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# Five Laws of Library and Information Science Associations and Institutions

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## **Abstract**

Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) is credited with the traditional classification of the five sense organs: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing (**Zamora, 2013**). In the absence of any one of the senses, a human is considered handicapped, not worth to work perfectly. Likewise, there is a need to frame the five laws for an association, institution, organization, society, etc. to carry out its work efficiently and effectively. An attempt has been made in the present paper to devise these laws using logical thinking. These laws can serve the guiding force for all the associations in general and Library & Information Science in particular.

**Keywords-** Library Associations Laws; Library Institutions Laws; Library Science Laws

## **Introduction**

Librarianship is an age old profession as old as human knowledge. However, the library professionals were performing their duties without any laws and guidelines until Ranganathan founded the “Five Laws of Library Science” in 1931 (**Ranganathan, 1931**).

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his [or her] book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the User.
5. The library is a growing organism.

Afterward, these laws became the pivot of librarianship and all the functions and services of libraries revolve around these laws. These laws became the bedrock for the progress and development of the librarianship worldwide. Later, these laws were also modified by some researchers and used various terms for books like documents, information, etc. However, the "*Five new laws of librarianship*" by **Michael Gorman (1995)** gave a finishing touch to the librarianship as a full-fledged and recognized profession. His laws focused on the role of libraries in serving the global society in general and humanity in particular. He has reinterpreted Ranganathan's Laws in the context of today's library and its likely future. The five laws of librarianship of Michael Gorman are:

1. Libraries serve humanity.
2. Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated.
3. Use technology intelligently to enhance service.
4. Protect free access to knowledge; and
5. Honour the past and create the future (Crawford & Gorman, 1995).

These laws polished and brightened the librarianship further. However, these aren't the directive principles for LIS associations, institutions or organizations to determine their objectives and achieve their goals. As such, there is a need to have separate laws for these bodies to accomplish their mission and vision. Therefore, the present paper will try to formulate "Laws of Library and Information Science Associations and Institutions" with the hope that these laws will prove the torchbearers for all associations and institutions in general and Library and Information Science in particular to achieve their mission globally.

### **First Law: Law of Mission**

*"Without a mission statement, you may get to the top of the ladder and then realise it was leaning against the wrong building."* **Dave Ramsey**

The mission statement is the bedrock of any organization. Any association or institution without a clearly defined mission is like a ship in the ocean without a compass. The associations and institutions of name and fame cannot bring any change in the profession until and unless these do not have a defined mission. The

powerful mission statements can be vitally important to the associations in a number of different ways. The association sets the goals in the mission and formulates policies to achieve them. The mission is a guiding principle of the association in the decision-making process, and implementing strategies to achieve professional goals. The associations in the developed world are more likely to have clear management plans that are connected with their missions. A well planned and systematic mission is the soul of an association. The LIS Associations and Institutions must have well drafted, planned and designed mission statements. The mission statement of these associations should be helpful in all decision making processes. It must determine the ways to protect the past, present and future of the profession. Stephen Covey has rightly said, "A mission statement is not something you write overnight, but fundamentally, your mission statement becomes your constitution, the solid expression of your vision and values. It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else in your life." LIS associations aren't only important for the present development but the future growth of a profession as well. These associations must have a well-designed mission with a clear future vision. LIS profession is at crossroads; many new technologies have emerged and fully entered in the libraries to ease the operations and services. We need be to abreast with the new technologies and their application in the libraries to be more relevant and up-to-date. We must adopt all the relevant technologies to be relevant in changing societies. The profession can't sustain the onslaught of the new technologies unless the professionals aren't well-versed with modern technologies. The mission must keep in mind the future vision for sustainable development. The mission of the libraries must revolve around the concept-

*"Libraries, Library Professionals, Library Associations and Library Institutions must be dynamic in changing their strategies in changing technological world to serve changing attitude of users with cutting edge technologies"*

### **Second Law: Law of Action**

*"No action, no change. Limited action, limited change. Lots of action change occurs."*

*Catherine Pulsifer*

The mission is nothing without action. Mission statements are nothing more than mere writings unless followed by actions to achieve and implement them. Action requires financial, emotional, and time investments. LIS professionals must take concrete actions to achieve the goals framed in mission. LIS Institutions & Associations have to identify professional issues and resolve these issues for the betterment of the profession. Regular introspection of the developments can lead to effective time management and timely settlement of these issues. Further, LIS professionals must strengthen their organizational framework to discuss future plans, organize committee activities, promote library studies and surveys, lobby for legislative support, and provide platforms for conferences, seminars, and workshops, for substantial professional development.

### **Third Law: Law of Identity**

*"The best way to find you is to lose yourself in the service of others."*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

Identity means self-image or self-esteem of anything. In the context of librarianship, our profession is our identity. It is basically a self-image or self-esteem of a profession and its associations and institutions. In a broader sense, identity means recognition, approval and acknowledgement of a profession and its associations and institutions in academic and non-academic settings, especially at personal, institutional or departmental level. Personally, everybody is aware of his/her professional competencies, strengths and weaknesses. In institutions or departments, the identity of all professions is determined by various factors like powers, positions, duties, salaries, financial benefits, career advancements schemes, service benefits, etc. When the professionals scan the literature of various committees and reports, *"Library is the heart of an institution"* like phrases and quotations come across while turning their pages. But these phrases and quotations either eat dust in these reports or have become decoration pieces of library walls. Practically, libraries don't attain such attention in institutional setup. While coming to the status of library and information professionals, *Ranganathan Committee* gave the University Librarian a position *"Highest of All"* in the university system but the reality is very far and

inverse. The post lacks dignity and honour in the good books of the administration in comparison to its equal posts. What is the place of libraries in the eyes of administrators? What position and powers the LIS professionals enjoy in the administrative setup? What status, wages and incentives LIS professionals receive in our institutions as compared to their counterparts? The LIS professionals need to self introspect about their identity in their respective institutions or departments.

