Theme
Current trends on the libraries of the Islamic world

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Topic
Development of Islamic Libraries: a Malaysian Perspective
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Abstracts
The purpose of this paper is to give focus on the evolution of Islamic libraries into a specialization which has not received much attention in the literature. This paper provides a brief overview on Islamic libraries, its historical background, development and prospects. A literature survey is used to describe characteristics of Islamic libraries and identifying topics for gauging awareness on Islamic libraries requirements and strategy for its development. Selected topics and issues include perspective on the services and collections, organization and access, professionalization of Islamic
librarianship, and impact of technology on Islamic libraries. What follow are ideas to embrace and promote Islamic libraries as a specialization by noting issues and problems faced by Islamic libraries, current challenges and direction for research. Discussion on Malaysian scenario relevant to Islamic libraries development is supplemented with an appendix of a list of Islamic libraries in Malaysia at the end of this paper.

Development of Islamic libraries: a Malaysian perspective

Both description about Islamic civilization and history of libraries would not be acceptable without Islamic libraries substantially mentioned. Search on ‘Islamic library’ on the Internet would produce results that show there are Islamic libraries in most parts of the globe. To name a few, there are the Australian National Islamic Library, Ghazi Husrev-bey Library at Sarajevo, Ar-Raudhah Islamic Library at Singapore, Plainfield’s Islamic Library at Indiana (may be one of the more than 700 Islamic libraries established by Islamic Assembly of North America), Al-Ma’rifa Islamic Library at Auckland, National Islamic Library at Kaduna in Nigeria, Islamic Library of AECI (Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion Internacional) at Madrid, etc.

Indeed, Islamic libraries are still a common feature wherever there is a Muslim community. How many Islamic libraries are there, and is there a comprehensive directory of the past and present Islamic libraries? It is however fascinating to learn that Baghdad has more than 100 public libraries in the year 891 (Amin,
at the end of 10th century Cordoba had 70 public libraries
(Tzortzis, 2007) while the library of the Fatimids in Cairo had more
than 600,000 volumes collection, and one of the most important
public libraries in Persia was the Library of Gundishapur,
established around year 666 (Pinto, 1997).

Islamic libraries: its emergence

Quest for knowledge and call for education has always been
given utmost emphasis by the earliest Muslims as seeking for
knowledge is a religious obligation. The position of Qur’an and
Hadith as source of knowledge brought about the impetus to the
birth of a collection, ascribed to the necessity of preserving the
Qur’an and the Hadith. During the earliest days of Islam, mosques
were the nerve centres of the society and also used as the locus of
teaching. Islamic libraries that we used to know emerged from the
tradition of ‘mosque as library’ in the Islamic civilization.

Islamic libraries started as early as the seventh century,
when the first mosque collections appeared during the Umayyad
dynasty (661-750). Islamic libraries further developed with the
composition of books on principal branches of knowledge cultivated
at that time. Private and semi-public libraries were a phenomenon
in the Muslim world – they grew rapidly not only at mosques but
madrasah, palaces, government institutions, scholars’ and elites’
home. A learned scientist of the Ummayyads, Prince Khalid ibn
Yazid ibn Mu’awiyah (d. 704) is credited with the foundation of
libraries of the Islamic era (Ibn Khaldun contested the existence of
library during the time of Khalid, while Ibn Nadim in his Fihrist
ascribe the opening of the first library of Islam to Khalid). According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam (El2), Khalid was the one who commanded books be fetched out for the people during an epidemic.

The earliest significant Islamic libraries were established under the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) at Baghdad as the Abbasids provided the most congenial atmosphere for the advancement of learning and teaching. The very first public library was founded by Harun al-Rashid which reached its peak during the rule of Caliph al-Ma’mun (832). The library (often called “Khizanat al-hikmah”) formed an integral part of a complex for scientific institution, the Bayt al-hikmah (House of Wisdom). The Encyclopedia of Islam (El2) suggested such institution was formerly established by Caliph al-Mu’awiyah of the Umayyads, which may indicate that “Bayt al-hikmah” was referred as a generic term for such academy. An academy which bore the same name was founded at Baghdad in 993-994 (Aman, 1975). Another academy by the name of Bayt al-hikmah was reported to have been founded at Cairo in year 1004 (Merlet, 1989).

Islamic libraries grew out of the interests and needs of cultured and scholarly individuals, literary societies, and institutions of learning. Great academies were housing rich and diversified collections. Cultivated individuals assemble private collections that feed their literary taste and scholarship; bibliophiles collected books of their interest. Many individual scholars had their own libraries.
Though they were privately owned, many of these libraries were made available for the use of the learned community.

It was reported that special library tradition has been founded for the cultivation of various departments of literature and the sciences; collections of medical books in hospitals; works on mathematics, astronomy and astrology in observatories; and religious and legal writings in mosques and colleges (Aman, 1975). Waqf in which books were willed, endowment, and gift of books bequeathed often made a basis of the library and making the library collection more diversified. Copying and purchasing was conducted in building well-stocked libraries.

Existence of large public libraries represents one of the landmarks of Islamic intellectual movement and being one of the major factors in the successes of the Islamic world. Developing libraries has always been a conscious notion among great personalities of Islam. Separate permanent buildings were built for them, and at times, these libraries were annexed to the large mosques and schools. As for the independent and permanent library buildings, they comprised several rooms and spacious halls which connected these rooms. The sizes of collection vary considerably between libraries. One estimate put it that the Maktabah al-Khulafa’ al-Fatimiyyin in Cairo had 1,600,000 volumes, among which were the finest copies of the Qur’an, and the royal library at Cordoba established by the Umayyad caliphs had its 400,000 volumes of books catalogued in 44 volumes (Pinto, 1997).
However, priority to have public libraries is still neglected in a number of Islamic countries. In most Middle Eastern countries, the functions of such libraries are performed by the national libraries. Some Islamic countries do not have national libraries in spite of the fact that usually it is the national libraries that provides public library services. Situation in some countries like Turkey, Jordan, and Pakistan are better since they have long established public libraries; and Malaysia deserves mention as a country having both the national library as well as a chain of well-connected public libraries.

