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# FIVE LAWS OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Dr. Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan (1892-1972) was an inventor, educator, philosopher, mathematician and a universal librarian. He made several significant contributions to the library profession. A fundamental contribution made by him, is the *Five Laws of Library Science*.

He formulated the *Five Laws of Library Science* in 1928 and published these in his famous book entitled, “Five Laws of Library Science” in 1931. He owes the First Law to Prof. Edward N. Ross, his mathematics teacher, and the other laws were enunciated by Ranganathan himself. In this lesson, we will discuss the basic philosophy of these laws and their implementation in library operations and activities.



## 4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- state the Five Laws of Library Science as given by S.R. Ranganathan;
- list the implications of each Law of Library Science in various library activities;
- describe how the guiding principles of library science apply to various library activities;
- illustrate the modern versions of the Five Laws by various experts;
- describe the relevance of the Five Laws in view of modern technologies; and
- explain the importance of the Five Laws for users and use of documents.



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### 4.3 FIVE LAWS OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

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. These laws provide scientific basis and general principles which serve as guidelines to librarians in organizing and managing information products and services. The Five Laws given by Ranganathan are:

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

These laws convey the fundamental philosophy of library science and convey a deep understanding of libraries. The basic tenet of these laws is to unite users with their desired information.

### 4.4 IMPLICATIONS OF FIVE LAWS OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

Let us now discuss in detail these five laws and their implications in library science.

#### 4.4.1 Books are for use (First Law)

The First Law of Library Science is simple and states a self evident truth. In ancient and medieval periods, the use of books was limited and the emphasis was on storage and preservation rather than on use. The libraries were regarded as institutions for preserving the books. With the onset of post-industrial society, the concept of modern library came into being. The library is now regarded as a service institution to serve the social information needs of its users. Ranganathan 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 books. By emphasizing on the use of books, he focused attention on access-related issues such as location, building, library hours, book selection, library staff, etc. Ranganathan suggests following methods for maximizing the use of books.

**Notes*****Implications of the First Law******(a) Library Location***

A Library must be located in the midst of its users. If it is a public library, it should be located in the heart of the city. If it is an academic library, it would be wise to locate it centrally to enable accessibility to all the students. The surroundings must be free from noise and other disturbances which impede the use of library resources.

***(b) Library Hours***

The timings of the library depend upon the community it serves. The Law implies that the library be kept open for as long as it is possible. Opening and closing hours of the library should be adjusted to ensure maximum utilization of library resources.

***(c) Library Furniture***

Library furniture should be comfortable, functional and easy to use. The stack rooms should be made vermin proof, theft proof and air proof. The Law states that best reading facilities should be provided, like sufficient lights, fans and sound proof floor. It may vary from library to library, depending upon the nature of clientele to be served, like children or adults. This law enforces that the height of the book racks should be short enough, so that books in the topmost shelf can easily be picked by a person of normal height standing on the floor. Tables and chairs should be comfortable to the user.

***(d) Book Selection***

Book selection should meet the needs of the present and potential users. The selection should also consider physical appearance of the books and ease of handling. The books should be kept clean and in good condition. Worn out and obsolete books should be weeded out from the library collection from time to time.

***(e) Library staff***

The Law states that to disseminate knowledge and to put the books to maximum use, the libraries must have highly qualified and professionally trained staff. The First Law has the most vital effect on the library staff. Assisting the users to find and use library resources is the responsibility of the library staff, as most of the users do not know how to use the resources. To know the needs of the users, and teaching them use of library resources, is an essential task of library

staff. In order to put library material to maximum use, qualified staff in proper numbers with suitable status and emoluments is required. The staff should cultivate service attitude towards readers.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

1. Choose the correct answer.

Who formulated Five Laws of Library Science?

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) Edward B. Ross | (b) S. R. Ranganathan   |
| (c) V.C. Vickery   | (d) W.C. Berwick Sayers |

2. Write a brief note on the implications of First Law on book selection.

#### 4.4.2 Every Reader his Book (Second Law)

According to Ranganathan, if the First Law replaced the concept that, “books are for preservation”, the Second Law widens the concept that “books for the chosen few.” If the approach of the First Law is from ‘books’ point of view, the approach of the Second Law is from ‘users’ point of view. It emphasizes the availability of library services to every kind of reader, irrespective of age, sex, vocation, the capacity for self help and the ability to read.

#### *Implications of the Second Law*

It imposes a number of obligations on:

- The State,
- The Library Authority,
- The library staff, and
- The readers

#### *(a) Obligation of the State*

Establishment and maintenance of library systems and their development along proper lines is a State’s responsibility. To meet this responsibility, the State has certain obligations. The first and the foremost is the library legislation. Through library legislation, the State can create the public library system in different areas by its policies and decisions, which makes adequate provisions regarding library cess, percentage of the cess to be collected from the people and grants to be given by the Government for library system. Legislation leads to cooperation



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between libraries in a State and integrates them with State Central Library at the apex. This type of coordination strengthens their resources through inter-library loan, which enhances the efficiency and standard of service for the readers.

It also recommends making a provision for

- Union Library Act
- National Central Library Law
- Finance

The Law desires an integrated library grid (horizontal and vertical levels) of public library system.

*(b) Obligation of Library Authority*

The choice of the books and choice of the staff are the two necessary obligations of library authority.

*(i) Choice of Books*

Selection of books is determined by the demands of the users. Demand refers to the selection of reading material for a given library. It is the duty of the library authority to make necessary provisions to build up collection for the community to be served. A comprehensive user survey of different groups of people can be done in this respect. This will help to build up collection according to the tastes and interest of the readers.

*(ii) Choice of Staff*

Careful selection of books is not an ultimate aim of the library. To exploit these resources, competent library staff is needed. Only competent staff can satisfy the user's requirements and be able to locate books and other materials that they want. To implement the Second Law, the library authorities should make all possible efforts to recruit well qualified library staff at the stage of planning.

*(c) Obligation of the Library Staff*

The objectives of Second Law cannot be achieved unless the library staff discharge their obligations in an efficient manner. To perform their duties, the library staff has to adopt certain attitudes and practices to realize the word "His". Providing reading material is not the only duty of the library staff. The staff must ensure that readers get the material of their interest before leaving the



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library. Besides this, the staff should try to know the readers, possess adequate knowledge of books and other collection of the library, to provide reference service and help readers in all possible ways. The Second Law puts another obligation on the library staff, i.e., to provide bibliographical, indexing, abstracting and other services to the users as per their requirements.

Catalogue is another facility that Second Law demands. Majority of documents are of composite nature in their treatment of subject and do not disclose fully all the contents. The catalogue is such a tool which reveals the hidden contents of such documents by cross reference entries and subject analytical entries. Otherwise, reader may not get this material in spite of best efforts. This requires that, the library catalogue should be fully analytical having necessary cross reference entries for the subjects covered in the documents.

Besides, other implications, the open access system will satisfy the expectations of this law, which enables the reader to decide what he should read. In open access system, books are kept on the shelves and are easily accessible to the reader. If a reader is not satisfied with a particular book, she/he can choose another suitable book. Thus, it will increase the chances for every reader to get the book of his/her choice.

*(d) Obligation of the Reader*

The Second Law imposes certain obligations on the reader towards library. It is the duty of the reader to follow the rules and regulations of the library in order to use and utilize library resources in an effective and efficient manner.

Thus, by fulfilling above listed four obligations, it becomes possible to provide every reader his book. The Second Law recommends that all the libraries of a country/region cooperate with each other and work as a single system. The entire documentary resources of a country should be regarded as a single pool of knowledge. Every book lying idle on the shelf of any library should be made available to readers.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2**

1. Choose the correct alternative.

The Second Law emphasizes on \_\_\_\_\_ of library services to every kind of reader.

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| (a) liberalization | (b) democratization |
| (c) socialization  | (d) polarization    |



2. Write a short note on the implications of Second Law of Library Science in about 150-200 words.

#### 4.4.3 Every Book its Reader (Third Law)

The Third Law stresses the maximum use of books by their readers. It urges that an appropriate reader should be found for every book. It is closely related to the Second Law, but it focuses on the book itself suggesting that each book in a library has an individual or a number of readers who would find that book useful. It is the duty of the library staff to bring the readers in contact with books. The Law advocates an open access system, classified shelf arrangement, subject analytical entries, provision of reference services, publicity methods, extension services and book selection policy.

##### *Implications of the Third Law*

##### *(a) Open Access*

In an open access system, the reader is allowed to select books/items on the shelves on his/her own. It increases the use of the books. Open access, thus helps in achieving the Third Law.

##### *(b) Shelf Arrangement*

The Law emphasizes the need to arrange the books on shelves in classified sequence based on their thought content. This arrangement brings books on the same subject together for easy browsing. If the shelf area is provided with well devised guides and labels, the use of each item increases.