*Identity* is neither natural nor permanent. It is shaped by actions and activities. LIS professionals shape their identity in their institutions and societies with their duties and services. Dedication and determination of the LIS professionals towards the fulfilment of goals of their respective organizations can change their identity from good to better, and better to the best. It can be gained through the functions and services provided by the professionals and their significance in the all round development of the concerned institutions in particular and global community in general. The hollow slogans like “*Library is the heart of an institution*” can’t rank the librarianship among the top professions unless they prove their existence. The acknowledgement of their contribution must come from their counterparts, institutions, and societies. The institutional administrators, civil servants, governments and the public must feel them as an indispensable part of the system. LIS professionals are fulcrums of academic and research productivity, with potential to expand both the width and depth of creative work that faculty and students undertake in any discipline. Therefore, it is vital for libraries to provide leadership in academic and research productivity and redefine their identities according to changing modes of knowledge creation and dissemination; matched to needs of the academic and research communities they serve (**Association of College & Research Libraries, (2007)**). In the future, people will not care about libraries and books; they will care about services and practices that support teaching, learning and research. Libraries must evolve to become pathways to high-quality information in multiple information sources disseminating right into their machines, classrooms, homes, streets, etc. To achieve the highest form of identity in the institution, LIS professionals must adopt the rule of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam (former President of India).

*“If you salute your duty, you need not salute anybody.  
If you pollute your duty, you have to salute everybody”*

#### **Fourth Law: Law of Recognition**

Recognition means the identification and reputation of a profession at international, national, governmental, political, social, and other such levels. Professional recognition is the formal acknowledgement of an individual's professional status and the right to practice the profession in accordance with professional standards and subject to professional or regulatory controls. First and foremost duty of the LIS associations is to register librarianship as a profession. Librarianship is not recognized as a profession like legal profession in many countries including India. The need is to frame professional ethics and bylaws to register the librarianship in the professional category. LIS profession is an age old profession but the associations have failed to register it as a profession in many countries all over the world including India. There are big library associations of name and fame at international, national and state levels but steps in this direction haven't been taken so far. The professional development in India is almost standstill after the death of Dr. S R Ranganathan (the father of Library Science in India). We need to take steps in this direction at the earliest to be relevant in all times to come. Otherwise, every *Tom, Dick and Harry* enters the profession without any knowledge. A good number of libraries especially the university libraries in India are headed by pure academicians knowing nothing about the profession. These practices should be stopped with one voice in all corners of the world including from India. Further, LIS professionals hardly find any place to directly serve society except in public libraries. However, due to the negligence of the governments, these libraries exist only for the name in developing countries like India. The governments don't take any concrete steps for passing library legislation to support public libraries in many countries and either treat these laws unvalued for the society or want to keep the society in darkness in order to prolong their rule. However, LIS Associations and Institutions must convince the authorities at state, national and international level to enact library legislation for the betterment of the society in general and LIS profession in

particular. LIS professionals' duties and services will have a great impact after recognition. Recognition of a profession is like a highway where professionals will take the profession to the new heights. Without the recognition, the LIS profession is like a tall tree without roots; to make it strong, we must firm its roots deep into the society with legal tools.

### **Fifth Law: Law of Unity**

*"Where there is unity there is always victory" Publilius Syrus*

"Unity is Strength" is the most commonly used proverb in the world. The story "Old man and his sons" is one of the simple and the best moral stories that beautifully teach the power of unity. Unity is the force that sticks the team together, not only increasing the morale of the members of the associations but also helps to achieve individual and collaborative goals as well. However, LIS professionals aren't so concerned about unity in the profession. LIS teachers and professionals need to work in close cooperation for the benefit of all professionals. All the LIS professionals must become members of their professional associations, organizations and societies to make them strong so that their voice will be heard at local, regional and national platforms. These associations also need dynamic leaders from institutions and libraries to address the problems and grievances of professionals from grass root to higher levels. Nonetheless, most professional advancement would be seriously handicapped without unity in such organizations. It has been observed worldwide that the elections of the associations have become dirtier than political elections. Few join the associations for name and fame whereas for their personal gains. The practice should be stopped and the genuine professionals representing the sentiments of all professionals need to be elected. The elected members must work tirelessly for the betterment of the profession and the general body must provide them full support by all means and in all circumstances. The members of the professional associations have to stand up with these organizations in all circumstances, weathers and seasons. LIS associations and institutions should also join hands with other associations for their support in resolving issues and should also request for their support in times of crises.

## Conclusion

LIS Associations and Institutions with a unified voice, agree upon objectives, identify strategies to achieve them and embark on activities to fulfil these targets can only be successful. It is imperative that all the members of an association are on the same page in formulating the mission and taking action to achieve goals.

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