**What is an Islamic library?**

Before furthering the discussion, we should attempt to at least strive for a general definition of Islamic library. As surveyed from relevant literature, Islamic library is a library having Islamic or Arabic collection as a major component, or having Islam as the subject oriented collection. Islamic library is not only home to a quality reference library but also its scope reflect diversity and range of standard Arabic heritage text as well as modern secondary literature on Islamic history and culture. The collection would always represent rich Islamic literary tradition and a significant source of knowledge resources for its clientele and community.

The International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science (2003) describe the following:

What then is an ‘Islamic library’? It is a library that focuses on Islamic – or Muslim – sources of information, irrespective of geographic concentration (Muslim majority / minority country),
language focus or discipline orientation. Such libraries by their very nature were, from the very beginning, more public than private and, indeed, freely open to the public. (p. 330)

Many reputable Islamic libraries were autonomous libraries, having independent governance. In the later era, Islamic libraries are usually attached to parent organizations, with or without an autonomous building, a department within a larger library, faculty library, or having Islamic collection as a distinctive sub-collection. In the case such as the Islamic universities and research institutions, Islamic materials dominate the collection.

Islamic libraries had always played significant roles in Muslims’ learning and cultural process. Historical and descriptive accounts on Islamic libraries reported that earliest libraries were for the access of the elites and scholars but later masses were allowed to read the books and use the libraries. Libraries in which people could check out books owe their existence to Islamic civilization. The West started to loan out books beginning with libraries in Cordoba during the 8th century, and the largest library in Europe until modern times was actually represented by Islamic Spain (711-1492). Modern Islamic libraries were built not only to collect treasures of books and information resources but also to facilitate Muslims’ knowledge seeking and meet the demands for literature.
Islamic libraries and librarianship

Islamic civilisation contributes significantly in today’s intellectual and management underpinnings of libraries, book arts and learning. As the Islamic civilisation took shape, academic institutions and libraries were established and abundance of books was accumulated. The library operation and collections required librarianship in which physical organization, systematic arrangement and preservation of resources became more prevalent.

The learning tradition, libraries and librarianship in the Muslim world had significantly brought together the concept of library as a public place, literate culture, public libraries, translations, concept of a universal collection, private collection, book lending, book collecting, book art, bookbinding, calligraphy, illuminations, illustrations, copyists and correctors, book provenance, book hunting, mobile library and book sellers. Muslims did not build the oldest library in the world (probably that of the ancient city of Nippur in Assyria, where the Sumerians stored thousands of clay tablets) but it was the Muslims’ contributions that influenced the world libraries as asserted through the vivid description of early Islamic libraries in many sources that revealed Islamic libraries were in every respect centuries in advance of those of the West (Siba’i, 2002).

Books in Islamic libraries were systematically arranged and classified according to the various branches of knowledge, with Qur’an having a special place. It is believed that al-Nadim’s *Fihrist*
is a clear picture of the system adopted in the libraries of those times. *al-Fihrist*, produced in 987 was a landmark work that contained an orderly description of every book al-Nadim had ever handled, seen, or otherwise knew of with short bibliographical note on the author.

History has it that early Islamic libraries were manned by the learned. Notable individuals such as al-Khawarizmi, who invented algebra (librarian in the famous library of Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma‘mun), ‘Ali ibn Yahya al-Munajjim (d. 888, the librarian for al-Fath ibn Khaqan, the Minister of Mutawakkil), Ya’qub ibn Killis (ca. 975-996), al-Shabusti (d. 1000, librarian of the Fatimid, Caliph al-‘Aziz), Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030, a librarian to the vizier Abu al-Fadl), Ibn Sina (980-1037, librarian of the Samanid prince), Abu Mansur (d. 1038), Ibn al-Futi, Ibn al-Sa‘i (d. 1275, a historian and was director of the Mustansiriyah Library), and Hunayn ibn Ishaq (Superintendent of Ma‘mun’s Library) were among the scholars entrusted to organize and maintain libraries.

Some of the librarians were designated only because of their scholarship. *International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science* (2003) reported “the principle duties of librarians included acquisition and preservation of resources, facilitating supplies for scholars, supervising the collation and correction of books in the collection, and co-ordinating with the library’s endowment or management in administrative matters” (p. 331). Scholar librarians are a bygone legacy, most often replaced by bibliographers or subject specialists.
An unwarranted lost

Maybe most of us ever wonder what Islamic libraries in the past were like. It was unfortunate as there were many reports on how the rich and wonderful Islamic libraries and the collections vanished. Libraries on many Muslim lands had been destructed, destroyed, plundered, burned and dispersed due to war, change of government, colonization and neo-colonialization. In the 13th-16th century, immense lost happened: for example, in Granada, the Christians made bonfires from Arabic religious books (In Baab-e-Rahlat alone was estimated at 1,070,000 volumes); in Cordoba, there was annual festival of the burning of Arabic books; and in Tripoli, 3 millions books were burnt during the crusade. ‘Collective robbery’ of books (Ashraf, 200_) through transfer or purposes of ‘saving’ and ‘preservation’ is still happening such as what happened in Iraq (Lossin, 2008).

