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Maktabah Syamilah as an Information Seeking Tool for Higher Education in Islamic Studies

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Abstract

This study is a personal perspective from the experience of teaching Islamic Studies in a Master's Program of Islamic Higher Education. Students' limited knowledge and skills while seeking reference sources for Islamic studies serve as an obstacle in writing authentic academic works. Therefore, the use of Maktabah Syamilah as a reference tool for Islamic studies is very important for students. The skill of using Maktabah Syamilah is necessary because scientific works, including papers or research at Islamic universities, demand the use of original Arabic literature. Hence, proficiency in using this tool requires serious training and should be promoted by the manager of the campus digital library.

Keywords: Maktabah Syamilah, Arabic literature, information seeking tool, Islamic studies sources,

Introduction

The Islamic studies resources observed from the 5-year experience of teaching in a Master's class at a State Islamic University is quite concerning. Although the cognitive power of Islamic studies, especially the understanding of the Qur'an and hadith, is in the original classical books, the use of Arabic literature by other subject lecturers is very minimal. Generally, students tend to cite English literature while making papers and research due to their easy online access and familiarity. This results in an imbalance between Arabic and English literature in libraries, which has long been felt by students and lecturers. Since 1979, books in Arabic have been observed to not spread to various national libraries in England, where, of the 424 found, 200 were in one particular library, while others had none (Auchterlonie, 1985). In addition, the understanding of Arabic literature is obtained from indirect translation because the majority of Arabic universities teach science in English. Finally, students read English language journals and books to complete papers or research that require critical Arabic thinking, thereby automatically

affecting their writing. This also occurs when the original Arabic paper or research is the foundation of the texts written from thoughts formulated in other languages (Sharkas, 2011).

Although the Maktabah Syamilah application needs to be promoted to help students easily access original literature, research on its use was rarely found while searching for literature reviews in journals indexed by Scopus. The use of original Arabic literature is less well-known and has been forgotten for years without any college policy. Hence, this bad experience should be resolved through the use of Maktabah Syamilah, particularly in master's classes and generally in all universities that have Islamic study programs. The Maktabah Syamilah application is very helpful for students in searching for Arabic literature, especially classical forms because it provides original books consisting of various kinds of knowledge. Hence, continuous habituation, alongside the development of professional writing skills, is needed (Clarke et al., 2013) because writing scientific papers are capable of continuously making arguments and finding explanations or answers (Attard, 2012).

Maktabah Syamilah

Maktabah Syamilah, which comes from Arabic, means comprehensive library. It contains 53 categories of knowledge clumps comprising 6688 original books, including *aqidah*, knowledge of the Qur'an, *tafsir*, *mulhak tafsir*, *hadith*, *the science of hadith*, *matan hadith*, *syarah hadith*, *mulhak Mutun hadith*, *ajza "alhadisiyyah*, and *takhrij hadith*. Other books are *Kutib ilal wa alsulah*, *al-alabani book*, *ushul fiqh*, *hanafi fiqh*, *mulhak fiqh hanafi*, *maliki fiqh*, *syafi'i fiqh*, *mulhak fiqh safi'i*, *servant fiqh*, *mulhak fiqh slaveli*, *siroh*, and so on. Maktabah Syamilah is an easy-to-use tool employed by entering keywords according to the required knowledge clump. This application is equipped with complete reference citations because it includes the book title, author's name, publication year and city, chapters, and pages. Therefore, it can be used as a reference in the master's class (S2).

The use of Maktabah Syamilah is an obligation for S2 classes, which seek the essence of truth, as scientific truth, especially Islamic studies, can be obtained correctly from original books in the application. Subsequently, Maktabah Syamilah is used to, *first*,

maintain scientific integrity. The reason is that many frauds write scientific papers, research results are occasionally manipulated, and there is dishonesty in the use of methodologies published in reputable journals (Putnam, 2015). Scientific integrity should be maintained from various angles, including works of articles, books, and research results. *Second*, Maktabah Syamilah users will be accustomed to analyzing the results of their readings. This is because non-Arab readers must conduct translations that require them to repeatedly understand the meaning of the sentences used in books and allow the narration in their paper or research. Although writing papers or research is very important for academics and requires practice (Grech, 2017), many students are bad at it. Hence, their papers are not well organized, are grammatically disorganized, do not focus on one theme, and are sometimes plagiarized (Pfeifer & Ferree, 2006). Students require practice writing down the readings obtained because their narratives may be inseparable from their nature, and they may present personal opinions without analyzing the required qualifications. Therefore, peer reviews from lecturers or instructors are needed during their training (Perregaard, 1995). Writing scientific papers is not only important in universities but also in the world of work to increase productivity. Consequently, academic writing proficiency in college demonstrates evidence of responsibility in teaching, research, and administration (Ferguson, 2009).

