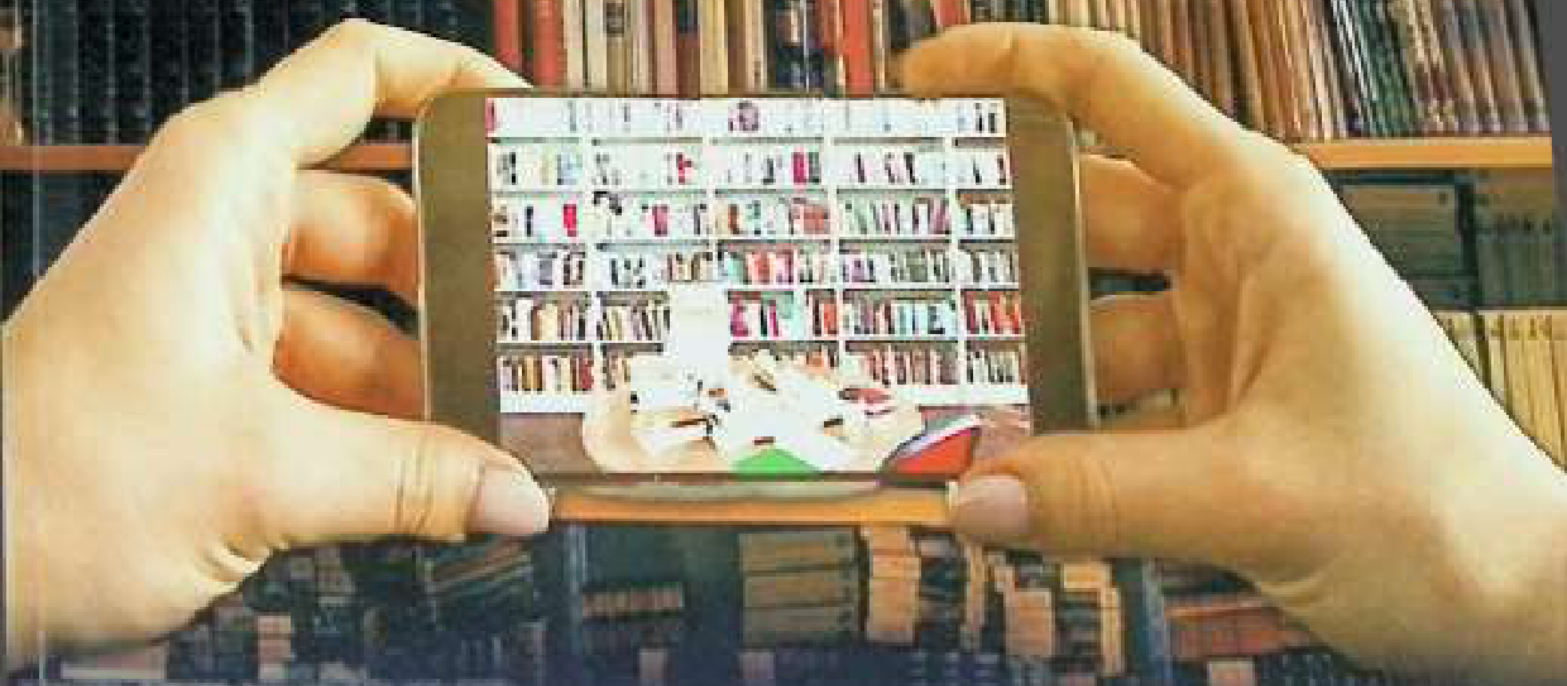# Leading the Information Revolution

The Role of LIS in a Connected World

Editors:
Dr. K. Veeranjaneyulu,
Dr. G. Rathinasabapathy,
Prof. M. Madhusudhan
Dr. D. D. Lal