The immense lost of Islamic libraries were also attributed to deliberate destruction such as by the Mongols in 1258 in which libraries in Baghdad were burned and emptied into Tigris river. In the hands of the Muslims conquer and invaders manuscripts and books also perish miserably, dispersed and scattered due to vandalism, lack of care, sold or taken out by irresponsible charge of the library, lost in fires and floods, wiped out due to doctrinal differences or religious and political strife, and by natural decay. In many Islamic countries, usually remaining manuscripts and books were poorly organized and lack traceability. Those casualties have caused diminish to the role, place and importance of Islamic libraries.
Arabic (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and other Arabic related languages) manuscripts formed the bulk and also important collection of the European libraries and museums. Several famous one are such as the collection in Chester Beatty Library, British Library, Bodleian Library, Berlin Library, Leiden University Library, University of Michigan Library, McGill University Library, Princeton University Library, France’s Bibl iotheque Nationale and including manuscripts in the 118 libraries in Italy (Ashraf, 200_) and many other institutions on the non-Muslim lands. Huge manuscripts and artifacts were acquired and removed from the Middle East, Indian sub continent, Malay Archipelago, and Africa to Europe by the Orientalists especially during the colonial period.

While reflecting the sufficiency of present day Muslim librarians, Monastra (1995) commented the following:

Islamic librarianship has been in generally sorry state during the twentieth century. The publication of books and other items in the Islamic world is flourishing, but the ability of Muslim librarians to handle the material adequately has been deficient – although not for lack of sincere, conscientious thought and discussion among concerned librarians.

In the colonial period, modern libraries in Muslim countries were set up and run by Europeans; in the early postcolonial period as well, professional British librarians dominated librarianship in the former British colonies. By now, however, library education has progressed enough in Muslim countries to enable Muslim librarians to assume leadership. (p. 2)
Many attempts to preserve and revive Islamic collections and establishing modern libraries in Islamic countries are contributed much by experts from the West. In Egypt, manuscripts scattered in the various mosques in Cairo were put into order by the first director of its National Library, a German Orientalist who was also among one who established the Library. The renewed interest in safeguarding and preserving the Arabic-Islamic collection in other countries with rich manuscript collection such as Turkey, Syria, Beirut, Iraq, North Africa and Yemen were made possible aided by the European experts, especially from German, Holland and England. In Iran, the American roles and influences was evident in the country's librarianship education especially before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

**Arabic-Islamic collection**

Generally speaking, the Islamic tradition has classified knowledge into two categories. The first kind of knowledge is that given by God to man via revelation. This type of knowledge is regarded as the highest form of knowledge and consequently is made obligatory on every Muslim to learn, understand and implement. The second form of knowledge is that acquired by humans through rational inquiry based on experiments and observation (al-Attas, 1978). The door for *ijtihad* and consultation has always motivated new and enrichment of knowledge in Islam, thus diversity of publication themes is a normal phenomenon.
Especially after World War II, the volume of Arabic-Islamic acquisitions drastically increased in North America and Europe because of the growing awareness of the Middle East’s economic and strategic importance. In the wider scenario, Islamic studies as an academic discipline, has an ancient root in western institutions of higher learning. If the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion listed in their directory over 1600 accredited departments and programs of Religious Studies in North America, it may suggest the total for all Islamic studies programs for the countries competing for leadership in this study area which are the United Kingdom, North America, France and Germany is overwhelming. Closer to our region, China, Japan, Korea and Mongolia formed the AFMA (Asian Federation of Middle East Studies Associations) to promote Middle East and Islamic Studies in Asia.

Prominent university libraries and library of Congress have large collections of Middle Eastern materials (Partington, 1980). With the rich Islamic collection and mass publications brought into the Western world, need for bibliographic control was felt and a desire for development of the required systems began, including of its affect to the end users.

Since collections in the Islamic libraries are primarily of Islamic books, knowledge of the discipline combined with bibliographic expertise and mastery of the tools of the trade enable grasp of subject pertaining to Islam and the Muslim world. Emphasis is of course on the classical or literary Arabic since Arabic is the main repository of all the religious sciences of Islam. The intensity of use of Arabic resources for study and learning is
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more needed at the higher level or advanced studies. Wider span
of consultation expected and multiplicity of information resources
needed. It is imperative to have at least basic Arabic because
accessing Islamic-Arabic resources is a challenge to the systems
providers as well as to the users.

Even though the number of Muslim librarians is growing,
some claim that today’s Islamic libraries and library practices have
fallen behind those of the West (Esposito, ed., 2008). If monetary
and technology issues could be resolved, Muslims librarians should
aspire to measure up by having the action and knowledge
competencies to emulate initiatives undertaken by mostly the
European librarians such as MEMP (Middle East Microform
Project), OACIS (Online Access to Consolidated Information on
Serials), Index Arabicus (a bibliography of Arabic periodical articles,
1870-1969) and a standard Arabic union catalogue competitive of
OCLC (Online Computer Library Center).

Malaysian Islamic libraries

Original formal education in Malaysia (which was then Malaya)
started off with Madrasah and Islamic schools. With the new
national education system, Islamic education stream was
introduced. The first higher Islamic education institution in Malaysia
was marked by the establishment of Kolej Islam Malaya in 1955.
Later, the curricular development demanded for tertiary Islamic
education.

Malaysia is enjoying the status as a developed Islamic nation.
Several Islamic institutions have been established in response to
the process of Islamic development, inculcation of Islamic values
policy, and Islamization of knowledge. The Islamic resurgence phenomenon in the early seventies has resulted in the creation and development of large Islamic-Arabic collection by Islamic institutions. Those institutions together with institutions of higher learning that offer Islamic studies are housing a considerable Islamic and Arabic collection usually accomplished through the institutions’ library. Besides traditional subjects, the collections cover whole array of disciplines like Islamic economics, Islamic anthropology, Islamic sciences or something offering ‘Islamic’ alternatives in the dominant culture.

Muslim scholars and academies with specialization in Islam grew rapidly and became available in government agencies, public universities and private colleges, as well as in institutions of Islamic research. On the other hand, Islamic civilization, Islamic philosophy and scientific thought have been established as a liberal arts education through taught course since 1970s and made compulsory in government universities since 1983/84 (Seminar Pendidikan Tamadun Islam, 1995). Explosion of literature in the field of Islamic studies is noticeable, and interdisciplinary thrust is more obvious than ever.

