

Arabic and Islamic collections in Nigeria university libraries: the state of the art



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Abstract Arabic and Islamic collections constitute an important aspect of the intellectual heritage of the peoples of Nigeria. Their subject matters are diverse and cover Languages, History, Law, Economics, Politics, Education, Science, etc. They imbibe a veritable body of knowledge which can be sustainably explored for the benefit of present and future generations of humanity. These manuscripts, however, are held at scattered locations and under various, sometimes undeterminable, conditions of management and care, which greatly affect access to them and their use. In order to ensure access, effective use and management, it is imperative that a study be conducted to determine their prevalence (existence) and the conditions under which they are held, managed and preserved. This paper presents a modest attempt at examining the state of Arabic and Islamic collections in the Nigerian Universities, identifying the challenges and possible solutions. It is discovered that these collections are accessed by the users, however, poor conservation and preservation of the materials and inadequate of professionals are among the challenges facing the collections and preservations of these materials in the University's library. The work therefore concludes that the collections should be well preserved, conserved through adequate management strategies, and proper handling and shelving techniques.

Keywords: Arabic, Islamic, Library, Collection, Preservation, Manuscript.

1 INTRODUCTION

Arabic and Islamic collections are essential part of the Africa's Library collections specifically in Nigerian Universities. The library's priorities and goals reflect and support those of the Universities as articulated by the National University Commission's six goals, three of which include putting student first, creating new knowledge and committing ourselves to communities. The academic library is deeply woven into this fabric of learning. It is the surrogate mother of knowledge and is considered one of any University's central components. Thus it is imperative that the library is positioned at the intellectual centre point of the University and its community. It is therefore essential that we pay close attention to the quality and quantity of collection and preservation of the Arabic and Islamic materials. It is also imperative that we maintain the collection and the preservation in the most accessible fashion possible for the academic community. To gain the trust of the community the library should promptly provide quality materials and adequate preservation that the Universities require. Hence, this work is to survey the status of Arabic and Islamic collections in the Nigeria Universities. This is highly necessary, considering the role these Arabic and Islamic scholars play in uncovering the true historical situation of West Africa, especially, Nigeria.

2 ARABIC IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

Africa had had contact with Arabic language prior to the advent of Islam in the Continent in the early part of the 7th century. As a consequence, the language had wider circulation among the people of Africa and later became the official language in some considerable part of the Africa such as Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia. As early as the 9th century, Northern Nigeria for instance, attracted the attention of the Arab geographers, travelers, and traders. In their curiosity for intellectualism and particularly for economic purposes, Arab travelers found themselves in these regions writing reports of their experiences. These Arab geographers, travelers and traders in their desire to tap the economic resources of the flourishing Trans Saharan trade for their countries produced a corpus of literary works in Arabic. These Arabic writings cover a wide range of information concerning nations, economic data, social life, international trade as well as merchant routes, religious beliefs and customs, and cosmographies. The Arabic sources are of tremendous significance to the early history of Africa particularly as it covered a period roughly between the 8th and 15th century. The Arabic literary heritage on Kanem – Borno Travelogues of the itinerant Arab Geographers were later regarded as first hand materials for African historical reconstruction.

The military and religious conquests have played important roles in the diffusion of languages. With Islamic movement, for instance, Arabic was made the language of non – Arab speakers as it was diffused into many places in Asia and Africa particularly south of Sahara. Considerable Arabic literary writings both in prose and verse were produced by scholars on subjects that cut across their religious disciplin boundaries such as history, and medicine. A distinct consciousness of history is perceptible in these literary works as several of the writings are of historical value, thus giving rise to the development of historiographical tradition in Africa particularly when there seemed not to be written records. Whenever Arabic is being mentioned in Nigeria, two regions quickly come to mind, the North and the West. Although Arabic penetrated into the above two regions long before the incursion of colonialism, yet, the time of its penetration, the level and quality of the language varied from one place to another.

