

Record Keeping and Management in IslamDr. Salisu Adamu Aliero¹, Dr. Musa Abdul Auyo²¹University Library, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, Nigeria²University Librarian, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria***Corresponding Author:**

Dr. Salisu Adamu Aliero

Email: salisualiero@gmail.com

Abstract: Islam as a religion is based on knowledge acquisition recognizes the importance of recordkeeping and management, which is signified in the first five verses of the Holy book of Islam, the Qur'an. This paper overviews the origin of recordkeeping and management in Islam. It highlights the purposes of recordkeeping and management in Islam, as well as the challenges faced in recordkeeping and management in the era of Information and Communication Technologies. It concludes by offering some suggestions on improving recordkeeping and management in Islam.

Keywords: Islam, religion, knowledge acquisition, recordkeeping.

INTRODUCTION

In Islam, recordkeeping and management are as old as the religion itself. This is signified in the first five verses of the Glorious Qur'an that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in the cave of Hira in the year 610 C.E. The emphasis placed on reading and the use of pen in the verses suggests that records need to be kept and managed for knowledge acquisition, propagation, preservation and transmission from one generation to another. Consequently, recordkeeping and management began from the time of the Prophet (S. A. W.) The efforts of the Prophet's Companions and the successive generations in recordkeeping and management contributed immensely in maintaining their authenticity and reliability. With the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies, Muslims need to acquaint themselves with new developments in order to safeguard the authenticity and integrity of Islamic Religious records, as well as to propagate the religion with ease.

DEFINITION OF RECORDS

According to Combs et...al [1], records mean books, papers, maps, photographs, machine readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency...as evidence of the organization's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the government...because of the informational value of the data in them.

Records are also defined by Au-yeung [2] as any information created, received and maintained as evidence of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.

Precisely, records mean any materials or documents that contain some valuable information that are preserved by individuals or organizations for specific or general purposes.

On the other hand, Keeper [3] defines record management as a systematic control of an organization's records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements and community expectations.

Simply put, records management means documenting, storing, preserving, safeguarding, and retrieving records in any format for specific or general purposes.

AN OVERVIEW OF RECORDKEEPING AND MANAGEMENT IN ISLAM

Recordkeeping and management in Islam began with the first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad in the year 610 C.E. Allah (S.W.T.) revealed the verses of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad in piece meal for proper understanding and easy memorization, who then appointed trustworthy and highly reputable scribes to record each and every verse that was revealed. The scribes used various materials such as skins, leaves, back of trees and stones to record verses of the Qur'an. Abdul-Wahid [4] reveals that the Qur'an was revealed to him (Prophet) gradually, bit by bit, over a period of 23 years. He recited it to his Companions, some of whom memorized it, while others wrote it down on parchment, leather and even bone. The materials on which the verses were recorded were jealously safeguarded by the scribes. The essence of this was to prevent the divine revelation from corruption, interpolation, distortion, alteration or

falsification. Subsequently, whenever the Prophet received any revelation, he instructed the scribes to record it in the appropriate chapter (surah) and at the appropriate place.

According to Shafi [5], the revelations were recorded contemporaneously by one of the scribes appointed by the Prophet for this purpose. After every revelation, the Prophet would recite the new verses in public. He would also instruct one of the scribes to write it down, and where the new revelation was to be positioned in relationship to previous revelation. The scribes would write on whatever materials were available to them at the moment. Thus, the writing medium ranged from a stone, the leaf of a tree, and shoulder bone of a camel, the membrane on the inside of a deer skin, a parchment or a papyrus. These writings were stored in a corner of the Prophet's room and later, perhaps, in a room or office near the Prophet's room. Buttrussing this point, Shirazi [6] posits that one of the most important reasons for the preservation of the Qur'an in addition to it being the will of Allah is the fact that the Messenger of Allah concerned himself with the collecting the Qur'an during his life and insisted upon it. Hence, from then until now, the text of the Qur'an has remained the same without any change.

Additionally, many Companions of the Prophet committed the whole Glorious Qur'an to their memory.

With regards to Prophetic sayings, Bala [7] narrated that storage and transmission of knowledge (particularly Hadith sciences) is not new among Muslims. In the early Islamic period, Muslims attached great importance to collecting, storing and preserving both the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions for future generations. He posits that the Companions (Sahabah) of the Prophet were the first generation to memorize and write the Ahadith. They developed keen interest in transmitting it through teaching within themselves and to the next generation. Hussain [8] buttressed that the Companions recorded statements and actions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), some memorized while others memorized as well as wrote it.