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BS Publications

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RETRIEVING AND ACCESSING FOLK LITERATURE IN DIGITAL WORLD: A LIBRARY APPROACH FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Folklore is a body of materials, a source of traditional knowledge and a cultural process of a society, transmits orally through generations from time immemorial. We hardly recognise, but the fact is that folklore is a great source of cultural knowledge. Francis Abernethy has defined folklore as the "traditional knowledge of a culture." (Abernethy, 1997). "Folklore is the *traditional* knowledge of a culture, and the word traditional carries with it the idea of things that are established, time-honored." (Untiedt, 2006, a). It is very aptly narrated "Folklore is everywhere, whether you are aware of it or not. A culture's traditional knowledge is used to remember the past and maintain traditions, to communicate with other members within a community, to learn, to celebrate, and to express creativity. It is what helps distinguish one culture from another. Although folklore is so much a part of our daily lives, we often lose sight of just how integral it is to everything we do. If we look for it, we can find folklore in places where we'd never think it existed." (Untiedt, 2006,b).With the progress of time and skill people tried to record folklore in different forms that ultimately led to the formation of a subject and an academic discipline of study in the School of Arts in traditional universities across the world.In these universities substantial research studies are being conducted in the entire array of the folklore discipline.Folklore is viewed as an aesthetic expression and so includes a wide range of multidisciplinary considerations.For study and research, especially in folklore discipline,recorded literature is the required source for analysis, interpretation and reference.Library collects folk literature from around the world in print and on-line forms, archives, organises these materials for users. Since folklore study has appeared as a formal academic department in universities, library collections need to be systematised and accessible off-line and on-line. Efforts in this regard are on at individual interest level and through organisations.

RECORDED FOLK LITERATURE

To find folklore, one does not need to travel to foreign locations, search out a specific segment of the human population, or wait for a specific period of time. Folklore can be recorded in a variety of ways. Simply remembering what has happened is the earliest and most basic method. Basic tunes and melodies, as well as jokes, riddles, jargons, gestures, rhymes, and simple songs and melodies, can all be easily memorised. These examples of folklore can be simply described, either orally or in writing, when recalled. Folklorists, on the other hand, keep written records. The words sung by a vocalist or spoken by a storyteller were written down very precisely. Written records are more lasting than human recollections, whether they are verbatim transcriptions of riddles or stories, summaries of epics or songs, or body decorations, which is why folk literature was created. Since the beginning of folklore as a discipline in the early 19th century, folk literature has functioned as the primary document for folklorists.

FOLKLORE – A SUBJECT

Folklore inspires us with the ways we solve problems, the choices we make every day, the way we communicate, the games we play, the food we eat, love the world around, the stories we tell, and other walks of life. Folklore also reflects our values, prejudices, fears, and desires that we adhere to by culture. The customs, beliefs and objects that make up folklore are so essential to our daily lives that they are often overlooked in other disciplines of human culture. Folklore gives unique observations of the events, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, materials, and abilities of a particular group. But culture of every country has folklore and we are all part of that society. By some way or other folklore is a subject of study in formal and informal education. Research in folklore propounds theories and gives philosophical background to the subject.Prosaic genres have many advantages as educational resources. They have interesting plots, they are easy to remember, and they have brilliant stylistic devices as repetitions, metonyms, metaphors, which help to develop speaking skills of a young generation. They bring up humanistic values. They help to develop communicative, listening skills, memory, logic, etc. (Fakhrut dinova et.al., 2019)

FOLKLORE – INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY

Folk literature also called folklore or oral tradition, the lore (traditional knowledge and beliefs) of cultures having no written language. It is transmitted by word of mouth and consists, as does written literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and the like. (Britannica 2021). In modern usage, folklore is an academic discipline whose subject matter is the sum total of traditionally derived and orally or imitatively transmitted literature, material culture, and customs of subcultures falls within the subject literature. In technologically advanced societies; comparative study among non-literate societies folklore subject belongs to the disciplines of ethnology and anthropology.In the last four decades Folklore has been discussed in different scholarly subject disciplines like; religion,literature, history, and language. At its core, folkloreis connected to these different disciplines by having aconstant change, "a variation within tradition, whether intentional or inadvertent" (Toelken, 1996, p. 7). With folktale and fairy tales, these stories embody cultural values and morals, aiding in learning a lesson or to keep intact a culturaltradition. Many works of literature serve as modelsfor studies in folklore, offering literary criticism, whileallowing ancient traditions and modern traditions to be explored (Toelken, 1996, p. 391).

HISTORY AND FOLKLORE

Among all subjects related to folklore 'History' has the direct connection, impact and literature. There may be good reasons in many ways that both the subjects are closely related. "History and folklore go hand in hand, and people frequently confuse the two in light conversation. The study of folklore is often historical in its focus. Also, to fully appreciate folklore one needs to have an understanding of the history behind it. History provides the factual circumstances that may have influenced each of those things, or more specifically, the members of the group. In history, you get the ingredients; in folklore, you get the flavor." (Untiedt, 2006, a). Because there are many different cultures in each society, there are often many different stories or accounts transmitted as traditional knowledge of a historical event. The perception that a people have of its history is often shaped not so much by knowledge of the facts as by the traditional knowledge transmitted to it through folklore, forms their opinion and sets the standard for the truth about the event. Wilson Hudson

writes in his preface to "In theShadow of History," "Every folklorist is aware of the interactionbetween historical events and popular imagination." (Hudson, 1980). In her article in *Texas Myths*, Louise Cowanstates, "One discerns a society's vision of the nature and destiny ofhumanity through its legendary material, its folklore, its fairytales." (Cowan, 1986).

