



**ABU DHABI  
INTERNATIONAL  
BOOK FAIR**  
23-29.05.2022

# Show Magazine

## May 2022



### DIGITAL PUBLISHING IN THE ARAB WORLD

Publishers are using digital  
book formats to reach  
readers — PAGES 10-13

### GERMANY'S CULTURAL AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAM

Find out what's on at  
Germany's Guest of Honor  
pavilion, 8B05 — PAGES 19-22

### EXHIBITOR VIEWPOINTS: PUBLISHERS AT ADIBF

Arab-world publishers on  
their businesses, books, and  
views — PAGES 29-35

# PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

مركز أبوظبي  
لغة العربية  
Abu Dhabi Arabic  
Language Centre



# Abu Dhabi Book Fair 2022: Inside This Issue

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 3  | Letter from the Editor                               |
| 4  | 31st Abu Dhabi International Book Fair               |
| 5  | Perspective from Dr. Ali Bin Tamim                   |
| 6  | Juergen Boos: Frankfurt-Abu Dhabi Partnership        |
| 7  | 25 Years of Banipal Magazine                         |
| 8  | Digital: Sail Publishing Online in Dubai             |
| 10 | Digital: Al Arabi's Ebooks and Audiobooks in Egypt   |
| 12 | Digital: Storytel on Creating Arabic Audiobooks      |
| 14 | Market Outlook: Emirates Publishers Association      |
| 16 | Market Outlook: Moroccan Publishers Association      |
| 17 | Rights: Akdem Agency in Istanbul                     |
| 18 | ADIBF Program: Spotlight on Rights                   |
| 19 | Germany's Guest of Honor Program                     |
| 21 | Germany: Foreign Rights at Aufbau Verlage            |
| 22 | Germany: Müller & Schindler's Facsimile Editions     |
| 23 | Sheikh Zayed Book Award's 2022 Winners               |
| 25 | ADIBF Program: New International Congress            |
| 27 | Maha Abdullah Explains Content Localization          |
| 28 | Majarra's Business Model for Arabic Digital Content  |
| 29 | Arab Scientific Publishers on the Pandemic's Effects |
| 30 | Dar Al Saqi on Arabic Literature                     |
| 31 | Poland-Arab Ties in Publishing                       |
| 32 | Dar Al Muna's Translations Into Arabic               |
| 33 | Lebanese Market Outlook From Dar Al Adab             |
| 34 | Children's Books: Noon Books in Canada               |
| 35 | Children's Books: Dar Al Buragh in Iraq              |

## PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

### #abudhabibookfair: Get More News From Publishing Perspectives

#### Interactive Magazine

This digital magazine includes links on every page so you can click through to events, companies, and find more information. Look for buttons and underlined text.

#### Online Coverage

*Publishing Perspectives* is providing ongoing coverage of the 2022 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair during the show on our website. Follow along to get the our latest headlines.

**ABU DHABI COVERAGE**

#### Event Recommendations

Visit our landing page for curated event listings and other important information.

**EVENTS PAGE**

#### ADIBF Videos and Online Events

Many events in the ADIBF program will be broadcast online for remote participants.

**ADIBF ON YOUTUBE**

#### Publishing Perspectives Email News

During ADIBF, we're releasing special email editions that include more stories, event coverage, and news from the fair.

**SUBSCRIBE FREE**

## PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

*Publishing Perspectives* is a leading source of information about the global book publishing business. Since 2009, we have been publishing daily email editions with news and features from across the book world.

Our mission is to help build and contribute to the international publishing community by offering information that publishing and media professionals need to connect, cooperate, and work together year-round and across borders.

In addition to our daily online coverage, we also offer an online monthly rights edition, as well as special issues and magazines at events including the London Book Fair and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Founded by the Frankfurt Book Fair's New York office and now a brand of its sister company, MVB US, *Publishing Perspectives* works with our colleagues in Frankfurt and around the world to share with you the latest publishing trends and opportunities, people to know, companies to watch, and more.

**PUBLISHER:** Hannah Johnson  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Porter Anderson  
**ADVERTISING MANAGER:** Meike Eckern

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Jarosław Adamowski  
 Olivia Snaije

**PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES**  
 a brand of MVB US, Inc

Read more at [publishingperspectives.com](https://publishingperspectives.com)

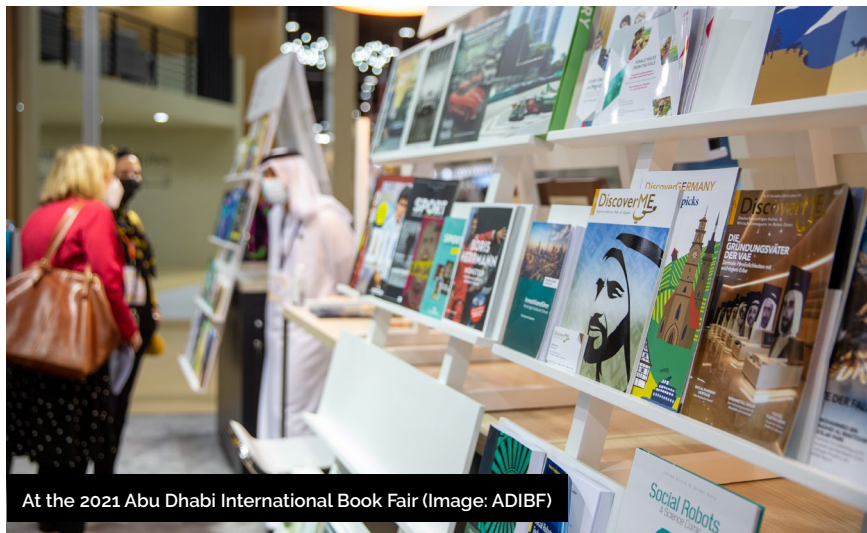
### CONNECT WITH US ONLINE:



### OUR PARTNER:



## From the Editor Watchwords at ADIBF: 'Platforms' and 'Localization'



At the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

As the stately stands and booths go up on the exhibition floor at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Center, acres of book covers start to fill the hall.

Those happy greetings between book-industry professionals and between kids, their parents, their friends are about to ring out again, as the 31st edition of Abu Dhabi International Book Fair opens its run.

But how have things changed? You're going to hear a lot during the fair about two concepts that are surfacing with potential impact in the region. And in this special show magazine, we'll let you hear from an expert on each.

The first case is platforms. You know the word, of course, but Abdulsalam Haykal of Majarra knows the importance of leveraging platforms as a way of advancing the region's access to some of the most important contemporary content in the world. Find our interview with him **on Page 28**.

And then there's localization. Translation is one thing. But Maha Abdullah, a localization consultant formerly with Netflix and now with Disney Streaming Services, wants you to think ambitiously. She's specialized in the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa, and knows that there is a lot of potential for publishers in the approach the studios come to her about. Find our story on her **on Page 27**.

Book fairs have been among the first public publishing events to regain their footing amid the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, and that's been critical for publishers who depend on book sales at these vast marketplaces. In the Arab world, those fairs have come back faster than in many other regions: they're just that important, not only to publishers and booksellers, but

also to readers and scholars, educators and parents, rights directors and acquisition editors, authors and literary agents.

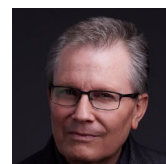
It's smart to keep in mind that the pandemic still is a major international concern, with health-security experts warning of the potential for new variants and summertime surges. The Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is one of the first to have returned to welcoming exhibitors and visitors in its successful hybrid (in-person and digital) format last year, and in a fully physical, in-person event this year.

We have a list of COVID-19 safety measures for you **on Page 4**.

This year, more than 1,100 exhibitors are here amid a program of more than 450 events, all being kicked off by the inaugural International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries. Under the aegis of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center, one of the great fairs of the region and the world is reawakening.

What will live on in the visual memories of those who attend, of course, are the kids. Those moments of discovery, of excitement, of passing a book among friends, these are all around you here. And what the industry will be thinking about—for the future of reading and publishing—is localization and platforms.

Welcome to Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. •



**Porter Anderson**  
 Editor-in-Chief,  
*Publishing Perspectives*



# The 31st Abu Dhabi International Book Fair Reaffirms Necessity of In-Person Events

Back to pre-pandemic exhibitor levels, this year's ADIBF features new programming highlights and promises a robust show for publishers, creators, and book buyers.



At the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

By Publishing Perspectives Staff

The 31st Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is expecting more than 1,100 exhibitors from 80 countries. The fair is also presenting an expanded program of some 450 events, including seminars and panel discussions for professional visitors, a cultural program highlighting authors and creators, and numerous activities for children and educators.

These figures are back to the fair's pre-pandemic levels, and up from pandemic-related reductions at the 2021 fair—which hosted 889 exhibitors from 46 countries.

As you'll read in this magazine, many of the fair's exhibitors are excited to be back to physical fairs, where they can meet their customers face-to-face and sell books.

In a statement about this year's ADIBF, HE Dr. Ali Bin Tamim, who is secretary-general of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award as well as chairman of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center, said, "The 2022 fair will reaffirm the role of culture and books in advancing societies and building bridges between nations, with a special highlight being Germany's return as guest of honor—a celebration of the long-standing cultural and intellectual collaboration between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Arab world."