In view of the absence of literacy amongst most of the Companions, they had developed their memory exceptionally well, as that was all they had to rely on for most important affairs of their lives, as well as for their forms of "entertainment", i.e. poetry. In fact, those efforts made by the Companions contributed significantly in ensuring the authenticity of the sayings and actions of the Prophet. Similarly, the efforts of the Tabieen (students of the (Prophet's Companions) helped in the collection, authentication and preservation of the sayings and actions of the Prophet. Many of them collected and compiled their hadith in books which in turn were incorporated into larger books by

the next successive generations. Many of these larger books survived till today.

In short, as far as Hadith is concern, what helped greatly in its preservation is the science of narration, collection and criticism of Hadith. Hussain [8] stresses that:

...In fact, it was due in part to the absence of such a reliable science of (narration, collection and criticism of hadeeth) that the messages of the former prophets became lost or distorted in the generation that followed them. Therefore, it may be said that it is largely due to the science of hadeeth that the final message of Islam has been preserved in its original purity for all times as alluded to in the Glorious Qur'an thus:

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption.)

PURPOSES OF RECORDKEEPING AND MANAGEMENT IN ISLAM

The purposes of recordkeeping and management in Islam are as follows:

- i. To preserve and safeguard the authenticity, integrity and reliability of divine revelations, prophetic sayings and other religious records.
- ii. To transmit complete and unaltered records or information that fully and accurately represents the facts to which it attests.
- iii. To avoid doubts, speculations, interpolations and misrepresentation of facts.
- iv. To facilitate remembrance or memorization of texts and contents of revelations, narrations of Hadith or historical events.
- v. To explicitly and confidently interpret or explain the circumstances or events that led to divine revelations or prophetic sayings.
- vi. To facilitate accessibility, usability and spread of religious messages.
- vii. To protect the legal and other rights of Muslims and non-Muslims on religious and other aspects of human life.

Interestingly, the longest verse in the Glorious Qur'an emphasizes the significance of recordkeeping and management thus:

O you who believe! When you deal with each other in transaction involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing. Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties: let not the scribe refuse to write: as Allah has taught him, so let him write. Let him who incurs the liability dictate, but let him fear Allah his Lord and not diminish aught of what he owes. If the party liable is mentally deficient, or weak, or unable himself to dictate, let his guardian dictate faithfully, and get two witnesses, out of

your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as you choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her. The witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (for evidence). Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big; it is more just in the sight of Allah, more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves. But if it be a transaction which you carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if you reduce it not to writing. But take witnesses whenever you make a commercial contract; and let neither scribe nor witness suffer harm. If you do (such harm), it would be a wickedness in you. So fear Allah, for it is Allah that teaches you. and Allah is well acquainted with all things.

Furthermore, literature on Islamic History contained a lot of examples of documents written, preserved, managed and transmitted from one generation to another. Examples of these invaluable documents include the treaty between the prophet and the Jews, the document between *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, treaty of Hudaibiyyah and the letters the Prophet sent to rulers of some non-Muslims provinces inviting them to Islam, to mention but a few. These letters do not only serve as historical evidences to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but also as sources of inspiration and guidance.

CHALLENGES OF RECORDKEEPING AND MANAGEMENT IN ISLAM IN THE ERA OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Although the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies has brought tremendous benefits to the development and spread of Islam, it also poses some challenges to the keeping and management of Islamic records. According to Abdullhameed [9] Western writers and their Muslim imitators have written many books which contained ideas alien to Islam. Their plot to distort Islam continues and the ICT has become a conquerable ground for spreading wrong ideas about Islam. Therefore a researcher who has no knowledge of Islam or not well learned in it may end up receiving the wrong information through the computer based communication. Hassan [10] laments that this development poses a worrisome danger to the learning of Islamic Studies from the net for fear of disinformation, misrepresentation of facts and blatantly false information and arguments by other religious missionaries who are already on the net. For instance, "suralikeit" website which was created in 1998 produced four fabricated chapters as follows:

- i. Surah al-Iman (Faith)
- ii. Surah at-Tajassud (the incarnation)

- iii. Surah al-Muslimoon(Muslims)
- iv. Surah al-Wasya (Commendments)

In order to widely spread the fabricated chapters, they were produced in Arabic, English, and transliterated versions. Kaleem and Khan [11] reveal that there have been cases of fabricated verses of Qur'an and Hadith put on the internet by questionable sources. To prevent Muslims from the dangers of this negative development, therefore, Bala [7] advises that Information and Communication Technology should be used with caution, preferably by comparing it with hard copies. One should verify the information obtained through ICT tools dealing with Islamic Sciences, particularly, those coming from fringe or 'deviationist' organizations that spend lots of time and money promoting ideology which contains fabricated or distorted information on Islam and the Muslims.

This means that Muslims are not only expected to be highly skilled in the development and utilization of the information and communication technologies, but also keep abreast of the ever-changing nature of the technologies. Additionally, Muslims should jealously preserve, safeguard and perpetually conserve the certified and authenticated hard copies of the religious scriptures. In fact, having proficiency in the development and utilization of the modern Information and Communication Technologies as well as expertise in keeping and managing certified and authenticated hard copies of the Islamic religious scriptures will not only enable Muslims to favourably compete in the changing world but also make them protect the religion from threats.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, one can understand that recordkeeping and management in Islam is as old as Islam itself. Guidance from the Prophet and conscientious efforts of his Companions as well as successive generations contributed immensely in recording, preserving and managing records in Islam. In this era of Information and Communication Technologies, Muslims need to seize the opportunity to acquaint and continuously abreast themselves with new developments in order to protect and safeguard the authenticity of Islamic Religious documents, as well as to spread the message extensively. A people that excel in recordkeeping and management will succeed in the preservation and transmission of its belief, values and cultural heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure efficient and effective recordkeeping and management in Islam, the following recommendations are offered.

- i. Islamic scholars, and institutions should effectively preserve, safeguard and protect Islamic scriptures from corruption, falsification, interpolation and alteration.

- ii. Muslims librarians and students should be soundly educated on the best practices in the preservation and conservations of Islamic scriptures.
- iii. Recordkeeping and management should be included in the Islamic Studies curriculum, particularly at tertiary levels.
- iv. Muslims need to be proficient in the development and utilization of the Information and Communication Technologies.
- v. Departments of Islamic Studies, Islamic Centres and Institutes should regularly organize conferences, seminars and workshops on recordkeeping and management in Islam.

REFERENCES

1. Combs, D. (2004). *Challenges in Managing Records in the 21st Century*, Lexington: The National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council.
2. Au-yeung, & Anthony. (1995). *A Guide to Business Records*, Hong Kong: Inland Revenue Records Department.
3. Keeper, G. M. (2003). *Managing NAS Records: A guide to staff*, Scotland: The National Archives.
4. Abdul- Wahid, A. K. (2016). *The Qur'an: Its Preservation and Compilation Part 1 (Islam 1.5)*.
5. Shafi, M. (2007). *The Qur'an: How it was Revealed and Compiled*, Lecture delivered at Dar al Islam Teachers Institutes, retrieved on 03-02-2017.
6. Shirazi, I. M. (2001). *The Qur'an: When was it Compiled?* Translated by Ali ibn Adam, London: Fountain Books.
7. Bala, A. A. (2009). "The Contributions of Information And Communication Technology(ICT) to the Preservation and Dissemination of Hadith Literature" in Y. O. Imam (ed.) *Public Administration and Information and Communication Technology in the Lenses of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Ijebu-ode: Shebotimo Publications.
8. Hussain, A. A. (2006). *Preservation of the Prophet's Works and Sayings*. www.Islamiclessons.com
9. Abdulhameed, N. M. (2009). "A Historical Study of Hadith and the Challenges of ICT to Modern Day Research" in Y. O. Imam (ed.) *Public Administration and Information and Communication Technology in the Lenses of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Ijebu-ode: Shebotimo Publications.
10. Hassan, A. K. (2009). "Islamic Studies and the Challenges of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)" in Y. O. Imam (ed.) *Public Administration and Information and Communication Technology in the Lenses of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Ijebu-ode: Shebotimo Publications.
11. Kaleem, K., & Khan, S. (1999). *Da'wah via Internet: Opportunities and Challenges*, <http://www.kol.org.1-13>