International Islamic University Malaysia (including ISTAC, or the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization) took the lead in Islamisation of knowledge effort and integration of Islamic perspective into all disciplines when it was established in 1983. The University states, “... integrates Islamic Revealed Knowledge and values in all academic disciplines and educational activities” as part of its vision. The University Library’s policy is to
acquire books with Islamic content on diversity of subjects. Several Islamic special collections relevant to the University program and niche areas are developed such as Islamic economics, Islam and education, Islamic laws, rare collection, and added with remarkable special collections brought along when ISTAC was made a department of IIUM.

With the growth of Islamic-based Institutions, Islamic research institutions and new universities and university colleges offering Islamic studies related programs, there are wider job opportunities for graduates interested in Islamic librarianship environment. To gauge how many Islamic libraries are there in Malaysia, the Author provides a list of Islamic institutions known, or presumably have a worth mentioned Islamic collection in their library (Appendix).

Despite the emergence of new Islamic libraries in Malaysia, no literature discussing element of managing Islamic libraries or Islamic information services in the local perspectives could be found. Current works on librarians’ competencies and library science curriculum are mostly devoted to non-conventional elements usually related to communication, or emphasizing the instruments, that is the information technology.

In the Malaysian scene, International Islamic University Malaysia offers few elective courses on Islamic librarianship. However, there is a need for an assessment of how many of the courses have been offered each semester; whether it is dependent
on the availability of the resource person, and convenient to the resource persons’ interest and capability as compared to the actual needs, or preparedness to teach the course that are not just focusing on imparting knowledge, but inculcating appropriate skills for carrying out technical tasks efficiently. It is also important to agree on the minimal requirement needed for students interested to work in Islamic libraries environment.

Preparing librarians competent to manage Islamic libraries is a new scenario local librarianship is facing. Malaysian library science education preparedness in dealing with Islamic libraries is significant towards incorporating the subject matter as one concentration within the LIS curriculum. It will indirectly delineate the scope of Islamic librarianship that suits Malaysian context especially, and other Malay speaking countries generally. In this regard, Indonesian Islamic universities design their librarianship education programs characterized by Islamic literature as one of the means to improve the quality of Islamic educational institutions as a whole (Farida & Purnomo, 2006).

New niche: Islamic librarianship?

According to Harrod’s librarians’ glossary and reference book, ‘Librarianship’ is simply “The profession of the librarian”, and there is a directive to “See also Library science”. If there is a need to distinct between library science and librarianship, the simplest contender would be about theory vs. practice, i.e. librarianship is application of library science. Alternatively, there are those who consider ‘library science’ and ‘librarianship’ synonyms, i.e. the
theory and practice of library work have been integrated from the start.

Islamic librarianship is rather new and strange concept here, and is yet to emerge as a field of study in its own right. Although the naming of the discipline is fairly new, Islamic librarianship is reflective of a multidiscipline area and embodied demonstrative character of a discipline. By perusing the emergence, establishment, growth and development of Islamic libraries, we may be able to explore the philosophy, method and practice of Islamic librarianship. Owing to little attention being given to Islamic librarianship, the lack of literature on the subject is understandable.

The circular meaning of the word ‘Islamic’ is ‘of Islam’. Here, apparently there is no clear indication for defining Islam, except for explicit expression on Islam. Describing the Islamic components that concerns librarianship is another challenge; nevertheless, it is important that the expression of ‘Islamic’ complies with the beliefs and values of the religion. A web search of “Islamic librarianship” through Yahoo by the Author in early September 2008 found seventeen hits. As the Author discovered, the phrase ‘Islamic librarianship’ was first used in 1984 by Dr. Mohamed Taher in his article “Islamic librarianship: research perspective”.

Is Islamic librarianship studies emulated in Europe? Is there some influence of Islam present in the library of the West? Islamic librarianship as always conveniently referred to as “Middle Eastern librarianship”, “Oriental librarianship”, “Arab librarianship”, “Near Eastern librarianship”, “North African librarianship”, or “Comparative
/ International / World librarianship”. However, none of the alternative terminologies took a holistic perspective in the meaning.

Used as a compound, in conjunction with the name of a discipline, it denotes the specialization of Islamic studies and library science. In categorizing it into special librarianship, the Islamic studies notion that emerged from Orientalism would bring some applicabilities. Because Islam is not just a religion but also a system, Islamic librarianship does not connote Islamic studies librarianship such as in the case of medical or law librarianship.

Islamic librarianship is always grouped into area studies librarianship whereas, area studies significantly reflects less diversity as far as geographic boundary is concerned and it is difficult to construct a set of universal differences and likenesses between specializations. The area studies presented an alternative of combining “Asian” and “African” partly to embrace the Muslim world. In the case of Near Eastern librarianship for example, it can represent Islamic, Christian and Jewish librarianship since those religions originated in the same geographic area. As compared to “Near Eastern”, the “Middle Eastern” give focus on the modern period.

Some of the names deemed appropriate as the Arabs account for less than one-fifth of all Muslims, more than half of whom live in Asia. But, it is a misconception to accept that “Arab” and “Islam” is an interchangeable subject. Even though librarianship has become a pervasive profession; it is global in
reach – geographically and socio-economically but Islam is universal and not nationalistic. Christians and the Muslims make half of the world population with Islam being the number two religion and the fastest growing religion. Both religions do not seem appropriate to be associated with only certain part or the world.

