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Islamic Scholarly Publishing and a Comparative Analysis of Religious Publications in the National Bibliography of Nigeria

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Abstract

Religious publishing is not strange to the knowledge production community of the human race. However, Islamic publishing has been problematic either in Nigeria or elsewhere in the globe. Literature has shown a slow response to scholarly publishing from the Muslim world generally. This study seeks to evaluate the performance of religious publishing between 2011 and 2018 in Nigeria and the quantum of contributions of Islam to this productivity. The data for the study was obtained from the National Bibliography of Nigeria which aggregates the bibliographic records of publications produced in the country annually. A total of 1,992 entries within the period of 2011-2018 was extracted from the NBN representing the entire publications recorded for religious publications for the period under review. The 1,992 entries were later collated for subsequent interpretation and further analysis using descriptive statistics. The findings show a decrease in the publishing activities of religious organizations and authors of religious books in Nigeria within the period, the extremely low performance of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications, and domination of the scene by CRP. Therefore there is an urgent need for sensitization of potential authors of Islamic books, training for Muslim publishing houses on the technicality of book production.
Keywords: Islamic Publishing, Islamic Publishing House, Islamic (Other) Religious Publications, National Bibliography of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Acquisition of indigenous Islamic materials among religious publications into various university libraries in Nigeria with special emphasis on the South-Western part of the nation has remained a herculean task. Right from my days in the university as a student of Islamic studies, it was a rare occurrence to come across Nigerian authored texts at Kenneth Dike Library. Most of the publications were foreign and written in the Arabic language; the tongue of the religious book of Islam. Indigenous and academic publishing is an integral part of academia; an endeavor that largely determines tenure and promotion of the faculty in the academia. It can therefore be correctly argued that library acquisition is an extension of the knowledge production and communication (dissemination) process. It is therefore unimaginable to separate the Siamese activities that lead definitely to the provision of access to information and the body of knowledge. As such, the symbiotic relationship between these seemingly independent but complementary roles needs to be examined further to strengthen the knowledge communication circle. The National Bibliography of Nigeria is the reservoir of all publications emanating from the Nigerian nation; religious materials are inclusive. A clear representation of the publishing trends in the religious sphere is better depicted when the records of the national bibliography are critically examined to determine the flow of production in religious publishing with particular emphasis on Islamic inclined one.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Knowledge production and dissemination have emerged as an all-inclusive circle that encompasses manuscript writing, editing, publishing, marketing, acquisition, and other routine aimed at ensuring accessibility by the clientele in the library. Production of literary materials tends to impact the acquisition of libraries for the use of the library patrons (Adebowale 2001). This endeavor would include both publications entirely produced in or co-published with foreign firms in Nigeria like any other African nation (Currey, 2013). Even though publishing as noted by Bgoya and Jay (2013) is purely economic activity, its contribution towards enabling ease of collection development cannot be overemphasized. Despite the high numbers of publishing houses that publish indigenous materials, they are not adequate to cater to the teeming population of library patrons; students, and faculty (Tomomowo-Ayodele, 2018). Generally, literature has discovered an embarrassing absence of adequate and current materials in the academic libraries (Amusan and Olanisimi, 2011) as well as other libraries in Nigeria. The situation becomes even appalling when viewed from the angle of Islamic scholarly materials going by the challenges of the oral tradition that birthed the religion and the reliance of its scholars on the Arabic language for scholarly communication. This is despite current drastic measures to make African universities the main place of knowledge production and dissemination especially on Africa matters and literary studies (Yankholmes 2014). This study aims to identify the correlation that exists between religious publishing generally and Islamic scholarly production in particular as well as representation in the National Bibliography of Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

This study has as its main objective to find out the trend in the productivity of the religious sector with a particular bias for Islamic publications in literary publishing as entailed in the national bibliography of Nigeria thereby enhancing accessibility to indigenous publications. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To ascertain the degree of involvement of the religious sector in the indigenous knowledge production process in Nigeria.
2. To determine the comparative status of the various Christian Religious Publications vis-a-vis Other Religious Publications and their contributions to the National Bibliography of Nigeria.
3. To evaluate the performance of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications within the confine of Other Religious Publications in the entries of National Bibliography of Nigeria.
4. To compare the performance of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications to the contributions of the Christian Religious Publications.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three basic guiding questions are driving this research namely:

1. To what extent are authors of religious texts involved in the indigenous knowledge production process?
2. What is the comparative status of Christian Religious Publications and Other Religious Publications in the religious entries in the National Bibliography of Nigeria?
3. What is the productivity contribution of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications to the Other Religious Publications entries in the National Bibliography of Nigeria?
4. What is the level of performance of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications vis-a-vis the contributions of the Christian Religious Publications?