## Germany in the Spotlight

This year, Guest of Honor Germany, coordinated by Frankfurter Buchmesse, is preparing a full presence of some 35 cultural and professional events, titles from 34 German publishers at its stand, and a delegation of book industry professionals, authors, artists, translators, and academics.

The "German Stories" cultural program is to include screenings of German films that highlight the collaborative dynamic between German and Arab cultures, and includes events with German-Lebanese author Pierre Jarawan, spoken word poet and scholar Dr. Afra Atiq, and writers Olga Grjasnowa from Germany, and Deepak Unnikrishnan from Abu Dhabi ([more on Page 19](#)).

## Cultural Figures from the Arab World

ADIBF's expansive cultural program for both professional visitors and members of the public will feature a number of writers and thinkers from across the globe, including: Syrian poet Adonis, Indian feminist critic and literary theorist Gayatri Spivak, authors and Columbia University professors Muhsin al-Musawi and Hamid Dabashi, British writer Ed Husain, and American University of Beirut professor Dr. Bilal Orfali.

The fair will also feature the late Taha Hussein (1889-1973) as its 2022 "personality of the year." Considered a leading Egyptian literary figure, this program offers a chance to appreciate his contributions to Arab culture.

## ALC's Creative Industries Congress

Ahead of the fair's official opening, the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Center is organizing the inaugural International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries on May 22 to highlight the intersection of publishing and technology, and as organizers put it, "how different media can thrive as the business of storytelling evolves. The program includes speakers from Disney, Netflix, TikTok, the New York Times, and the international book industry ([more on Page 25](#)). •

## COVID-19 Safety Measures at ADIBF

The Abu Dhabi International Book Fair has updated its safety measures for 2022, aimed at keeping visitors and exhibitors healthy:

- **Pre-registration is required** to enter the fair. Get your ticket online at [www.adbookfair.com](http://www.adbookfair.com) or on the fair's mobile app. Your ticket will be scanned at the fair's entrance.
- **Attendees must wear a face mask** at all times while at the fair.
- **Download and active the Al Hosn app** on your mobile phone. This is the UAE's official app for contact tracing and for displaying your health status. More info at [alhosnapp.ae](http://alhosnapp.ae)
- **Adults 16 years and older:** if you are fully vaccinated, you must present a green status on your Al Hosn app—activated by uploading a negative PCR test taken within the last 30 days; if you are unvaccinated, you must present a negative PCR test taken within the last 48 hours.
- **Visitors to the UAE from outside the country:** if you are fully vaccinated, you must present a negative PCR test, conducted inside the UAE in the last 30 days, along with proof of vaccination; if you are unvaccinated, you must present a negative PCR test taken within the UAE in the last 48 hours.

More info on the ADIBF website:

**COVID-19 INFORMATION**



# Dr. Ali Bin Tamim: Abu Dhabi International Book Fair as a 'Home for Creative Minds'

Under the leadership of Bin Tamim, the Abu Dhabi fair is returning for its 31st year to help regional publishers connect with the public and to provide an important forum where creative industries can meet.



Dr. Ali Bin Tamim at the 2022 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair press conference (Image: Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre)

By Hannah Johnson

As the chairman of the relatively young Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and its many projects—which include the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and the Sheikh Zayed Book Award—HE Dr. Ali Bin Tamim is aiming to enhance the fair's atmosphere as a place for intellectual exploration and a celebration of all things literary.

"Over the course of more than three decades, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair has succeeded in positioning the emirate as a home for creative minds and innovators in the literary and publishing sectors," says Bin Tamim.

"Each year we aim to not only facilitate the growth and evolution of the industry," he says, "but to empower individuals with knowledge and creativity, and spark passion for the written word."

This energetic support comes at a crucial time, as many book markets in the Middle East region are still recovering from COVID-19 pandemic setbacks. Many publishers interviewed for this magazine said that business during the pandemic was difficult, and that

being back at physical fairs to sell books is important for their bottom lines.

Publishers have also reported that finding digital solutions—like embracing ebooks and launching online shops—during the pandemic are helping to propel their businesses forward in new ways. This type of progress, says Bin Tamim, is another element he wants the fair to address.

"As an international event and a gateway to the Middle East," he says, the fair "helps to shape Abu Dhabi's vibrant culture and commerce by driving the professional and commercial development of the regional publishing industry."

In addition to this crucial support for regional publishers, Bin Tamim says, "We are pleased to welcome back the international publishing community to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair for our most ambitious event yet. We are creating an ideal platform for members of the international book industry and literary world, as well as global media and technology brands, to come together and share their knowledge and expertise across cultures, industries, and disciplines."

New on the agenda this year and spearheaded by the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language

Center is the inaugural International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries, taking place on May 22, a day before the official fair opening. The program spans publishing, streaming film and tv, audiobooks, and technology platforms (**more on Page 25**).

Bin Tamim calls this new event "a think tank on the latest trends in publishing and technology. We are proud to host distinguished speakers from the literary, publishing, and arts sectors, and we offer our gratitude to our dedicated partners and stakeholders who have made this industry event possible."

And taking a broad view of what this year's fair has in store, Bin Tamim says, "The 2022 fair will reaffirm the role of culture and books in advancing societies and building bridges between nations, with a special highlight being Germany's return as Guest of Honor—a celebration of the longstanding cultural and intellectual collaboration between the Federal Republic and the Arab world." •

[ADBOOKFAIR.COM](http://ADBOOKFAIR.COM)

# Revitalizing Our Connections: Juergen Boos at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair

In 2022, Juergen Boos is focused on making sure these vital interactions continue in the book industry, both at Frankfurter Buchmesse and throughout the world.



Juergen Boos (Image: Frankfurter Buchmesse, Jonas Ratemann)

By Juergen Boos  
CEO, Frankfurter Buchmesse

It's a pleasure to return to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year, especially as in-person events and travel are increasing after more than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. And while many of us have been able to continue our important work in publishing, we've also seen during our two years of limited contact how vital in-person meetings are to maintaining professional relationships and building new ones. As we return to these vital events that allow us to meet, I anticipate seeing more friends in Abu Dhabi this year and making new ones.

The Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF), now part of the newly established and auspicious Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC), has long been one of the Frankfurter Buchmesse's most trusted partners in the Middle East. This vital relationship, established many years ago, has enabled both Frankfurt and Abu Dhabi to facilitate the kind of international exchange in the publishing industry that's needed to ensure important scientific and literary works are available to readers around the world.

As a fellow book fair organizer, I know

that the ADIBF team have put an enormous amount of time and energy into staging this year's fair and rebuilding after disruptions caused by the pandemic. And having now attended several in-person fairs and events this year, I've seen how eager our industry is to gather together again—and how important fairs like ADIBF are for regional publishers to connect with readers.

## Germany Guest of Honor, 2022

In 2019, Germany was announced as Guest of Honor at the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. Because of COVID-19 considerations, Frankfurter Buchmesse and our partners opted to host a scaled-back, hybrid program in 2021 and to push our in-person program to 2022. So this year, you'll see Germany's 400-square-meter booth at ADIBF, featuring titles from 34 German publishers and event space for our cultural and professional programming ([more on Page 19](#)).

Our supporters and partners of the Guest of Honor program—Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, AUMA – Association of the German Trade Fair Industry, LMI – Leipziger Messe International, Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, and the German Embassy in Abu Dhabi; with generous support

“As we continue to adapt to new conditions in our world and in the book industry, one thing remains constant: we need each other.”

Juergen Boos

from German Federal Foreign Office—are also working to ensure that Germany's turn in the spotlight at ADIBF will be a success.

## Looking Ahead to October

As we continue to adapt to new conditions in our world and in the book industry, one thing remains constant: we need each other. No matter who we are or where we live, we need trading partners, business connections, and professional supporters.

Frankfurter Buchmesse is committed to making sure these vital interactions continue in the book industry—whether through our activities at fairs like the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair or during our own fair this October. In Frankfurt this year, we'll host our four fellowship programs that introduce international publisher and booksellers to each other and to the German book market. Our Literary Agents and Scouts Centre is filling up quickly, and the exhibition halls will be bustling with publishers from across the globe.

I hope that 2022 revitalizes our networking, connections, new business, and new ideas. Please join us at the German stand at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and at the Frankfurter Buchmesse in October. •

Find Frankfurt at ADIBF: Stand 8B05

[WWW.BUCHMESSE.DE](http://WWW.BUCHMESSE.DE)



# 25 Years of Banipal Magazine: 75 Editions of Arabic Poetry and Literature in Translation

Founders and publishers Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon have been publishing talented Arab-world writers in translation for a quarter-century. Without new management, this year's 75th edition could be the last.

By Olivia Snaije

At the end of this year, *Banipal* magazine will have been bringing readers contemporary Arabic literature in English three times a year for a quarter of a century. It's a measure of their passion and dedication that founders and publishers Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon have for the most part operated on a shoestring, developing a book publishing business, running a yearly prize for literary translation, a book club, and—since 2020—a Spanish-language edition of *Banipal*.

