

Preservation and Accessibility to Private Collection of Islamic Scholars in Kano Metropolis

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Abstract

The study investigates the collection of Islamic scholars in Kano metropolis and how they are preserved and accessed. The study also investigates the challenges faced by the Islamic scholars in the preservation and access to their collections, and the strategies to put in place to address the identified challenges. Purposive sampling technique was used in which the leaders of the three major Islamic sects in Kano namely: Tijjaniyya, Qadiriyya and Izala were selected as the respondents for the study based on the size of their collections, approachability, and leadership position. Personal interview and observation were used as the instruments for data collection. The result shows that the collections of the Islamic scholars were housed in separate rooms with proper care and handling. The Islamic scholars allowed access to their collection to family members, trusted friends and disciples. The major challenges associated with the preservation and access to their collections were absence of modern facilities for preservation and access, lack of involvement of the Government and librarians in providing assistance and professional advice to the Islamic scholars on modern methods of preservation and access. The strategies to address the problems include seeking advice from professional librarians; liaise with libraries and documentation centers for advice and training on basic routines of library services, employment of librarians and acquisition of modern library facilities for proper preservation and access to their collection.

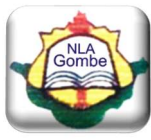
Keywords: Islamic Scholars, Private Collection, Preservation, Access

Introduction

Islamic Scholars are regarded as the learned ones or possessors of knowledge in the society. They also serve as the repositories of knowledge and have the duties of enlightening and giving guidance to members of the society. They also engaged in educating the members of the society through Islamic schools and sermons in the Mosques (Pervez, 2017). They are fond of learning and therefore developed private collection with relevant information resources in order to meet their respective needs and to serve as a source of reference for their study.

The private collections of Islamic scholars can be in form of manuscripts such as handwritten lectures, commentaries, incantation and prayers, poems, satire, treaties, song, etc., or in printed form such as books, journals, magazines (Habibu, 2014). They are valuable information resources that cover a wide range of subject areas that will serve as vital instruments in the development of every society (Muhammad, 2009). These collections are valuable and therefore, liable to be preserved. Private libraries are type of library of any size that is not supported by public funds, but by individual or families (Reitz, 2004). The owners of the collections usually display books that show their range of interest, and they are able to collect in depth on a subject of their interest.

The arrival and impact of Qadiriyya, Tijjaniyya and Izala movements was significant in the development of writings and private collections. The Islamic scholars from different part of



the world brought books and works on Sufi, Sunni and various subjects which spread to major cities and villages in northern Nigeria (Habibu, 2014) The volume of literary work increased considerably thereby facilitating the development of private libraries.

Statement of the Problem

Islamic scholars established and maintained private collections for their use. The most effective way to ensure longevity and access to the collection is to prevent or retard deterioration. The private collection of Islamic scholars in Nigeria lack a uniform method of documentation and organization which make it difficult to be accessed (Habibu, 2014). Kani (1986) also argued that Islamic scholars possessed a significant number of information resources, but no serious attention has been given to this vital heritage that led to their loss and deterioration. Despite the existences of these private collections of Islamic scholars, little efforts have been made in the recovery of the collections, and the state of their preservation and accessibility. This gives room for concern about their effective preservation and access by individuals and families. In the light of the above concern, this study investigated the preservation and access to private collections of Islamic scholars in Kano State

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include:

1. To identify the preservation methods to the collections of Islamic scholars in Kano metropolis
2. To find out how Islamic scholars in Kano provide accessibility to their private collections
3. To identify the challenges faced by the Islamic scholars in the preservation and provision of accessibility to their collections

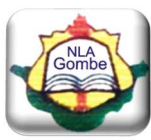
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Preservation of Private Collection

The responsibility of any library is to preserve and manage information materials both printed and non-print for present and future use. San (2019) believed that, libraries have the responsibility to preserve, conserve, and restore library materials. According to Siddique, (2011), Many books and manuscripts were destroyed due to lack of proper means of preservation. A large number of books from private collections of Islamic scholars were lost or damaged through carelessness, neglect, and ignorance which make their life-span not so long (Laugu, 2007). Proper dissemination of library materials is possible if the documents are in good and usable condition.

