



Chapter-3

Five Laws of Library Science

After studying this section, students will be able to:

- ◆ Understand the Five Laws of Library Science;
- ◆ Gain knowledge about the implications of the law 'Books are for use';
- ◆ Understand various obligation for satisfying the second law of library science "Every reader his/her book";
- ◆ Understand the implications of the third law of library science "Every book its reader";
- ◆ Gain knowledge about the implications of the fourth law "Save the time of the reader";
- ◆ Understand the implications of the fifth law "Library is a growing organism".

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3.1 Introduction

The laws of Library Science govern various disciplines within the field of library science and are normally invoked when two or more commons lead to a conflict. S. R. Ranganathan formulated the Five Laws of Library Science in 1928 and published them in 1931 under the title "Five Laws of Library Science".

The five laws are:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his/her books
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the user
5. Library is a growing organism

3.2 First Law: Books are for Use

The first law of Library Science is 'Books are for use'. No one will question the correctness of this law but the story in actual practice is different. Historically, in the 15th and 16th century in Europe, books were chained to the selves. In those days, libraries were meant for storage rather than for use. At a later stage, books were made available to those people who paid a fee, but now the book lending is free for users. Modern libraries are attractive, comfortable and a number of special services are introduced to ensure optimum utilisation of books. A modern librarian is happy when the readers make their shelves constantly empty. He/she is worried and depressed on seeing those books which remain in the library only. Librarians take initiatives to make the library a centre of intellectual achievements by increasing the use of books.

3.2.1 Implications

In order to satisfy the first law of library science, libraries have to look into a number of factors. The most prominent are:

3.2.1.1 Library Location

The resources of the library need to be fully exploited. Library has to play its vital role among intellectual users. It must be at the centre of its users community. If it is an academic library, it should be situated in the middle of the academic institution or at a distance of few minutes' walk from the teaching departments or hostels. If it is a public library, it must be located in the heart of the city. A centrally located library will



be helpful in increasing the use of books and, hence, will become the soul of the institution or city for its intellectual achievements.

3.2.1.2 Library Hours

Before the advent of this law, libraries mostly remained closed. Even when open, it was mainly to perform the dusting of books and chasing out the 'book worms'. Fortunately, in countries where the law "Books are for use" is implemented, it has changed people's mind and normally the libraries are kept open for 18 hours a day. In the majority of universities in the USA and Europe, the library is kept open round the clock.

In libraries, the opening hours of the library are according to the convenience of the library users. Academic libraries are kept open during the working hours of the institution. Most of the libraries are kept open from morning to evening. In case of public library, most of the users are workers, businessman, professionals, etc., so such libraries are kept open according to the off/free time of the users. Now-a-days, due to the impact of this culture, the majority of libraries are kept open round the clock.

3.2.1.3 Library Furniture

The impact of the first law 'Books are for use' on library furniture and internal equipments, is considerable. In the olden days, when the books were stored for preservation, the focus was to keep the maximum number of books in the least space, at the lowest cost. Hence, the books were shelved up to the roof. The implementation of the first law motivates us to provide open access of books to library users. Now, generally, the shelves are not more than 7 feet high. The space between two rows of shelves is sufficient, so that the readers and staff can move comfortably.

The Reading Room is also made attractive with hangings, flowers and pictures. The rooms are made vermin-proof and theft-proof, and are well-ventilated. The tables and chairs are comfortable and suitable for continuous sitting for long hours. The Bureau of Indian standards established standards for the design of tables and chairs for the reading room of a library under the chairmanship of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan. The first law has, thus, exercised tremendous influence on the library building and its furniture.

3.2.1.4 Library Staff

In the olden days, the librarian as a caretaker was expected to protect the books from four enemies- fire, water, vermin and man. He was just a matriculate and his pay was



low. The first law of library science directs that the libraries must have well-educated and qualified staff, so that they can provide better library services to their users.

