

## **The Banyan Tree and Diversity - An Analogy** Maha Kumaran (University of Saskatchewan)

Have you seen a banyan tree? It is a tropical plant found in many parts of Asia and other temperate regions closer to us such as Maui and Hawaii. As an epiphyte, it depends on other trees for its growth, and once it finds the support it needs, it develops and survives for centuries. A banyan tree lasts for centuries because as it expands too wide its branches turn downwards and grow into prop roots to support the main trunk, thus forming a labyrinth of branches that look like new trees. Due to this, a single tree resembles a forest. However, this “forest” stands united by the main trunk. The tree (at least in most parts of Asia) has religious and cultural significance - it lasted for centuries, provided edible fruits, had medicinal values, and its canopy offered shade and served as place to gather, relax and belong. Like the branches of the banyan tree, diversity is vast and growing. With librarianship as the grand trunk uniting the tangents of diversity and allowing multiple aspects of it to root and grow, I am optimistic that our profession will be shaped to thrive and advance for centuries.