Prior to the penetration of Islam and the Arabs into North Africa, the Romans and the Greeks were the rulers of the territories. During that period, they initiated commercial interactions between North and the West African Empires (Al-Ilori, 1978: 15). After the introduction of Islam to North Africa and the subsequent conquest in the territory, the trade initiated by the Romans and the Greeks was taken over by the Arabs (Galandac,i 1982:17). From then on, Arab, merchants engaged in lucrative large- scale business transaction with Wes Africa Kingdoms, including Kanem-Bornu. Commercial activities marked the beginning of Arabic in West Africa. The local traders in the West Africa Kingdoms began to pick and use some Arabic words relevant to their business transactions, but as soon as people started to embrace Islam through those Arab merchants, the desire of West Africa peoples to learn Arabic increased significantly(lawal , 2006)

During the above period, some level of competence in spoken Arabic developed but the standard could not be said to be very high. Nevertheless, many Arab geographers who visited Kanem-Bornu recorded the socio-political and economic situation of the empire in the Arabic language. There are no known records of written documents about Kanem-Bornu for that period other than those written in the Arabic language or in Kanuri using Arabic script. It must be emphasized here that before the people of Kanem-Bornu properly mastered Arabic for writing and record purposes, they availed themselves the opportunity of using the Arabic alphabets to write their own various local languages in what is known as *Ajami*.

The level of Arabic usage reached its peak in Hausa land in the 19th century during the celebrated Islamic reform of Shaykh Uthman b. Fodio. During the period, the language was widely used and its standard was very high. Consequently, the language was adopted by the Sokoto caliphate as its official language and it served several purposes in the society before the colonialists gained control of the North in 1903. Among other things, it was a medium of official communication and administration, a tool of dissemination of Islamic belief, a means of historical documentation and a language for articulation of legal rules. Over the ages, Arabic words made systematic inroad into the Hausa language and many commercial, social and religious vocabularies became part and parcel of the Hausa language and have remained so till today.

Arabic also has a relatively long history in Yoruba land though its history in the area may not be as long as in Kanem- Bornu and Hausa land. It began not only with the history of Islam but also with the trade between the Arabs from North Africa and the Yoruba land long before the arrival of the colonialists. It is needless to say that Islam served as an impetus to the study of Arabic language, not only in Yoruba land but also in the entire West Africa sub-region. It is also important to note that Arabic has witnessed tremendous development in Nigeria. The standard is not only high but Nigerian Arabic writers have also started writing on areas such as short story, drama and pithy sayings which were hitherto not known in their writings.

Muslim constitutes a major community in the Nigerian society and Arabic is of supreme importance to them, being the language of their religion. The attachment of Muslims to Arabic has develop over the centuries and most Muslims learn Arabic because of Islam .This explains why it becomes difficult for a layman to distinguish between Arabic and Islamic studies This is also why the relevance of Arabic to Islam overshadows all other functions of the language in the society. The language has become familiar to every Muslim through constant religious usages and Islamic ceremonies. This is because; the holy book of Islam, the holy Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and the book must be recited by Muslims in its original language. The caller to prayer (mu,adhin) must render the call in classical Arabic. The confession of faith (kalamat al – shahadah) must be proclaimed by both the new convert and the old in Arabic; the recitation during the pilgrimage must be done In Arabic. Furthermore, the second fountainhead of Islam, the traditions of the holy prophet Muhammad (p.B.O.H) are articulated in Arabic, and various Islamic sciences that emerged from the two major sources are also recorded in Arabic This explains why some erudite Arabic scholars consider Arabic as part and parcel of Islamic studies because no serious research work can be carried out on Islamic studies without recourse to Arabic sources.

It is however, regrettable that most of these works are still in manuscripts form awaiting competent hands to edit and translate them. In the light of the above, it becomes clear that Nigerian historians cannot dispense with the study of Arabic or the assistance of arabists whenever the need arises. Professor K.O Dike has the following remarks on how to make use of the abundant Arabic historical documents in our library or archives for writing authentic Nigeria history which can be called our own history. He submits thus:

“.....it is through their work on the enormous amount of Arabic materials in archives and libraries both public and private, that we shall be enabled to put together a coherent picture of northern Nigerian history based on our own indigenous source materials, and not as in the pasts, chiefly on the report of the colonial administrator and foreign travelers, valuable though much of these materials is. The significance of this for the new generation of Nigerian students in schools and colleges can hardly be over-emphasized. The Arabic scholars of the present, drawing upon the writings of the Arabic scholars of the past will be able to bring before us the

events and happenings of the past ages of Nigeria and so help us to write a history we may rightly call our own” (Malik 1999).

