

TRACING AND ACCESSING ARABIC PERIODICALS : AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Arabic periodicals are mostly published in the Arab countries and are usually untraceable from the international indexing and abstracting services. This article presents a brief descriptive overview of the characteristics of Arabic periodicals and explores the existing bibliographical control tools as found in the literature. The discussion encompasses issues on Arabic periodicals' bibliographical access and physical access. The Internet was searched to identify available current contents lists, individual indexes, collective indexes (general and specific), institutional indexes, and bibliographic databases (general and specific). The final part of the article will include a review on the Malaysian Union List of Serials and Katalog Induk Kebangsaan (Malaysian Union Catalogue) on whether retrieval using the descriptor terms will yield local Arabic periodicals collection available in the database. The results showed the extent to which the available information on Arabic periodicals is helpful for local libraries facilitate Arabic periodicals reference.

Keywords: Arabic periodicals; Indexing and abstracting; Malaysian Union List of Serials; Katalog Induk Kebangsaan; Union catalogue; Bibliographic control tools

INTRODUCTION

Arabic periodicals collection is a common collection in many academic libraries and research centres having Arabic and Islamic studies programmes. Arabic periodicals are mostly published in the Arab countries and are usually untraceable from the international indexing and abstracting services. Literature survey suggests that the issue of tracing and accessing Arabic periodicals is a matter of concern in 'Middle eastern librarianship' but research interest on Arabic periodicals is seemingly minimal. When 'Middle eastern' is used, this connotes to area studies, and periodicals are important materials for area studies. For this study, Arabic periodicals refer to periodicals using Arabic or primarily Arabic especially those produced in the Middle East and North Africa.

For the purpose of instructional and research needs, it is essential to make Arabic periodicals bibliographically identifiable and its contents be made intellectually

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and physically accessible. Arabic periodicals mostly covers the area of Islamic studies, Arabic studies and humanities. It was found that the humanists relied more on formal bibliography and librarians in their scholarly information seeking. Even though they also showed “preference for books and pamphlets over periodical articles”, the existence of hundreds-to-thousands Arabic periodicals in academic institutions outside the Arab countries suggests that the materials are significant for scholarly needs and is worth collecting for the sake of knowledge and culture.

Formal bibliographic systems permitted easier access to materials for retrieval based on relevance. However, the first indexing service exclusively for Arabic periodicals was only established in 1981 with the launch of *al-Fihrist* in Lebanon. The slow progress of Arabic indexing services may have caused the faculty who selects periodicals to support their relevant field of study and the librarians who provide the usage and reference services to face tracing and accessing issues. This article aims at consolidating the disparate information on Arabic periodicals made available through bibliographical activities.

NATURE OF ARABIC PERIODICALS

Arabic periodicals are mostly published in the Arab countries covering Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Yemen and UAE. As far as basic features are concerned, Arabic periodicals do not differ from other language periodicals. In terms of publication and preservation, the periodicals are available in traditional and electronic formats. Naturally, Arabic periodicals use Arabic script, and generally, accessing Arabic resources is a challenge to the bibliographic system providers as well as to the users, among others, due to the script and bibliographic system.

Language generally enhances the visibility of published works and that explains why some Arabic periodicals are published bilingually and even trilingually, and multiscript title, that is, having the titles cited both in Arabic and its romanised versions, especially in the Arab countries with a history of European colonisation. The growing trend of turning towards English as the medium is prevalent in scientific publications. Inadequate communication on the part of publishers usually added the complexities in managing acquisition of Arabic periodicals. Political consideration and funding led to issues of irregular continuation and changes of country of publication, which further bundles with establishing variant titles and problems of numbering. With the lack of importance placed on bibliographical notification, Arabic periodicals managers are facing problems with tracing the periodical and are bound to collect incomplete runs of titles. The issues could partially be clarified with the examples presented by Ubaidly (1988, p. 87):

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“This irregularity may take the form of a sudden interruption or an abrupt resumption of publication, an extended gap, or a complete cessation. For instance the Lebanon-based *Qadaya ‘Arabiyya* magazine ceased publication abruptly. Other periodicals have been issued under new names, in complete disregard for the codes of bibliographic arrangement, as was the case with Kuwait University’s *al-Huquq wa-l-Shari’a* magazine. Another example is the *Majallat al-Makhtutat al-‘Arabiyya* magazine, in which bibliographic information was rewritten in a contradictory manner when the magazine was moved from Cairo to Kuwait”.

