# What Librarian's Think of Theft, Mutilation and Misplacement of Library Resources? A Study of Karnataka University Libraries

**Jagadish M.V.**
*Research Scholar*
Department of Studies in Library and Information Science
University of Mysore,
Mysore, Karnataka, India.
jagga.rituparna@gmail.com


**Dr. P. Sarasvathy**
*Deputy Librarian*
Mysore University Library
Univiersity of Mysore
Mysore, Karnataka, India.

## Abstract

*Library is a place of study such as quite peace full and safe for learning and research activities, libraries are spirit of the academic institution and it plays a vital role by providing knowledge to the people without any bias. But some selfish users are doing the unlawful activities such as theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in library. The present study focused on librarian response towards theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in university libraries in Karnataka. The study found that more than seventy percent of the librarians have felt that illegal incidences at the university libraries such as theft, mutilation and misplacement of library materials have become serious problems. Even previous studies have identified illegal acts in the library; it has still persisted and has negatively impacted the academic spirit of the library.*

## 1. Introduction

Libraries in academic institutions has regarded as one of the important space for enrichment of knowledge. Even it is called as the heart of the institution. As the function of heart is essential for the wellbeing of the human body, the good and well organized library is important for the good functioning of academic institutions. The growth and the development of the libraries depends internal interest in its developments from the parents institutions(Infrastructural supports, man power and collection development) on the other hand external interest mainly its utilization, following rules and regulations of the libraries for its longevity from users side is also important for its maintenance and development. But illegal incidences in libraries mainly theft, mutilation and misplacement have often been reported in the library literature has shown that illegal incidences effects both libraries and users equally in terms of providing access to required material and using library resources without any hindrances to the fullest.The review literature part of the study shows how serious theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in libraries. Many of the studies that have been found in scholarly literature on this subject looked at how library users are affecting from illegal incidences in libraries (Jagadish&Sarasvathy, 2016; Ogunyade, 2005;Parvathamma &Gavisiddappa, 2001). There is very little research from the librarian's perspective with regard to theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. Here in this study we have attempted to address this issue from the librarian's perspective of what libraries specifically university libraries think of these problems, how seriously it affects the administrator and library users, and also what measures can prevent these problems?

## 2. Review of the Literature

A misuse of library resources is the act of deliberate destruction of library resources, such asprint resourcesand electronic resources, etc. This type of issues has been well documented in the professional literature as it is a problem that affects academic life of the library users. Some of the previous studies on this subject have been reviewed for having initial background this issue from the librarians' perspective. Souter (1976) in his study has made

an attempt to address the issue of delinquent readers'problems at the British University libraries. The study identified that illegal borrows, steals or mutilates books had become serious problem in British University libraries. The study made an interesting observation that the silence of non-delinquent readers even when they come across of illegal borrows, steals or mutilates books in libraries have encouraged to thrive delinquent acts. Bello (1998) has made a systematic study on library security, theft and mutilation in technological university libraries in Nigeria. He has found in his study that high cost of photocopying and frequent breakdowns of copiers were the causes of library material theft and mutilation. The study suggested that there was a need to put in place some security measures to prevent theft and mutilation in Nigerian university libraries. Ajayi&Omotayo (2002) have made study on Nigerian students' perceptions and reactions to mutilation and theft of library materials. The study found that insensitivity to the need of other users, high cost of books, non-detection of previous acts of theft and frequent power outage are some of the factors responsible for mutilation and theft of library materials. The study also revealed that students were aware of negative impact of theft and mutilation of library materials on academic life of the users. Higgins (2015) examines the reasons and motives the book theft and vandalism, the study summaries exiting security measures and offers suggestions for theft and vandalism prevention. And states that until technology sufficiently meet the specific needs of collections security in today's library, best electronic security systems, vigilant observation such as the installation of posters and signs etc will be there.

### 3. Research Questions

This study was designed with the following Research Questions:
1. Are theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources serious problem in University Libraries?
2. What are the kind of theft, mutilations and misplacements that often takes place at the University libraries?