The magazine publishes Arab poets and writers in English translation—and now in Spanish—from Arabic and from other languages at times, and it highlights the importance of literary translation. *Banipal* also features interviews with authors, translators, and publishers as well as book reviews. It's a resource both for academics and lovers of literature.

Obank says that the 75th edition of *Banipal* (Autumn/Winter 2022) will be a special 25-year celebratory publication with events organized around it, but will also be the moment to make a change—she'll be retiring as publisher of the magazine. And unless it's taken over, "It will be the swan song of *Banipal* magazine in its present form," she says.

But Obank is not really retiring, she says, as she'll continue to oversee the publication of *Banipal* books and the Spanish edition of the magazine.

In 2019, before the pandemic began, Obank and Shimon had already decided to publish more books, and to establish a Spanish edition of *Banipal*. Publication dates for three books were planned for April 2020, and issue No.1 of *Banipal, revista de literatura árabe moderna* was also scheduled for spring 2020, to be printed in Spain.

During multiple COVID-19 lockdowns, international coordination became complicated, but "With various adjustments to working life," Obank says, "we were able to continue planning and producing books, the magazine in English and Spanish editions, print and digital."

The Spanish edition had to be printed in the United Kingdom—where the *Banipal* operation is based—but now plans are underway to begin printing in Spain.

In April 2020, *Banipal* magazine won a \$200,000 Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the Publishing and Technology category, "a wonderful honor that was a terrific confirmation



Samuel Shimon and Margaret Obank, founders of Banipal

of all *Banipal*'s work over the previous years," says Obank. Then, as Shimon says, they set about spending the money, with their creativity "spilling over."

In 2021, they published the three issues of each magazine, as well as two novels and two books of poetry. The motivation for starting *Banipal* in Spanish was that, "Over last five years, there's been a big change in the number of houses publishing in English from the Arab world," Obank says. "We wanted to do something different."

There have been six editions in Spanish so far, working with associates in Madrid, Granada, Murcia, or Barcelona.

"Responses from Arabists all over Spain have been good," Shimon says. For the moment they don't have a distributor, but they work with universities, bookshops, and the Casa Árabe institution.

Indeed, interest in Arabic literature does seem to be increasing, Obank says, with a greater variety of works being translated.

"More publishers are taking on works by Arab authors, from Arabic, French (and English) originals," she says. "There are more translators and more translators making careers from translating literary works. In the UK, there have been more translation workshops that include an Arabic strand, and Arabic translation mentorships."

Still, she says, there's "the never-ending question of what kind of books get translated. Mainstream and some big independent publishers have their business model for Arabic literature that sees the Arab world in stereotypical ways. But translators, prize shortlists, current affairs, issues of *Banipal* magazine, and

online Web-zines, along with the few literary agents serving Arab authors, are ways of providing access to potential titles for translation and publication."

Their challenge, Obank says, is to continue "to be the bridge, the ever-open window on the Arab literary scene, to keep on creating new avenues for inter-cultural dialogue, and ones that can be sustained. [This means] backing up the magazine issues with live events."

Keeping up with technology has also been a challenge, which led to the *Banipal* team launching a full digital archive of issues in 2017 and keeping their sites updated.

As far as growth in reading and publishing in the Arab world, Shimon says he feels that it's increasing, both on the part of readers and publishers.

He has noticed, he says, "Authors themselves are setting up publishing houses, which means it's easier for local writers to get published, instead of having to make relations with the big established Arab publishers in Beirut, for example, to get their works published."

"Growth in publishers means more books can be entered into the various major Arabic literary prizes. Along with this, there seems to be a much-increased use of Facebook and other social media, and of course Zoom, to promote and launch books, particularly in the last two years."

Find Banipal at ADIBF: Stand 9G30

[BANIPAL.CO.UK](http://BANIPAL.CO.UK)



# Digital Success in Dubai: Sail Publishing Masters the Transition

Iman Ben Chaibah launched Sail Publishing 12 years ago as an ebook-first company. She's since added print books and, with a push from the pandemic, an online store.

By Porter Anderson

Working across a wide range of genres including children's books, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction both in Arabic and English, Dubai's Sail Publishing started as the English-language *Sail* magazine and is now 12 years old.

Sail CEO Iman Ben Chaibah offers a perfect example of a publisher embracing the "digital acceleration" that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to changing market conditions.

Ben Chaibah says, "Our journey with digital publishing has been humbling." And yet, in our exchange with her, it's clear that she and Sail Publishing have prevailed over the challenges and made an important transition to the growing digital-platform awareness of the region.

We start by asking her what she anticipates in being at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year.

**Iman Ben Chaibah:** Sail has been running as a book publishing house since 2014, based here in the United Arab Emirates. We've been running before that, since 2010, as *Sail* magazine, which publishes articles about the community and about cultural topics written by regular writers from across the Emirates. In the publishing house, we specialize in books, both in print and digital. We aim to be a one-stop shop for individuals and the families to find whatever they might want to read with us.

Book fairs are definitely a great spot for authors who are looking for new publishers to publish their works, as it gives them first hand experience to talk with the publishers, sense if there is a chemistry in communicating with them, and if they get the essence of what they wrote about and can be the best home for their new book.

Participating in Abu Dhabi International Book Fair gives us first-hand access to our audience and the mainstream reader. We get to gauge what books they respond to, what genres attract them, and the overall consumer behavior around book-buying that we often don't get through online sales or bookstores.

**Publishing Perspectives:** How has Sail fared during the pandemic years?

**Iman Ben Chaibah:** COVID-19 has been very interesting from different perspectives for us. From one side, it pushed us to launch our online store in order to sell our physical books much sooner than what our business plans dictated at the time.

When book fairs stopped operating, we



Iman Ben Chaibah

had to find new ways to sell our books and continue to release new titles, and the store was our solution for that. Before then, we only sold in fairs and via marketplaces such as Amazon. Having our digital store gave us access to our audience. We could get the full margin of our sales. And it also helped us release new titles across the year as opposed to just around book fairs.

From another side, in the main COVID year, 2020, we actually doubled our new releases compared to years before and after. Thanks to quarantine periods, it seems that finally had the chance to focus on the books ideas they'd had for so long and get them written.

While we did have a book fair later that year, it didn't have a third of the sales we'd had the year before, but we did *next page »*

"Participating in Abu Dhabi International Book Fair gives us first-hand access to our audience and the mainstream reader."

Iman Ben Chaibah



Sail Publishing stand at the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: Sail Publishing)

«from previous notice that most of the sales shifted to online retail instead, which still was a plus for us.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Being as advanced in digital publishing and sales as you are now, do you think of Sail as a kind of platform of services? Who are your usual clients? And do you offer distribution and marketing as well as publication?

**Iman Ben Chaibah:** Our journey with digital publishing has been humbling. When I started Sail, I was an avid Amazon Kindle reader and thought that's exactly what's missing in our region.

So when I launched Sail, it was exclusively about digitally publishing books on Kindle, iBooks [later Apple Books], Kobo, and the likes. But I was faced by a number of obstacles.

When I found the sales number too low to be sustainable, I realized that—at the time—the main digital platforms didn't exactly allow users who reside in the Middle Eastern and North African region to buy the books. So while I, as a publisher, had the digital rights for a book sold worldwide on those platforms, there still were geographical limitations placed on sales by the platforms themselves.

While some avid digital readers knew their work-arounds, I realized that I wouldn't be able to reach the mainstream with this approach. Some of the platforms since then have expanded their reach into the MENA region, but the catalog is still not as rich as it is for the Western readers.

So after two years of that, we launched our print line and were surprised by long queues for book signings. Some of these consumers had already read digital versions of those books, but they expressed their love for autographs on print books, nevertheless.

And since then, we've been expanding our catalog, and getting our books published in digital and print simultaneously.

As we became expert in digital publishing in the region, those who didn't have the means for it partnered with us to digitally publish their own books, whether from large cultural entities, small publishers, or niche publishers and a few self-published authors.

We're proud to have grown our digital publishing expertise not only in English books but also in Arabic books, as they come with their own intricacies. Through those services we've allowed our partners to expand their reach, and some of them have seen their e-books on Amazon's bestseller lists for a few weeks, which we're really proud of.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Can you point to a couple of the specific pieces you'll be presenting at your stand at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair?

**Iman Ben Chaibah:** We'll be releasing a few new books, one of which is a beautiful Arabic children book called *ما معنى أن ننتمي؟* which translates to *What Does It Mean to Belong?* by Maryam AlShehhi.

It tackles belonging as a theme, whether to a country, to moments in our lives, to people in our lives, or to our things and the places we grew up in. And in a time when we're more aware of the power of belonging on the psychology of human beings, to teach young kids that they can belong to anything can give them a huge sense of grounding and relief and security which gives them the power to grow up secure in their own skin.

We're also releasing the third book in our English collective poetry series, in which we've been bringing together various groups of up-and-coming authors and debuting their works in published books—which finally gives them the pride of knowing their works are on the market.