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Literature Review

The genesis of the publishing industry in Nigeria dates back to the inception of the foremost printing press initiated by Rev. Hope Waddel from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission in the Southern city of Calabar in 1846 (Blueprint 2020). The major area of focus for this press was arithmetic for elementary schools in addition to the major goal of production of bible lessons. Subsequently, in 1854, another Christian missionary from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who had his base in Abeokuta founded a printing press that was instrumental to the publication of the maiden Nigerian newspaper, Iwe Irohin, in 1859. This chronicle is a reflection of the involvement of religious organizations in the evolution of publishing in Nigerian history. They were the foundation upon which subsequent endeavors were placed to pilot the presently booming publishing industry in Nigeria. After this phase of involvement of the clergy and religious organizations, came the participation of interested individual elites and commercial entities. This led to the debut of the maiden indigenous newspaper by a Nigerian, Herbert Macaulay, who established Lagos Daily News in 1926. Similarly, Daily Times came on board within the same year. Oxford University Press (OUP) later launched a retail store in Nigeria in

1949. This action attracted many foreign-based publishing firms to Nigeria, the likes of Macmillan, Longman, etc. the earliest Nigerian book was produced in 1963 by Oxford University Press while Ijala Ere Ode, a Yoruba poetry genre written by Yemitan was published by its Nigerian branch (Blueprint 2020). Nigerian merchants started getting involved in the publishing trade leading to the emergence of Nigerian-based book publishing houses. Oso (2000) asserted that book publishing constitutes a standard for measuring the quality of a nation's education, the main indicator of national development, the fundamental structure on which culture is premised, and a significant enterprise. Publishing engenders positive development in the conduct of the populace (Blueprint, 2020). Ever since the industry has witnessed tremendous growth. Like other emergent nations, the publishing business is besieged by a range of obstacles which include a dearth of quality textbooks, mushrooming of inexperienced self-publishers, shortage of working capital, and book piracy. Years earlier Bankole (1985) had identified policy dilemma, sticking to well-established authors by publishers, capitalization, market, and editorial and production problems.

The publishing of scholarly and indigenous materials is just one lap of a series of steps that ensure the conveyance of knowledge to its eventual users. Each nation conducts its publishing activism in line with the religious beliefs and acceptance within the society. Kowatsch (2020) noted that even though the German population still retain an interest in subjects with religious values, there is a decrease in publishers and patrons of religious materials due to change in roles played by religion in German society. He, therefore, advocated for an urgent need in mapping out a strategic marketing process to ginger users towards robust patronage. Hammer (2007) stated that purposefulness and intentionality are twin implications of book writing and publishing endeavor. Islam emerged from a society known for its oral transmission of knowledge. However, the birthplace of Islam – the Arab world - has gradually embraced documentation courtesy of the religious civilization. Yet, much of the publishing activities are done by the government parastatals. Del Castillo (2001) had observed that governments in the Arab world have remained the dominant force in the publishing industry of the various countries. Except for Syria, Morocco, and Libya where private publishing is just lately coming up even though in a limited scope, only Egypt and Lebanon are the only Arab nations where private publishing had taken firm root. The situation is still not different from this finding. Ali and AlQuradaghi (2019) discovered that there are a series of challenges bedeviling publishing research in Islamic economics and finance. These include a dearth of funding opportunities as well as the quality of research conducted in the field. Similarly, there is the absence of journals in the core area of Islamic finance and economics giving wrong perceptions among Islamic finance scholars that journals in other fields are more reputable. Del Castillo (2001) reported Selim as identifying books and publishing challenges as sub-problems critical to a total educational system overhauling required by the Arab world.

