

2016

## N V Sathyanarayana Profile

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mention a few of them: NeuroMed, a full-text archive of three Indian Neuroscience Journals from Volume 1; Exim-India on CD; and, India Business Insight Database. The last one is still continued but online.

**ATG:** *In your early years, Informatics was the leading distributor of information products to libraries in India for a wide variety of publishers and aggregators like Silver Platter. However, now you are increasingly known for products which you've developed yourselves. What prompted this change?*

**NVS:** It was not a change but part of our early vision and evolution. It is simply that we had to wait for the technology to be available at an affordable level to create products. The distribution business provided sustainability to the business. We earned well from distribution (until three years ago), and spent on creating products. Our CD-ROM publishing could not take off as we were too ahead of the time. We shifted our technology strategy from CD-ROM back to online as the Internet was promising a better and more affordable online experience. Internet and the emerging web, and the experience in the database distribution business helped us to conceive J-Gate, our flagship product.

**ATG:** *As far as your distribution services go, the print journal subscription business still continues to be a main focus. With the continuing shift to digital journals, how long do you expect that to remain viable?*

**NVS:** Not really. We started the distribution part of our business with print subscription products and moved quickly to e-content media beginning with CD-ROM products in the late 1980s and shifted to online products with the Internet taking off in India. By 2012, our e-content distribution was 80% of our total distribution business. The regulatory changes in the country in 2012 concerning tax laws and the refusal to accept these changes by international publishers for orders coming through Agents forced us to re-define our distribution business strategy completely.

**ATG:** *India, of course, is both a vibrant and growing economy but also a developing country. How does the issue of Open Access impact your company and your customers?*

**NVS:** There is no major negative impact on our business, or on the business of the paid content market in India. But, the OA wave has caught on widely at the awareness level including a limited level of lobbying at the national level. A government-funded institution is a lead player with more than 15 journals published by them. The lobbying by OA advocates led to moving their journals to the OA domain a few years ago. Indian libraries are quite active in setting up institutional repositories.

While the Indian economy is doing well, the same may not hold true for India's scholarly information market, which is relatively small, perhaps around 1% of the global market. Even this 1% is almost entirely the market shared by

## against the grain people profile

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### N V Sathyanarayana

**BORN AND LIVED:** In India.

**EARLY LIFE:** I spent my childhood in my village where I did my schooling. My village got electricity when I was in my 10th Standard. My father was a Teacher in the school which helped me in my academics. We were a large but happy family of 8 (my parents, and six children). I used to be very unconventional and adventurous, always wanting to do what my father restricted me from indulging in. I did my graduation in Science (Physics, Maths and Chemistry) in a town close to my village and my post-graduation in Library & Information Science from the **University of Mysore**, Mysore.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** In a span of eight years after my post graduation, I worked as a Librarian in four different institutions before promoting **Informatics** in 1980. My first job as a Librarian was in a large College Library. My second job was in a premier academic and research Institute in Bangalore (**Indian Institute of Science**) where I worked as Information Assistant to a Professor. From there I moved on to a company then called **Smith Kline & French**, Bangalore, as their first Librarian in their Indian operation. My last job was in **Hindustan Machine Tools Ltd.**, Bangalore, as a Documentation Officer.

**IN MY SPARE TIME:** Got very little spare time until now. But love reading and writing, watching movies and travelling.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** My reading interests are wide and varied. Favourite authors include **Bertrand Russell**, **Charles Dickens**, **Ayn Rand** and many Indian Authors like **R. K. Narayan**.

**PET PEEVES:** Nothing.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Live and Let Live.

**MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** Launching my dream product, J-Gate.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Diversify and expand **Informatics** into non-library centric information business and build a strong global presence. 🌳

a few major global journal publishers through big deals of a few library consortia. India's scholarly journal market for the locally published journals is insignificant. I can estimate it to be around U.S. \$10m a year.

We launched Open J-Gate, a subset of J-Gate to ride on the OA wave, in 2004. The launch was inaugurated by **Prof. Jean-Claude Guedon**, **University of Montreal**, Canada, a leading OA advocate. It was the largest database for OA literature then. It was used extensively consuming more than 90% of our hosting infrastructure! We had to find a way to monetize this product as the J-Gate, the mother database in subscription model, was still not earning enough. We had to withdraw Open J-Gate for sheer reasons of our not being able to move to a Google kind of advertisement and sponsorship based revenue model. We find the OA opportunity more promising now, an opportunity to come out with a new kind of product as a significant and wider expansion out of J-Gate. We are working on developing some new interesting models.

**ATG:** *Informatics also serves publishers by providing editorial and compilation services including content review and editing, indexing and abstracting, not to mention Web*

*research and analysis. Can you tell us a bit about that part of your business?*

**NVS:** It is a smaller pie in our total revenue, but is slowly developing well. The trigger for this activity came from our thinking in early days of our startup to find global markets for Indian content. Encouraged by a small contract in the early 1990s from **Predicast**, a business database company in the U.S., we started abstracting and indexing Indian business sources for an international database, but retaining the copyright for the work we did which forced us to get a smaller price per record than we could have got otherwise. This contract helped us in expanding in two directions. It led to the India Business Insight Database, as a product. We developed a separate services division for doing contracted services which became our services division. A huge contract we got from **Reuters** in 1995, indexing close to a million news stories a year with turn-around time of less than 12 hours, taught us to manage large contracts. We did this by developing a team of home-based workers and connecting them to be online with our server through local telephone network. **Reuters** would upload the feed to our server, we would distribute this to

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