Possibilities of Modern School Libraries in *Pesantren* in Indonesia: A Case Study with Two Young Muslim Women

Yuriko Nakamura
Rikkyo University, Japan

In this case study, the potential for modernizing school libraries in pesantren, Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, is explored. A Japanese Library Science researcher, met and interacted with two Indonesian Muslim women, a student and an apprentice teacher from two different pesantren in Java. Guided by the author, the student and apprentice were introduced to modern libraries through trips to Jakarta and Tokyo in 2012. By observing and analyzing the two participants’ words and conduct, as well as the photos and notes they took, the author found that they showed a distinct interest in introducing new types of activities to their own school libraries. In particular, both participants noted their approval of the student research projects displayed in the Japanese school libraries they visited; this positive reaction suggests the Indonesian participants’ openness to new styles of teaching and learning.

Introduction

The word “library” conjures up different images for different people. International organizations, such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), along with many national organizations, have actively advocated for libraries and librarianship, disseminating information and helping to develop a uniform core concept of libraries throughout the world. However, the ideas and practices that constitute libraries still differ from one culture and community to another, with various cultural, historical, and political factors affecting different populations’ conceptions of libraries.

Until the end of World War II, most Japanese teachers and librarians, along with the public in general, had little knowledge of modern school library practices, which were introduced by the U.S. after the war. In light of this fact, it is indeed remarkable to see that today the Japanese actively visit and donate books to developing countries. In some cases, Japanese nationals have even served as models for how to develop libraries and share a love of reading with children. The diffusion of information about modern libraries and library activities occurs everywhere, but how can we effectively tell others who are new to our field about the essence of the modern library now? This was my initial concern as I started to conduct ethnographic research with Indonesian Muslims.

In this case study, I explore some of the possibilities of “modern” school libraries in pesantren, or Islamic boarding schools, through interactions between a student and apprentice teacher associated with two pesantren and me, a Japanese library science researcher. This is a topic that has received almost no attention: a search was able to turn up only one article in English on the subject of school libraries in pesantren. That article’s author, Quezada (2004), has written about visits to school libraries in Tasikmalaya, in West Java, where I conducted a workshop for teachers and librarians in 2004. Quezada (2004) found that the libraries contained only a few books, none of which were intended for recreational reading. In the workshop, she showed slides of school libraries in

---

Copyright of works published in *School Libraries Worldwide* is jointly held by the author(s) and by the International Association of School Librarianship. The author(s) retain copyright of their works, but give permission to the International Association of School Librarianship to reprint their works in collections or other such documents published by or on behalf of the International Association of School Librarianship. Author(s) who give permission for their works to be reprinted elsewhere should inform the Editors of *School Libraries Worldwide* and should ensure that the following appears with the article: Reprinted, with permission, from *School Libraries Worldwide*, Volume 24, Number 1, January 2018 pages 57-70. doi: 10.14265.24.1.004
Massachusetts and introduced her audience to numerous activities that can be used to promote a love of reading.

In this article, the expression “modern school libraries” refers to facilities that not only house collections and reading rooms but also offer a variety of school library programs. Many library services have been invented and expanded since the early 20th century, when the ideas and practices of the school library also emerged. The changing role of library practices in the contemporary world is often discussed in connection with ideas of multiculturalism and intellectual freedom, such as those outlined by IFLA and UNESCO (2008) in the following *Multicultural Library Manifesto*:

As libraries serve diverse interests and communities, they function as learning, cultural, and information centres. In addressing cultural and linguistic diversity, library services are driven by their commitment to the principles of fundamental freedoms and equity of access to information and knowledge for all, in the respect of cultural identity and values (p.1).

Multiculturalism and intellectual freedom as they relate to practice, policy, and philosophy are not simple or easily attained, as noted by Adams (2008), East and Lam (1995), Hopkins (1999/2006), and Pawley (2006). However, in many developed and secular states the core value of librarians, including school librarians, is to ensure that all people have equal access to diverse information, in accordance with the *Multicultural Library Manifesto*.