From another dimension, unlike Christian librarianship as an example, Islamic librarianship should not be categorized as religious librarianship. Here, the word ‘religious’ is derived from ‘religious study’. Since the terminology comes from Christianity, ascribed to the flourishing era of scholarly and historical analysis of the Bible – it concerned ritual prayer, saint, devotion and related topics. Islamic librarianship put no gap to embrace between those living the religion and those studying the religion. While having no separation from religion, the universality of Islam (i.e. man and religion form an inseparable whole) does not condition librarians whom their professional practice is Islamic librarianship be intentionally informed by Islamic faith.

While developing the field of Islamic librarianship, naming issues should be congruent to the content, which is on Islam, Muslim and Arabic. "Islamic" as an adjective is used for referring to religious teachings and practices that are rooted in the basic sources of Islam (namely the Qur’an and traditions of Muhammad). The cultural products, social practices and expressions of Muslims rooted to the original sources translating Islam as the way of life also made the content of "Islamic". This premise works inline with
the organization of knowledge promoted by the early Muslim scholars. Also, there is a unique and lasting relationship between Arabic language and Islam; it is a fact that Arabic language is a tool to understand Islam.

Islamic librarianship is a virgin area for research and study. It is so partly because the concept of librarianship implies a philosophical underpinning of the field as a unique discipline, a relatively new, and not yet fully developed approach. Despite advancement of libraries in Islamic civilization, there is yet any work on historiography of librarianship from Islamic perspective (Taher, 2000).

Attempts have been made to approach the central issue on philosophy of Islam and librarianship in papers presented at previous proceedings of COMLIS. The perspectives presented and outlined deserved further investigation as the basis for Islamic librarianship. A holistic approach on Islamic librarianship would encompass the place of Islam to the sociology of knowledge, the growth of library science in general, and the creation of professional awareness about the real tenets and contributions in which Islamic world has influenced librarianship.

**Issues and challenges**

There are many things worth of contemplation. Muslims librarians continue being the followers and consumers of library systems on Islam and Arabic. The impact of knowledge, disciplines and specializations has implications on contemporary issues like
interdisciplinary, skills, research methods, and professional identities. In addition, the communication technologies had changed the way people manage, do business and activities, interact with the global communities, and transformed how the world is studied.

The profession should not so much depend on the conventional structure to address concerns and queries of Islamic librarianship without our active participation. Step should be taken to formalize and build upon the experiences, knowledge, and acquaintance through national and international platform for a more meaningful and substantive contribution for Islamic librarianship.

**Defining Islamic information**

Librarianship, information and documentation are so cohesive. Librarianship concerns with making information and its sources organized (organization of bibliography) and facilitating information and knowledge needs through exploration of library collection within an intellectual environment. Islamic information that concerned librarianship have a more focus entity as compared to what is embraced within the media or knowledge management practitioners. In information studies profession, the representation and organization of information resources is a primary focus as the vehicle to make available all recorded knowledge and information.

Islamic information is yet to be properly described, let alone its definition. Islam deals with information in a holistic sense, and
synthesizes spiritual and mundane. In the case of Islamic librarianship, it should be approached in the context of realizing the Islamic thought and its methodology. Islamic approach to discipline put the highest emphasis on authority and authenticity of sources. This premise would then define the identity of Islamic information. Islamic information chaining to sources of knowledge: the Qur’an, Sunnah, Qiyas and Ijma’, and including other sources in which the Muslim scholars, Orientalists and academies have written in the past or may write in future on the sacred books, books written about the sacred books, and whatever falls within the Islamic sciences.

**Knowledge organisation and information access**

Interdisciplinary dimensions and area study vistas are among high priority theme in Islamic librarianship (Taher, 2000). The Islamic civilization has been, and is still a major contributor to knowledge in a variety of fields and specializations. There is a lot of intermingling of fields and disciplines, including sources and technology that require elaborations.

Systematic ability to use the Islamic resources is depended among others, the organization. To ensure Islamic information system meeting the pursuit for Islamic information, it is obvious to introduce a re-orientation of the entire corpus of classification of knowledge into bibliographic classification systems. Information management subscribing to western hegemony is not conducive for Islamic Weltanschauung.
In term of technical area, the field of Islamic librarianship is yet to come to terms with a variety of issues. The debate is still on almost every aspect such as bibliographic control, cataloguing, classification, indexing, exchange of information, etc. From the main issues in the international framework, there is a lot to be looked into pertaining to Universal Availability of Publications, Universal Bibliographic Control and International Standards for Bibliographic Description. Attention for specialization of Islamic librarianship lies in knowledge management as it was suggested that “combination of scholarship with knowledge management skills” can make scholarly librarians (Islamic libraries, 2003). Library science being the “Ilm alat” (vehicle for knowledge and information) should be put in place to organize information.

**Resource development and documentation**

Besides organizing and managing, resource development concerns would be the growth, creation, information pattern, content origination, control, availability, preservation and making the resources accessible. Parallel with the fact that information resources on Islam that exist today are widely dispersed, the diversity of information resources will continue to increase, and the evolving literatures in different ways serve the different imperatives of Islam as a discipline.

Skills are important in developing collection, understand how information systems and information technology affect Islam as a discipline and a living religion, multidisciplinary knowledge production phenomenon, and observations regarding approaches
to Islam. There is no necessity to re-invent the wheel, but an urgent need to revive use of the established and available Islamic resources since it is quite evident that the information practice of the Muslims is that they relied on fundamental resources (Taher, 1997). Research on information seeking in humanities may well support this opinion.

**Information seeking and retrieval**

Islamic recorded information are available in varieties, some are distinct and have problems unique to Arabic. It comprises of classical and modern works, core and secondary collections, Arabic and non-Arabic, originals and translation, wide subject coverage, not very common genres unless to the Arabic-Islamic scholars and academies, contents being the Islamic sciences and Islamic perspectives approach, and many more. As recorded information of a universal religion, the widespread dispersion of Arabic-Islamic works is also available in many publication patterns. Current phenomenon indicates that publishing on religious studies is experiencing exponential growth, thus developing controlled vocabularies that received universal acceptance is crucial.