Usage of established international serials’ identifier namely ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) for Arabic periodicals is less common with a considerable number of Arabic periodicals not using the ISSNs. With regards to issue designation of serials, numbering designation system as to volume/number and other continuous numbering is inconsistently assigned and even ignored, and this problem in numbering would further make ascertaining collation difficult. Despite a predictable schedule of publication not being common enough, there are Arabic journals which have proven to be outstanding and are able to maintain their vitality.

It is interesting to note that Arabic periodicals were also being published outside the Middle East countries like United Kingdom, North America, Paris, Germany, Netherlands, including Malay speaking countries like Malaya and Indonesia. *Kawkab America* was the first Arabic language newspaper published in New York City, United States in 1892. The long history of the periodicals produced in the West, solely in Arabic or otherwise show the language and the pertaining knowledge is not confined within arbitrary boundaries of the Middle East.

The scenario is supported with an arguable observation made by Edward Said when he noted that “... there is not a major journal of Arab studies published in the Arab world today, just as there is no Arab educational institution capable of challenging places like Oxford, Harvard, or UCLA in the study of the Arab world, much less in any non-Oriental subject matter.” This group of periodicals may be more sophisticated in production and internationally visible in the indexing services but how far reference to primary sources and discussion about *turath* are made need some investigation.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL OF ARABIC PERIODICALS

The scale of publishing in the Arab world is large but bibliographic control and shortage of selection tools has been long known. The difficulties in acquiring serials publications is partly due to the weaknesses of the international

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distribution mechanism. The situation has hampered the dissemination of knowledge, culture, and information which are the main purpose of publishing. Clearly, the potential readership of Arabic is seemingly discriminated from the treasure of Arabic publications. Generally, publishing in the Arab world is documented in the *Arab Bulletin of Publications*, which is published by ALESCO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation) in Tunis. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria and Jordan have been making use of the various forms of electronic publishing such as e-books, e-journals, e-prints, databases, or hypertext pages, whether online or on CD-ROM, especially in scientific and academic fields.

Prior to 1981, there was no indexing service in Arabic exclusively for Arabic periodicals. In late 1981, *Al-Fihrist*, a Lebanese indexing service was launched. By 1987, the service indexed 216 periodicals from 21 countries including five non-Arabic speaking countries. Saudi Arabia and Iraqi periodicals were heavily indexed with the next group being Egypt and Lebanon (Nazim Ali, 1987). The index has covered 1981 to 1985 issues, but it is unclear whether it has been revived since the end of the civil war (1975-1991) in Lebanon.

The current state of bibliographic control of Arabic periodicals is much left behind compared to other western language periodicals, especially English. The consequent lesser international visibility presents some challenges not only to those who wish to undertake research, but also to those publish in Arabic. Lack of well established and complete indexing systems for Arabic periodicals limits researchers' ability to identify relevant material and the others' awareness of their output. The current political instability in the Middle East poses further barriers to Arabic publications.

The absence of reliable indexing services is coupled with the lack of specific and comprehensive national and regional directories which compile lists of periodicals and the necessary information. Two important directories such as *al-Dawriyyat al-'Arabiyyah: Dalil al-'Amm al-Suhuf wa-al-Majallat al-'Arbiyyah al-jariyyah fi al-watan al-'Arabi* (Arabic periodicals: a general guide to the current Arabic newspapers and journals in the Arab World) by ALESCO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) and *al-Dawriyat al-Khalijiyyah: al-Suhuf wa-al-Majallat al-Sadirah fi Aqtar al-Khalij al-'Arabi* by Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, apart from having deficiency of information in the entries, also failed to list all the periodicals published in the Arab world and has not been updated since the first edition in the early 1980s.

GUIDE TO ARABIC PERIODICALS LITERATURE

Before potential users search for the desired Arabic articles, the first step is to find out what Arabic periodicals were in existence and are being collected.

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When an item is unknown, library users may identify materials by making use of secondary publications such as abstracts, indexes, directories and union lists. They decide on the selection of articles before obtaining them, usually at their local libraries. This is usually the limitation faced by the Arabic users since the libraries' OPAC search is limited to the respective library's holdings only.

To find non-Arabic articles on Arabic and Islamic studies, there are some English indexes such as *Index Islamicus*, *Index of Islamic literature*, *The Middle East: Abstracts and Index*, and the *Annuaire dr l'Afrique du Nord*. The number of bibliographic databases covering the disciplines of Islam is very small. Even though *Index Islamicus* is very well known within the Arabic and Islamic scholars, its limited popularity could be attributed to the 'English only' materials in the database.

The intention of this study was to collect information on resources for tracing and accessing Arabic periodicals through the Internet, vis-a-vis the situation where there is an absence of proper indexing and abstracting services. Manually selected websites and webpages offering information on list of Arabic periodicals are made by combining the phrases and single search terms "Arabic periodicals", "access", "library" and "list". OCLC's WorldCat.org, a freely available search engine of the world's largest library catalogue, has been significantly used in identifying and collecting bibliographical works relevant for the study. With the awareness that search engines are less suitable for information retrieval because of its disability for field searches of structural records, the yield may not be exhaustive but is believed to be useful. Some bibliographical tools presented here may be overtaken by bigger works, thus repetition of information may occur. At the very least, this article intends to provide a guide to Arabic periodicals literature.

Despite the lack of research attention given to Arabic periodicals use studies, the fact that some Arabic periodicals have an outstanding prominence in famous libraries cannot be ignored. For bibliographic control and selection tools of Arabic periodicals, one must depend on a variety of selection tools, mostly printed catalogues or indexes. Unfortunately, there is no definitive data of estimates of the world total of Arabic serials, largely comprising periodicals in Arabic literature, is available. To gauge the publication size, interested parties may need to wade through union catalogues, bibliographies, indexes and databases.

1. Bibliographic databases and networks

- i. *Multidata Online* database offers full text documents and bibliographic citations from selected newspapers and periodicals of the Arab world. It is divided into five databases: 1."General News" with full text covering

52 dailies and weeklies since 1994; 2. "Specialized Periodicals" with bibliographic citations from more than 225 specialized Arabic periodicals since 1920; 3. "Reviews" with full text book reviews from more than 250 newspapers and magazines in the Arab world from 1998 (250 newspapers and journals published in Arabic, English, and French) ; 4. "Theses" with a subject index to theses submitted to 21 Lebanese institutions of higher learning; and, 5. "Index Arabicus" documenting the contents of 42 Arabic periodicals published between 1870 and 1969. This database claimed to be the Arab World's archive of periodicals. The records of *Index Arabicus*, which European librarians had collectively compiled to index Arabic periodical articles published from 1870 to 1969, were sent to Lebanon for printing and believed lost during the civil wars in the 1970s. However, these have recently been re-discovered and placed online by Multidata Services Inc.

- ii. *Arabic LISA* is an index and abstract of Arabic periodicals in library and information science (11 periodicals as at 2007). This database is developed by Cybrarians: the Arabic Portal for Librarianship and Information, a non-profit organization established in 2002 and located in Cairo.
- iii. *OACIS (Online Access to Consolidated Information on Serials)* and *AMEEL (Arab Middle East Electronic Library)*. *AMEEL*, a web-based portal and digital collection, is a continuation and extension project of *OACIS* and both are initiated by the Yale University Library. The *OACIS* system, a comprehensive online union catalogue of serials from and about the Middle East, was launched in November 2003 and completed its original three-year term in September 2005. It currently comprises of 19 partners (including 14 US universities, one German, one Jordanian, one Lebanese, one Syrian, one Egyptian, one from the United Kingdom and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, with three more US libraries), 42 languages (with top collections in Arabic, Persian and Turkish) and over 23,000 unique title records (some with digitized text incorporated into the catalogue holdings). In January 2005, a mirror site of the system was launched at Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The mirror site was designed to enhance access to the *OACIS* database in the Middle East region and serve as a backup to the original. It has the automatic updating facility of the *OACIS* catalogue and an Arabic web interface for the collection.
- iv. *AskZad.com* is a series of databases for Arabic language materials. When first initiated in 1998 by Arabia Inform, it focused on periodicals. Version 2.0 launched in 2011 is made up of *Pan-Arab News Index (PANI)*, *Pan-Arab Newspapers (PAN-AskZad Full-Page newspapers)*, *Pan-Arab E-books (PAEB)*, *Pan-Arab Journals Index (PAJI)*, *Pan-Arab Academic Journals (PAAJ)*, *Pan-Arab Dissertations (PAD)*, *Pan-Arab*

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Peer Review Articles (PAPRA), and *Pan-Arab Conference Proceedings* (PACP). It includes index to over 650 newspapers and 700 journals, and provides some in full-text.

- v. *IDC's Digital Library* is a product of Brill which offers online access to primary sources, currently in five areas. It is a primary source for Middle East and Islamic Studies series which includes Arabic newspapers and periodicals collection divided into three parts: 1. Palestine newspaper; 2. Egyptians oppositional periodicals newspapers (1970-1981); and 3. Early Arabic periodicals (65 titles) from the 19th century.

2. Collective catalogues and indexes

- i. The *Kashshaf al-Dawriyat al-'Arabiyah, 1876-1984* was compiled by 'Abd al-Jabbar 'Abd al-Rahman. It indexes around 250 Arabic periodicals, concentrating on the Arabic heritage to the exclusion of the modern world. The project was initiated by European librarians, the MELCOLM members. This classified index is also known as Index Arabicus, now made available online by Multidata Services. There is no author index.
- ii. *Al-Fihrist* is a quarterly index to Arabic periodicals literature published by Al-Fihrist Academic Research Institute, Beirut. It covered 1981 to 1985 monthlies and quarterlies, first published in 1981 and ceased circa 1999. The index was edited by Mishal Nawfal. It is now available in electronic format.
- iii. 'al-Khuri's catalogue is a two-volume catalogue of Arabic periodicals: 1. *Mudawwanat sihafat al-Jazirah al-'Arabiyah* (Catalog of Periodicals Published on the Arabian Peninsula) published in 2003 covering the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain; 2. *Mudawwanat sihafat Lubnan* (Catalog of Periodicals published in Lebanon) published in September 2004.
- iv. *Muhtawayat al-Dawriyat al-'Arabiyah* (Contents of Arabic Periodicals) is a quarterly listing of the contents pages of about 100 Arabic periodicals with subject access provided by keywords. This work began in 1989 and is held in the Arab Gulf Studies Centre.
- v. *Fihrist al-Muqtataf, 1876-1952* is a three-volume Arabic periodicals index of the American University of Beirut which was published in 1967.
- vi. *Istanbul kutuphaneleri Arap harfli sureli yayinlari toplu katalogu, 1828-1928 = Union Catalogue of the Periodicals in Arabic Script in the Libraries of Istanbul, 1828-1928* is a catalogue which was published in 1986 and prepared by Istanbul's Beyazit Library ex-Director, Hasan Duman at the IRCICA's request. The contents reflect developments related to printing activities in the Muslim world. This catalogue of

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1804 titles of periodicals in various languages which are all written in the Arabic script. This catalogue is complemented with holdings information and a number of indexes.

- vii. *Bibliography of Malay and Arabic periodicals* is a unique work published in 1972 indicating the prominence of Arabic language and Jawi script in the intellectual activity of the Malay world of periodicals published in the Straits Settlements and Peninsula Malay States from 1876 to 1941, with an annotated union list of holdings in Malaysia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.
- viii. *The Arab Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies, 1914-1942* is an article by Natalie Mobini-Kesheh which presents 36 periodicals titles, a result of library research in Leiden and Jakarta.
- ix. *Directory of Arabic and Islamic Periodicals* edited by Siraj Mohammed Bijle, makes available a list of Arabic periodicals available in India. The work is published in 2001.
- x. *al-Dawriyat wa-al-majallat al-nadirah, 1989-1990 = Out of print & rare serials, 1989-1990*, was estimated to have been published in 1990.

3. Individual or cumulated indexes

- i. *Kashshaf al-Hilal : Majallat al-Adab wa-al-Funun* by Rida Subhi, Muhammad Jalal Ghandur & Ayidah Hanafi Dhikr Allah, 2003-
- ii. *Kashshaf al-Risalah, 1933-1953 : majallah usbu'iyah lil-adab wa-al-'ulum wa-al-funun*, 1998.
- iii. *al-Fihris al-'Amm li-'Anawin al-Mawdu'at al-Sadirah fi Majallat Da'wat al-haqq : Mundhu Suduriha 'am 1376 H (1957 M) ila 'am 1416 H (1995 M)*, 1996.
- iv. *Kashshaf majallat al-Ma'rifah lil-'adad 1-100* by Walid Nadhir 'Atamah, 2004.
- v. *Fihris majallat al-manar 1898-1935 = The index of al-manar*, Tokyo, 1998.
- vi. *Fihris Majallat Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyah bi Dimashq* by Ghazwah Badri, 1986.
- vii. *al-Faharis al-mufaṣṣalah li-Majallat Ma'had al-Makhtutat al-'Arabiyah, 1955-2000 M*, published by Institut of Arab Manuscripts, Cairo, 2001.
- viii. *Les sommaires de la revue IBLA, 1937-1999*, published by IBLA, Tunisia, 1999.
- ix. *Fihris al-qism al-'Arabi min Majallat "al-Marahil" al-Baraziliyah, (1955-1980)* by Helen Gouchenour; Fawzi Abdulrazak. Typescript [1984].
- x. *Fihrist a-tahlili li-majallat al-Ufuq al-Jadid, 1961-1966* by Shukri Hajji, 1996.

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- xi. *Kashshaf majallat shu'un adabiyah, al'adad 1-30* by Muslim Zaybaq, Badran Mikhlaf, [1993].
- xii. *Kashshaf al-tahlili li-sahifat Umm al-Qura. Al-Qism 1, 1343-1373 H/1924-1953 M*, published in Riyad, [1999 or 2000].
- xiii. *Majallat al-Thaqafah, 1939-1952 : ta'rif wa-fahrasah wa-tawthiq : dirasah bayujrafiyah naqdiyah tahliliyah wa-bibliyujrafiya kamilah.*
- xiv. *Kashshaf majallat 'Alam al-kitab : tahlili qamusi 'urud al-kutub : mustakhlusat* by Ulfat 'Abd al-Rahim, Ra'aya 'Abd Allah, 2000.
- xv. *Kashshaf Majallat Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Iraqi, 1369-1420, 1950-2000* by 'Abd Allah Juburi, 2000.
- xvi. *Kashshaf majallat Shu'un Adabiyah* by Muslim Zaybaq, Badran Mukhlif, 1995-
- xvii. *Majallat Ahwal al-ma'rifah : kashshaf tahlili lil a'dad min al-awwal (1416 H) ila al-'ishrin (al-Muharram 1422 H)* by Hashim Farahat; Mahmud Sayyid Mahmud Yusuf. Riyad, 2001 or 2002.
- xviii. *Kashshaf Majallat Afaq 'Arabiyah* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1982-
- xix. *Kashshaf Majallat al-Wathiqah lil-Sanawat 1975-1982* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1986.
- xx. *Kashshaf Majallat al-Turath al-Sha'bi lil-sanawat 1969-1982* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1984.
- xxi. *Kashshaf Majallat al-Kuwayt lil-sanawat 1980-1984 /* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1985.
- xxii. *Kashshaf 'Alam al-Fikr lil-sanawat 1970-1982 /* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1983.
- xxiii. *Kashshaf Majallat al-Darah lil-sanawat 1975-1982* by Arab Gulf State Information and Documentation Centre, 1984.
- xxiv. *Kashshaf Majallat Risalat al-Khalij al-'Arabi lil-fatrah bayna 1399-1414 H* by Maktab al-Tarbiyah al-Arabi li-Duwal al-Khalij, 1998.
- xxv. *Kashshaf al-Majallah al-'Arabiyah* by Khalid Ahmad Yusuf . Riyad, 19--.
- xxvi. *al-Kashshaf al-tahlili li-sahifat Sawt al-Hijaz, 1350-1360 H., 1932-1941M*, published in Riyad.

4. Institutional catalogues and indexes

- i. Abdul Hameed Shoman Public Library issued its electronic Unified List of Periodicals in Jordan which contains approximately (12000) printed periodicals, including around (3500) in the Arabic language, and, approximately (8500) periodicals in other languages, mostly in English, available at 89 Jordanian libraries.
- ii. Jaber al-Ahmad Central Library of the Kuwait University has their 214 Arabic periodicals titles electronically identifiable for reference.

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- iii. *Indices de revistas espanolals de Arabismo* by Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, Madrid, 1987.
- iv. *Kashshaf al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah fi Maktabat Ma'had al-Idarah al-'Ammah : kashshaf mawdu'I lil dawriyat al-muqtanah hatta nihayat 1404 H/ 1984 M*, Riyadh, 1988.
- v. *al-Kashshaf al-tahlili li-maqalat al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah al-mutahah bi-al-markaz, 1987-1989* by Ma'had Takhtit al-Qawmi, [Cairo], 1991.
- vi. al-Aqsa Mosque Library is a library having one of the largest historical periodical collection. In 2008, the Library undertook a digitization project on 24 selected titles of Palestinian newspapers and periodicals of the library.
- vii. Givat Haviva Educational Institute's library developed an index using the Haifa Index model for articles from unique archives of Palestinian Arabic periodicals from 1920 to date. This database includes Israeli's largest collection of Arab press clippings dating from the 1920s and digitized for preservation.
- viii. Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies claimed to be the largest world's library of Arabic periodicals, maintains a searchable database of bibliographic references to Western and Arabic periodical literature which includes over 100,000 entries dating from 1979 to the present.
- ix. Riyadh University Libraries produced one of the earliest catalogue, *Qa'imah dawriyat al-Maktabah al-Markaziyah, Jami'at al-Riyad, and then al-Fihris al-muwahhad lil-dawriyat : al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah = Union List of Arabic periodicals at Riyadh University Libraries* in 1977. The whole project was abandoned in 1984.
- x. *Muhtawayat al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah* by IMES (Institute), 1989.
- xi. Maktabat al-Malik Fahd began publication of *Kashshaf al-watani lil-dawriyat al-Sa'udiyah, 1386 H/1966 M-1412 H-1992 M* in 1996.
- xii. Darul Kutub al-Qatariyah (Qatar National Library) published *Dalil al-Dawriyah al-'Arabiyah wa-al-Ajnabiyah bi-Dar al-Kutub al-Qatariyah*, 2000.
- xiii. Khizanat al-'Ammah lil-Kutub wa-al-Watha'iq of Morocco published two works, *Dalil al-Dawriyat al-Maghribiyah al-'Arabiyah al-Mahfuzah bi-al-Khizanat al-'Ammah* and *Dalil al-Dawriyat al-Maghribiyah, al-Majallat wa-al-Suhuf al-Jariah* and both were first published in 1983.
- xiv. Majlis al-Watani lil-Thaqafah wa-al-Funun wa-al-'Adah published *Qa'imah bi-al-Dawriyat al-'Arabiyah bi-al-Maktabah al-Markaziyah*.
- xv. Jami'at al-Malik Su'ud published its union list, *al-Fihris al-muwahhad lil-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah bi-jami'at al-Mamlakah*, in 1985 or 1986.
- xvi. Egyptian National Library and Archives published *Fihris al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyah allati taqtaniha al-Dar* since 1961 and up to 1996.

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- xvii. Jami'at al-Imarat al-'Arabiyyah al-Muttahidah or the UAE University published the *Qa'imat al-Dawriyat al-'Arabiyyah* in 1994.
- xviii. Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, University of Basrah published *Fihrist al-dawriyat al-'Arabiyyah al-Mutawwafirah fi Maktabat Markaz Dirasat al-Khalij al-'Arabi* since 1980.
- xix. Astan-i Quds-i Razavi Library in Mashhad published one of the Arabic periodicals list of Iran, *Fihrist-i Majallat-i Mawjud Dar Kitabkhanah-i Astan-i Quds-i Razavi*, since 1982.
- xx. Jami'at al-Urduniyah. Maktabah or the University of Jordan Library publishes *Dalil al-Dawriyat al-'Arabiyyah* since 1983.
- xxi. Khartoum University Library publishes the *Sudanese union catalogue of periodicals*, 1961.

5. Specific catalogues or indexes

- i. *al-Mabahith al-Suryaniyah fi al-majallat al-'Arabiyyah = A catalogue of Articles on Syriac subjects in the Arabic periodicals* by George Awwad is a comprehensive catalogue relating to Syriac studies published in Arabic language periodicals down to the 1970s. Volume 1 covers articles published in the journal *Al-Mashriq*, while volume 2 covers articles published in all other journals, including those that are little known and difficult to access outside of the Middle East. In the main body of the catalogue, the items are arranged according to subjects. The search through the catalogue is facilitated by comprehensive indices of names and subject matters.
- ii. *Faharis al-Muqtabas : majallah adabiyah 'ilmiyah ijtimaiyah li munshiha Muhammad Kurd 'Ali sanat 1324 Hijriyah* by Riyad 'Abd al-Hamid Murad, 1977.
- iii. *al-Yamamah wa-kutubuha : min 1372 ilá 1382 H* by 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Salih Ibn Salamah, 2005.

