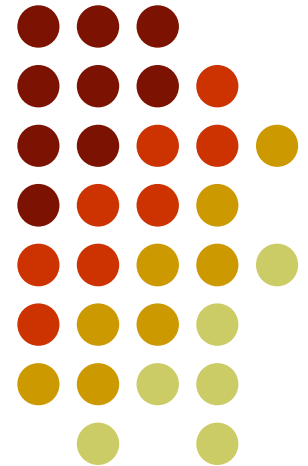# Directions for LIS Education: Some Stray Thoughts

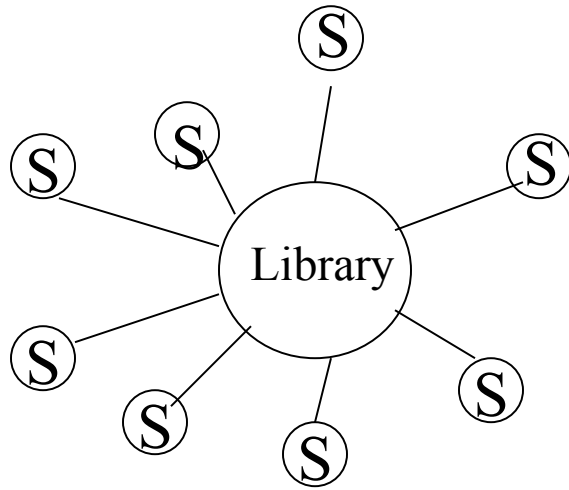## *Prof. Harsha Parekh*

Context

- primacy of print replaced by a multiplicity of communication media

- resulting in ease of research, writing, editing and publication

- led to an increasing quantum of information and information overload for library users

- growth in information providers 'Copernican Revolution' .
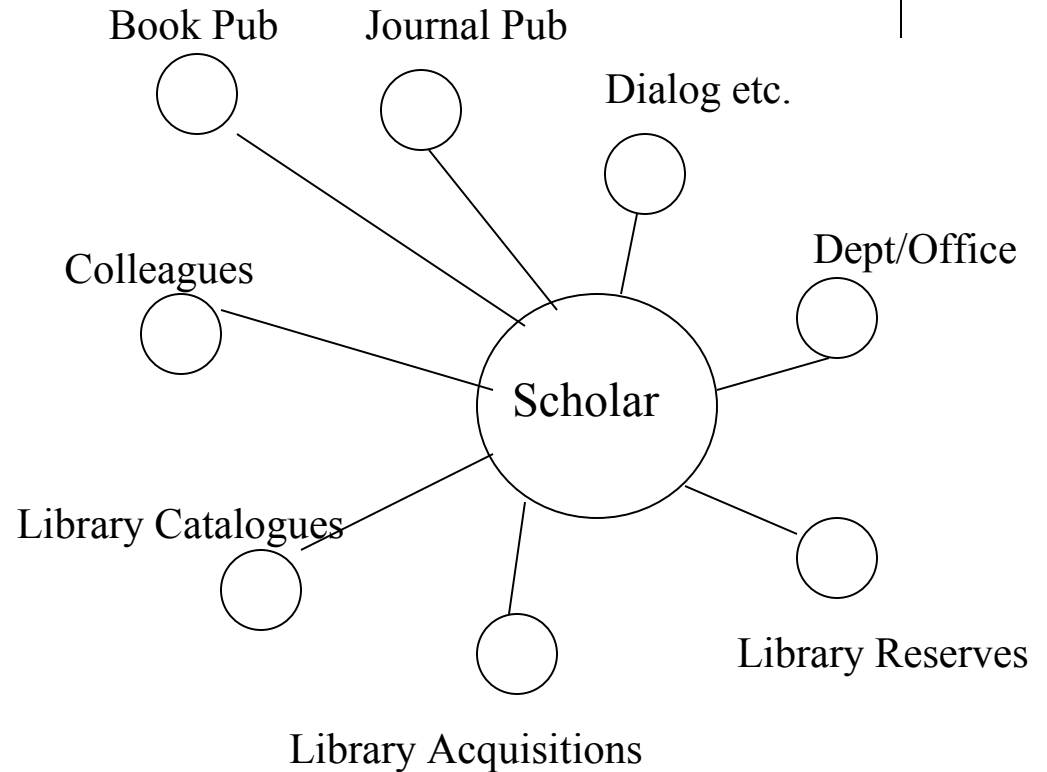
4 Communication Revolutions

- Speech: possible to make propositions

- Writing: possible to preserve them speaker independent

- Printing: possible to preserve them writer independent

- Digital: possible to access a document without physical ownership

Copernican Revolution in Information Access

Book Pub   Journal Pub

Dialog etc.

