

DRTC SEMINAR: A RECAPITULATION

Seminar Technique—I.

By

C. V. SUBBA RAO,
Indian Statistical Institute,
Calcutta.

Contains a disquisition on Seminar papers, observes pre-seminar Secretarial work with the high-light on editor's role. The efforts needed by a delegate to attend the seminar, are given with an apology on behalf of DRTC first batch. The Chair and the delegates are viewed from various angles during discussions along with the structure of work. Performance of the second line of leadership is discussed. The inaugural and the valedictory accounts draw the narration to a close.

0. Seminar papers

Can there be really good Seminar papers? From the writers point of view, inspite of being given an year's time, unless the author is already prepared on the topic or has the script ready, a good paper cannot be produced from the start to the finish. The thought ingredients of a paper and the psychological atmosphere stand in the way. A suggestion to work on a topic, served with trends of approach, takes away choice from the writer's hand. A paper on a borrowed idea cannot smell original. The guidance afforded can be only a second step to spoon-feeding. There is the possibility of owning others' ideas, voluntarily by self choice and work on them to greater depths. Discussions and reading are after a self-felt need. Pre-planned problem and minute guidance, go against a good paper rather than helping it. To work on others' ideas is intellectual imprisonment.

01. Forces behind writings

A writer is propelled by his own inner forces, not at the dictates of even himself. Some corners in the graphic thought are found neglected, confused, or ill-explained. Many ideas criss-cross in the mind while at such a spot. Thoughts crystallise, trends of approach are established for further pursuit. Soon the ground is covered and possible solutions are held by a few knots in the thought. By discussion, extended reading and a search within, new findings are got to untie the thought-barriers. Till the findings are available a psychological crisis rages in the author's mind. He absorbs relevant contents of books and articles like a dry sponge, the sweep of the eye becomes powerful. Discussions with elders and betters

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are sought after. It is a stage wherein there is search for truth. Sometimes intuition and inspiration play a significant role.

02. *Scientific essay*

Thought process having been completed, the problems of a Scientist-essayist come to the fore to give the needed introduction, to explain the origin of the problem and its various stages, the solutions attempted, their evaluation, and finally a balanced conclusion. In every place the stress and strain of thought is carried in words. When the verbal-plane is identical with the idea-plane, the author realises himself. But at every moment it varies. Among several ways of putting a thing, there is a way which is born of inspiration and imagination, where the words and thought go hand in hand. The author feels earthly bliss and the reader understands and enjoys. The irreplaceable scientific terminology is no hindrance, as there are words that lead to a technical term and many to come after. A paragraph contains sentences that paint a message. How to convey, is not entirely controlled by jargon but by artistry. When the jargon itself is mastered, and facility is found in expression, vocabulary of one branch of science seeps into another branch. Botany and Medicine have contributed such terminology. Reason, scientific attitude and mental honesty being given, writing a paper ceases to be a jugglery of words, to deceive or twist facts, but is an earnest attempt to portray fact-findings in an inspired way.

03. *Extract the Seminar paper*

From such a paper is to be abstracted the Seminar paper. Detail background is not necessary. Only issues are selected, introduced, explained and solutions are given at every controversial spot. The author is to speak only on them and seek the opinion of the participants in the Seminar. Thus, an ideal seminar paper does not go above five typed pages and to be effective, should be a detailed abstract of a bigger and wholesome paper.

04. *Without such seminar papers*

But what actually happens in Seminars? Papers of various lengths and depths are sent to the organisers. Authors are either asked to read out their papers or expound on them. A discussion may immediately follow or a few more papers on the same subject are explained by their authors and then the house is allowed to participate. Issues are not made out and hence the participation is desultory, except for conferring a distinction on the authors. Serious minded authors who want solutions for problems posed, get disappointed.