OWNERSHIP OF ARABIC PERIODICALS BY MALAYSIAN LIBRARIES

In most cases, the creation of special Arabic collection served to support the teaching programmes of Arabic and Islamic studies. The intensity of use of Arabic periodicals for study and learning is more needed at the higher levels or advanced studies. The researchers have to identify collection of titles and libraries need to gauge whether the Arabic periodicals collection reflects what they are supposed to be serving to the users.

There is yet usable statistics on the country's ownership of Arabic periodicals. It is believed that the serials count in the principle libraries having Arabic periodicals runs to a few hundreds. The collection in two universities alone, namely the International Islamic University Malaysia and the University of

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Malaya is 359 titles, with 149 active titles. It is not known whether Malaysian libraries have an adequate proportion of identifiable bibliographic tools to Arabic periodicals. This investigation would tell whether Malaysian libraries provide relevant bibliographic sources to Arabic periodicals within the library information system.

Malaysia has both the national union catalogue and a union list of serials available on the web. The union catalogue or *Katalog Induk Kebangsaan* (KIK) hosted by the National Library of Malaysia was soft launched on 5 December 2008, now having more than 200 libraries participating. A union list of serials by the abbreviated name MyULIS or *Malaysian Union List of Serials* is a portal that lists the titles of all serial publications subscribed by all university libraries in Malaysia. MyULIS was created under the stewardship of PERPUN (*Persidangan Perpustakaan Akademik dan Nasional*), a forum that coordinates the meetings between the head of government university libraries and the Director General of the national library.

Bibliographic tools identified from the Internet are inclusive of purely periodical serials, which means that non-periodical serials (such as prospectuses or law reports and newspapers only) are excluded. The Arab world publishing had a term *majallat ghayra dawriyah* (non-periodical journals) which appear at irregular intervals, qualifying neither as a periodical nor as a monograph, and this is taken if covered in the index. In order to compile a list of bibliographic tools, the author identifies the tools through an extensive search of bibliographical tools on the internet.

In an attempt to find out ownership of bibliographic tools useful in identifying Arabic periodicals literature, searches were made in both databases to compare lists of bibliographic tools identified with the library holdings in KIK and MyULIS. Using both databases, the author tried to single out bibliographic tools from the union catalogue and titles of Arabic periodicals from the union list of serials. To determine if bibliographies and indexes to Arabic periodicals can consistently be retrieved using subject headings or form/genre term, the subject keyword of adjectival form 'Arabic periodicals' was used in conducting the search in both databases. KIK yielded four hits of directory titles while the same subject term could not work on MyULIS. "Arabic periodicals" in MyULIS retrieved four titles, identifiable from the alphabetical browse search of titles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study is a list of 65 indexes and bibliographies covering Arabic periodicals. This simple study also concluded the following findings:

1. It is obvious that there is a very low hit of Arabic periodicals directories found in the Malaysian union catalogues.

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2. The search results is far from matching with the actual holdings of Arabic periodicals in Malaysian libraries.
3. The result seems to present researchers with limited choice of periodicals.
4. From the list of identifiable tools, internationally as well as locally, the list of bibliographic tools indicate that users do not have access to any current awareness service and abstracting services.

This study presents a low visibility of Arabic periodicals in Malaysian libraries through its union catalogue and union list. Generally, it can be concluded that users are unable to find out what Arabic periodicals have been acquired by Malaysian libraries. The catalogue cannot adequately help our researchers. There is therefore a need for an initiative to reflect the actual size of the collection since Malaysia owns quite a considerable number of titles.

CONCLUSION

There seems to be a need to improve the visibility of Arabic periodicals so that it will not be underuse. In the absence of Arabic indexing and abstracting services and low proportion owned between the identifiable resources and the one available in Malaysian library, it is not known how Arabic periodicals search is facilitated. Until a comprehensive indexing service for Arabic periodicals having indexing information like *Ulrich* is made available, users will have to depend on institutional index or individual periodicals index.

Challenges to access Arabic periodicals will remain. This may be lessened with an integrated or consortium-based indexing project of Arabic periodicals made available nationally. The future for cooperation at the national scale is paramount to promote local system's effectiveness at managing Arabic periodicals, to offer professional competencies to users and to strengthen the case for sharing of holdings.

Bibliographic control is in itself a form of quality assurance to enhance interaction between the user and the information. The need to support the bibliographical control for Arabic periodicals indirectly have positive impact to collection development, access to serials holdings and encourages use of periodicals. The use of bibliographical control tools is critical in an active academic environment and will make librarians' role easier.

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