Intellectual freedom in school libraries governed by religious bodies is an issue that few have written about. The Harry Potter book series by J.K. Rowling was a subject of great concern in the Christian community, but discussions about whether school libraries should include the series in their collection mainly pertained, at least in the case of the U.S., to public school libraries because freedom of speech, enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, is not extended to private schools (DeMitchell & Carney, 2005). Franklin (2008) conducted an electronic survey on the state of challenges to materials held in private school library media centers in the U.S.; over a third of Franklin’s 40 respondents answered that they had experienced materials challenges between 2002 to 2005.

The situation of education and religion in Indonesia is quite different from that in secular states. In Indonesia, according to the 2010 census, about 87.2% of the population—that is, more than 207 million people—answered that they believed in Islam (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010), even though the country is not an Islamic nation. The constitution of Indonesia, in Article 29, guarantees freedom of religion within the parameters of monotheism. However, the Indonesian archipelago consists of more than 17,000 islands inhabited by several hundred ethnic groups: it is therefore naturally a multicultural society in terms of ethnicities, languages, social classes, and religions. The nation has a long and complex history. Its national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, means “Unity in Diversity” and is laid down in Article 36 of the Indonesian constitution. In this multicultural country, which has the largest Muslim population of any nation in the world, Islamic schools have been a popular option for education. As Zuhdi (2006, p. 426) observed, “Muslims seem to agree that in addition to knowledge and skills, religious instruction is another important aspect of education.”

There are two kinds of Islamic schools in Indonesia. One is the madrasa, a day school without residential facilities, and the other is the pesantren, an Islamic boarding school more focused on religious education than the madrasa. Because pesantren are residential, their students have little access to resources outside of their schools, which is why I decided to conduct research with individuals associated with pesantren. As Dhofier (1999) explained, the “word pesantren derives from the word santri, with the prefix pe and suffix an, thus literally meaning ‘the place of santri [student]’” (pp. 2–3). At these schools the students learn the Qur’an and other Islamic texts alongside the precepts by which Muslims are taught to live. A pesantren is “far more than an educational
institution or school, where the pupil just comes, boards and learns, it is also a specific ‘sub-culture’ of the Indonesian community,” according to Srimulyani (2012, p. 16). Hasyim (2009) noted that “pesantren has basic characteristics such as (1) autonomy from the state; (2) studies based on classical literatures of Islam (kitab kuning); (3) orientation to local values (Nusantara ethos); and (4) respect to the leader of the school, kyai, as well as others” (p. 73). Many of the pesantren are historically founded by local ulama, or Muslim Islamic scholars in rural areas, and they traditionally provide instruction for free or at a very low cost.

Gazali and Malik (2009) noted that pesantren are known as conservative institutions where freedom of thinking is limited; however, the authors also pointed out that not all pesantren limit their students’ intellectual freedom. According to Pohl (2006), the emphasis of pesantren activities was formerly on local community development, but starting in the 1990s, this focus began to shift to supporting democratic civil society: “using classical Islamic texts, these institutions have geared their educational activities toward the affirmation of thought and praxis on antiviolence, civility, justice, and pluralism” (p.402).

Both madrasa and pesantren are supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for secular schools. However, the madrasa and many of the pesantren now offer the national curriculum as determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Madrasa and pesantren are divided into several categories according to their curricula, mainly depending on the percentage of instruction that is on general subjects rather than religious ones (Decentralized Basic Education 3 Project Consortium, 2007). Here, “general subjects” refers to those that are part of the national curriculum, such as science, languages, and social studies; “religious subjects” referred to those based on traditional Islamic texts. The government has relied on Islamic schools to help provide education to its population because of “the lack of development of secular public schools and high informal fees charged for the public schools.” Diplomas from Islamic schools are regarded as equivalent to those from public schools in Indonesia if 70% of the instruction follows the national general education curriculum (Woodward, 2015). Hasyim’s (2009) concerns about the consequences of these reforms to education are that “some traditional pesantren that have a strong tradition of kitab kuning [classical literatures] are now abandoned by their students” (p.62) and as a result fewer students are interested in studying and mastering kitab kuning. Pesantren thus face the challenge of modernizing their teaching methods and content to keep students engaged.