Benefits of Maktabah Syamilah

The urgency of Maktabah Syamilah can be seen from various points of view. These are, *first*, time efficiency during literature search using the application, as about 20 seconds is spent to obtain direct access after entering keywords. *Second*, it is cost-effective, as the application can be downloaded for free and stored on a laptop or bought for IDR 100,000, making the purchase of literature at a bookstore unnecessary. *Third*, the application is flexible, can be used anytime and anywhere, and only requires a laptop with a sufficient battery. *Fourth*, Maktabah Syamilah can minimize plagiarism in scientific works because students are required to immediately understand, analyze, and present the original book in their papers. The application reduces the influence of other people's writings, especially from the internet, thereby guaranteeing the quality of their work. This is important because many cases of plagiarism are found in universities,

which they are trying to prevent. Consequently, Saudi Arabia created the Win32 application on the Windows operating system against plagiarism (Kolhar & Alameen, 2021), while a software application named Urkund was developed in Tunis (Bettaieb et al., 2020). Plagiarism also damages the reputation of lecturers and students as academics in universities and weakens the development of critical analysis and creative thinking skills of students (Halak & El-Hajjar, 2019). *Fifth*, this application trains students to think critically while writing scientific works, articles, and research. Maktabah Syamilah requires students and lecturers to read and understand the writings in a book and try to record them in their scientific works. Writing skills, especially sources obtained using foreign languages, particularly Arabic, require training to ensure results are of high quality. This does not only happen in the master's (S2) but also in the doctoral class. Meanwhile, research was conducted by Eastman & Maguire (2016) to improve the quality of writing by making critical autobiographical exercises for 300 doctoral candidates in the UK. This research found that fostering a critical attitude with full confidence is possible and can be performed by practicing writing on a web blog (Vurdien, 2013).

The explanation above shows that re-popularizing the study of Arabic books from original sources by academics is necessary because many lecturers and students quote fragments of narratives contained in journals on the internet without opening the original work. The most concerning issue is that new students should know how to cite literature when entering college. Hence, citing patterns need to be studied, especially papers that focus on literature reviews (Badenhorst, 2019). Furthermore, Mahtabah Syamilah requires readers to understand the original book from the author to prevent errors in understanding the content.

Strategies for using the Maktabah Syamilah

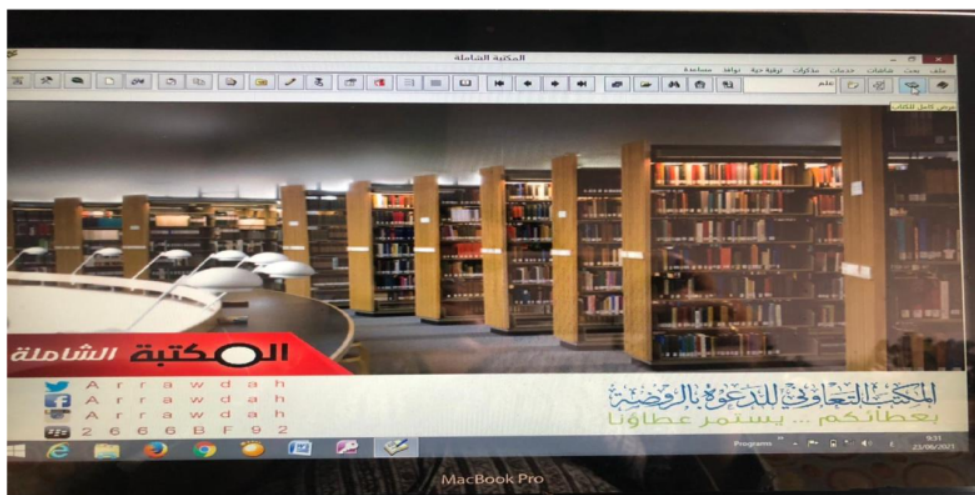
Along with the development of digitalization in the 20th century, there has been a shift in the use of libraries from print to digital and e-book forms that are easily accessible while searching for books and journals. Digital libraries continue to develop with technological advances, and the features are continuously being improved. A trial was performed by incorporating the [Integrated Library System \(ILS\)](#) into the [Library](#)

Management System (LMS) and forwarding it to the Library Service Platform (LSP). Besides the development of this technology, every library should respond to the needs of its users. However, the Islamic University digital library, specifically at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU), has not yet connected to Maktabah Syamilah. This is because the librarian does not understand the application's benefits.