Preservation as an activity in libraries is described as the protection, repair, restoration and maintenance of the library materials. It is defined by San (2019) as the task of minimizing or reducing the physical and chemical deterioration of documents. Therefore, materials in public and private libraries must be preserved to ensure that they are retained for as long as possible. Every library, large or small should have a well defined program for preserving the materials which it housed. Private collections in Nigeria are usually abandoned after the death of the originators and most libraries and research centers which housed such collections lack financial resources and equipment to manage and preserve these collections efficiently (Abbas 2009).

This situation therefore, calls the attention of librarians to put more effort to ensure that such valuable collections were not destroyed. All the elements of preservation should be considered, like the condition of the materials, restoration of the damaged materials, conversion and storage conditions and facilities.



Accessibility to Private Collection

The purpose of developing libraries is to promote reading, study and research by facilitating the use of the resources available. The materials acquired by libraries need to be accessible to those who need them and at the right time. In the area of access to private collections, Islamic scholars allowed limited access to their collections to trusted persons as stated by (Zaharadeen, 1988). Islamic scholars normally lent books and other manuscripts to trusted persons such as friends, relatives, and other scholars. But they rarely keep any borrowers register in the form of books or cards which makes such borrowed materials to get lost (Laugu 2007).

During the period of Sheikh Usman bin Fodio (1754-1817), there was reasonable lending system between the scholars of the caliphate and other palace covered by the jihad. There was an effective network of distribution of texts, and letters containing request of all sorts. This was found among the remains of correspondences of the caliphate. Also various correspondences between Muhammad Bello and El Kanemi were found, which clearly indicated the existence of lending activities (Zaharadeen, 1988). Muhammad (1975), cited in Habibu (2014) pointed out the problem with this lending system, as the owners rarely record the date due for the return of the materials, and there was neither a fine nor any form of punishment for long overdue books.

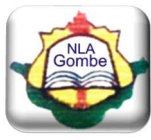
Challenges of Effective Preservation and Access to Private Collections

The primary aim of developing private collections by Islamic scholars is to support their teaching, learning and research activities by providing adequate, relevant and up to date information resources. Islamic scholars are using different measures like securing perimeters and building where the collections are kept and restricted access to prevent deterioration and loss to the greatest extent possible. However a lot of challenges hinder effective preservation and access to their collections. The challenges of effective preservation and access to the collection as stated by Habibu (2014) include: Poor housekeeping activities, Poor environmental condition and absence of disaster management. A number of their collections were damaged by insects and badly affected by dust, mould and moisture. Biddle, (2012), cited in Iliyas (2015), observed that private collections in northern Nigeria suffered lack of cleanliness, temperature, humidity and light control, adequate storage facilities, sufficient maintenance of existing building, and handling procedures. These challenges led to the deterioration of the valuable collections of Islamic scholars especially those in manuscripts form and therefore hinder effective usage of the collection.

In the area of access, the major challenges are lack of modern information retrieval devices which hinders effective access and utilization of the rich resources in the private collection of Islamic scholars. These devices according to Okafor (2006) include catalogues, classification, abstracts, indexes and bibliography that enable the users to find and use the materials effectively. Other challenges of accessing private collections of Islamic scholars as stated by Biddle (2012), cited in Iliyas, (2015), were lack of access policies particularly on copying and borrowing.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative method using interview and physical observation as instruments for data collection. The population for the study comprises of sixty seven (67) registered Islamic scholars in Kano metropolis (Kano State Shariah Commission, 2008). Purposive sampling technique was used to select a leader from each of the three major sects in Kano, Tijjaniya, Qadiriyya and Izala, (Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and



Training, AKCDRT, Mambayya House, 2005), as respondents because they are in the best position to provide information relevant for the study.

