



IASLIC NEWSLETTER

Indian Association for Special
Libraries and Information Centres



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Quote of the Month

"Libraries are as the shrine where all the relics of the ancient saints, full of true virtue, and that without delusion or imposture, are preserved and reposed."

— Francis Bacon

Appeal to Readers

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

Email: chatterjeeamitabha@yahoo.co.in

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, see *IASLIC Newsletter* April 2020 issue or visit IASLIC website.

List of New Members

Life Members

1. Ms. B Lalhlimpui, Aizwal
2. Ms. Satabdi Sarkar, Kolkata
3. Dr. Deepthi, SIRSI, Karnataka
4. Ms. Geetali Das, Kamrup, Assam
5. Dr. Nabin Chandra Dey, Silchar, Assam
6. Mr. Om Prakash Vaishnav, Ajmer, Rajasthan
7. Dr. Kadam A. Mashruwala, Mumbai
8. Mr. Gyanajeet Yumnam, Imphal, Manipur
9. Ms. Rumpa Pal, South 24 Parganas, WB
10. Dr. Radhika Rani Bandari, Warangal, Telangana
11. Dr. Saiyed Faheem Ali, Udaipur, Rajasthan
12. Mr. Sourav Patra, Purba Medinipur, WB
13. Mrs. Satabdi Mondal, Durgapur, WB
14. Mr. Soumya Jash, Durgapur, WB
15. Mr. Sudip Kumar Singha, Paschim Medinipur, WB
16. Mrs. Sheuli Hazra, Purba Bardhaman, WB
17. Dr. Md Azizur Rahman, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

Ordinary Members

1. Mrs. Aheli Banerjee Manna, Hooghly, WB
2. Mr. Gopal Das, Purba Medinipur, WB
3. Mr. Subhendra Pandit, Barrackpore, WB
4. Mr. Suman Saha, North 24 Parganas, WB
5. Dr. N C H Varadaraju, Hyderabad
6. Dr. Rumi Das, Jamugurihat, Assam

Institutional Members

1. Maharashtra Animal and Fishery Sciences University, Nagpur
2. Maynaguri College, Jalpaiguri, WB
3. The Tamil Nadu National Law University, Tiruchirappalli

CONFERENCES/SEMINARS/ WORKSHOPS

National

Workshop on Research Tools and Techniques

A Workshop on 'Research Tools and Techniques' is being organized in online mode by National Institute of Technology Puducherry during November 23 - 27, 2020. For details visit: <http://nitpy.ac.in/assets/pdfs/2020/10/5%20Day%20Workshop%20on%20Research%20Tools%20and%20Techniques.pdf>

International

Conference on Big Data Management

The 4th International Conference on 'Big Data Management' (ICBDM 2021) will be held at Shenzhen, China, during February 26 - March 1, 2021. For details visit: <http://www.icbdm.org/>

Conference on Information Science

The 11th International Conference on 'Information Science and Information Literacy' (ICISIL 2021) will be held at Brasov, Romania, during March 11 - 12, 2021. For details visit: <http://www.icisil2021.com>

Conference on Information Management

The 7th International Conference on 'Information Management' (ICIM 2021) will be held in London during March 27 - 29, 2021. For details visit: <http://www.icim.org>

Conference on Innovation, Knowledge

The 10th International Conference on Innovation, Knowledge, and Management will be held in Hong Kong during June 26 - 28, 2021. For details visit: <http://www.icikm.org/>

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

The Most Wanted Book

The New York Public Library has been loaning books for a long time. The institution turns 125 this year. To celebrate, the library dug into its records and calculated a list of the 10 books that have been checked out the most in its history. The most-wanted book? *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, says a story by Laurel Wamsley available on www.npr.org website. The Caldecott Medal-winning tale of a young boy's encounter with snow has been checked out 485,583 times from the NYPL since it was published in 1962. It shares qualities with many of the other most-borrowed titles: The beautifully illustrated book has been around a long time, it's well-known and well-loved, and it's available in numerous languages. "It is such a relatable story, and pure magic for kids and adults alike," Andrew Medlar, director of the library's BookOps selection team, said in a statement. "It's on people's radar screens, they remember when they first heard it, and they want to share that experience with their kids. And the artwork is just gorgeous." Children's books

make up a large part of the list. That's not too surprising short books can be read faster and are returned more quickly. Even the more adult books on the list, such as *1984* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, are rather slim. Only one non-fiction book appears on the list: *How To Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. The self-help juggernaut was published in 1936. For full story visit: <https://www.npr.org/2020/01/13/795873639/the-new-york-public-library-has-calculated-its-most-checked-out-books-of-all-time>

