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Call for Ideas, Papers, Etc.

Editor

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both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, also routinely available at restaurants. There was the requisite number of receptions and social events, as well as tours of the many interesting sites in and around Delhi. Area libraries were also open for tours and I took advantage of this to visit the New Delhi office of the Library of Congress.

One of the realities in India is the ubiquitous crowd, which was keenly felt even in the luxurious venue of the Conference. Waiting in line in India, whether at a railroad crossing or at the conference registration desk, is total chaos. The large number of people means that there are no orderly queues with each person politely waiting his/her turn; here, aggressiveness pays off and those not constantly pushing or demanding attention are most likely forgotten and left to linger at the fringes. Once this concept is grasped, however, the visitor can either manage with the condition or make arrangements to avoid it as much as possible. One way to do this is to arrive early or try to get service during the “slow” periods. Another approach is to hire a private car for a day of shopping or sight-seeing. The driver often doubles as tour guide or can get one who speaks reasonable English. The guide does much more than point out the sights, however, as he finesse his (and your) way around beggars, pays entry fees, and introduces you to the ultimate shopping experience (“Just use your American Express, Madam. The bill won’t arrive for six months!”)

Although this was my first trip to Asia, I found many familiar circumstances that I have observed elsewhere: most notably, the lack of resources in public libraries and publicly-supported institutions, while the private research institutes are endowed with all the best. In Madras I saw two private research institutes within a few blocks of each other, which my hostess told me both owned Chemical Abstracts, while her own university library lacked the most basic reference materials.

The computer seems like the ideal solution to address the shortage of resources; however, another condition that prevails in India is the lack of a reliable source of electricity. It is not uncommon to walk down a street and find a small generator in front of each shop. During the monsoon the electricity might fail, cutting off the lights and continued on page 54