It is not the case that information is not being effectively used, but that the effective use of information is just a small fraction of what it potentially could be, given the appropriate collection, organisation, storage and retrieval mechanisms. An understanding of the nature and characteristics of Islam as a subject area is important if the available information resources are to be used effectively. Perhaps Arabic literature is the richest of the ancient
literatures that having personnel with native or near native Arabic should be celebrated within libraries having big classical collection. In this regard, some western university libraries enjoy the benefits of having Arab librarians living and working in their countries.

It is important also to understand the behaviour of the Islamic and Arabic users approach to information, range of information sources used by this group and that they need varieties of documentary and non-documentary tools to identify materials. Islamic researchers should be competently served with library service that opens up for them so to advance in their field. Requirements in achieving the ideals would include appropriate information literacy, precise understanding of the use of collection, and efficient systems for delivery of resources and administrative support.

**Information sharing, cooperation and network**

One of the challenges Islamic librarians face is expressing their views within the profession. Working with authorities in other fields would make the applied and action research more valuable contributions in developing better service ideal. Areas of research may include classification, classification of knowledge vs. classification of library materials, vocabulary control, intellectual access, FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and Arabic-Islamic literature, treatment of Arabic script and romanisation, abstracting and indexing, providing catalogue and interchange of bibliographic data, end user access, cooperation and networking, education, manpower, etc.
To further develop the field, education and research on Islamic librarianship should be directly and explicitly introduced to widen the pool for high skills workers. Many intimate subjects of the field can be explored with cooperation and partnership with relevant communities and partners. Professionalism can be enhanced if many librarians servicing the Arabic-Islamic community understand the use of the collection and be able to provide quality information services.

Sharing programmes and facilities would also ensure the sustainability and advancement of the Islamic librarianship profession. “Cooperative interconnections and accomplishments in Muslim countries presented a dismayingly separate situation” (Sajjad, 1988) partly holds true. As of today, there is yet association, let alone strong affiliations between libraries and information institutions of Islamic countries, except for COMLIS (which is a loose organization) to unite the libraries and the information workers.

Interest groups and professional associations provide means for practitioners to engage in the development of the discipline and promotion of the profession. When there is no platform to synergise the cooperation and less opportunity for practitioners and scholarly community to study and develop the field, a lot of potentials are not tapped appropriately for the cause of resources development. There is a lot to learn from the established associations like MELA (Middle East Librarians Association) and
MELCOM International (European Association of Middle East Libraries) on resources development activities and cooperation. Association like International Association of Oriental Librarians and European Librarians in African Studies (ELIAS) would in certain ways complement the coverage for librarianship in the Muslim world.

Malaysia had taken a small step of establishing an Islamic librarianship professional body when the Malaysian Librarians Association (MLA) founded a committee, the Malaysian Islamic Library group following a proposal by the Author during its annual general meeting in April 2005. Another association known to take the naming of Islamic library is the Islamic Library Association registered in Hyderabad but functionally located in California. The University of Karachi once had an Islamic Library Information Centre within its Library and Information Science Department as recorded in the Centre’s publication.

An international cooperation to supporting the cause for international standardization and establishment of bigger network should remain as one of Muslim librarians’ ideals. Information is yet available about pursuing something like the Centre for Arab-Islamic Bibliography as suggested by Professor J.D. Pearson in 1975, World Islamic Bibliographic Centre as suggested by Professor Mumtaz Ali Anwar in 1983, World Bibliographic Centre for information on Islam suggested by Professor Anis Khurshid in 1986 and Universal Bibliographic Control of Islamic Literature (UBCIL) as suggested in COMLIS 3 in Turkey. Latest development
is the Arabic Union Catalogue project as promoted by the King Abdul Aziz Public Library which was launched in November 2006.

Direction for research

Every practice area has its own set of sites for research. While the information scientists have the capacity to studying multidisciplinary applications and problems, librarians may be generally more comfortable with tackling specific professional issues than discussing the philosophical foundations that underlie the librarianship. Lack of basic research inhibits understanding of phenomena as basis of theoretical foundation.

Studies to unveil the contribution of Islamists in Library science – Islamization of the sciences have to be far more substantial than merely citing relevant verses from Qur’an and Hadith. Islamists from the beginning concerned about knowledge society, facilitating access and control. The real intellectual challenge lies in articulating the religious textual relevance in conceptual terms rich enough to determine the content and direction of actual empirical scientific research.

Islamic information issues cover basic areas such as organization, storage and retrieval, communication and network. Prospect for development is very wide: Identification of what make Islamic resources, organization, preservation, information analysis, Islamic informatics, creation of new information resources, creation of bibliographic tools, use study, developing standard Islamic
Future research can certainly bring more clarity to the meaning of Islamic librarianship. The profession can work from what is available while the intellectual role has been paved by previous Islamic library librarians. The need to raise Islamic librarianship as a field of study including its nature and enterprise require some working definitions in order to formally suggest its place within library science and contribute to seek Muslims’ root in librarianship.

Conclusion

Islamic libraries are not just history but a study area which need constant application so that Islamic libraries are held in high regard. The Muslim social scientists or librarians may at best summarize the state-of-the-art and draw the outline of Islamic librarianship (Taher, 2000). The discussion for a working conception hopes to offer a framework that may describe for a definition for Islamic librarianship. A definition is a fundamental element for shaping a specialty. It is needed to help others, within and outside the field, understand the legitimacy of the practice and the general expectations of that specialty.

The profession is generally aware that library schools is expected to produce graduates who are potentially able to work at any library equipped with basic in collection development, cataloguing, classification and reference. However, promotion of
scholarship should not be neglected that library school education need to provide its applicability to Islamic librarianship. All this while, Middle Eastern librarianship has been given the formal attention as an area of interest of the West. The Library of Congress and other Western institutions had paved substantial leadership in the Muslim world librarianship that the Muslims librarians and information scientists should draw greater interest and commitment to the same cause.