We're proud to have shed light on about 30 young poets so far, bringing out their beautiful writings for the world to see. And hope-



fully this encourages them to go on and write their next full poetry books to be published, and signals to other young potential poets that they can share their precious writings with the world.

We also have one of our new releases, called *How I Survive Motherhood* by Nada Bingham. It's a funny yet very helpful take on parenting in today's world. No matter what generation you were born into, you'll soon realize that this world is broken when it comes to raising a child. So the book really taps into the emotional rollercoaster of what it means to be a parent in today's increasingly complicated world, as the author navigates the tides of raising children amid the latest parenting trends and existing outrageous stereotypes. •

Find Sail Publishing at ADIBF: Stand 9F01

[SAILPUBLISHING.COM](https://sailpublishing.com)



# Al Arabi Embraces Digital Solutions to the Post-Pandemic Publishing Environment

At Egypt's Al Arabi Publishing, the inventory is being digitized as ebooks, and a new partnership is underway in print-on-demand.



Sherif and Ranya Bakr

By Olivia Snaije

Egypt's independent Al Arabi Publishing has been run by brother and sister Sherif and Ranya Bakr since 1997. The company had been run primarily as a nonfiction house by their father, who founded it in 1976. They've since developed Al Arabi into a publisher many Arab readers go to when they want quality literature in translation.

## Book Sales During the Pandemic

But the pandemic years have been tough, says Sherif Bakr, a speaker at the International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries on the eve of Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's opening.

"With the pandemic," Bakr says, "sales completely stopped in the Arab world. Even if [in Egypt] we didn't close bookstores or have lockdowns, people automatically went to Netflix. But at Al Arabi, we took a different approach and thought things had to go back to normal. Our pipeline is long, and we worked on our titles."

The Cairo International Book Fair was

held in January 2020, after which most book fairs ground to a halt. But Al Arabi continued to publish, and between February 2020 and July 2021, when the Cairo fair held its postponed 2021 edition, the company published 90 titles of which 50 were translated, Bakr says. Between July 2021 and January of this year, they published 88 titles, with 50 in translation.

"Actually, we wanted to publish less," he says, "in order to do the proper distribution and go to all the book fairs. People want the new titles, so if you have more you don't necessarily sell more." Moreover, printing costs have gone up again amid devaluations of the Egyptian pound. Earlier in the year, the pound was down 14 percent; after the onset of the Russian war in Ukraine, the pound's value was down 20 percent.

Now that book fairs have resumed, Al Arabi's biggest source of sales is back in place. For his company, he says the Riyadh International Book Fair sells the most, followed by the United Arab Emirates' fairs as well as Algiers International Book Fair, at which Al Arabi exhibited this time for the first year. "Your books have to be diverse," Bakr says, because "the books that sell in Algeria don't sell in the Gulf and vice-versa."

"With the pandemic, sales completely stopped in the Arab world. Even if [in Egypt] we didn't close bookstores or have lockdowns, people automatically went to Netflix."

Sherif Bakr

## New Business by Going Digital

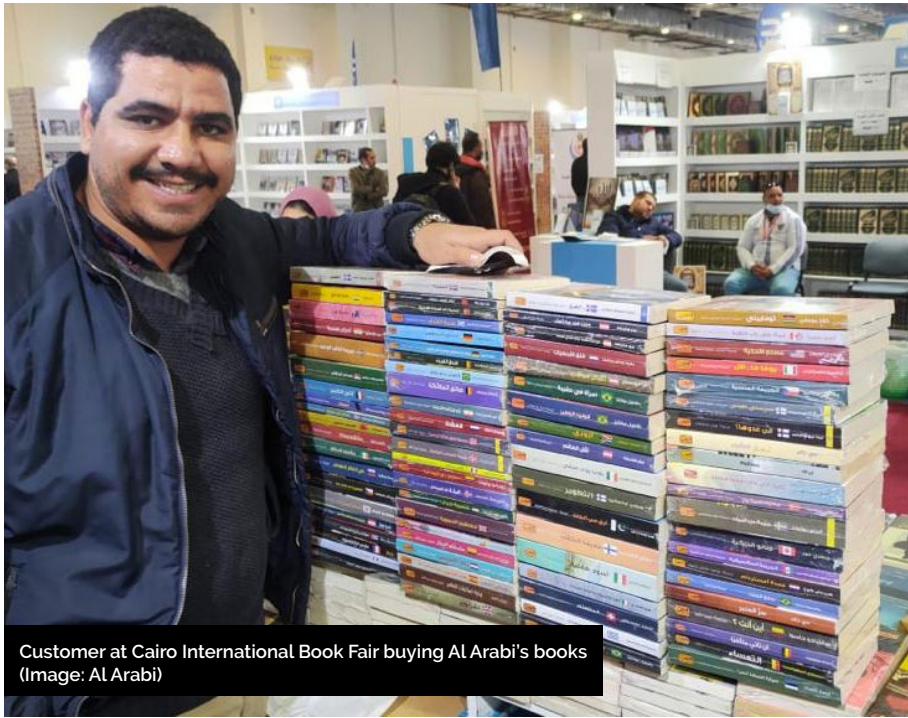
Bakr says that the pandemic has been a way to explore business opportunities that he and his sister hadn't tried before. "People who are waiting for things to go back to the way they used to be are wasting their time," he says. In addition to changing their internal software, they tried producing audiobooks—"it was a total failure"—and began developing ebooks and launching a series of interviews with authors on their YouTube channel.

Besides a surge in digital printing, Bakr says that digital platforms have been developing. Ebooks, which had never really taken off, are becoming increasingly popular. Al Arabi has been working with a Jordanian reading app, Abjjad, run by Eman Hylooz. A subscription costs 60 Egyptian pounds per month (US\$3.27) the price of one book, Bakr says. That's affordable for readers, and for publishers, "It's a good way to combat piracy and publish books that are censored."

## Translation and International Trade

Because so many of Al Arabi's books are published in translation, the company's series of interviews has focused on authors from a variety of countries, including Korea, Norway, and Finland, with the Estonian-Finnish author Sofi Oksanen baking a cake for readers for Ramadan. "We learned a lot about *next page* »





Customer at Cairo International Book Fair buying AL Arabi's books  
(Image: AL Arabi)



Customer at Sharjah International Book Fair with AL Arabi's books  
(Image: AL Arabi)

«from previous scripting the material, and adding Arabic subtitles,” Bakr says. He likes the fact that his own company’s videos can be found after an event, which is not always the case with a book fair’s media.

Bakr says that the book market in the Arab world is getting bigger, but there’s less money being made.

A member of the International Publishers Association’s (IPA) Freedom to Publish committee, Bakr says three problems—distribution, piracy, and censorship—remain their greatest challenges.

Ebooks are partly a solution. “You’re selling more copies but you’re getting less money,” he says. “It’s complicated with Arabic characters, but we’ve invested in this and now we’re converting all our books” to digital formats, and working with Amazon Kindle, Bakr says.

AL Arabi began working with Amazon in Egypt, which relaunched its Souq.com site as Amazon.eg in September 2021. Mobile phones, perfume, and electronics are pushed

“People who are waiting for things to go back to the way they used to be are wasting their time.”

Sherif Bakr

on the site and selling books is not a priority for Amazon, Bakr says, although he sympathizes because the bureaucracy and supply chain for books in Egypt are so complicated. “You really need someone to pave the way. It’s not easy for them to understand.”

In the last month, AL Arabi began initiatives with Ingram Content Group and a Saudi

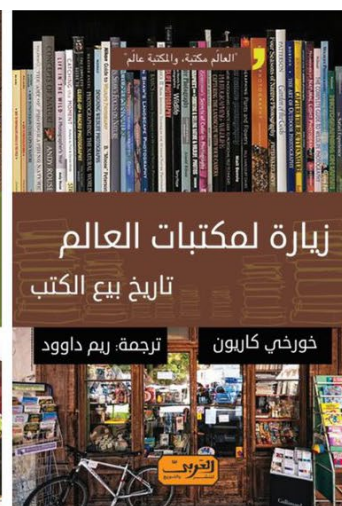
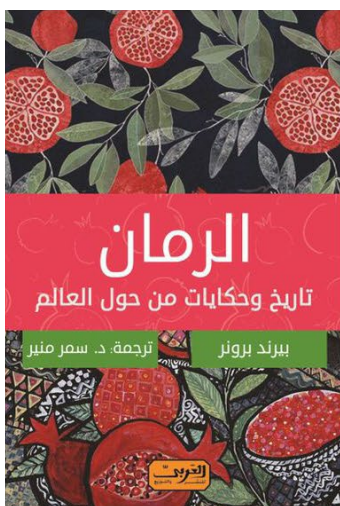
company to develop print-on-demand books.

Censorship and self-censorship remain problematic for Bakr. “Supposedly things are changing in Saudi, but it doesn’t seem to get better in the UAE and Kuwait. Sometimes even readers self-censor, and some translators will refuse to translate ‘sensitive’ material.”