3.  What are the major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources?

4.  What are the concrete measures that the librarians suggest for preventing illegal incidences in University Libraries?

## 4. Methodology

A total number of 7 questionnaires distribute to 7 university librarians in Karnataka (See Appendix-1). All seven university *l*ibrarians have participated in the study. The questionnaire was designed so as to collect the information about the extent of illegal incidences that occurs in the library. The Questionnaire consisted of questionnaires on illegal activities mainly on theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. The questionnaire comprised of both the open ended and closed ended questions. The first author of the paper visited each of the seven university librariesduring 15 December 2015 to 15$^{th}$ February 2016 for data collection. The data obtained were analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1. How Serious of Theft, Mutilation and Misplacement of Library Resources in your Library

Table-1 depicts the user response of the seriousness of the problem of theft, mutilation and misplacement in university libraries. Of the seven librarians who have participated in the survey five of them (71.42%) have responded that theft, mutilation and misplacement are serious problems in the library. Two librarians (28.57%) have reported that theft, mutilation and misplacement are not a serious problem. Technologies especially CCTV, Security Electronic Gates, Barcoding and other similar technological tools have penetrated libraries across the world. These tools have become handy in identifying and minimizing illegal incidences at the libraries. This study explores this aspect further elsewhere in this paper.

| SL. No. | Theft, Mutilation and Misplacement of Library Resources | # of Respondents (n=7) |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | Yes | 05 (71.42%) |
| 02 | No | 02 (28.57%) |
| | **Total** | **07 100%** |

**Table-1: Theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources**

### 5.2. Types of Theft, Mutilation and Misplacement of Library Resources

Table 2indicates the types of theft, mutilation and misplacement of libraries that often takes place in the university libraries.It is indicative from Table 1 that excessive downloading of e-resources (100%) and misplacing or hidings of books (100%), mutilation/rough handling (85.71%), and tearing pages (85.71%) are some of the major types of illegal incidences at the university libraries.None of the respondents in our study have reported that there is no occurrence or illegal downloading e-resources with stolen password and user ID. This is because of very few Universities (for instance: University of Mysore Library) offer remote access to e-resources and many of the library users are entitled to obtain the user ID and password for accessing subscribed e-resources. Of the total sample 4 (57.14%) librarians have reported that there were instances of damaging library rare collections. There is a need to protect the archival resources for the posterity from damaging.

| SL. No. | Theft/ Mutilation/Misplacement of Library resources | Yes | % | No | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Excessive downloading of e-resources | 07 | 100% | - | - |
| 2. | Misplacing/Hiding | 07 | 100% | - | - |
| 3. | Mutilation/Rough Handling | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.2% |
| 4. | Tearing pages from books | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.2% |
| 5. | Theft/Stealing | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | Over borrowing | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 7. | Damaging rare collections | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 8. | Downloading E-resources with a stolen password and user ID | - | - | 07 | 100% |
| 9. | Borrowed library books are unreturned | 03 | 42.85% | 04 | 57.14% |

**Table-2: Kind of theft, Mutilation and Misplacing of Library resources that are confronting the library**

### 5.3. What are the major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacing of the library resources in your library?

Table: 3 gives information regarding major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacement of the library resources in the University library covered in the present study. The respondents have reported that one of the major causes that librarians reported for theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources is non-availability of sufficient number of copies (85.71%) for reading and references. Some of the other major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacement that the librarians have stated are: needed or required books and journals are not available in time, restricted access to rare materials, restricted access for reference materials, financial conditions of the students, and excessive downloading of electronic resources. However, when we have surveyed students and research scholar with regard to the causes for theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources in University libraries, they have stated that insufficient borrowing periods (78.34%), Opening hours of the library (58.65%), lack of proper photocopying facilities (66.71%) and high cost of photocopying (70.02%) were some of the major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacement (Jagadish& Sarasvathy, 2016). There is complete contrast between users' opinion and librarians' opinion with regard to the causes for illegal incidences in libraries. There is a need to examine this aspect further through qualitative research.