##### *(c) Easy Access*

Another important factor helping every book to get its reader is that the books may be placed within the easy reach of the readers. The Third Law emphasizes that the height of the racks should not be more than the average height of the reader, i.e., the topmost shelf of a book rack should be within easy reach of a person of average height. The shelf should not have more breadth than required.

##### *(d) Catalogue*

The Third Law also advocates that the library catalogue should play an important role to provide every book to its reader. Subject analytical entries help in finding readers for a suitable book. There are series entries and subject cross reference entries. The series entries provide information about the whole set of books to the reader. In alphabetical part of the catalogue, all the entries having



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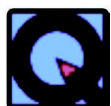
the same series as the heading are brought together. In the classified part of the catalogue, subject cross reference entries help to find a specific reader for the documents having a subject as the heading. It also indicates that the book is placed under different subjects.

*(e) Publicity*

Publicity through annual reports, library bulletins and magazines, printed catalogues, subject book lists, list of latest additions, etc. is a powerful technique to attract the attention of readers to find every book its reader.

*(f) Display of Books*

The newly added books to the library should be displayed as it enhances the chance of every book to find its reader.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.3**

1. What are the implications of Third Law of Library Science on “Open Access”? Write a short note.
2. Why do we need classified arrangement of books to find every book its reader? Give your answer in not more than fifty words.

**4.4.4 Save the Time of the Reader (Fourth Law)**

This Law requires that there should be no time lag between the demand received from the user and the document supplied. This Law makes its approach from the point of view of the user. It almost completely centres on the user from the moments he/she enters the library to the moments he/she leaves it. The objective of this Law is to save the time of the reader. To provide better services, it is required that, latest technologies in library operations be adopted and users be trained to use them independently.

**Implications of the Fourth Law***(a) Classified arrangement*

The classified arrangement of books in the stack room saves the time of the reader, as it is easy for a reader to find all books on the same subject arranged at one place for browsing. The arrangement of entries in the catalogue cabinet in classified manner, aids the reader to select the books easily from the respective shelves. The Fourth Law, therefore, calls for classified arrangement of books in the stack room.





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*(b) Catalogue Entry*

In case of composite books, classified arrangement is sufficient to save objective time of the reader. The various facets of composite books can be brought to the notice of the reader by making cross references and subject analytical entries. Therefore, the Fourth Law calls for (i) classified arrangement of cards in the catalogue cabinet, and (ii) analytical entries for composite books. In order to save the valuable time of the reader, the Fourth Law also recommends a bipartite classified catalogue for this purpose, because readers have diverse approaches to find books, i.e., author, title, collaborator or series approach. In the classified part, the entries are arranged in the filiation sequence, each subject is represented by an ordinal number, i.e., class number. In the alphabetic part, the author, title, collaborator and subject approach is provided.

*(c) Open Access*

The Fourth Law strongly opposes the process of the closed access system. It supports open access system for saving the time of the reader.

*(d) Reference Services*

The Law supports that the library staff should provide adequate personal help to their readers, such help is known as reference service. A reference library staff should have adequate professional knowledge and be active to serve their reader in an efficient and effective manner. The message “save the time of the reader” makes all necessary efforts to meet demands of the reader in least possible time with the help of reference cum guidance services. The reference librarian should be able to answer the queries of readers by providing ready reference service and long range reference service with the help of information tools. Therefore, a reference librarian should be humble, friendly, devoted and with a positive attitude to welcome every visitor to the library.

*(e) Issue Method*

Adopting efficient circulation system is another step towards saving the time of the reader. This enables maximum books being issued and returned in minimum possible time. The system used should provide answer to the following queries:

- What and how many books are lent on a given date?
- How many books have been loaned out to a given person?
- What books are due for return on a given date?

The Fourth Law recommends the two card system that answers all queries and eliminates wastage of objective time.

*(f) Centralized/ Pre-natal Cataloguing*

To save the time of the staff, Ranganathan has advocated pre-natal centralized cataloguing and classification. The law urges the library to evolve a uniform cataloguing code to make way for international cooperative cataloguing. It also supports the centralized documentation work at international level to save time, money and manpower.

*(g) Stack Room Guides*

To save the time of the reader, the library should provide an efficient system of guides in the stack room. The guides, along with placing tags, should enable the readers to find the books easily.

*(h) Library Location*

The Fourth Law also deals with the time taken by the readers to reach the library. It should be so located as to save the time of the readers. But, the location of urban area libraries is not always equally accessible from all parts of city due to geographical constraints. The Law demands setting up of the branch libraries and delivery stations for the same. In rural areas, a branch library can be as useful as in the town. The rural population can also be served by the mobile vans which serve the small libraries and delivery stations. All these libraries should be connected and operated with district central library.

