
**Arabic Collection Processing and Challenges
in Nigerian Academic Libraries: The University of Ilorin Library Experience**

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ABSTRACT

At the University of Ilorin library, the Arabic collection forms the largest collection of non-Roman scripts. It constitutes the major resource for staff and students. The task before the cataloguer is to process library collection of diverse types including Arabic materials. The purpose of the study was to investigate the processing of Arabic materials together with the challenge encountered at the University of Ilorin Library. In this research, a descriptive survey approach was used. Questionnaire and oral interviews were used to elicit information from respondents. The findings revealed that the majority of librarians find it difficult to catalogue Arabic materials. The study concluded that a standard cataloguing tool that would have universal application for Roman and non-Roman script should be developed for Arabic books cataloguers; more Arabic librarians should be employed to process Arabic materials among other recommendations.

Keywords: university library, cataloguing, and classification, Arabic materials, librarians.

Introduction

A catalogue is a complete list of items; books held by a library in alphabetical order or other systematical order (Kindresley, 2016). He described cataloguing as making a catalogue of, or entry in a catalogue. Hence the library catalogue should serve as a finding list for a specific document. One of the primary responsibilities of a library is to preserve, conserve and organise the book and non-book materials for easy retrieval by library clientele. The task before the cataloguer is to process library collection of diverse types including Arabic materials.

Arabic materials are important like other materials in the university of Ilorin library holdings because the University offers Arabic language and literature to its students. Researchers on

Islamicists and historians consult the works of the Arabic held by the library. Arabic materials have become increasingly important for a variety of political, economic, and religious reasons. According to Muhammed and Biki (2017), Arabic today is a universal language of political, economical, and diplomatic interactions. The authors emphasized that owing to the language's popularity, learning and teaching of Arabic can promote Nigerian diplomatic relationships with sister nations in international organizations like the African Union (AU), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and United Nations Organization (UNO).

Yusuf (2020) gave religious factors as the major reason why Arabic is studied in Nigeria. In his explanation, he said that Nigerian Muslims passively or actively use Arabic Qur'an during five times daily prayer. In addition, the bulk of Islamic knowledge and traditions is recorded in Arabic. Therefore, it is of immense importance to them to appreciate the culture of the religion they profess.

From the historical review of the language in Nigeria, we can see that Arabic served as the custodian of world civilization in pre-colonial Nigeria. Bollata, (2015) argued that it is an indisputable fact that if not for Arabic through which the history of West Africa was first written, the West Africans would have been ignorant of many important events of their past. These imperative interests in the Arabic language, among others, have made successive governments consider the teaching and learning of Arabic in our schools important and therefore include it in any educational policies formulated in Nigeria.

For easy location and retrieval of materials by library clientele, Librarians catalogue and classify books (Nwalo, 2012). In the light of this, these researchers observed that the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule 2 (AACR 2) and library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH) are the main tools that librarians employ to catalogue and classify Arabic materials before they are made available to the users. The researchers however observed that the strict application of these tools to process these materials presents some challenges for the cataloguer. For instance, librarians find it difficult to determine some access points such as author, title, subject headings, and imprints, among others. For instance, until now, there are no specific "standard access points" for cataloguing and processing Arabic collections in Nigerian academic libraries.

A lot of people have written on the problem in cataloguing Arabic books. Zuwiyya (2007) stated that the main problem in cataloguing Arabic materials is identifying the part of the groups of names and titles as the main entry. She said this is because, for centuries, Arabs seemed to pride themselves on being known mainly as the sons of their fathers (son) or fathers of their sons (father). Hence, Cataloguing Arabic articles should be approached accordingly even for experienced cataloguers.

Plettner (2003) emphasised the importance of having a globally shared name authority file for vernacular Arabic names. The author suggested that there is also a need to allow the input of authorised headings into the international clearinghouse of multi-lingual records from national

agencies and customised downloading of the chosen field. According to research done by Abdoulaye (2002), he found that most of the cataloguing staff ignored some rules of AACR2 and LCSH in cataloguing Arabic items due to the insufficiency of AACR2 and LCSH in cataloguing Arabic materials.

Statement of the Problem

The ease at which clientele retrieve Arabic collections from the library catalogues and shelves depends largely on whether or not the materials have been accurately catalogued and classified by librarians. The only two cataloguing tools that librarians employ when processing Arabic materials are (AACR2) and (LCSH) which are the most suitable for cataloguing and classifying materials with Roman scripts. The problem here is that most cataloguers who must transliterate the Arabic script in many instances do not retain the spelling of Arabic words as they are spelled in the original language. Therefore, this study intends to examine types of Arabic collection, manner of processing, and challenges of cataloguing it in the university of Ilorin library

Purpose of the Study

Accordingly, the purpose of the study was to investigate the types of Arabic materials acquired at the University of Ilorin Library and the method of processing of the materials together with the challenges encountered.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following questions.