Methods

Research participants

In this paper, I report a case study that includes qualitative and quantitative approaches. The two main research participants, G and H, were selected through the following process. Since pesantren are boarding schools and the schools supervise all of their students’ activities, I needed to ask the schools for permission to allow the participation of their students and instructors in any kind of research. In addition, I had to ask the principals to help in selecting the participants.

I visited three pesantren on the island Java Island in 2011 and observed their classes and school facilities, including the libraries. In these three schools, children are taught in a unique bilingual system. The languages used are Arabic and English: two weeks of Arabic-only instruction are followed by two weeks of English-language instruction. The use of Indonesian languages in the schools is prohibited. The aim of this system of instruction is for students to learn about Islam using the Arabic language while also learning to express themselves in English for the purpose of communicating with the wider world. The school libraries have mostly religious books in Arabic, along with mainly practical books in English and some Indonesian books as well.
I was first introduced to one of these small coed schools by an Indonesian scholar living in Japan. The school’s *nyai*—that is, the wife of the *kyai* (school leader)—is an older sister of the scholar. According to Srimulyani (2012, p. 25), the *nyai* “is respected both in the pesantren community and in society as a whole.” The *nyai* is regarded as a very pious Muslim who acts as a role model for female students in the school. On the first day at the school, I was struck by the way the *nyai* told her in front of a group of people that she should study Islam (this occurred just after I had introduced myself as Catholic). The *nyai* confidently said in Indonesian, “If you study, you will realize that Islam is the truth.” She clearly lived up to the expectations of an exemplary *nyai*. I also thought there seemed to be a family atmosphere in this small co-educational (coed) pesantren as the student committee taking care of the school library showed her their library, depicted in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Inside the library of the small co-educational pesantren.](image)

One of the students said that most of the books in the library were gifts from foreign embassies, and that they wanted to have more books but didn’t know how to acquire more.

The same Indonesian scholar living in Japan introduced me to another school, one for boys that is among the most famous and the largest pesantren in Indonesia. He and the founder of the first small coed pesantren were both graduates of this large boys’ pesantren. The large boys’ school is historically known as modern and international, and a significant number of its graduates go to study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The school has a relatively well-stocked school library, which is managed by the students in what looked to be a relatively modern fashion.

Having been introduced by the staff of the boys’ school, I next visited one of their sister schools. Shemet one of the directors of this large girls’ school. During the very short conversation the director former told me that his view was that women should not read novels. Later, a few students showed me the school facilities. Their school library was under renovation, and it was impossible to observe the whole collection; what she could see is shown in Figure 2.
The students said they had 20,000 or 30,000 books in the library. Many of the books seemed to be practical books in Indonesian. The students explained that the library’s collection development system was for each student to bring one book to the school after long breaks.

After visiting the schools, I recognized that working closely with males on this study in a Muslim context would be impossible, so she wrote to the principals of the first (small coed) school and the last (large girls’) school, asking them to recommend one cooperative female participant for her research in 2012. I was not aware of the existence of any librarians or teachers who had a special interest in libraries in those schools; therefore, she only requested that the participants meet three conditions: they should be female students who were pious Muslims with no experience traveling abroad. I wanted to observe and record the reactions of participants who had never been widely exposed to literature and modern libraries. At the same time, I wanted to give young women a chance to participate in social change.

The high school student (referred to here as G) was recommended by the small coed school. The apprentice teacher and higher education student of Islamic studies (referred to here as H) was recommended by the large girls’ school. G was born in 1998 and, like H, who was born in 1989, is ethnically Javanese. G gave the impression of being very calm, and she rarely expressed her feelings or thoughts. She gave the impression of being curious about new things despite her reserved nature. She attributed her presence at the pesantren to the fact that an elder child in her neighborhood had been to the same pesantren and gotten a chance to go to the U.S. for study. Having heard about this, G’s father wanted his child to have the same opportunity. H was more active and mature. She had been one of the best students and leaders in the huge girls’ school she attended. Aspiring to a career as a writer, journalist, or professor, with a love of photography, H expressed an interest in traveling and possibly living in Russia, with its sizable Muslim population and communities.