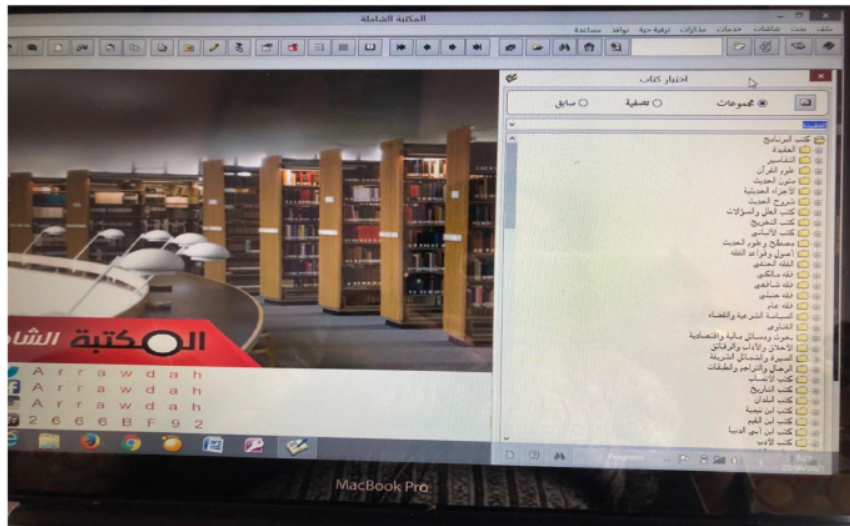
Another benefit of Maktabah Syamilah is that students of Islamic studies and other programs, in general, can use the books quickly online. Therefore, these books should be popularized by being included in digital libraries to make their acquisition easy and also prevent the bad experiences of lecturers and students from recurring. For example, the Syarah Hadith book written by Imam An-Nawawi was not found in the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) digital library, but it was available on the Maktabah Syamilah application. Although a quick response would have been helpful for the lecturers and students, using this library requires a long time and personal skills. Hence, the benefits of the application are extraordinary because academics can easily use the original books. Consequently, library managers should support using this program to encourage the academic essence of students, especially in writing original works and reducing plagiarism levels.

The steps for using the Maktabah Syamilah are:

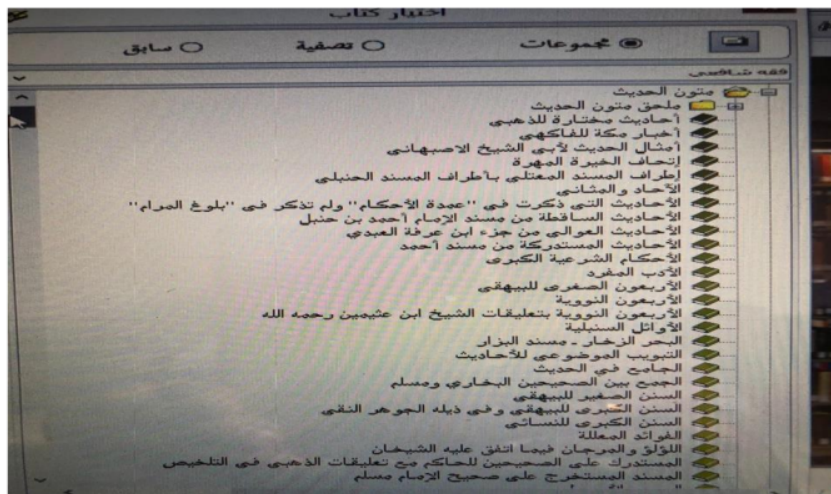
1. Download the Maktabah Syamilah application or copy from the available CD.
2. Open the Maktabah Syamilah application as shown below.



