S.R.Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science with Users Studies: An over View

Mahadevaprasad N
Librarian, SBRR Mahajana Law College, Jayalakshmipuram, Mysuru

Abstract:

S. R. Ranganathan, regarded as the father of Library and Information Science in India, propounded the Five Laws of Library Science in 1931, which continue to serve as the fundamental principles of modern librarianship. The Five Laws—Books are for use; Every reader his or her book; Every book its reader; Save the time of the reader; and The library is a growing organism—provide a philosophical and practical framework for the organization and delivery of library services. This paper presents an overview of these laws in the context of user studies, highlighting their relevance in understanding user behavior, information needs, and service optimization in contemporary libraries. The study examines how user-centered approaches in libraries reflect Ranganathan's vision and discusses the applicability of his principles in the digital information environment. It further explores how user studies contribute to improving access, resource management, and service efficiency, thereby reaffirming the enduring significance of Ranganathan's laws in the 21st century knowledge society.

Introduction

Ranganathan''s philosophy on user studies has a great contribution for the sustainability and development of libraries. Ranganathan''s philosophy is a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for user's behaviour. Ranganathan''s philosophy is study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence of libraries, especially when considered as an academic discipline.

Today we are living in an information communication technology driven environment and libraries are affected by the changes in the internal and external environments. Their operation, organization, services, and networks must

be fine-tuned to meet the rising needs of the users. For this, he gave the five laws as guiding principles for the overall development of the library and librarianship and to improve the quality of library services for the betterment and satisfaction of the users.

The libraries always have purpose, mission, and objectives for their existence. For this user studies are conducted by individuals and institutions in order to achieve the mission and to justify our existence. Ranganathan''s Laws may be treated as guiding principles to fulfil the objectives of the libraries. Ranganathan''s five 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. A library is a growing organism.

Ranganathan's Philosophy

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan's five laws are still relevant in digital communication technology and ICT enabled scenario. These laws are helpful to librarians and the work done for the development of the libraries and welfare of the society. Ranganathan expressed that "a library is a collection of books kept for use. Librarianship, then, is connecting a user and a book. Hence the very life of a library is in the personal service given to the people." (Ranganathan: The Five Laws of Library Science: 75). Here, user satisfaction is an ultimate objective of whole librarianship. Today we are living

in the age of technology. Technology means, application of knowledge to make human life easy and comfortable or knowledge dealing with scientific methods and their use in industries, organizations, processes and such other activities. Talking Drums of Africa, Radio, Telegraphy, Telephony, printing and photography, Television, Digitization etc. are some results of the technology specially deals with production and transmission of information. In common sense, we call them Information Technology. It is the IT, which provides a nerves system to the global village society living on the earth.

Libraries in the modern era are treated as gateway to the information. The open information culture has shifted focus from subject experts and limited modes, which suits the needs of the users. There is a need to provide users based or user centric service to the users to satisfy their requirements. The face of the information services is changing due to the application of the information technology in the library.

Dr.Ranganathan's philosophy is relevant and accepted as a way to overcome the libraries users'' related problems. The answer comes in the application of his five Laws of Library Science.

During his eighty-year lifespan, he devoted his life to the grounds of development of library science in India. Dr. Ranganathan vocalized various laws,

principles, canons, theories, etc., in LIS. His theories are based on scientific principles. We can say that his ideas are like a lighthouse for libraries, and users. His ideas are still exciting and, even today when computers and other developments in the field of telecommunication have changed the whole scenario of LIS. (AK Sharma) Libraries and Information Centers are facing the problem of underused information resources as well as the challenges of implementing Information Communication Technology and these problems can also be solved by the Ranganathan‟s philosophy. It was natural for Ranganathan who was a lively teacher and had thrilling intellectual experiences with students and faculties of the Presidency College not to opt for the post of librarian, even though it carried a handsome salary. Ranganathan quite often narrated to us that he never wished to be a librarian. He said that chance had made him one, for which he never regretted in his later life (Kent, 1978). In spite of his diffidence and lack of interest, he took charge as the Librarian of the Madras University on 4th January, 1924. He kept on working on Colon Classification and proved that the design and development a scheme for classification is a life time activity. Until the end of his life to the very last day, Ranganathan kept on working. His life was a symbol of immortality. The integral nature of Ranganathan's theory emerged from occasional intuition; and his intellect strove to make it more explicit to the rational mind of the scientific worker. His contributions sometimes bordered on a poetic beauty and sometimes on uncouth prose - but his life and work in the field of library science modelled an ever-inquiring mind, well entrenched in the philosophy of Bhagavad Gita.

The Five Laws

The five laws of library science are playing very vital role in user education based on information communication technology scenario. In other words we can say that these laws can build great satisfaction among user's studies. The core meaning of "books are for use" is still about access; however, our interpretation focuses on developing the physical and technical infrastructure needed to deliver materials our interpretation of "every book its reader" focuses on increasing the discoverability, access and use of resources within users‟ existing workflows. It can be agree that "a library is a growing organism" and propose growing users' share of attention First of all, like any philosophy, it is important to realize that merely stating the five laws or even understanding the words will not automatically lead to enlightenment about the function of libraries.

Prof R. N. Satyanarayana says that "Dr. S R Ranganathan has, in the simplest possible terms, enunciated the total philosophy of library science in the form of his five laws of library science....these principles when applied in practice indicate the best result of their adoption

come out when library users are informed or taught the library skills in exploiting the resources and services to their maximum advantage."

1. First Law – 'Books are for use'

It is imperative to ensure library users, use the materials mean to say that we select and purchase for them. Libraries are not just about storing books, they are about people having access to books. For proper uses of information there should be proper storage and dissemination of information.