This submission of this pioneer professor of African history explains why it is important for students of history to take Arabic as their subsidiary from 100 to 300 levels in most of the Nigeria Universities.

It is no longer news that Arabic is an international language recognized by many international organizations such as AU, UN, OPEC, CAF, AND FIFA. (Amuni 1997). Hence, if Arabic is properly explored, it would contribute significantly to smooth interaction with Arab countries and possibly transform our economy. Both the Arab embassies in Nigeria and the Nigerian embassies in Arabic speaking countries need to employ Arabists as translators and bilingual secretaries. It is important to state at this juncture that, besides the many Arab countries in Asia, about nine Arabic speaking countries are on the African continent. These include Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and, Morocco. Nigeria has established diplomatic relations with almost all these countries but the full benefits of this diplomatic relations are not being realized due to some lapses which include lack of adequate use of Nigerian Arabists in these embassies

3 THE PHILOSOPHY OF COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION

The influence of Arabic language on the territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was dated back to the emergence of Islam in the country towards the end of the eleventh century (Umar 2007). It is however pertinent to mention that it was during the eightieth century that a cultural efflorescence occurred which resulted in greater generation of Arabic literature, in the early nineteenth century, under the leadership of the Sokoto Islamic revivalists . Biras (1999) emphasized that towards the end of this century, the production of Arabic literature began to wane. But, by the beginning of the 20th century, the dominance of the British colonial rule, coupled with the influx of new printed Arabic books and manuscripts from Cairo, the Middle East and North Africa, tended to reduce the interest of the “Ulama” (Islamic Scholars) in writing original works.

Mahmud (2000) claimed that Arabic /Islamic materials contain a vast literature on a number of topics like theology, politics, law education, applied science, medicine and a host of others. As a result of such a variety of subject coverage, the works have, more than ever before, become indispensable reference source to scholars and researchers in different fields of learning, especially Arabic/Islamic studies, history, political science and linguistics. Arabic/Islamic materials collection in Nigeria have achieved not only national but also international importance because of their immense research volume and reference in the enrichment of knowledge and understanding of the historical, cultural and socio-economic development of the country. Frantic efforts have been made by a number of academic, researchers and public institutions, both within and outside Nigeria to collect, document and preserve the available materials for proper and effective utilization. It is also noted that the participation of Nigerian academic institutions in particular was stimulated further by two main factors. First, was the urgent need to collect document and preserve all indigenous historical source materials. Second, was the introduction of certain academic or research programs, in these Institutions, which necessitated the use of the materials for teaching and research. Prominent amongst the Nigerian Institutions that engage in the collection of the materials are the National Museum, Jos in 1952; the Center for Arabic/Islamic Documentation of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan in 1953; National Archive Kaduna, 1960 – 70; Ahmadu Bello University in 1964; Sokoto State History Bureau in 1973; Bayero University in 1974, Center for Islamic studies of the Usman Danfodio University in 1982; the

Institute of Trans Sahara Studies, University of Maiduguri in; and the Lagos State University in 1983.

In other African countries also, there are many libraries, educational and archival institutions where numerous collection of Arabic works of Nigeria provinces are available. for instance, the Institute de researching on science Human (IRSH), Universite de Niamey in Niger Republic which has acquired, cataloged and preserved many Arabic works dealing with the intellectual activities of Hausa states from the 15th century onwards. Other centers include the Institute of African studies, University of Ghana; Ahmad Baba Center of Documentation Timbuktu; the Libyan Government Archives (Dar al-mahfu:za:t al-Farihiyya) and several other places like Egyptian and Sudanese Archives (Balarabe 1992).

