- Copies can always be made from the original master;
- Mechanical aspects of printing and publishing and of resources directories can be bypassed;
- With electronic publishing and distribution, the material can be accessed on the network as soon as the author has keyed in the text or created graphs, images, etc.

Cell phones and hand-held devices facilitate enhanced access to information resources, digital libraries, and enable social networking on a larger scale. To the academic sector, it means onsite information delivery, seamless access within organization and globally, facilitation of scholarly international communication, formation of virtual collaborating teams. Researchers, teachers, scholars, and others need not personally visit the library. They can browse online the library catalogues and other resource directories. Electronic methods could deliver the required text pages, images, and voice recordings to users in their place of work, dormitory, home, or wherever they are. Hence, fast global reach of messages and instant response.

Information providers and professionals will increasingly be called upon to collaborate with experts and people involved in:

- Resources management;
- Health care delivery;
- Disaster management;
- E-governance; tele-centres;
- Environment protection;
- Crime detection and forensic work;
- and a host of other fields

Internet, Web 2.0, and other data and communication technologies have, like any other technology, not only good aspects but also bad and ugly aspects. For example:

- Vulnerability of digital records;
- Problems of massive unfiltered, not well organized data and information;
- Little control over the Internet / Web content;
- Manipulability of data and information;
- Junk and porno stuff;
- Confidentiality and security breaks and leaks;
- Hacking;
- Quick virus spread;
- Cyber crimes; Cyber-terrorism;
- IPR issues: Copyright and cyber laws violations.
The chapters contributed to this volume deal with different aspects of collaboration in different setups and environments. It is hoped that these chapters will encourage and support information professionals to push further the boundaries of their interest-domain as they will find enhanced opportunities for collaborative interdisciplinary research and development.

This volume of chapters is also a festschrift to Prof. G.B. Ghosh, well-known information professional and a scholar gentleman. Prof. Ghosh, one of the founders of the IASLIC, has served in and contributed his expertise to several important organizations, but most notably to the education and training of information professionals (e.g., the post-graduate training programme at the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, New Delhi [now part of NISCAIR], the Indira Gandhi National Open University [IGNOU], New Delhi, The Jamia Millia Islamia Central University, New Delhi. Designing / revising curricula, preparation and editing of PG course materials [in print and CD] for the online nation-wide programme, and consultations with experts). As a Fulbright scholar and with his participation in international conferences, he facilitated the widening of his perspectives of the information profession and the education and training of information professionals to trans-national and global levels. I hope that the chapters in this volume constitute an appropriate tribute to the eminence of Prof. Ghosh in the LIS domain.

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REFERENCES


