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Putting Knowledge to Work; An American View of Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science
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LECTURES BY
PAULINE ATHERTON

CHAPTER D

INTRODUCTION

1 Attracted by Dr Ranganathan's Work

It is indeed an honour for me to be here with Dr Ranganathan and his students in his home-land. I have introduced myself to many groups in the United States as an apostle of Ranganathan. Now I have the opportunity to tell a group in his own land why I have given myself such a title.

11 FIRST IMPRESSION

More years ago than I care to remember, even at my age, I heard of Ranganathan. It was in a course on the History and Theory of Cataloguing at the University of Chicago, I had already received my Master's Degree in Library Science, and was working as a librarian. It was in this advanced course that I first learned of the "Father of library science in India." Let me recall for you what my first impressions were when I pursued the request that Mrs Ruth French Strout made of me in a seminar to find out something about Ranganathan's catalogue code and report back to the class. I remember them quite well because my immediate im-

pression upon reading the five statements called "The Five Laws of Library Science" in the first book by Dr Ranganathan that I found, was one of amusement. Yes, I smiled, and thought to myself, "how simple he makes it all sound, when really it is much more complicated!"

2 Depth of the Five Laws

After that, I thought about these five short statements and decided that no more really needed to be said to force me to think seriously about the most important areas of library service, evaluation, and management. Ever since that day fifteen years ago, I have been guided by those words when I pursued advanced technological developments and applied them to library and information work, or when I would begin a class on the organisation of information, cataloguing, or library in society. I have written these five statements on every blackboard in every classroom where I have taught and I will continue to do so, because they offer me (and my students) the guidance and the rationale we need when we critically review how we follow the cataloguing practices which prevail, how we evaluate the libraries we use, visit, or work in, and how we work to improve the practices we follow and the library services we manage. Because these five statements have served as my guiding star through-

out my professional library career, I would like to use them as the framework for my Sarada Ranganathan Lectures, being delivered at the Documentation Research and Training Centre which Dr Ranganathan helped to found.

3 An Opportunity to Review

I appreciate the invitation to deliver these lectures in Bangalore. This has served as my needed opportunity to pull together my thoughts on the topics which mean a great deal to me; namely, library education, library use, system evaluation, and improvements in the principles and practices of cataloguing and classification based on assistance from computers and empirical research. Because I am so deeply touched by this opportunity, I may tend to be overly personal in my remarks rather than purely scientific and scholarly. Hopefully, this will not detract from my presentation too much. I hope that my review of several studies on these topics recently completed by my colleagues in the United States (some of them former students) will add the substance needed to make these lectures as beneficial to the listener (or reader) as they are to the writer.

The information on the emergence of the Five Laws (*See Chapter K*) has been provided by Prof A Neelameghan.



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