



BOOK REVIEW

Where Knowledge is Free: The Journey of a Librarian. By Kalpana Dasgupta. Allcap Communications, Kolkata, India, 2019, 295 pages, Hardback, ISBN: 9789353615628.

Ms. Kalpana Dasgupta is one of the fascinating professional librarians in the country in our time, held the most senior positions in India's Ministry of Culture. She was the first woman Librarian of the National Library of India and the first woman Director of the Central Secretariat Library. Besides those, she was the first President of the Indian Library Association. Her successor in the Central Secretariat Library, Dr. Prakriti Ranjan Goswami, has already published his account of professional experiences in a book titled "Corridor of Books: Memories, Ideas and Reflections of a Library Worker" in 2018^[1]. Dasgupta's book is titled to tribute to Rabindranath Tagore's famous poetry from his book 'Gitanjali', which was first published in 1910. No wonder, she is an ardent supporter of free knowledge. Under her leadership, the national libraries and public libraries of India transformed into the knowledge hubs for the scholars and common citizens. The book is a reflection of her services to the nation and her leadership style. The primary objective of this book is not to initiate academic discourses; rather, this book is written to make the aspiring library professionals aware of the actual functioning of libraries and responsibilities of working librarians.

The book is structured into thirteen chapters. The book begins with a Foreword by Kapila Vatsayan, who held many senior positions in the Ministry of Culture, and UNESCO. Vatsayan narrates the evolution of libraries in India, and the contributions of visionary personalities such as Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III, Harinath De, S.R. Ranganathan, and B.S. Kesavan, who shaped the Indian library systems.

The book starts with a chapter titled "Choosing a Librarianship as a Career". The author completed the Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) from Jadavpur University in Kolkata in the respective department's inaugural batch. After some professional experience in the libraries of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI)

in Kolkata, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in New Delhi, and she proceeded for pursuing Master's in Library Science at Syracuse University in the United States as a Fulbright student. With her graduate study (MLS) in the USA, she could opt for a professional career somewhere in an advanced country, including the Americas. However, she chose to serve the libraries in India.

The chapter "The National Library" is the longest one. After serving the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) and Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in New Delhi, she joined as the National Librarian of NLI in July 1983. Mr. B.S. Kesavan earlier held this position during 1947-1962. However, the position remained vacant until Ms. Dasgupta occupied it. In this chapter, she elaborates on her learning process to become a successful National Librarian, the automation and administering of the National Library of India (NLI), and the functioning of the Central Secretariat Library (CSL). It was a time for the modernization of libraries in India in line with other academic and national libraries across the world. The computerization in library services was started in the 1980s in different libraries, and the NLI was not an exception. In fact, the NLI was one of the first places in India that initiated the computerization of library services, overcoming many barriers, including the psychological and political barriers affecting the old-fashioned library staff and professionals.

In the chapter "Role in National and International Professional Organisations", she chronicles her association with various professional societies and networks. While serving the NLI, she became very active in the international librarianship as a member of the Regional Standing Committee for Asia and Oceania (RSCAO) of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL). She served different sections of IFLA, including the RSCAO, Government Libraries Section, and National Libraries Section. Enriched with experience in IFLA and other international networks,

she got elected as the first woman President of the Indian Library Association (ILA) in 2000. ILA was at the forefront of professional activities after successfully organizing IFLA's 1992 World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) in New Delhi. In this book, he remembered fondly the painstaking tasks of holding such a massive professional event in India, and how team ILA prepared for the event since its announcement. During her tenure as a President of ILA, she tried to expand its professional activities in different zones with the help of the Vice-Presidents.

In the chapter "Government Initiatives for Library and Information Services Development", she recalls her frequent interactions with the national policymakers for ensuring the government's commitments in shaping the library systems and services. She was nominated as the Chair of the Working Group on Libraries under the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in 2005. The Group made ten-point recommendations for the overall development, good governance, and modernization of

library services in the country. The chapter also discusses the functioning of the National Mission on Libraries (NML), launched in 2012, and the National Virtual Library of India (NVLI) working under NML. Although the author has not mentioned in the book, many scholars observed that NVLI, as well as NML, lack progress and halted within the bureaucratic boundaries of the line Ministry.

The book provides an insight into understanding the functioning of crucial library institutions in the country, and the transformational challenges in organizing a cohesive national network of modern library and information system. This book is recommended to the scholars and aspiring young library and information professionals for preparing for the services and understanding the nuances of librarianship as a professional career.

Reference:

- 1 Das, A.K. (2019). Corridors of Books: Memories, Ideas and Reflections of a Library Worker [Book Review]. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 66(2), 87-88.

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Addendum

In the research paper "Document clustering for knowledge synthesis and project portfolio funding decision in R&D organizations" that appeared in *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, Vol. 66, September 2019, pp. 110-116, the author affiliation institution namely, Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), of the Abhishek Kumar and Naresh Kumar was missed out.

Accordingly, the affiliation institution names stand modified as follows:

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Document clustering for knowledge synthesis and project portfolio funding
decision in R&D organizations

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