British Museum Library contains most of the valuable Arabic works/documents that were removed from Nigeria by the British colonial administration. The above mentioned library is, however, by no means the only place where such items are available. There are a good number of valuable Arabic / Islamic manuscripts documents in the libraries or museums of many other European and American countries. Arabic manuscripts of the Northern Nigeria can also be found scattered in repositories in African, American and European countries; notably the Bibliotheque National Paris, the Library of the school of Oriental and African studies, University of London and North-Western University, United states. It is important to note that many of the Arabic manuscripts collections at one institution complement and enrich resources at other institutions.

The Arabic manuscript heritage of Northern Nigeria is a vast treasure form of invaluable source materials on the period of Islamic revolution in the West Africa sub-region which show the contribution of African scholars to Islamic heritage and world civilization. These materials provide a written testimony to the skill of African Scientists in Anatomy, mathematics, chemistry, medicine and climatology in the middle ages. In Nigeria, aspect of the historical, social and economic life of various people are documented and preserved in the Arabic language or scripts. The greater percentage of these manuscripts is in Arabic form. Apart from the personal library of scholars and individual families, several collections of Arabic manuscripts of interest to researchers can be found in Academic libraries and research centers across the country. The Arabic manuscripts collection in Nigeria constitutes works produced in centers of power and Islamic library, i.e. Bornu, Sokoto, Katsina and Kano. Parts of the materials also include works produced in Yorubaland. Some of these works are in other languages of Nigeria, such as Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri or Yoruba which are written in a version of the Arabic scripts known as *Ajami* (or *Ajamiyyah*).

The Arabic /Islamic materials can be classified into three forms; namely: original (which can either be on parchment or paper), photographic reproductions and microfilms. Their content contains discourses on various areas of scientific, religious, economic, cultural, philosophical and political interests. It also includes the Intellectual works of three valuable Islamic leaders and scholars of the 19th century Jihad in the Northern Region of Nigeria , Sheikh Uthman Dan- Fodio, his brother, Abdullah Dan Fudi and his son, Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto and the works of Nana Asma'u, (daughter of Uthman Dan-Fodio), who was a scholar, poet and scribe. Additionally, there are also works of scholars from West Africa, Timbuktu and Mauritania. Below, are some of the Arabic / Islamic manuscripts that are available in the Arabic and Islamic section of the Nigerian University Libraries:

Table 1: Some of the Arabic and Islamic manuscripts in the Libraries

	Author	Title	Meaning
1.	Uthman ibn Fudi	Haqiqat Iman(sic)	The importance of Faith
2.	“	Bayan wujub Hijrah(sic)	Detail explanation of what necessitate Hijrah.
3.	Muhammad Bello	Kitab Kaff Ikhwān min itibā ^c khutwat al-shaytan(sic)	Forbidden Muslim ummah from the foot step of shaytan
4.	Muhammad Bello	Jala Sammam fi marad(sic)	Effects of various diseases
5.	Al-Sayuti	kawkab al-satii(sic)	knowledge about superstition; consultation of stars. (From sheikh Nasir Kabara)
6.	Musa b. Abdullahi Jibril	Mustawahab sulam al-Talil ala Kawkab al-Sati.(sic)	knowledge about superstition
7.	Muhammad Mansur	No title	Islamic theology.
8.	Abd Razaq	Tariq al-Jannah Nafi(sic)	A benefit work to Paradise on Islamic Jurisprudence, (Fiqh)
9.	Add Salam b. Muhammad b. Hasan	Tariq al-Janah	A way to paradise
10..	Abu Hassan, Al-Maliki al-Sahdhili	Fiqh	Islamic Jurisprudence
12.	Sjilmasi Abu Wangari	Duurul Ula	Problem faced by those on top
13.	Muhammad Mustapha bn. Yusuf (Bere Ibadan)	No title	Encourage brothers to seek for knowledge
14.	Alhaji Umar Gwandu (Sokoto)	Poems (1984)	
15.	Abdul Qadir Babatunde (Ilorin)	A story of three brothers (1904)	
16.	Ahmad Abu	Tarikh Akhbar al-quruun	Information about some generations and centuries.

Source: Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan¹

4 THE STATE OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC MATERIALS IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

¹ The list above is left unedited, in order to show the level of knowledge possessed by the staff assigned to the sections. (Yaqub and Olagunju 2013).

