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Tenth Annual Convention & Conference of SIS Trivandrum, 17-19 January, 1991

The Tenth Annual Convention & Conference of the Society for Information Science was held at the Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Trivandrum during 17-19 January 1991. Inaugurating the Convention on the morning of 17 January, Shri R. Chandrashekharan, Hon'ble Minister for Education and Law, Government of Kerala, emphasized the need for making information available to researchers speedily and in a cost-effective manner. He called upon all agencies concerned with generation, communication and use of S&T information to put speedily their best efforts to computerise the systems as possible, so that India does not lag behind other countries in this respect. In so far as Kerala is concerned, he assured all assistance from Government of Kerala in these endeavours.

In his presidential remarks, Dr. A. D. Damodaran, Director, RRL, made a mention of the efforts made in the last decade by CSIR and RRL to upgrade and modernize information systems. He made particular mention of the recently evolved SIRNET system at RRL which provides a unique electronic mail facility. According to him, there are plans to integrate this system with online search facilities. He hoped that with the assistance and encouragement of the State government, this facility would be made available to researchers, students and other S&T persons in Kerala.

Shri S. Nagarajan, President, SIS, in his remarks gave a resume of the activities and programmes of the Society to date and drew attention to the tasks lying ahead.

The Hon'ble Minister presented the Society's Fellowships to Sarvashri I.R. Kumar and P.N. Sharma and the Young Information Scientists Raizada Memorial Awards to Sarvashri Subhash Deshmukh (1989) and Som Dutt (1990).

Shri P. C. Bose, Secretary, SIS, proposed a vote of thanks.

In the Preliminary Session presided over by Dr. D. S. Rane (Rapporteur: Mrs. K. K. Lalithabar) Dr. M. R. Balakrishnan delivered his keynote address in which he gave a lucid exposition of the development of the various automated Information systems. He explained, in particular, the CDROM technology highlighting its suitability, at the moment, for countries like India.

Among the other notable general presentations were those on NICNET by Dr. K. Subramanian, of NIC, on NISSAT activities by Mrs. S. Ravindran of DST, on TIFACLINE by Ms. Radhika Ramnath, on various systems developed and marketed by HCL by Shri Anil Kumar of HCL, and on systems developed by WIPRO by Shri Veeraraghavan of WIPRO.

Operational demonstrations were also organized on the occasion of some of the systems developed by HCL, WIPRO and TIFAC.

About two dozen technical papers were presented at the five technical sessions devoted to various facets of information generation, handling, storage and retrieval.

(1) Session 1: Parameters involved in the building up of specialized information systems (Chairman: Dr. I. N. Sengupta; Rapporteur: Shri S. N. Mehta).

(2) Session 2: Existing information systems in India—A case study (Chairman: Dr. M. R. Balakrishnan; Rapporteur: Shri D. Kamala Vijayan).

(3) Session 3: Standardized methods in relation to hardware and software (Chairman: Prof. T. Viswanathan; Rapporteur: Shri R. Kundra).

(4) Session 4: Information services offered—Processes involved: Present practices (Chairman: Shri I. R. Kumar; Rapporteur: Shri V. Govindarajulu).

(5) Session 5: Marketing of Information products—Pricing factors (Chairman: Dr. P. C. Shah; Rapporteur: Shri K. A. Ranganath).

Illustrative presentations were made on the information services developed and offered in specific areas, such as Plantation Crops, Food Science & Technology, Agricultural Science, Medicinal & Aromatic Plants, Textile Industry, etc. The networking efforts being made in various sectors and organizations featured in some of the papers.

Recommendations

The major recommendations arising out of the presentations and the discussions that followed stem from the common desire to hasten the process of adoption of modern systems as speedily and at as widespread a scale as possible, with due consideration for needs specific to various sectors.

The following recommendations were adopted at the valedictory session held on 19 January (Chairman: Prof. K. A. Isaac; Rapporteur General: Shri R. N. Sharma):

(1) Efforts and programmes aimed at evolving, standardising and using automated systems are in progress at a large number of centres. There is obvious need for a proper stock-taking of all these so that knowhow already developed can be evaluated and shared. This would in addition help in avoiding duplication of effort. A suitable mechanism for the purpose needs to be evolved.