S

S   S   S

S   Library   S

S   S   S

Colleagues

Dept/Office

Scholar

Library Catalogues

Library Reserves

Library Acquisitions

View of Library "Ptolemic"   View of Scholar "Copernican"

Changing Expectations

- For the user retrieval of information has been made extremely simple.

- Library users now expect instant, easy to use, point of use services.

Content

- The functions of the library - the 3 A s - acquisition, access creation, and archiving have undergone a major shift.

- Materials acquired include electronic and audio-visual materials in a variety of digital formats different in their structure (e.g. databases, e-journals, pictures, films, etc.) and in file formats.

- Frequently, we do not even buy them but instead lease them or rather purchase the right to use them.

Access Creation

- OPAC, Dublin core, digital object identifier and such phrases have been added to our vocabulary of access creation.

- The familiar card catalogue has almost disappeared

- The concept of main entry & tracings not relevant in a computerised catalogue

Changes in Content of Library Work

- Archiving -storage, maintenance, preservation and security - has expanded to include backups, firewalls, format migration and other concepts unheard of by the last generation of librarians.

- There are several new areas of service delivery which were not conceived of then – be it electronic document delivery or a digital reference desk

Implications for LIS Education

- The cumulative effect of these changes has been a total change in the library, as an institution.

- The skills required of the librarian to run a library in today's world are very different

- General agreement that an urgent need to revamp the LIS curricular; but how?

- A new framework for our professional education programmes is needed, but first let us look within and assess the nature of the knowledge and skills we are at present providing.

Knowledge and skill areas of LIS professionals

Users: understanding their need, the way they search for information, helping them locate information, enhancing their capacity to search & use information
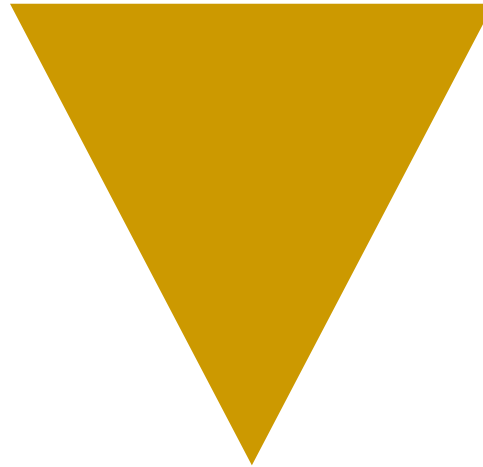
Information Resources: Their selection, acquisition, organisation, preservation and management

Services: To bring together users and information resources; to enable the right user to get the right material

I believe

- That the basic areas continue to be relevant; ability required to transfer them to different contexts.

- Proficiency in handling ICT is essential.

- The days of the generalist librarian are over. Domain knowledge familiarity is again becoming an essential.

- Skills in developing information literacy among readers and also skills in assessing and filtering "poor" quality information has become critical

Translating needs into practice

- It is evident that the curriculum needs to be widened with more subjects to be introduced.

- The depth at which many of the subjects are taught need to increased.

- The broad directions of the change are towards making LIS education of a longer duration, more **relevant** and increasing **flexibility.**

- A choice based, modular, credit system seems to provide an opportunity for experimentation.

Module

- A self-contained cohesive unit of the curriculum that forms a meaningful whole with its own title & objectives and will be further divided into units.
- It may be compulsory / optional, theory oriented / practical
- It may have some specific pre-requisites
- Will carry weightage of credit(s) generally between 2 to 4 credits.
- A credit would refer to the work on the part of the student. One credit implies that it will require 15 class hours.

Steps

1. Agreement on objectives
2. Detail Analysis of existing course contents to develop basic modules
3. Analysis of the skill requirements of new job areas and detailing of additional modules.
4. An assessment of areas which non LIS students would benefit from could be worked out.

Detail Analysis

Each traditional course and each unit included in it needs to be looked at freshly, openly and critically. As each unit is examined, the following questions asked:

- Why are we teaching this?

- What are the objectives?

- Are these relevant today?

- For whom?

- Should all professionals know this?

Challenges

- Timetabling
- Resource persons

As LIS educators, is it not our responsibility to provide relevant education to our students? To provide capable information professionals to society? I end with a well known quote from Robert Frost:

The **woods** are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep.