

# User Delinquency in Law College Library, Sri Lanka: perception of the Students

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**Abstract-** User malpractices of Library materials by highlighting, underlining, removing papers/parts of the page, binding barcode labels, call numbers labels and damaging or defacing library materials is a threat to the library collection. Such practices can be describe as abusing of the library materials. According to the stock count carried out in 2017, 78 books (out of 4320) were highly abused and removed from the lending collection in the library. There for this survey was conducted with following objectives; to identify the various forms of abuse, to identify reasons for the abuse and to identify the possible solutions to protect the library collection. The survey was conducted by using questionnaires with close and open ended questions. Students (75) were selected for the study and 69 responded and the rate was 92% from years of first year, second year and final year.

The respondents gave their answers to the forms of abusing library materials mainly tearing away pages, writing notes inside text books, highlighting/underlining the pages, mutilation, hiding, of books. According to the reasons for the abuse of the library materials, 65% of students mentioned that rare materials not allowed to be photocopied, 68% claimed the inadequate numbers of copies and 59% indicated high cost of photocopying charges. The respondents proposed a variety of strategies to protect the collection too. The study recommended proper orientation to users. The number of copies of demanded text books should be increased. Improving of photocopying services of the library. Introduce and electronic system as RFID machines. Regularly reviewed set of library instruction should be drawn.

**Index Terms-** User delinquency, Abuse of library materials, Mutilation, Malpractices of readers, Law collection.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The abuse of Library materials can be defined in terms of theft, mutilation, unauthorized borrowing, drawing and vandalism. Mutilating library materials by marking, underlining, removing pages or portion of pages, removing binding, removing barcodes, removing call number labels, labeling color tags, damaging or defacing library materials seriously affect the library. Abuse of library materials or mutilation and theft in libraries is a serious and harmful issue in any library.

The Sri Lanka Law College functions under the council of Legal Education to administer legal education to person who desire to be enrolled in the Bar of Sri Lanka. The Law College is the only institution which offers a complete course of study

leading to examination for those desiring to qualify for admission to the profession.

As at today, while other institutions (eg : University of Colombo, University of Peradeniya, University of Jaffna, Open University of Sri Lank and Private Institutions) offer academic courses leading to a degree or other academic qualification relating to law, person become eligible to practice the law, only after admission to the profession as provided for in rules of the council of legal education. Thus, The Law College is the only gateway to the legal profession in Sri Lanka. Members of the profession are called Attorneys-at-Law.

**Law College Library-Stock Count – 2017**  
**Table 01:**

Subject	Class Number	Amount of Books
Law	340	911
Legal System	340.5	314
Conflict of Laws	340.9	77
International Law	341	89
Constitutional and Administrative Law	342	317
Military, Tax, Trade, Industrial Law	343	226
Social, Labor, Welfare, Healthy, Safety, Cultural Law	344	191
Criminal Law	345	77
Private Law	346	80
Civil Procedure and Courts	347	36
Laws(statutes), regulations, Cases	348	26
Law of Specific	349	31

Total amount of books 2375

**II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the survey were:

- To identify various form of abuse in library materials.
- To identify the physical damages on library materials.
- To identify the lack of appropriate information resources.
- To identify the reasons for the abuse of library materials.
- To identify the most common methods/opportune time for stealing and mutilation.
- To identify the possible solutions to protect the library collection
- The various measures in place to detect stealing and mutilation in the library.

Writing notes inside text books				
Highlighting/underlining the pages	25	26	00	11
Hiding of books	27	30	03	07
Stealing of books	23	26	07	15
Mutilation of books	19	12	14	06
Withholding	21	14	02	19
Rough handling	19	28	07	11

**III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The survey was conducted by using questionnaires with close and open ended questions. Observation of the abused library materials was also used for this study. The total sample for the study was 75 students down through systematic random sampling technique questionnaire was major tool for the data collection.

**IV. POPULATION OF THE STUDY:**

Students of the Sri Lank Law College which are on the first year, second year and final year students were selected for the study as they use the Lending collection especially in preparation of their notes and project activities, From first year 25 students were selected and 24 (96%) responded, from second year 25 were selected and 23 (92%) responded and also final year 25 students were selected and 22 (88%) responded. The total number of respondents was 69 students and total response rate was 92%.