Therefore, the library as a storehouse of information performs the task of conveyance of recorded knowledge with its acquisition of publications for the use of its clientele. Quadri & Sodiq (2018) noted that the acquisition of library information materials is central to the gratification of the information needs of library patrons and the realization of its goals. Thus, dissemination of research outcomes via management of institutional or national repository and traditional process of acquisition and management of library collection are important roles played by the library and its personnel (Bains, 2017). The library does this via multiple channels. To enhance the library collection at the University of Uyo Library, Usoro and Okechukwu (2019) advocated a rapport between the library management and authors within the academic community aimed at encouraging the deposit of their publications in the library.

The library has been confronted by age-long challenges that make the performance of its job herculean. Davies (1997) said the absence of educational resources—among which the book is the most essential—has had the greatest adverse effect. The outcome of this, he noted, is that pupils from primary and secondary schools are unfit for the job in the modern workplace and rarely suitable for job placement. Decades later, Tomomowo-Ayodele (2018) found that there is an availability of textbooks authored by indigenous scholars which are relatively accessible to users in the Nigerian education industry. The rapid development of the sector was greatly impacted by the supplementary role played by indigenous books. Not-withstanding, the global contribution of Nigerian indigenous publishing is still abysmal. Resenga Maluleka (2019) discovered that the contribution of African publishing endeavors to knowledge production is grossly inadequate especially on formal education with regards to indigenous knowledge. Coming closer home, he stated that on the web of science platform, the University of Ibadan was in the 8th position among the first ten universities on the table of institutional contribution to publishing output, while no Nigerian university was rated among the first ten on Scopus in Africa between 2008 and 2018). Still, Quadri & Sodiq (2018) found that tight budgetary restrictions, increasing prices of published materials and currency exchange constraints are the major impediments hampering the process of acquisition of libraries resources.

The absence of a multifaceted stratagem towards the promotion and marketing of indigenous books specifically self-published materials constitutes a greater challenge to ease of acquisition in the Nigerian university libraries (Bakrin, Bello, and Salami, 2016). To Anderson (2010) there are lots of critical obstacles such as low library budget provision that inhibit the process of selling books directly to libraries by the publishers. Tomomowo-Ayodele (2018) equally noted that inadequate sales marketing experienced by Nigerian titles is the most endemic constraint confronting local book production and distribution besides the use of inferior materials by the indigenous publishers among other negative factors. Though the rank of publishers has grown with time, yet, they have failed to meet the demands of a large number of students. Thus, poor usage of Nigerian locally published texts is mainly attributable to poor marketing of the indigenous information materials. Holley (2015) asserted that academic libraries largely avoid

the acquisition of self-published books into their collections. This might not be unconnected with low publicity and confidence in its worth. Davies (1997) had discovered that African publishers give little attention to the issue of promotion, book distribution, and supply of information regarding their publications. This is owing to a degree to a shortage of funds, but additionally, it reveals a failing in organization: most times, publishers assume it's sufficient to publish the books and store them in storehouses. Even though some achievement has been attained, strong attention on marketing and advertisement as well as distribution should attract the subsequent focus of publishers of African books.

Zell (2016) in his study which displayed the necessity for further methodical and robust investigation and certification, data collection, and critical analysis of the African book industry took cognizance of the collection of publishing statistics and book production figures, as critical elements in quantifying the expansion and vibrancy of indigenous publishing in contemporary Africa. He also argued for the expediency for more partnership, knowledge exchange, and sharing of expertise and talents within the African continent; in addition to the feasible advancement of North-South links and collaborative initiatives, which includes a program to establish a North-South research organization, a novel study circle or chain connecting appropriate research and educational academies in Africa, Northern America, and Europe. A concluding segment advances a few tips for revitalizing research and viable varieties of cooperation. AbdulSalami (2019) noted that Nigeria Institute of Transport Technology Library in Zaria was confronted with the predicament of distance from wholesale book vendors and publishers which can be solved through familiarity with the latter thus gaining insight into their catalogs and new addition to the stables. There is therefore a symbiotic relationship between publishing activities and collection development. Fulkerson (2021) stated that data obtained are necessary tools in the publishing process and formulation of policies for collection development. The above-highlighted challenges can be better catered for when bibliographic details of published books are readily available to the libraries through the instrumentality of the National Bibliography of Nigeria.