Several areas in Islamic librarianship need to be further developed. To name amongst them are the classification for manuscripts and printed books, access to intellectual content of Islamic documents, solution for Muslim names in cataloguing, bibliographical control of print and electronic documents, assist users unveil the treasures of Islamic-Arabic library, facilitate understanding of genres of Islamic literature, enlighten range of materials for research opener and content comprehension, revision of catalogues, etc. With such basic problems at hand, why are we not formally making it as one educational agenda?
References


Pantelidis, Veronica S. (1979). The role of the library school in the career of the Middle Eastern librarian. In David H. Partington


Pollock, James W. ( ). What is a Middle East librarian. [United States]: Middle Eastern Library Association.


Appendix

Initial list of Islamic libraries in Malaysia

NOTE. The list comprises of libraries which the Author believes to be Islamic libraries or libraries possessing Islamic collection deserving mention. The compilation is based on personal intimate knowledge and information published in the media. Data are derived from the Directory of Libraries in Malaysia (2002)*, the mailing list of Islamic organizations and associations of ABIM’s headquarters, list of universities and colleges from Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia’s website, admission advertisement of local institutions of higher learning in local newspapers and
Author's own findings. The libraries are categorised into public universities, private universities and colleges, public and state libraries, governments departments, statutory bodies and private institutions, and associations and societies.

Feedbacks in making this list more comprehensive are welcomed and appreciated.

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<th>Name of institutions</th>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Islamic Centre Library</td>
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</table>
11800 Minden  
PULAU PINANG  

Islamic Mini Library  
Health Campus  
16150 Kubang Kerian  
KELANTAN  
Universiti Utara Malaysia  

7  
Perputakaan Masjid Sultan Badlishah  
06010 Sintok  
KEDAH  
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia  
√  

8  
Perpustakaan Masjid Sultan Ismail  
81310 Sekudai  
JOHOR  
√  

B. Private universities and colleges  
International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance (INCEIF)  

9  
Library  
2nd Floor, Annex Block, Menara Tun Razak  
Jalan Raja Laut  
50350 Kuala Lumpur  
WP Kuala Lumpur  
Institut Professional Baitulmal  
X  

10  
Library  
Lot 1363 Jalan Perkasa  
Off Jalan Kampung Pandan  
55100 Kuala Lumpur  
WP Kuala Lumpur  
√  

11  
Institut Teknologi Ibnu Sina  
Library  
No. 34 Blok F, Jalan 4/50  
Diamond Square, Off Jalan Gombak Setapak  
53000 Kuala Lumpur  
WP Kuala Lumpur  
Kolej Islam Antarabangsa  
√  

12  
Library  
No. 1, Jalan 31/10A Taman Batu Muda  
Mukim Batu  
Gombak  
68100 Kuala Lumpur  
X
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Al-Madinah International University (MEDIU)  
Tingkat 11, Plaza Masalam  
No. 2 Jalan tengku Ampuan Zabedah E/9E  
Seksyen 9  
40100 Shah Alam  
SELANGOR  
Institut Perguruan Islam Bangi | X |
| Al-Ghazali Resource Centre  
Sg. Merab  
43650 Bangi  
SELANGOR  
Darul Fuqaha | √ |
| Library  
Lot 3283 Jalan IPIS  
Sg. Merab Luar  
43650 Bangi  
SELANGOR  
Institut Antarabangsa Iqra’ | X |
| Library  
29A PJS 10/24  
Bandar Sri Subang  
46000 Petaling Jaya  
SELANGOR  
Kolej Darul Hikmah | √ |
| Library  
163 B, Jalan ABIM Surada  
Sungai Ramal Dalam  
43000 Kajang  
SELANGOR  
Kolej Hafiz | √ |
| Library  
No. 2 Wisma Hafiz, Jalan Batu 3  
41300 Klang  
SELANGOR  
Institut Pengajian al-Azhar | X |
| Library  
Lot 224, Batu 9 Kebun Baharu  
Telok Panglima Garang  
42500 Kuala Langat  
SELANGOR | X |
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kolej Jamiah Islamiah Sultan Ismail Petra (JAIPUTRA) Library</td>
<td>Lot 1911, Kem Kijang Jalan Pantai Cahaya Bulan 15350 Kota Bharu KELANTAN</td>
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<td>Institut Pengajian Tinggi Islam Perlis</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>Guar Jentik, Beseri, 02400 Kuala Perlis, Perlis</td>
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<td>Kulliyah al-Dirasat al-Islamiyah wa-al-Arabiyah (Kolej Pengajian Islam dan Bahasa Arab)</td>
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<td>D/A Kompleks Maahad Tahfiz al-Qur'an, Lot 1225 Mukim Rim, Chenderah</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77000 Jasin, MELAKA</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kolej Antarabangsa Dunia Melayu Dunia Islam</td>
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<tr>
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35. Library  
Kampus Utama  
Batu 28 Kuala Sungai Baru  
78200 Alor Gajah  
MELAKA  
Kolej Islam Teknologi Antarabangsa (KITAB)  

36. Library  
Bangunan Tahfiz, Kompleks Masjid Negeri Pulau Pinang  
Jalan Air Hitam  
11400 Geogetown  
PULAU PINANG  
Maahad al-Ihsaniah (MANHAL)  

37. Library  
Jalan Bukit Tambun  
14100 Simpang Ampat  
Seberang Prai Selatan  
PULAU PINANG  

38. Kolej UNITI  
Library  
71250 Pasir Panjang  
Port Dickson, NEGERI SEMBILAN  
Kolej Universiti Darul Qur’an Islamiyyah  

