Classification Islamicus: a solution for Islamic collections in libraries

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ABSTRACT

Standard library classification systems like Dewey Decimal Classification, Library of Congress Classification and Universal Decimal Classification are internationally known and widely used by libraries as the tools for organization of information. Brown's Subject Classification, Bibliographic Classification Ranganathan's Colon Classification are also known as standard classification systems, but with a little less usage as compared to aforementioned three systems. These systems are easy to use and convenient for most of the general collection libraries. However, these systems are not adequate for some of the special collections. Libraries with rich collections on Islam face problems while using these systems. Hence, such libraries use expansions and indigenous systems for such collections in many of cases. Based on findings of literature and data collected from a representative sample of 30 libraries of this kind and 16 Scholars of library and information science from nine different countries of the world, outline of an independent and comprehensive classification system for Islam has been presented in this paper.

Keywords: Organization of Islamic Knowledge and Classification Systems; Indigenous Library Classification Systems; Expansions in Standard Library Classification Schemes; Rich Library Collections on Islam

INTRODUCTION

Classification plays a vital role in organization and display of information and collections in libraries. During the 19th century, formal classification systems, with hierarchies, enumeration and notation were developed to replace previously general subject categorization. Some of these systems that got popularity and got known as standard systems include the following:

- Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)
- American Library of Congress Classification (LCC)
- Universal Decimal Classification (UDC)
- Brown's Subject Classification (SC)
- Bliss' Bibliographic Classification (BC)
- Ranganathan's Colon Classification (CC)

The first three of aforementioned systems are widely used around the globe. These systems served the purpose adequately in case of majority of knowledge areas and general collections. Nevertheless, some particular branches of knowledge were somehow ignored by these systems. Collections on Islam are among such grey areas. Subsequently, such libraries used expansions in these systems and indigenous systems

for Islam. This paper presents summarized findings of literature on problem, empirical data and an outline of a comprehensive classification system developed for Islam.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Libraries that have developed extensive collections on Islamic knowledge face problem of organizing their collections while applying the commonly used standard classification systems. The reason behind this problem is that the standard library classification systems do not provide sufficient place, proper enumeration, and adequate expansion for resources on Islamic knowledge and literature. In response, such libraries have adopted very incoherent, inconsistent, and non-uniform practices. These practices include employing locally developed non-standard systems, expansions within given place in standard classification systems, expansions using alternative place (notations) in standard systems, and combination of aforementioned practices along with standard classification systems. As a result, the materials are organized quite differently in homogeneous libraries, which create confusions and inadequacies for the users of these libraries who use to visit multiple libraries. Hence, the libraries under discussion are not satisfied with available options, despite practicing different alternatives. This problem has been felt by the researcher through personal experience of serving in such a library, review of relevant literature, study and visits of the similar libraries and interaction with library users. This problem has urged the researcher to conduct this study to enable non-Western resources has an equal chance to be as organized as other resources. The author believes that Classification Islamicus will solve this problem, because of its following characteristics:

- An enumeration of Islamic knowledge has been adopted, which was developed by classical scholars of Islamic knowledge, started by "muhaddithīn" (the collectors and compilers of Hadith knowledge) and followed by latter scholars.
- It is a comprehensive system, in which more than 1500 themes and subthemes of Islamic knowledge have been covered with an opportunity of building numbers with the help of tables, where required.
- It has been developed following the principles standard classification systems of Dewey and Library of Congress.
- It has a great potential of further expansion due to format of its notation (explained in section 8).
- It has been validated by 17 scholars of Islamic studies and LIS, most of them having dual expertise of Islamic knowledge plus LIS.
- A team of experts have agreed to work on further developments of this system with passage of time.

OBJECTIVES

This paper serves the following objectives:
1. To draw a factual situation of classification problem of rich Islamic collections.
2. To know indigenous library classification practices.
3. To discover the satisfaction level of the libraries with classification systems in their use.
4. To gather opinions about potential solution of the problem.
5. To present an outline of an independent and comprehensive classification system for Islam, suggested by population.