Library professionals should not forget the noble cause of the service. Scholarship, training, emoluments and status, etc. are some essential issues for attracting qualified and sincere professionals. The staff of the library should ensure the maximum use of books by readers.

The library should try to keep a balance between the retrospective holdings and latest information bearing documents in its collection. Staff of the library should express their pleasure while providing services and express their friendly attitude. They should function as a friend, guide and teacher to their users. The efficiency of service and the ultimate success of the modern library as an agency for diffusion of knowledge depend upon the performance of its staff.

3.2.1.5 Book Selection

The first law had a tremendous impact on book-selection procedure. The librarians should perform the primary work of selecting books while keeping the present and potential needs of users in mind. In order to maximise the use of books, the librarian should select books in a suitable, informative, evaluative and inspiring way. In fact, the first law allows placing of only those books on the shelves which are regularly read, enjoyed, understood and acted upon by users. Worn out and out-of-date books should be 'weeded' out with rigidity.

In brief, the implication of the first law is profound, rich, useful and revolutionary. This law has changed the concept of librarianship as it was in the olden days.

3.3 Second Law: Every Reader his/her Book

The second law of library science has established a new concept of libraries and has inculcated the culture of libraries. 'Every Reader his/her Books' means, books for all. Books for all symbolises 'Education for All.' In the past, education was not for all, it was only for the chosen few.

The second law states that every user of the library should get the book he/she wants. This law also advocates the generalisation and democratisation of library services. In earlier days, the access to libraries and their books were only available to those few who belonged to the aristocracy and the upper classes. Now, the library services have become the basic right of all citizens, without any distinction or discrimination. Thus,



the second law 'Every Reader his/her Books' has assumed great importance in this age of democracy. The second law supports the principal of equality of opportunity for books for all and provides a suitable environment for all to learn.

3.3.1 Implications

Requirements of the readers are varied for the implementation of the law 'Every Reader his/her books'. It is the obligation of the library to provide every reader his/her books. This law has placed obligations on the state, library authority, library staff and the readers of the library.

3.3.1.1 Obligation of the State

It is the obligation of the state to provide sufficient support to its citizens for informal, continuous self-education through the network of libraries. Public libraries provide academic and literary support to a cross-section of the society, i.e., children, men, women, rich, poor, disadvantaged or challenged in anyway, to facilitate development and dissemination of knowledge.

The state maintains various library services through several provisions for library activities and organisation. Various levels of provisions for better functioning of libraries are as follows:

- ◆ State Public Library Act;
- ◆ State Library Authority;
- ◆ Local Library Authority;
- ◆ Local Library Committee and Village Library Committee;
- ◆ State Central Library;
- ◆ Finance, Accounts and Audit.

Thus, the development of the planned programmes of library services to "All", can only come from the government of the state.

3.3.1.2 Obligation of the Library Authority

The library authority should monitor the functioning of libraries and the overall system. They should try to provide prompt and free service. A well-thought legislative and co-ordinated measure on the part of the state ensuring adequate source of finance is essential, but not sufficient.

For the second law, obligation of library authorities is in respect of choice of books and the choice of the staff. These are the main functions of authorities in libraries.



To provide 'Every Reader his/her Book', the second law requires the librarians to know (i) Subject (ii) Standard (iii) Language of the books used.

The second law indicates that a library should select books on all the major occupations of its actual and potential users. The people are also likely to demand biographies and travel books. The second law also desires that the book selection should be closely connected with the exposition of language and style suited to all the intellectuals. The librarians should select and furnish books which satisfy the demands of the neo-literates as well as scholars.

Regarding the selection/appointment of staff, an adequate and competent team of library professionals is necessary for facilitating the law 'every reader his/her book'. In the absence of competent staff, a reader will not be able to utilize the library services properly.

3.3.1.3 Obligation of the Staff

The library staff has a great role to play in the success of the second law. The first law stresses the need for a well-qualified trained and well-paid staff, the second law directs the library authority to provide adequate and devoted staff to show every reader how to use books as tools. To act as the canvassing agent for the books, the staff must know the readers, must know the books and actively help every reader to find books of his or her interest.

