NACLIN 2019 : A Report

Dr. Sangeeta Kaul*

The 22nd National Convention on Knowledge, Library and Information Networking—NACLIN 2019 on the theme "Emerging Innovations, Trends and Technologies for Libraries of the Future" was organised by DELNET at Hotel Shourya Garh Resort, Udaipur from September 18-20, 2019. It was inaugurated on September 18, 2019 by the Chief Guest Dr. T. D. Tilwani, Former Head, DLISc, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur. The Guest of Honour was Dr. (Prof.) A. P. Gupta, Principal & Controller, Pacific Medical College & Hospital, Udaipur. Dr. H. K. Kaul, Director, DELNET presided over the Inaugural session. The programme began with lighting of the lamp. The welcome address was jointly delivered by Dr. Sangeeta Kaul, Organising Secretary, NACLIN 2019 & Network Manager, DELNET and Shri R. S. Deora, Convener, Local Organising Committee, NACLIN 2019 & Chief Librarian, Pacific Medical College & Hospital, Udaipur. Prof. A. P. Gupta, Principal & Controller, PMCH, Udaipur delivered the Guest of Honour address. He applauded the efforts of DELNET to organise the Convention in the city of Udaipur. He also spoke about the changing paradigm of the users' information-seeking behaviour and the role played by DELNET to bring together the scattered resources. It was followed by the release of the conference proceedings

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containing the 21 papers contributed to the Convention and a Souvenir. The message received from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi for the conference and published in the Souvenir was read: "Reading books must be a passion of every individual, particularly the youth. People should cultivate the habit of gifting books rather than bouquets and other presents. Parents should encourage the children to visit library regularly and also accompany them. The habit of reading alone will help our nation to reclaim the status of a 'Vishwaguru' – world leader, of thought and action. A library is a rich treasure house of books on various subjects and topics. Today, books and

digital versions of libraries are available online. Libraries of the future will be interconnected, placing in the hands of the readers a vast universe of knowledge and information. Digital technology holds immense possibilities for libraries to upgrade better methods of collection, storage and dissemination of information on books. The role of DELNET assumes a critical importance in creating a network of libraries. I am sure that the National Convention will help in identifying and adopting the latest, as well as the best international practices and standards for the expansion and growth of a network of libraries. May the deliberations at NACLIN 2019 be a resounding success."

The inaugural address was delivered by Dr. T. D. Tilwani. He spoke about

L to R: Shri R. S. Deora, Dr. Sangeeta Kaul, Dr. H. K. Kaul, Dr. (Prof.) A. P. Gupta and Dr. T. D. Tilwani

Transforming Human Resources in Libraries: Strategies for the Future Learning

Mr. Raj Nehru

Mr. Raj Nehru, Vice-Chancellor, Shri Vishwakarma Skill University, Haryana delivered the DELNET Annual Lecture 2018 on "Transforming Human Resources in Libraries: Strategies for the Future Learning" on January 7, 2019 at DELNET.

Mr. Nehru delved into India's ancient educational history and it gave him great pride in saying that India was a fantastic educational hub and most of the world would want to travel to India and have their educational aspirations fulfilled here. He said that the students and scholars came to India to study from China, Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Rome. He added that, we find excellent excerpts which tell us that most of these scholars had travelled thousands of miles through tough terrains. He further said that many people claim that the first university in the world was the Takshila University in India. "If we start mapping the educational institutions of that time, we find hundreds of institutions like Nalanda University, Somapura University, Valabhi, Odantapuri, and many more". He said that many of these institutions were called Gurukuls, many were called Matths and many were in the form of temples and paathshalas. "Looking at these institutions, we get deep insights into how they actually operated. Takshila University gives us the impression that most of the renowned people of that time, including Chanakya, Panini, Charak and Kautilya, who had made phenomenal contributions to the world in the form of Charaka Samhita or Kautilya's Arthashastra were nurtured in these institutions". He said that we feel proud, of the way education in the continent was being managed during those days. "We were famous for being logical. Mathematics, astrology, astronomy, metallurgy, health sciences and surgery were of a superb nature".