Assam Girl Starts Roadside Library

Now for some glad tidings from Upper Assam! Anindita Gogoi who hails from Charaideo district has constructed a small roadside library for both children and adults. A truly novel concept, isn't it? - says a story published in *The Sentinel*. Gogoi's initiative has become the talk of the town after she posted pictures of her initiative on Facebook. She mentioned that the roadside library had been built near the historic Nefa Aali road, which was built during the reign of the great Ahom ruler Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha. The books of the 'Pothor Puthibhoral' library have been stored in a small cabinet. The library even has a small bench where teachers can sit and pore over the books. This library has books for both children and adults, as well as periodicals and newspapers. According to reports, the books in this library shall be replaced every week, just to keep things interesting. Gogoi has urged the residents of the nearby areas of Sonari and Sapekhati to take initiative and build more such roadside libraries. The stated purpose of this roadside library is to disseminate information to the locals through the means of learning and reading. Surely, initiatives like these will go a long way towards inculcating the habit of reading. For original story visit: <https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/assam-news/assam-girl-anindita-gogoi-installs-roadside-library-in-charaideo-all-you-need-to-know>

Tribal Girls set up Library

They say if you educate a woman, you educate a nation, and two tribal girls in Jaskandih village in the outskirts of Jamshedpur are setting such an example. Laxmi Besra (23) and Laxmi Munda (19) were all set to start a community library in their village from October 7, according to a story by Antra Bose published on October 5 in *The Telegraph*. Supported by some social organizations and individuals, the community library-cum-study centre equipped with solar lighting aims to give children a place to study in a place where daily power cuts hamper everyday studies. "Power cuts are frequent and affect education for school and college-going children. Thus, we decided to build a centre where children can come and study. The place also doubles up as a library with books on literature, science and other subjects that empowers the village youth to dream big," said Laxmi Besra, who belongs to the Santhal tribe and is a history graduate. Laxmi Munda belongs to the Bhumij tribe. Both the girls are a part of Medhavini, a tribal girl education project initiated by Jamshedpur based organization Kalamandir CCAF and supported by the Tata

Steel Downstream Products Ltd. The Medhavini project was launched to prevent school dropout and motivate tribal girls to pursue higher education. The girls say that being a part of this project gave them the freedom to think beyond their boundaries. Though they had a dream, implementation of the idea was difficult with scarce resources. When they presented the idea to Kalamandir, they immediately agreed to support the idea. The Kalamandir CCAF and Inner Wheel Club of Jamshedpur helped the girls build the library, while books were donated by Jusco School, Kadma. Some individuals from the Inner Wheel Club also donated solar lights, blackboards and furniture. The girls wish to make the library an education hub not just for children but also for adults who are illiterate. "For tribal girls in a village, this was a dream come true. We want this centre to become a hub. There are many senior citizens and elders who do not know reading and writing. Thus we have decided that we will run an adult literacy programme too," said Laxmi Munda who is a second-year economics student at LBSM College. For full story visit: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/jharkhand/tribal-girls-in-jaskandih-village-lead-the-path-to-knowledge/cid/1793934>