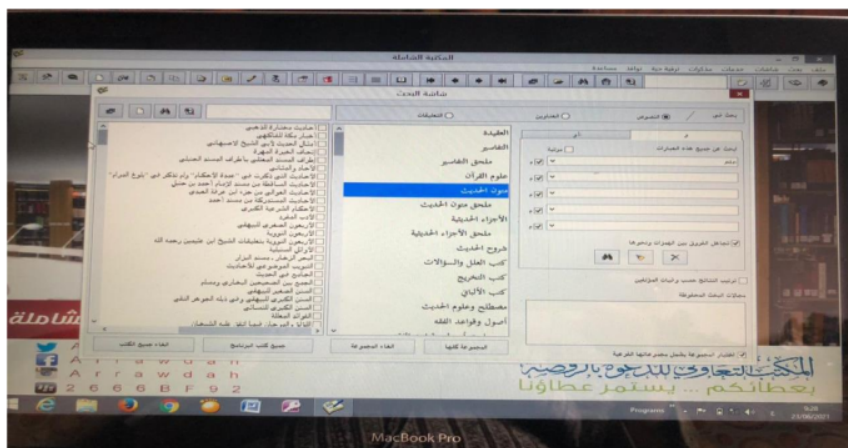
- Click the picture of the book on the top right. The point is to search for the types of books you want, such as *aqidah*, *ulumul Quran*, *matan hadith*, *fiqh*, Islamic history, etc., as shown in the following image.



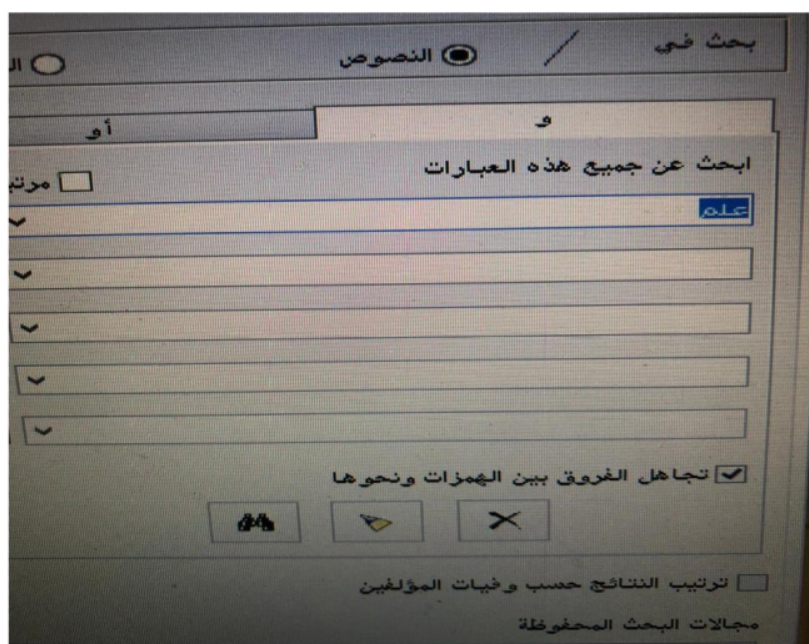
- Click on one of the desired types of books, for example, search for hadiths as shown in the following image.



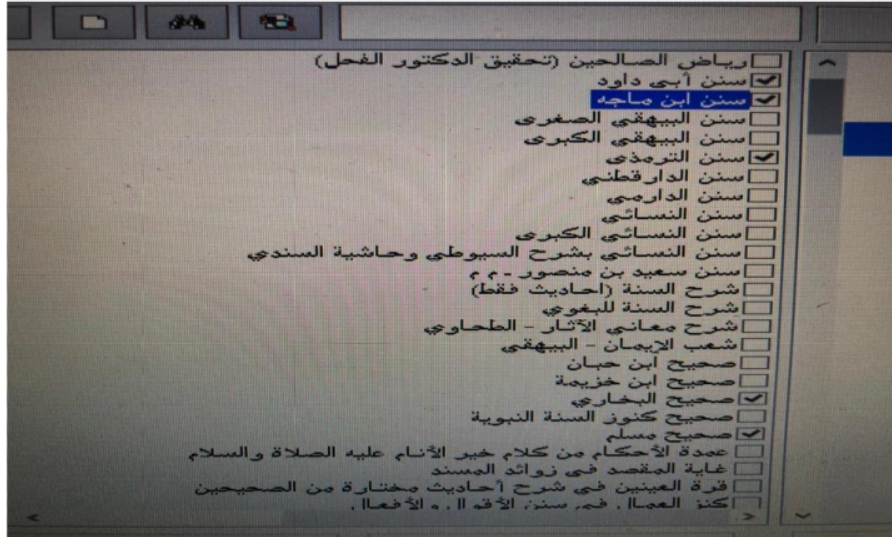
5. Click on one of the desired hadith books by reading the provided books, as shown below.