(2) It is essential to make an inventory of the facilities available in various centres, as also to assess the requirements both specific and general, in respect of systems, hardware, software and personnel.

(3) Welcome efforts are afoot to network and integrate various systems and services. It would be in the fitness of things to evolve guidelines, norms and specifications for networking at local, regional and national levels. A high level committee needs to be set up for this.

(4) One major hurdle in developing capability for online access to databases among library professionals lies in making them familiar with the communication software. Organized effort in making these online users thoroughly familiar with the capabilities of commonly used communication software packages and developing in them the capability to check whether the trouble lies in the telephone line or the modem when online access fails, will help considerably in increasing the use of online database by libraries.

(5) Dedicated effort to take the attractive features from the retrieval software developed or available in all the major libraries and development of a software which can be used by all libraries will be necessary before the benefits of any networking can be realized. In the meantime information centres can make use of available software packages without prejudice to the need for a wider networking programme.

(6) Side by side with efforts to evolve information systems, adequate attention needs to be paid to the development of indigenous capabilities

in respect of fabrication of the basic materials. A coordinated action programme involving various concerned ministries, industrial establishments and societies needs to be worked out for the purpose on priority basis.

(7) An issue specific to countries like India is that the systems evolved need not only be cost-effective, but also capable of catering to the requirements of a multi-lingual clientele. Provision for the latter must necessarily form an essential component of policies and programme formulated.

(8) Building up of bibliographic databases has to date remained relatively neglected. Due attention needs to be paid to this aspect.

(9) Standardization of classification systems, practices, formats, etc. needs to be taken up at national level with involvement of all interest groups concerned with development of information systems.

(10) The Government of India is urged upon to finalize the formulation of a National Information Policy which has been on the anvil for quite some time. The Policy evolved should have adequate provision for legislative measures pertaining to matters like authenticity, secrecy, ownership, and copyright.

(11) With fast change-over to automated systems, due attention needs to be paid to appropriate user studies and user education programmes in respect of these systems. While taking note of the ongoing efforts by NISSAT, INSDOC, DESIDOC, DRTC, etc. to organize training facilities for library and information service professionals for management of computerized information systems and services, the conference feels that the facilities need to be considerably augmented to meet the ever-increasing manpower requirements in this area. In this task NISSAT and its sectional centres should play an increasing role by expanding and upgrading the existing facilities.

(12) To effectively serve its purpose, information must be communicated to the end-users. To achieve this it is important that packaging of the information commodity for effective communication be in line with the users' level and background in terms of language and presentation. This needs acquisition of certain essential communication skills and capabilities. NISSAT and other agencies are, therefore, urged to extend support in a big way for organizing training facilities directed at upgrading communication skills of library and information science professionals.

(13) It is important to undertake cost-benefit analyses of use of automated systems vis-a-vis manual systems.

(14) Large libraries having machine readable databases on book catalogues stand to gain if they exchange these databases with one another.

(15) Bodies like the SIS should take steps to catalyse extended 'computer literacy' among the youth and the non-white collar workforce with the aim of creating awareness about the role of information technology in improving the quality of life.

(16) Databases need to be built up on ecological/environmental topics, land use patterns and other similar themes of importance to the lay public.

Annual General Body Meeting

The Tenth AGM was held on Jan. 17, 1991 at 7.30 p.m. in Hotel Pankaj, Trivandrum. Twenty two members were present.

1. The Proceedings of the Ninth A.G.M. held at NIO, Goa on Jan. 18, 1990 were confirmed.
2. The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were read and approved.

Members were of the view that the activities of the Society might be broad based and cover the varied interests of members. The new executive committee might also be so constituted to include active members from different regions.

Of the recommendations made by the A.G.M. the following were important.