Arabic/Islamic library plays a vital role in the University. The library is to provide the relevant materials for Arabic and Islamic education, scholarship and information sciences. Therefore, libraries are deserved to be established in order to widen the scope of researchers, students of higher learning and to enhance the horizon of academic scholars in their various research disciplines.

The Arabic/Islamic library acquires the materials on the followings: Arabic grammar, etymology, semantics, rhetoric, Arabic literature, Arabic prose, Arabic poems, Arabic play, Arabic drama and stories. In the area of Islamic education, it acquires materials on Islamic theology, Islamic religious knowledge, Islamic philosophy, Islamic history, Islam and politics, Islam and science, Islamic literature, Quranic commentaries, Tafsir and Islamic laws. There are also journals on Arabic and Islamic studies acquired from various academic societies, Islamic scholars and reputable academic organizations. The journals cover Encyclopedia of Islam, Encyclopedia of Arabic literature and Encyclopedia of Quranic studies. These materials are usually in volumes. These collections have their own cataloging box shelf list, and entries which are stipulated in the book of National Union Catalogue published by Library of Congress. Arabic Scheme is coded as PJ while Islamic scheme is BP in accordance with the library of congress classification schemes. Subject headings in the library classification usually follow a dictionary plan arranged in an alphabetical classed plan. Arabic and Islamic subject headings are classified under the following subject heading: A-C, Vol 3, for Arabic and I-M vol 3 for Islamic Studies. The subject headings contain volume one to five which comprise of Arabic language, Arabic literature, Arabic phonetics, and Arabic philosophy, stipulated as headings and also sub- heading. Islamic studies also cover the following subject headings and sub headings: Islam, Islam and State, Islam and Politics, Islam and Culture, Islam and Philosophy, Philosophy of Islam etc.

The Arabic/Islamic collections have some peculiar characteristics of language philology and sociolinguistic and semantic pronunciation which are different from the conventional collections of the library. Hence, there are two types of Arabic and Islamic materials that are acquired, processed and preserved in any Arabic /Islamic libraries.

1. Materials that are purely written in Arabic e.g. Qawaidu-al-lugah al-arabiyyah (Principles of Arabic grammar), Kitabu al –tarikh wa al-mamalik(Book on history and socio-political administration).
2. Materials that are written in English but discussing Arabic e.g. History of the Arabs by R.A. Nicholson, Modern Arabic Literature by David Cowan.

These collections are beneficial to the academic community where Arabic and Islamic curriculums are entrenched in the institution curriculum.

5 THE PRESERVATION OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC COLLECTIONS

There are abundant Arabic/Islamic materials in the library. Among them are materials on Quran exegesis, Hadith, Islamic History, Islamic theology, Arabic literature, Islamic Religious knowledge, Islamic jurisprudence, Islam and politics, Arabic language, Arabic linguistics. Most of these materials are acquired through purchase by the library. Balarabe (1992) notes that the management of Arabic/Islamic manuscripts collection has to do with the availability of space, conducive environment, installation of facilities like air conditioners, fans, chairs, tables, training of the personnel, staff welfare package, trust and cordial relationship of a teamwork. Our recent visit to the Arabic and Islamic manuscript section of some libraries shows that the materials are neither organized nor structured. There is no standard framework of codification and classification. The basic library routine does not allow easy access to these materials. The manuscripts are dumped on a section of the library while the content pages of

the materials are faded. Two to three manuscripts of different topics are joined together while some of the content of these manuscripts are no more readable.