05. *Seminar paper and agenda*

In some other cases summaries of papers are drawn out of the main papers, to help participants grasp the points. From such summaries are prepared a skeleton paper containing all the propositions that arise out of the papers submitted. With the aid of summaries authors are arranged for and against. After the author's speak on the proposition, in line with the expressed thought contained in their papers, the rest of the participants opine on the issues and results are achieved. Skeleton papers are worked out by the organisers and only the propositions stand before the house, the papers themselves forming the back-drop for the discussion. But the Seminar paper as a species is done by the organisers after an arduous toil.

06. *Survey paper*

Of late, in the field of Library Science a species of writing is born and christened 'Survey paper'. A period of time is selected, mass of data is collected, in long or short tables they are exhibited, the data in the tables is interpreted in words and conclusions are drawn in trends. As far as I know, in India, Shri A. Neelameghan has started this type of writing in Library Science. The method is an asset in any argument, in that, the opponent to the view expressed, is disarmed. To contend against it is impossible unless the statistics themselves are wrong, or different designs of detail allowing other interpretation are perceived, than those mentioned. In short 'survey paper' has a crocodile back.

061. *Seminars and survey papers*

In a Seminar, if defects be found in a Survey paper by good enough laborious study, since there is no time to work out another statistical study, a resolution envisaging such a survey would be the outcome. The 'Survey Paper' is not of a seminal research type in thought, but is certainly a big leap and a great help. But they are dreaded by the reader unless he is too serious, especially in a Seminar.

11. *Much ado about nothing*

Inspiration itself lacking—what else is to be expected of any exam-student!—the Survey method was undertaken by the 1st batch of students of DRTC, under the guidance of Prof. Neelameghan. Some of us waded through the mass of detail, prepared data tables, from which summary tables, graphs, and pie-diagrams were built up. The Exam. was so frighteningly close at hand that it was impossible to be engaged in any other work. Fondly hoping to do the writing portion of the papers in a

day or two of respite after exam, we turned our back to it. Till two months after the exam our time was tightly packed by the study of Special Libraries at Calcutta, plus the taking travel within the boundaries of Calcutta. It was too late to do anything then. DRTC 1st batch students did not give papers, as time and examination combined together, overwhelmed them, the sole exception being Mr. MVR Rau, whose business ended by collecting data, rest of the paper being done by Prof. Neelameghan himself.

12. *Organising seminar thought*

Eight months ahead, the seminar and the subject were announced. Circulars were sent to all those who are capable of working on the topic and contribute significantly. Professor Neelameghan posted himself of the sector each is working on, so that there would be no duplication and gave advice about further work, to make the investigations undertaken cover as many facets as possible of auxiliary problems, linked up with the main issue. Some conscious library workers remarked, that the way things were being done and taking shape, the Seminar would surely be the best, under the renowned direction of Dr SRR. For the first time the authors of the papers to a Seminar would be spending their time in getting answers to the doubts posed.

2. *Editor's desk*

If the picture is viewed from the Organisers' side, different impression is gathered. Only a third of those who started working could submit papers for the seminar. Half-a-dozen papers from DRTC first batch students were not forthcoming, inspite of closest personal direction! As the editors told later, editing was as good as re-writing and reconstructing. Some papers came late and upset their routine and plans.

21. *Editors' contribution*

The margin between nights and days were rubbed-out by the Editor and their devoted Secretaries, in their pre-seminar editing and secretarial work. With what joy they heaved a sigh of relief when the last paper was cut on stencil at 12 midnight! The Organising Secretary not only edited papers, extracted propositions arising out of them, but also kept on recording the standards for writing a paper, so that editor's work would be easy in future seminars. Thanks are too meagre a tribute to Prof. Neelameghan, the Organising Secretary, for carrying the camel's load cheerfully and yet keeping a part of his original thought in tact about standards for writing a paper, instead of getting lost in others papers. The attempt at a standard gave the stimulus to active thought and enabled

him to pull through the work with a lingering smile and not act as the last straw. The bulky copyrighted volume reached the participants ten days ahead.