FOLKLORE AND SOCIOLOGY

Folk is synonymous with a people or a way of life. Clearly the idea of "Folk" is a sociological concept inasmuch as the term commonly refers to social units which manifest a profound sense of shared values, interests, and activities. (Abrahams, 1978) Even if we define the folk, with Alan Dundes, as any group of two or more people who share something, we focus on the shared elements and the means by which this sharing establishes a minimal sense of groupness. (Alan Dundes,1963)It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the chequered history of relations between sociology and discipline of Folklore has not attracted attention (Thompson, 1980).

TYPES OF FOLK LITERATURE

Folk literature is the lore of unlettered people transmitted by word of mouth. Like written literature, Prosaic genres of folklore consist of different oral fictions. They are fairy tales, legends, myths, fables, epic ballads, lore's, sagas. One of the most popular prosaic genres is a *Fairy Tale*. Fairy tale is "a traditional story, usually written for children, which often involves imaginary creatures and magic". *Legends* are "traditional stories sometimes popularly regarded as historical but not authenticated. **Myths** are "stories that come from an ancient culture and often include supernatural elements. These elements may be anything from talking animals to people with superhuman powers to the interference of gods and goddesses in human affairs. Myths traditionally were created to explain the origin of the world or of belief systems, practices, or natural occurrences in the location of that culture".**Saga** is "a long, detailed story of connected events. In order to trace the growth of folklore studies, we must focus on the scholarly works from Asia. The *Vedas*, great epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, and bulky anthologies of folktales such as *Hitopadesa*, *Brihatkatha*, *Kathasaritsagara*, *Betal-Pancavimsatika*, *Jataka Tales* etc. do exemplify the vibrancy of oral and written traditional creativity in India since ancient times. (Fakhrutdinova et.al., 2019)

FOLKLORE RESEARCH

Each nation created its own fairy tales or legends, myths etc. Reading and researching them, it is possible to understand the soul of the nation. Reading fairy tales, legends, myths, sagas students can understand what and why this or that language word or expressions should be used this way. In fact, students can also learn some historical facts or events which happened to that period of time in their country (Fakhrutdinova, et.al. 2019). Modern literary texts explicitly make use of popular traditions to provide today's readers and researchers with equal treatment with folk texts that are only oral, known as "Pure Folklore". Due to the nature of folk material, they have been studied by scholars from many different disciplines such as literature, anthropology, psychology, history, etc. also ensure that folkloric studies are still subordinated to one of these themes. The study of folklore has become an area of critical interest in contemporary literary research and pedagogy as a major feature of fringe studies. Research in the field of folklore and cultural studies encounters many contradictions. In fact, in an article in the Texas Folklore Society's publication "In the Shadow of History", RadoslavTsan off tells that folklore "falls to pieces under the stern touch of factual

research" (Tsanoff, 1980). Whatever the case, it is a welcome fact that most modern folklorists and scholars strongly support the idea that pushing folk into a single period of literature word of mouth is tantamount to treating it as marginal literature. Folklorists find a lot of scope for conducting research in pure folklore subject and in interdisciplinary areas of the subject. Now research is being carried out on the entire field of folklore.

ORGANISED FOLKLORE SOURCESIN LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH

Researcher requires primary sources for study, analysis and interpretation of motifs and messages behind the folklores. Secondary sources organise the available primary sources in diverse society and guide the researcher to retrieve the original folk literature. Academic libraries and libraries in general, should include folklore collections in an "effort to create a collection that helps to preserve local traditions and culture, and to introduce other cultures into a community" (Lonergan &McHone-Chase, 2010). The organised collection of folk literature (print and on-line) in libraries and their easy retrieval tools for access are instrumental for carrying out research in different areas the subject Folklore. Library initiatives for organisation of folk collection and related tools are categorised under three major headings:

1. **Research journals for the study of Folklore:**

   Journals are the major publications of research outcomes of different scholars in any subject. Some eminent journals often referred by folklorists in library are:

   - *Journal of American Folklore*
   - *California Folklore Quarterly*
   - *Journal of the Folklore Institute*
   - *Journal of Folklore Research*
   - *Journal of English Folk Dance Society*