Mr. Nehru said that before being documented into manuscripts, one of the important ways of transmitting information was through memory. "As we are aware, in the olden days people used to memorise and then that memorisation would further move to the next generation. With the passage of time as writing also evolved, most of these institutions started documentation in manuscripts. Most of these institutions had great libraries. We find that while Takshila had a very big library, one of the biggest libraries of those times was in the Nalanda University. We are familiar with the fact that Nalanda University was considered to be one of the world's biggest University and it even competed with Takshila University of that time." He added that when we dive deep into Nalanda University, we find that history was documented by many historians of that time. "They tell us that more than nine million books or manuscripts were available at that time in Nalanda University. Nalanda came into existence in the first or second century. Later, it was attacked by Bakhtiyar Khilji, in the tenth or eleventh century. Imagine, in the second-third century, nine million and more books and manuscripts were housed in that library. It is said that the library had more than nine floors at that time. According to history, when Bakhtiyar Khilji arrived and attacked the library and destroyed it, it took six months and more to get that library being burnt because there were so many documents which existed at that time in the library. There were accounts of some Persian and Indian scholars who had documented it. So, management of books, they may not have called it a library as we call it now, but management of literature, management of manuscripts and management of knowledge had been an age-old strength of India".

Mr. Nehru added that certain things were destroyed in the last nine hundred years after the invaders entered and

then we had the colonial invasion. "Though that is not the subject today, but somewhere, something is missed. It is like when we are moving on a motorbike and suddenly, some robbers appear on the highway. They not only loot your motorbike, but also loot you of all your resources-money, so that you won't be able to buy in future. That is what happened to India after the twelfth century, when they not only robbed us of all our knowledge and not only destroyed all the existing resources, capabilities, capacities and potential, they also robbed us of all the resources that could have further created something. The situation today is not hidden from any of us, though in the last five-six decades, we have made concerted efforts so that the country could come back on track. There is extensive work that has gone in, but these five-six decades actually created an impact on our thinking process. It has impacted us terribly-the way we think, operate, perceive and process information today. It has actually changed our way of handling knowledge and how we should be actually thinking-the way we were thinking and the way we are thinking today. As a result, there are certain issues that are actually not making us highly competitive in the world of Knowledge Management. So that is an area, that we have to deal with and when we look at this, it makes us understand the issue today".

"When we look at the world, we see the biggest challenge today that we are experiencing. It is the speed of innovation and the disruption that is happening all around. Technology is changing so fast and the way we work and deal with certain things is changing so rapidly that it actually becomes very disruptive. What we have seen a day before, we are not sure whether we will see it in the same way or in the same fashion tomorrow. Things are becoming highly gadgetised and the way it has to be handled, the skill sets, are frequently changing. This speed is actually killing

most of the skills. We may still be living with something but the world would have already moved on to something else. Although we may be fairly happy living with that but the world outside is changing very quickly".

"The second important change that we find happening today is that the demography is changing due to an increase in the number of millenials in most parts of the world, especially in India. The learning styles of the new demographies are also different. If we see our learning style versus our father's learning style versus our daughter's learning style-all three have three different learning styles. Yet we try to solve a 2000s problem with a 1900s tool. We want to force it on others but they don't want to accept it and because of that many conflicts are emerging in the society. Therefore, the other challenge in front of us is to recognise that there is a demographic change leading to the development of new styles of learning."

"The next important thing we find is that the age of the learning content is also shortening every day. Owing to the kind of innovations that are happening and the collective outcomes that are emerging in the market, the content that is available today, which used to be very special in the past, has lost its relevance. What is pricey today may not be pricey tomorrow. In the past we would store the content, have our hold on it, not let it go and not pass it on to anyone. Those days are gone. If we do not let the content flow out freely and quickly, we will find that soon something new will emerge, rendering the content completely non-essential. Hence, there is a need to understand that the age of content and its price can quickly change with the change in the new thinking. As the thinking is changing so frequently and so quickly, the price of that content will depreciate".

"Another challenge we find, when we talk to people when we meet them, is that regulations and compliances are also at the same time increasing, which many

people may not be familiar with. Youngsters today want everything handy and everything easily available. As a result of that and the kind of culture that has crept in over the last few decades in India, people are keen to do cut-copy-paste. This has actually impacted the innovation and creativity of youngsters and has also put them onto the risk of becoming non-compliant. So, we find that while creativity has to be preserved, the youngsters or the people have to be taught also about certain regulations and compliances, so that they do not waste or while away their time".