3. *The Inaugural*

Prof Humayun Kabir, Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, Government of India, was to inaugurate the Seminar, under the presidentship of Shri Nijalingappa, Chief Minister of Mysore. Prof. Kabir could not land in India by the date of inauguration and Shri Nijalingappa was summoned to Delhi. Last minute arrangements had to be made and the organizers were lucky to get as Chief Guest Dr. Nilakanthan, Director of the National Aeronautical Laboratory and Mr. Sen, Advisor in Statistical Quality Control, Indian Statistical Institute, to preside. The press boldly recorded the right and valuable purport of the inaugural! Indeed a unique feature of co-operation from the press.

The messages sent for the conference from abroad and within India had a marked difference. The Indian good-wishes-in-absentia were entirely directed to the fact that Prof Kabir was to inaugurate, being innocent of the purpose for which the Seminar is conducted. The foreign messages were a treat to read, relevant, and honestly told what is expected of the Seminar. Is there no art of sending suitable messages if the function of the conference is known, or not known, suiting both ways? A short and appropriate message in the latter case would be equally well-received, length by itself not indicating a greater store of goodwill.

4. *Preparation of delegates*

Most of the papers submitted were of the Survey species. Dr SRR's cryptic and right-to-the-point exposition served as a model, not belonging to the survey type. The propositions were lined up, with the papers where they occurred, given in brackets. Half the time in the train to Bangalore was spent in reading the papers by the 1st batch DRTC students, after finishing their survey of special libraries at Calcutta. The papers are to be read in the light of propositions, so that arguments for and against are collected and data on either side properly evaluated. First reading gives only a nodding acquaintance, with the contents of the papers, while a second reading will inter-link arguments at a greater depth, to see every minor emphasis and its over-all impact on the broad objectives embedded in the propositions. It was not possible to do the two readings in the train. In the Seminar, having read the papers once, I was at a loss what the paper said on the point posed for discussion. Many delegates confessed aside, that they have not read all the papers, some had no time. During

the discussion, the time taken to stand up and speak on the propositions, amendments and amended propositions, the failure to analyse the proposition into facets after Dr SRR stopped prompting from the Chair, not covering points mentioned in the papers, are proof of insufficient preparation.

5. *Success of the Seminar*

But then, the topic was not too technical for documentalists and operating special librarians. Many had rich experience of field work and the chair was richer in ideas and sallies without assuming authority. When the discussion showed signs of flagging, the chair by its analysis put new spirit into the delegates and the tide of discussion was rolling on. Anybody less deeper and versatile than Dr SRR on the subject and his persuasive way of putting forward view-points, could not have played the role he did. The lion's share of the success belongs to the Chair and the experienced and knowledgeable gathering. Compared to five seminars I attended, there was although a high level of thought and deeper digging.

51. To crown it all, the next seminars would be on the areas suggested for further study at this Seminar. Such a decision heralds a continuous series of discussions on a particular topic till the bottom is reached and all the limitations and boundary conditions are obtained. Would Research workers seize these fields, once a year assemble at DRTC to compare notes, discuss and penetrate further, all in a planned way? Dr SRR's guidance along with Prof Neelameghan's, will be available throughout the year. DRTC is on the threshold of realising the ambitions of research in Library Science, provided Indian Librarians are prepared to genuinely exploit the facilities made available.