**Data collection**

The research participants, who had no experiences of going abroad or studying library theory, were introduced to modern school libraries both conceptually and literally through visits and conversations with me, a library science scholar. After receiving permission from their schools, they made the following two trips to participate in the research. I planned all of the visits, but the participants knew the flow of the planned visits and the research. Since their schools used a
bilingual system of Arabic and English and I am not familiar with Arabic, they used English throughout the research. The participants’ written responses in English understandably contained errors, which I only corrected for the purposes of clarifying their intended meaning. I collected data on two excursions:

1. **Book searches in Jakarta.** To acquaint them with a variety of options for the development of their library collections, the participants were introduced to the vast selection of literature for school libraries that is available in Indonesia. On the first day in Jakarta, they visited one of the biggest and most comprehensive bookstores in Indonesia, Gramedia, in the Grand Indonesia shopping mall. On the following day, they visited the Tenth Islamic Book Fair, which was held that week in Jakarta. The two participants were given plenty of time to look around. I planned this visit because she had noticed on her visits to pesantren that almost no selection policies or collection development plans, policies, or practices existed in these school libraries, where a lack of awareness about multiculturalism and intellectual freedom was noticeable. Most of the books had been in the libraries for a long time, donated from outside of the school or brought in by students. Of course, the lack of a coordinated system of materials acquisition reflected inadequate library budgets.

2. **Library visits in Tokyo.** The participants traveled to Tokyo for five days, visited modern libraries, and communicated with library personnel and students to see how those school libraries were managed and used. The participants visited different types of libraries for children. The libraries they visited are described in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Characteristics of the library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shibuya Junior and Senior High School Library</td>
<td>This is a private school. Famous and competitive. Internationally oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tokyo Gakugei University Oizumi Elementary School Library</td>
<td>These two schools are attached to a national university, Tokyo Gakugei University that focuses on teacher training. The secondary school is internationally oriented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td>No school library visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>International Library of Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Branch library of the National Diet Library that focuses on children’s books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Daiichi Nippori Elementary School</td>
<td>Sites located in Arakawa Ward, a downtown area of Tokyo. The schools and the support room are public and oriented toward the local population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The libraries are slightly above average Japanese school libraries. These visits were planned to give the research participants actual experience with modern school libraries. The trip also gave them a chance to observe libraries in the sociocultural context of a modern society.

During the visits described above, many interactions occurred between the two participants and me, but my interventions were unassertive, and she never gave direct instruction in Library Science knowledge. I did guide them and answered their questions from my point of view as a library science researcher. Although the research participants were selected by their schools, I promised that she wouldn’t report their reactions and answers to their schools, and she asked them to be as honest and frank as they could be. I kept observations and took notes on a series of events in an informal writing style so that she could analyze the participants’ reactions later. In addition to this, I conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires to better understand the participants’ thoughts. I also asked the research participants to create and hand in the following materials.
I collected three types of data from the two research participants: (a) Lists of books and other kinds of materials they felt were suitable or wanted to acquire for their school libraries and for their own interests. Photos were taken during the two visits in Jakarta, and the digital files were submitted by the two research participants. The lists provided me with quantitative data as well as qualitative data. (b) A questionnaire in English after each of the two visits in Jakarta, supplemented by my interviews. (c) Scrapbooks of photos and notes about the trip to Tokyo, which were collected and submitted by the two research participants. Both (b) and (c) provided me with qualitative data.

Research Results
The collected data from G and H were analyzed to explore the potential for the modernizing school libraries in pesantren. They were analyzed not only to evaluate the participants’ recognition and understanding of the series of events they had experienced, but also to see how their experiences caused them to reflected upon their own practices in their schools in Indonesia. I also used the notes of her observations to give detailed descriptions of the events and better understand the two participants’ thoughts.

