



IASLIC NEWSLETTER

Indian Association for Special
Libraries and Information Centres



February 2021

A Monthly Newsletter Published by IASLIC

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Quote of the Month

“The library is not only a diary of the human races, but marks an act of faith on the continuity of humanity”

— Vartan Gregorian

Armenian-American
academic, educator, and historian

Appeal to Readers

News from different regions / states are solicited from IASLIC members for inclusion in the newsletter. Send such news to the Editor.

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IASLIC ACTIVITIES

IASLIC 29th National Seminar

The 29th National Seminar of IASLIC could not be held as scheduled during October 27 - 29, 2020 due to pandemic. The new dates and venue of the seminar will be announced in due course on IASLIC website and in the newsletter. Papers for the seminar are still being accepted. The last date of acceptance will also be announced in due course. For 'Call for Papers' detailing facets and sub-facets of the seminar theme and those of the themes of SIG meetings, please see *IASLIC Newsletter* April 2020 issue or visit IASLIC website.

Nominations invited for IASLIC Awards

IASLIC invites nominations for the following awards for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

1. Prof. Prabir Roychoudhury and Mrs. Amita Roychoudhury - IASLIC Best LIS Teacher Award, sponsored by Prof. Prabir Roychoudhury and Mrs. Amita Roychoudhury Memorial Trust.
2. Smt. A Satyavathi and Prof. A A N Raju - IASLIC Best Young LIS Teacher Award, sponsored by Prof. AAN Raju.
3. S M Ganguli - IASLIC Award for the Librarian of the Year, sponsored by late S M Ganguli.

Six copies of application in prescribed format should reach Honorary General Secretary, IASLIC, P 291 CIT Scheme No. 6M, Kankurgachi, Kolkata 700054 on or before April 30, 2021.

For eligibility criteria and prescribed format of application visit IASLIC website.

23rd Ranganathan Lecture: Brief Report

The 23rd IASLIC-Ranganathan Lecture was held on December 26, 2020 at 5.30 pm in virtual mode. Prof. Alaka Buragohain, Retired Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati, delivered the lecture on the topic 'Ranganathan and the Present Context of Public Librarianship in India'. The programme was chaired by Prof. Narendra Lahkar, President, IASLIC. Shri Abhijit Kumar, General Secretary, IASLIC, welcomed the Speaker, Chairperson and the participants who were linked with the programme through Google Meet. Shri Kumar also introduced the Speaker. The Chairperson, Prof. Lahkar, in his introductory remarks, briefly highlighted Ranganathan's contributions towards librarianship and the important role of public library in the societal growth. He was of the view that all stakeholders should work for the development of public library system.

Prof. Alaka Buragohain commenced her lecture by paying homage to Dr. S R Ranganathan for his single-handed struggle in the development of library profession. She mentioned how Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science had implications in almost all fields of library and information science and library and information profession. Prof. Buragohain pointed out that

Ranganathan continued rigorous research in every aspect of librarianship/library and information science to establish Library and Information Science as a regular discipline. Recalling Ranganathan's contribution in the field of academic librarianship, Prof. Buragohain highlighted how college and university librarians got their academic status from a mere custodians of books. She talked about the necessity of ICT in library and information services as a tool only. But, she lamented, nowadays many library authorities were trying to manage their libraries by computer experts or IT personnel rather than qualified librarians. While talking about Ranganathan's views on public librarianship, Prof. Buragohain highlighted the role of public library in serving the society irrespective of caste, colour, creed, age, sex, religion, educational qualification, and financial position. But public librarianship was not getting proper importance both in LIS course syllabi and in the profession, she said. She also stressed on converting public libraries into dynamic institutions.

After the speech, Prof. Amitabha Chatterjee, Editor, IASLIC Newsletter, expressed his views on the government's contention about public libraries throughout the country. He pointed out that in West Bengal many public libraries remained closed and in some cases two or more libraries were being managed by a single librarian. The programme ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Smt. Banasree Roy, Joint Secretary, IASLIC.

CONFERENCES / SEMINARS / WORKSHOPS

National

Programme on IPR

A Short Term Programme (online) on 'Intellectual Property Rights', organized by UGC-HRDC & IPR Cell of Gauhati University, in Collaboration with Patent Information Centre, ASTEC Govt. of Assam, will be held during February 1 - 7, 2021. For details visit: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18TKqSyj44mREdgsxzt17GJnt3GHSp18C/view>

Refresher Programme in LIS

A UGC sponsored Refresher Programme in Library & Information Science will be held at Sabitribai Phula Pune University, Pune, during February 11 - 24, 2021. For details visit: <https://hrdc.unipune.ac.in/>

International

Web of Science Training Programme

A series of free WebEx trainings is being conducted by the Clarivate product experts on various aspects of the Web of Science platform to support academic institutions with effective scientific discovery and writing. The programme schedule is as follows: Session 1: January 28, 2021; Session 2: February 2, 2021; Session 3: February 4, 2021 am; Session 4: February 9, 2021; Session 5: February 11, 2021 at 11.30 am in

each session. The training will culminate into a Web of Science e-certificate for those who successfully complete the training and the quiz which will be sent out within a few days after the completion of the fifth session. For more details visit: <http://s786780033.t.en25.com/e/es?s=786780033&e=1093517&elqTrackId=9697c1f688ef4be5a0e63c7ab2ba2730&elq=d92895821eb74c878f9c07c3047b53b6&elqaid=13310&elqat=1>

Conference on Webometrics, Informetrics

17th International Conference (COLLNET 2021) on 'Webometrics, Informetrics and Scientometrics (WIS)' and 22nd Meeting of COLLNET will be held during December 13 - 15, 2021 at Ambedkar University, Delhi, and Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. For details visit: <https://www.slp.org.in/events/>

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Street Libraries in Madurai

A street library has been initiated at Karuppapillai Enthal area in Madurai to help primary school students get access to books and develop reading habit from home, says a *The Times of India* report. K Saravanan, Headmaster, Dr. T Thirugnanam Primary School, who also runs 'Nool Vanam', started the street library initiative with the aim of helping students from poor backgrounds get access to books and help them read better even when schools are shut. "We used to introduce our school children to public libraries and help them get memberships. However, now most libraries are not functioning as usual. So, with the help of members of parent-teacher associations, self-help groups, we are looking to set up street libraries across Madurai," he said. The street libraries will be run by parents who will maintain it just like a lending library. "As the first part of the initiative, around 100 books worth Rs 5,000 were put together to establish the street library at Karuppapillai Enthal area. Students in nearby streets would be able to access these books any time. Depending on the response and if we can have more parents involved, we are planning to develop such libraries in 11 more areas," said Saravanan. At the primary school, already a home-schooling initiative is going on wherein teachers are going to different localities where students live and give them lessons. "These street libraries can help support the home-schooling as students can develop reading habit and read more books on their own without worrying about spending on them," he added. According to a previous report in the same newspaper, street libraries have been opened for students of a government middle school in Kondapethan village in Madurai district to inculcate reading habits in them. The street libraries are being set up at the houses of the volunteers in each street. Students can borrow books every week to read and then return them after a week. At a special reading session held in an open space recently, students, following Covid-19 safety norms, were given books to read. Archana Deiva, an entrepreneur and college professor, who has been involved in organizing reading sessions in various schools, donated books and was also the chief guest at the event. Children

were taught to make hats out of newspapers and also were given the chance to tell stories. For original reports visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/street-library-takes-wings-to-help-primary-school-kids-in-madurai/articleshowprint/79652149.cms> and <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/street-libraries-opened-in-tn-village/articleshowprint/78517885.cms>

Library in Car Trunk

In times of social media and digital entertainment, two Nagpurians have decided to take the road less travelled with their 'Library on Wheels'. IT professionals Likhit Agrawal and Alisha Nathani are taking their passion for reading literally to the streets, in a bid to recreate the magic of the era when libraries were a popular destination, says a *The Times of India* report. Former classmates from Ramdeobaba College of Engineering, Likhit and Alisha strongly felt the need to engage people in a meaningful hobby in these Covid-19 times. Their mobile library operates from the trunk of their car. Parked for almost four hours at a fixed spot, they offer books of all genres to anyone who loves reading. Alisha said, "There is no membership fee. We want to create awareness about reading and that's the only reason we are doing this. Anyone who loves to read can drop in and take away a book." Likhit said that it was high time that people discovered the joy of reading. "More and more people are working from home and many are spending time on social media and other platforms. We want people to experience what it means to browse through books and read it," said Likhit. Considering that their initiative is just a week old, Library on Wheels' stockpile has already crossed a hundred books. "All these books are either from our own collection or donated by friends and relatives. We are expecting more books to be added as the word gets around," said Alisha. Their first weekend saw mostly those in their early and mid-20s flocking to browse through books. "We were stationed outside a cafe and the crowd was mostly of young adults. And 'fiction' was the genre that got most eyeballs," said Alisha. So while there's no membership fee, the duo still prefers to err on the side of caution. There is a refundable deposit that is to be paid by the user. "Payment can be done online or in cash. It is fully refundable once the book is returned," said Alisha. For full report visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/this-library-on-wheels-will-take-you-on-a-literary-ride/articleshowprint/79613423.cms>

WhatsApp library

Whenever 13-year-old Pooja Kumari would find some time, she would escape into the community library in Delhi's Sikandarpur with her younger sister. She had an arrangement. They would pick a book, sit down and the librarian would read to them. In March last, like everything else, the library shut down because of the pandemic. School was also closed. The voracious reader lost her quiet refuge. That was when the Community Library Project (TCLP), a non-profit that runs four libraries across Delhi-NCR, launched a WhatsApp library, Duniya Sabki, says a story in *The Times of India*. It's a simple idea books and stories are either read

aloud in short videos or audio clips by volunteers and community members, delivered on WhatsApp thrice a week. By now, Duniya Sabki has 900 households as members. "A lot of parents were worried about what children would do with the free time they had. A lot depended on their access to a library. Our library was a response to that," said author Mridula Koshy, who launched TCLP. So far, the digital library has curated 500 books and short stories in Hindi. The content is open source feminist stories by Kamala Bhasin, revolutionary poems of Pash or curated 'Ismat Ki Eid' published by Tulika Books or 'Jui Mausai Ki Beti' by Madhuri Purandare. It has also been putting out reliable information on general topics like health, Covid-19 and college admissions. "Since the online library is accessed by members who have limited access to the Internet and to gadgets, we ensure that the files are light and videos short," said Zoya Chadha, a reading specialist and project coordinator, Duniya Sabki. And the issues they bring up resonate with their kids. "They tell us through texts or on Facebook. They also send requests for books and stories they want to listen to." The library will soon be uploading a series of videos on the Constitution. "At a time when people push back and say change the Constitution, it's a great chance to know what it really is. Instead of sleep-walking through the citizenship debate, for instance, people need to join it," said Koshy. TCLP also hosted a Free Library Festival recently to celebrate the work they have done and raise funds. For full story visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/whatsapp-library-comes-to-the-rescue-of-pandemic-hit-bibliophiles/articleshowprint/79642456.cms>

Dead Cop's Family Builds Library

Family of police sub-inspector (SI) R Murugan, 57, who died of Covid-19, has built a police station outpost-cum-library in his memory to fulfil his dream and pay a fitting tribute to him, according to a story in *The Times of India*. It was recently dedicated at Karaiyiruppu on the highway in Tirunelveli city. The place where the outpost has been built is among three temporary check posts where he was on Covid-19 duty when he contracted the virus three months ago. Murugan joined the police department as a constable in 1987 and served at various police stations before he was transferred to Thatchanallur police station in Tirunelveli city on April 5 last year. "He did not want to work in Thatchanallur as our native village Karaiyiruppu comes under its jurisdiction. He feared villagers would misuse his name to escape from any crimes," the eldest of his three daughters K Sornaselvi, 32, told *TOI*. Due for retirement in May 2021 he had leave for more than 400 days. Though the family advised him to take leave and spend time with them, he told them that it would be impossible for him to spend a day without the khaki uniform. "When tribute was paid to a policeman who died in the line of duty, he used to say they are fortunate to be laid to rest with the 21 rounds fired. He considered it as an honour," she added. Murugan was involved in Covid-19 awareness and checking at the Chidambrananagar Vilakku (Karaiyiruppu), Thatchanallur and Subburaj Mill

temporary check posts. The one at Karaiyiruppu only had two barricades and two chairs under a tree and it was there Murugan wanted to build an outpost. He even laid a foundation stone for the same in the third week of July last. Though he tested negative for Covid-19 twice, he was diagnosed with mild lung damage in a CT scan and was hospitalised till he breathed his last on September 12. As wished by Murugan, his wife Shanthi, 52, and daughters K Sornaselvi, M Vanitha, 29, and M Amritha, 23, fulfilled his dream by coordinating with the city police and fully bore expenses to construct the outpost at more than ₹ 1 lakh. City Police Commissioner Deepak M Damoor dedicated the outpost. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) said that the outpost was strategically located at a place that was communally sensitive. “We have kept 400 books to help youth prepare for competitive exams and books on agriculture as it is an agrarian region. Youth can take the books to prepare for the exams and return them,” he said. Efforts are being taken to arrange 400 more books in the library. For full original story visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/family-builds-police-outpost-cum-library-in-memory-of-cop-who-died-of-covid-19-in-tirunelveli/articleshowprint/79698384.cms>