52. *Pay-to-day work*

The thirty-two delegates gathered were divided into four groups each batch containing Science and Arts students. The experienced special librarians were leaders of the groups and the first batch DRTC students were drafted as Rapporteurs. The plan is that youngmen are to work, and those rich in experience are to guide and advice. At the very first session matters of procedure were approved after discussion. The facets of the propositions for the day were taken up. In between there was a cup of coffee. In the afternoon it was discussion by groups where annotations, amendments, new propositions, and suggestions to drop propositions were arrived at, while discussing the facets of propositions. The decisions of the groups on each proposition were immediately intimated to the Secretaries by the Rapporteur soon after the discussion on it was concluded. At 5 pm when the groups disbursed, the Leader and

Rapporteur sat together, gave a full length report of the discussions to the Secretaries by 7 pm, before, leaving for dinner. The Organising Secretary, Rapporteur General and Director had the full length reports of discussions of groups to deliberate on before them in the night. By night fall too, the annotations, amendments, new propositions were stenciled and circulated to all the delegates. From the second day onwards the routine was in full swing :

- 9-00 to 11-00 Discussions of alterations suggested by the groups.
- 11-00 to 11-30 Coffee break.
- 11-30 to 1-00 Facing the day's propositions.
- 3-00 to 5-00 Group discussion on faceted propositions.
- 5-00 to 7-00 Group leader & Rapporteur's proceedings of group discussion.

The system worked like a well-oiled machine.

53. *The delegates in and out of the Seminar*

There was no lack of spirit because of the time-schedule. Over a cup of coffee two opposites met to clinch the issues. Jokes, and loud laughter were common features. More than coffee, it is the friendliness in search, after some sort of truth as we see it, that drove off the fatigue. At night each member sat in his bed judging not only the amendments, the course of new propositions, the implications of annotations or the wisdom of omissions, but also the quality of work each group did and how they could better their own. Some amendments were so closely fought that casting vote of the chair (Mr J Saha) was twice exercised to resolve the tie. Voting cut across the groups, as better reason prevailed. Everyday the cycle of events were eagerly awaited :—the plenary sessions, coffee, stating the facets of the proposition (dull session), group discussion, counting pros and cons of group decisions by voluntary get-togethers in rooms till 10 pm at least, and fireworks the next day morning between 9 to 11 am when opinions clashed—under parliamentary conditions directed by the Chair. Delegates with similar or same views came closer to put up a stiff stand and tried their best to win by points.

6. *Discussions*

In a limited way the discussions were humorous. The chair declared that the propositions tabled are not policy matters, an adverse vote on which would go against him or the organisers. The delegates would be very much happy if such an attitude is taken in other Seminars too.

Put in a tight corner by the Chair, while speaking on the amendment, for having crossed over to the proposition itself, Shri Gundu Rao

blushing profusely had to contend, that entire feminine world would be offended if 'he' is accepted. The whole house broke into laughter except the chair. The Rapporteur general solved by substituting 'the' instead of 'he or she'.

While speaking on the benefits of documentation, Mr. P. R. Shah remarked that because of effective documentation service rendered with personal bias a Doctor is treating his family and children free of cost. He contended that as a beneficiary he has to relate his own experience.

It was sheer irony, when the suggestion that authors should move their propositions was accepted by the Chair, a few of the immediate propositions belonged to Dr SRR himself. He vacated the Director's Chair, asking Shri J Saha to assume the responsibilities, and took the floor to shoulder the propositions. He moved the propositions and wound up the discussion on each one of them in an admirable way. Virtually it was a demonstration lesson to the participants as to what is expected of them.

At a very tense moment, while criticising the existing word and in search of a new and appropriate substitute, the silent Gidwani identified the defect as "the difficulty is that the adjective is the enemy of the noun".

PR Shah and Isaac were very much amused when my group's opinion was different from the stand I supported in discussion, while at the end voted for a third alternative. I had to oppose one of the two propositions advanced by PR Shah, for which I was a co-author behind the scenes. Between day and day there was progress in thought, which put new and uncalculated elements into the picture, to which one has to react on the spot, judge and vote.

62. *Some active participants*

One inevitable speaker always on his legs for or against the proposition, amendment and amended proposition was MVR Rau. It looked as if a vow of God will be violated if he at least does not rise and sit down on each occasion. Unless controlled, he had the capacity to swallow time, confuse himself and side track the discussion. Refusing to admit when the chair pulled him up while crossing the borders of tolerance, is a characteristic he personified. Gesticulations had the better of the words, and he was more an actor than a debator. His original contribution is 'random arrangement', different from classified, alphabetico-classed and pure alphabetical arrangement!