Analysis of the lists of books and other materials after the visit to Jakarta
G created and submitted one combined list containing photos of books that she thought would be good selections for her school library and for herself (List G). H submitted three separate lists: books for her school library (List H-l); books for herself (List H-h); and digital materials (List H-d). List G includes 50 Indonesian books and one English-language book. List H-l includes 43 items, of which one item is a set of four volumes of the Qur’an. List H-h includes 15 books, and List H-d includes 50 items.

In addition to the three lists, H submitted two papers with brief explanations of her selections. In one paper, H notes that List H-l is the list of books that she “consider[s] will be employed functionally at” her pesantren. This list included 47 items altogether and was made by picking all 43 items from List H-l and adding four books from List H-h. In the other paper, H says that List H-h consists of books that she “consider[s] interesting.” In List H-h, she categorizes the books into four divisions: (1) “The books that provide information on travelling abroad, or a book about one’s experience living abroad”; (2) books on “photographic skill”; (3) “Novels that are written by my favorite writer (they are best Indonesian writer[s])”; and (4) “Books that help me accomplishing my study and widen my knowledge in Islamic philosophy [of] science.”

The following two of the four books added in the paper are the only ones that both G and H selected: Dunia Sophie (Sophie’s World) (1996), by Jostein Gaarder, and Compassion: 12 Langkah Menuju Hidup Berbela Kasih (2012), by Karen Armstrong. Dunia Sophie has been read worldwide. H describes the reason why she believes that it “will be employed functionally” at her school:

This book is [a] novel which mentioned many world philosophers, such as Plato, Socrates, Immanuel Kant, [and] Karl Marx. The writer of this book may describe every single idea of philosopher, but he covered the thoughts with nice description so everyone who begins learning philosophy will be helped.

The student may begin learning philosophy from this novel joyfully.

Armstrong, the author of Compassion, has a wide circulation as well. She is British and writes about comparative religion, exploring especially Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. H explains the selection this way: “She has very wide experiences about that knowledge so she can write those books systematically. The student could enrich their faith by reading this book.” Both participants’ selection of these two books, along with this explanation by H, shows that they are open to discussions about their religion but also fundamentally interested in and focused on religion and philosophy.
To further understand the nature of their selections, I asked an Indonesian librarian’s assistant, who was once working under the supervision of a professional librarian, to classify the materials in the lists. She applied Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), the most widely used system in libraries in Indonesia. In addition to that, she kindly added information on another classification system used by the bookstore Gramedia and some explanations of subjects of books that she found on the Internet. The result of her classification is shown in Table 2.

### Table 2. Books in Demand by Dewey Decimal Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DDC main classes</th>
<th>List G (G)</th>
<th>List H-I (H for the library)</th>
<th>List H-h (H for herself)</th>
<th>Sum of the three lists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>000 Computer science, information, and general works</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 Philosophy and psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 Religion</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 Social sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 Language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 Science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 Technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700 Arts and recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 History and geography</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-one items of 112 (73.2%) are classified in religion. This is probably because their lives and the curricula of the schools are all based on Islam. However, when the two participants visited Japan and saw more different kinds of books, they displayed other interests (described later).

H’s list of 50 digital materials includes CD computer software, CD tutorial software, CD music, DVD computer software, DVD tutorial software, DVD films, DVD digital books, VCD, and pairs of digital books and pens. Most of the computer software, including tutorial software, is for office work and includes Microsoft and Adobe products as well as materials for learning the Qur’an and Arabic. Two pairs of digital books and pens are also for learning the Qur’an. H expressed an interest not only in digital media, but also in having the holy Qur’an available in new media.