Thus, this Law deals with the different aspects of library policy and administration for reducing the time factor in all the library activities. The devices proposed in the law are the best classification and cataloguing system, open access, shelf arrangement, stack room guides, reference service and central location of the library. The basic objective of all such measures is to save the time of the reader.



#### INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.4

1. Enumerate any three time saving devices according to Fourth Law of Library Science.
2. Where and why do branch libraries prove useful for the users?



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#### 4.4.5 Library is a Growing Organism (Fifth Law)

The Fifth Law states, “library is a growing organism”. It is an accepted idea that a library along with its services is a growing organism. This Law maintains that the library as an institution, has all the attributes of a growing organism, which takes in new matter, casts off old matter, changes in size and takes new shapes and forms like human beings. Since library is trinity of books, readers and staff, it is bound to grow in all three respects. Therefore, library authorities should plan the library building in such a way so as to make it easy to keep pace with the necessary growth in size of collection, number of readers and the members of staff.

According to Ranganathan, the growth of an organism can be of two kinds, growth as of body of the child and growth as the body of an adult. He compared the growth of a storage or repository library and service library to that of child and adult respectively. A child’s growth is characterized by the overall increase in size and weight. Similarly the building of a repository library should be capable of growth to incorporate additional material. On the other hand the building of a service library need not grow beyond a certain size, as is the case with the body of an adult.

#### *Implications of the Fifth Law*

##### *(a) Growth in Size*

As the body of a child grows steadily in size and weight, similarly a newly started library grows steadily in size in terms of reading material. The growth and size of reading material has effects on:

##### *(b) Library Building*

- Stack area
- Circulation area
- Reading room area, etc.

##### *(c) Growth of Readers*

The growth of a library is dependent upon the growth of its readers. The growth of readers affects:

- the size of the reading room
- the issue method
- certain safeguards (in case of open access system)



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*(d) Growth of Staff*

With the growth in size of reading material and the readers, increase in the number of the staff is inevitable. The book selection activity, cataloguing section, binding section, periodical section and the reference section have to grow as the library grows. The Fifth Law advocates that the library authorities make all necessary provisions for growth of library staff in these sections.

The Fifth Law urges the library authorities to provide adequate well qualified and trained staff to serve its readers. It also supports the development and enhancement of the working environment in accordance with the latest tools and techniques in the working area.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.5**

1. How can you compare a library to a growing organism?
2. What are the implications of fifth law of library science on the size of a library?

**4.5 MODERN VERSION OF LAWS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS**

Looking through the library literature, one can see clearly the same Five Laws discussed, reused, or re-worded in different contexts. The American interpretation of Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science as given in 1975, is as follows:

1. Books are for use.  
(Tapes, films, records, relic and books are for use in the information delivery system)
2. Every reader his book.  
(Every Reader his/ her medium)
3. Every book its reader.  
(To every tape, record, etc. its utility)
4. Save the time of the reader.  
(Save the down time of the patron)
5. Library is a growing organism.  
(A learning resources center is a growing organism)

In 1992, James R. Retting devised a Sixth Law as an extension of Ranganathan's Five Laws. The Sixth Law is "Every reader his freedom".

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Jim Thompson (1992) revised Ranganathan's Laws as follows:

1. Books are for profit.
2. Every reader his bill.
3. Every copy its reader.
4. Take the cash from the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism.

Kuronen and Pekkarinen have suggested two supplementary (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>) Laws to Ranganathan's Five Laws:

6. Every reader his library.
7. Every writer his contribution to library.

In 1998, Michael Gorman and Wait Crawford focused on the validity of the Five Laws and suggested five new laws as an extension of the first Five Laws. These are:

1. Libraries serve humanity.
2. Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated.
3. Use technology intelligently to enhance services.
4. Protect free access to knowledge.
5. Honour the past and create the future.

In 2004 Alireza Noruzi applied Ranganathan's Five Laws to the web in his paper "Application of Ranganathan Laws to the web". They are:

1. Web resources are for use.
2. Every user his or her web resources.
3. Every web resource its user.
4. Save the time of the user.
5. The web is a growing organism .