GK Arora, rose to his feet on many occasions, and to his credit has some valuable contributions, at least thrice during discussions, when he had the trump card and his participation decided the issues. Purposefully slow in intonation, he took thrice the time he ought to, and need not have risen at least half the number of times when there was not much to contribute.

Isaac who spoke Malayalam-English put forth his views very clearly. Roughness and delicacy were both combined as suited to the occasion. Rising up only when necessary, he was listened to with respect.

AS Raizada having deep roots in the subject, raised many points of order, puzzled the gathering by questions of the quiz type. At times he held the thought-flow of the delegates in his grip, only the chair being wiser still. He spoke to effect but equally rose to throw his weight about and in such moments, he looked a politician without success.

Bimalendu Guha was in charge of Insdoc's interests, to the extent of confusing 'Indian National Documentation Research Centre (to undertake special classification schemes) with Insdoc, and ploughed a lone furrow to emphasize the viability of 'Science Abstracts'. Normally shy to speak, he was invited time and again and he always spoke to the point.

PR Shah never spoke anything harsh, was more interested in all the papers than the others and discovered two new propositions. Would anyone know by his looks that he is an established writer in Gujarati, himself an engineer in textiles, broadcasts talks in AIR, and is appearing for FLA under the guidance of Mr Ashworth!

Raghavan, though belonging to the 2nd batch of DRTC and new to the setting, displayed powerful reasoning, compelled attention, played distinctive role in the discussions. He caught the eye by the unbiased and unemotional approach.

T Thyaga Natarajan was soft spoken, even on his propositions. Abdul Rahaman and T Ranganathan could not be contended on their survey papers. Abdul Rahaman expounded to his heart's content whenever any theory of classification was involved, repeating the language of the Prolegomena—the dread of most students of Library Science, except the 1st batch of DRTC! Kulkarni directed his shafts, always unconsciously, at his opposite number, to reduce the sitting to a question-answer hour and the chair had to do its bit. The fast speaking Subrahmanvan and Chitnis, the impressive Parthasarathy, Sultan, Bhogle and Ganesh Bhattacharyya, did their best to make themselves felt. Kalyan Saha made a maiden effort in moving a lone amendment. Mane held

the chair of Goup II for a day in the absence of NK Goil. Rajagopalan appeared and vanished like a star that shoots across. My apologies to the rest for not mentioning them by name as Seminar participants, for that work will be done by the printed list and the general report which would include all Group discussions not covered here.

7. *New finds*

The Seminar had three new finds. Prof Neelameghan is well known to DRTC students in their colloquia as a diligent Chairman whose help is more dangerous than his opposition. As the Organising Secretary he played his role in a befitting way. J.Saha as Rapporteur General was another success at the Seminar. By his conduct he shaped the job as next in importance to the Director. It virtually became a Deputy Directorship in that he could substitute for the Director whenever he was absent. During the proceedings he was of help to the chair by his participation from the dias. When he himself had to be on the thorny throne. did his very best, that too with Dr SRR on the floor. He could assert himself when SRR did not attend the plenary session, kept up to the currents and cross currents of thoughts, constitutionalities and was equal in parries. He was in the dual capacity of Chairman and Rapporteur General when he conducted the proceedings and the burdens should be very heavy. The Seminar proceedings will be his workout. which is eagerly awaited.

71. Gidwani was in the Chair for two hours on the last day. He controlled the situations, shaped them from the chair, was not harsh but a mixture of firmness and persuasiveness. Time was the blood-hound at his heels. In spite of the hurry there seemed to be confidence and calmness about him and he won the race by the skin of his teeth.