Book selection is an important job of the library staff. The staff should build-up good collections of reference work in libraries and provide personalised service, whenever needed. In conclusion, we understand that the second law demands the staff to help the users of the libraries in locating the required books.

3.3.1.4 Obligation of the Reader

In the second law, there are certain duties/responsibilities of the users of libraries too. The users of the library should cooperate with the library staff so that the latter can provide better services. The users should have a sound knowledge of the rules and regulations of the library.

Readers should know that there are other users too in the library. It is the obligation of every reader to get only the number of books he/she is entitled to and return them on/before the due dates. The users should also have the basic knowledge of the scheme of classification used in the library and the art of using the library catalogue. They should know about reference works, bibliographies, catalogues and other library services.



3.4 Third Law: Every Book its Reader

The third law is: "Every Book its Reader". It ensures the maximum utilisation of books by the readers. This law advocates providing an appropriate reader for every book. The first law is developed to satisfy the interest of library documents, the second law is concerned with the task of finding an appropriate book for every reader and the third law expects that an appropriate reader should be found for every book. The most prominent system used by the libraries for satisfying the third law is 'Open Access System', while the other library activities related to this are shelf-arrangement, catalogue entries, reference work, publicity methods, book selection and extension work.

3.4.1 Implications

3.4.1.1 Open Access

The Open Access System provides an opportunity to see and examine the book collection with as much freedom as one has in one's own library. In an open access library, the readers are permitted to enter the stack room and browse books to select the best book/books to satisfy their requirement.

The Open Access System increases the use of books. It provides an opportunity to its readers to search for books which they never expected to find due to various reasons. With this specific support, less-used books are put to use.

3.4.1.2 Shelf arrangement

Shelf-arrangement plays a vital role in providing easy and comfortable access books to their appropriate readers. The third law emphasises the need for the arrangement of books on shelves in a classified order, based on their content. Subject-based arrangement on shelves, a special shelf for displaying recent arrivals, and novelty in the arrangement and display, attract the attention of the users.

3.4.1.3 Catalogue

It is the catalogue that gives useful bibliographic information about the library collection and helps in the selection of books. A well-planned, classified shelf arrangement is highly desirable but it is not sufficient in itself to attract readers unless it is supported by a well-developed catalogue. The third law also expects the technical staff to prepare analytical entries based on the contents of each document, for the benefit of readers.



3.4.1.4 Reference Work

The books cannot reach the hands of readers unless their content is interpreted by the reference staff. It is the duty of a reference librarians to act like marriage match-makers between books and readers. They should find a suitable reader for every book or vice versa. They should also identify all those books which are of less use or no use. This is a kind of service that the third law expects from the reference staff.

3.4.1.5 Publicity

Publicity is a powerful tool to attract the users of the library and thereby to increase the chances for every book to find its reader. Regular publicity is given through library bulletins, newspapers, magazines, printed catalogues, subject book lists, press notices, book fair, window displays, radio/TV talk, public lectures, exhibitions, demonstration tours, library week, brochures and leaflets. The library should adopt all authorised methods to attract more library users.

3.4.1.6 Books Selection

The third law has an important role in the book selection process. For satisfying the third law and fulfilling the users' demand, it is essential to examine the users' requirements and the objectives of the library. Book selection must be proper, timely and based on the local demand, local history and local needs of the users. Thus, the book selection process plays an important role in satisfying the third law of library science.

3.4.1.7 Extension Service

The extension service is a vital part of the implications of the third law. The purpose of providing extension services is to convert the library into a social centre for encouraging and inculcating reading habits and to turn a non-reader into a regular reader.

To satisfy the demand of the third law, librarians celebrate local festivals and certain national days dedicated to national leaders or ideas, and participate in local festivals. In India, where such celebrations attract huge crowds, this form of extension service has a great potential to satisfy some aspects of the third law of library science.