Mobile Phone Libraries

After months of heart-break and exasperation over a deepened digital divide in accessing online education, a teachers' union in Mumbai is setting up three mobilephone libraries for grade 1-10 students, according to a story in *Mumbai Mirror*. Called Online Education Mobile Library, it will be equipped with ten smartphones and wifi connectivity, with drinking water facility and toilets. This free facility was scheduled to be inaugurated in Imamwada, south Mumbai, on October 14. To maintain social distancing, students will need to book their slots between 9 am and 8 pm. Two other such libraries will soon open at Behram Baug in Bandra East and Mohili village in Sakinaka. Muhammad Javed Ansari, the president of Mumbai Municipal and Private Urdu Teachers' Union, said that over 60,000 students of BMC schools did not have access to online classes because they either did not have smartphones or access to Internet connection. While the union raised funds of nearly ₹ 50,000, organizations like Khaire Ummat Trust, Yuwa Foundation, Jamaat-e-Islami have also contributed either monetarily or by making space available. Ansari said that his union had been inundated with phone calls from helpless parents and students since June when schools reopened. "Several teachers told me that many students are not being able to study at all. In most households, there is no wifi connection. Others have just one mobile phone that's used by the father for work. Furthermore, two or three siblings cannot study together on a single phone," said Ansari. The teachers' union initially decided to raise some money and give mobile phones to a few, but 60,000 was a number beyond their reach. "More feasible was setting up a library for online learning, where students can attend classes," said Ansari, hoping to see a maximum number of children take advantage of the facility. Salman Ansari from Bandra East doesn't want to lag behind the rest of his classmates. A grade 7

student at Kher Nagar BMC school, Salman hasn't attended a single online class in the past three months. "I don't have a mobile phone and have requested my teachers to help me with one," said Salman, whose household runs on odd jobs his mother and two siblings do as his father is ill. "I really miss school," he said. Class X student Kulsum Sheikh from Bandra BMC school, and her two younger sisters (grade 6 and 8) have also been missing classes as they don't have a mobile phone. Looking forward to the mobile library, Kulsum said, "All my friends are attending online classes. I desperately need a phone." Another teacher from the union, Sajida Memmon said that the teachers wanted equal online access for all students and had also helped some parents pay their phone bills. "Many of them lost their jobs or are not able to revive their businesses. Their houses are small and not conducive to stay focused on studies. The mobile library will help maintain both sanity and sanctity of learning," she said. For full story visit: <https://mumbai.mirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/other/book-a-phone-wifi-for-online-learning/articleshowprint/78607904.cms?prtpage=1>

Mother's Savings Donated to Library

After their beloved mother passed away, two men fulfilled their mother's last wish to spend her savings for the welfare of their village. Thus, the children of late Santha of Kandoth house in Kaniyeri, Kannur, Kerala, donated her savings worth ₹ 12 lakh for renovating the Navakerala Library in Cherupazhassi, according to a story in *Mathrubhumi*. Santha's sons and daughters-in-law counted her savings she had in the bank and the currency notes she kept in the house, on the day of Sanchayanam ritual as part of the funeral. They handed over the amount to Navakerala Library which was setup about 60 years ago. The amount will be used for constructing the first floor of the library that has over 8 sub-sections and over 12,000 books. Santha's husband late Kannothe Narayanan Nambiar was a bill collector in Mayyil panchayat for over 30 years. She had been saving from the family pension and other savings since 2004. Her sons K K Unnikrishnan and K K Vinod Kumar and their families fulfilled her wish to spend the amount for the welfare of the village. Library president C K Anoop Lal and secretary A P Mukundan came to Unnikrishnan's house and received the amount, passbook and the documents of handing over the amount. Earlier, Unnikrishnan had served as the secretary of the library and Vinod Kumar as the librarian. For original story visit: <https://english.mathrubhumi.com/books/books-news/sons-donate-rs-12-lakh-to-library-to-fulfill-late-mother-s-last-wish-1.4723013>

Library set up for Village Kids

A mobile library has been set up for first-generation learners of a village on the occasion of the bicentenary of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's birth. An NGO that works in the districts for empowerment of the underprivileged felt many students were getting detached from studies during the pandemic. This initiative launched on the birthday of Bengal's renaissance icon

who had drafted the primer Barnaparichay might help these children to at least stay in touch with books, according to a story by Jhinuk Mazumdar published in *The Telegraph*. The children of Banshkopra village in the Bishnupur block of Bankura district in West Bengal are mostly first-generation learners whose parents are mostly farmers. Some rear animals for a living. When out of school they have no facility or ambience of studies in their homes, those working with them have said. They will either while away their time or help their parents in the fields. "It's a tribal village and many of the children in the 75 families have been losing out on studies during this time when schools are closed. We hope that they will at least be able to remain in touch with books and not be completely detached," Somnath Pyne, the secretary of The Force for Rural Empowerment and Economic Development, said. The NGO has been working in the village for the past four years and has provided some girls with scholarships after they cleared the Madhyamik exams. "We are now asking those students to reach out to their siblings or other children in the villages. They will be our local coordinators who would encourage the children and make these books available to them," Pyne said. They have started with 100-odd books, mostly in Bengali, which will cater to children, aged five to 16. "Some of the girls who go to college will hold interactive sessions with them to develop an interest in them. We will soon upgrade and have more books," Pyne said. For original story visit: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/calcutta/library-to-help-village-kids/cid/1793706>