| SL. No. | Causes | Yes | % | No | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | Insufficient number of copies | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| **2.** | Needed books and journals are not available in time | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |

| 3. | Restricted access or borrow to rare book materials | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. | Uncirculated volumes (e.g., reference materials) | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 5. | Financial condition of the students | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 6. | Excessive downloading of e-resources without knowing the restrictive access policies | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 7. | High price of textbooks | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 8. | Fear of others may borrow and fail to return in time | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 9. | Ignorance of the impact of theft of library materials | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 10. | Insensitivity towards the needs of others | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 11. | Opening hours of the library is insufficient | 02 | 28.57% | 05 | 71.42% |
| 12. | Insufficient borrowing periods | 02 | 28.57% | 05 | 71.42% |
| 13. | Lack of photocopying facility | 01 | 14.28% | 06 | 85.71% |
| 14. | High cost of photo copying | 01 | 14.28% | 06 | 85.71% |

**Table-3: major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacing of the library resources in your library**

### 5.4. Most common methods/incidences of theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources

Table 4 denotes the response rate of respondents for the most common method of theft mutilation and misplacement of library resources. It can be seen from Table 4 that Excessive downloads of electronic resources (100%), deliberately shelving or misplacing books in different locations in the library (85.71%), tearing pages from books and journals (85.71%), stealing books from the library (85.71%) and missing rare materials from the library (85.71%) are some of the most common and often reported illegal incidences at the library. University libraries have now slowly and steadily moving towards digital information. The INFLIBNET initiative of providing access to huge collection of digital scholarly information through UGC-INFONET consortium for universities across India have made university students to access and use digital information easily. However there is a need to create awareness among students and teaching community about the pitfalls of excessive downloading of e-resources. In a similar

study Ogunyade (2005) have also found that stealing books (40. 62%) from the library and tearing pages from books and journals (27.34%) were the illegal acts that most commonly occurred in academic library environment.

| SL. No. | Methods/incidence of theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources | Yes | % | No | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Excessive downloads of e-resources | 07 | 100.00 | 00 | -- |
| 2. | Books are wrongly shelved deliberately | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| 3. | Pages torn from books and journals | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| 4. | Books are reported stolen | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 5. | Borrowed books are not returned | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 6. | Rare books are reported stolen or lost | 05 | 71.42% | 02 | 28.57% |
| 7. | Pages are eaten by book insects or silver fish | 03 | 42.85% | 04 | 57.14% |
| 8. | Interchanging book slip of previously loaned book with stolen book | 03 | 42.85% | 04 | 57.14% |
| 9. | Staff keeps books processed or otherwise for personal use | 03 | 42.85% | 04 | 57.14% |
| 10. | Erasing library identification stamp and removing due date slips | 01 | 14.28% | 06 | 85.71% |
| 11. | Reference materials such as Thesis are being issued for photocopying without permission | 01 | 14.28% | 06 | 85.71% |
| 12. | Staff allows friends, family members to borrow restricted items | 01 | 14.28% | 06 | 85.71% |
| 13. | Users borrowing library books by stealing someone's ID | 00 | 00.00 | 07 | 100.00 |

**Table-4: most common methods/incidence of theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources**

### 5.5. Preventive measures for reducing theft, mutilation and misplacement and damages to the library materials

Table-5 presents the librarians' response towards minimizing the theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. All most all the respondents have suggested that provide more number of copies for borrowing, provisions for purchasing more number of reference copies, installing electronic security systems to curb theft, mutilation and misplacement of library materials, vigilant security arrangements at exit gates and many others (See Table-5).