METHODS

Keeping in view the nature of the problem, following methods have been employed:

Literature Review: Findings of available literature reviewed on the topic in print and non print formats have been included.

Empirical Data Collection: Findings of empirical data collected from reasonably representative sample of 30 libraries with rich Islamic collections and 16 scholars who have worked on the problem from following countries have been included in this paper; Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Kingdom, United States and Canada.

The sample was selected initially using purposive and convenient sampling. Later, snowball sampling was also utilized for data collection.

Data Collection Techniques and Instrument: Keeping in view the social nature of the problem, human experience and people perceptions involved in this study, qualitative methods were adopted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data.

Data Analysis: Collected data were transferred to paper, categorized, arranged, codified, tagged and qualitatively analyzed.

Development of an Independent and Comprehensive Classification System for Islam: Based on the findings of reviewed literature and empirical data, an independent and comprehensive classification system was developed. The outline of this system has been presented in this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Idrees (2011), the summarized findings of literature on the topic are as following:
- Seeking and developing reservoirs of knowledge is evident throughout Islamic history, for which libraries of Al-Sahib Ibn 'Abbād with a collection of 6,200 books and a ten volume catalogue, Al-'Aziz Fatimid's 1.6 million volume collection in Egypt, and Hakam II's library with 400,000 books during the 10th century alongside the historic Dar-al-Hikmah library of Abbasid caliph Ma'mun have been referred.
- A trend of increase in publications and emerging new topics has been noted. A search in Amazon (April, 2010) on titles available on "Islam", published since 2000 showed 17,1726 titles. The same search in December 2011 resulted in 21,292 titles. Barnes and Noble (2011) showed availability of 24,307 titles on Islam. Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon (2009 and 2011) published 4,400 titles on more than one hundred main topics of Islam in 2009 and 5,394 titles during 2011.
- All standard classification systems were devised in the West by non-Muslims., except for the Colon classification. Therefore, these classification systems could not provide proper enumeration and suitable hierarchy to Islamic topics. Reasons denoted in literature for this phenomenon are unawareness of devisers with horizontal and vertical expansion of Islamic knowledge, their particular interest and biasness. (Riazuddin,1993; Qaiser, 1974 and Idrees and Mahmood, 2010)

- In response, librarians have developed expansions in standard classification systems remain within given place and notation, e.g., Shafi (1962), Qaiser (1974), and Eraqi(1985) in DDC and International Islamic University of Malaysia (n.d) and Kamran Fani(2000) in LCC. Some others used alternative place and notation that was originally specified for Christianity, e.g., Sabzwari (2007). Some independent systems and frameworks were also coined, e.g., Sardar (1979), and Indian Institute of Islamic Studies (IIIS, 1974).
- Later, some standard systems too expanded their notation for Islam, but it was still insufficient since the baseline was limited. Hence, the libraries with rich Islamic collections remained unsatisfied with available options.

RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

Findings of empirical data collected from 30 libraries and 16 LIS scholars are summarized as follows:
- The sample represents all the relevant population. Countries were included from Middle East, Far East, South Asia, Africa, Europe and America. The libraries included had rich collections on Islam and the scholars were those who had either researched on the topic, developed classifications / expansions for Islam or have been in close contact being faculty to teach organization of information / knowledge.
- Out of 30 libraries 25 (83.3 percent) had been using multiple classifications i.e., standard systems for general collections and indigenous systems or expansions for Islam. DDC is most used system, (used by 21 libraries), preceded by LCC (five libraries). Eight expansions in DDC, four in LCC, one in UDC and three independent indigenous systems are in use of libraries.
- Out of 30, only one library is satisfied with the standard classification system for Islam. Out of 23 libraries that were using indigenous expansions, two were fully satisfied, 17 were partially satisfied, and four were highly dissatisfied. All three libraries using indigenous systems were dissatisfied with these systems. All 16 scholars mentioned that standard classification systems were not adequate to classify large collections on Islam, nor were the indigenous systems or expansions fulfilling the needs optimally.
- The problems being faced by the libraries is shown in Figure 1.
- Majority of the respondents suggested to develop an independent and comprehensive system, some proposed for amendments / expansions and some recommended for both. Opinions is shown in Figure 2.
- All 44 respondents who suggested for new, independent and comprehensive system agreed that expansion of Islamic knowledge and publication of Islamic literature determined real need for such a system and that developing a particular subject classification system was viable. A total of 42 participants thought that there were sufficient literature to help guide the development of such a system.
- Majority of participants (37) recommended for an enumerative system and 7 were in favor of faceted system. Opinions regarding implementation of a new system is displayed in Figure 3.
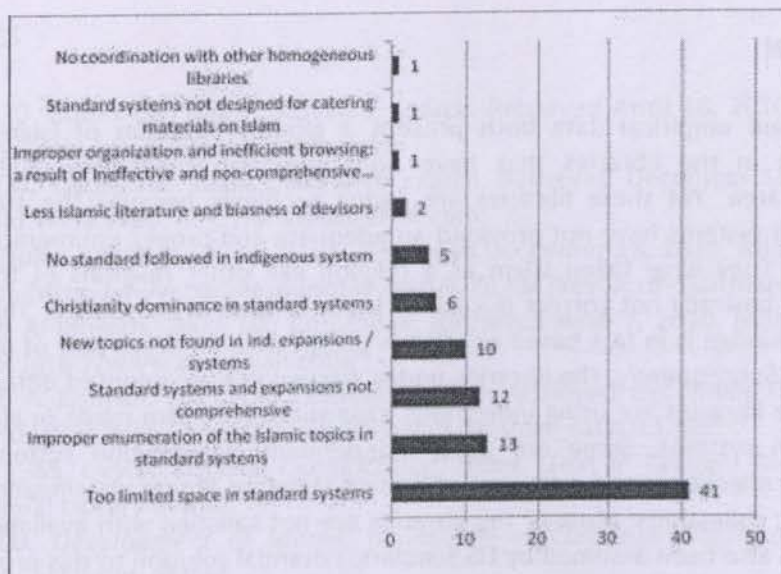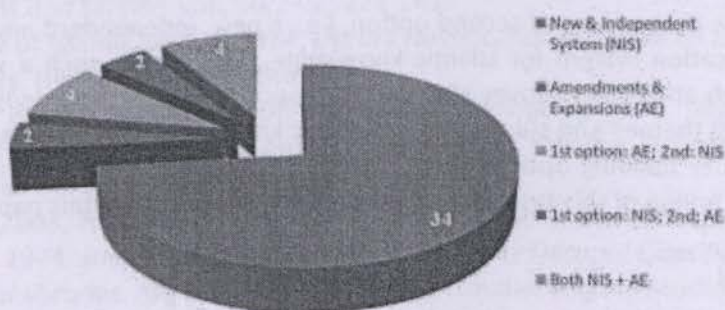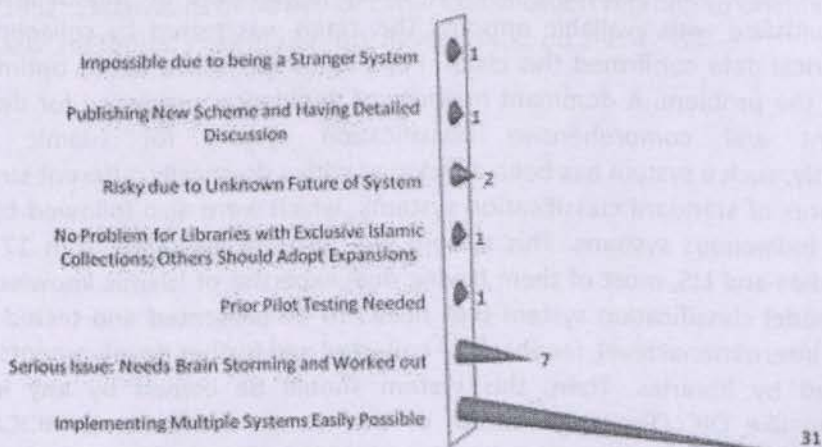
Figure 1: Problem Faced by Librarians