AL Arabi at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is presenting a series translated crime novels from around the world, launched in 2020. Their most recent translation, a Swedish crime novel titled *Knock Knock* by Anders Roslund, has become a quick bestseller and is in a second edition. Readers also are buying nonfiction titles in AL Arabi’s “Unconventional History” series. •

Find AL Arabi at ADIBF: Stand 11D36

[ALARABIPUBLISHING.COM.EG](http://ALARABIPUBLISHING.COM.EG)





# Storytel: Building Audiobook Markets Across the Arab World

'We're in a good position,' says Storytel's Yasmina Jraissati, after the first five years of the audiobook subscription service's operations in the region.



Yasmina Jraissati (Image: Jacob Russel)

By Porter Anderson

As the 31st Abu Dhabi International Book Fair opens, the Stockholm-based international audiobook subscription service Storytel is reporting growth in the first quarter of this year, albeit after making as many as 100 layoffs in what's called "a strategic shift to focus on more mature markets."

The company's founding CEO Jonas Tellander departed from daily operations, handing off to Ingrid Bojner as interim CEO. There's some speculation in world publishing

"Accents and dialects are certainly a challenge in Arabic audiobook publishing, but I also think they can be a great opportunity."

Yasmina Jraissati

circles that Storytel could be seen as an attractive acquisition, as Katy Hershberger mentions in her report for Publishers Lunch, especially with some softening of the Swedish krona. In January, Storytel completed its acquisition of Audiobooks.com, but overall numbers showed a Q1 jump of 35 percent in Storytel's worldwide streaming sales.

*Publishing Perspectives* has been glad to see Stefanie Lamprinidi, Storytel's international content expansion manager, on the slate of speakers at the International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries in the run-up to the Abu Dhabi fair this year. The company's roughly 25 world markets now include the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Egypt.

Having covered Storytel's progress for many years, we're glad to have a chance to gather some observations from Yasmina Jraissati, a well-known pioneering literary agent operating from her RAYA in the region and Storytel's publishing manager for the MENA markets (Middle East and North Africa).

We begin our conversation by recalling that as Storytel entered the Arab world in 2017, the company found itself doing quite a bit of production in order to broaden and deepen the available inventory of Arabic-language audiobook content.

We ask if such "Storytel Originals," as they're branded, are still part of the picture for the company in the Arab world.

**Yasmina Jraissati:** That's right. Apart from a few children books publishers who would provide audio CDs with their printed books to their readers, there was virtually no audiobook production in the region at the time.

Today, although things are mostly the same, we can observe a slight shift. Most print publishers still don't produce audiobooks, but a few of them now see it as an opportunity to increase the size of their audience, and have therefore started to do some production themselves, which they distribute through Storytel, for example. Most of these publishers are in Egypt, some are in the UAE or Saudi Arabia, and they tend to have books that target a very broad audience.

As you say, apart from distributing audiobooks and licensing audio rights, Storytel also creates its own audiobooks, the Originals, including in MENA. Since I joined, toward the end of 2020, we've released quite a few Originals and have experimented with different genres and audiences—epic fantasy, dystopia, crime, biographies, for a general audience, and YA. We have more in the pipeline for the coming months.

*next page »*

«from previous **Publishing Perspectives:** How do you handle Arabic dialects? Do you tend to opt for the Egyptian “central” dialect or for Modern Standard or for several dialect versions of an audiobook?

**Yasmina Jraissati:** Most books published in print in the region are in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and MSA is the language of modern fiction and nonfiction alike.

In recent years, we’ve observed an increased tendency to write dialogues in dialectal spoken Arabic. This was a big thing when it first started in the print world a couple of decades ago. Today, in Egypt in particular, sometimes even the narrative parts are in Spoken Egyptian. This can be seen in postmodern literary works in which Egyptian slang is mixed with Standard as well as anglicism for example—which provides a lot of texture to the book, and kind of situates the narrative in one or another part of the social landscape.

To push things farther, some Egyptian books that are nonfiction are also sometimes written entirely in Spoken Arabic. Egypt is so self-sufficient when it comes to publishing, that they can publish books with only the Egyptian market in mind.

So when we adapt a book to the audio format, we are most of the time adapting it from an MSA text. Nonetheless, we try to be as faithful as possible to the author’s intentions, since our mission is to bring it to life in the most convincing way in audio. If the author is Egyptian, we’ll go for an Egyptian narrator. Even if the book is written in MSA, say even if the dialogues were in MSA, there are slight differences in accent to which people are very sensitive.

Importantly, the names of cities and places are very hard to pronounce correctly for someone who is not from the country. We made this mistake a couple of times, where because there was no Spoken Egyptian at all in the book, we thought we could go with a narrator from a different country. But then, he got the pronunciation of the small unknown towns and areas wrong—as you may know, print books for adults don’t include diacritics, which in Arabic mostly stand for vowels, so it’s pretty complicated to guess what the correct vowel is in a proper name you’ve never heard before.

This means we work with voice talents from across the MENA region, but they tend to belong to mostly three families: Egypt, Levant—Syria or Lebanon to be precise—and Gulf, or Saudi more specifically.

I think the question here would perhaps rather be: What do listeners prefer? I won’t get into that since it’s a complicated one to answer. But one thing we do know is that for example, even Saudi (i.e. non-Egyptian) listeners enjoy listening to an Egyptian book by an Egyptian narrator. And they particularly love it when the dialogues are in Egyptian. It makes them feel connected to the place. Accents and dialects are certainly a challenge in Arabic audiobook publishing, but I also think they can be a great opportunity.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Since Storytel acquired the Kitab Sawti library, has its



“Today, all users don’t actually know that listening to a book on YouTube is piracy.”

Yasmina Jraissati

material been a good source for Storytel? And are Sebastian Bond and his co-founder involved now with Storytel?

**Yasmina Jraissati:** Storytel acquired Kitab Sawti in the summer of 2020, along with its library. And yes, definitely, Kitab Sawti’s library represents a precious asset. Sebastian Bond is currently the MENA bub manager, and Anton Pollak, co-founder of Kitab Sawti, is tech manager.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Overall, how does the reception of audio seem to be going in the Arab world? Are subscriptions growing at the rate Jonas Tellander—who recently was succeeded by Ingrid Bojner—had hoped?

**Yasmina Jraissati:** There’s no doubt that we’re an emerging, still immature market. Most people in our target audience group still don’t know what audiobooks are. To illustrate this, the head of Arabic at a school in the UAE once told me, “Oh, so you’re like the radio.” ... Well, yes, I can definitely see where he’s coming from, and in a sense we are. But in another sense, we are nothing like the radio.

For example, the experience of watching Netflix today, versus the previous experience of watching television when there were five state-owned channels is quite different, I would say. It’s the same for audio. People’s lives have changed and as a result their time constraints, expectations, and needs have changed. Some people find this out on their own, and they embrace Storytel. Others already experience it, but they’re not yet aware of the possible answers to their needs and expectations.

We’re definitely growing at a good pace and are very optimistic about the future. We



are in a good position, and there’s still so much more we can do.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What are the main challenges for audio work of this kind in the region? Various parts of the world can be so different in how they receive and respond to audio.

**Yasmina Jraissati:** I believe one important challenge has to do with understanding the value of our service. We know that people are listening to audiobooks: the need is there. But many people turn to the pirate industry instead of paying for a subscription—even though it’s much less practical and the quality is catastrophic.

Today, all users don’t actually know that listening to a book on YouTube is piracy. There’s a low awareness level about how piracy damages the industry and ultimately impacts the readers and listeners.

But I believe this will change. The parallel to music sheds an interesting light. I remember back in the early 2000s, when music took the digital turn and everyone downloaded it free from different sites. At first it was exhilarating: So many songs we never could have dreamt of having access to. But soon, this became very cumbersome. It was an utterly time-consuming experience for the consumer, and not sustainable for the industry.

Then, various authorities started cracking down on illegal downloading and at the same time streaming services took their place. And that was the real digital revolution within music.

This scenario is what’s needed for audiobooks in MENA. Storytel has an important role in that transition, providing a high-quality service and showing people there’s a more sustainable way to consume audiobooks than piracy.

The way I see it, illegal downloading means there’s a need for audiobooks in the market, and more potential readers and listeners than we might think. •

Find Storytel at ADIBF: Stand EZ07

**STORYTEL.COM**



# Emirates Publishers Association Facilitates International Opportunities for Its Members

The Emirates Publishers Association is tackling one of the region's most daunting challenges for its book business by creating its own Manassah Distribution Company.



Emirates Publishers Association seminar on educational publishing with the UAE's minister of education (Image: EPA)

By Porter Anderson

Among the most active publishers associations in the international book business today, the 13-year-old Emirates Publishers Association (EPA) is based at Sharjah Publishing City and is the United Arab Emirates' central organization for publishers and associated stakeholders.

For our special Abu Dhabi International Book Fair coverage, we've spoken with the association's Abdulaziz AlShomali, senior media and marketing executive, for a picture of the organization's outlook on the markets and their potentials. We begin by asking about the association's scope of activities this year.