2. Second Law – 'Every reader his/her book'

This is user oriented law. Every user has the right to access the information (Right to Information Act, 2005). In other word we can say that our duty is to help users find the information they require and ensure any blocks in the way are not blocks we have created. This law guides the library or information professionals to take care of information users, so that they can access information without any obstacle. Here is a necessity of User Survey, User Study and User Education. User Orientation may help in acquiring the need and satisfying the purpose.

3. Third Law – 'every book its reader'

Third Law is information oriented. We can interpret reader development as being part of the third law. In modern situation information professionals have to accept the information technology to organize and manage the information. Except in rural area, most of the university and institutions libraries in India are automated. Few of them have taken initiatives in digitizing the collections. Now e-books and e-journals have taken place into the libraries instead of the print collections.

4. Forth Law – 'Save the time of the Reader'

Under this Law Libraries must have the objective of saving the time of the user. This law highlighted on, how fast information can be delivered to its end users. ICT has helped user in getting their required information into their laptop, palmtop, and desktops. Today"s the concept "library without wall" has come into the picture. Through broadband connection information professionals serve the information to its clients with in a fraction of second.

5. Fifth Law – 'Library is a Growing Organism'

Fifth law states that libraries will continue to grow in the future. Keeping in view the information available and growth in the area, it is impossible for the single library to acquire all the information of a subject. There is space problem, staff problem and most importantly the fund problem every library has. The fifth law's implication for latest technologies are adapting by the libraries to the future needs of user, including mobilizing resources, dealing with uncertainty about future user needs, new services, new customer groups, new environment, etc.

Five Laws vs. User Study

The relevance of Ranganathan's five Laws of Library Science in Libraries with user in the following manner:

Books are for use; (Maximize the use of books/ information)

1. Every reader his/her book (User is prime factor and his/her need must be satisfied)
2. Every book its reader; (Find a user for every book)
3. Save the time of the reader; (Organize information in a way that the user finds the wanted information promptly)
4. A library is a growing organism; (Emphasis is on comprehensive and evolutionary growth regarding collection and users

Ranganathan (1953) in his five laws of library science have focused on uniting the users with their resource with the purpose to maximize the use and serving them to their utmost satisfaction.

User Studies and Library Services

The user studies are basically carried out to improve the quality of library services. To improve user oriented services our libraries need to institutionalize library performance evaluation by user approach. This should be done annually in order to have a feed-back from the users on how well the library is meeting their information needs. Once measured, the processed result should be published in the institute's journal or library bulletin without any bias. Apart from winning support for the library, the exercise would sensitize the library staff to put in their best towards meeting user needs.

S R Ranganathan: Combining Library services to Indian values

SR Ranganathan always preferred to support his statements with old Indian wise sayings. These wise sayings were taken from various Indian sacred books. "During eighty years of his life span Dr. S.R. Ranganathan made a great contribution in the field of library and information science. He enunciated new laws, theories, canons, principles that paved a path to established library and information science as a subject. His theories, principles, laws, canons etc, are based on scientific principles; therefore, they are accepted universally and are relevant even today. It can be stated that his ideas are like a lighthouse for librarians, teachers and students in the field of library and information science."(A K Sharma)

Ranganathan was very much influenced by Indian traditions. He pointed out these at various places. He quoted a stanza from Taittiriya-Upanishad. "The Taittiriya-upanishad contains the following passage, embodying exhortation at the convocation. On the eve of a batch of students entering life.

अतिथि देवो भव (Atithi devo bhava) the guest is your God

श्रद्धया देय (Shraddhaa de) Serve him, with all attention

थश्रया देय (Thashrayaa de) Serve him, to your utmost capacity

ह्रिया देयं (Hriyaa deyam) Serve him with all modesty without any touch of ego or prestige

भभया देय (Bhayaa de) Serve him with a sense of fear, lest anything should go wrong

संववदा देयं (Samvada deyam) Serve him with a full knowledge of his needs.

We cannot find a clearer or fuller statement of the way in which documentation service should be given to a reader." (Ranganathan, Documentation: 1973:99). User is the priority; user satisfaction is the motto of whole librarianship. SR Ranganathan motivated professionals to serve the reader with all efforts and without ego.

Conclusion

In the perspective of Ranaganathan"s philosophy we can say that above more valuable laws are very significant since the inception and they have relevancy with the users of modern era also besides the advent of various information communication technologies time to time. The first three of these laws centre on the singular relationship between a book and a reader. They are philosophical concerning the nature of people and things (books). The fifth is about the organic nature of library growth; it addresses change. Ranganathan recognizes that library growth, like growth in nature, may be episodic or periodic. In his chapter discussing the fifth law, it is clear that Ranganathan wants to treat the library as a unity. In simplest terms, Ranganathan is suggesting that a library is more than the sum of its parts. Today"s library users are raising expectations, diverse needs and wants, and choices. The notion of services has also changed, from basic to value added, from staff assisted to self-service, from in- house to outreach, from free to priced, from reactive to pro-active and from mass customization to individualized service. As in such an environment librarians are finding new ways of serving users effectively and efficiently. The Laws and theories provoked by Dr. Ranganathan can be considered as „benchmark" for User Studies.

References

- Bhatt, R. K. (2011). Relevance of Ranganathan's laws of library science in library marketing. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2011.

- Cole, M., Gwizdka, J., et al. (2011). Eye tracking in information behavior research. Retrieved January 16, 2015,

- Das, S., & Patra, S. (2008). Ranganathan's five laws in the light of ICT. In *Proceedings of International CALIBER 2008*.

- Garfield, E. (1984). Essays of an information scientist. *Current Contents, 7*(6), 37–44.

- Gupta, O. P. (1992). *Development of university libraries in India after independence*. Concept Publishing Company.