**Table 02 : Selected Students.**

Year	Selected Students	Responded Rate	Percentage
First Year	25	24	96%
Second Year	25	23	92%
Final Year	25	22	88%
Total	75	69	92%

**V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.**

**Table 03 :- Forms of Abusing Library Materials.**

Forms of Abusing Library Materials	SA	A	D	SD
Tearing away pages	31	25	03	04
	20	32	03	12

**KEY**

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

From the above table 3, over 70% respondents mentioned that the forms of abusing library materials mainly were tearing away pages and hiding of books , over 65% respondents mentioned the forms of abusing library materials were writing notes inside text books and highlighting/underlining the pages. There are law rate of responses for stealing books, mutilation, withholding and rough handling. It is indicated that tearing pages, writing notes inside text boos and highlighting/underlining the pages are the main forms of abusing the Library materials.

**Table 04 :- Physical Damages on Library Materials.**

Physical Damages on Library Materials.	SA	A	D	SD
Underlined words or scribbles	26	14	12	17
Marks in documents, stain in document	28	23	11	07
Books with torn or removed covers, figures	24	17	18	04
Creased books, use of correction fluid	12	17	21	19
Structural Damages	11	17	13	28

**KEY**

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

From the above table 04, under the question on the physical damages on the library materials 65% agreed that marks in document, stain in document, 50% agreed that underlined words or scribbles and books with torn or removed covers, figures. 35% said that creased books use of correction fluid and

structural damages. According to these figures most of the physical damages of the books are marks in document, stain in document, underline words or scribbles and books with torn or removed cover, figures. Actually there were major facts of the damages in the collection.

**Table 05 :- Lack of appropriate information resources are to contribute to the abuse of library materials.**

Lack of appropriate information resources are to contribute to the abuse of library materials	SA	A	D	SD
Lack of photocopy services in the library.	18	20	18	13
Strict library rules.	14	12	16	27
Lack of support from the library staff.	14	14	23	18
Lack of proper shelving and shelf reading of library materials.	07	13	25	24
Lack of adequate library orientation programmes for new library users.	20	18	20	11
Inadequate copies of popular library materials.	28	19	13	09
Inadequate copies of recommended text in the library.	30	16	13	10
Library staff is not competent enough sometimes.	20	19	22	08

**KEY**

SA	A	D	SD
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

According to the table 05. The students are indicating that more than 60% agreed that inadequate copies of popular library materials and inadequate copies of recommended text in the library is a serious issue for the readers. On the other hand lack of photocopy services in the library, lack of adequate library orientation programmes for new library users and library staff is not enough sometimes also is to be a seriously considering factor. The students have neutral responses to the statements of strict library rules, lack of support from the library staff, lack of proper shelving and shelf reading of library materials, It shows that the library staff are very supportive of the students.

**Table 06 :- Reasons for abusing library materials.**

Reasons for abusing library materials	SA	A	D	SD
Rare materials not being allowed to photocopy	37	07	15	10
Inadequate number of library materials	23	20	18	08
High cost of photocopying	12	14	26	17
Rare materials-Unavailability	38	13	06	12

of copies				
Inadequate supervision in the library	18	14	23	14

**KEY**

SA	A	D	SD
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

According to the table 06 there are various reasons for abuse of the library materials. 50% said that rare materials not being allowed to photocopy, inadequate number of library materials-unavailability of copies. Inadequate supervision is also another main reason for abuse of the library materials.

**Table 07 :- Maintaining of disciplinary measures.**

Maintaining of disciplinary measures	SA	A	D	SD
Charging for full cost of the abused materials	46	17	06	00
Cancellation of membership	17	31	16	09
Exhibiting their photos with names	24	17	11	19
Suspending the membership for a new weeks	10	09	22	28

**KEY**

SA	A	D	SD
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

According to the table 07, 46 students were indicated charging for full cost of the abused is the best option for maintaining of disciplinary measures. Today, disciplinary measures are essential for any institute for effective management. Library as an institute disseminating of information. 50% students have responded to being students have responded to being cancellation of membership and exhibiting their photos with names. Other measure has been indicated like suspending the membership for a few weeks.

**Table 08:- Most common method/opportune time for stealing and mutilation.**

Most common method/opportune time for stealing and mutilation	SA	A	D	SD
Escaping with materials at library closure hour when there is a rush.	27	19	17	06
Hiding stolen/mutilated materials in folders	28	17	19	05
Hiding materials inside / under dresses	11	08	29	21
Connivance / collaboration with staff	14	11	28	16
Erasing library identification	17	36	11	05

stamps and removing slip and back covers				
Interchanging book slip of previously loaned book with stolen book	17	21	24	05

**KEY**

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

From table 08 respondents mentioned escaping with materials at library closure hour when there is a rush, hiding stolen/ mutilated materials in folders and erasing library identification stamps and removing slip and back covers as the most common method of stealing and mutilation. 50% than students were mentioned above methods for stealing and mutilation.