Results

Coding of the Subject of the Research

The leader of Qadiriyya sect was coded A, the second respondent representing the Izala sect was coded B, while the leader of Tijjaniyya sect was coded C.

Theme 1: Methods used in the Preservation of the Collections

Respondent (A)

The collections are preserved in a separate room with adequate ventilation. Storage facilities such as shelves and containers were made up of strong wood. A family member is assigned to take care of the collection and to ensure that the materials are in good condition. There is regular dusting and cleaning of the collection and the room in general. During acquisition, qualitative materials in hard covers were preferred for purchase.

Respondent (B)

Respondent B revealed that, the storage facilities and furniture were made of strong woods which cannot easily be damaged by insects. There is regular dusting and inspection of the collection. Most of the materials are in hard covers. Rare books and fragile materials are stored in a special cupboard.

Respondent (C)

There is regular inspection and dusting of the collections. Books in hard covers are preferred during acquisition, and valuable books are purchased in multiple copies. The storage facilities such as shelves and cupboards are of standard quality.

From the summary of responses given, it can be observed that, the Islamic scholars under study have separate rooms for their collections, and the rooms are big enough to accommodate more materials. The findings also show that, the Islamic Scholars preferred acquisition of books with relatively high quality. In addition, popular books especially on Hadith (Tradition of the Prophet) are acquired in multiple copies to prevent deterioration by excessive use. Also, during arrangements, the materials are not tightly shelved to allow circulation of air.

The findings also showed that, the restoration of deteriorated materials were through local binding, photocopying and lamination. In his writing on preservation of library materials, Siddiqui (2011) believed that, the preservation of library materials begin with the acquisition of qualitative materials and storing them in a controlled environment with proper care.

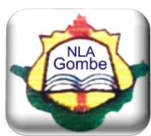
Theme 2: Access to the Collections

Respondent (A)

According to respondent A, the collections were accessible to family members, friends and disciple were also allowed to use the collections for their research activities. Students and researchers outside the family can use the library with permission. Borrowing is allowed to members of the family, while public users are allowed to photocopy some of the materials.

Respondent (B)

Respondent B indicated that, Family members are allowed to use the collections, and researchers can only access the collection with his permission. Materials in the collections are



not loaned out to anybody. Members of the family, researchers and his students can only photocopy the materials of interest with permission.

Respondent (C)

According to the respondent, the collection is accessible to restricted family members. Visitors are getting access to some of the collections. Members of the family are allowed to borrow materials from the collections, but researchers outside the family can only photocopy some of the materials.

The findings showed that Islamic scholars allow partial access to their collections. The main users are family members and friends. Members of the family can borrow materials from the collections. The finding also shows that, the Islamic scholars are actively engaged in sharing their resources in order to enrich their collections with relevant and current materials for their teaching and research activities.

They share materials on different subjects through photocopying of the materials. In their writings, (Clifford and Olurotimi, 2014), stated that effective access to information resources depends upon the availability of effective reprographic services.

Theme 3 Challenges Encountered in the Preservation and Access to the Collections

Respondent (A)

Respondent A indicated that, the major challenges of preserving the collection were poor quality of the paper, shortage of power supply, absence of modern preservation facilities such as microfilm, scanner, photocopy machines and so on.

In the area of access, there is lack of awareness of the existence of the collections to the general public, Lack of adequate funds, and absence of qualified librarian.

Respondent (B)

The major challenge of preserving the collection is poor quality of the materials, lack of professional assistant/advice on modern preservation and access methods. Non return of borrowed materials is another challenge that led to restrict access to the collection.

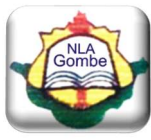
Respondent (C)

There is poor quality of the books especially our local publication. There is lack of professional advice on modern preservation methods.

