# Adieu: Prof. Shalini Urs

Prof. Shalini R. Urs is attaining superannuation on 31st December 2016 after four decades of academic journey.

Prof. Shalini started her career as an academic at the Department of Studies in Library and Information Science, University of Mysore, Mysore in 1976. Precisely forty years back. Thereafter, it was a remarkable journey in the field of library and information science. She has contributed immensely for the growth and development of LIS in general and more particularly for digital library movement in India.

Prof. Shalini is always at the forefront in designing and developing MyDLIS (the term coined by Prof. Shalini for LIS Department of Mysore University to create unique identity) curriculum. The MyDLIS curriculum was far ahead of its time compared to other LIS schools in Indian Universities. The syllabus was always kept abreast with the current developments in LIS. It was MyDLIS which first introduced digital library, digital library practicum, and personal development and communication skills papers in LIS schools in India. Many LIS schools have used MyDLIS Curriculum as a model to develop their LIS Curriculum. Such was its uniqueness. Prof. Shalini's global outlook has helped MyDLIS greatly in having model curriculum.

Prof. Shalini's was one of the very few academicians who sensed the emergence of technology in a big way and its impact on LIS domain much before the Internet era. Prof. Shalini was instrumental in bringing 4th International Conference of Asia-Pacific Digital Libraries (ICADL) one of the biggest ever digital library conferences to India and organizing it for the first time in Bangalore. Again in 2013 after a decade ICADL was held in Bangalore under Prof. Shalini's leadership.

Prof. Shalini's brainchild Vidyanidhi Digital Library and E-Scholarship Portal was the first Indian digital library initiative which was created to facilitate the archiving and accessing of Indian doctoral theses. Vidyanidhi was envisioned as a national repository for depositing e-theses as early as 2004. However, INFLIBNET, an Autonomous Inter-University Centre (IUC) of University Grants Commission (UGC) started Sodhaganga on the lines of Vidyanidhi and emerged as a national digital library and e-scholarship portal. It was Prof. Shalini who envisioned the idea of developing national digital repository for archiving and accessing doctoral theses in India. Vidyanidhi showed way for UGC to come up with Sodhaganga. The name Sodhaganga (Reservoir of Intellectual Output) resembles Vidyanidhi ((Treasure of Knowledge).

Prof. Shalini wrote a very lengthy scholarly article for Annual Review of Information Science and Technology on "Digital Libraries" in 2002 with Edward A. Fox of Virginia Tech University, who was a pioneer in digital library research. This is an indication for her penchant for technology and its impact on libraries.

In fact, in one of the scholarly meetings, Sri Puttanaiah, Retired Librarian of SJCE (JSS Science and Technology University), Mysore, and an alumnus of MyDLIS, while sharing his thoughts on the lecture, mentioned that Prof. Shalini was talking of importance of computer for information processing way back in the 70s and 80s.

If one were to script the history of Indian digital library, without acknowledging Prof. Shalini's contribution for the Indian digital library movement it would not complete.

Because of Prof. Shalini's efforts and interests MyDLIS often used to organize talks/lectures and seminars with eminent LIS scholars from universities and research centers spreading across the world. Perhaps no other Indian LIS schools have had so many invited speakers from other countries. Prof. Mike Shephered and Prof. Carolyn Watters from Dalhousie University, Canada, were frequent visitors. There were so many scholars who have visited MyDLIS, but unable to collect all the names.

The Informatics Endowment Lecture Series on Digital Libraries was also started under her tutelage.  This lecture series is truly scholarly in nature and many eminent researchers from academia and industry who have involved in cutting edge research in information domain have given talks under this series. To name few, Prof. Sadagopan of IIIT, Bangalore, Prof. Balakrishnan of IISc, Prof. Jayanth Haritsa, Infosys Prize winner of 2014 in Engineering and Computer Science, Prof. Vijay Raghavan of University of Louisiana, Lafayette, USA and other scholars had given lectures.

Prof. Shalini always ahead of her times, she was keen in observing what was happening across the world in LIS domain. MyDLIS, because of her rich experience not only redesigned and re-modified LIS curriculum but also organized important conferences and seminars to understand where LIS education was heading and what information industry needs.

To mark the 40 years of its existence MyDLIS in 2005 organized one day seminar on the theme of "Repositioning the information profession for the market place".  Very recently while celebrating its golden jubilee MyDLIS organized two day events called "Golden Jubilee Summit" on the theme of "Information Unbounded: The Past, Present and the Future of Information Science". The themes itself is an indication that these events were organized to

understand global library and information science phenomenon and how Indian LIS community is responding to it. These events were organised on the behest of Prof. Shalini.

As LIS was undergoing rapid transformation because of technology, she introduced Master of Information Management (MIM) course at MyDLIS. The course was designed and developed to produce new age information scientists and later Prof. Shalini established ISiM (International School of Information Management) which was probably the first Indian iSchool (Information School). Though it looks like a kind of departure of Prof. Shalini from LIS profession and MIM and ISiM both defunct now. We have to see these efforts of hers as experiment to understand information science in different perspective and how information science education combing other interdisciplinary subjects could contribute to the evolving information economy.

Prof. Shalini's lectures were always fascinating and interdisciplinary. She used to bring literature, information science and other allied subjects to teach information science for us in the class. Her lectures were always energetic and full of intellectual verve. There was a space for questions and discussions. Students were allowed to ask questions however silly it may be. She used to engage us and made us to think out of the box. She used to encourage us to find jobs in evolving information industry rather confined to traditional libraries. Because of her encouragement many of her students have exceled in both academic and corporate industry.

Whenever Prof. Shalini was there for Ph.D. open viva-voca, there was ample opportunities for discussions and debates for all of us. She was concrete and positive in her discussions and encouraged students and other researchers to ask questions to learn more, which was hard to see in her absence.

There was elegancy and intellect in her lectures. She was one of the best communicator. There were new jargons and words in her every class. I still remember of picking up some of the words she often used in her lectures such as 'paradigm shift' 'contemporary society', 'evangelist' 'scholarly meetings', 'scholarly communications' and many more. She is a quintessential professor.

Professor love for books is a well known secret. The very first class she took for us when we were in MLISc she asked us about anyone reading Arundathi Roy's "God of Small Things". Very recently she had posted a message in her Facebook wall about completing the reading of Siddhartha Mukherjee's recent tome "The Gene: An Intimate History". She always encouraged us to cultivate reading habits and writing personal diary.

Another her unique attribute is Prof. Shalini's love for designs. The MyDLIS conference brochures, invitations, cover pages all have unique designs. The Vidyanidhi Digital Library Lab cum conference hall at MyDLIS has one of the best interior designs. ISiM interior is also a treat to watch. Her aesthetic sense is such that no other Departments in the campus have such unique interior designs.

She created unique identities for MyDLIS through her contributions to the LIS profession. She will stand tall in the annals of MyDLIS as one of the very best teacher and her contributions to the LIS profession in general and in particular Indian digital library movement will always be admired.

After forty years of unflinching service at MyDLIS, University of Mysore, Mysore, she is attaining superannuation, the void which will be created because of this at MyDLIS is hard to fill.

I wish her to be hale and hearty as always.

With Best Wishes

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