Parliament Library gets Revised Mahabharata

Mahabharata, one of two major epics of ancient India is now on the shelves of the Parliament Library in Delhi, says a *The Times of India* report. This epic - all 24 volumes of it in Sanskrit - was gifted by Sri Vishwaprasanna Tirtha Swami, Pejavar mutt seer, who handed it over to Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, at his residence in Delhi recently. The epic was revised during the Paryaya tenure of Sri Vidyadeesha Tirtha Swamiji of Palimaru Mutt. Vasudev Bhat, social worker, who facilitated this handover to the Parliament Library, told *TOI* over phone from Delhi that the Mahabharata was last revised in an exercise undertaken in Poona in 1910. “The Tatwa Research Centre of Palimaru Mutt under Sri Vidyadeesha Tirtha during his paryaya tenure undertook the revision work. Then Swami of Pejavar Mutt Sri Vishvesha Tirtha and other seers of Udipi Ashtamutt joined this effort,” he said. It was after good 100-years after the epic was last revised that an effort of this scale was taken up in India, Bhat said. “With a government sympathetic to our disposition in power at the centre, a decision was taken to hand over the epic to the Parliament Library where it richly deserves to be kept and read by our lawmakers,” Bhat said, adding that the 24-volume epic was released in a function spread over a week during the Palimaru paryaya period. Incidentally, Sri Vishwaprasanna Tirtha Swami has affixed his signature in Tulu on the cover page of the epic that he handed over to Joshi. “With this, even the Tulu script has entered the Parliament,” Bhat said, also highlighting another aspiration of people of this part of the state to see this language included in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution. Bhat had to take special permission to fly the volumes weighing in excess of 20-kgs to New Delhi. For original report visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mangaluru/india-epic-mahabharat-winds-its-way-to-parliament-library-in-delhi/articleshowprint/79152757.cms>

Book Bank in Police Station Revived

Koderma Superintendent of Police Ehtesham Waquarib utilized social media platforms to get books through crowdsourcing for a book bank situated in Koderma police station campus, according to a story by Vishvendu Jaipuria in *The Telegraph Online*. Getting books from different parts of the country, Waquarib has made the library functional recently claiming that a good library or book bank can help in minimizing the rate of crimes. This library was started by the then Koderma SP, Shivani Tiwary in 2018, but soon it became non-functional. After knowing about it, Waquarib requested people to send him books for this library. He used social media platforms for this purpose and got a good response. Talking to *The Telegraph Online* recently, Waquarib said he got co-operation from people in different parts of the country who sent books for this library. “I have utilized crowdsourcing to strengthen the book bank,” he informed. He said that the students of standard-VI and above could take advantage of this library by going through books available in the book bank. “We have competitive books as well,” he added. Waquarib has deployed policemen for the smooth functioning of this book bank. According to him, the main objective behind the opening of this library is to help the needy and poor students who failed to purchase the required books. He said “books are the best friend of a man and it can transform anyone's life.” “I strongly feel that a library can help in reducing crime,” he added. Waquarib, before becoming an IPS officer, was a doctor. He is joining health camps in the remote Naxal infested areas of Koderma checking patients, prescribing medicines as well. He said as a police officer his priority was to maintain law and order. “But for my own satisfaction, I am checking patients as well whenever I'm getting the opportunity,” said Waquarib, an MBBS and MD degree holder from Aligarh Medical College. For full story visit: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/jharkhand/koderma-sp-uses-social-media-to-create-book-bank-in-police-station/cid/1802591>

Actress setting up Libraries

Actress Varsha Priyadarshini of Orissa has launched an initiative to provide library facility in every part of the state. Her initiative, 'Aama Pathaagar' which means 'Our Library', is going to rekindle the library movement, that had been initiated by late Dasarathi Pattnaik, popularly known as Dasia Ajaa, in 1959 at his village in Nayagarh, says a *The Times of India* report. Varsha launched the initiative at an event organized in a hotel in Bhubaneswar recently, where several literary persons were present to extend their support to this noble cause. Besides, she also donated two book-cabinets consisting up text books as well as novels and biographies to an ashram in Khandagiri area. “My aim is to collect books from people, who want to donate freely, to underprivileged children and help setting up these libraries in every part of the state. People can donate text books and reference books needed for study purposes as well as novels and biographies. I want to expand the library movement and set up libraries in every nook and

corner of the state, the way Dasia Aja had imagined,” said the actress. For full report visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/varsha-priyadarshini-relaunches-library-movement/articleshowprint/79844110.cms>