Though, these materials are shelved, and secured from rain, termites, cockroaches, humidity, temperature; theft and misplacement, the students of the University find it very difficult to have access to them. The space allocated for these materials, in some of these Universities is at the last floor of the building. This hinders or serves as impediments for students to go and consult them. The space for Arabic and Islamic manuscripts is restricted to few staff users. The section also lack competent personnel to man it. The personals require library techniques with a sound background of Arabic language. There is no expertise to handle these collections. The relevance of knowledge of Arabic is to enable the person to interpret, translate and assimilate the content message from Arabic language to English language, so that any researcher can easily read and understand the content of the materials. Lack of knowledge of Arabic will create problem of identification of titles and lack of library techniques results into problem being faced in arranging, classifying and restructuring the materials. To say the least, the management of the manuscripts is very poor. Apart from the problems mentioned above there are other failures that tend to undermine the effective and uniform bibliographic treatment of Arabic Archive in the library. There is a fundamental problem of identifying and recovering most of the materials that exist in individual private custodies. This is as a result of absence of a specific national depositories/centers where the archives could voluntarily be deposited by their owners or a center to be charged with the responsibilities of discovering and recovering the materials as well as monitoring and coordinating the bibliographic activities of the other existing libraries in the country(Yaqub 2012).

The problem of poor maintenance culture of the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts do not allow for a comprehensive and up to date biography of the holdings. This does not only hinders the preparation of a national union catalogues but also the successful realization of an effective cooperative scheme especially in the area of acquisition, cataloguing, photocopying and exchange of the archival documents. Other serious problems facing the Arabic/Islamic manuscripts collections in these libraries are the lack of common survey or subject headings list and non existence of any standard or nationally acceptable cataloguing code in the country. The non existence of conventional bibliographic/classification scheme for printed materials affects the collection and organization of these materials due to the inadequacies of Arabic archives; hence, the reason for some variation, contradiction and unnecessary complication both in the entire bibliographic undertakings and approach to information or document retrieval (Yaqub 2012).

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the historical significance of the Arabic manuscript collection in Nigeria, it has been largely neglected. Little attention is paid to the fact that these valuable manuscript holdings are important cultural properties that require appropriate management, preservation and conservation. Preservation of collections is a means of providing continuing access to items in the libraries for as long as they are needed. To maintain this access, library staff at all levels must take responsibility for proper handling of these materials. Proper handling techniques and well-ordered library stacks serve as a positive example for library users. All library staff, including student and lecturers should follow these guidelines and assist in the preservation of the collections. The following guidelines are suggested as guide

6.1 General guide

- Refer items in need of repair to trained repair staff that will use proper techniques and supplies. Do not make repairs yourself. Minor repair problems can become major ones if neglected too long.
- When photocopying books, take care not to wrinkle pages. If a book is bound so that it resists being pressed flat, do not force it--settle for a less than perfect copy or use a copier that allows for draping the book over the edge of the copying surface.
- Do not use metal paper clips in library materials. These items can be permanently damaging, leaving stains or tearing pages. Limit the use of rubber bands, preferring instead to tie fragile materials with cotton tape.
- Remove damaging items before shelving materials.
- Use a paper bookmark to mark your place. Do not turn down the corners of pages.
- Library rules should be enforced (Yaqub and Olagunju 2013)

6.2 Proper handling techniques guide

- Open new books carefully. Forcing the covers back can break a book's spine, especially if it is tightly bound.
- Apply date due slips and bar codes and add technical processing notes neatly and in the designated places on materials. Limit markings to those that are necessary.
- Use book trucks for sorting and transporting library materials whenever possible. Crates and bins do not provide proper support for materials. Clear book drops, tables, and unload boxes directly onto book trucks or shelving. Do not leave library materials stacked in piles on desks or on the floor.
- Place books on book trucks and shelving in an upright position with no other materials stacked on top. If a shelf is only partially full, keep books supported vertically. Lay large volumes flat on the shelf. Do not place books on their fore-edges, even for a short time. This will weaken the binding.
- Properly balance distribution of items on book trucks and do not overload. This will make the truck easier to maneuver and prevent it from tipping over.