Street Libraries in TN Village

Street libraries have been opened for students of a government middle school in Kondapethan village in Madurai district to inculcate reading habits in them, says a story in *The Times of India*. The street libraries are 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 organising 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 story visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/street-libraries-opened-in-tn-village/articleshowprint/78517885.cms>

Doorstep Library Service

"It is from books that wise people derive consolation in the troubles of life" - Victor Hugo. The proverb has been put to good use in Mizoram by the Young Mizo Association (YMA) amid the lockdown to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus, according to a story by Henry L Khojol in *The Telegraph*. The YMA branch of Ramhlun South locality of Aizwal has decided to start a doorstep library service for residents in order to kill boredom, inculcate good morals and promote the reading habit. The service, called Kawtkai Library, was started by the library

and documentation sub-committee of the YMA branch recently. "The idea was conceived soon after the imposition of lockdown but could not be implemented immediately as we had to respect the government's guidelines on safety measures and social distancing," sub-committee chairman B Lalmalasawma said. He added that the response had been tremendous and beyond expectation. He said they were distributing fiction, autobiography, religious books and novels, among others, in English and Mizo languages. He said the idea followed the YMA's theme this year, "Promotion of reading and learning". The branch secretary Hrathmingthanga said, "photocopies of books are posted on a Whatsapp group of the locality to enable the reader to choose. Once the readers select, they inform the sub-committee members, who deliver them at their doorstep". Under this system, a reader can borrow a maximum of four books of different categories for 10 days. "We do not only deliver but also collect the books from the reader's home. Social distancing is strictly followed while distributing and collecting books," Hrathmingthanga said. Ramhlun South is one of the biggest localities of Aizwal with at least 1,500 households. According to Hrathmingthanga, the facility has been enjoyed by nearly 100 people in the first phase and now by over 300 households. He said the third phase of distribution was under way. The YMA was also planning to give prizes to the best or highest reader. The YMA branch started its own public library in 1985 and was recognized by the state government in 1991. The library has more than 1,500 books, according to Hrathmingthanga. Established in 1935, YMA is the largest philanthropic organization in Mizoram. For full story visit: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/reading-bonus-for-bibliophiles-amid-coronavirus-lockdown/cid/1767517>

Transformation of Rajasthan Panchayat Libraries

With there being no signs of schools reopening owing to unabated Covid-19 pandemic, the Karnataka Government is seeking public donations of tens of thousands of books to transform panchayat libraries into learning centres, says a report by Akhil Kadidal in *The Deccan Herald*. The programme is the brainchild of the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj. The department said that all donations would be used to upgrade 5,622 panchayat libraries in the state into learning centres accessible to underprivileged children. Uma Mahadevan, Principal Secretary, RDPR, said that the move was to ensure that rural children were not left behind in their education. "Libraries will be supplied with a range of children's books and periodicals. And reading programmes will also be organized. There is a growing inequity of education among rural kids, who, unlike many urban children do not have access to e-learning platforms," she said. Subhankar Chakraborty, State Secretary of the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), which is partnering with the programme to hold science classes at libraries, said that a large

