

## Participation of Academics In Collection Development at the Islamic Studies Library

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### Abstract

The Islamic Studies Library has always strive to improve its collection. This study was conducted to know the weakness and strength of the existing collection. The study also investigates the attitude and willingness of academics to commit themselves in assisting the library in collection development. The result of the study will be used as a guideline for the future development.

### Introduction

An ongoing assessment of the information needs of the library's clientele is important. In the university environment, the academics opinions on library collection are very much appreciated. As defined by Qobose (2000), the library is "academic partners, and should actively participate in the promotion of excellent teaching and research activities. By monitoring curricular and research developments in assigned subject fields, subject librarians develop and maintain library collections for their respective faculties. It is vital that we should always be proactive, and not wait for the faculty to ask since they may never come forward on their own".

However, not all librarians are subject experts. Therefore, the library-faculty cooperation is very much needed and appreciated for collection development in order that the library can get the most recent and excellent collection recommended by the faculty academics. If these two entities (library and faculty) fail to cooperate, the references will remain outdated and insufficient for students as well as for academics and researchers. When library-faculty collaboration does not exist, responsibility is on the librarians to develop reference collection for the respective faculties. As non-academics and non-experts in the subject matters, the librarians tend to use "guess" and "think" criteria to determine whether the books are relevant to the subjects or not. Occasionally, their efforts or initiatives are not appreciated by faculty members.

### Background

Established in 2000, the Islamic Studies Library collection at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has grown up to more than 20,000 volumes. The collection comprises of all subjects related to Islamic religious studies. The existence of the library is to support the teaching, learning and research activities at the Academy of Islamic Studies (with 11 departments) by supplying reference materials. Its clientele includes academics, students, and researchers both within and outside the University.

The librarians role at the University of Malaya is very challenging especially when the University has been nominated as Research University. As a research-active university, keeping the collection up to date and comprehensive is very crucial because lack of resources in any area might affect research activities. Sometimes, when the collection is insufficient for references, the librarians are chided for not being aware of the recent developments on subject resources.

In order to meet the teaching needs of the faculties, the librarians do selection on their behalf. Since most librarian select using the "guess" and "think" criteria, these remarks can be heard from the academics:

- "Your selection titles are very general; we need more specific titles";
- "You are not familiar with our subjects and your selection does not suit our courses".

However, if librarians remain passive in the absence of library-faculty cooperation, these remarks can be heard:

- "Our library collection is insufficient in this area compared to the X University Library";
- "My poor students always go to the Y Library because the collection here is very poor";
- "I am doing my research but I don't think this library has the references";
- "The collection does not support our research as well as teaching and learning processes";
- "We need a more contemporary collection; the collection in this library is outdated".

Librarians have to absorb and digest these comments and complaints warily admitting that there is some truth in these remarks.

At the University of Malaya, lack of resources in any area will have negative impact not only for teaching and learning but also for research. Without comprehensive references, researchers cannot produce quality research. This can indirectly affect the ranking of the University. The library has heavy responsibility to ensure the success of a researcher.

In order to strengthen the relationship with the faculty members and encourage them to participate in library collection development, a survey was carried out to find a solution so that the objectives will be achieved.

This study is also to discover suitable ways to get academics commit themselves with the library and to identify areas that need further attention for improvement and development. With the information given, the strong partnership between the library and faculty members might become a reality.

### Statement of Problem

The difficulties of getting academics to team-up with library in collection development resulted in this study to be conducted as well as to know the strength and weakness of current library collection. The result might be used as guidelines to maintain a good relationship with the academy members and to improve the library collection.

### Methodology

Various studies on library-faculty cooperation in collection development have been conducted and the methodology used in these studies were absorbed wherever relevant.

Mohd. Zain and Siti Hawa (2004) used documentation and personal interview as their sources to gather data. Their respondents were 32 faculty members from 4 departments at Islamic Revealed Knowledge Division. They had been asked on the faculty awareness on the collection development of International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) Library as well as issues that affect this awareness. Mohd. Zain and Siti Hawa concluded that "there is the need for librarians to take more proactive approach to improve the faculty awareness on the library collection development". The study also revealed the willingness of faculty members to cooperate with the librarians to achieve the objectives, "but due to ambiguous understanding of their roles in the process, some of them are left behind in the participation of the designed activities".

Kuo (2000) distributed a survey to 185 faculty members at Kean University to identify faculty selectors and understand their selection methods. Kuo summarized that "the library needs well-balanced input from all faculty in all disciplines to continue building a responsive and user-centered collection". The feedback mentioned the readiness of "Kean librarians to assist faculty with book selection by identifying improvable areas and recommending useful sources".

Other researchers, Ameen and Haider (2007) tried to explore the basic issues in book selection strategies in major university libraries in Pakistan in order to suggest some betterment. They sent self-completion questionnaire to 40 major accredited universities of Pakistan and 30 respondents answered the survey. They also conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 librarians as a method to gather data concerned. Based on the feedbacks, they concluded that there are "needs to be better liaison among faculty, library staff and vendors in order to make quality selections well on time".

To sum up, these research studies discover the willingness of faculty participation in collection development. The librarians too have to play proactive role to ensure the relationship is in "good health" condition by providing academics with assistance and understanding their attitudes towards the book selection activities.

As for this study, the research carried out by Mohd. Zain and Siti Hawa, has been used as a guideline to develop the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of multiple choice and open-ended questions on the following aspects:

- i) Participation in book selection process.
- ii) Reasons for not making any selection.
- iii) Willingness to participate in selection.
- iv) Methods of selection preferred.
- v) Sufficiency of collection and lacking areas.