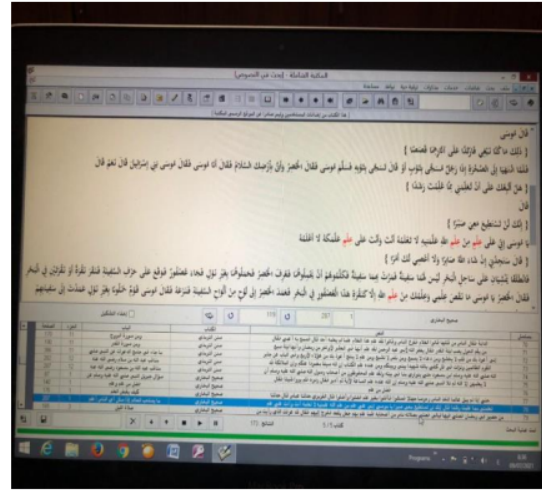
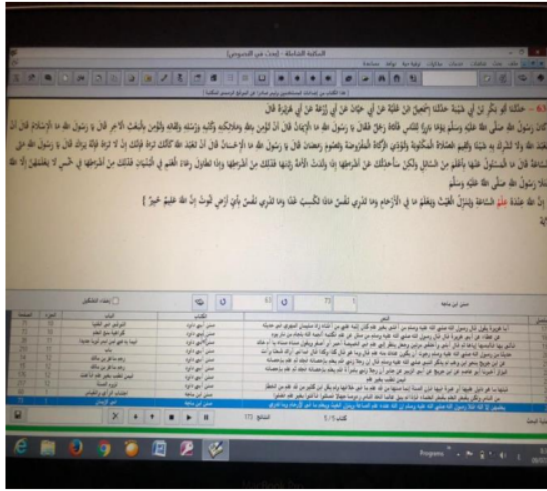
6. Or perform a quick search by entering keywords in the search field, for example, the sentence "science," as shown below.



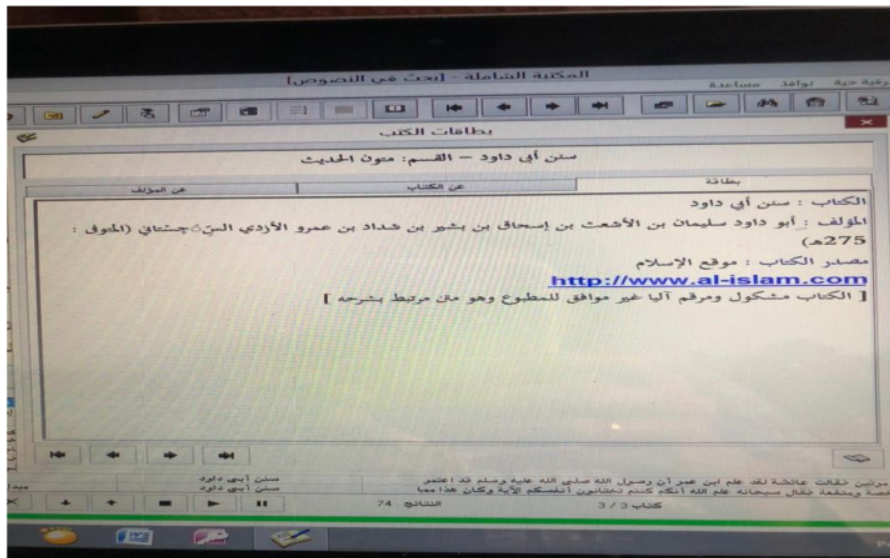
7. Click one, a few, or an entire copy of the desired hadith books contained in Maktabah Syamilah. For example, clicking on the books *Shohih Bukhari and Muslim, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan at-Tirmizi, and Abi Daud*, as shown in the following picture.