72. *Old wine*

Dr SRR as the Director of a Seminar or the Chairman in the plenary sessions, is without a peer in India. By his calculated absence, he experimented the responsibilities of Leadership among the two top men of the delegates. The second line of Indian Librarians, as were present, proved that, given a few more opportunities, the ropes will be fully grasped with the inevitable individual touch. DRTC Seminars have become a training ground for Chairmen, Rapporteurs, who will be of immense help in conferences at which Dr SRR may not be present.

8. *The valedictory*

Chief Minister Nijalingappa was so genuinely sorry for his absence at the inaugural, that he made it up by presiding over the valedictory.

The conference was also coming to a close in that the inter-weaving of thoughts has already attained a shape, needing finishing touches. At that time came the address of Brigadier Chakravarthy, Director of LRDE, on the significance of the space age and its challenge to Scientists, and Documentalists. The mythological 'Tribhuvana' idea was explained as a biological concept, and the progress through the ages as based on Science. Man, if he does not grapple with the space age and live in it by the help of progress in Science, he will be exploited as fish in water or animals on land by some other species. Full of a new philosophy, he ended like a poet, humming on 'would it be', 'could it be', and mused over the future.

The Chief Minister felt relieved of wholtime politics enforced on him and managed an escape into the Librarians world. He was humourous, taking the valedictory as a special function providing recreation, where he kept aside for a while the burdensome crown. He promised help for ISI Building at Bangalore. He also realised the importance of the Library Legislation, a Bill for which he is introducing in the next session of the Mysore legislature. He felt very happy that Dr SRR at his ripe age, is more active than the young and with his international stature is guiding a Research Institute like the DRTC at Bangalore.

Dr SRR's brief explanation of the Seminar to the President, during the introduction was capital, when he compared Documentation to a eight-wheeled-trolley which goes round to serve information to the Research workers in factories and laboratories. DRTC is meant to be a research centre for sharpening the techniques behind information service. Some words have a mesmeric power, and the trolley metaphor was singing its tunes in many minds, even after the Seminar.

91. *Excursions*

The programme was although so tightly packed and worked out that few could manage escape unnoticed without prior permission. But their extra-curricular interests were accomodated by providing a free trip to places in Bangalore on the pleasant evening and night of the 10th June. The Mayor of Bangalore welcomed the delegates in Mayo Hall and was at home to the delegates on the 10th evening. The 11th and 12th were also billeted for excursions to Bangalore Special Libraries and motorable neighbourhood. Many eager souls thirsting for travel and those who could not get out of Bangalore for lack of accomodation in trains, should have had pleasant engagements and fine weather.

The excursions were put towards the fog end of the stay, not to interfere with the serious thought of the scientists grappling with problems at deeper levels. Is it not a wise departure from the habit of taking every

evening off for sight-seeing to quench the lust for wandering-aimless, which hardly leaves 2 or 3 effective hours of work a day, reducing the Seminar to a mere get-together, to be spent in light talk? The Seminar papers and discussions would look like intruding into our pleasant time! Will not an exploration to a nearby hill, a day, before, be a surer antidote to the travelling-mania of Librarians—if going to Bangalore from Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras is no travel and a stay at Bangalore in mid-summer, not a pleasant excursion!

92. *The Memento*

I have seen delegates to a seminar or conference, tax themselves for a photo with reluctance. The reigning mood being—could not the organisers afford that much? I have yet to come across a seminar where the delegates voluntarily left relics of their association. It was a mark of appreciation for the rare privilege of having Dr SRR to ourselves for full five days and is the acclamation by the delegates for the role of the chair. The appeal to Indian Librarians on the role of DRTC made by Dr SRR struck root and as a token of immense benefits and deep dedication, the delegates financed a party, photo and a handsome memento to DRTC. It is a well designed brass plate, bearing the names of delegates, resting on a wooden support of teapoy height, just a lovely ornament in a room.