2. **Organised Secondary Sources of Folk Literature:**

   Some authentic sources used as reference and retrieval tools in library to have access to the original folk literature from all across the world are:

   - *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia (1996)*
   - *American Folktale (1959)*
   - *African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World (1983)*
   - *A Guide to Folktales in the English Language (1987)*
   - *The Origins of Rhymes, Songs and Sayings (1977)*
   - *Motif-Index of Folklore Literature (1955-1958).*

3. **Archive (on-line) of original folklores:**

   A great effort has been made at international level to create an online open access database of original folklores from all across the world and making itavailable in Internet for on-line access. The process of archiving is continuing and appeal has been made to contribute more number of folk literaturesto thisopen archive. Libraries from all countries are contributing the digital versions of their folk collection to this archive.The database is available at the URL: https://fairytalez.com

STITH THOMPSON'S MOTIF-INDEX AND UTHER INDEX OF FOLK-LITERATURE

As the scholarship of folklore developed, an important advance was the classificationof material for comparative analysis. Standards of identification were devised, notably for ballads by F. J. Child (Child,2021) and for the plots and component motifs of folktales and myths (by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson) (Lee Haring, 2006). The motif-index and the AT or ATU indices are admitted to be standard tools in the field. These indices play as guides for the folklorists to access the original collections in classified sequenceFor example, folklorist Mary Beth Stein says, "Together with Thompson's six-volume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, with which it is cross-indexed, *The Types of Folktale* constitutes the most important reference work and research tool for comparative folk-tale analysis. Alan Dundes who was its outspoken critic also said substantially the same thing, without even confining the application to comparative studies: "[the indices] indexes constitute two of the most valuable tools in the professional folklorist's arsenal of aids for analysis" (Dundes, 1997).

1. **Motif-Index of Folk-Literature:** This index is the classified list of folk literature on the basis of Narrative Elements (motif) in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends.Motif is defined as any element in a tale that distinguishes it from other tales. It can be an unusual creature, a strange land or a significantly striking or amusing occurrence, i.e., any of the parts into which a tale can be analyzed (Kuehnel & Lencek, 2021).

2. **The Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index (ATU Index)** is a catalogue of folktale types used in folklore studies. The ATU Index is the product of a series of revisions and expansions by an international group of scholars: Originally composed in German by Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne (1910); the index was translated into English, revised, and expanded by American folklorist Stith Thompson (1928, 1961); and later further revised and expanded by German folklorist Hans-Jörg Uther (2004). The ATU Index, along with Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1932) (with which it is used in tandem) is an essential tool for folklorists (Dundes, Alan (1997).

3. **System of Thompson's motif-index** – The collected bibliographic information on folk literature have been classified under different headings like, animal, society, humor, religion, etc. Thompson's motif-index organizes thousands of motifs. Entries are first organized by an umbrella topic (for example, category S is "Unnatural Cruelty"). The Index divides tales into sections with an AT number for each entry. Entries are then divided into more specific subcategories. The names given are typical, but usage varies; the same tale type number may be referred to by its central motif or by one of the variant folktales of that type, which can also vary, especially when used in different countries and cultures. For example, entry S50 "Cruel relatives-in-law" contains the sub-entry S51.1 "Cruel mother-in-law plans death of daughter-in-law". The name does not have to be strictly literal for every folktale. For example, *The Cat as Helper* (545B) also includes tales where a fox helps the hero. Closely related folktales are often grouped within a type. For example, tale types 400–424 all feature brides or wives as the primary protagonist, for instance *The Quest for a Lost Bride* (400) or the *Animal Bride* (402). Subtypes within a tale type are designated by the addition of a letter to the AT number, for instance: tale 510, *Persecuted Heroine* (renamed in Uther's revision as *Cinderella and*

Peaud'Âne), has subtypes 510A, *Cinderella*, and 510B, *Catskin* (renamed in Uther's revision as *Peaud'Asne*). *(See other examples of tale types in the online resource links at the end of this article.)* (Thompson, 1996).