**Table :-09 Collection protection strategies.**

Collection protection strategies	SA	A	D	SD
User education or awareness seminars	50	13	05	01
Library must constantly display mutilated books with names of	37	21	05	06

**Table :-10 Suggestions to protect the library materials.**

Suggestions to protect the library materials	SA	A	D	SD
Improve supervision	47	18	02	02
Conduct regular library programmes	39	23	03	04
Provide enough library materials	48	15	05	01
Digitalization on rare materials	39	23	05	02
Regular supervision of users	40	22	05	02
Improve competence in security officers	29	18	18	04
Books should be examined after return or used by the reader	35	16	07	11
Introduce huge fine system for abusers	32	21	07	09
Ban bringing blades, correction fluid, water bottles, file covers. etc for the library	33	20	07	09
Introduce electronic checking system	42	14	07	06
Provide cheaper and efficient photocopy services	48	20	01	00
Through search at exits	26	19	14	10

**KEY**

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

According to the table 10, 68 (90%) students agreed to provide cheaper and efficient photocopy service. 82% said that improve supervision, conduct regular library programmes, digitalization on rare materials and regular supervision of users. 60% said that provide enough library materials. Books should be examined after return or used by the reader, introduce huge fine system for abusers, introduce electronic checking system. 50%

the readers				
Encourage users to protect the collection	47	16	04	02
Develop the collection ownership attitudes	45	15	07	02
Installation of security cameras	46	13	10	00
Provide electronic resources	39	24	05	01
Fine system according to the damage	42	16	06	05

**KEY**

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

According to the table 09 more than 75% have agreed to the statements given in the table.63 (84%) students indicated the necessity of user education awareness seminars, encourage users to protect the collection and provide electronic resources. 60 (80%) students agreed to develop the collection ownership attitudes and also 58 (77%) students mentioned and agreed to establish Library must constantly display mutilated books with names of the readers

agreed to improve competence in security officers and through search at exits.

**VI. RECOMMENDATION:-**

In the light of finding from the study conducted. It was glaring that Law College library has to solve some problems in order to reduce and hopefully eliminate the problem of user delinquency. The following recommendations are here by given based on these identified problems.

- Proper orientation should be given to users. First year orientation should be well planned with video documentary with demonstration to the students
- Multiple copies of books in the circulation section and those displayed in the open stack should be provided since it is discovered that textbooks are the most affected by theft and mutilation.
- User registration number should be mentioned on the date label below the return date, when issuing a book. It will give an idea about the list of users who borrowed the particular library materials.
- Affected libraries should launch campaign against user delinquency, there should be posters containing warning against theft and mutilation being conspicuously pasted on the notice boards within and outside the library.
- Libraries should be in possession of a standby and efficient power generating set to provide electricity to the library services during power shortage. The period of temporary electricity blackout usually encourages library delinquency among users.
- Libraries should engage more trained security personnel.
- Strict implementation of reasonable circulation policies must be adhered to by all libraries to control and avoid library theft and mutilation.
- The photocopy services of the library should be subsidized. This will reduce the tendency of stealing or mutilating library materials.
- In service training should be encouraged by libraries, particularly for the junior staff on what library profession is all about. This will enhance the efficiency of the workers.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The study was mainly concerned with examination of the abuse of library materials in the Sri Lanka Law College library, Sri Lanka: perception of the first year, second year and final year students. There is no doubt that for as library materials are physically handled and intellectually explored, there is bound to be some forms of abuse or the other. The results of the study have clearly indicated that the documents of the Sri Lanka Law College library network are considerably abused by the users. Tearing away pages, writing notes inside text books, highlighting/underlining the pages, hiding books are common. Abuse of library materials are higher on print materials than the non print materials, because print materials are used more often than the non print materials. The library awareness programme is a very important factor to the users. Students who undergo frequent library instruction and orientation understand better the value of borrowing and returning library materials, and avoid abusing them. Introducing CCTV camera system is another alternation to reduce the abuse of library materials. Library should invest in more electronic resources which will reduce to a large extent the incidence of users physically handling documentary materials. The students have proposed that the library staff also should be carefully involved with the protection

of the collection. The library staffs who work in the shelf are and the reading rooms should frequently visit and observe these areas. Books should be examined by the counter staff when they are returned by the user. Library staff should be made aware of the value, importance, rareness of library materials, should introduce motivational and punishable guidelines for library staff requiring the responsibility of the collection, not issuing already damaged books, getting the assistance of security staff, employees placed in the stack areas, counter for supervision of the readers. Staff should be carefully examined when books are returned. Conducting awareness programmes to make the students understand the importance of protecting library materials. Inculcating proper attitudes will help them to refrain from abusing library materials.

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