All the CDs and DVDs, except for one Turkish film about Palestine, are published in Indonesia, but some are in English or Arabic. This list includes mostly Islamic music and films of great Islamic men. Four of the listed items are films about Palestinian people, in an indication of H’s strong interest in the Palestinian dispute with Israel. In List H-I, she includes *Kapitalisme dan Blackwater* (Capitalism and Blackwater [i.e., oil]), which showed her interest in political matters as well. H explained her interest in this book, which mainly focuses on the Iraq War that began in 2003:

*This book is contained of movement that is done by America, such as; the conflict propaganda, business and hired soldiers to tear the Muslim country up into pieces.*

*The students have to read this book to know the enemy’s action, so they may prevent themselves from war; physically and mentally.*
The word “enemy” is shockingly used to refer to the U.S. It is unclear if the use of the word “enemy” is her original and individual choice or simply the common usage among the people in her pesantren. It’s also unclear whether her selection of several films on the Palestinian people and her explanation of the selections are based on her uniquely strong concern about the issue or if the topic is something studied and discussed in pesantren and therefore included among the topics that a special collection would be expected to develop.

**Analysis of the questionnaire about the visits to Jakarta, supplemented by interviews**

After visits to Jakarta, I asked participants the following questions:

1. What did you think about the big bookstore/the Islamic Book Fair?
2. What did you find interesting or curious in the bookstore/the Book Fair?
3. Did you find books that you want? If yes, please tell me what kind of books they are. If you remember, write down the titles of the books.
4. Did you find books that you think would be suitable for the library in your school? If yes, please tell me what kinds of books they are. If you remember, write down the titles of the books.
5. Did you find any hints for improving the library of your school?

The Islamic Book Fair was very crowded, and just being there made people tired. However, both G and H found much to see there. G wrote that because she was Muslim, the place was particularly interesting for her: she had found many books on Islamic subjects, including some that she wanted to acquire. She mentioned *Dunia Sophie* three times in her questionnaire answers. She found the book interesting and thought it would be a good addition to the library in her pesantren.

The other books she chose for her school library were *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow troops) (2005); *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Pacaran!* (God, allow me to date!) (2010); and *Shalat makanan lezat*. *Laskar Pelangi*, by Andrea Hirata, a best seller that sold over a million copies in 2005 and was made into a movie in 2008. When I visited G’s pesantren in 2011 and asked what kinds of books they read, students mentioned their love for *Laskar Pelangi*. The main characters of the novel are a group of schoolchildren and two teachers in a poor village in Belitung Island. *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Pacaran!* is on List G as well. The book is about love, marriage, and dating. The median age for first marriages in Indonesia, according to the latest Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey data of 2012 (Statistics Indonesia, 2013), is around 20 for women. This practice of marrying early undoubtedly gives teenage girls and young women strong incentives to read books on love, courtship, and marriage. When I visited H’s large girls’ school and talked to the young women there, one of the students offered that she was already engaged, and the other students indicated a strong interest in getting married. I could not identify the last book, *Shalat makanan lezat* (which is translated as something like “praying is delicious food”). Their remarks on best sellers and practical books on life issues show that they have access to information on popular culture and that they are interested in their lives beyond what shapes their religious identities.

After the Islamic Book Fair, H responded to question 2 that “[T]here are some translation books from English (the Western) and translated into Indonesia. It [is] because, sometimes, we need to learn the contradiction (Western><Muslim) to know ourselves better.” This comment by H shows that she tries to be fair and believes one should understand the world. She also wrote that she had found books from Beirut and Egypt that were well suited for the library in her pesantren, although those books are not included in her lists. In her answer to Q2, she expressed an interest in
introducing books and other media in different languages or from different countries into her school library.

After visiting a big bookstore and answering the questions in the questionnaire, both G and H recognized the coziness of the bookstore, and they both liked the idea of making their school libraries more comfortable. G responded,

*I want make the reading place in my library be more comfort than before, because, because I think, this is why student in my school didn't interesting read in the library. that because they haven't feel comfortable reading the books there, so I want change reading place in my library be more comfortable, like I feel comfort when I was arrive in this bookstore.*

G showed a strong interest in novels as well as electronic books, such as digital dictionaries. H’s interest is more focused on books about hobbies and leisure, along with translated books. She also wrote that books about languages, with topics such as TOEFL preparation grammar—along with encyclopedias—were good choices for her library. She wanted her school library to include some English novels “because the students are not allowed to read [novels] in Indonesian.” As mentioned before, the school’s director, whom I met, expressed the opinion that women should not read novels. However, according to the students in the girls’ school, novels in Arabic and English are allowed in their school library.