6.3 Proper shelving techniques guide

- Shelf books vertically, supported by a bookend. Neither overcrowds nor loosely shelves books. Be careful not to accidentally "knife" the pages of a book with the edge of a bookend. Do not shelf books on their fore-edges. This can cause the textblock to loosen from its case. Follow departmental procedures for referring items which cannot be shelved properly because of large size.
- Properly remove a book from the shelf by pushing volumes on either side back just far enough to grasp the one you need in the middle of its spine. Do not simply pull on the top of the spine as this will cause a weakening and eventual damage to the spine.
- Remove any trash, loose books, or extra bookends from the shelves.
- When assisting library users, take the opportunity to educate them on correct handling of library materials as outlined above.
- Watch for signs of mold and mildew or pest infestations. Refer affected materials to bindery and repair staff. Report pest problems to the preservation librarian.
- Be aware of environmental conditions. Immediately report to a supervisor or the preservation librarian noticeable changes such as high heat, humidity, low air flow, or sunlight hitting library materials.

- Watch for theft or mutilation of library materials and any instances of unauthorized access. Report incident immediately to the circulation supervisor or security guard.
- Immediately report signs of any potential disaster situations, such as dripping or standing water, overloaded electrical outlets, or blocked emergency exits (Yaqub 2012).

Other recommendations are that preservation education of staff and users should be given high priority at the Preservation Program Task Force of the library management. The Preservation Librarian and the Associate University Librarian for Collections should develop a 1-1/2 hour preservation orientation session which all library staff, including librarians, are required to attend. Attendance at the sessions fulfills a new "Skills and Knowledge" requirement added to most staff job descriptions. The focus for the orientation sessions is the role and responsibility of each staff member in the Libraries Preservation Program. An overview of the Preservation Program, collections, and types of materials is presented, and the "natural enemies" of materials (e.g. heat, moisture) and "human abuse" (e.g. photocopying, book returns) are discussed. Sessions are informal and participatory, with table displays and handouts. Staff awareness of preservation issues is enhanced, which lays the groundwork for preservation education of library users.

Since part of the fundamental roles of the National Library is to preserve Arabic and Islamic documentary heritage, and to make sure it is available for people to use for as long as possible. Collecting material is only one step towards achieving this - the material also needs to be looked after if it is to remain useable. The aim of the National Library's preservation program is to maintain and preserve items according to their use and their significance. The collection should consist of various items in many different formats. The Library uses different methods and draws on different skills, procedures and partnerships to manage the preservation of both digital and non-digital collections. The Preservation Services Section ensures the ongoing access to physical collections by undertaking assessments, treatments, housing, storage reviews, surveys and collection stabilization for exhibitions, loans and digitization projects. This work is achieved within the guidelines of the Library's Preservation Policy. The Library's collections are diverse and vast. Staff faces daily challenges to find ways of providing access to the collections whilst ensuring the condition of the collection is not compromised. A risk management approach to this work is essential, and the significance of collection items is used to help guide treatment approaches. Preservation staff is responsible for many activities such as:

- ensuring Library staff are trained in the care and handling of collections, including paintings, textiles, objects, photographs, negatives (glass plate and flexible), large format items like maps and newspapers, flat paper items, books and microforms;
- monitoring the temperature and humidity in storage areas and advising on its suitability for long term storage;
- ensuring that disaster equipment is maintained in all stack areas and staff are trained in its use;
- advising on the appropriate storage of collections in boxes, folders, drawers, hanging screens, plan cabinet draws;
- working closely with special collection areas to provide advice on the preservation requirements of new acquisitions
- carrying out stabilization treatments on collection items, as well as intensive treatment where required;
- Preparing items for reformatting, such as digitization and microfilm and external disc.

7 Conclusion

Arabic and Islamic manuscripts abound in Nigeria in great amount with actual and potential values for administration, research, teaching and learning, language development, cultural preservation and acquisition of general knowledge. They cover wide range of subject areas including politics, linguistics, law, history, medicine, sciences, culture, technology, architecture, philosophy, spiritualism and logic. Those manuscripts are held, and managed by varied agencies, individuals and families, in scattered and sometimes undetermined locations and condition. This work ex-rays the state of Arabic and Islamic collections in Nigerian University libraries, identifying the problem and the challenges. Among which are proper management, inadequate training, poor preservation and conservation. Suggestions and way forward are also presented. These include preservation and conservation through adequate management strategies, proper handling, shelving techniques, regular training of the library staff and enforcement of library rules. If these are considered, it will definitely enhance the current state of Arabic and Islamic collections in the Nigerian Universities.

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