39. Library  
Kubang lembek  
21200 Kuala Terengganu  
TERENGGANU  

40. Perpustakaan Awam Islam Malaysia  
Kompleks Pusat Islam  
Jalan Perdana  
50519 Kuala Lumpur, WP KUALA LUMPUR  
Pusat Manuskrip Melayu  

41. Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia  
232 Jalan Tun Razak  
50572 Kuala Lumpur  
WP Kuala Lumpur  
Perpustakaan Masjid Abd Rahman bin Auf  

42. Jalan Puchong  
58200 Kuala Lumpur  
WP Kuala Lumpur  

C. Public and state Libraries
Perpustakaan Masjid Al Shafie
43 Kampung Pandan
55100 Kuala Lumpur
WP Kuala Lumpur
Majlis Agama Islam & Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan

Perpustakaan Islam
44 Jalan Sultan
15000 Kota Bharu
KELANTAN
Masjid Sultan Ahmad Shah

Pusat Dakwah dan Perpustakaan Islam Negeri Pahang
45 26600 Pekan
PAHANG

Perpustakaan Masjid Ayer Panas
46 Kampung Ulu Duyong
77200 Bemban, MELAKA
Perpustakaan Masjid Al Hasaniah

78200 Kuala Sungai Baru
MELAKA
Perpustakaan Masjid Al-Anshariah

Batu 22, Kampung Lubok Redan
48 Masjid Tanah
MELAKA
Perpustakaan Masjid Negeri Al Azim Melaka

Km 3, Bukit Palah
49 75150 Melaka
MELAKA
Perpustakaan Masjid Kampung Serkam Darat

77300 Merlimau
50 MELAKA
Perpustakaan Masjid Air Hitam

Mukim Jerlun
51 06150 Jitra
KEDAH
Perpustakaan Masjid Air Puteh

Mukim Serdang
52 09800 Bandar Baharu
KEDAH
Perpustakaan Masjid al-Aqla

Bt. 6, Simpang Empat, Mukim Pengkalan Kundur
53 06660 Alor Setar
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D. Government Departments

76 Pesantran Kemahiran Islam Malaysia
   Perpustakaan
   Cawangan Sarawak, Telaga Air
   93050 Kuching
   SARAWAK

77 Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
   Perpustakaan
   Aras 4-9 Blok D7
   62502 Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
   WP PUTRAJAYA
   Masjid Putra

78 Perpustakaan
   62502 Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
   WP PUTRAJAYA
   Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan

79 Perpustakaan
   Jalan Duta
   50480 Kuala Lumpur
   WP KUALA LUMPUR

80 Mahkamah Syariah Wilayah Persekutuan
   Bangunan Sultan Sulaiman
   Jalan Damansara
   50676 Kuala Lumpur
   WP Kuala Lumpur

81 Darul Qur’an Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
   Perpustakaan
   Jalan Hamzah, Ampang Pecah
   44000 Kuala Kubu Bharu
   SELANGOR

82 Institut Latihan Islam Malaysia (ILIM)
   Perpustakaan
   Jalan Sungai Merab Seksyen 12
   43650 Bandar Baru Bangi
   SELANGOR
   Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia
### E. Statutory bodies and private institutions

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<td>84</td>
<td>Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia</td>
<td>Perpustakaan IKIM No. 2 Jalan Langgak Tunku, Off Jalan Duta 50480 Kuala Lumpur WP Kuala Lumpur Islamic Arts Muzium Malaysia</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>Scholars’ Library</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia Berhad</td>
<td>Knowledge Management Centre 5th Floor, Dataran Kewangan Darul Takaful Jalan Sultan Sulaiman 50000 Kuala Lumpur WP Kuala Lumpur Yayasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Islam Malaysia</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>Institusi Perundingan dan Penyelidikan YAPEIM</td>
<td>No. 52, Bangunan YAPEIM Jalan Kampung Attap 50732 Kuala Lumpur WP Kuala Lumpur</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>Perpustakaan Awam Islam Dar Nur Zahra</td>
<td>5529 Lorong Merican Off Jalan Telipot 15150 Kota Bharu, KELANTAN</td>
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### F. Associations and societies

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<td>Regional Islamic Da’wah Council of South East Asia and The Pacific</td>
<td>RISEAP Library Tingkat 4 Bangunan PERKIM Jalan Ipoh</td>
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World Congress of Muslim Librarian & Information Scientists
25th - 27th November 2008
Putra World Trade Center

51200 Kuala Lumpur
WP Kuala Lumpur
Islamic Outreach ABIM

90 Library
3402, Jalan Ampang Hilir 2
55000 Ampang
WP Kuala Lumpur
Research and Information Centre in Islam

91 136 A Jalan Burhanuddin Helmi
Taman Tun Dr. Ismail
56000 Kuala Lumpur
WP Kuala Lumpur
Centre for Studies in modernity and Civil Society (CESMACS)

92 No. 37-A, Lorong Rahim Kajai 13
Taman Tun Dr. Ismail
60000 Kuala Lumpur
WP Kuala Lumpur
Pusat Budaya Arab Libya

93 Library
No. 42/44 Wisma Mat Jan
Jalan Raja Abdullah
50300 Kuala Lumpur
WP Kuala Lumpur
Persatuan Darul Fitrah Malaysia

94 9-5, Floor 3A Jalan PJ/U 8/51
Bandar Damansara Perdana
47920 Petaling Jaya
SELANGOR
Sisters in Islam

95 Library
No. 7, Jalan 6/10
46000 Petaling Jaya
SELANGOR
Persatuan Pengkajian Khazanah Klasik Nusantara Malaysia
(Pengkajii)

96 No. 40, Jalan Batu Geliga Satu
Taman Melewar
68100 Batu Caves
SELANGOR
United Sabah Islamic Association

97 Library
Ibu Pejabat USIA
Bangunan USIA
Jalan Sembulan
88803 Kota Kinabalu, SABAH