Micro Library in Thiruvanthapuram

'Aksharappura' (House of Books) is not a regular library by any standard. The 'library' is a small stainless steel box of books mounted on a stand. This 'micro library' has been installed along the Valiyasala-Kavilkkadavu Road in Thiruvanthapuram, according to a story in *The Hindu*. Opened by Valiyasala Brothers Arts and Sports Club, a registered club run by residents in their twenties and thirties staying in and around Valiyasala, the library has no membership fee. When a reader borrows a book, the borrower is required to enter the details of the book, his/her name and phone number in a register kept inside the box. Books should be returned within a fortnight or renewed within that period. Vishnu G Nair, secretary of the club, says: “The users are supposed to follow the COVID-19 protocol. We have kept a sanitiser and those who stop by to use the library must ensure social distancing and wear masks.” The concept has been inspired by the Little Free Library movement popular in Western countries and such mini-libraries function in several cities in India. “Thiruvananthapuram is home to a lot of libraries, big and small. However, some people don't enjoy going to regular libraries on account of the rules regarding membership, timing, fines and the like. Also, there are some good libraries in the city that lie deserted because of mismanagement. Aksharappura has a democratic and transparent arrangement. Our aim is to encourage more people to take up reading and visit libraries,” adds Vishnu. Although only a few books can be kept in the box, he says that they have tried to include as many genres as possible. “Being an apolitical organisation, we don't keep any books pertaining to a particular religion or political party,” Vishnu says. In addition to Malayalam, English and Hindi books, they plan to add Tamil books as well. Newspapers and magazines cannot be taken home and children below 10 years should be accompanied by a parent. People can contribute new books for the library. “We have noticed that it is the women in the neighbourhood who have started using the library more than the men,” Vishnu says. The club, registered over a year ago, has 28 members. The members take turns to man the library. For full story visit: <https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/aksharappura-a-micro-library-in-thiruvananthapuram/article33336006.ece>

Fund Cut for PLs in UK

The struggles of the UK's public library service continue apace, with total funding for libraries in Britain down by nearly £20m in the year to March 2020, immediately before the lockdown that saw libraries handling a rapid increase in demand for their services, which were eventually deemed essential by the government, says a report by Alison Flood in

The Guardian. Annual figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa) show that the number of books borrowed from libraries in the year to March 2020 - before the pandemic closed branches - fell by almost 9m year to 166m. Public funding also fell by almost £20m, to £725m. In 2010, it had topped £1bn. Librarians warned about the impact of the cuts, particularly in the face of the pandemic, during which many branches have increased e-book availability and online services to meet demand. In October last, charity Libraries Connected reported that more than 3.5m additional ebooks were borrowed between the end of March and mid-August 2020, an increase of 146%. Adding audio-books and e-comics, there was an increase of 5m digital items borrowed. Isobel Hunter, chief executive of Libraries Connected, said: “We know that even before the current crisis, many local authorities were struggling financially and this is reflected in the cuts to library spending. However, even more concerning is that our members have told us that they are now facing even larger cuts - with an average reduction of 14% in their budgets for next year.” She said that the cuts would inevitably have an impact on the people who needed libraries most, estimating that England alone faced a £4m funding gap due to the increased demand for libraries in 2020. “Libraries are high-profile local services that make valuable impacts on people's lives, yet cost an average of just 0.6% of council spending. Adequate, sustained investment is essential if they are to play their full part in ensuring our communities recover from this crisis,” she added. At CILIP, the UK's library and information association, chief executive Nick Poole said that the cuts were “disappointing, but not surprising”. For full report visit: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/dec/04/uks-public-libraries-record-another-year-of-cuts-with-yet-more-on-the-way>