Mr. Nehru said that we should be able to add value to the knowledge which comes from various sources. "When I meet people, especially the people in libraries, or especially where all this knowledge is stored, I ask them, 'There is so much knowledge available. So, what is your role?' Many people say, 'My role is to make all this knowledge available.' I say, 'That is available handily to people, so what is the big thing that you do?' Often I do not get an answer. Today's villagers and farmers sell their produce after considerable value addition. For example, they produce potatoes and sell them at Rs. 5 a kiliogram but by the time it reaches me through Uncle Chips, it has become Rs. 50 for a hundred grams. Value addition is happening in between. So I ask people in the knowledge domain, 'What do you do to add value?' As a librarian, you may have all the knowledge at your fingertips and you may provide it to the people, but the value you are adding today is not sufficient. What value can you add to the knowledge?"

Commenting on today's learning styles, Mr. Nehru said, "Learning styles of today's users are changing and they have many expectations. For example, we remember, many years ago we used to go to the library with the intent of being silent there and taking a book to read. There used to be a board, 'Keep

Silence'. We would go through some pages of a book and perhaps sometimes make notes. That was all that we would do and we would feel very privileged to be inside a library, reading a book and making notes. We would feel privileged telling someone, 'I was in the library'. But with the kind of knowledge invasion that has happened, when we read a book today, we feel the need to have some references at the same time, handily available to us. We do not want to repeatedly get up and get another book. So, everything should be just available in front of me. Possibly, in addition to what we are looking at today, we may require something more, for making more enriched notes as a value addition, we may want to do some copying or something specific like sending an email to someone. But we want everything at one point, at the same time, at one place. Can we create some kind of notes out of it? Can we create a document out of it? We do not know whether this is possible. Certain publishers are doing that today. They call it collaborative learning, that is, one can have a book within which there are many reference points. We can click on something and it will take us there, as desired. But those clicks would be at specific things. However, there may be something that strikes my mind but which is not in the publisher's book. I may be reading something, but something else clicks in my mind which I want to see. So, can I have that handily available? I am not sure whether that is possible. Or, for example, entering the library, I do not want to go physically to scan all the books one by one and spend almost two hours only on looking at the racks and the physical books. Is there a way that everything comes to me handy, now, while I am sitting at my table? As you know, we are using augmented realities technology today. For example, in our university we are trying to find certain skill sets where we can use augmented reality and the student can

scan through and get actually that job role and understand that job role through various features, the moment he enters into that tool. Using virtual reality you can get into immersive technologies and actually start experiencing that role. So, can that be possible? My point is that today's libraries cannot be only physical spaces. They have to be creative spaces. A library should become the space where knowledge is not only disseminated, it is diffused and where an opportunity is provided to knowledge seekers to be able to diffuse that knowledge to refuse a new idea or a new thought".

"A library cannot be a place only to 'maintain silence'. A library has to be a place for disruptive thinking. Because the entire knowledge today is not in the form of books in the racks. More than ten million, twenty million, thirty million books are in one place with the click of one's phone. So, if knowledge is available, what can libraries do to transform that knowledge? How can they contribute to innovation? How can they contribute to disruption? How can they contribute to developing something new? That should be the role of a library."

"What should be the role of a librarian?" Mr. Nehru felt that Librarian should become the epicentre of driving this entire thing. "Since I am a Human Resource professional I always see it from the Human Resource professional perspective. When interacting with people, I find certain issues and challenges. I have captured them in what I call Six Is."

Mr. Nehru said that the first is the "Image". "There is a problem with the self-image of a librarian. We do not know how library professionals see themselves. Unless they see themselves in the new world, in the context of the six things referred to: the speed of innovation, disruption, learning styles, demography changing, technology changing, expectations changing, unless they immerse themselves into this new world, their image can be a big roadblock". Mr. Nehru

affirmed that many librarians still continue to do the same thing as he saw them doing in his library several decades ago. Discussing the concept further, he said: "I do not see any change, though I'm not sure, there may be some librarians who will pardon me for that because I have not seen that. I was trying to ask a few of you earlier, 'Can you help me understand how they are operating? I am conceptualising the library in my University and do not want to make it a physical library of the conventional nature, so, I am trying to learn these days and I am meeting people. In fact, I have requested to have a conference on how the library should be redefined with DELNET. I am very keen. We may not have an answer today, we may find an answer tomorrow. But I think somewhere when I meet people, especially people in the library profession, I find that there is an issue of self-image and that self-image is actually impacting their behaviour, how they should be performing and how they should be adding value. Without getting into the depth of the long subject of self-image which will require a complete session only on how re-imaging has to be done, the first thing, any library professional must see is how they see themselves. Unless you relook at how you see yourself in the changing world, you may not be able to change certain things that are expected in the changing world".