**Abdulaziz AlShomali:** Emirates Publishers Association (EPA) has 231 active member-publishers at this time.

The services we provide to our member-publishers to assist them with their special publishing projects include:

- Providing the required consultancy support for all the members' publishing activities
- Providing industry insights, research, and reports as a base for them to develop their thoughts and procedures
- Guiding our members to the proper specialists for publishing legal issues
- Designing workshops and seminars to improve publishing capabilities

- Providing exceptional rates and helping to facilitate all publishing requirements and needs of our member-publishers to support their books reaching the widest audience

In addition, our Manassah Project supports publishers with marketing through various local and international book fairs and exhibitions. Through the Manassah Project, our goal is to facilitate participation in local and international exhibitions for small publishers who produce fewer than 20 publications. We help them present their work to the most significant possible range of audiences.

This allows our members to enter new markets and expand their business outside the local region. Another essential criterion of our progress and development lies in the fact that we're seen as the pioneering entity of our kind in the region's publishing business. The association represents Emirati publishers nationally, regionally, and internationally.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Yes, we noticed the role of the Manassah Project during the Emirates Book Fair this year, with what was reported to be 151 books showcased from 17 publishers through the program. How have the EPA's member-publishers fared during the pandemic years?

**Abdulaziz AlShomali:** Several publishers working in the UAE have been beneficiaries of our Publishers Emergency Fund, an initiative we launched to help *next page »*



Abdulaziz AlShomali (Image: EPA)

"Through the Manassah Project, our goal is to facilitate participation in local and international exhibitions for small publishers who produce fewer than 20 publications."

Abdulaziz AlShomali

“We’re currently developing the Manassah Distribution Company, a new venture operating under our association to enable local publishers to expand their reach into regional and international markets with reduced operating costs. The company will also work to boost the culture of reading in the Arab world and internationally.”

Abdulaziz AlShomali

«from previous sustain the publishing industry and support member-publishers who were impacted by the coronavirus’ outbreaks.

In addition to supporting the publishing sector, this fund contributes to the continuity of the broader cultural and creative projects of the member-publishers, despite the difficult circumstances they’ve been through in these pandemic years.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Can you pinpoint the most significant challenges currently facing Emirati publishers?

**Abdulaziz AlShomali:** Among the biggest challenges that Emirati publishers encounter are distribution issues and the effort to get Emirati books to international markets where they can find wider readership.

These distribution problems lie on top of the high costs of publishing a book today.

This is why we’re currently developing the Manassah Distribution Company, a new venture operating under our association to enable local publishers to expand their reach into regional and international markets with reduced operating costs. The company will also work to boost the culture of reading in the Arab world and internationally. More services will include integrated services for writers as well as publishers, including editing, design, marketing, production, and distribution.

**Publishing Perspectives:** By contrast to the struggle for effective distribution, are there successes, even surprises, that the association can point to?

**Abdulaziz AlShomali:** The Ingram Lightning Source print-on-demand installation at the Sharjah Publishing City free trade zone is just such a success. It represents an essential addition to the free trade zone’s op-

erational capabilities offered to publishers, retailers, and other stakeholders to expand their access to books and content and their outreach into regional markets.

What’s more, Lightning Source is helping our member-publishers by giving them the chance to sell a book first and then print it, rather than going to the expense of large press runs and warehousing.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Lastly, what needs attention in the UAE market these days? Where are the “pressure points” the organization is working on, and what’s the general mood and tone of Emirati publishers as we all hope for

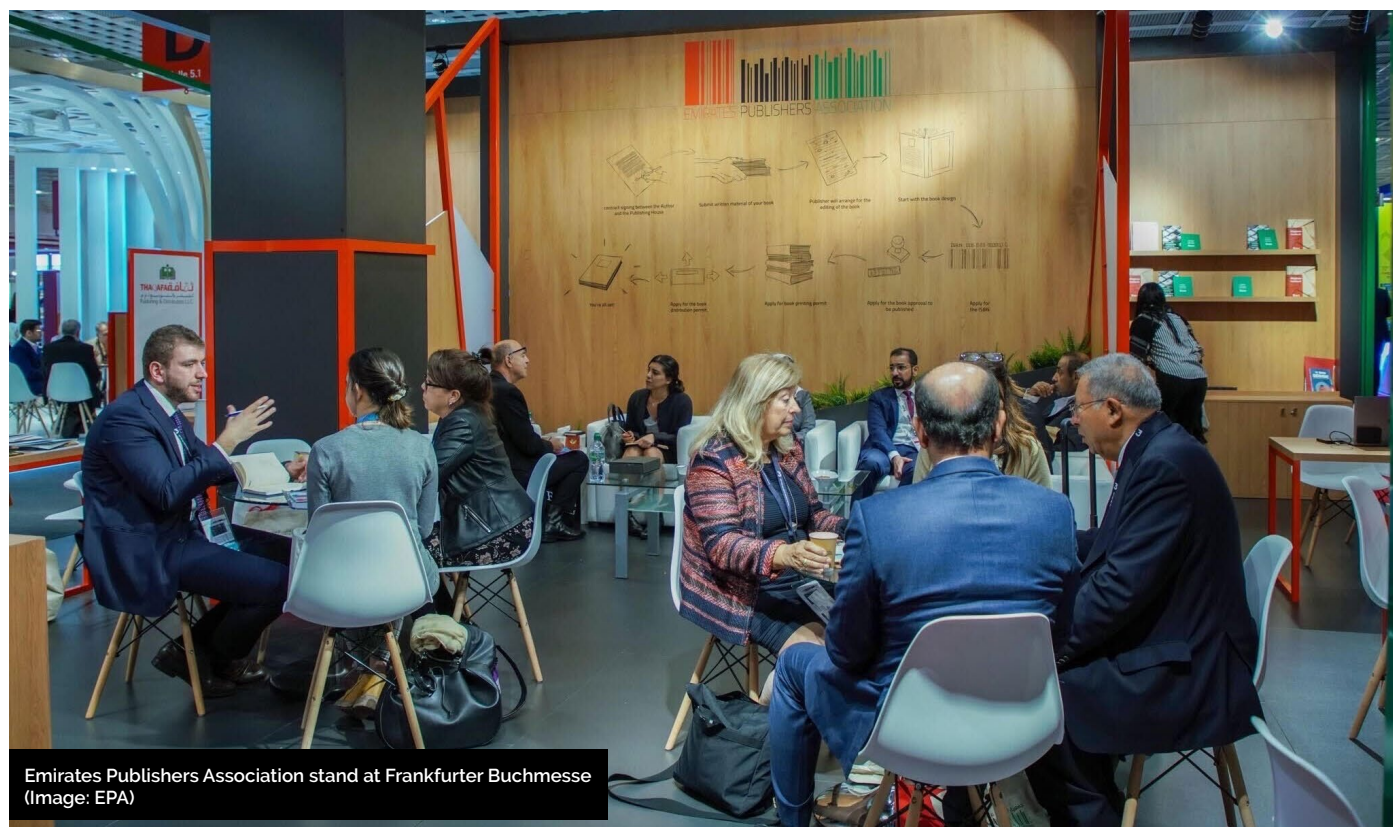
**Abdulaziz AlShomali:** The current Emirati publishing market is healing, and that makes things look promising for getting back to our previous, regular business.

We’re lucky to have had the emergency fund, as I’ve mentioned, which was endowed with 1 million dirhams (US\$272,286). The fund has helped alleviate accumulated financial burdens resulting from lost sales during the closures that hit various sectors—including our cultural sector.

In publishing, it’s how we have been able to help preserve our industry’s sustainability. Twenty-five publishing houses have benefited from the fund during the COVID-19 crisis, to help support the continuance of their creative programs. •

Find the EPA at ADIBF: Stand 12M05

[EPA.ORG.AE](http://EPA.ORG.AE)



Emirates Publishers Association stand at Frankfurter Buchmesse (Image: EPA)



# Morocco: A Book Market at the Intersection of the Arab World, North Africa, and France

Abdelkader Retnani, president of the Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco, says Moroccan literature is in a 'good position' across the region.

By Jarosław Adamowksi

Morocco, a country with a population of about 37 million, hosts some 113 publishing houses, which puts it behind other Maghreb-region countries such as Algeria and Tunisia.

That said, Morocco's publishing industry exceeds its counterparts in the two North African states by the number of titles released each year, at about 3,000, as indicated by the latest available data from the *Bureau international de l'édition française* (BIEF), a Paris-based association financed by France's ministry of culture and the ministry of Europe and foreign affairs.

It's noteworthy that the French association estimates that only a small share of those publishers—around 20 local publishers—have their books available at Moroccan bookstores.

On average, titles released in the Moroccan market are printed in runs of between 1,000 and 1,500 copies, higher than standard print runs of some 500 copies in Tunisia and 1,000 in Algeria. Morocco's houses mostly release books in Arabic, and only about 28 percent of the country's novels are released in French, according to those figures from the Paris-based research.