E-book Lending Surges in UK Lockdown

They may have been closed for months during lockdown, but amid long days and many on furlough it has emerged that the nation (i.e. UK) turned to local libraries for cultural sustenance - with a surge in the lending of e-books, and crime thrillers in particular, says a report by Caroline Davies in *The Guardian*. In total, more than 3.5m additional e-books were borrowed between the end of March and mid-August 2020, according to the charity Libraries Connected, an increase of 146%. Adding audio-books and e-comics, there was an increase of 5m digital items borrowed. Library online membership in the UK increased more than six-fold during lockdown, with demand for e-books and audio-books one of the main drivers. “Library membership has surged,” said Nick Poole, the chief executive of the UK library and information association CILIP. “The increase in registration for online membership cards was huge, between 600% and 700%, which is amazing.” With library buildings closed for up to four months, and people at home, services had to move swiftly online. A survey by Libraries Connected found audio-book checkouts increased, overall, by 113%, magazines by 80%, newspapers by 223% and comics by 497%. There was growth in digital offerings across many areas

including rhyming and reading sessions for young children, instruction sessions to access online services, author-led events, school readiness programmes, and jobs and arts clubs. More than 75% of libraries delivered online services during lockdown. Some reached more than 20,000 views, according to Libraries Connected. One toddler reading event, which was staged on Facebook, had a 400% increase in views. While the borrowing of physical books still massively outnumbers that of e-books, a report by the charity suggests that digital borrowing is not just an early lockdown “fad”. After experiencing an initial surge, the higher level of demand has been sustained. For full report visit: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/oct/23/library-ebook-lending-surges-as-uk-turns-to-fiction-during-lockdown>

Effect of Overdue Fine Abolition

It's the kind of policy that would normally be dismissed as “leftist do-gooding” or “fantasy economics”. But if you want to see what happens when you put public need over the collection of money, look to Chicago, says a story by Kenan Malik in *The Guardian*. In October 2019, the city's public libraries abolished all fines for overdue books. A year later, the impact has been extraordinary. Thousands of books have been returned, the numbers of users have shot up and the number of books borrowed has increased by 7%. The greatest beneficiaries have been the young and the poor. Readers in more affluent areas are likely to download e-books from the libraries, those from poorer areas to borrow physical books. Digital books do not incur fines but are deleted from a device when they become overdue. So fines fell disproportionately on readers who could least afford to pay, discouraging them from using the service. One in five library cards suspended for the non-return of books belonged to children under 14. “Fines don't teach responsibility,” observes Curtis Rogers of the Urban Libraries Council. “They just reinforce the difference between people who are able to pay for a common mistake and those who aren't.” Chicago libraries have lost about \$800,000 a year. But that's a relatively small proportion of total costs. Chicago is not the first US library system to experiment with abolishing fines. But it is by far the largest. And the result, so far, has been that the libraries have got back most of their lost books, more people have started reading and more people from poorer areas now use the service. Relying on trust rather than punishment might sound utopian, but it works. For full story visit: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/15/a-chicago-story-with-lessons-for-libraries-everywhere>

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

WhatsApp Updates Privacy Policy

WhatsApp users in India and other countries woke up to an in-app notification about its new terms of service and privacy policy. The company informed users about the changes made in the privacy policy and terms of service. Some users had started getting the notification late in the morning on January 5 last but a

lot of users were greeted with the WhatsApp notification first thing next morning. The Facebook-owned messaging app started trending on Twitter soon after users reported getting the message about its changed policies, according to a story by Ankita Chakravarti on www.indiatoday.in website. “WhatsApp is updating its terms and privacy policy,” the notification that was sent to Android and iOS users by the company read. Some of the key updates would include how WhatsApp processes the user's data. “How businesses can use Facebook hosted services to store and manage their WhatsApp chats and how we (WhatsApp) partner with Facebook to offer integrations across the Facebook Company Products,” the WhatsApp notification read. WhatsApp's new term of service and privacy policy will go live on February 8, 2021. In order to continue using the services, users will have to accept the terms and conditions. If the users do not accept the new terms of service they will no longer be able to use the app from February 8. WhatsApp has also updated its privacy policies on its website and given a detailed overview of how the app will change.” Our Services have optional features which, if used by you, require us to collect additional information to provide such features. You will be notified of such a collection, as appropriate. If you choose not to provide the information needed to use a feature, you will be unable to use the feature. For example, you cannot share your location with your contacts if you do not permit us to collect your location data from your device. Permissions can be managed through your Settings menu on both Android and iOS devices,” WhatsApp wrote. For full story visit: <https://www.indiatoday.in/technology/news/story/whatsapp-updates-privacy-policy-asks-users-to-accept-terms-of-service-to-continue-using-app-w-1756272-2021-01-06>