1. What type of Arabic materials did the University of Ilorin Library acquire?
2. How did the University of Ilorin library catalogue its Arabic materials?
3. What were the challenges associated with cataloguing and classification of Arabic materials at the University of Ilorin library?

Literature Review

Shortly after it began academic work in 1976, the University of Ilorin began to offer courses in Islamic Studies, Arabic Language, and Literature. Therefore, the University library also gave equal attention to the growth of its Arabic materials as part of its holding as in other courses. The Arabic collection development effort of the University of Ilorin, over the years is in tandem with the observation by Ya^cqub, Onibon, and Olagunju (2003) that “the introduction of certain academic or research programs in Nigerian institutions necessitated the use of the certain materials for teaching and research purpose. Arabic materials in the collection of the University of Ilorin Library include books and periodicals on Arabic Grammar, Semantics, Prosody, Rhetorics, Morphology, Fiction, Non-fiction, documents, and reference collections.

For easy location and retrieval of materials by library clientele, Librarians catalogued and classified books by using the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR 2) and Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH) tools (Macdonald and Vanduinkerken, 2015). The acquisition and final processing of the materials in the library follow prescribed procedures. This is to ensure that the subjects and class marks assigned to the materials are accurate and consistent.

The procedure begins with the publishers' catalogues or lists which the Acquisitions librarian sends to Lecturers of Arabic Studies and Islamic Religious Studies to recommend the desired titles to the Library for acquisition. The recommended desired titles are then acquired and sent to the cataloguing librarians to catalogue and classify the materials by assigning subject areas that the materials cover - accurately and consistently catalogue and classified. The tasks before the librarian include; (1) effective reading of the texts (2) identifying the primary and secondary messages in the texts (3) accurate interpretation of the messages (4) formulating the correct subject heading and (5) location marks for the texts and finally (6) organizing the texts in the catalogue using Author, Title, or Subject Headings as well as on the shelves using Location Numbers (Omoniyi, 2008).

In an attempt to implement the procedure (1-6) above in the process of cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials, librarians rely primarily on Arabic Language knowledge and skills in the adaptation of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule 2 (AACR 2) the Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH) tools to process Arabic collections. According to Ismail, Yaakub, and Napiyah (2006), the insufficiency of the AACR in cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials is due to its bias for Roman scripts because the tools were developed without consideration for non-Roman Arabic scripts. Consequently, Librarians have to fall back on the adaptation of Roman standard to process Arabic Materials.

In Romanisation of Arabic, Abdoulaye (2002) observed that transliterators of the Arabic script in many instances do not retain the spelling of Arabic words as they are spelled in the original language; for instance, the Arabic glottals, which English do not have in their phonetic inventory. Thus, we find that the Arabic emphatics are not pronounced as uvularized, but rather as plain, non-uvularized sounds. Another example, is the pharyngeal /ع/ sound pronounced as a glottal stop, and the pharyngeal /ح/ sound pronounced as a [h]. Moreover, there are many such phonetic redundancies. This means the same sound could be spelled in multiple ways. Hence, *ص* and *ث* rendered as /s/ and *ز* and *ض*, *ظ*, *ذ*, *ض* rendered as /z/. According to Muhammed Al- Rabi^o (2015) romanisation of cataloguing tools also constitutes another problem of the standard or alphabet to use. For instance, the name, Fatimat, which can either be spelled with /t/ or /h/ can be problematic. Librarians without Arabic skills may confuse which letter of the alphabet to choose.

Arabic calligraphy itself constitutes another challenge. Arabic calligraphies are simple, complex, and aesthetic in value. Arabic calligraphy could be misleading if it is complex and if it is allowed to intrude into the title of a book. Some publishers however inadvertently include Arabic calligraphy in their publications to create beauty in what is published. In the title of this instance, the Librarian could misinterpret the real title of the book from its aesthetic title. There is also the

problem of typography and phonology which may distort the graphics and title of Arabic books as Librarians attempt to vocalize and write down the vocalized Arabic words in Roman scripts, (Zawadeh, 2008).

Similarly, the library integrated system software does not recognize the Arabic style of writing. For example, the word /Ramadan/ does not indicate which /d/ must have a dot/., (Vassie, 2000). Zuwiyya (2007) stated that the main problem in cataloguing Arabic materials is identifying the part of the groups of names and titles as the main entry. For centuries, Arabs seemed to pride themselves on being known mainly as the sons of their fathers (son) or fathers of their sons (father). Hence, Cataloguing Arabic articles should be approached accordingly even for experienced cataloguers. Arabic names are usually lengthy, consisting of patronym, (given name) such as laqab (descriptive epithet); Kuniyah" (appellation), honorific name and „nisbah" (attrition) all of which are used spontaneously as the name of the individual. For example, Abu malik Wahab ibn Qasim Ibn Ahmed Mohammed Al-syaibani. Although such common lengthy names are genealogical and cultural features among the Arabs, they, however, pose a problem for the cataloguer in determining the part of the name to be used as the main entry (Zuwiyya, 2007).