"The second is the "Intent". Having reappraised our self-image, we now need to relook at 'What's my intent? What do I want to do?' As a library professional, if we want to do the same things that have been done twenty or thirty years ago, that is a choice we have. But if we do not relook at our intent in the changing environment and the changing scenario, we will not be able to make a big difference as a professional in the library science world. So, we need to relook and that intent can be developed after we understand what is going on around, how things are

changing, people's changing needs and changing expectations".

"The third is "Ideate". After we have understood where the changes are and have recognised what our role is and what our intent is that we should be delivering on, there is a need to ideate. We were given a very generic kind of a perspective, but this is what we experience when we meet people. We need to look at new and disruptive ways of doing certain things".

Mr. Nehru talked about a story "A King was gifted two eagles. He told his Wazir, "I want to know how they are going to fly." The next day the Wazir comes back and reports to His Majesty, "One of the eagles is flying very high but the other one is not flying at all. We have tried our best." The king was surprised. He said, "I don't know. I want them both to fly. I want this one also to fly." So, they made an announcement and an old villager came in, a very smart villager, who said, "I will help." He left and the next day it was reported that the second eagle was flying very high, even higher than the first one. The king was surprised and said, "I want to know what was done with this eagle." He called the villager and asked him, "What did you do?" He replied, "I did nothing. I only cut the branch on which this eagle was sitting. And, that's it."

Mr. Nehru observed, "Sometimes we cling so strongly to certain old patterns and perceptions that we do not want to leave them and because of that we do not want to fly. And because we do not want to fly, we do not soar higher. That is when someone comes and cuts the branch. If even at that time we do not want to fly, we will fall and die. The only choice we have is to fly. Given the potential that already exists inside us, the image which we have changed, the intent which we have looked at and the ideation which we are trying to bring out, a professional can definitely fly

high rather than fall down and die".

This ideation, Mr. Nehru said, is something which is not very new to us. "The *padhitis* of our entire traditional education system were grounded on ideation. According to the first principle of Veda, 'agnimeele purohitam' and the first shloka, the principle on which the Ved acharyas or Gurujans of that time would teach was 'Let noble thoughts come from all sides'. This is the Veda principle, the fundamental principle on which education was being offered to the students. Ideation is in our DNA and it is because of this that we were able to achieve so much. The economy of India in the first century AD was reported to be around 37-38 per cent of the world GDP. Now how did it happen? So much ideation by Indians resulted in many innovations, which resulted into many products which were actually being sold and purchased by people around the world. That is how it happened! Ideation is fundamentally in our Indian DNA. When we travel to countries outside, we see that through the ideation Indians are able to generate results in business growth and new strategy. Without them, it is not possible". Mr. Nehru said that the last place he worked was in the Phillipines, where, ninety per cent of professionals managing the Filipino businesses were Indians. "At the Google office in the US we found ninety per cent of the products came from the heads of the Indian software engineers. At IBM, in hundred per cent of software labs, Indians were being imported from India to the US and then they would help them. Look at any company, Indians were prominent. Indians fundamentally had this in their DNA. We have been trained and taught this way".

"The fourth I is "Implement". Once we have an idea and have come out with a thought, what is more important is that unless we implement it, there is no point in having the idea. So, execution is very critical. Many of us have heard this management example.

There was a shoe making comany which

had sent its marketing executive to a country to examine and assess the potential of selling their shoes there. So, this gentleman goes there and does a survey. He finds no one is wearing shoes. He comes back and says, "There is no point in establishing our business in that country because no one is wearing shoes there." Another marketing executive working there says, 'I would want to go.' So, he is also sent. From there he sends a telegram to the company executive saying, 'Boss, keep four truckloads of shoes ready.' The company executive replies, 'Are you going nuts? Your senior colleaugue told us that there is no need of shoes and you are now sending me a telegram.' He says, 'That is true, no one is wearing shoes here and that is why there is a potential for selling our shoes.' So, it is the way we look at it. We may see an opportunity or we may see no opportunity. It depends on how we look at certain situations. When we have ideas, we may find many people who say, "Sahab, this is a great idea but it is not possible, we cannot implement it. There are so many constraints." They give legal constraints, technological constraints, publisher constraints, company constraints, they give so many constraints. However every constraint is an opportunity and that there is a possibility to go and execute it".