3.5 Fourth Law: Save the Time of the Reader

The main concern of the first three laws of library science is to facilitate access to books by their appropriate reader, and to optimise the usage of library collection. The fourth



law focuses on the services for the readers to save the time of the reader as well as staff. The law expects the reference staff to support readers from the very moment they enter the library, up to the moment they leave it, critically examining each and every process they involve themselves in, with a care to save their time.

3.5.1 Implications

3.5.1.1 Open Access System

The fourth law strongly opposes the process of 'Close Access System' as the time is an important constraint. In a closed access system, there will be loss of time while going through the library catalogues. In larger libraries, if the closed access system is followed, the unit processing time for getting the required book may be longer in comparison to that in the Open Access System. As the user, after submitting the request, is bound to wait at the counter to get the required book and it may take a longer time if the asked book is not available on the shelf and the staff is asked to give list of other related books. In the Open Access System, the user can go to the relevant shelf and browse several books and then finalise the best suited book.

3.5.1.2 Shelf Arrangement

The comfortable and useful method of shelf arrangement can save significant time of the user. Arrangement by subject has been found to be useful as it makes it easy for the reader to locate the desired book. But in some cases, the interest of the reader goes primarily by the author rather than by the subject. The method of shelf arrangement should be based on the convenience of the users.

3.5.1.3 Stack Room Guides

Proper signal guides in the stack room save the time of the user. It may be quite useful to place them at the entrance of the stack room. They should include the complete plan of the stack room indicating the disposition of every row. Every book shelf must have a separate signal guide.

3.5.1.4 Catalogue

The fourth law acknowledges the composite nature of the books. Some prominent aspects of a composite book can be highlighted only by cross-reference and analytical entries. The fourth law advises the librarian to meet the diverse needs of readers. To save the time of the reader, the library catalogue is generally divided in two parts: Alphabetical and Classified. Some libraries also have an Author-Title and Subject catalogues, altogether known as Dictionary Catalogue.



Although the library catalogue enables a reader to locate the desired book without any loss of time, yet it becomes difficult to search for a micro-document.

Further to save readers' time, the library must procure published bibliographies of individual authors, subject bibliographies, cumulative indexes to periodicals, topical bibliographies, national and regional bibliographies, union catalogues, computerised databases, etc.

3.5.1.5 Reference Services

Most of the readers require the assistance of reference staff who knows the hide-and-seek character of all catalogues and indexes, and can easily understand them. They can bring books and readers together by providing ready reference services. Reference staff can also help in the selection of books. Documentation services like indexing, abstracting, translation, reprography; information services like CAS (Current Awareness Services), selective dissemination of information, referral service, information consolidation and repackaging, etc. helps in fulfilling the requirements of the fourth law.

3.5.1.6 Issue/Return Methods

Circulation service is an important service of library. If this service is well planned and equipped, it saves the time of both the users and staff. After a number of experiments, it is brought out that Browne charging system, Newark Charging System, Ranganathan Reader ticket-Book ticket method and Detroit Self-charging System are some of the economical and time-saving charging systems. The two-card system is found to save the time of the readers over 'Day book' and 'Ledger system'. Automated circulation system is better than all other systems that save the time of the users.

3.5.1.7 Other Services

To save the time of readers, libraries provide other services like Mobile library services, Library services for special classes, etc.

3.6 Fifth Law: Library is a Growing Organism

The fifth Law is 'Library is a growing organism'. This law enunciates a fundamental rule and principle which govern planning and organisation of libraries. The fifth law handles the library as an institution which has all the qualities of a growing organism. A growing organism has the inherent feature of natural growth, deterioration, change in size, development of new shapes and forms, etc.



3.6.1 Implications

3.6.1.1 Growth

The library is a growing organism. Its growth depends on the number of readers, materials and staff. According to Dr. Ranganathan, there are two types of growth; Child growth and Adult growth. Here, the child growth is characterised by an overall growth in size and weight, while adult growth is characterised by the absence of an overgrowth. The growth of a library is very similar to the child growth in respect of reading materials and staff. It may possibly attain the adult growth, but only with respect to the number of readers.

