

## EXPLORING USER PERCEPTIONS OF BOOK THEFT AND MUTILATION: A CASE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Libraries serve as organized repositories of knowledge and resources, offering access to a wide range of materials in various formats to a defined community. This paper delves into the concept of libraries, emphasizing their role in providing both physical and digital resources to users. Libraries, whether physical structures or virtual spaces, house an array of materials, including books, periodicals, digital media, and more, catering to diverse information needs. The historical roots of the term "library" can be traced to Latin and Greek origins, with derivatives like "bibliothèque" in French, symbolizing the idea of a bookcase and library in modern languages.

One of the challenges libraries face is the intentional damage, defacement, or theft of materials, known as mutilation. Mutilation encompasses acts such as tearing covers and pages, cutting out content, and removing labels or bookplates, all of which deplete library resources. The motives behind such actions vary, ranging from a sense of entitlement to financial reasons or disagreements with the library's collection choices, and even malicious intent.

This paper presents a case study focused on user attitudes toward book theft and mutilation within a management college library, shedding light on the perceptions and behaviors surrounding these issues.

**Keywords:** library, resources, book theft, mutilation, user attitudes, management college.

### INTRODUCTION

*"A Library to modify the famous metaphor of Socrates, should be the delivery room for the birth of ideas a place where history comes to life" (Norman Cousins)*

A library (from French "librairie"; Latin "liber" = book) is an organized collection of resources made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. It provides physical or digital access to material, and may be a physical building or room, or a virtual space, or both. A library's collection can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, e-books, audiobooks, databases, and other formats. Libraries range in size from a few shelves of books to several million items. In Latin and Greek, the idea of bookcase is represented by *Bibliotheca* and *Bibliothēkē* (Greek: βιβλιοθήκη): derivatives of these mean *library* in many modern languages, e.g. French *bibliothèque*.<sup>5</sup> ODLIS described mutilation as "Damage, defacement, or destruction of library materials inflicted intentionally, rather than accidentally, including tearing covers and pages; cutting out illustrations or passages of text; and removing labels, bookplates, protective covers, date due slips, etc.--all actions that drain library resources. The motives for such acts range from an attitude of entitlement, to monetary concerns (libraries generally charge for photocopying), to disapproval of the library's collection development decisions, and outright malice".<sup>6</sup> This paper is a case study which examined the Users attitudes to book theft and mutilation in management college library.

### Objective:

- Distribution of questionnaire
- Frequency of Library use
- Purpose of Library visit
- Chances of being caught
- Causes of book theft or mutilating Books
- Opportunity time for stealing and mutilation
- Method adopted for book theft or mutilating
- Is library book theft or mutilation normally wrong

### SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The present study covers the students, Staff and faculty of Library and Documentation Centre, Pailan College of Management & Technology. Sector-I Phase-I. Bengal Pailan Park, Joka., Kolkata-700104. The college has almost 3,000 students. College library has over 16,500 books, Journals and other resource materials. PCMT library provide DELNET online journal for user.

### METHODOLOGY USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Data on access and utilization of information resources was collected through a questionnaire designed for the purpose. The survey method was employed to collect the required data. A detailed questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, experts in the field of library science, psychology and statistics were consulted and were requested to review the questionnaire critically. Questionnaire was revised based on the suggestions. The study was limited to the user the library of Pailan College of Management & Technology (PCMT). Total of 160 questionnaires were distributed to collect the primary data. 135 Questionnaires were received. Collected data were analyzed.

### DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaire

Particulars	Readers
Questionnaire distributed	160
Questionnaire received	135

Table 2: Frequency of Library use

Frequency of Library use	No. of Respondents	%
Everyday	65	48.14
Once in a week	35	25.94
Once in a month	31	22.96
Infrequently	04	02.96

Table 2 represents frequency of library use. 65 respondents everyday use library. 35 respondents once in a week use library. 31 respondents once in a month use library. 04 respondents infrequently use library.