Parvathamma & Gavisiddappa (2001) in their have also found that provision for more text books and reference copies, installation of electronic security systems, and providing photocopy facility at minimum cost were some of the preventive measures which would help in reducing the illegal incidences such as theft, mutilation and misplacement of books and other materials in academic libraries.

| SL. No. | Preventive Measures for Reducing illegal incidences | Yes | % | No | % |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | Provide more text books for borrowing/issuing | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 2. | Provision for more reference copies | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 3. | Installing electronic security device/systems | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 4. | Thorough search at exist gate | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 5. | Use trained security personnel | 07 | 100% | - | 00 |
| 6. | Student and Staff ID should be made compulsory to enter library | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 7. | Introduce firewalls and intrusion detection system to stop unauthorized users to access | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 8. | Library staff should be vigilant | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| 9. | Provide cheaper photocopying facilities | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| 10. | Use signage and other methods of publications to create awareness | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |

**Table-5: Preventive measures for reducing the theft, mutilation and book misplacement and damages**

### 5.6. Library/Legal Actions in Curbing Illegal Incidences at the Library

Table-6 presents the librarian's response with regard to the strict measures or actions that at their disposal to curb the menace of theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. It was found that all the university librarians have opined giving warning to the guilty students is best possible actions in curbing illegal incidences followed by imposing hefty penalty(85.71%) and withdrawing library membership (57.14%). Only two librarians (28.57%) have suggested that dismissing students from the colleges and strict legal action

would help in curbing these problems. It is important to conduct user orientation program to create awareness among students about the illegal incidences and how it effects overall academic ambience of the library.

| SL. No. | Library/Legal Actions | Yes | % | No | % |
|---------|----------------------|-----|---|----|----|
| 1. | Give warning to the student | 07 | 100% | 00 | 00.00 |
| 2. | Imposing hefty penalty | 06 | 85.71% | 01 | 14.28% |
| 3. | Withdrawing the library membership | 04 | 57.14% | 03 | 42.85% |
| 4. | Dismissing the student from the college | 02 | 28.57% | 05 | 71.42% |
| 5. | Enforcing strict legal action | 02 | 28.57% | 05 | 71.42% |

**Table-6: Library/Legal Actions**

### 5.7. Steps taken to eliminate the theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources

Table 7 indicates the various steps taken to curb theft, mutilation and misplacing of library resources in Karnataka University libraries. All the librarians who have participated in the survey have responded (100%) that they conduct user education/orientation program regularly to create awareness about theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. Two respondents have stated that their libraries have installed CCTV and are using RFID technology to monitor illegal incidences in their libraries. Another two university libraries have made security arrangements at the entrance to check the menace.One University library (14.28%) has taken steps to shelving books at regular intervals so that misplacing of the books can be identified and re-shelving them. Anotheruniversity library (28.57%) has taken measure to increase library collections in order to reduce this problem.

| SL. No | Steps taken to eliminate illegal incidences at the libraries | Respondents (n=7) | Percentage |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
|        | User education/Orientation programs                         | 07                | 100%       |
| 1.     | Installation of CCTV/RFID Technology                        | 02                | 28.57%     |
| 2.     | Vigilance at the entrance gate                              | 02                | 28.57%     |
| 3.     | Shelve checking/Re-shelving books                          | 01                | 14.28%     |
| 4.     | Increasing library collections                             | 01                | 14.28%     |

**Table-7: Steps taken to eliminate illegal incidences at the libraries**

## 6. Findings of the Study

Some of the major findings of the study are:

- More than seventy percent of the respondents have agreed that theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in university libraries are serious problem.
- The study found that excessive downloading of e-resources, misplacing and hiding of books and journals, mutilation, tearing pages from books and journals, book thefting are some of the common types of illegal incidences that occur often in university library environment.

- The study found that insufficient number of books available in university libraries, required books and journals are not available in time, restricted access to rare books, restrictions for borrowing reference books, high cost of books, financial conditions of students are some of the major causes for theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources. However only one university library has taken initiative to increase the number of copies available for users to reduce the illegal acts in the library.

- Librarians have mentioned that excessive downloads of e-resources, misplacing of books in different locations, tearing pages from books and journals, stealing books, and non-returning of borrowed books are some of the common methods of illegal incidences they have facedregularly in university libraries.

- Librarians have suggested following preventive measures to curb theft mutilation and misplacement of library resources: providing more number of copies for borrowing, provisions for more reference copies, installing electronic systems such CCTV, Electronic security gates,RFID tags embedded books for circulation, security personal at exit gate, trained security personal to monitor users' entry and exit.

- The study found that giving warning to students and imposing penalty would strongly help inreduce illegal act in libraries.

- The study found that only two university libraries have employed CCTV and RFID technologies for managing illegal acts in the library. It is important for other university libraries to use available technologies to avoid theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources.

### 7. Conclusion

The study revealed that theft, mutilation and misplacement of library resources in university libraries in particular and libraries in general are serious problems that libraries often come across. This study looked these problems from the librarians' perspective. More or less this study is in line with the previous studies conducted on this subject (Ogunyade, 2005; Parvathamma & Gavisiddappa, 2001). Interesting fact is that though these previous studies have done almost decade back, but still as this study revealed theft, mutilation and misplacement of library materials have remained as problem for university libraries which effects academic ambience of the library. There is a need to adopt technologies that some of them suggested by librarians such as CCTV, RFID technologies for circulation and stock verifications, electronic security gates. Most importantly librarians should engage with library users regularly to create awareness about misuse of library resources.

# References

1. Rao,Tata K(1995). Users' Attitude and Behavioral Pattern towards Theft and Mutilation Ina University Library. A Case Study. *IASLIC Bulletin*. 40(2).49-62.

2. Weiss Dana (1981) Book theft and Book Mutilation In A Large Urban University Library. *College and Research Libraries*.42(4).341-347.

3. Goswami & Badriprasad. (1989).*Problems of Misplacement,Mutilation and Theft of Books in Libraries.*Varanashi,Radha Krishna Publication,B.H.U

4. Souter G.H. (1976). Delinquent Readers. A Study of The Problem In University Libraries. *Journal of Librarianship*.8(2).96-110

5. Ajayi N.A &Omotayo B.O.(2004). Mutilation And Theft of Library Materials: Perception and Reactions of Nigerian Students. *Information Development*, 20,(1).61-66

6. Bello,M.A(1998). Library Security, Materials Theft And Mutilation In Technological University Libraries in Nigeria. *Library Management*.19 (6).379-383.

7. Maidabino A.A. (2012). Theft and Mutilation of Print Collections in University Libraries" A Critical Review of Libraries and Proposed Frame work For Action. *Annals of Library and information sciences*. 59.(4). 240-246.

8. JimohF.Lawani. (2014). Nature of Delinquency among Library Staff and Users in Academic Libraries: A Study of University of Benin Library (John Harish Library). *Information and KnowledgeManagement* (www.iiste.org). 4(12).84-94.

9. Parvathamm N. & Gavisiddappa A. (2001). Students & Librarians Attitudes towards Book, Theft & Misplacement in Engineering College Libraries. *SRELS Journal of Information Management*. 38(3), 221-230.

10. Ogunyade,(2005),Theft and Mutilation in an Academic Library: College of Medicine, University of Lagos Experience. *Journal of Hospital Medicine* .15 (2).

11. Higgins. (2015). Theft and Vandalism of books, Manuscripts, and Related Materials in Public And Academic Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Library Philosophy and practices(e-Journal)paper-1256.

12. Jagadish.M.V. & Sarasvathy P. (2016) users attitude towards Theft, Mutilation And Misplacement of Resources in University Libraries in Karnataka State: A Study. e-Library Science Research Journal(e-journal).4(10).

**Follow us on:** IRJLIS, Facebook, Twitter

**Appendix-1**

| SL No. | University Name | University Library Website |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | University of Mysore | uni-mysore.ac.in/library |
| 2. | Karnataka University Dharwad | kudlibrary.org |
| 3. | Bangalore University | bangaloreuniversity.ac.in/library |
| 4. | Gulbarga University | Guglibrary.net |
| 5. | Mangalore University | mangaloreuniversity.ac.in/library |
| 6. | Kuvempu University | kuvempu.ac.in/library |
| 7. | Tumakur University | tumkurunivrsity.ac.in/library |