number of children were out of school. "A large number of migrant workers have returned to their home villages. However, because of work loss and the lockdown many do not have the money to spend for their children's education. This is worrisome," he said. Just how many children are out of school? Mahadevan said a statewide survey would soon determine numbers. In the meantime, a pilot survey has begun in Srirangapatna. The RDPR's plan is straightforward: enroll all children aged six to 18 to gram panchayat libraries in their areas with a small deposit paid by the panchayat. "This will give the children access to the library which will also be upgraded to access digital libraries maintained by the government plus other online content," Mahadevan said. In the interim, thousands of books are required. The target, according to Manasa Rao, a consultant with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is about 50,000. "The book drive started on September 1, but Bengaluru is a focus. The objective is to procure gently used or new books. They can range from encyclopedias to story books, from picture books to books about science and sports," she said. When asked how rural children can potentially cope with books in English, Mahadevan added that trained librarians would be appointed at every library to assist. "Many children will be taking home a book for the first time in their lives. It is something that we would want to continue after the pandemic," she said. For original report visit: <https://www.deccanherald.com/state/karnataka-govt-planning-to-transform-panchayat-libraries-into-learning-centres-893830.html>

No Takers of Delhi Private Libraries

Amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, private libraries across the national capital have lost their prime audience -- children who used to throng there in huge numbers - says an IANS report in *The Times of India*. One such instance of a private library without any takers for its books can be observed in New Delhi's Sultanpuri where Nand Kishore, owner of 'Talk a lot Library,' says he suffered huge losses in the last six months owing to Covid-19 even to the extent of being unable to repay the loan for his private library. The private libraries in Delhi wear an empty look during the corona pandemic due to lack of students visiting them. For full report visit: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/no-takers-for-delhi-libraries-without-children/articleshowsprint/78253161.cms>

British Council's Deal with Kolkata Library

With a month left for the completion of its first anniversary, New Town Library at Nazrul Tirtha in Kolkata is giving another reason for local residents to sign up. The library, founded on November 12 last year, has entered into a partnership with the British Council to launch a resource centre which will give its members access to several facilities from

the United Kingdom's international cultural and educational services wing. A memorandum of alliance was signed to formalize the arrangement on October 1, says a report by Sudeshna Banerjee in *The Telegraph*. Said Debashis Sen, chairman of Hidco, the administrative body in charge of New Town: "We have built this as a smart library with RFID tags. We want this to be a space not just for storage of books, but a community space where people can connect with each other. That is why we have built a seminar room-cum-audio-visual screening space where language classes are held. We have digital resources to browse e-books. But not everything can be achieved on one's own. That is why we have tied up with the British Council library." Added British Council director, east and northeast, Debanjan Chakrabarti: "Libraries are no longer silent spaces. They are safe spaces to have open discussions. What we offer most importantly is access to our digital library collection. There are over 1.3 lakh books, journals, magazines and newspapers in our online catalogue which would open a whole new window to a world of knowledge. One can access music and movies as well. There is also a separate database for children." For full report visit: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/calcutta/british-council-inks-deal-with-library/cid/1794224>

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Fastest Internet Data Transmission

Scientists in the UK claim that they have achieved the world's fastest Internet data transmission rate, a speed which would make it possible to download the entire Netflix library in less than a second, says a PTI report available on *ndtv.com* website. The researchers from University College London (UCL) in the UK achieved a data transmission rate of 178 terabits a second - five times faster than the previous record. The record, described in a research paper published in the journal *IEEE Photonics Technology Letters*, is double the capacity of any system currently deployed in the world. It was achieved by transmitting data through a much wider range of colours of light, or wavelengths, than is typically used in optical fibre, the researchers said. They combined different amplifier technologies needed to boost the signal power over this wider bandwidth and maximized speed by developing new Geometric Shaping (GS) constellations, manipulating the properties of each individual wavelength. GS constellations are patterns of signal combinations that make best use of the phase, brightness and polarization properties of the light. The benefit of the technique is that it can be deployed on already existing infrastructure cost-effectively, by upgrading the amplifiers that are located on optical fibre routes at 40-100 km intervals, the researchers said. The new record, demonstrated in a lab, is a fifth faster than the previous world record held by a team in Japan, the researchers said. At this speed, it would take less than an hour to download the data that made up the world's first image of a black hole, they said. The speed is close to the

theoretical limit of data transmission set out by American mathematician Claude Shannon in 1949, according to the researchers. "While current state-of-the-art cloud data-centre interconnections are capable of transporting up to 35 terabits a second, we are working with new technologies that utilize more efficiently the existing infrastructure," said lead author Lidia Galdino, a Lecturer at UCL and a Royal Academy of Engineering Research Fellow. For full report visit: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/uk-scientists-set-a-new-record-for-the-worlds-fastest-internet-speed-2284582>

