5 Most Influential Articles on Dr. S. R. Ranganathan: A Retrospective Study

"God has chosen me as an instrument, the honour done to me should act as an incentive to the younger generation to devote their lives wholeheartedly to library science and service"
- S. R. Ranganathan

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Abstract

(The article derives a sketch of retrospective information browsing through the 5 most influencial articles on Dr. S R Ranganathan that inspired me to draw a timeline of his works and further to draw a few anecdotes of events then, now and forever of his contributions leading us to times in future.)

Allusion

To begin with my retrospective analysis on Dr. S. R. Ranganathan the "art of browsing" his literature of relevance and pertinent to the occasion was the biggest effort on his 125 years celebrations. More precisely knowing the man and his contributions was like living with Dr. Ranganathan and more so" Living with Libraries". The first lead was his birth centenary celebrations poured in special literatures on him in books, proceedings and journals from many quarters from library associations and library schools dominated by all great admirer who have penned downed their thoughts in the form of articles, comments and talk at various celebrative events as a mark of respect at national and international levels.

On his 125 years celebrations, the stimuli of retro-revision of literature aptly relevant of past, present and future retained me for selection of five articles covering a panoramic view of mellowness after Ranganthan.The first review of the was "Birth-centenary literature on Ranganathan 1991-1994: A review by Satija, M P in Asian Libraries in 1996 leads to progress of achieving what is to be discovered. Furthering my quest deepening into the article made me more fragile in nature understanding the literature on S R Ranganathan from 1991-1994. The review of the output of his death paying tribute to the great genius of all times of Indian librarianship and to the world it was a great loss stilled all

of us, his thoughts pouring out in many forms from Library associations, special issues of the journals, schools and individuals to make it “memorabilia” to signal the end of an era. The era did end but furthered our curiosity of understanding him more and more to feel him from his contributions to the world of Library science moving from here to the future. Conferences queued in to mark the respect to the towering personality from ILA associating with others on “Ranganathan's philosophy and relevance”. Yearlong celebrations on the birth centenary in India as well as other places like Moscow and London were organized including seminar and meeting focusing on him. “Hardly any other library professional received such honor and recognition in the world on his birth centenary”. He observes that sizable amount of literature; some books had only spilled some of the reminiscences of life and career with bagful of facts and tabulated figures of his works with ILA and MLA, which also had with captions thirty photographs with captions.

Other interesting story on the role played as a biographer by Prof.Girija Kumar for a full length biography is a comparative study of Ranganathan with Melvil Dewey and Indian Nobel laureate Sir C V Raman as case studies on intellectual despotism of pioneers to study vital parallels in the lives of three great men. The two parts of the book, “The Man” and the “The Intellect” elaborates life, activities and achievements of the S R Ranganathan in the first part and the man and the social environment he worked In the second part. The brilliancy of the book, a hall mark was peerless and unmatched contributions to the Indian Library Science. Another great admirer of S R Ranganathan is P.S.G Kumar and his book quoted as a readable monograph with shades of opinions, describing Ranganathan as a man, scientist and teacher.

Mohanrajan's works in the form of book consisting of 13 chapters which gives bibliography of 13 books and 127 papers on library science authored by Ranganathan. Satija's doctoral thesis contains only specialized works on Ranganathan and his thoughts, stresses on the research process, communication skills and techniques. Another PhD thesis on him by Sharma R. N, Influence on academic libraries in India, which is good source of Ranganathan influence in the west, classifications and information science, particularly duiring his days in University College in London. Another book from the west by Dudley (1992) often referred as a “quoted publications” which includes lectures by major players of those times like Vickery, Foskett,

Wells Plamer, Coblans and Langridge. The book has again updated with new introduction by the author of this paper to give "Ranganthan's relations with UK professionals with chronological references". The explorations continues, of Trehan, veteran librarian's prose and verses on Ranganathan and his reminiscences of some eminent librarian's of the Punjab. Felicitatory volume on Ranganathan from DLISc, Annamali University had papers on Ranganathan research aspects and General to Specific classification.