Table 3: Purpose of Library visit

Purpose of Library visit	No. of	%
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	Respondents	
Education	102	75.55
Entertainment	022	16.29
Sports	00	00.00
Other	011	08.16

Table 3 shows purpose of library visit. 102 respondents visit library for education purpose. 022 respondents visit library for entertainment purpose and so on. <sup>4</sup>

Table 4 : Chances of being caught

Chances of being caught	No. of Respondents	%
2 out of 4	25	18.52
2 out of 20	47	34.82
2 out of 200	63	46.66

Table 4 displays chances of being caught. According to 25 respondents, 2 out of 4 chances of being caught. 47 respondents, 2 out of 20 chances of being caught. 63 respondents, 2 out of 200 chances of being caught. <sup>1</sup>

Table 5 : Period in which stealing and mutilation are committed

Period in which stealing and mutilation are committed	No. of Respondents	%
10.00am-12.30pm	27	20.00
12.30pm-3.00pm	62	45.92
03.00pm-5.30pm	46	34.08

Table 5 discloses that between 12.30am – 3.00pm mostly stealing and mutilation are committed. After that stealing and mutilation are committed between 03.00pm-5.30pm and so on.

Table 6: Causes of book theft or mutilating Books

Causes of book theft or mutilating Books	No. of Respondents	%
The price of the book is very high	24	17.78
Do not have enough facility of Xerox	25	18.52
Do not consider the need of others	49	36.29
Unconsciousness about the importance of books	18	13.34
Steal or mutilate books as expression of hostility toward the library	19	14.07

Table 6 shows that 24 respondents think that the price of the book is very high is the causes of stealing or mutilating Books. 25respondents think that do not have enough facility of Xerox is the another causes of stealing or mutilating Books.

Table 7: Preventive measure

Preventive measure	No. of Respondents	%
Provision of Xerox facilities	44	32.59
Cooperative staff	25	18.51
Create consciousness among user	30	22.23
Strong rules about steeling and mutilation and throughout checking	36	26.67

Table 7 revealed that provision of Xerox facility, Strong rules about steeling and mutilation & throughout checking, create consciousness among user and cooperative staff can prevent book theft or mutilating. <sup>2</sup>

Table 8: Method adopted for book theft or mutilating

Method adopted for book theft or mutilating	No. of Respondents	%
Tearing of important pages	60	44.46
Throwing books out of the window	42	31.11
Removal of due date slip from borrowed book to un-borrowed one	26	19.25
Other	07	05.18

Table 8 reveals that 60 respondents identified that tearing of important pages is the main method adopted for book theft or mutilating. Beside this removal of due date slip from borrowed book to un-borrowed one is the another method of book theft or mutilating and so on.

Table 9 : Is library book theft or mutilation normally wrong

Is library book theft or mutilation normally wrong	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	112	82.96
No	016	11.85
No opinion	007	05.19

Table 9 discloses that most of the Respondents think that library book theft or mutilation normally wrong.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of book theft and mutilation of documents held in libraries is not new. The first incident of theft from a library can be traced back to Persian conquerors removing papyrus rolls from an Egyptian library in 539 BC.<sup>3</sup> The problem is growing day by day. Ranganathan (1970) through his guiding principles of library services contained in his five laws of library science, pointed out the usefulness and importance of the reader to any library. Book theft and mutilation of documents affect the library services. The major findings of this study are below-

- 65 respondents everyday use library. 35 respondents once in a week use library. 31 respondents once in a month use library. 04 respondents infrequently use library.
- 102 respondents visit library for education purpose. 022 respondents visit library for entertainment purpose and so on.
- According to 25 respondents, 2 out of 4 chances of being caught. 47 respondents, 2 out of 20 chances of being caught. 63 respondents, 2 out of 200 chances of being caught.
- Between 12.30am – 3.00pm mostly stealing and mutilation are committed. After that stealing and mutilation are committed between 03.00pm-5.30pm and so on.
- 24 respondents think that the price of the book is very high is the causes of stealing or mutilating Books. 25 respondents think that do not have enough facility of Xerox is the another causes of stealing or mutilating Books.
- Provision of Xerox facility, Strong rules about steeling and mutilation & throughout checking, create consciousness among user and cooperative staff can prevent book theft or mutilating.
- 60 respondents identified that tearing of important pages is the main method adopted for book theft or mutilating. Beside this removal of due date slip from borrowed book to unborrowed one is the another method of book theft or mutilating and so on.
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- Most of the Respondents think that library book theft or mutilation normally wrong.

## SUGGESTIONS

- Proper orientation should be given to users of the libraries.
- Affected libraries should launch campaign against user delinquency;  Libraries should engage more trained security personnel.
- The photocopying services of the library should be subsidized.

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