The main components of the library organism are the books, readers and staff. A modern library is a trinity of all these components. There must be a harmonious growth among these basic components.

3.6.1.2 Reading Materials

The quality of every library service is based on a well-chosen, selective and growing collection of information and documents. The library should purchase new books, journals, audio-visual materials and other informative documents to provide informational support for teaching and research activities of the parent institution, and to fulfill the needs of the readers.

3.6.1.2.1 The Library Building

The increasing size of the library collection is one of the important aspects for growth. This type of growth is reflected in the stack room of a library. Its size, relative position, book racks, forming unit for which the stack is built, the parts of the book rack, the self-planks, label holders and all such things relating to the housing of books are examined in the light of the inevitable growth in stack. In terms of the size of library building, the librarian should provide sufficient provision not only for satisfying the present needs, but also the future needs.

The library building must have a self-sufficient system for adjusting books of fluctuating size. Being a service institution, a library may provide a number of user-based services. The design of library building must be functional in nature for providing proper space for all the services. The Periodical Room also needs a careful design in the light of the fifth law of library science. While designing the library building, new principles of architecture such as modular design need to be considered seriously.



Catalogue Room is a very important part of the library building. The catalogue room is the room in which the catalogue cabinets are kept. A standard size of a unit cabinet is 23"*28". It can hold 48000 catalogue cards. It is observed that each book may have sufficient number of cards for its proper representation. So, there must be a provision for its extension.

The fifth law also affects the physical form of the library catalogue. If a library is a growing organism, the library catalogue will also grow proportionally. If a library grows dynamically, librarian finds it difficult to administer its catalogue because of its limited identity, inflexibility and increasing cost. Other physical forms of the catalogue are shelf catalogue, loose-leaf book catalogue and one leaf one entry catalogue, but all of these are not competent enough to satisfy the fifth law of library science. Card catalogue is very useful for libraries because of its simplicity, attractiveness, cost-effectiveness and the tendency to have less chances of error, . The card catalogue has an epoch-making contribution in the library profession. It is quite valuable for preparing bibliographies, indexes and union catalogues for ensuring that the library is up-to-date and is ever expanding.

3.6.1.3 Classification Scheme

Another important matter that needs to be examined in the light of the fifth law is the classification of books. As knowledge itself is growing at a very high speed, it is necessary that the classification scheme is comprehensive, all-embracing of all past and present issues and allowing space for any possible addition of knowledge. It means that the classification must be highly flexible, expandable and hospitable, so that it can accommodate any new subject without dislocating its pre-defined sequence.

The reader is a part of trinity, where he/she is an important part of the library organisation. The growth of libraries is measured in terms of continuity, eternity and perpetuity which depends upon the growth in the number of readers. The growth of readers is examined in the light of the following factors:

- (a) The size of the reading room
- (b) The method of use
- (c) Safeguards

The growth of the reader requires the reading room to be flexible to meet the growth of documents, furniture and accommodation of readers. The reading room should be



well- planned, attractive and comfortable with seating arrangements for painless study.

Issue Work: The increased number of readers leads to the increase in issue and return work. The size and shape of the issue counter must, therefore, be taken into consideration to meet the future growth. The issue system will also affect the size of the counter. The counter should be spacious enough to make the reader comfortable while getting their books issued and returned. The provision of property counter must be available, where readers can deposit their luggage (belongings).

3.6.1.4 Open Access

The Open access system is only a medium for facilitating the meeting of books and the readers through the fifth law. In the open access system, the readers themselves pick books of their choice, while in closed access system, it is not possible.

3.6.1.5 Circulation System

The ledger system based circulation is not sufficient for the growth of issue/return work, as it involves a number of operations in completing the process of issue/return of a book. The Browne Changing System and Newark Changing System have achieved better results in crowded libraries.