It was distributed to 66 academics at the Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya and received 18 feedbacks from the target group. The findings are discussed in this study.

## Findings and Discussion

### Participation in Collection Development

The participants of this study were asked about their involvement in recommending library materials. The majority, with a total of 14 respondents, confessed they have submitted their recommendation to the library. However, 3 respondents never made any suggestions and 1 respondent did not answer the question at all (Table 1).

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on Participation in Collection Development**

Participation	Respondents	Percentage
YES	14	77.78%
NO	3	16.67%
NO ANSWER	1	5.55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Reasons for Not Making Selection

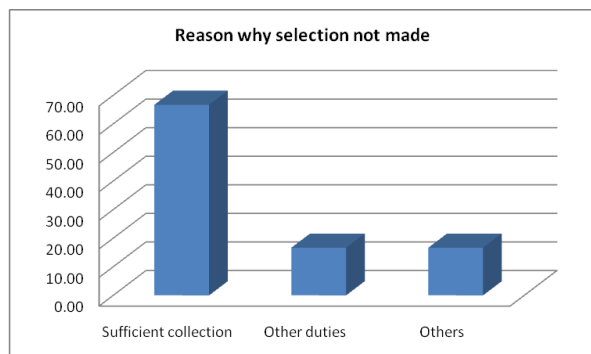
Those who have never participated in the collection development clarified the reasons for not making selection was (Table 2):

- the 'collection is sufficient' given by 4 respondents,
- 1 respondent was heavily engaged with other duties and
- 1 respondent felt 'it is students' duty'.

### Willingness to Participate in Selection

Majority volunteered to get involved in selecting library materials. Only 1 respondent refused to participate with the reason "The librarian duty to do this. Lecturers can only recommend the resources".

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Regarding the Reasons of Not Making Selection**



The respondents also were invited to go to the Kuala Lumpur Book Fair, all respondents showed their interest except 1 respondent answered "No" to the invitation.

### Methods of Selection Preferred

The respondents were also asked on the format suggested. Most of them preferred printed formats such as books and journals compared to audio visual formats (Table 3).

**Table 3: Distribution of Recommendation Formats (on a scale of 1 to 5)**

Formats	Average	No. of Respondents
Books	2.92	13
Journals	2.46	13
Video Tapes	1.29	7
Audio Cassettes	1.29	7
CD-ROMs	1.29	7
Online Databases	1.29	7

Their methods of selection also differed from one another. The highest method chosen by 13 respondents was catalog selection. The second method was book fairs. There were 9 respondents who are willing to visit book fairs as a way of engaging themselves with the collection development. The other respondents answered "other convenience places" for book selection is by going to the book exhibitions in the library or bookstores/warehouse visits.

### Sufficiency Resources for Teaching, Learning and Research Purposes

#### a. Teaching and Learning

Based on the survey, 10 respondents agreed the library resources were sufficient for teaching and learning purposes. The remaining 7 respondents did not agree with the statement.

#### b. Research

The respondents were then asked for the sufficiency of library resources in supporting their research. 7 respondents answered the materials were sufficient, while 10 respondents felt the materials were not enough to support their research.

There were open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The questions asked for further collection to be developed as follows:

**a. Lacking areas**

Several areas have been identified by the respondents that needed further attention. These areas are: i) Islamic history and civilization, ii) Islamic banking and finance, iii) Islamic law, iv) Comparative law, v) Studies in modern and contemporary tafsir, vi) Islamic management, vii) Conventional and modern subject and viii) Current issues pertaining to social problem

**b. Other areas to develop besides Islamic Studies**

Besides Islamic studies, the respondents have requested the library to develop the following areas: i) Science and technology, ii) Information technology, iii) Social Sciences, iv) Art and media, v) Motivation and career, vi) Light reading materials concerning hobbies and vii) Other multidisciplinary area.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the academics' feedbacks, the library should consider the suggestions given by them. Some good recommendations have been extracted from their feedbacks are as follows:

**a. Invitation to participate in library collection development activities**

Since the library now knows their attitudes and views towards collection development, the library should play a proactive approach to get them involved in the activities. However, the librarians must be alert of the faculty members' preferences and try to find suitable ways to get them involve. The main point here is, do approach and invite them. As Brown (1997) stated that most academics are very grateful when librarians go to see them in their offices.

**b. Focus on other areas besides Islamic studies**

The field of Islamic Studies is wide. It not only focuses on religion, but also other aspects. Some respondents suggested new areas to be developed by the library besides the Islamic studies. One of them gave comment as follows, "Islamic studies are not just about theology or philosophical study but covers social sciences area such as politic, law, genders, finance, and banking". Their inputs are vital for the new areas development.

In conclusion, the result reveals the willingness of faculty members to participate in library collection improvement. It is very important to involve faculty members in the collection improvement process, as mentioned by Hurt, Rein, Connors, Walsh and Wu (1995), that their participation is a way "to guarantee that the collection meets the demands of university curriculum and campus teaching needs".

The library has an important role to play in order to improve areas which are lacking. By consulting the respected academics, the library could get some advices from them regarding on how to develop the area. Besides that the academics also should help the library by suggesting titles to be included in the required areas.

The result identified the weak areas that need improvement and enhancement in current library collection.

Last but not least, here is an advice for the academics from a librarian like me:

"Please feed us with the precious titles needed for your researches as well for your lectures to ensure the availability of the updated collection of references".

A comprehensive collection will lead to the success of the University.

"Come on! Collaborate with us! Together we strive for a higher world ranking for our University."

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