The Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Culture, Language, and Literacy

The Role of Information Literacy in the Digital Era

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Abstract:
Digital transformation in the world of knowledge has altered the way humans interact with texts, especially in the context of Islamic studies. The shift from physical texts to digital metadata creates a new landscape in Islamic scholarship, where access to knowledge sources becomes more open, yet also more complex. In these changes, information literacy becomes a key competency for navigating, evaluating, and utilizing Islamic information effectively and ethically. This article discusses the role of information literacy in supporting the transformation of Islamic studies in the digital era, by highlighting its implications for the fields of library science, history, linguistics, and literature. With a literature analysis approach and conceptual reflection, this paper affirms that information literacy is not merely a technical skill, but rather a form of epistemological proficiency that determines the quality of Islamic understanding amid the continuously developing digital ecosystem.

Keywords*: information literacy, digital Islamic studies, metadata, knowledge transformation, digital humanities*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology in the last two decades has driven significant transformation in the way knowledge is produced, stored, and disseminated. In the field of Islamic studies, this change is clearly visible through efforts to digitize classical manuscripts,

catalog kitab kuning (yellow books), and develop knowledge databases such as Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, Qur'an Corpus, or OpenITI (Open Islamic Text Initiative). The shift from text to metadata from manuscripts to databases is not only technological in nature, but also epistemological: it changes the way Muslims understand, study, and interpret the Islamic intellectual heritage.

Amid these changes, information literacy skills become very important. Information literacy, according to UNESCO (2018), encompasses the ability to recognize information needs, find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically. In the context of Islamic studies, information literacy enables researchers, students, and the general public to navigate diverse digital sources, assess their credibility, and use them with scientific and religious responsibility.

However, these changes also bring challenges. Easy access to digital information is not always accompanied by critical ability in sorting out the truth and authority of sources. Many Islamic texts are digitized without academic verification, while digital algorithms often determine what is more "visible" rather than what is more valid. Therefore, strengthening information literacy becomes a prerequisite for the sustainability and credibility of Islamic studies in the metadata era.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information Literacy and Digital Transformation

Information literacy emerged from society's need to adapt to the changing paradigm of information. Head and Eisenberg (2010) explain that in the digital era, the main challenge is no longer the lack of information, but rather the ability to manage an overflow of unverified data. In the context of Islamic scholarship, this phenomenon becomes even more complex because the Islamic scholarly tradition has a long history based on textual authority, sanad, and rigorous interpretation.

Digital transformation changes the relationship between humans and Islamic texts. Previously, textual authority depended on teachers, scholarly institutions, or transmission chains. Now, anyone can access thousands of classical books online. For example, Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah allows users to search for hadith or scholars' opinions in just seconds, something that previously required hours in a library. However, this convenience carries epistemological implications: how to ensure the authenticity and context of digital texts?

This is where information literacy plays a role. Bruce (2008) affirms that information literacy is not merely a technical skill for searching data, but also a critical understanding of how knowledge is formed and interpreted. In digital Islamic studies, information literacy includes the ability to read texts with digital awareness understanding that the digital representation of a book is not an absolute substitute for the original manuscript, but rather the result of curation, transliteration, and digitization that has certain biases.

Information Literacy in Islamic Studies

The role of information literacy in Islamic studies is evident in four scholarly domains: library science, history, linguistics, and literature.

1. In Library Science

The transformation from text to metadata makes libraries no longer merely storage spaces, but centers of information management. Modern librarians serve as epistemological mediators who help users understand the Islamic context of digital sources. Through the application of descriptive, thematic, and relational metadata, Islamic works can be indexed and accessed in a more scholarly manner. Information literacy helps users understand how metadata works how information about authors, places, years, and print versions affects the validity of Islamic interpretation.

2. In Historical Studies

The digitization of Islamic historical sources opens new opportunities for researchers to conduct cross-temporal analysis. Digital archives such as the Qatar Digital Library and Islamic Manuscript Database provide thousands of historical documents in digital format. However, without adequate information literacy, researchers risk drawing conclusions from data detached from its context. Information literacy teaches source verification, understanding of digital bias, and assessment of the reliability of historical metadata.

3. In Linguistic Studies

In the field of Arabic linguistics and Qur'anic studies, digital transformation enables massive corpus text analysis through computational linguistics. Projects like Qur'an Corpus utilize linguistic annotation to trace the morphological and syntactic structure of the Qur'an. Information literacy helps users understand how algorithms and linguistic annotations work, as well as their limitations in representing the spiritual meaning of sacred texts.

4. In Islamic Literature and Philology Studies

Arabic literary studies and Islamic philology have also experienced a digital revolution. Manuscripts that could once only be accessed in Middle Eastern libraries are now available online through platforms such as the World Digital Library and Gallica BnF. However, without information literacy skills, users may lose awareness of the material context of texts the type of paper, calligraphic style, or marginalia notes that are not always captured in digital versions. Information literacy here becomes a bridge between textual beauty and historical awareness of the cultural transmission process.

Challenges and Implementation Strategies

Despite its great potential, the application of information literacy in Islamic studies faces several challenges.

First, fragmentation of digital sources. Many Islamic digital projects operate independently without uniform metadata standards. This complicates interoperability and cross-database searching. Second, the lack of information literacy curriculum in Islamic educational institutions. Yet, students of tafsir, hadith, or Islamic history now directly encounter digital

sources that demand critical evaluation skills. Third, algorithmic bias and digital authority, where search engines tend to prioritize popular sources rather than the most credible ones (Noble, 2018).

To address these challenges, strategies for strengthening information literacy based on Islamic scholarly values are needed:

1. Integration of Information Literacy in Islamic Education
   Islamic educational institutions, including pesantren and Islamic universities, need to integrate information literacy into the curriculum of tafsir, hadith, and Islamic history. Training in digital data searching, online source evaluation, and citation ethics should become part of the basic competencies of contemporary Muslim scholars.
2. Collaboration between Librarians, Academics, and Scholars
   Strengthening information literacy must be done across disciplines. Librarians play a role in providing metadata access; academics develop digital research, and religious scholars maintain the ethical and authenticity dimensions of Islamic knowledge.
3. Development of Islamic Metadata Infrastructure
   Standardization of metadata for Islamic texts is needed so they can be accessed across platforms and institutions. For example, a classification system based on Islamic scholarly terminology (fiqh, aqidah, tasawuf) can help users navigate literature more meaningfully.
4. Information Ethics in Digital Islamic Studies
   The Islamic values of amanah (trustworthiness) and tabligh (conveying truth) can serve as the foundation for information ethics. Every researcher or user of digital texts is responsible for using and disseminating information honestly and respecting copyright and textual authenticity.

C. CONCLUSION

The shift from text to metadata has created a revolution in Islamic studies, opening great opportunities for the democratization of knowledge while simultaneously raising new epistemological challenges. Amid this wave of digitization, information literacy becomes the key to maintaining the quality, credibility, and authenticity of Islamic scholarship.

Through information literacy, individuals are not only able to search for and manage Islamic data, but also understand the context, structure, and values behind the digital representation of texts. Thus, information literacy is not merely a technical capability, but rather a form of intellectual ijtihad in facing the complexity of Islamic knowledge in the digital era.

The future of Islamic studies depends on the extent to which the scholarly community is able to combine a strong textual tradition with critical digital competencies. This transformation demands a balance between turath (classical scholarly heritage) and tajdid (renewal), where information literacy functions as an epistemological bridge between the two.

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