Horizontal bar chart values:
- No coordination with other homogeneous libraries: 1
- Standard systems not designed for catering materials on Islam: 1
- Improper organization and inefficient browsing: a result of ineffective and non-comprehensive...: 1
- Less Islamic literature and biasness of devisors: 2
- No standard followed in indigenous system: 5
- Christianity dominance in standard systems: 6
- New topics not found in ind. expansions / systems: 10
- Standard systems and expansions not comprehensive: 12
- Improper enumeration of the Islamic topics in standard systems: 13
- Too limited space in standard systems: 41

Figure 2: Solution for the Problem

Pie chart legend:
- New & Independent System (NIS)
- Amendments & Expansions (AE)
- 1st option: AE; 2nd: NIS
- 1st option: NIS; 2nd: AE
- Both NIS + AE

Figure 3: Implementation of the New System

Horizontal bar chart values:
- Impossible due to being a Stranger System: 1
- Publishing New Scheme and Having Detailed Discussion: 1
- Risky due to Unknown Future of System: 2
- No Problem for Libraries with Exclusive Islamic Collections; Others Should Adopt Expansions: 1
- Prior Pilot Testing Needed: 1
- Serious Issue: Needs Brain Storming and Worked out: 7
- Implementing Multiple Systems Easily Possible: 31

DISCUSSION

Literature and empirical data both present a gloomy situation of Islamic knowledge organization in the libraries that have built very rich collections of this particular knowledge area. Yet these libraries are facing problems because the standard library classification systems have not provided an adequate and proper enumeration for Islamic knowledge. They have taken Islam as a religion like other religions of the world. This approach is basically not correct in case of Islam or Islamic knowledge. The approach of Islamic knowledge is in fact based on Islam's perspective on every part of life and area of knowledge. Subsequently, the libraries under discussion have adopted different practices. Some of the libraries are using indigenous expansions for Islam made in standard library classification systems. Some are using independent classification systems for Islamic knowledge collections. And a few are still using standard library classification systems for their Islamic collections. Most of the libraries are not satisfied with available options and this fact has also been assumed by LIS scholars. Potential solution to this problem could be either amendments and expansions in structure, enumeration and hierarchy of portion specified for Islam in standard library classification systems or to develop a new, independent and comprehensive library classification system for Islamic knowledge. A dominant majority of the libraries and scholars that were included in sample population of this study were in the favor of second option, i.e., a new, independent and comprehensive library classification system for Islamic knowledge. As a result, such a system has been developed with an effort to cover all possible aspects of Islamic knowledge with coverage of almost 1500 themes and subthemes of Islamic knowledge that also has an opportunity of more number building options using standard subdivisions, geographic, language and other tables. Outline of this system is presented as an appendix to this paper.

CONCLUSION

The libraries with rich collections on Islam are facing problems of organization of such collections while using standard library classification systems. Such libraries have adopted different indigenous systems or expansions in standard systems of classification for their Islamic collections. Still, according to claim made in literature on this issue the libraries were not satisfied with available options. This claim was tested by collecting empirical data. Empirical data confirmed this claim. Population was asked about optimal potential solution of the problem. A dominant majority of population suggested for developing an independent and comprehensive classification system for Islamic knowledge. Subsequently, such a system has been developed with a drastically different structure from the structures of standard classification systems, which were also followed by previously developed indigenous systems. This system was also got validated from 17 scholars of Islamic studies and LIS, most of them having dual expertise of Islamic knowledge plus LIS. This is a model classification system that needs to be presented and tested in different libraries at international level, feedback be collected and further developments be made as if suggested by libraries. Then, this system should be owned by any international organization like OIC (The Organization of the Islamic Conference), IRCICA (Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture), and ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), so that an editorial board could be constituted and continuous future developments in this system would be materialized.