"The fifth I is "Institutionalise". If we have a vision we should implement it. We should find ways. There would be many challenges and people would try to derail, demotivate and not inspire us. We should not let that happen. Always see it from an institutionalisation point of view. It should not happen that when you leave, the idea dies. We have to create an ecosystem where this idea is institutionalised and where a mechanism is in place so that it lives even when we are not there".

"And the sixth I is "Inspire". So, we must combine all these things together and then keep on, as we say, sharpening

the saw. Whatever we did today, tomorrow may be different, so we have to act differently towards the next step. So inspire. Create that inspiration".

Mr. Nehru recommends these six *Is* to LIS professionals. He feels that, libraries have vast scope to transform the creative spaces in the country, and India needs it. It is because ideation, execution and implementation are major challenges today. He feels that the cut-copy-paste tendency has developed in us and originality has somewhere died. Libraries could re-establish the age-old tradition of originality, imagination, creativity and innovation and could make India proud of what we were over a million years ago.

The lecture was followed by questions/ answers. While answering questions, Mr. Raj Nehru made the following observations:

1. "We open a book, flip the page, then recline, but now that feel is gone today where we have Kindle, a gadget or a tool from which we read the book. We do not need to go to the library. Libraries have entered the bedrooms, the palmtops and hand tops of humans."

2. Referring to the sustainability of a project today, Mr. Nehru's personal experience about sustainability is that the problem with us human beings is that we want to do everything individually. As a result, it dies when we are not there. But when we work in a collaborative mode and bring people in from different spaces and make them feel that we are working on a knowledge sharing basis where everyone is an equal stakeholder, we will find the possibilities of sustainability going higher, as everyone feels that his or her contribution is equally good as the other person's.

3. "We may soon see the role of a librarian completely disappearing. The technology will one day completely replace us.

4. There may be more than a hundred thousand libraries in the country and their condition is pathetic. This is because the mindset towards libraries is very poor. When examples are given that some libraries have made some change, is it not a great opportunity for library professionals to go and see what it is they have done that made them change? However, what is in our control is to put in the best efforts towards change.

5. In thirty years of my career as a professional, I have seen this, not in a library but whenever we used to pick up a new project. The challenge always was that many of the recipient beneficiaries, different departments would not buy it because they did not feel that it was going to make a change. However, we realised that two things worked very well for us. One was, when I am developing something, I have engaged with some stakeholders, directly or indirectly, to understand what exactly is their main point, their exact needs and expectations. After collating that when we created a solution, if there was a resistance by the larger audience who said, "no, it will not work for us here", we would establish a success story somewhere and when the success story was published, we recognised that other stakeholders started coming.

6. There is a need to do the service of educating, training and skilling. But remember one thing, this issue of the plagiarism that we talked about, we may be only looking at it from the tip of the iceberg. Today it has become a problem emerging from our value system. This value is inculcated in our children right from the day they are born. I recall, students going to school. From an early age, six, seven, eight and nine, big schools have projects for the children to do and do you see what we as parents do? We go to the market where there is a stationery-wala who has three types of projects: one is for A grade, one for B Grade and one for C Grade, depending on your payment abilities. Now see where the problem starts. The problem starts when as a parent I go and buy that depending upon how much I can spend. I bring it home and in front of my child label the name of my child on it. The child happily takes it to school and gets applause and recognition by the teachers. The child knows very well that he did not do it but he is being praised for doing nothing. So, he learns one value: Cut, copy and paste! It is not the problem of skilling today. It is the problem of values that have been inculcated. So it is not a librarian who will change it. Every Indian has to do it today as a parent at home. Stop doing this."

Dr. H.K. Kaul, in his concluding remarks said that we have to wake up as professionals and do something. The Six Is that Mr. Nehru has mentioned, are the great principles we should work on. The profession has to really come up and he hoped that the library professionals and library associations would play a pivotal role as it is their responsibility to promote the functioning of libraries. He thanked Mr. Raj Nehru for delivering an enriching and thought provoking DELNET Annual Lecture for 2018. ∎