

S.R. Ranganathan and Five Laws of Library Science

*Saumen Chakraborty*¹⁰

Shyali Ramamrita Ranganathan was born at the Shiyali of Tamilnadu. His father was N. Ramamrita and mother was Sitalaxmi. He passed M.A. in Mathematics from Madras Christian College and later joined as professor of Mathematics in Madras University. In 1924, he took the charge of library of the university. For this reason he studied library science in London. S.R. Ranganathan was a doyen personality in India as well as global library movement. He gave a speech on 'Library development and modernization' in an All India Educational Conference held in Varanasi, 1931. In 1961, he was appointed as a chairman of the library committee formed by UGC. He recommended many steps and procedures to be taken for the development of library and librarians of the college and universities. Dr. Ranganathan wrote nearly 70 no. of books and more than 800 no. of articles. He established DRTC, under ISI, at Bangalore, Karnataka. Main function of this organization was to provide research and training programs to librarians. According to Michel Gorman Ranganathan was "Unquestioned Giant of 20th Century Library Science". Though he was a professor in Mathematics, he was awarded national professor of library science for his outstanding contribution. He was father of Indian Library Science for his outstanding contribution and known as an international personality in this discipline.

In 1931, Dr. Ranganathan first propounded five laws. It had been acclaimed as a milestone as a universal theory of library and information science which is still acknowledged. They are :

- a) Books are for use.
- b) Every reader his/her book.
- c) Every book its reader.
- d) Save the time of the user and
- e) Library is a growing organism.

The initial reading of these five laws looks simple and self-evident, but these have several implications, interpretation and connotations to the librarians.

¹⁰ Assistant Librarian, Panchakot Mahavidyalaya, Purulia, West Bengal.

The first law is *“Books are for use”*. The following steps are to be needed to satisfy the law:-

- 1) The location of the library should be established in a place so that all users can best utilize the resources of the library.
- 2) The opening and closing time of the library must have to be at par with the need of local society.
- 3) Open Access System should be introduced.
- 4) Well trained library staff should be appointed for users for proper services.
- 5) User-oriented library building and furniture should be provided.
- 6) Proper Book selection policy should be followed.
- 7) Library techniques (proper classification and cataloguing) should be followed.

The second law is *“Every reader his/her book”*. User demand is most important factor here. The following steps are to be taken to satisfy the law:-

- 1) These law stresses democratization of the library where every reader has equal right to get the book of his interest.
- 2) Needs library legislation (by the state).
- 3) Selection of proper books.
- 4) Responsibility and required guidance of library staff to users.
- 5) Coordination among libraries is needed through resource sharing.
- 6) Obligation of the reader is to be expected like take care of books, return the book in due time.

The third law prescribes *“Every book its reader”*. Here the main emphasis is laid on books. The following parameters have to be observed to satisfy the rule:-

- 1) Open access system is the chief condition for the successful operation of this law.
- 2) The whole material of the library should be in front of the user including **Reference Section**.
- 3) Proper fulfillment of reading and other consulting material should be placed before the users for ready availability.
- 4) Classified arrangement of books arranges these subject wise in a filiator sequence thus there is every possibility that classified arrangement based on would provide greater opportunity of every book getting its reader.
- 5) Provision of analytical entries in a catalogue increases the chances of composite books getting their readers.

- 6) Besides such arrangement other important some measures should be taken for this purpose. Devices such as setting of special sequences of books at prominent places to attract readers, placing of books on shelves within convenient reach of a user, average height etc. increase accessibility.
- 7) Moreover library publicity can play an important role for particular book should be used by an user. These methods are: i) list of new arrivals, ii) display of new books, iii) book exhibition, etc.

The fourth law says, "**Save the time of the user**". Here also user is the most focal point. A user must be assumed to be a busy person and his time is precious. Therefore, his spacious time must be saved. The following points are to be carefully jotted in order to satisfy the law:-

- 1) Location of the library is an important factor to save the time of the readers/users.
- 2) Like previous laws this one also demand open access system and using various guides for the better services in the library.
- 3) Proper classification and cataloguing should be prepared for the efficient circulation system;
- 4) Reference services, Documentation and SDI services shall be made easily accessible for the users;
- 5) Arrangement of books on the shelves to justify the demand of the users.
- 6) While charging and discharging at the counter minimum time must be taken. To achieve this, simple and economical charging system should be followed. It must save the time of the support staff and the readers or users. For this purpose '**subjective**' versus '**objective**' time concept should be kept in mind of the staff.

According to fifth and final law of Ranganathan's basic tenants "**Library is a growing organism**". The library will grow in terms of documents, readers and staff. The nature of organic growth can be either growth as of the body of a child or growth as of the body of an adult. The growth of a new library will correspond to that of a child growing in all respects. These growing libraries should be organized in such a way the change/ growth/ development is reflected accordingly.

The universe of knowledge is ever dynamic; therefore we must follow a scheme for classification which is able to meet the onslaught of knowledge reasonable way. Similarly a library should adopt a well established catalogue code. The provision of further space arrangement (provision for weeding-out of old documents) is needed to cope with the growth of library collection. Besides these, a library should use

computer and other ICT for its house-keeping jobs and provide proper services to its users in a speedy way.

The five laws of library science consist of five short statements. There are fundamental laws of library science which provide the rationale for a unifying theory of library science. With the help of these laws we can derive postulates, canons and principles applicable in different fields of library and information science. They keep us constantly alert to the new methods and practices that we should introduce in order that the library may served its community better. The five laws have been interpreted in the changing context of information/knowledge. The implications of each law clearly indicate their validity and usefulness in the expanding role of information in national development. The five laws fit into the modern framework of an information /knowledge society.

References:

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