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APPENDIX

OUTLINE OF AN INDEPENDENT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR ISLAM

This is an outline of a model classification system, which has been developed for the libraries that have rich collections on Islam. It has been developed on the basis provided by review of literature available on the problem and the empirical data collected from 30 libraries and 16 scholars of Library and Information Science (LIS). Empirical data supported the view point mentioned in the literature, i.e., the standard library classification systems do not provide the optimal solution for the libraries that have rich collections on Islam. Therefore, the scholars have developed different alternatives, which are being used in such libraries. Majority of the respondents mentioned that the provided solutions were not satisfactory and a new and comprehensive system was needed to be developed for Islam with provision and availability of further developments as per requirements with the passage of time.

1.1.   Enumeration, Hierarchy and Arrangement
The works that have already been done in this direction and classification systems previously developed for Islamic knowledge were mainly of following types:
- Expansions in the standard classification systems, remaining within the place   provided in the system.
- Expansions in the standard classification systems, utilizing alternative place in the system originally provided for some other religion or other areas of knowledge, i.e., mostly Christianity.
- Independent systems developed for collections on Islam based on the standard systems.
- Independent systems developed for collections on Islam following no standards or systems.

The above mentioned systems have their own limitations, which are not meant to be pointed out here indeed. An effort has been made to develop this model system in a different way, approach and style. Unlike the standard systems or expansions it has strived to enumerate the subjects in the hierarchy that has been adopted by the Islamic studies. Main themes or topics have been taken as the main classes and sub themes have been taken as their minors. Indentions have been used in the schema to reveal this hierarchy.

Islamic knowledge is based on the belief and faith system of Islam. Tawhīd (Oneness of God) is foundation of Islamic belief system and all the Islamic knowledge is supposed to start from this baseline. Then comes faith in other components, i.e., angels, sacred / divine books, prophets, Day of Judgment, life hereafter, and destiny of good and bad being in control of God (قدر خيره و شره من الله تعالى). This belief system is also known as Īmān. Topical arrangement of Hadith books were the first ones in the Islamic history that were compiled as per thematic hierarchy or index of Islamic knowledge. These books have taken the belief system on the top. Compilation of these books was started during the first century of Islamic history and reached to its peak during the third century (Maududi, 2003). This subject hierarchy is respected and followed by the Islamic studies and it has also been taken in the classification system developed by the researcher. After Īmān, comes Islam, that is known as the practical implications of belief and faith. These are also known as Ībādāt or pillars of the religion Islam. These pillars include Prayers, Fasting, Almsgiving and Pilgrimage of Ka'aba, the house of God as per Islamic concept. As conceived by Islamic studies, sources of knowledge are Qur'an, known as the last divine book according to Muslim belief, Hadith, the sayings, deeds and judgments of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which are also sacred as per Muslim belief. Hadith is also known as Sunnah, which linguistically means the way of Prophet's life. Then are Ijmā' and Qiyās. Ijmā' means consensus of the Ummah or the scholars and experts of Islamic knowledge on some issue that has not been clearly narrated in Qur'an, nor in Hadith. Qiyās means looking for solution to some of the contemporary problem that has not directly been discussed or given any solution in Qua'an and Hadith, relating it to the context in the light of Qur'an, Sunnah, judgment of any of the Prophet's companions or Ijmā'. There are some more principles taken as sources, but these four are known as popular sources of knowledge in Islam. Sīrah, means the biography of Prophet Muhammad written by others in their own words and the

biography of other renowned people in Islam and Islamic history, especially companions of Prophet, known as Sahaba (صحابہ) and their successor generation known as Tabi'īn (تابعین). Sīrah is also considered as one of very important and integral parts of Islamic literature. It could be included in history, but as per Islamic studies' perception, it is assumed as an independent area of knowledge. Therefore, it has been taken in the system independently as it is assumed by the experts and scholars of Islamic studies.