Interestingly Venkappaiah and Kumar's 800 terms coined which were used by Ranganathan in some cases meaning with illustrations is a new dictum of a dictionary concept despite its limitations and is a useful source of Information. Journals from national and international devoted to Rangantahan works in classifications and influences in others countries like Russia and China. International Library Review –Libri special issue, Prof. Neelmeghan as its editor had papers on methods on classification design, facet analysis, designing subject indexing languages, classificatory principle of designing databases, user's friendliness in library works and services, International contributions, Five laws as guidance in assessing information technology in library services. SERLES Journal archives, achievements, methods of teaching, applications of scientific methods to librarianship of Ranganthan are enumatred. Another Journal of INDSDOC Annals of Library science and documentation brought a special issue in 1992.In the race were, Journal of Library and Information Science, DESIDOC Bulletin (Released in IFLA Conference in New Delhi), IASLIC Bulletin, College Librarian and Herald Of Library Science, Asian Libraries,Bahvan's Journal, Timeless fellowship , Third world Libraries etc,.

Ingenuity :

This article, "Creativity in the thought of Dr. S R Ranganathan" by Prof. Girijakumar is surely an "ultimate manuscript" of knowing Dr Ranganthan which gives impulses of knowing his intellectual insights at broader social perspectives, as the author was closely associated with him for long time. The impact article was a clinch of point of views of his religious, mystic's approaches making it clear while endorsing his views as religion was individual and library scientist in him was a personality of different order. His was an intellectual who observed much from west and united all in scientific approach of librarianship. The article beautifully sketches that Ranganathan was

identical of legendaries like Dewey, Cutter and Bliss of his times more specifically classifications. His cultural roots have more influences in his thoughts which were more exhibited in many of the occasions as his mythology and spirits has engrossed in his contributions to the spirit of library. The reference of Shankara and Ramujanacharya, talking of God in terms of attaining knowledge through which enlightenment is achieved, but for Ranganathan it was Library as an instrument of enlightenment. The concept of "Vital Principles of Library Science" related more of human resource development as spirit of Library Science. He also often referred about inner man in a broader sense the world being one family – "Vasudtaiva kutambkam" . His "Ekavakyata principles" the whole is greater than its part what it implies that intuition, holism and intellection have been employed by him. Here the article tries to capitulate and precisely quoted on Ranganathan as:

-Pope of Library classifications;

-A pragmatist at the bottom of the heart;

-He feels like a soaring bird high in the sky singing the spirit of Library science".

Here the zest of this phenomenon article needs more time to reach to the zenith of his explorations but reading will experience the sight of "divinity of his spirits in Library Science". The extract of this article will only kindle your interest to rediscover Dr. Ranganathan by reading it fully.

Observations:

Garfield's visited India in 1984, for a series of lecture covered three basic topics—the use of citation indexes, co-citation analysis and clustering, and Third World research. The fourth was his works related to Ranganathan, in Madras University. His recent article on "Third World research", published in Science & Public Policy and reprinted in Current Contents had more impact which followed many invitations to speak. His conquest by observations of the two articles, Part I and Part-II in current contents "Essays of Information Scientist in Current Contents"- A Tribute to S. R. Ranganathan, the Father of Indian Library Science- Life and Works" his comments in his column "Current

comments" reflects that:

- A rewarding tour of India;

But it was particularly gratifying to help honor Ranganathan, who is, without question, one of the luminaries of library science and library classification. Not only did he do more than any other single individual to modernize and professionalize library science in India, he also had a revolutionary impact on international classification theory;

- Though meeting Ranganathan only once, in Dorking, England, at the International Study Conference on Classification for Information Retrieval in 1957.where Ranganathan gave the opening address, and contributed his views on citation indexing. They shared many conversations during the conference. At the time, Ranganathan was riding the crest of a career that spanned almost 50 years (from 1924 to 1972), and from which he never really retired;

- Besides encouraging formulation of the five laws, Ranganathan's visit to England stimulated another important line of thought. The more he learned about the orthodox Anglo-American library classification systems, the more convinced he became that they were seriously flawed. Library classification is the systematic arrangement of documents by subject. As such, it may determine the arrangement of books on library shelves or of documents in an information retrieval system. However, in many libraries, particularly in Europe, classification determines only the order of the "catalog cards" describing information items, rather than the physical arrangement of the items themselves;