Longer Google Meet Video Calls till March

Google has now stated that it is extending its policy allowing free *Google Meet* users host calls for more than 60 minutes till March 31, 2021, according to a story available on www.firstpost.com website. In a blog post, Group Product Manager of *Google Meet* Samir Pradhan wrote that "as everyone looks forward to a holiday season with less travel and important milestones like family reunions, weddings and others, they want to continue helping those who rely on Meet to stay in touch over the coming months". The development comes days after Google declared that the free features of *Google Meet* are going to last only till the end of September. "As a sign of our commitment, today we're continuing unlimited Meet calls (up to 24 hours) in the free version through March 31, 2021 for Gmail accounts," he added. Pradhan also said that "Google has also added a number of experiences to make Meet more fun and productive. Users will now get to see their family on the big screen when they cast calls to the television, or join hands-free on their Nest Hub Max". The blog stated that the users would be able to jump on the call with background blur or take trivia night to the next level by seeing 49 of the competitors (and the user themselves) at the same time. Google had confirmed that it was not making any changes to *Meet* promo, or advanced features. However, G Suite and G Suite for Education customers are set to lose free access to some advanced *Google Meet* features. For original story visit: <https://www.firstpost.com/tech/news-analysis/google-meet-to-allow-free-users-to-make-video-calls-for-more-than-60-minutes-till-march-2021-8865861.html>

Messenger Merges with Instagram DMs

Facebook is bringing the best of Messenger to Instagram DMs, which will allow users on both platforms to seamlessly connect with each other, says a story by Matt Southern available on www.searchenginejournal.com website. In addition to cross-platform messaging, a total of 10 new features are coming to Instagram DMs. Users can choose to update immediately or delay the update to a later time. If you're eligible for the update you'll see a prompt upon opening Instagram. The new features coming to Instagram DMs are: *Cross-platform Messaging*: Seamlessly connect with people across Instagram and Messenger by using either app to send messages and join video calls; *Watch Together*: Watch videos on Facebook Watch, IGTV,

Reels, TV shows, movies, and more with other users during a video call; *Vanish Mode*: A chat mode where seen messages disappear after they're seen or when you close the chat; *Selfie Stickers*: A new way to react to messages - hybrid of Boomerangs, emojis, and selfies; *Chat Colours*: Personalize your chats with colour gradients; *Custom Emoji Reactions*: Create a shortcut of your favourite emojis to react quickly to messages; *Forwarding*: Share content with up to five friends or groups at once; *Replies*: Respond directly to a specific message in your chat; *Animated Message Effects*: Add visual flair to a message with animated send effects; *Message Controls*: Decide who can message you directly, and who can't message you at all; *Enhanced Reporting and Blocking Updates*: Report full conversations in addition to single messages and receive proactive blocking suggestions across Instagram and Messenger when you add your accounts in the new Accounts Centre. Aside from the above new features, which users can choose to utilize or not, the main change to be aware of is who's able to message you. People using Messenger can now reach you on Instagram without you needing to download a new app, and vice versa. Messages and calls from people using Instagram will stay in the Instagram app. Facebook says even more ways to connect will be added over time. Some of these features, such as custom emoji reactions and selfie stickers, will be available on Instagram first and come to Messenger after. For full story visit: <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/facebook-messenger-instagram-dm/382686/#close>

SPECIAL FEATURE

An Agent of Change!

A group of children listened spellbound to a webinar on Zoom. Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, the director-general of the Assam Police, told them how to stay healthy and safe during the coronavirus pandemic. He explained what social distancing was; how to protect themselves from physical, psychological and sexual violence; and the hurdles to online education in inaccessible areas. This experience is possible because there is a library on Majidbhita, a char or riverine island located on the Beki River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, in the northeastern Indian state Assam, says a story by Teresa Rahman available on www.thethirdpole.net website. The webinar was organized earlier this year by the Assam police and UTSAH, an NGO that works on child rights in the state. A total of 105 children across Assam participated in the webinar; due to social-distancing rules, only five young people from Majidbhita could participate. Miguel Das Queah, who founded and leads UTSAH, said, "We are trying to give underprivileged children a platform to learn about their rights and the remedies they are entitled to. Rural libraries in inaccessible areas can be both a learning hub and empower children to exercise their rights under the UN Convention."