Abdelkader Retnani, president of the Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco, is assessing the outlook for Morocco's publishing industry and its position in the larger Arabic-language sphere, speaking with *Publishing Perspectives* for the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

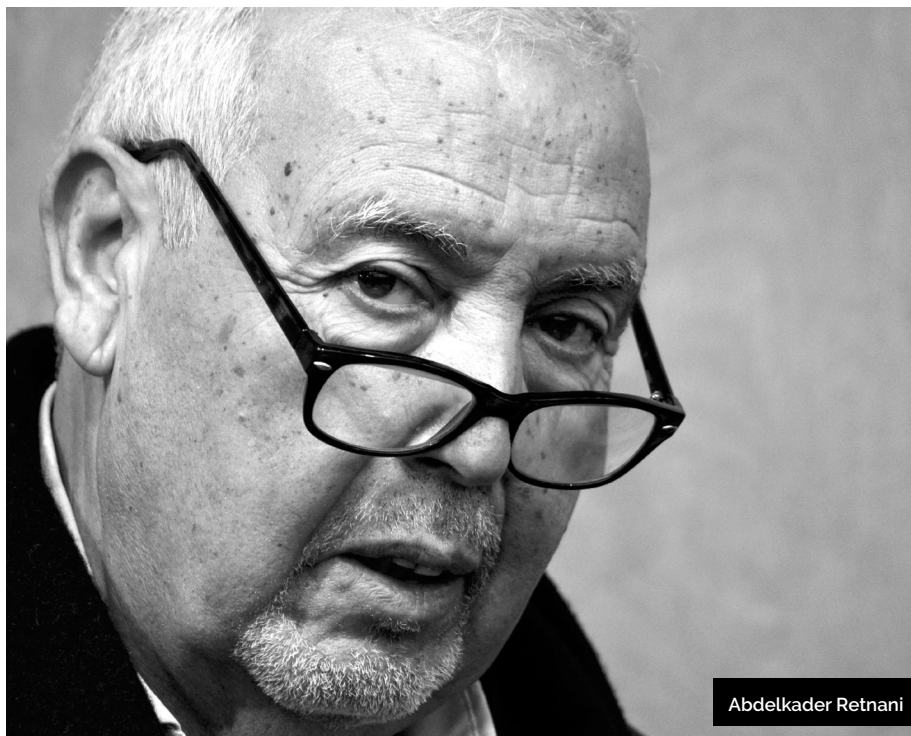
Retnani is a seasoned publisher who has been involved in promoting Moroccan literature for decades. His activities have earned him the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's highest order of merit.

We ask about the profile of the Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco's membership, and the main activities in which the association is involved?

**Abdelkader Retnani:** The Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco is an association that groups professional publishers from our country who comply with the rigorous conditions that we require of our members. This is to ensure that the sector remains dominated by professionals, and the market is heading upwards.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What's the general situation of the Moroccan publishing industry amid the pandemic years we're going through?

**Abdelkader Retnani:** The pandemic has left traces on the sector during its first two



years. All of the entities active in the sector were forced to adapt and come up with solutions to stay afloat and stimulate book publishing.

However, we're persuaded that it's during times of crisis that we can challenge ourselves and become stronger through cooperation.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Do you see Moroccan literature becoming increasingly popular across the Arab world?

Abdelkader Retnani: Morocco is advancing rapidly in terms of the quality of its published books, and even the cover design, the choice of paper by publishers.

Morocco's literature occupies a good position in the Arab and African market. In addition to this, we have an increasingly strong position in the French book market.

Our association's objective is also to ensure that this professionalization is increasingly shared by all of our industry professionals. And it's a source of pride for us to see our books, and our authors, seduce readers from across the Arab world.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Could you name a few books by Moroccan authors that have gained international recognition?

**Abdelkader Retnani:** Some of those books include Leïla Slimani's *Regardez-nous danser* (*Watch Us Dance*), which was published by Gallimard; Loubna Serraj's *Pourvu qu'il soit*

*de bonne humeur* (*As Long As He Is In A Good Mood*) which was released by La Croisée des Chemins; Zineb Mekouar's *La poule et son cumin* (*The Hen And Its Cumin*) which was published by Jean Claude Lattès; and Tahar Ben Jelloun's *La nuit sacrée* (*The Sacred Night*) which was released by Gallimard.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What are your association's plans and objectives for the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair?

**Abdelkader Retnani:** We plan to hold talks with as many publishing houses as possible, and try to sell translation rights to Moroccan books to Arab publishers. •

"It's a source of pride for us to see our books, and our authors, seduce readers from across the Arab world."

Abdelkader Retnani

# Muhammed Ağırakça on Rights and Translation: 'Politics Divide, Culture Unites'

Muhammed Ağırakça's Akdem Copyright and Translation Agency in Istanbul has seen sales double despite the pandemic's impact—and is an avid participant in the Abu Dhabi fair's 'Spotlight on Rights' program.

By Jarosław Adamowski

With a population of more than 84 million, Turkey's independent publishing houses increased their output in 2020, publishing some 2.3 percent more books than they had released in 2019, according to data from the Turkish Publishers Association.

A growing number of Turkish book-industry players have developed ties with Middle Eastern partners. Muhammed Ağırakça, the general manager and founder of Akdem Copyright and Translation Agency—part of the Akdem Istanbul group—talks with *Publishing Perspectives* about the outlook for such cooperation.

**Muhammed Ağırakça:** We're a young copyright and translation agency established in early 2018. However, since the day we were established, unlike many older copyright agencies in Turkey, we've been mainly interested in copyright sales in Asia, and especially in the Arab world.

We pay special attention to the cultural landscape of this region. In more than four years, we've managed to generate 60 percent of our total turnover from cooperation with Arab countries. We've succeeded in selling copyrights for both fiction and nonfiction to the Arabic-language world.

What we consider to be our biggest advantage is our "cultural affinity" for the region. When the same values and common history are combined with culture, the Arabic book publisher who examines a work pays special attention to what we represent.

Our motto is "politics divide, culture unites." In our opinion, the main issue to be considered in copyright procurement is the content and quality of the book.

Another problem we have in the Arab world is that publishers don't have a distribution network. This is a market of 22 countries, but the volume of copyright purchases over five years is around 2,000. We think this number is too low. When we talk to publishers, they say the biggest problem is the inadequacy of book distribution networks, and that's reflected in the prices of the books and indirectly in decreases in sales figures.

But, despite all these adverse conditions, it feels great to work with the Arab world.

**Publishing Perspectives:** How has business been going for your company, relative to the pandemic's effects?

**Muhammed Ağırakça:** At the be-

ginning of the pandemic period, we were all scared that maybe publishers would stop buying rights because there were lockdowns all over the world. We needed to find a new way to overcome the stagnation we experienced in March and April of 2020. As a team, we wanted to find publishers who produce beautiful works as part of their publishing activities, but have never bought translation rights.

We chose the Arab world as the target geography. We started to present the works we represent in Turkey by studying the catalogs of individual publishers—which resembled digging a well with needles—and looking at what kinds of books they published.

In 2021, our copyright sales doubled despite the impact of the ongoing pandemic, and so far the first quarter of 2022 looks magnificent. We perceive this as a result of the bilateral relations that we've developed with publishers in the Arab world, and we value this very much.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Do you see book reading and publishing in the Arab world growing at this point? How is the relationship between the book industries in Turkey and the Arab world today?

**Muhammed Ağırakça:** One of the most important attractions for us in the Arab world is boutique works from younger publishers. There's a remarkable increase in the number of publishers, especially in the Gulf region. Publishing houses for children produce great works.

These young, boutique publishers have begun to make new rights deals, becoming a serious competitive element in their markets. While it's said that technology pushes children and young people away from books, but in my opinion the level of education in these societies is increasing the level of reading.

There's a significant increase in the category of children's books and books for young people. This is an indication that the new generation has been growing up with books.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What do you hope to achieve by participating in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year?

**Muhammed Ağırakça:** What we love the most about the Abu Dhabi fair is that the biggest publishers from almost the entire Arab world are there.

Rights agencies such as ours are making more use of it because the show's retail density is not excessive. You get the opportunity to just sit back and evaluate different options with a publisher for a long time. What does



Muhammed Ağırakça  
(Image: Akdem Istanbul)

"One of the most important attractions for us in the Arab world is boutique works from younger publishers."

Muhammed Ağırakça

the reader want? What's in the publication's plans? And where are educational levels in a given publishing house's country? We can get answers to all these questions directly from the publisher in person.

In addition to this, the Abu Dhabi fair's Spotlight on Rights program is an important translation support fund carefully followed by Turkish publishers.

In this regard, in fact, the United Arab Emirates is the leading country in the Arab world. We can say that it's the only country in the Arab world that provides two separate funds for copyright and translation support. Publishers are more than glad to have this opportunity.

We're here to meet more new publishers, develop business partnership models, examine more books, get representation and, of course, sell copyrights. •



# Spotlight on Rights: Grants for Translation and Ebook and Audiobook Conversion

Continuing its expanded grant program, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's 'Spotlight on Rights' funds are available to the fair's exhibitors and trade visitors.

By Publishing Perspectives Staff

Following an increase in the number of grants awarded under the Spotlight on Rights program in 2021, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair says it has now given out funding for more than 900 titles and 100 publishers across children's books, science, history, social sciences, and other genres.

