

SPEECH ON CONVENTION ON AUTOMATION OF LIBRARIES IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS HELD AT PANJAB UNIVERSITY, CHANDIGARH ON FEBRUARY 8-10, 2007.

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Accept my felicitations on this august gathering of librarians and computer specialists of national and international repute in this '5th International Convention on Automation of Libraries in Education and Research Institutions'. I am certain that all of you have deliberated upon new vistas, frontiers and problems that will prove most fruitful to information providers and more so to information seekers.

World has indeed changed in last two decades. 1980's were times for automation of libraries. In the 1990's, Internet as also the web were the flavor. In the present day world, big search engines and institutional repositories are gradually gaining a firm footing.

Ladies and gentlemen, we stand today, as a part of and as harbingers of a new era – where at the click of a mouse, anyone can find any item from any location irrespective of whether such an item as well as libraries are physical or digital or both.

What uptill now was a world of catalogues posted on the web, e-mail notifying about expired lending periods and scanned copies of articles is giving way to a new order. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the new world of 'virtual learning

environment' created by the new repositories, services and search engines. Libraries are indeed set to metamorphose into 'libratories' indicating and expressing the combined function of a library, a repository and a collaboratory.

As one looks at the entire spectrum of issues of 'Automation of Libraries in Educational and Research Institutions', certain fundamental issues – legal, ethical, moral and contextual arise. I pose some of these issues to you today:-

- (i) Should scholarly communication be librated from current copyright hindrances?
- (ii) Isn't open access to state-of-art knowledge crucial for success of both research and learning environment?
- (iii) Is it intellectually correct to put research work of authors into the bin of open accessibility resulting into repeated references, citation and consequent impact factors?
- (iv) How to balance the dichotomy between the users and financers of information, as the former is in favour of unquestioned access to as much information as is possible, while the latter seeks to make maximum revenue?
- (v) Whether the doctrine of 'ambient findability' supersedes the issues of economies and to what extent?
- (vi) How is an information repository to be harvested?

- (vii) Whether getting the search engine to order the yield and present it to the word for free as in case of 'goggle scholar' is the answer or should the yield be charged as in case of 'Scopus'?
- (viii) Whether responsibility of an educational institution, library or librarian stops with furthering 'creation of knowledge' or should it be followed by dissemination and its communication as a necessary corollary?
- (ix) Who really owns academic work?
- (x) How should universities and state institutions define the parameters of strategies that address the issues of information accessibility, copyright quality and secrecy?
- (xi) How to balance the issues of privacy, free expression, intellectual freedom, equal and unfettered access to ideas and information and opposition to censorship?

I am certain that Caliber 2007 has helped you to answer some to these questions and share experience of professionals in the area of automation, management and networking. I am certain that you have explored advantages of web-based systems, free dissemination of information and its usefulness in ground breaking research.

While, there are fundamental issues of ethics and economics involved in almost all positions in terms of free or regulated information, we have to walk that extra yard. I have a few suggestions to make in this perspective:-

- (a) Our endeavor to create a 'free learning environment' as an important parameter of automation is imperative for ground-breaking research in educational and research institutions. Its dissemination through 'libraries' and 'libratories' is the way ahead.
- (b) Doctrine of 'ambient findability' is a key to automation.
- (c) 'Information and Library Network' (INFLIBNET) must aim at standardization of library automation activities, resource sharing and high speed connectivity.
- (d) Libraries, particularly in educational and research institutions must prepare a catalogues of documents as also all important research papers and make them accessible through INFLIBNET centres.
- (e) Initiate electronic thesis and dissertations (ETD) projects on priority as is being done by other developed nations.
- (f) A comprehensive information network between libraries of various universities, educational and research institutions, UGC, ICAR, CSIR and other similar institutions for a free flow of information is another important milestone.

At the end, I would like to thank our esteemed Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sobti as also the delegates of the function for giving me the valuable opportunity of sharing these precious moments with you. I would also like to congratulate INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad as also all organizers associated in this program.

Last but not the least, Chandigarh is the city beautiful – with its unique culture, abundant beauty and insurmountable love. Dissemination of affection and warmth moves faster here than the click of a mouse. Dissemination of beauty and all enveloping atmosphere of the city always leaves enchanting memories for all its visitors. I am sure that you have enjoyed your stay in the city as also on the campus.

May God bless you in your spirited endeavour of quickest and widest possible dissemination of information.