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Editorial

A tribute to Eugene Garfield, Information Scientist Extraordinaire, on his 85th birthday

This issue is dedicated to Dr Eugene Garfield, who has revolutionized the way scientists and scholars search, retrieve and use information, on his 85th birthday. He gave scientists and scholars of the world many innovative tools such as *Current Contents* and *Science Citation Index*, developed tools for evaluation of research performance and the study of historical evolution of ideas, and brought out a quality science news magazine, *The scientist*. At a time when databases were mainly covering individual fields like biology, chemistry and medicine, he thought of a database for all of science and later all of knowledge. With his work and writings spanning over six decades, Garfield has had a tremendous impact not only on scholarly communication and information access but also on public policy and public understanding of science.

I listened to a talk by Eugene Garfield for the first time some time in the second half of 1960s when, as a guest of the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, he addressed a packed house at the National Physical Laboratory auditorium. But it was only in the last quarter of 1969, when I enrolled as a student at the Indian Institute of Science, that I became an avid reader of Garfield's weekly essays in *Current Contents*. Many in the Institute, both faculty and students, would wait for Friday evenings when the library would display *Current Contents* along with the journal issues received and processed during the week. Needless to say that we were waiting not only to know the most recent papers in our areas of interest that were published in hundreds of journals many of which the Institute's library was not subscribing to but also to read Garfield's weekly column Current Comments. My amazement at how anyone could write so eruditely and engagingly about so many widely different things never ceased. At that time I had no inclination that a few years later Gene would invite me to be on the editorial board of *Current Contents - PCES edition* and our association would turn out to be an enduring friendship!

What is the secret of Garfield's phenomenal success? He is genuinely interested in everything he writes about - people, places, events and ideas. His erudition and learning and his love for all the finer things of life - art, music, theatre and food - never made him feel that he was special and different from others. He is invited to premieres of operas and plays and he knows restaurants where the owner is a physicist-cum-painter of class or where the waiters and waitresses are professional opera singers. He is comfortable at once in the company of Nobel laureates and university presidents as well as the janitor and the packing assistant at the Institute of Scientific Information, the company he had founded. He used to live in a penthouse in the historic part of Philadelphia, facing the river Delaware but would take a town bus back home every evening. His current home in a suburb of Philadelphia might have received hundreds of guests. He is truly egalitarian and secular and has friends in every continent.

In the mid-1970s, when I was the Editor of publications and Secretary of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore, I had the privilege of hosting Garfield, who had come to India to address the FID Congress at Bombay, as a guest of the Academy for a few days. Bangalore was not in his original travel plan and he had to make changes and alter his ticket at my request. On the day he arrived in Bangalore, there was a general strike and traffic was disrupted and it was with great effort we could take him from the HAL airport to the Raman Research Institute guesthouse! Anyone would have been annoyed but Gene took it in his stride. In my desire to maximize the benefits of his presence in Bangalore, I really

worked him hard by designing a crowded programme. As a result, he was talking from morning till late in the evening, addressing large audiences at the Indian Institute of Science, National Aeronautical Laboratory and elsewhere, and answering questions from enthusiastic students and faculty. On top of it, he was reading and writing or playing on his saxophone whenever he was on his own. I was amazed at his extraordinarily high energy levels, razor-sharp intelligence and catholicity of interests. Talking to him was a great learning experience.

He came to India subsequently on two occasions on my invitation and again I organized crowded programmes and punishing travel schedules. On one visit, we had to alter the tickets again to include Hyderabad where he spoke at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology.

Any description of Gene's India connection would be incomplete without a mention of his great admiration for Prof. Shiyali R Ranganathan, whose contribution to information sciences he thought was comparable to that of Einstein to physics. He devoted a two-part essay in *Current Contents* to the life and work of Prof. Ranganathan. Another Indian for whom he has great admiration is Prof. Sambhu Nath De. It was Garfield's 1986 essay on Prof. De that brought De's monumental contributions to cholera research to the attention of the Indian scientific community and paved the way for his posthumous recognition in India, and opened our eyes to the inadequacies in the nation's peer review system.

A not-so-well-known face of Gene Garfield is his willingness to support both unknown young talent and exceptionally brilliant people in difficult circumstances. He brought out English translations of the works of Prof. Vasily Nalimov, who was persecuted in the former Soviet Union. He supported many Soviet block scientists when they went through difficult times. He had supported Huichols of Mexico and their art of yarn painting and in particular became the patron of one of them, Emeteria Rios Martinez, so she could work full time in making yarn paintings. Many Indian information professionals are among those who have received support from him to attend international conferences.

When Garfield turned 75 in 2000, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, paid tribute to him by hosting a two-day conference on Advances in Information Access and Science Communication to which Alan Gilchrist, then Editor of *Journal of Information Science*, and Stevan Harnad, open access evangelist, were invited. A report on the event appeared in *Current Science* [http://www.ias.ac.in/currsci/feb252001/493.pdf]. That seminar gave birth to the open access movement in India. Incidentally, Gene Garfield made all his writings freely accessible to all through his web site long before the world started talking about open access. Around the same time *Current Science*, India's premier general science journal, brought out a special section in honour of Garfield with contributions from many eminent scientometricists. When Garfield turned 80, a group of scholars, scientists and information scientists, including yours truly, contributed to *The Web of Knowledge: A Festschrift in Honor of Eugene Garfield***,** edited by Blaise Cronin and Helen Atkins. Now, on the occasion of his 85th birthday, NISCAIR-CSIR, New Delhi, has pleasure in bringing out this special issue of *Annals of Library and Information Studies* as a token of our gratitude to a man, a true polymath, who has made many great contributions to the fields of information science, science studies, science communication and science and public policy.

We are grateful to Tibor Braun, Wolfgang Glänzel and András Schubert; Leo Egghe; Peter Jacso; Loet Leydesdorff; Katherine McCain; Henk Moed; Ronald Rousseau; John Willinsky; B K Sen; T.V. Prabhakar, V Balaji and Lavanya Kiran Neelam; B M Gupta; K C Garg for contributing articles to this special issue. We hope readers of this issue are well rewarded.

Gene Garfield may not consider himself special, but all of us know he is very very special. We look forward to reading many more of his essays and incisive analyses and hear many more of his provocative presentations. We wish him many more years of healthy and productive life.

Subbiah Arunachalam
Distinguished Fellow
Centre for Internet and Society
Bangalore 560 071
Guest Editor