- Ranganathan's objection to the prevailing classification systems, such as Dewey Decimal Classification and Library of Congress Classification, was that they tried to enumerate all possible subjects and provide preconceived pigeonholes to accommodate all documents. But this enumerative approach made little allowance for the addition of new topics. Thus, these systems couldn't easily accommodate the explosion of knowledge occurring in the twentieth century;

- He has related, the discovery of Ranganthan's toy erector set at Selfridge's, the London department store with Newton's falling apple, Fnedrich Keku's the benzene ring, which acted as catalyst.

But this eureka experience in 1924 would require many years' gestation before it came to fruition. Not until 1933 did Ranganathan publish his first major work on his new classification system,the Colon Classification.Thus, Colon Classification is known as an analytico -synthetic classification system.

Metrics Disclosure

With reference to Hildrun Kretschmer's paper presented at the National Seminar on Information Professionals for the Digital Era, 29th-30th January 2003, Chennai, India, and published in the Proceedings, MALA, Madras Library Association, edited by A. Amudhavalli, 2003.“Had I known of Ranganathan's term in time, I would have adopted librametrics for information studies and bibliometrics for information science”.

Dr. S. R. Ranganathan coined the term “Librametry” and presented his concept in 1948 at the ASLIB conference held at Lemington Spa. He said that “there is a need to develop this subject on the lines of Biometry, Econometry, Psychometry, etc. He used the term to include statistical approaches to the study of library and its services. However, the practice of using quantitative method to measure information sources were made even before Dr. S. R. Ranganathan either under different name or without any name at all. For instance E. J. Cole and Nellie Eales in 1917, graphically mapped the literature and called this as “Statistical analysis”, E. Wyndham Hulme in 1922 studied the literature and called it “statistical bibliography”, but the terms were found to be clumsy as it could easily be mistaken.

His suggestions were avidly welcomed at the conference, notably also by Bernal. In preparation for this great event, Ranganathan in the course of the preceding 20 years, i.e. since 1925, had already successfully practiced the application of 'Elements of Statistical Calculus' to library problems. The success accomplished had inspired him to introduce publicly the term 'Librametry' to the above-mentioned conference.

Strengths of 5 Laws:

Gorman's Singular Strengths': The clear views of the Gorman (1998a,b) believes that S.R. Ranganathan invented the term 'Library Science' and beautifully demonstrates how his laws are applicable to the future issues and

challenges that librarians will face. Gorman's laws are not a revision of Ranganathan's laws, but another completely separate set, from the point of view of a librarian practicing in a technological society. Gorman's laws are the most famous. He has reinterpreted Ranganathan's laws in the context of today's library and its likely future. Michael Gorman has given us his five new laws of librarianship:

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. Honor the past and create the future (Crawford & Gorman, 1995).

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Climax

I think that all library and information professionals once in their life time browse and read all the writings of Dr. S R Ranganathan and the books and articles on him. The more we assimilate in the thoughts of legendary Ranganathan, to practice his ideals and adopting thoughts in today's context we live with him. The applications of laws, theories, assumptions deepening our quest to know about Dr. S R Ranganathan for our enrichment means “Ranganathan's pertinent statutes”. The five tenets of this knowledge discovery of a person is a “eureka satisfaction”. The first article that inspired me was the Prof. Satija's article Birth-centenary literature on Ranganathan quenched the thirst. The other was Garfield's comments of two series published in currents contents thrilled me of his explorative views in his “Essay's on Information scientist”. Girija kumar's article on “Creativity in the Thought of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan” is levelled of attaining Moksha, Gorman's Singlur Strengths was a “transformer of past to present” then to Librametry in today's context more deemed as scientomtrics. It is never ending, his spiritual unity and intuitive experiences and thoughts derived given to the world in to a discipline of highest order will be more explored through research and commemorated with incentives in volumes that will spring in from the next generation LIS professionals.

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