Islam is not just a religion in popular meanings as most of other religions of the world are normally considered. It has rather deep roots in all aspects of practical human life. It is considered as a complete code of life. Islamic knowledge is considered Islam's perspective on all fields of human life and nature. Islamic jurisprudence and different jurisprudential schools of thought have their own detailed legal stands on different matters of life. Then Islam has its own perspective on sociology, economics, politics, law, arts, science, commerce, education and other practical fields of human life. Therefore, a class of Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Law and Social Sciences has also been included in this classification system. Sufism (mysticism) known as Tsawwuf (تصوف) in Arabic terminology is also an independent and a vast field in Islamic knowledge. It deals with internal purification and developing relationship with God. It has some similarity with monasticism, but not the same. It has very deep roots in Islamic history. Its origin goes back to the companions of Prophet Muhammad, e.g., Ali ibn Abu Talib, the cousin of Prophet and fourth caliph of Muslims and Abu Zar Ghifari, one of very renowned companions are considered to be among the pioneers of Islamic mysticism. It has different doctrines, orders, schools and journey of evolution. It is a complete science in its own. So, it has also been treated as a complete independent class in the system.

Comparative religions is also taken as a complete discipline and many of the universities are offering master level degree programs in this discipline. A variety of Islamic sects developed throughout the Islamic history have also their expanded roots in Islamic knowledge. At broader level comparative religions and Islamic sects have a hierarchical relationship. So combining the both, a class has also been included in the system. At the end a class comprising of history, biography and geography has also been included in the system, which covers historical expansion of Islam and Muslims in different parts of the world and different Muslim dynasties, rulers and other important personalities of Islamic history. Standard subdivisions and tables of geographic areas, historical periods, important persons, and languages have also been furnished in the system to increase the usability and flexibility for the users of the system.

1.2. Terminology, Notation and Future Potential
The terminology of Islamic knowledge mainly originated from Arabic, which has mostly been translated and sometimes transliterated into English. The original terms in Arabic have also been supplied in succession where felt necessary.

It was revealed in the empirical data and is quite logical that the notation of the proposed system should not be same or contradictory to the standard classification systems, especially to DDC, Library of Congress Classification and UDC. Hence, effort has been made to coin the notation in such a way that it may be easy as having some similarity to the standard system notations and simultaneously not being the same or contradictory. Notation format provides a lot of opportunities to expand it in the future if required. It is based on minimum three characters, i.e., first: Arabic numeral, second: alphabet A (or B, which has only been used a few times so far) and then another Arabic numeral. If needed in the future, next alphabets, i.e., C, D, E, and so on, can be used to expand the classes. So, it provides a fair opportunity to expand the system many times, when required. The notation could be even brief and shorter, if an alphabet in the middle would have been dropped, but as it has revealed in the empirical data, most of the libraries in Muslim countries use DDC. Therefore, it was possible that using just Arabic numerals could create a fair chance of ambiguity, confusion and mixing them with other notations of DDC. In order to avoid this confusion and making a distinction among notations, this format has been adopted, which at the same time provides an opportunity for further expansions, if and when required.

This is a model classification system for Islamic knowledge, which can be adopted and further developments can also be made and incorporated in this system.