National bibliography

An absolute and expedient national bibliography is a significant data resource that aids book selection and subsequent acquisition in any type of library and information center (Žumer and IFLA, 2009). Carpenter (1988) believed that a national bibliography can provide the required assistance to initiate a centrally-managed record and catalog in addition to aiding the procedure for collection development in the library. Similarly, it assists in the cataloging process and authentication of authorship and history of publication (Žumer and IFLA, 2009).

National bibliography is therefore a database of the literary production of a given country. Häusner & Sommerland (2019) noted that besides its usefulness for study on publishing models,

the national bibliography entails historic perspectives on communal and cultural inclinations. This suggests that open national bibliography plays the purpose of the memory bank and researchable data due to its curative nature. Foskett, Estabrook, Francis & Haider (2017) declared that the British National Bibliography works as an illustration of the publishing venture and thus is an estimation of scholarly production. Parent (2007) highlighted that among the characteristics of a national bibliography are that it provides a current, timely, comprehensive, and authoritative list of all titles published in a country; it provides a record of their existence, and it identifies them unambiguously.

Parent (2007) had questioned the possibility of national bibliographies to continue to perform an age-long role which was obvious in the era of print taking into cognizance the ever-changing landscape. To him, the national bibliography evolved as a concept in the first part of the millennium but got expanded distinctly in 1950 at UNESCO organized conference focusing on bibliographic services in Paris. The conference had recommended the need to promote the establishment of national bibliographic services and national bibliographies. Consequently, a joint international congress was organized by IFLA and UNESCO in 1977 on National Bibliographies accepting the concept of Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) creating guidelines for national bibliographic agencies. It was at the Copenhagen international conference held a year and two decades later by the quartet (of IFLA, the Danish Royal Library, the Danish Royal School of Library and Information Science, and the Danish Library Centre) that the revision of the original UNESCO recommendations from the previous conference was done with many recommendations adopted. Throughout the globe, national bibliographies are presently accessible to clients in various formats, though there are a couple of states that continue to produce them in print or microfiches.

Häusner & Ylva Sommerland (2017) averred that the basis of the national bibliography in many countries is the legal deposit. Nevertheless, the extent and benchmarks for selection range greatly making international statistical comparability a difficult task. This has made it expedient to embark on a reassessment of the motivation for national bibliographies in this era of digital technology. There is no availability of a structured collection of international data for book statistics and there are no model interpretations available for basic concepts like "book", "publisher", or "author". The relationship between bibliography and library is complementary. Nepori & Sabba (2019) declared that bibliographies and libraries have consistently maintained a complementary relationship; while the former performs the function of documenting the statistics of publications produced, the latter collects, organizes, and stores the books so published. The national bibliography is the aggregate of the certified and exhaustive data of the nationally published books of any nation. The purpose of national bibliographies is to metamorphose as tools of national bibliographical control.

Häusner (2019) suggested that currently, one principal justification for guaranteeing the standard of national bibliographies is that the statistics should be published with free permission and as open connected records. For national bibliographies, it is necessary to examine the possibility of

cooperation between national libraries and other organizations running ancestral traditions. This remains a condition that should be included in the Parent's features of the bibliography. Lahti et al (2019) noted that national bibliographies can supply an exhaustive quantifiable understanding of the general chronicles of the emerging publishing environment over a while and geography.

The National Library of Nigeria has the sole responsibility to Index the literature of the nation and publish the national bibliography (Umoh, 2017). Igbosuah (2012) had emphasized that the national bibliographic control deals with the provision of bibliographic records that make up the National Bibliography of Nigeria as well as a guide to users on where information could be located or acquired. This is a unit within the structure of the National Library of Nigeria. Catalougers are further assisted with the development cum maintenance of and the presence of Cataloguing in Publication Data (CIP) within the NBN (Omosor, 2015). A check on the website of the National Library of Nigeria will indicate a move towards digitization of the NBN, but the print editions are still the reliable published format available for the use of information professionals and researchers as well.

Methodology

Islamic scholarly publishing is an integral part of religious publishing in Nigeria. This study interrogates the quantum of the contributions of Islam as a religion to this productivity. The data for the study was obtained from the national bibliography of Nigeria; a publication by the national library of Nigeria which aggregates the bibliographic records of publications produced in the country annually. The total of 1992 entries within the period of 2011-2018 was extracted from the NBN representing the entire publications recorded in the NBN for religious publications for the period under review. These entries were recorded under the Dewey decimal classification number 200-299 that stands for religion. Even though the class accommodates all entries for religion, 200-219 caters for books under general religion, 220-289 for Christian religious publications, and 290-299 for other religions under which Islam is accommodated; thus portraying a bias for other religious entries in a similar fashion to what is obtainable in Library of Congress classification scheme. The 1,992 entries were later collated for subsequent interpretation and further analysis using descriptive statistics.