Titles of Arabic materials often contain too much information that can bring about confusion when cataloguing such materials, according to scholars; it is difficult to decide which of the title to choose as the right one when there is more than one title as ascribed to a book (Ismail and Roni, 2011).

The cataloguing tools that university libraries in Nigeria use in cataloguing Arabic materials (AACR 2 & LCSH) are in Roman script, which are insufficient for the cataloguing of Arabic materials. In a study of the problems that librarians face when cataloguing Arabic books in Malaysia academic library, Ismail and Roni (2011) argued that the AACR and LSCH cataloguing tools lacked universal application quality because they appear only in a Roman script thereby excluding Arabic texts from the English cataloguing and classification scope. This, according to Othman and Momin (2008) made the World Congress of Muslim Librarians and Information Scientists (wCOMLIS) meet and come up with common standard codes and procedures for cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this research descriptive survey approach was used. It involved finding facts about a phenomenon (Scott and Morrison, 2017).

Population and sample

The study covers all staff in the Technical Unit of the University of Ilorin Library but was limited to 12 purposely selected librarians involved in the translation, transliteration, bibliographic description, indexing, cataloguing, and classification, and processing of Arabic material collection in the library including the system analyst. The purposive sampling technique, according to Daramola (2007) is a deliberate attempt to select samples for study.

Instrument including validity and reliability

The researchers designed: “Arabic Collection Processing Challenges Questionnaire” which was the main research instrument employed in this study to elicit data from respondents. The questionnaire consists of two main sections, A and B. Section A provides demographic information of the respondents while section B is subdivided into three parts. Each part contains a statement on the problem of the study. Twelve librarians at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin were the respondents to the questionnaire. However, a checklist was prepared to physically observe the materials processed to substantiate the provision of the questionnaire. Draft instrument was given to the experts to determine the suitability of the statements. Their comments and observations were incorporated, leading to the deletion and modification of some items while others were retained. A pilot study was carried on three respondents who are not part of the study and the administration of the questionnaire was repeated at four weeks intervals. The scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics and the reliability of the instrument was .82. This was considered high enough for the success of the study.

Procedure for data collection

Copies of the questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher together with the oral interview. The researcher explained the items on the questionnaire to enhance respondents understanding and they were given sufficient time to supply information.

Data Analysis

Frequency of response and simple percentages were used to analyse the data collected.

Results

Research Question 1: What type of Arabic materials does the University of Ilorin Library acquire?

Table 1: Type of Arabic Materials Acquired.

| S/N | Type of Material | Frequency of librarians’ response/12 | Percentage |
|-----|--------------------|---|------------|
| 1 | Arabic Language | 8 | 66.7 |
| 2 | Grammar | 4 | 33.3 |
| 3 | Rhetorics | 3 | 25 |
| 4 | Morphology | 2 | 16.7 |
| 5 | Semantics | 2 | 16.7 |
| 6 | Syntax | 3 | 25 |
| 7 | Arabic Literature: | 11 | 91 |
| | Prose | 9 | 75 |
| | Poetry | 4 | 33.3 |
| | Drama | 1 | 8.3 |

Table 1 showed that the University of Ilorin Library acquired materials in Arabic Language and Literature, (66.7%) Arabic Grammar, (33.3%) Rhetorics, (25%) Morphology, (16.7%) Semantics, (16.7%) Syntax, (25%) Arabic prose, (75%) Poetry, (33.3%) and Drama (8.3%).

Research Question 2: How does the University of Ilorin Library catalogue its Arabic Materials?

Table 2: Arabic Materials Cataloguing Method.

| S/n | Cataloguing Method | Frequency of librarians' response/12 | Percentage |
|-----|---|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Assistance from Arabic translators without library Science background | 12 | 100 |
| 2. | Librarians without Arabic background | 11 | 91.7 |
| 3. | LCSH and AACR 2 tools | 12 | 100 |
| 4. | Assistant Librarian with Arabic background | 4 | 33.3 |

As shown in Table 2, the University of Ilorin Library relied solely on lecturers from the Arabic Department of the University to translate Arabic books before the Librarians could catalogue the materials (100%); Librarians who did not have any background in Arabic language catalogued Arabic materials (91.7%) as already translated by Arabic Language Lecturers. The two main tools used to catalogue Arabic collection were Library of congress Subject Heading (LCSH) and Anglo-American Classification Rules series 2 (AACR 2) (100%). Assistant Librarian with background in Arabic Language was engaged to catalogue Arabic books (33.3%).