- Click on the books one by one as desired or transfer the hadith complete with sanad, Matan and rawi, by simply copying, pasting, and transferring to a word sheet.



- To copy the book, click the image on the top right, as shown below.



Arabic Original Literature

The process of writing quality scientific papers is inseparable from the literature used. Also, recording the results of reading directly from an original book is different from quoting other people's writings. Technological advances sometimes make students trapped and quote references from other writings without reading the original literature. Original Arabic literature is a source or book directly written by an author, and many students tend to read translations, which have more understandable language, than the original copies. For instance, students tend to open the translation of al-Jami'us 'Shohih Bukhari and Muslim' instead of the original book. Likewise, they prefer to open a book discussing the sciences of the Qur'an (translation) in studying ulumul Qur'an rather than the book, 'Mabahits fi Ulum al-Qur'an' by Manna Khalil al-Qaththan. However, original Arabic books are readily available in Maktabah Syamilah, and locating such copies even in digital resources like Abd is easy. Such books include Al-Hay al-Farmawi, al-Bidayat fi Tafsir al-Maudhu'i, Dirasat Manhajiyat Maudhu'iyat and Muhammad Ibn Abdillah al-Zarkasyiy, Al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Qur'an, Cairo, Isa al-Babiy al-Halabiy.

These original books mentioned above are easy to access, providing the individual is proficient in using Maktabah Syamilah. References indicate the quality of scientific work (Lee et al., 2010), hence using this application for this purpose is very natural for a master's class (S2). Consequently, Islamic study programs should master the Arabic language to understand original literature, while the translation of books should be used as a tool to help understand original works. This has long been done by translating texts into other languages to produce an accurate understanding, such as the use of glossing (Sharkas, 2011). Meanwhile, the role of the lecturer in examining the literature and all students' scientific works is important. Therefore, correcting an article by giving a red mark and revising is not a punishment but an opportunity for students to compare their previous work, which ultimately creates confidence, pride, and increases their competence (Dirrigl & Noe, 2014).

Discussion

The provision of book services in the library makes students' access to needed books, especially Arabic, for writing scientific papers easier. Meanwhile, implementing these services requires the readiness of universities to provide learning tools, such as applications in digital libraries supported by personal liaisons for the use of Maktabah Syamilah. Carpan (2011) explained that the purpose of librarians with academic qualifications according to their fields is to be liaisons for students and faculty in facilitating and assisting library use.

Therefore, the university must prepare its human resources to use this application by making the mastery of the Maktabah Syamilah application a requirement or prerequisite for prospective master's students before entering the real class. Research by training Al-Hidayah Islamic boarding school students in Central Java, Indonesia, showed that they could operate the Maktabah Syamilah application after 9 meetings, each lasting 5 hours (Syafi & Azizah, 2019). Also, a 1-day training provided to Islamic boarding school teachers in Malang, Indonesia, was sufficient to help them use this technology (Nasih, Ahmad Munjin, Kholidah, Lilik Nur, Rohmanan, 2018). Furthermore, Bariah (2017) showed that 70% of the lecturers in the Faculty of Islamic Religion (FAI) UNSIKA, Indonesia, were able to understand and use the Maktabah Syamilah application after training.

The use of Maktabah Syamilah should be supported by proficiency in Arabic because its features use the language without lines, thereby requiring habituation for its application. Recognizing and understanding these features is not difficult, providing the individual is used to reading the Qur'an or opens the book of Tsuros often. Hence, directly or indirectly strengthening students' and lecturers' knowledge of Arabic is important, and implementing this perfectly may guarantee the quality of learning. Students will also experience satisfaction with their work, which is an indicator of the quality of education (Xiao & Wilkins, 2015). Therefore, a strong commitment is needed between lecturers and students in ensuring the implementation of the quality of learning.

Conclusion

This study showed that universities, especially those with Islamic study programs that utilize the Maktabah Syamilah application to search for original Arabic literature,

should perform three actions. *First*, conduct continuous training for lecturers, students, and library personnel. *Second*, library unit heads should develop policies to provide assistance services for using Maktabah Syamilah for information retrieval in Islamic studies and promote the application through various media, for example, through the web and digital libraries. *Third*, program managers of courses related to Islamic studies should implement a policy to make using Maktabah Syamilah a prerequisite for prospective students before entering a class or matriculation course, thereby ensuring proficiency in its use before lectures begin.

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