

National Library Week 2016

21 November 2016, 2 pm, DLIS, University of Kerala

Kerala Library Association, in association with the Department of Library & Information Science (DLIS) University of Kerala, organized an interactive session on “Libraries in Transition: Millennium User’s Experiences & Perceptions” on 21 November 2016 at DLIS Hall, as part of National Library Week celebrations. The 3-hour programme had three eminent personalities drawn from three different disciplines – science & technology, literature & languages and performing arts – narrating their past experiences as library users, their perceptions and also expectations.

Sri P Radhakrishnan, a distinguished space scientist and a great lover of books, gave an in-depth analysis of knowledge society and knowledge management. He predicted that old fashioned librarians will have no future in this technological age. Sri Radhakrishnan listed out five of his requirements as: flexible arrangement between the publisher & the user for free access; borderless domains; knowledge ATMs where one can get what one wants using a pre-paid card; information literate cybrarian who has the ability to meet user needs; and human search engines. He concluded quoting T S Eliot’s lines, “*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*” adding on his own, “Where’s the information lost in data?”

The next speaker, Dr Vilakkudy Rajendran, Former Joint Director, State Institute of Languages, attributed all that he has achieved to libraries. Reminiscing about his college days, he was full of praise for his college library for inculcating reading habit into him, which helped in his journalistic career and later in his writing. He was of the opinion that libraries and librarians will never become extinct. According to Dr Rajendran, libraries should always try to encourage and make new readers. He ended his speech saying that those who come to libraries seeking that inner light will have no need to go in search of the Internet.

The perspective of Dr B Arundhathi, a playback singer and Associate Professor & Head, Department of Music, S N College for Women, Kollam, was very different. Because of the very nature of her subject, her requirements were also unique. She pointed out the lack of suitable materials in the libraries for those doing research in performing arts. Audiovisual libraries are very vital for fine arts and different categorization is to be devised for music libraries. Similarly public libraries have to focus more on helping children develop aesthetic / creative side of the brain along with technological brain and they also require visual and audio collections to motivate them. Dr Arundhathi touched upon a wide range of topics like music therapy & virtual libraries and rounded off her talk with a request to the University authorities to hold open defenses in the University Library itself.

There were interactions from the audience. Dr P K Suresh Kumar observed that the no. of books issued has come down due to the google mentality. He hoped that librarians would be able to

distinguish between what is authentic and what is not, thus transforming themselves into knowledge curators.

Dr Mini Devi was of the firm opinion that libraries would always have an important role but they should become more user-friendly. At the same time there is no need to turn a blind eye to the West. Citing Library Commons & Space Commons, she said that time is not far away when learning spaces, similar to libraries and classrooms that share space for information technology, remote or online education, tutoring, collaboration, content creation, meetings and reading or study will become a reality in India also. Learning commons are becoming increasingly popular in academic and research libraries in the West and spaces are often designed to be rearranged by users according to their needs.

In his summing up Sri P Radhakrishnan said that the ultimate, to him, would be using the library from home. Since the definition of reading has changed, librarians also have to change, keeping in pace with technology. They may have to learn to navigate the landscape differently.

Dr K P Vijayakumar, President, KLA welcomed the gathering and Dr Humayun Kabir, Head, DLIS, proposed the vote of thanks.