The Parag Kumar Das Char Library and Research Centre was

set up in 2016 by Jhai Foundation, an NGO. It is run by four young local volunteers: one is a science graduate and three have completed high school. They help students with subjects like English, science and mathematics. At first, the volunteers had to go door-to-door, urging parents to send their children to read books in the library. Now, the facility is widely used and popular with local children. When the library opened, it had a one-off membership fee of ₹5 (less than \$0.10), but this rule is not imposed strictly.

There are more than 250 families on the island, over 80% of whom lives below the poverty line. There are three primary schools. For higher education, students have to leave the island and make a risky journey by boat. As a result, the library caters to unmet educational needs and has become a learning hub. As well as crowdsourced storybooks and reference books, the library has a laptop used to show videos to the children. This way, they learn about indigenous fish, birds and insects, as well as access UNICEF-produced videos on disaster-risk management and the evils of child marriage.

Zahedul Islam, the librarian and president of the initiative, said, "Technology has changed lives. The Internet has shown us the world. Google and YouTube have revolutionized knowledge. If we had had a library like this 10 years ago, we would have been miles ahead." Islam is a resident of the char who completed high school, a feat in an area where almost 80% of residents are illiterate. "I grew up on this char. The library has contributed a lot in spreading the light of knowledge. Now, during lockdown, we are helping children access online education," Islam said. With the monsoon now well underway, most of the char is flooded and the library, which is normally open every day, is closed. However, Islam, who is a member of the WhatsApp group for the local schools, has been passing on notes from teachers to over 100 children, who come to his house to pick them up.

The library is made out of sheets of tin and was built on a raised platform, which means it escapes the worst of the floodwaters. Many of the char's poorest households have replicated this design. But the library is still the highest point in the char; during floods, it looks like a floating house. There is also a modified boat, which is used as a floating classroom when the school buildings get flooded. However, it is in need of repair and is out of action during the pandemic. There is no electricity on the island, but the library has a solar-powered lamp. Meanwhile, volunteers like Shahnaz Parbin are spreading a different kind of light in the river island - that of knowledge. "The library is open seven days a week from 3 pm to 5 pm. Sometimes we have to convince the parents as children are engaged in domestic work, cooking and farm work. Some farmers feel that it is a waste of time," that she said. Parbin said she never got to visit a library when she was young. "Children learn a lot about the world from these books. It is as if the world is in their hands," she said with a twinkle in her eyes.

Rituparna Neog, a library worker and storyteller who makes videos about literature for children on YouTube, stayed in the library for 10 days in June 2018. (There is an extra room with a

bed and a washroom for whoever wants to stay and experience life in a char). Neog said, "I had never been to a char before. I told many stories to the children. The children taught me some indigenous games like dig dig which is similar to kabaddi [a team contact sport]." Neog said that the library was a powerful agent for change. He remembered one evening, when a mother came to ask if he had eaten dinner. Peeping through the window, she saw her son looking through the books and said, "My life is over. I want him to study well and be a great man."

The library is also used as a community centre. One important example is mentoring adolescent girls. Manjuwara Mullah, a volunteer, regularly talks to them about menstrual hygiene. She said, "We have done social profiling of the families with adolescent girls. We are making a concerted effort to stop teenage marriages and try to inform the girls about their reproductive health." Mullah also helps them to improve their quilt-making skills. "We had training for them in the library. And we hope to sell quilts done in kantha [a type of embroidery] work online," she added.

Sometimes the library is a space for cultural exchange, where people can sit, sing and debate. Abdul Kalam Azad, the founder of the library, said, "We once invited a farmers' group from Jorhat. They shared how they take care of their cattle and their flood experiences. The night was spent singing the folk songs of their respective areas - borgeets, zikirs, bhatiali, murshidi."

In addition, many students and researchers from across India and abroad come and stay in the library and interact with the local community. Abhishek Chakraborty, a social worker, visited the library regularly for two years for his master's dissertation at Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Guwahati. "I realized how much difference a space like this can create," Chakraborty said. "The extra inputs and storybooks are for the privileged few. There are a lot of things that we take for granted." "We want to create more such libraries in adjoining chars. We have to create a rapport with them first. The biggest challenge is to get a dedicated local volunteer," said Azad, the library's founder.

