

# MyDLIS, my Career and my Life: Thoughts and Theories

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MyDLIS facilitated my personal, academic and professional development. I believe that it is good to follow the community of knowledge building teachers. Admittedly, teacher is a master; and students do not outgrow. Here are impressions and lessons as anecdotes (some comic, tragic, sentimental and some melodramatic) that are a reflection of school experiences, career, celebration and memorabilia.

### School Experience & Career:

Joined the MyDLIS to just get a degree and a job; however unexpectedly the ROI was very high. Thanks for the opportunities. The impetus came from the physical presence, intellectual surroundings, practice, along with student's commitment and circumstances. Later this led to work with

communities of practice, where you are paid for what you know and how to do. Success in career is a reasonable metric of output, experts opine. I could not have received this training elsewhere.



I got education and training during 1976-78 from a Faculty who were a good sample of leading lights of Indian LIS Education: Prof. P K Patil; Prof. T V Subramanyam; Prof. Pangannayya; H A Khan; Prof. K S Raghavan; and Prof. Shalini Urs. It saddens me that of the six of my professors, three are no more.

### The Course Catalogue@MyDLIS (BLIS 1976-77) and (MLIS-1977-78)

<p>BLIS (1976-77): Semester I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library &amp; Society</li> <li>• Library &amp; Management</li> <li>• Information Sources</li> <li>• Literature Survey Project (Eco Geology of Ferro Alloy Metals)</li> <li>• Optional: College Library</li> </ul>	<p>Semester II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Processing 1: Classification</li> <li>• Technical Processing 2: Cataloguing</li> <li>• Documentation Techniques and Services</li> <li>• Project (Sepoy Mutiny),</li> <li>• Field Work (in a public library)</li> </ul>	<p>MLIS (1977-78): Semester I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information &amp; Communication;</li> <li>• Information Processing &amp; Retrieval Part 1</li> <li>• Comparative Librarianship;</li> <li>• Optional: Industrial Information System</li> </ul>	<p>Semester II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Processing &amp; Retrieval Part 2</li> <li>• Research Methods</li> <li>• Optional: Education for Librarianship</li> <li>• Advances in Classification &amp; Indexing (Practice)</li> <li>• Dissertation Project (Newspaper as source of industrial info)</li> </ul>
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Later, while looking at a catalog of forty ALA schools discovered that the above courses were similar.

*Lesson # 1: MyDLIS Faculty was an informed participant in keeping pace with the need for change.*

### Active learning environment:

It was closer to the time-tested Indian approach, than to asynchronous distance or experiential learning type. Space is insufficient to state everyone's spirit and determination (e.g., faculty, staff including Dasarath, and Chanchala) in facilitating the learning curve.

Learnt to search, then, in printed tools and in library card catalog (author, title, subject and dictionary + ALA card filing rules), using worksheets—a mind set that prepared for keyword searching. This did help me with transferable skills in an online menu. I was inspired by “documentation techniques” course to capture and manage data, which in turn facilitated understanding KM. Motivated by guidance to collect, analyze and synthesize data using industry metrics, and aided by research methodology course, I was eventually successful in receiving doctoral and post-doc degrees. Being trained to differentiate “reference bibliography” from “physical bibliography,” enabled me in identifying data formats and sources for biblio-mining. The Library & Management course guided me to create an album of every type of library's stationery – helps in picking Brodart, Gaylord's stationary.

*Lesson # 2: Librarian is not a technician, rather a reflective practitioner. “Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners” (John Holt, 1984).*

### Librarians are live wires of the society:

Library & Society course taught us about Dr. S R Ranganathan's Laws in relation to human relationships wherein the user is foremost in the library trinity of – user, staff, and resources. Library staff makes resources accessible and useful to every user at the time of his/her need. Interestingly, this idea was practiced under the

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same roof. A hard working junior staff in the MUL's reference never declined anyone's request; would know where to find what you needed. This attitude reflects the impact of SRR's Laws, i.e., proactive and timely approach with a human touch in meeting their needs. To such die-hard barefoot librarians I dedicated a book (Libraries in India's National Developmental Perspectives, 2001). Critics call this kind of service as ‘spoon-feeding’ ‘microwaved’ or ‘canned reference.’ Such critics may perhaps need go to school to learn as to why spoon-feeding is Google's best practice, e.g. Google's Directory (2000-2011), Google Instant Search (2010-), free tutorial videos to search the ‘Google’, etc.

*Lesson # 3: Librarianship at its heart is a helping profession.*

This role of librarian— to help, remains fundamentally unchanged. Librarians sustain their profession by enhancing serendipity—disseminating not just ‘popular’ resources as Google does, but also relevant and current, based on skills; best is to ignore such criticism. “When the reader comes amidst the library, there must be someone to say: Take my hand; for I have passed this way, and



know the truth.” (Gopinath, M.A., ed, *Memorabilia Ranganathan*, 1994).