New Feature of YouTube

YouTube has rolled out hashtags landing pages - pages showing videos with those specific hashtags. The new feature will help users discover videos through hashtags, according to a story by Vineet Washington available on gadgets.ndtv.com website. While social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter have made extensive use of hashtags over the years, YouTube had only scratched the surface, until now. The new hashtag landing pages will be accessible through both the YouTube apps on Android and iOS and its desktop version. Jensen from TeamYouTube shared on the Google support page that the use of hashtags on YouTube will change in a way that will help users discover videos by grouping content together. Till now, clicking on a hashtag on YouTube would show videos that used the particular hashtag combined with a lot of related content. With the update, clicking on a hashtag will take the user to a dedicated page that only has videos that use the particular hashtag. Google has said that the dedicated page for that hashtag will be sorted in a way that best videos appear on the top. It's difficult to assess what Google means by “best videos” as we found that clicking on #gaming showed videos that were at least not arranged by maximum number of views. However, the hashtag landing pages do show more specific results for videos compared to just

searching for the phrase. A video posted on the YouTube's Creator Insider channel also reveals that users will be able to search for a particular hashtag and get to a landing page for that hashtag. However, a report by Engadget citing a YouTube spokesperson says that this feature will be rolled out over the coming days or weeks. For full story visit: <https://gadgets.ndtv.com/apps/news/youtube-hashtag-landing-pages-discover-videos-google-support-2356444>

SPECIAL FEATURE

Unlettered to Man of Letters!

Will you believe that an unlettered man can one day turn to a man of letters? Possibly not. But it has actually happened in case of Manoranjan Byapari - now a well-known Bengali writer and a proud employee of South 24 Parganas District Library in West Bengal. You must be interested to know how did this miracle happen.

Born in a poor Namashudra family at a remote village of Barisal district, now in Bangladesh, a few years after Partition of India, Byapari - then a small child - fled with his family to India in the aftermath of communal violence following the partition, and landed at a refugee camp at Shiromanipur in Bankura district of West Bengal. The inmates of the camp had to lead a very hard life depending on the dole distributed by the government. Children suffered from dysentery and many of them died due to lack of good medical facilities. Even Byapari was also infected and his parents thought him to be dead, but he finally survived. Talking about his childhood, Byapari says in his autobiography *Itibritte Chandal Jiban* (the title of the English translation of the book by Sipra Mukherjee is *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*): "Take a look at that green field outside your window. You will see a bare-bodied goatherd running behind his cows and goats with a stick. You've seen this boy many times... That is me. That is my childhood. ... Now come outside your house for a while. Look at that tea stall that stands at the corner of the road where your lane meets the main road. That boy who you see, uncombed hair, wearing a dirty, smelly, torn vest, with open sore on his hands and feet; he has been beaten a while ago by the owner of the stall for breaking a glass and has been crying - that there is my boyhood. ... And then my youth. Ferrying goods at the railway station, climbing up the bamboo scaffolding to the roofs of the second or third floor with a load of bricks on my head, driving the rickshaw, walking nights as a guard, the khalasi on a long-distance truck, the sweeper on the railway platform, the dom (who burns dead bodies) at the funeral pyres. That is how I have spent my youth. At one stage or the other of this varied life, you must have seen me somewhere, on the roads or the bazaar."

After nearly seven years in Shiromanipur refugee camp suddenly one day, the dole given by the government to the refugees was stopped, and the family was compelled to move out to the Ghutiyari Sharif, Gholadoltala Refugee Camp in

South 24 Parganas. Byapari did not have the opportunity to get any formal education in either of the camps. Though his parents continued to live in the latter camp, Byapari decided to escape from the miserable camp life and try his luck elsewhere and left home. He was only 14 years old at that time. He worked in dhabas, washed plates and did menial jobs to sustain himself at various cities of Assam, and at Lucknow, Delhi and Allahabad. He also stayed in Dandakaranya for two years when he came in contact with famous labour activist Shankar Guha Niyogi, founder of the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha at the Dalli Rajhara Mines, who was leading a revolution to reclaim lands of the tribals from feudal lords who had captured them by unfair means. At one time he was in Siliguri in North Bengal, when he was drawn to Naxalite movement in nearby Naxalbari and actively took part in the actions of Naxalites. Subsequently, he was arrested and was lodged in Alipore Central Jail, now also known as Presidency Correctional Home, in Kolkata as an undertrial.