1. Action may be taken to run regular courses in Computer Applications, Technical Communications, Reprography and micrography, etc. in collaboration with institutions interested in such courses.
2. Steps may be initiated to involve active members in the fields of interest by organizing seminars, lecture series, etc.
3. SIS should be able to associate with similar professional bodies at the national and international levels.
4. Conventions in future be planned well in advance with the theme of current interest and papers may be invited to bring out the publication in time for the convention.
5. SIS may be in a position to assert in matters relating to the professional interests of members and their service career.
6. SIS may build up its resources to set up its own secretariat and office for effective functioning.
7. Auditor M/s Bajaj & Co. may be continued for the next term also for accounting and audit purposes.

The A.G.M. however, included three regional representatives as under to make SIS as an all-India Society.

1. Sh. K.P. Sadasivam—Reg. Rep. (South)
2. Sh. P.C. Shah —Reg. Rep. (West)
3. Sh. Dr. I.N. Sengupta—Reg. Rep. (East)

With vote of thanks to the Chair the meeting came to an end

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SIS Election Results 1991-92

1. President	Shri S. Nagarajan	Unanimous
2. Vice-President	Shri Kuldip Chand PID	Elected
3. Vice-President	Shri I.R. Kumar NRDC	Elected
4. Secretary	Shri P.C. Bose ICAR	Unanimous
5. Jt. Secretary	Shri R. Kundra NISTADS	Unanimous
6. Treasurer	Shri H.C. Jain PID	Unanimous
7. Regional Representative (North)	Dr. Gian Singh PID	Unanimous

No nominations were received for the posts of Regional Representatives (South, East & West). Three nominations were received for the 2 posts of Vice-Presidents and hence Election was held by postal ballots. Votes secured by the contestants were: Shri Kuldip Chand 59 votes; Shri I.R. Kumar 45 votes and Dr. S. Mallick 29 votes. Shri Kuldip Chand and Shri I.R. Kumar are now declared elected for the posts of Vice-Presidents.

Sd/- Dr. T.K. Mukherjee
Member, Nominations Committee

Sd/- Shri P.D. Tyagi
Member, Nomination Committee

Sd/- H.C. Jain
Convener, Nominations Committee

New Delhi
Dated 9-1-1991

Taking Science to People

Dr. G.P. Phondke (Director, P.I.D. New Delhi) delivered a lecture on 'Taking Science to the people' on 1 March, 1991 at the NISTADS auditorium, New Delhi. He said it has become imperative to know about science because science influences life style and also it is an instrument of economic development.

Dr. Phondke stressed that Science is not only for Scientists but also for students and housewives, in short just for every one.

Scientists are the best people to take science to the people, the second best are the science communicators.

He referred to a survey conducted at a seminar where even Nobel laureates admitted ignorance of the knowledge in other fields.

Dr. Phondke emphasized the need of scientists learning about the media and their constraints so as to put across scientific issues effectively and without distortion. He advocated that dissemination of science could be achieved by participative ventures through interactive means.

Dr. Phondke suggested seminars on scientific literacy, setting up of museums, exhibitions and public movements such as Bharat Jana-Vigyan-Jatha and individual efforts as means for disseminating scientific knowledge.

Expert System for Diagnosis

The Centre for development of Advanced computing (C—DAC) Pune has developed a diagnostic expert System, MADHAVA. The MADHAVA has a knowledge base in the form of trained neural network, which is the latest development in expert system field. This knowledge base serves as rules while predicting a disease (out of around 700 probabilities) depending upon a given symptom set out of list of nearly 4000 commonly occurring symptom. The physician would conduct an interactive dialogue about the patient by providing information and responding to the questions generated by the system. It is possible to associate intensity of individual symptom on a scale of 1-2-3.

The output of the system is a list of possible diagnosis with a certainty greater than a pre-defined level. The system considers closeness of the given symptoms set with the different diseases and accordingly gives certainty factors about the presence of the various most likely diseases. An estimate about the severity of the disease (hence the curability) can also be included. The system acts as an advisor, and the physicians have the final responsibility about diagnosis of the disease as well as administration of the medicines and treatment.

FORM IV
(See Rule 8)

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I Kuldip Chand, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

21 March, 1991

Sd/- Kuldip Chand
Signature of Publisher

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