**Analysis of the scrapbooks about the trip to Tokyo, supplemented by interviews**

The scrapbooks both participants made include photos and descriptions of the trip to Tokyo. G reported that she lost many of her photos after returning to Indonesia because of a computer virus. G’s scrapbook has only two pages of writing; most of her scrapbook is taken up with photos, as shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. G’s scrapbook, showing photos of Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School.](image)

H’s scrapbook is full of both photos and explanations, as shown in Figure 4.
In addition to her scrapbook, H created a PowerPoint presentation. She named it “Trip to Japan; The report: May 27–June 2, 2012.” The contents of the presentation are similar to those of her scrapbook.

Both G and H were particularly taken with Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School. They met a librarian who was a part-time employee of the school but worked very hard, showing a passion for librarianship. An experienced teacher-librarian (shisho kyoyu) for elementary schools in Tokyo and a contributor to the Japanese Board on Books for Young People (JBBY), she has lived in Burma, helping the local people develop libraries and educating people in refugee camps. She has written a book about her experience in Burma. Her personality and behavior undoubtedly made a very favorable impression on G and H.

G and H spent a lot of time observing the library at Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School, especially how it was decorated with such as small paper crafts on which the librarian and students wrote book reviews. The librarian was happy to teach the two women how to make small paper crafts, and they enjoyed it very much. In addition, they showed considerable interest in the library’s practical how-to books about cooking and crafts during the visit. G and H were also interested in the displays of students’ research projects and artworks. Both G and H said they had never seen such displays of students’ research projects in Indonesia, and they carefully examined the Japanese students’ work.

The decorations in the libraries they visited in Japan made these spaces very cozy, and both women realized that this was something they could do in their own school libraries. For the scrapbook, G picked a photo of a round table with a neat tablecloth in Shibuya Junior and Senior High School Library. In relation to the International Library of Children’s Literature (ILCL), G wrote in her scrapbook, “we and a new library board was trying to make a better change upon our library. i even dreamed our library has a warehouse big enough to [store] old books in the library [like the] sliding wardrobes in the International library at Japan.” Probably because of her feeling of responsibility for taking care of the school library in her pesantren, she was thinking practically. Both G and H had taken photos of small bookcases and book carts for the special placement of books in Tokyo Gakugei University Oizumi Elementary School and Tokyo Gakugei University.
International Secondary School. H mentioned that volunteer mothers contributed to the decoration of the school libraries in Arakawa Ward.

Probably because they are a student and an apprentice teacher, neither of them showed a lot of interest in bigger systems, such as the ILCL and the School Library Support Room in Arakawa Ward when they visited there. However, when I showed them several sets of books for the interlibrary loan system for school libraries in the ILCL, after they had had a tour of all the public rooms of the library, including the one called “Meet the World,” H showed some interest in books for learning about other countries and the world. She said that if those kinds of books with many pictures had been published in Indonesia, they could be used in pesantren, but probably it wouldn’t happen immediately. She remembered that she had seen the displays of students’ research projects on international matters in Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School and mentioned that as well. The apprentice teacher, H, also mentioned the collection of English literature at Shibuya Junior and Senior High School Library in her scrapbook. About the ILCL, she wrote, “The collections are exactly useful to be read, discussed, and learnt among students. So they may have an exciting learning.” She also wrote, “I, myself, never find this kind of library in Indonesia, while actually, everyone—or every country is in need to ‘have’ this kind to widen their future.” She also referred to the potential beauty and power of children’s literature: “Children’s literatures are remembered by people all the time. Even though modernity is coming, but classic era is remaining nice. And wise.”