Data Analysis

The following is a raw presentation of data with its subsequent analysis aimed at deducting the appropriate research conclusions:
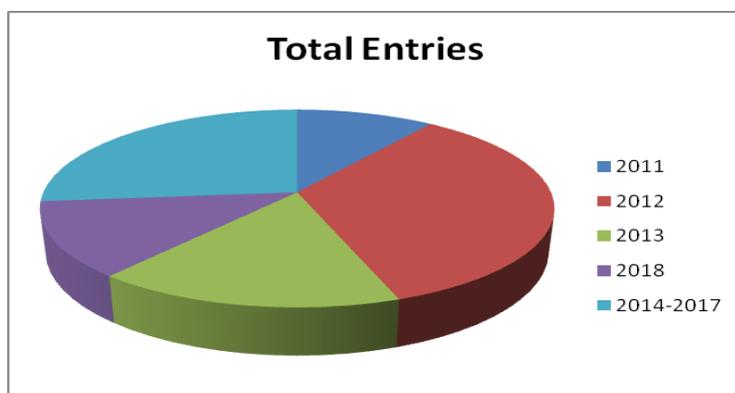 a. **Total Publishing Entries**

Figure 1

The study looked at the total entries for religious materials published in the national bibliography of Nigeria within a decade starting from 2011-2020. However, to date, the last edition from the national library was that of 2018. An edition comprised of four years (2014-2017). Thus, five editions of the national bibliography of Nigeria representing eight-year issues were examined to determine the annual performance of authors of religious texts within the period under consideration. The year 2012 saw a bumper harvest for greater productivity in this sector with 684 entries representing 34% of the total entries for the eight-year-long period. This would have been closely followed by the performance in 2014-2017 with 527 representing 26% of the total entries of 1299 except that this stood for a combination of four years; living 2013 practically as the second-largest entry with 333 representing 17%. There was a regression in the level of productivity in 2014-2017, with a slight increase in 2018 that recorded 246 figure (12%).

b. Intra-Class Performance

Year	GRP (200-219)		CRP (220-289)		ORP (290-299)	
2011	5	2.47%	195	95.53%	2	0.99%
2012	14	2.05%	654	95.61%	16	2.34%
2013	8	2.40%	308	92.50%	17	5.10%
2014-2017	10	1.90%	509	96.58%	8	1.52%
2018	5	2.03%	240	97.56%	1	0.41%
	42	2.11%	1906	95.68%	44	2.21%

Table 1

From the table above it is obvious that the entries were dominated by Christian Religious Publications representing seven sub-classes (220-289) within the class 200 of DDC. CRP had 1906 entries (95.68%) out of the entire 1992 publications recorded for the period. This was distantly followed by other Religious Publications which had 44 entries (2.21%). The least figure of 42 (2.11%) was recorded against General Religious Publications that stood for two sub-classes of Religion (200-209) and Philosophy and theory of religion (210-219). GRP represents books that describe religion from a general perspective rather than from the sectarian outlook. The obvious high performance of CRP had the highest percentage of entries in 2018 with 97.56%, while its giant show had the lowest of 92.50% in 2013. ORP recorded the lowest figure of a single entry (0.41%) in 2018.
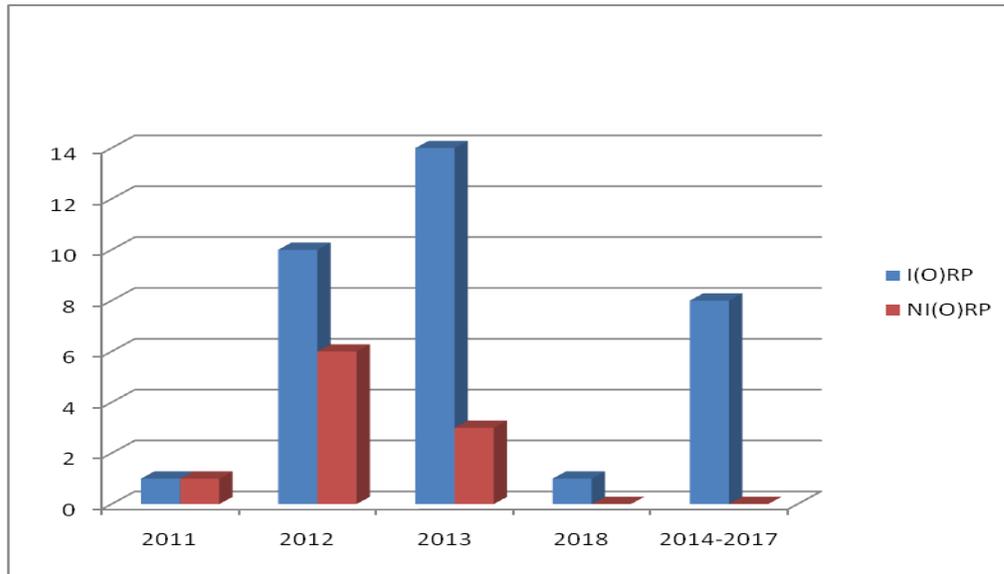
c. **Other Religious Publications**