There is little challenge as the collections are only accessible to the families and trusted friends, and materials are not loaned out to public users. There is lack of equipment for modern methods for accessing the collection.

The summary of the responses showed the challenges faced by the Islamic scholars in the preservation and access to their collections. The materials are getting deteriorated as a result of chemical factors, and the substandard paper used for the production of the materials. Modern preservation facilities such as scanner, microfilming, photocopying machines and close circuit television were absent in all the collections.

There is lack or absence of disaster management plans especially the provision of fire extinguishers that will allow quick response in case of fire outbreak. Another challenge faced by the Islamic scholars under study is the lack of professional advice on modern methods of preservations especially digitization.



The major challenges faced by the Islamic scholars under study in giving access to their collections are lack of equipment for modern information dissemination such as computers, internet, and scanners. It was also observed that photocopy machines are not available in all the collections. Another challenge as indicated is the lack of qualified staff that will be dedicated for the work especially the digitization of the collections.

Theme 4: Suggested Strategies for Effective Management of the Collections

Respondent (A)

The respondent suggested the involvement stakeholders in the library profession and government to provide professional and financial assistance/advice on effective preservation and access to the collection, Creation of more repository centers, and provision of modern library facilities.

Respondent (B)

There is need for training and educating family members on the importance of preserving the private collections for teaching, learning and research. Creation of more repository centers and provision of modern preservation and access facilities.

Respondent (C)

Respondent C suggested the need for Islamic scholars to involve librarians to provide professional assistance/advice on how to preserve and give access to their private collections, provision of modern preservation and access facilities and creation of more repository centers where private collections of Islamic scholars can be preserved.

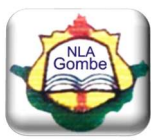
The Islamic scholars under study suggested the needs for the involvement of stakeholders and government in the preservation and access to private collections through offering professional advice and training to the owners of private collections. Another useful suggestion was made by the respondents on the need for the owners of the private collections to teach and train their family members on the importance of the collections and the need for their preservation. They also suggested the creation of repository centers where such collections would be preserved and utilized properly. The Islamic scholars under study also indicated the needs for the provision of modern preservation and access facilities that will allow sharing of resources. These were similar with the suggestions made by Muhammad (1975); Ghorab (1983) and Abbas (2009) on the need for the development of more centers such as those in Bayero University Kano, University of Ibadan, Kano State History and Culture Bureau, etc. for the care and utilization of private collections.

Conclusion

The study finds out how private collections of Islamic scholars are preserved and accessed in Kano metropolis.

The collections of Islamic scholars are housed in separate rooms with proper care and handling. The modern preservation facilities/methods such as microfilm, digitization, scanner etc., are absent in all the collections.

The users of the collections of the Islamic scholars are family members, trusted friends, and their disciples. There is limited access to the collections as public users are not allowed to borrow out materials from the collections.



The major challenges associated with the preservation and accesses to the collections are lack of professional advice/assistance to the Islamic scholars on modern methods of preservation and access, absence of modern preservation and access facilities and so on.

The strategies suggested for effective preservation and access to their collections include the involvement of government/librarians and organizations in providing assistance and training to the Islamic scholars on modern methods of preservation and access, employing qualified staffs, provision of modern preservation and access facilities, and the creation of more repository centers where such collections can be preserved and utilized effectively.

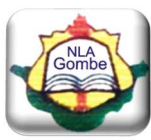
Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Islamic scholars should seek the advice/assistance from librarians on how their collections should be taken care of as regards to their preservation and access.
2. Islamic scholars should also solicit and liaise with centers of documentations such as those in Bayero University, Kano, Kano State History and Culture Bureau, for proper care and utilization of their collections.
3. Islamic scholars should go on training on basic routines of library services such as acquisition, documentation, preservation, retrieval and dissemination.
4. The Islamic scholars should also acquire modern library facilities especially for preservation and access to their collection.

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