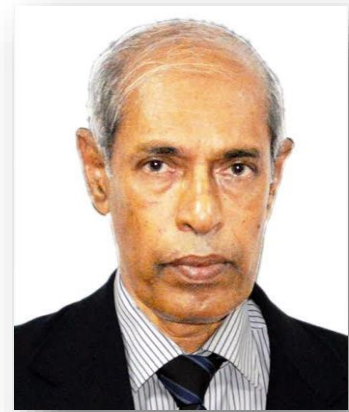


## **Sunil Chandrasiri**

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**"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities."**

**R. David Lankes**

I have fond memories of the UoC main library as an undergrad, postgrad, member of the academic staff, and University administrator. I remember being in my early twenties and spending many productive hours in the UoC main library and taking a break at the 'Round Canteen' including a visit to "Jathika Pola" on Fridays. The first thing that comes to mind is the newspaper desk and periodicals section on the right side of the main entrance. The UoC main library in the early 1970s had only two floors and the 2<sup>ed</sup> floor was mainly for the Faculty of Arts. It was a quiet place to study provided you were with a companion and occupied a desk closer to windows. Most of the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor was fully occupied and sometimes difficult to get a seat. I did my reference work in the main library and the most productive time for me however was between 4.30 to 8.00 pm on weekdays. The lending section also helped us a lot by allowing us to borrow recommended textbooks. I had learned how to use a library, especially how to search a book using the old card catalog system in the 1970s without even having a primitive computer. I am sure that knowledge helped me cope with more complex database systems and modern search engines.

The UoC main library was one of the popular meeting places for undergrads of the Faculty of Arts. You could always tell friends to meet in front of the main library and share campus gossip, local politics, international politics etc, over a cup of tea at the 'Round Canteen.' The UoC main library was also one of the biggest social hubs for the Faculty of Arts. It's where you get a chance to talk to people you thought smartest in your batch following general and special degree programmes in Economics, Sociology, Geography, Philosophy, History, etc. You could come together and

discuss both academic and non-academic issues and help each other. Many times these interactions captured views from diverse groups of students who represent the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the UoC student population. I believe that was the biggest learning experience in terms of knowledge sharing, team effort, mutual respect, appreciating diverse views, promoting ethnic harmony, etc.

The UoC main library has served me in many ways over the years. I still remember one of the key decisions by the management of UoC main library during a crisis situation - youth insurrection in April 1971. The University authorities decided to close down the University indefinitely and the main library decided to release 5 books per undergraduate student. The students were very pleased with the decision and most of us got the full benefit out of it. The bookbinding service maintained by the main library was another source of support for research students. The staff of the printing unit was very professional, and the quality of work was outstanding. I also appreciate the efficient service facilities provided by the Sri Lanka collection unit and periodicals unit. Easy access to some of the classic papers in economics (hard copies) was very exciting and useful.

During my tenure as the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), the Librarian (Dr. (Mrs.) Pradeepa Wijetunge) and Assistant Librarian (Mrs. Kalpana Manatunga) played an active role in setting up a mini-library at the FGS for the benefit of students who followed post-graduate Diplomas, Masters, and MPhil/Ph.D. programmes. The library staff led by the Librarian also provided lecture inputs to many of the post-graduate programmes particularly in the areas of literature survey, access to library resources, e-resource center of the main library, referencing, and citation methodologies.

For the past 50 years, the UoC main library has been an important part of my academic and intellectual life and will, I hope, continue to be so for many more.

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