Figure 2

Other Religious Publications different from books on Christians, Christianity, and the Bible were assigned sub-class of 290-299. It is under this category and specifically sub-class 297 that entries on Islam have been lumped with Babism and Baha'i faith even though there are no significant practitioners of the duo in the country. The figure shows that 34 entries representing the majority of 77.27% were recorded for the Islamic (Other) Religious Publications during the period considered for the research work as against the total of 44 for ORP during the same period. Non-Islamic (Other) Religious Publications was credited with 10 entries which equal 22.73% of entries under ORP. The figure indicates that the total contributions of Islamic (Other) Religious Publications is 1.71% of the entire entries of all entries for religion in NBN for the period under review. Similarly, this figure represents 1.78% of the CRP contributions to the NBN during this period.

Discussion and Recommendations
The study discovered that there was a decrease in the publishing activities of religious organizations as well as authors of religious books in Nigeria within the period between 2011 and 2018. Even though there was a pick in 2018, but it was a far cry from the height attained in 2012. This has corroborated the finding of Kowatsh (2020) who noted a decline in publishing activities of religious materials in Germany despite the attachment of the German society to its religious values. Nigeria, though a democratic state, has continued to accord a place of relevance to religion in the scheme of governance. The absence of sufficient information resources especially in the murky water of religious knowledge and in the language of the commoners is a major challenge to national integration and understanding. Religious extremism may not be easily divorced from inadequate understanding of religious beliefs which the dearth of religious texts connotes. This work further confirmed the vantage position occupied by the Christian missionary in the publishing industry in line with its earlier involvement in the evolution of the

printing/book publishing market in Nigeria as earlier identified by Blueprint (2020). Printing and publishing activities are intertwined in the information communication circle. The consistent lead exhibited by Christian publications is an indication of a backlog of experience, commitment, and resilience. Even though Islam had been in Nigeria for centuries, it seems that its heritage of oral transmission of knowledge alluded to by Del Castillo (2001) is still hanging on its neck, thus preventing high productivity in indigenous book production in Nigeria. Perhaps, the full participation of private entities such as religious organizations in publishing ventures unlike what Del Castillo (2001) claimed obtains in the Muslim world where government parastatals hold sway is a factor in this low response. It is apparent from this work that low contribution from ORP is part of the cumulative low performance by Africa in indigenous knowledge contribution as noted by Resenga Maluleka (2019). Therefore, efforts must be made to strengthen religious publishing with particular emphasis on Islamic knowledge. The following recommendation may be of immense assistance:

1. Sensitization of notable Islamic scholars and organizations to this challenge
2. Training of potential authors of Islamic texts on the technical demands of literary writing and organization of workshops for Islamic publishing houses on the handling of publishing routine
3. Establishment of jointly owned publishing houses through consortium by interested Muslim bodies to reduce cost and enhance the economy of scale
4. Creation of awareness of Islamic reading materials among the Muslim elites to increase the market values of Islamic books to create profitability and guarantee continuity of business
5. Synergy should be created between the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council and the National Library of Nigeria to promote literacy, knowledge production, and promotion among the adherents of religious beliefs in Nigeria.

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