4. **On-line Retrieval of Literature** –The hypertexted searchable PDF document enables the index user to reach a particular collection from the content page given at the beginning of the index by clicking on the category one desires to get the list of folk literature. It is in the public domain published on the Internet in the year 2016and may be copied and distributed freely. Visit the site and click on each category for getting information on folk literature: https://ia800408.us.archive.org/30/items/Thompson2016MotifIndex/Thompson_2016_Motif-Index.pdf
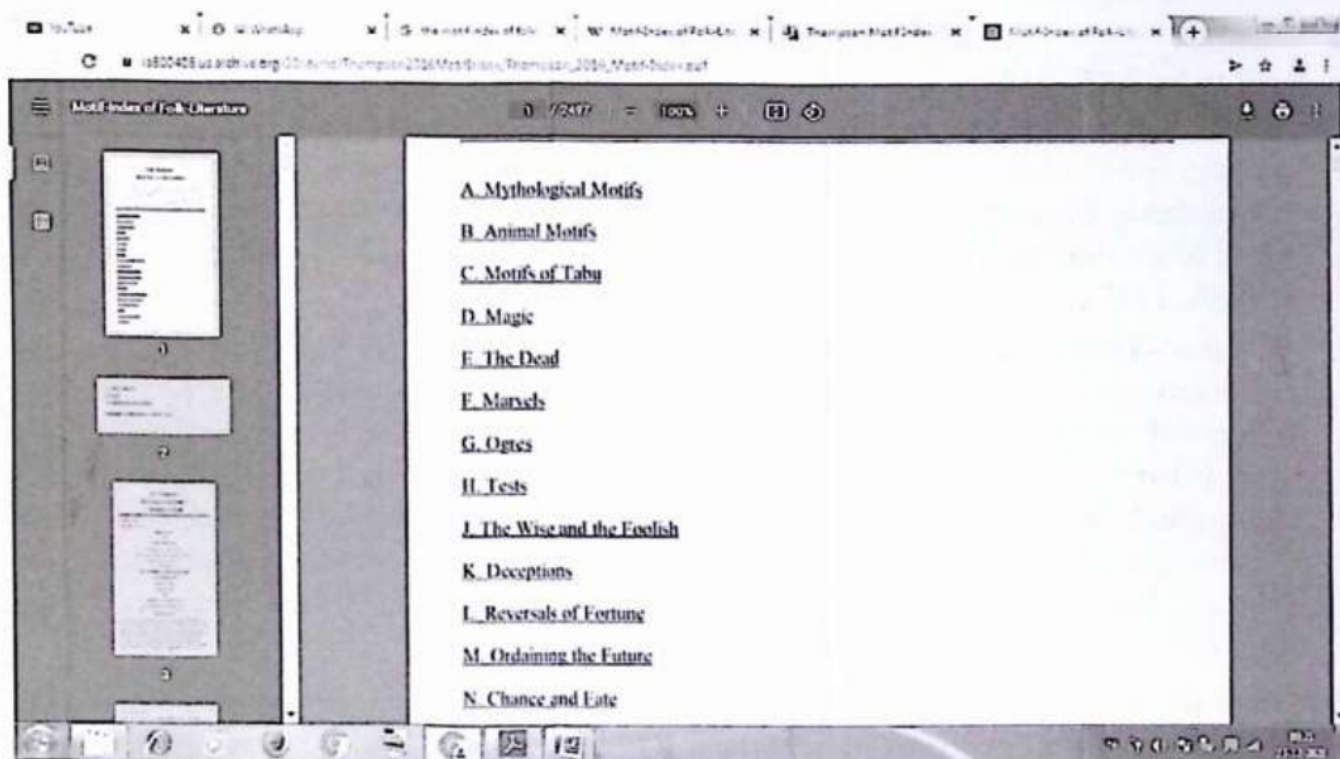

Image 1: Screen shot of initial page of the on-line *Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*

5. **Largest on-line Archive of World Fairy tale collection** – Archives preserve non-current documents for great potential use to their creators and other researchers in documenting and understanding the past. World's largest digital on-line open access archive preserves more than 4,000 fairytales, folktales and fables at its Internet location: URL: https://fairytalez.com

Image 2: Screen shot of the online open access Archive of Fairy Tales.

CONCLUSION

Folk literatures were created by people to instill moral characteristics in individuals for peaceful cooperation. Then, as generations passed, they improved and developed, resulting in modifications in their elements. People utilised them for educational purposes, to preserve national customs and traditions, and to describe significant historical events. The social processes that were taking place resulted in the formation of new meanings, contents, styles, and narratives in folklore. Folk pedagogy and research helped them to improve. Aside from original folklore, a large body of literature on folklore is being generated on a regular basis, analysing and interpreting the concept behind folklore from social, economic, historical, and other perspectives. For preparation of such research-based literature on folklore, folk scholars refer original literature and other research results published by other scholars in journals. In order to reach scattered folklore, the guides and archives like "The Aarne–Thompson–Uther Index" and "on-line Archive of World Fairy tales" athttps://fairytalez.comare found the most useful tools.

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URL: https://fairytalez.com

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