Research Question 3: What are the challenges associated with cataloguing and classification of Arabic materials at the University of Ilorin Library?

Table 3: Challenges of cataloguing Arabic materials

| S/N | Challenges | Frequency of librarians' response/12 | Percentage |
|-----|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Calligraphy Typography, Pronunciation: (a) Differentiating between كُتِبَ eg. kataba, Kutiba and kutub. (b) Understanding the meaning of nasakh, raq'ah and sulus. (c) Recognizing specific calligraphs (d) Identifying appropriate Roman words to adapt (e) Reading Arabic calligraphy | 11 3 3 3 6 | 91.7 25 25 25 50 |
| 2. | Arabic Names: (a) Lengthy names (b) Name varieties (c) Multiplicity of names (d) Name inversion | 11 9 11 11 | 91.7 75 91.7 91.7 |
| 3. | Title of book in Arabic: (a) Determining title to select (b) Recognizing lengthy title (c) Multiple title in a book (d) Books with same content but different titles. | 5 12 11 8 | 41.7 100 91.7 66.7 |
| 4. | Subject Heading Formulation (a) Conventional versus Islamic world subject heading (b) Translating Arabic terms | 11 9 | 91.7 75 |
| 5. | Software problem: (a) Missing Arabic features transcriptions (b) Limitation of LCSH (c) Arabic truncated words وصل | 8 5 3 | 75 41.7 25 |

Table 3 showed that differentiating between pronunciation (91.7%), understanding word meanings (25%), recognizing specific calligraphy (25%), choosing Roman words to adapt (50%), and reading Arabic calligraphy were challenges that librarians at the University of

Ilorin library faced in the process of cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials. The librarians also encountered the problems of lengthy Arabic names (91.7%), name varieties (75%) multiple names (91.7%), name inversion (91.7%), determining which title to select (41.7%), recognizing, the lengthy title of a book (91.7%), conventional versus Islamic world subjects heading (91.7%), translating Arabic terms (75%), missing Arabic transcript (75%), limitation of LCSH tool (41.7%) and truncations in Arabic words (25%) were problems that librarians often encountered when cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials.

Discussion of Findings

Arising from the data analysis and interpretation in this study, the respondents stated that the University of Ilorin Library acquired varieties of Arabic books in its stock. Table 1 (items 1-7) showed that it acquired materials in Arabic Language and Literature, Arabic Grammar, Rhetorics, Morphology, Semantics, Syntax, Arabic prose, and Poetry.

It was found that translators from the Department of Arabic Studies were engaged to translate Arabic books for the librarians. In the end, librarians adopted translations from the Department of Arabic Studies as the correct subject headings to use to catalogue and classify Arabic materials. Despite American - developed Library of Congress Subject Headings and Anglo-American Classification Rules 2, the main tools adapted to catalogue and classify Arabic materials, the strict application of these tools to process these materials presents some challenges for the cataloguer. Librarians in line with Zuwiyya (2007) observation find it difficult to determine some access points such as author, title, subject headings, and imprints, among others. This is because until now, there are no specific “standard access points” for cataloguing and processing of Arabic collection in Nigerian academic libraries.

It was also revealed in Table 3 items 1 - 5 that librarians had difficulty reading Arabic texts, pronouncing Arabic names and words, recognizing titles and subjects in Arabic books, adapting computer software and American tools to catalogue and classify Arabic books, (Zawadeh, 2008).

Conclusion

Based on the obtained results the following conclusions were drawn: An Arabic material is an important part of the University of Ilorin library holdings because students of Arabic language and literature, researchers as well local and diplomatic purposes are served with the stocking. Translators who are not familiar with Librarianship registers and synonyms expressions might find it difficult to appropriate library terms when translating Arabic texts for cataloguing and classification of the materials are being used. It is established that librarians encounter difficulties in the cataloguing of Arabic materials in the University of Ilorin Library.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers wish to recommend as follows: Lecturers from the Department of Arabic Studies should be used minimally as translators of Arabic books for librarians unless they have a background in Library Science. Translators who are not familiar with Librarianship registers and synonyms expressions might find it difficult to appropriate library terms when translating Arabic texts for cataloguing and classification of the materials. The library should either employ Librarians with Arabic Language backgrounds as cataloguers of Arabic materials or employ those with a Degree in Arabic Studies and send them to accredited Library Schools to be trained as Librarians before deployment as cataloguers of Arabic materials. More Arabic librarians should be employed to process Arabic materials due to its quantity as the largest non-roman medium collection in the library. Cataloguers should meet regularly and come up with common standard codes and procedures for cataloguing and classifying Arabic materials in Nigerian libraries. Librarians with advanced Arabic Language backgrounds should come up with Arab-developed subject Headings and classification schemes for processing Arabic materials. Library software developers should develop a computer system with Arabic codes for the processing of Arabic materials in the library.

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