Several sets of books, including ones in languages other than Japanese, were carefully prepared for lending to elementary schools and junior high schools by the professional librarians in the ILCL to promote teaching and learning about other countries and areas of the world. Many schools in Japan apply to borrow a set, and this service is very popular. These kinds of book sets, along with geography books to promote international understanding, might be attractive for teachers and students in pesantren, according to H’s comments.

**Conclusion**

In this case study, two research participants from pesantren in Java showed an interest in changing their libraries, although both of them seemed to filter what they saw through the lens of their conservative and religious backgrounds. They both said they wanted to make their libraries comfortable for reading. One of the two participants, a student in a small coed pesantren, actually challenged the school to make a small change once she returned from her trip.

Students and apprentice teachers in pesantren probably recognize the limitations of intellectual freedom in their school libraries. The responses of the two pious Muslim research participants in this study seemed conservative at first glance, as more than 70 percent of the listed books that they thought would be good for their school libraries and for themselves are classified under religion. However, both participants consistently showed an interest in books on practical matters such as life and leisure, cooking and crafts. One research participant in particular, an apprentice teacher, indicated an interest in introducing new types of books in her school library, including some about “Western culture.” An issue related to collection development in pesantren is how to deal with fiction. Literature, including teenage fiction, is in demand, but it would probably only be acquired by their libraries if it were kept hidden from conservative directors.

The apprentice teacher sometimes showed her bias toward “Islamic science.” For example, she included a series of atlases in her list of books for the library (List H-I), but the atlases are what she described as “Atlas Hadist (about prophetic tradition), Atlas about Performing Hajj/Umrah, Atlas about the Spreading of Islam.” Another series of books that she listed is about architecture based on Islamic customs. Islamic science is different from modern science, as introduced by Lukens-Bull (2005). Anyone proffering assistance for the development of school libraries in Islamic
cultures must do so with an appreciation for the customs and traditions in the arts and sciences dating back to the Islamic Golden Age. The views of science that are unique to the Islamic world must be part of the school curriculum and publishing culture in Indonesia. How could this microcosm of knowledge be presented in the school libraries of pesantren?

While visiting libraries in Japan, the two research participants showed an interest in the students’ research projects, which were on display in the libraries, and they showed real curiosity about the different styles of teaching and learning to which they were exposed. Their words and conduct suggested an attitude of openness to new, modern styles of learning. In a very recent study about learning in a pesantren, Eliana (2017, p. 31) concluded that “Learning theory implementation undertaken by the application of various learning methods that are varied and thorough further strengthen Islamic boarding school as educational institutions appropriate to establish and develop an attitude of religious tolerance.” Some of the learning methods examined in her study seem to include the use of multiple resources. These new styles of learning may require the addition of a learning resource center.

The apprentice teacher was especially impressed by the internationally and multiculturally oriented national library in Japan, the ILCL. She wrote that every country should have such a resource. She did not say that it was needed in her school, but she saw the value of having such a library. Raihani (2014) has explored how education in Indonesia has helped contribute to the creation of tolerant and multicultural citizens, and another author, Pohl, writes, “some pesantren have begun to see their educational and social activities intimately connected with raising a critical political awareness among a wide spectrum of society for issues such as human rights, pluralism, political and social justice, democracy, and interfaith tolerance” (2009, p. 115). Their educational system is changing, and the modern school library, with its embedded ideas of multiculturalism and intellectual freedom, might be needed at least in some pesantren.

There were two major limitations in the very first stage of this study, when I was looking for research participants in the Islamic boarding schools. The two pesantren represented in the study are relatively modern, and only women participated in this study. More comprehensive research involving both students and teachers from a wider selection of pesantren is needed.

References


**Author Note**

Yuriko Nakamura is professor at Rikkyo University in Tokyo. She coordinates the Librarian Course at the university as the director and she also serves as the Dean of Rikkyo University Library. Her major research concern is on how the development of school libraries differs between different areas and cultures.

**Acknowledgement**

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI grant 22700249.