It is during his stay in jail that he recognized the letters of the Bengali alphabet and went on to become an award winning Bengali writer. According to his own account, Byapari wanted to do the work of a writer i.e. maintaining daily records in the jail so that he could evade rigorous labour expected to be done by the jail inmates. But he did not know how to read and write. An aged inmate, whom other inmates called 'Mastermoshai', convinced him that his problem would be solved if he learnt reading and writing. He made Byapari conversant with Bengali alphabets by drawing them on the floor of the prison cell. Starting with alphabets, he progressed to words, and eventually to books, and discovered an insatiable hunger for literature. Byapari even sold his blood to buy paper and pen so that he could practice writing.

Byapari came out of jail on bail after two years and started pulling rickshaw for sustenance and continued reading to quench the thirst of his mind. Then came a very important day in his life: on that day, he refused to take a lady to her destination, because he was engrossed in reading *Agnigarbha*, a book of short stories by Mahasweta Devi, about cast, class and gender. One unknown word that attracted him in the book was *Jijeebisha*. He finally agreed to take the lady to her destination after the next rickshaw-puller, too, refused. On the way, Byapari asked the lady the meaning of *Jijeebisha* thinking that she was a teacher as she had boarded the rickshaw in front of a college. It was a sheer stroke of luck that the lady turned out to be Mahasweta Devi herself. She was a bit intrigued to face the query from a rickshaw-puller. She readily explained the meaning - will to live. Having come to know about his interest in reading, she asked him to write something for her journal *Bartika*. Byapari's first piece of writing 'Rickshaw Chaalai' (i.e. I Pull a Rickshaw) was published in her journal in 1981 and thus a new writer was born. As a writer he came to prominence with the publication of his essay *Is there a Dalit writing in Bangla?*, translated by Meenakshi Mukherjee, in the journal *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Byapari continued to read extensively and write stories and essays specially depicting the sufferings of dalits. He has penned a dozen novels and over a hundred short stories, besides a good number of essays and an autobiography. His writing prowess was first recognized in 2014 when he was awarded Suprabha Majumdar prize by Paschimbanga Bangla Akademi. The following year he received Sharmila Ghosh Smriti Literary prize and in 2018 the English translation of his autobiography won the Hindu Literary Prize for non-fiction and was shortlisted for the Jio MAMI Word to Screen Award. In 2019, he was recognized as the Gateway LitFest Writer of the Year. Also, the English translation of his novel *Batashe Baruder Gondho* by Arunava Sinha (English title: *There's Gunpowder in the Air*) was shortlisted for the JCB Prize for Literature 2019, the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2019, the Crossword Prize for Best Translation 2019, and the Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Prize 2020. Not only that, his essay on 'Dalit Literature in Bengali' finds place in Oxford Anthology of Bengali Literature, Vol. 2. Rajya Sabha TV has even produced a documentary film on him.

Byapari has been lately serving as a cook at the hostel of Helen Keller Badhir Vidyalay in Kolkata's Mukundapur area. But after two knee replacement surgeries, he was really finding it difficult to stand and cook for more than 150 children twice a day. He had made several petitions to the state government pleading for a transfer to a place where he could perform less strenuous job, but there was no result for several years. Finally,

in August last his petitions borne fruit and he was transferred to District Library of South 24 Parganas located at Vidyanagar in the outskirts of Kolkata. Not only that, recently he has also been appointed as chairman of newly created Dalit Sahitya Akademi of West Bengal. This is indeed a great achievement for Byapari.

The staff members of the library where he has been placed must be feeling very proud to have a litterateur on their ranks, while Byapari also must be very happy to be amidst the books - it must be a dream come true for him.

[Sources: Bag, Shamik: The dissent of Manoranjan Byapari, <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/k8RVeYN6NcmgAU7GItNPXJ/The-dissent-of-Manoranjan-Byapari.html>; Hansda, Sowvendra Shekhar: A Dalit Writer's Journey - of multiple identities and struggles, <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/reviews-recommendations/a-dalit-writers-journey-of-multiple-identities-and-struggles>; Chakrabarti, Paromita: Manoranjan Byapari to move from kitchen to library, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/manoranjan-byapari-to-move-from-kitchen-to-library-6572759/>; Chakraborty, Sanghamitra: Once a Child Left for Dean, now an Award-Winning Author, <https://www.readersdigest.in/features/story-mightier-than-the-sword-a-look-at-manoranjan-byaparis-remarkable-life-124988>; Khurana, Suanshu: Will to Power, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/will-to-power-2/>; Manoranjan Byapari, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manoranjan_Byapari]

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