In 2008, Carol Simpson revised these laws and applied them in the field of media They are:

1. Media are for use.
2. Every patron his information.

3. Every medium its user.
4. Save the time of the patron.
5. The library is a growing organism.

#### 4.6 FIVE LAWS AND MODERN LIBRARIES

In automated libraries, OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) fulfills all the laws of library science. Sitting at a computer terminal, a user can search the entire collection of the library and gets to know if the required document is available in the library or not. User can reserve a book, recommend a new title to be purchased and renew a borrowed book. If it is WEBOPAC, the user can access the library collection from anywhere, anytime (24 hours on all days of the week). Here, the library goes to the user instead of the user coming to the library. Library networking has brought the collection of various libraries together in the form of a union catalogue of resources. For example, in DELNET (Developing Library Network), resources of over 4,000 libraries are accessible to its users from its website available at [www.delnet.nic.in](http://www.delnet.nic.in).



#### INTEXT QUESTION 4.6

1. What do you understand by modern version of laws in different contexts?



#### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Ranganathan enunciated the normative principles, known as Five Laws of Library Science for all kinds of library work. These laws serve as a guide to the librarians in policy making, planning, programming at every stage both at micro as well as macro levels to make their library an ideal place for reading. These are universally accepted as fundamental laws for all kinds of libraries.
- 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



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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.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Explain the fourth law of library science and its implications on library activities and operations.
2. “Library is a growing organism” is fifth law of library science. What is its implication on library building and furniture?
3. Explain how modern libraries fulfill the five laws of library science.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****4.1**

1. S. R. Ranganathan Option (b).
2. The first law says that Books are for use. Books can be used only if the library selects appropriate books as per demand and choice of the users.

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The book selection should meet the needs of the present and potential users of library. Worn out and obsolete books should be weeded out from the library collections from time to time. Therefore, a library should select and procure books by taking due consideration of first law of library science “Books are for use”.

**4.2**

1. Democratization (option b)
2. The second law emphasizes on the user and states that books are not only for use but books are also for all. It advocates that every reader has equal right of access to knowledge whatever the age, sex and vocation he/she belongs. Books are not the monopoly of one man or groups or sections of the society. It emphasizes on democratization of library service.

**4.3**

1. Open access system helps in achieving the objectives of third law of library science. In this system, books are arranged on open shelves in classified order and readers have lot of freedom to see books according to their choice, needs and interest.
2. We need classified arrangement of books to find every book its reader because, in this system books on shelves are arranged in classified sequence based on their contents so that related subjects may also appear. It increases the use of library collection by the reader at a time. It is also necessary that the books taken out from the shelves should be again filed back at right place and be available to the readers.

**4.4**

1. Three time saving devices according to fourth law of library science are:  
(1) Open Access (2) Reference Service (3) Stack Room Guide
2. In big cities and metropolis branch libraries can serve users at different parts of the city. Similarly, rural areas can make optional use of branch libraries.

**4.5**

1. A. Library is a growing organism and its size grows because universe of knowledge is ever growing and coming up with new subjects from time to time. Every library grows in size regarding books, periodicals, book racks, physical form of catalogue in the card form and so on.
2. A library building should be planned on a long term basis, keeping in view the present and future requirements of people who use the library.



**Notes****4.6**

1. In the modern version of laws in various contexts, Ranganathan's five laws have been re-interpreted and reused or reworded in various contexts by the authors/philosophers of library science. James R Retting even devised a sixth law of library science "Every reader his freedom" in 1992.

**GLOSSARY**

**Catalogue:** It is a list of documents available in a library, arranged according to scheme of classification or any other sequence.

**Classified Arrangement:** In classified arrangement, books are arranged on shelves subject wise, along with related subject in consecutive row.

**Filiatory Sequence:** Library collection is arranged subject-wise and is placed on shelves for use in the library. Library classification is a system that arranges the documents in filiator sequence. In this context, filiator sequence refers to arrangement of documents in a subject and its subordinate concepts without any interference.

**Objective Time:** Objective time is the time actually spent in the library.

**Open Access System:** In this system a reader is allowed to select books of his/her choice or interest among the books from open shelves.

**Reference Service:** Reference service is provided in anticipation and on demand by the library to its users. In this service, a user is either given an answer to his/her query or is provided with a document.

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITY**

1. Visit any library and observe the building, services, classification and cataloguing scheme of that library and prepare a report with reference to Five Laws of Library Science.

**WEBSITES**

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_laws\\_of\\_library\\_science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_laws_of_library_science)
2. <http://libraryscience4ugcnet.wordpress.com/tag/five-laws-of-library-science/>
3. [http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/llj/LLJ-Archives/Vol-95/pub\\_llj\\_v95n03/2003-28.pdf](http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/llj/LLJ-Archives/Vol-95/pub_llj_v95n03/2003-28.pdf)