

BOOK REVIEW

Corridors of Books: Memories, Ideas and Reflections of a Library Worker; by P.R. Goswami; Ane Books, New Delhi, 2019, hardcover, 271 pages, ISBN 9789386761965.

The book titled “Corridors of Books: Memories, Ideas, and Reflections of a Library Worker”, by P. R. Goswami is a memoir of a professional librarian who worked as a Director of Libraries with the Ministry of Culture and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Dr. Goswami reached the pinnacle of library leadership in the country, and also offered voluntary services in different capacities in professional associations and information networks. He was one of the key decision-makers related to library affairs in the Ministry of Culture (MoC), which maintains an array of national level library institutions, such as National Library of India (NLI), Central Secretariat Library (CSL), Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), Central Reference Library (CRL), and Delhi Public Library (DPL). He observed the functioning of these institutions very closely and facilitated the matters related to the implementation of action plans of the MoC. This book is an eye opener, from the perspective of a seasoned library administrator. Although, he humbly prefers to call him a library worker, as reflected the sub-title of this book.

This book includes four chapters. In chapter 1 titled “Life in Ranchi (AD 1958-1976)”, the author narrates his enriched experience as a keen learner in a peri-urban middle-class family environment. In chapter 2 titled “Library Science, Libraries and Working Life (AD 1976-2002)”, the author describes his study period in University of Delhi (DU), and then narrates his journey as a junior and mid-level library professional in different libraries, starting from an ad-hoc appointment in Central Council for

Research in Ayurveda and Siddha (CCRAS) and then settling as an Librarian in the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) in DU. He later got engaged with Indian Library Association (ILA) as an office bearer.

In Chapter 3 titled “State, Bureaucracy and Library Development (AD 2002-2012)”, the author described his transition from a library professional to a library administrator. In this chapter, he observed the challenges in the sustainability of library and information services at the national library institutions amidst administrative indifferences and disinterests amongst a section of the bureaucracy. The state-of-the-art library and information services provided in the libraries of national importance in other countries are somewhat missing in the country. The author felt that sometimes, there is a problem of discontinuity of some of the innovative efforts taken by the yesteryears’ library administrators.

This book offers an outline to the challenges and opportunities in the 21st-century library leadership to place our library and information services much suited for the next generation library users. The nextgen library users are born in the 21st century, and much familiar with the digital devices than the library users born in the 20th century. They have a different kind of aspirations and ambitions. To fuel their aspirations of going global, utilizing local educational and knowledge resources, library institutions should play a vital role in shaping their future.

The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have stressed the importance of access to information to common citizens. Here public libraries are best suited for dissemination of information at different levels, from the grassroots level for the seekers of socio-economic

empowerment to the state and national levels facilitating programmes implementation for the achieving SDG targets. Here the National Mission on Libraries (NML) could play a vital role in shaping the public libraries as a facilitator for achieving SDGs. The Chapter 3 offers an insight about how great opportunity was lost due to a kind of mis-governance.

The book makes an honest attempt to highlight the labyrinth of professional librarianship in government libraries. The book also helps the library researchers to understand the historical development and the leadership culture in

different library institutions under MoC and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). The scholars will also find the narratives, as presented by Dr. Goswami, are not only important from the perspectives of the history of librarianship in the country, but also vital to know about the politics and governance issues of library institutions functioned under the union government. Considering the ideas and personal views of the author, as reflected in this book, there is a further scope of studying leadership pattern and culture in crucial library institutions in India.

Reviewed by

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