On the other hand, Ranganathan proposed the Two Card System, known as Reader's Ticket-Book Card Charging System. It is useful and the most economical charging system. These methods have solved the problem of identifying borrowers. Readers are made responsible for the books drawn on their tickets and it is their work to keep the tickets in their personal custody and prevent the use of these tickets by others.

3.6.1.6 Safe-Guards

As the number of users increases, the problems of preventing unauthorised removal of books from the library becomes an acute problem in the Open Access libraries. It necessitates some safeguards. The safeguards really ensure that all readers can leave the library through a single door, where vigilance can be exercised. The safeguards consist of the following arrangements: the entrance and exit to the library must be provided by one and only one gate door. The gate door should normally be in a closed position. It should be opened only if the counter assistant allows it. The moment reader exits it, it should automatically close/lock itself. The passage of the gate should be big/wide enough to allow one and only one reader to pass through it at a time. All other doorways and windows should be fitted with grill work, shutters,

or weld-mesh shutters; whose meshes are too small for a book to allow passing. The greatest disservice to the Open Access is its introduction without proper safeguards.

3.6.1.7 Staff

For providing quality support to the library users with regard to various library services, a library require a large number of professionally-trained personnel. For facilitating this, the library decision-maker provides the required staff. To fulfil the aim of library organisation, the librarian must keep in view three behavioural requirements:

1. Brilliant and trained people must be inspired to join the library profession and to remain in it.
2. The staff must be aware of the task for which they have been appointed.
3. Working environments must be conducive for creative, spontaneous and innovative work.

3.6.1.8 Staff Council

Dr. Ranganathan suggests the formation of a staff council to help the librarians to obtain maximum outcome of work in an efficient manner. In the constitution of the council, there should be one representative from each section of the library. The prime function of the staff council is to advise the librarian on various matters. Besides, the librarian should encourage the staff members to work with dedication through sectional meetings.

3.6.1.9 Spirit of the Hive

As a library remains open on all days for long hours, the organisation of the reference section and the direct dealing counters require skilfulness and care during interaction. Further, library professionals in such areas should work hard with a natural quality of politeness. The members of staff should inculcate in themselves the spirit of bees. It means that member of staff should be willing to co-operate with one another in every possible way.

3.7 Summary

The Five laws are the five commandments, embodying the rational for unifying the theories of library science and their formulation. Dr. Ranganathan infused a new life into librarianship and changed it into a scientific approach-based library science.



3.8 Glossary

Open Access System: In this system, a user is allowed to go inside the library stack and browse the documents.

Close Access System: In this system, users search for an entry of a document of their interest in the library catalogue, write the description on a slip and hand it over to the Stack Assistant. The Stack Assistant goes inside the stack and searches for the document in the slip and then hands over the document to the corresponding user.

Modular building design: In a modular building design, all the services of the library are independent. No service is affected due to the functionality or non-functionality of other services.


3.9 Exercise

Short answer type question

1. How is the location of a library important for popularising library use?
2. Explain the ideal opening time of the library?
3. List the criteria for furnishing library?
4. List the obligations for satisfying the second law of Library Science?
5. What are the obligations of the library authority for providing quality services?
6. How can the third law of library science be satisfied?
7. What is the role of the extension services in popularising library services?
8. How will you publicise library services?
9. List the library services that save the time of users?
10. What do you mean by a Guide? How is it useful for saving users' time?
11. Which circulation method is the best for saving time of the users? Explain
12. Discuss various types of growth in a library.
13. What are the essential qualities of a library building in terms of the fifth law of Library Science?

Long answer type question

1. Discuss the various issues involved in satisfying the first law of Library Science?

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2. Explain the various obligations in the context of the second law of Library Science?
 3. Explain the importance of the Open Access System in terms of the third law of Library Science?
 4. How can a librarian save the time of library users? Explain
 5. Discuss the various issues that establish the library as a growing organism?