

## FIVE LAWS OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

Lesson No.	Title of the Lesson	Skills	Activity
4	Five Laws of Library Science	Application of guiding principles of Library Science in library activities, Embedding library systems and services into existing workflow, Effective use of library resources and library services, Problem Solving and Decision Making	Developing physical and technical infrastructure of the library, Knowing the library user community and their needs, Increasing access to library resources

### Summary

The **Five Laws of Library Science** is a theory proposed by S. R. Ranganathan in 1931, detailing the principles of operating a library system. These are guides to good practice in librarianship. Many librarians worldwide accept them as the foundations of their philosophy. These laws were first published in Ranganathan's classic book entitled Five Laws of Library Science in 1931. These laws are:

1. Books Are For Use
2. Every Reader His/Her Book
3. Every Book Its Reader
4. Save The Time Of The Reader
5. The Library Is A Growing Organism

These laws of Library Science are the "fundamental laws" of Library Science. These are applicable to any problem in the areas of library science, library service, and library practice. Prior to their enunciation, the subject of Library Science had no philosophy. These laws gave a philosophical base, guaranteeing an everlasting future to the subject of library science, the profession of librarianship, and the use of libraries. Five laws have provided a scientific approach to the subject of library science. Even though S.R. Ranganathan proposed the Five Laws of Library Science before the advent of the digital age, they are still valid and equally relevant today.

## Principal Points

- The Five Laws of Library Science are the most influential concept in the field of library science. They are fundamental and discuss the basic philosophy of library science. They concisely represent the ideal services and organizational philosophy of all types of libraries, even today.
- The First law constitutes the basis for library services. Ranganathan observed that books were often chained to prevent their removal and that the emphasis was on storage and preservation rather than use. He did not reject the notion that preservation and storage were important, but he asserted that the purpose of such activities was to promote the use of the materials. There is little value in an item, if it is not used.
- The Second Law suggests that every member of the community should be able to obtain material needed. Ranganathan felt that all individuals from all social environments were entitled to library service, and that the basis of library use was education, to which all were entitled.
- This principle of the Third Law is closely related to the second law but it focuses on the item itself, suggesting that each item in a library has an individual or individuals who would find that item useful. Ranganathan argued that the library could devise many methods to ensure that each item found its appropriate reader.
- The Fourth Law advocates that part of the excellence of library service, is its ability to meet the needs of the library user promptly and efficiently. To this end, Ranganathan recommended the use of appropriate business methods to improve library management.
- The Fifth Law focused more on the need for internal change than on changes in the environment itself. He argued that library organizations must accommodate growth in staff, the physical collection, and patron use.
- Modern version of these five laws has been discussed, reused, and reworded in various contexts by different authors, which includes James R Retting, Kuronen and Pekkarinen, Michael Gorman, Wait Crawford, etc.
- Modern libraries which are automated and networked, aim to fulfill all the Five Laws of Library Science.

## **Build your Understanding**

In Ranganathan's words, "A developing organization absorbs new material, abandons old material, changes its shape and takes on a new appearance and form.

There is two types of library development:

(i) Child Growing

(ii) Adult growth

All the libraries are in their early stage of child development and after some understanding, they reach the adult development stage. But the National Library always remains in the stage of child development.

Libraries have held the past in high regard, and that remains important. However, the Fifth Law of Library Science, "the library is a growing organism," requires that a library must continually change, update its collection, methods of access, and now its virtual presence.

## **What's Important to Know ?**

1. These Five Laws have provided a scientific approach to library science. They constitute the philosophical basis for work and services of all types of libraries.
2. The Laws provide guidance in the practice of Library and Information Science.
3. Since the publication of these Laws in 1931, a number of variants have been suggested in the last five decades, but "The Original Five" are still applicable to libraries and their activities.
4. In view of the importance of these laws, various Library Scientists have recommended the application of these laws to the Web and Media respectively.

## Did You Know ?

1. One of the notable aspects about Ranganathan's Five Laws is the depth of meaning in so few words. Below is his description of each Law stated by him in very simple words:
  - a. First Law – Books are for use. “I will build a collections not for vanity but for use.”
  - b. Second Law- Every Book its Reader. “I will add useful items to the collection and make them accessible to all.”
  - c. Third Law- Every reader his Book. “I will be the connection between users of the library and the materials they need.”
  - d. Fourth Law- Save the time of the reader. “I will always bear in mind that time of the library users is precious.”
  - e. Fifth Law- Library is a growing organism. “I will remember that libraries grow and develop and will plan accordingly.”
2. Another statement by Ranganathan still holds good –“I will give library users what they want-balance between the old and the new.”
3. Ranganathan referred to the Fifth Law as his final law detailing “the vital principle of the library”. He referred to the library as an instrument of universal education that assembles and freely distributes all the tools of education and disseminates knowledge with its aids.
4. The Five Laws of the Web are inspired by the "Five Laws of Library Science" which were the seed of all of Ranganathan's practice. These laws form the foundation for the Web by defining its minimum requirements.

### Evaluate Yourself

1. What are called the set of guides to good practice in library science?
2. In which year the book 'Five Laws of Library Science' was published ?
3. State the Fourth Law of Library Science.
4. Which Law focused on the need for internal changes in the library environment ?
5. Who suggested two supplementary (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) Laws to Ranganathan's Five Laws ?

### Extend your Horizon

S R Ranganathan proposed the Five Laws of Library Science before the advent of the digital age. Search for the variants of Five Laws of Library Science in library literature.