1.3. Main Outline of the Scheme

1st Summary

0A0	Generalities
1A0	Belief and Faith System of Islam / Īman ('Aqā'id عقائد /ايمان)
2A0	Worships / Islam (Ibādāt, عبادات)
3A0	Sources of Knowledge
4A0	Sīrah (سيرة:The Life of Prophet Muhammad SAW, his Family and Companions)
5A0	Islamic Jurisprudence (فقہ, Fiqh) , Islamic Law and Social Sciences
6A0	Tasawwuf (تصوف) / Sufism (Mysticism)
7A0	Comparative Religions and Sects
8A0	[Unassigned]
9A0	Religious Historyand Geography

2nd summary

0A0   Generalities

General Works on Islam

0A0.1-9 Standard Subdivisions

1A0-1A9   Belief and Faith System of Islam / Īman ('Aqā'id عقائد/ايمان)

1A0	Comprehensive Works
1A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
1A1	Belief in God (Allah)
1A2	Belief in Angels
1A3	Belief in Divine Books
1A4	Belief in Prophets
1A5	Belief in Life after Death
1A6	Belief in Destiny of Good and Bad (قضاء و قدر)
1A7	Hypocrisy (نفاق)

2A0-2A9   Worships ('Ibādāt, عبادات)

2A0	Comprehensive Works
2A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
2A1	Prayers (صلوٰة)
2A2	Fasting
2A3	Almsgiving (Zakāh and Sadaqāt: زكوٰة و صدقات)
2A4	Pilgrimage of Allah's Home (Hajj)
2A5	'Umrah
2A6	Jihād

3A0-3A9   Sources of Knowledge

3A0	Comprehensive Works
3A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
3A1	Qur'an
3A2	Hadith
3A3	Shiite Hadith
3A4	Hadith of Other Sects
3A5	Ijmā'
3A6	Qiyās
3A7	Other Sources of Islamic Knowledge

4A0-4A9   Sīrah

4A0	Comprehensive Works
4A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
4A1	Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Previous Religions and Scriptures
4A2	Life of Prophet Before Announcement of Prophet-hood
4A3	Life of Prophet After Announcement of Prophet-hood in Makkah

4A4	Life of Prophet in Madīnah
4A5	Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Battlefield (Holy Wars: Ghazwāt wa Sarāyah)
4A6	Personality, Family Life and Later Occurrences of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
4A7	Family of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
4A8	Sīrah of Companions of Prophet
4A9	Tābi'een (تابعین) and Tab'e Tābi'een (تبع تابعین)
5A0-5A9	**Islamic Jurisprudence (فقہ, Fiqh), Islamic Law and Social Sciences**
5A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
5A1	Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (Usool al-Fiqh: اصول الفقہ)
5A2	Composite Life Affairs (Mu'āmlaat: معاملات)
5A3	Islamic Politics
5A4	Islamic Economics
5A5	Islamic Administrative/Management and Military Sciences
5A6	Islam, Sociology and Social Work
5A7	Islamic Education
5A8	Islamic Commerce and Communications
5A9	Islamic Customs and Folklore
6A0	**Tasawwuf (تصوف) / Sufism (Mysticism)**
6A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
6A1	Basic Concepts and Philosophy
6A2	Sufi Journey -- Evolution
6A3	Sufi Doctrines
6A4	Characteristic Features of Sufism
6A5	Sufi Orders
7A0-7A9	**Comparative Religions and Sects**
7A0	Comprehensive Works
7A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
7A1	Sunnite Sects
7A2	Shi'ites
7A3	Ismailites/Ismailees
7A4	Mu'atazilites
7A5	Khārijites
7A6	Medieval and Modern Sects
7A7	Heretical Sects Derived from Islam
7A8	Comparative Religions
8A0	**[Unassigned]**
9A0-9A9	**Religious History and Geography**
9A0	Comprehensive Works
9A0.01-09	Standard Subdivisions
9A1	Pre Islamic Religions
9A2	Biography
9A3	Geography and Demography
9A4	Early Islamic History: Year 609-661 A.D.
9A5	Banu Umayyad Dynasty: Year 661-750 and 711-1053 A.D.
9A6	Banu Abbas Dynasty: 750-1258 A.D.
9A7	Islam and Muslims in Africa, Europe and America: 788-1900 A.D.
9A8	Islam and Muslims in India and Rest of Asia: 650-1900 A.D.
9A9	Contemporary Muslim World: Year 1900--

3rd summary: includes about 1500 themes and sub-themes.