Inspired by wise masters, I continue to learn by sharing the lessons, in areas such as, faith-based taxonomy, Web sights & Webometrics, bibliometrics, OPAC’s usability (esp., Thomas Mann: mysterious elephant amidst the six blind), Searchology, KM, digital literacy, and information literacy.

### Educational Tours:

Educational tours (from one day and week long ones) exposed me to the works of stalwarts such as Mr. B P Shenoy (Osmania); Dr. B Johnson and Marshall (Bombay University.) Visits to TIFR, BARC, British Library and meeting Dr. VAKamath, Dr. L J Haravu, Dr. Chandra Prabha Vaidyanathan, and Mrs. B Prasanna Lakshmi, helped get first-hand information about best practices in libraries. Since then I have remained fascinated about Prof. Marshall’s contributions. To this mastermind I dedicated the Indian library history book (*Librarianship and Library Science in India*, Concept, 1994).

*Lesson #4: Long-lasting LIS knowledge comes also from beyond the classroom—but not necessarily beyond books & bytes.*

### Celebration & Memorabilia:

Compassionate voice of senior faculty, e.g., ‘Where is you’ ‘how are you’ and ‘when I was in Chicago’ or ‘when I was using MEDLAR database’ ring in ears. In that same galaxy are voices of guest speakers, Prof. T K S Iyengar (IISc), Prof. Jakarti (Kolhapur University Librarian), Prof. K S Subramaniam (DrexelU), and Dr. Peter Lazar (Hungarian documentalist).

*Lesson # 5: Getting to meet these experts with a variety of roles from a variety of institutions was a great exposure.*

A few classmates were extremely talented; some specialized in fine arts, such as, music, dance and singing. Campus reminiscences include a walk/ride by the Kukkarahalli Lake, relax/chat at shaded benches, at Gandhi Bhavan, by-two coffee in the canteen, etc. The buildings and

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lanes are all recognizable, and even if navigating from any direction, GPS will not give up in confusion.

Had amazing times, cherish those moments. Unforgettable was a royal wedding ceremony of a faculty. In this grand event only one person—FK Irani, CEO of Ideal Jawa was in a simple dress. Had another feast at a classmate’s residence (just behind Jawa). It’s a bond of trust, which persists.

*Lesson # 6: “You might forget those who made you laugh, but you will never forget those who were by your side in your darkest hours” (Kahlil Gibran).*

Using the future to ‘sort out’ the present: Having received wisdom, need to pass this so that others too can thrive. Here are TAHER’s five brainstorming ideas for a soon-to-be library school student:

- Tapping your network, rather than making sole decisions – seek expert advice;
- Ask the LIS program about the percentage of hired grads – be realistic because your numbers

may be luckier;

- Have a plan about career—no degree guarantees you a job; it is you – with additional academic and professional motivation/skills, who will land in a job;
- Education for librarianship prepares you for skills that are transferable – think before you jump: it needs a proactive timely approach with a human touch, not a potato coach;
- Research both inside the field and outside for job market (know the areas in demand), and then apply knowledge not information in your final decision to join or not to join.

Endnote: This reminiscence is a horizontal view. However, a vertical narrative would have been better, with in-depth details, such as, a session amidst changing heads; a rush hour session with an emerging superstar; moments of response on finding someone struck in impasse; feelings of those who lost top-rank or did not pass the exam; and short and long-term impact of the influencers (aka outcome bias). Hence, need to inculcate the idea of documenting alumni stories (tacit and explicit) as it happens, or ASAP. Such narrative is a good ROI, both to increase alumni loyalty and be a trendsetter for the newcomers. Digging for ideas, after a time gap, are akin not just searching ‘ants carrying sugar’ (in scattered locations), rather brown sugar from

brown ants (in dispersed hiding places). So true!!! Nevertheless, the science of documentation needs both, story and data. It is better to record using a uniform template, such as, school experience, career celebration and memorabilia.

Here is a humble reminder for people of understanding. Based on the emerging scenario (school closures, disappearance of Associateship, saturated market, changing demands, recession 2008, UGC’s call to restore one year BLIS and MLIS, etc.) LIS programs require a different incarnation altogether. Re-branding from Lib economy to KM/IM, re-naming as in University of Toronto, Rutgers and transformation as was PKP’s proposition (1978), are already tested, and by now, in 2015, is it not time to state ‘LIS as frozen’ (‘not frozen in time.’ Shalini, 2002). If not, do we agree that ‘Mars works in universities & Venus in corporate organizations’ (John Kingston)? Whereas, as the business model in the market changes, shouldn’t LIS be open for different model(s) of librarianship and reinvent its info structure—for e.g., intensive collaboration (not competition; as is rampant in LIS with computer science) with related disciplines, such as, psychology, sociology, marketing, and law?

Lesson # 7 : Great masters built MyDLIS, no doubt; but institutions cannot survive on mere past reputation.

*Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*