



Contribution of S. R. Ranganathan in the field of Library & Information Science

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Introduction:

S. R. Ranganathan (Siyali Ramamrita Ranganathan) born on 09 August 1892 – 27 September 1972, was a mathematician and librarian from India. His birth date is also written 12 August 1892 but he himself wrote his birth date 09 August 1892 in his book "five laws of library science". His most notable contributions to the field were his five laws of library science and the development of the first major faceted classification system, the colon classification. He is considered to be the father of library science, documentation, and information science in India and is widely known throughout the rest of the world for his fundamental thinking in the field. His birthday is observed every year as the National Librarian's Day in India. He was a university librarian and professor of library science at Banaras Hindu University (1945–47) and professor of library science at the University of Delhi (1947–55). He was president of the Indian Library Association from 1944 to 1953. In 1957 he was elected an honorary member of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) and was made a vice-president for life of the Library Association of Great Britain.

Contribution of S.R. Ranganathan:

In 1923, the University of Madras created the position of university librarian and had invited applications for the post. Ranganathan was persuaded by some of his colleagues to apply for the position as it carried much higher emoluments than that of an assistant professor. Ranganathan was selected for the position from among the many applicants and joined as University Librarian in January 1924. One of the conditions of appointment was that the selected candidate should go to England for training in librarianship and library work. His initial reaction to this change — from being a teacher of mathematics, a subject he loved, to becoming a librarian, which in those days was more in the nature of a storekeeper — was one of frustration. However, owing to persuasion by his friends he stayed on in that position till he was sent to London to study modern practices in library management.

Colon Classification

Ranganathan's chief technical contributions to library science were in classification and indexing theory. His Colon Classification (1933) introduced a system that is widely used in research libraries around the world and that has affected the



evolution of such older systems as the Dewey Decimal Classification. Later he devised the technique of chain indexing for deriving subject-index entries. Colon Classification is the system of library organization developed by Ranganathan in 1933. It is general rather than specific in nature, and it can create complex or new categories through the use of facets, or colons. In it, there are 108 main classes and 10 generalized classes (broadly divided between the humanities and sciences), which are represented by a mixed notation of Arabic numerals and Roman and Greek letters. Each main class comprises five fundamental facets, or groups: personality, matter, energy, Space, time.

Ranganathan's main contribution to classification was the notion of these fundamental facets, or categories. Instead of schedules of numbers for each topic, Colon Classification uses series of short tables from which component numbers are chosen and linked by colons to form a whole. The book number is an integral part of the call number, a departure from Dewey or Library of Congress systems.

Each main class has its appropriate facets and focuses; e.g., literature has language and form. In addition, there are four floating tables that correspond to subdivisions -- e.g., form, geography, time, and language. Further expansion of the tables is allowed through colon addition or omission (if the subject cannot be expanded). The collection of the University of Madras, India, was utilized in the creation of Colon Classification.

Five Laws of Library Science

Ranganathan formulated Five Laws of Library Science in 1928 and was first published in the book *The Five Laws of Library Science* in 1931. These are widely accepted as a definitive statement of the ideal of library service. These laws are:

First Law: Books are for use.

Second Law: Every reader his/her book.

Third Law: Every book its reader.

Fourth Law: Save the time of the reader.

Fifth Law: A library is a growing organism.

Over his lifetime, he wrote over 2000 research papers, 60 books and founded and edited five periodical publications. He also drafted plans for a national and several state library systems, founded and edited several journals, and was active in numerous professional associations. In 1965 he was honoured by the Indian Government with the title of National Research Professor in Library Science.

Ranganathan was one of the founders of the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDOC) established in 1952 under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) with support from UNESCO to provide information support services for R&D activities. He was also chair of its first Scientific Advisory Committee. INSDOC was merged with NISCOM (National Institute of Science Communication), also a unit of CSIR, in 2002 to form NISCAIR (National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources). In 1962 after returning from



Zurich, Ranganathan founded the Documentation Research & Training Centre (DRTC) as a unit of the Indian Statistical Institute.

Honours and awards

Ranganathan was recipient of many honours and awards. Some noteworthy awards are:

- Rao Saheb (in 1935 from the Government of India under British rule)
- doctorate honoris causa (University of Delhi, 1948)
- honorary fellow, Virginia Bibliographic Society, 1951
- honorary member, Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres, 1956
- padmashri (from the Government of India in 1957)
- honorary vice-president, Library Association (London), 1957
- honorary fellow, International Federation for Documentation, 1957
- honorary DLitt (University of Pittsburg, 1964)
- honorary fellow, Indian Standards Institution, 1967
- national research professor (Government of India, 1965)
- Margaret Mann citation (American Library Association, 1970; the very first time the citation was presented to a person from outside USA)
- grand knight of peace, Mark Twain Society, U.S.A., 1971

Upon the 1992 centenary of his birth, several biographical volumes and collections of essays on Ranganathan's influence were published in his honour. Ranganathan's autobiography, published serially during his life, is titled *A Librarian Looks Back*. Future generations of librarians may well look upon Ranganathan as a Colossus bestriding the pre- and postautomation eras in librarianship.

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