[Note: This interesting story of a library located on a riverine island in Assam, which is serving as an agent of change in the island, is available on www.thethirdpole.net website. As it may be liked by the readers of this newsletter, the same is being reproduced here with due acknowledgement to the author and the website concerned. For original story visit: <https://www.thethirdpole.net/2020/08/05/tiny-island-library-in-assam-gives-children-a-headstart/>]

PERSONALIA

Prof. H N Prasad has taken over as the new Vice-Chancellor of Nalanda Open University (NOU), Patna. He has also been given the additional charge of Vice-Chancellor, Patna University. Prior to joining as the VC of NOU, Prof. H N Prasad has been serving as Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. Prof. Prasad obtained bachelor's degree and master's degree in LIS from BHU

in 1979 and 1980 respectively, standing first in order of merit. He also obtained Ph D degree from the same university in 1991. He joined DLIS, BHU, in 1982 as a lecturer, became a Reader in 1997 and a Professor in 2004. He served as head of the department twice and also as Professor-in-Charge/Librarian, Central Library, BHU, twice. He has many books and articles to his credit. He was invited to deliver lectures in Universities of Mexico during September 1999. He was honoured with 'Prof. Kaula Best Librarian Award 2018' by Indian Library Association. Prof. Prasad is a Life Member of IASLIC. Hearty congratulations to Prof. Prasad.

OBITUARY

Dr. Surya Nath Singh, Former Director (Lib. & Info) and Head/Group Leader, Information Centre and Library, National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, passed away on October 14, 2020. Born in 1954, Dr. Singh graduated from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1977 and also obtained bachelor's degree and master's degree in LIS from the same university in 1978 and 1979 respectively. He obtained master's degree in political science and Ph D degree in LIS from University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, in 1986 and 2001 respectively. Dr. Singh started his professional career in 1981 at DESIDOC as a Junior Scientific Assistant (JSA) - II and rose to the position of Senior Scientific Assistant in 1986. He joined NIV as Documentation Officer in 1990 and rose to the position of Director (Library & Information) in 2010. He contributed more than 100 papers in seminars/conferences and different LIS journals. He was honoured with several awards, including IASLIC - S M Ganguly Librarian of the Year Award 2011 and Lifetime Achievement Award 2010 of Pustakalay Parishad, Jodhpur. He also supervised a number of MLISc dissertations and Ph D theses of different universities. Dr. Singh served as the organizing secretary of 29th IASLIC National Conference held at NIV, Pune, in 2013. He donated ₹ One Lakh to IASLIC for

providing a scholarship to an LIS researcher every year. IASLIC deeply mourns his death.

Dr. Sibani Roy, former Deputy Director, Visva Bharati Granthana Vibhag (Publishing Department), Kolkata, passed away on September 30, 2020. She was suffering from cancer. Dr. Roy obtained bachelor's degree, master's degree and Ph D degree in Library and Information Science from University of Calcutta, Kolkata. She was closely associated with IASLIC and served as a Governing Body Member and Associate Editor of *IASLIC Bulletin* for a long time. In spite of her deteriorating health condition she regularly attended national conferences and national seminars of IASLIC. She also contributed many papers in IASLIC conferences/seminars, *IASLIC Bulletin* and other professional journals. IASLIC deeply mourns her death.

NEW LIS LITERATURE

[Note: Publishers of books enlisted here and/or any new books in LIS may send copies of such books to the Editor, *IASLIC Bulletin*, for review]

Indian

1. DEVARAJAN (G). Encyclopedia of Science of Information. 2020. Ess Ess Publications, New Delhi. ₹ 2200. ISBN : 9789387698239

(It is a compendium of systematic study of Information)

Foreign

1. KOUTRAS (Nikos). Building Equitable Access to Knowledge through Open Access Repositories. 2019. IGI Global, Hershey, Pennsylvania, USA. \$ 180. ISBN: 9781799811312

(Explores the theoretical and practical aspects of open access publishing practices in the digital age and applications within scientific and academic research)

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