The program was officially launched in 2009, and its goal, according to ADIBF, is to "[enhance] exchange and cooperation between Arab and international publishers."

## Translation Grants

The Spotlight on Rights program offers grants to cover some of the costs of translating books into other languages, and it is available for books brought translated into Arabic and from Arabic to other languages.

As in many countries around the world,

this kind of translation funding is crucial to making sure that literature travels across languages and reaches more readers. Many discussions at this year's fair—at the ALC's new International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries, as well as Germany's Guest of Honor program—will be about translation and how to get more Arabic books published in other languages.

## Ebook and Audiobook Grants

In addition to supporting the translation of Arabic books into English with its through its translation grants, ADIBF expanded its program in 2020 to include funding for exhibiting publishers and trade visitors to convert their titles into ebooks and audiobooks. These funds continue to be available this year.

According to ADIBF, these grants are in place to help publishers reach "a larger number of readers" through digital book formats. Though consumer adoption of ebooks and au-

diobooks is still nascent, a number of regional publishers and companies are working to show readers the benefits.

Storytel, an audiobook subscription service, has been operating in the Middle East for the last five years and is making progress showing publishers and consumers the value of this format. Read an interview with Storytel's publishing manager for the MENA region, Yasmina Jraissati, [on Page 12](#).

Publishers are also working more with ebooks, in particular, as a strategy to overcome distribution hurdles in the region. In Egypt, for example, Al Arabi Publishing reports that ebooks are becoming more popular among its customers. Publisher Sherif Bakr is working with a reading app to get his ebooks out to more readers. Read more about Bakr's activities [on Page 10](#). •



Image: ADIBF

## Spotlight on Rights

Translation grants from the Spotlight on Rights program are available to exhibiting publishers and trade visitors at the 2022 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

### How to Submit Applications

- Submit applications in person to the "Spotlight on Rights" program at the fair or online: [adbookfair.com](https://adbookfair.com).

### Grant Amounts (in USD, per title)

- Print books: \$2500–\$4000
- Interactive ebooks: \$2,000
- Ebooks (non-interactive): \$1,000–\$2000
- Audiobooks: \$1,500–\$2,000

Click here for more information:

[SPOTLIGHT ON RIGHTS INFO](#)

# Germany Celebrates Return as Guest of Honor in Abu Dhabi

Originally set for 2021, Germany's Guest of Honor program was held digitally last year and now returns to Abu Dhabi in 2022 with a delegation of creators and publishers.

Germany's Guest of Honor presentation at ADIBF is produced by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in cooperation with AUMA – Association of the German Trade Fair Industry and supported by Frankfurter Buchmesse. The Guest of Honor presentation is organized by LMI – Leipziger Messe International. This year's cultural program, jointly organized and implemented by Frankfurter Buchmesse, the Goethe-Institut Gulf Region, and the German Embassy in Abu Dhabi, is made possible with support from the German Federal Foreign Office. •

## Publishers and Organizations at the German Pavilion, 8B05

- Adam Bookshop
- Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities
- Carlsen Verlag
- Cribster
- De Gruyter
- Delius Klasing Verlag
- Discover Middle East Publishing FZE
- Dom Publishers
- Duden
- Duncker & Humblot
- edition text+kritik
- Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Arab Emirates
- Falschrum
- Finken-Verlag
- Frankfurter Buchmesse
- Goethe-Institut Gulf Region
- Harrassowitz Verlag
- Hanser Verlag
- Huber Kartographie
- Lesekidz books trading
- Lars Müller Publishers
- MAJOBA
- Maria Pinto-Peuckmann Literary Agency
- Müller & Schindler
- Georg Olms
- Red Sea Bookstores
- scaneg Verlag
- Schweizerbart/Borntraeger
- Tessloff Verlag
- Thienemann-Esslinger
- Transcript Publishing
- Ueberreuter / Annette Betz
- Unionsverlag
- Youth Book Publishers Association



German stand at the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

## Selected German Cultural Events at ADIBF 2022 (times in GST)

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| May 24<br>13:00 - 14:00 | <b>THE SURVIVAL OF BEAUTY IS UNIVERSAL</b><br><b>H.E. Ernst Peter Fischer</b> , German Ambassador to the UAE, in conversation with artist and book author <b>Mindy Weisel</b> about her compelling memoir "AFTER: The Obligation of Beauty".  |
| May 26<br>13:00 - 14:00 | <b>LABOR ATELIERGEMEINSCHAFT, FRANKFURT</b><br>From this Frankfurt-based studio collective of graphic designers, illustrators and authors, <b>Anke Kuhl</b> , <b>Jörg Mühle</b> , and <b>Kirsten von Zubinski</b> speak with children's book author <b>Maitha Al Khayat</b> about the illustration and design process.                            |
| May 27<br>16:00 - 17:00 | <b>FUTURE OF CITY ARCHITECTURE IN THE UAE AND EUROPE</b><br>Interest Gulf architecture books is growing. Publishing director of DOM, <b>Björn Rosen</b> , and <b>Alamira Reem Bani Hashim</b> , author of "Planning Abu Dhabi – An Urban History", discuss architectural concepts and examples of outstanding architecture in the UAE and Europe. |
| May 27<br>17:00 - 18:00 | <b>THEATRE TODAY - A SPACE FOR REFLECTION AND TRANSFORMATION / INSPIRATION</b><br>Bestselling authors <b>Olga Grjasnowa</b> and <b>Moritz Rinke</b> discuss the German and international theatre landscape, the particularities of writing for the theatre, its challenges and the options vs. writing a novel.                                   |
| May 28<br>14:00 - 15:00 | <b>WHEN COMICS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MEET</b><br>Comic book author <b>Anke Kuhl</b> ("Manno") talks with Emirati comic artist <b>Mohammed Alshaibani</b> about the creation process of a comic and how the cultural heritage is reflected in the story and artworks.  |

GERMAN-STORIES.DE



# Germany's Guest of Honor Program at ADIBF: Selected Professional Events

| Time (GST)              | Event Title and Description   |
|-------------------------|---|
| May 24<br>14:00 - 15:00 | <b>THE MARKET FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE PUBLISHING AND WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR</b><br>Publishing with a focus on architecture and art has grown and is very popular in the UAE, not least due to the many exciting new structures such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi. How is the market in the Middle East and the West for publications of this kind? What are the challenges and the opportunities? Speakers: <b>Stefan Maneval</b> , founder, Falschrum Books; <b>Björn Rosen</b> , publishing director, DOM Publishers; <b>Amanda Smith</b> , head of publications, Louvre Abu Dhabi<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English   |
| May 24<br>15:00 - 16:00 | <b>ECOLOGY OF THE BOOK: SUSTAINABILITY IN PUBLISHING</b><br>In publishing as in all other areas, sustainability is the order of the day. How is the industry addressing this challenge as paper costs and digital content adoption increase? What has been achieved so far and what are the prospects for the future? Where do we stand in the Arab World, and how can we support each other? Speakers: <b>Nasser Assi</b> , founder of several publishing houses in Lebanon and UAE; <b>Dr. Nadja Kneissler</b> , director of the book branch of Delius Klasing<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English  |
| May 24<br>17:00 - 18:00 | <b>CHILDREN'S BOOKS RIGHTS DURING THE PANDEMIC AND IN THE FUTURE</b><br>Due to school closures, online learning, and a lack of activities outside of the house, the market for children's books has boomed during the pandemic. Which topics have seen the most growth? Is it the same all over the world? What has the situation been since the loosening of the strict anti-COVID regulations? And how has the rights market developed during the pandemic? Speakers: <b>Dr. Alyazia Khalifa</b> , founder, AlFulk; <b>Sylvia Schuster</b> , Carlsen Verlag<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English   |
| May 25<br>14:00 - 15:00 | <b>DIGITIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING – LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC</b><br>While this topic has often been discussed, it is so important to remember what we have learned and what it will make sense to keep doing once we have moved past the peak of the pandemic and into a new normal. In view of the soaring prices for paper, difficulties in supply chains, ongoing digitization: where are we now and where are we going as a worldwide industry? Speakers: <b>Dr. Nadja Kneissler</b> , director of the book branch of Delius Klasing; <b>Iman Ben Chaibah</b> , CEO, Sail Publishing; <b>Juergen Boos</b> , CEO, Frankfurter Buchmesse; <b>Nadine Achar</b> , Overdrive<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English |
| May 25<br>17:00 - 18:00 | <b>THE ARCHITECTURE GUIDE FOR THE UAE: CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING ARCHITECTURE TITLES</b><br>Speaker: <b>Björn Rosen</b> , publishing director, DOM Publishers<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English   |
| May 26<br>14:00 - 15:00 | <b>FACSIMILE PUBLISHING IN EUROPE AND THE ARAB WORLD</b><br>Facsimile publishers are constantly working on new technologies to create unique artworks that preserve invaluable cultural heritage and make it accessible. Speakers: <b>Charlotte Kramer</b> , owner, Müller & Schindler; <b>Alexander Wilhelm</b> , Müller & Schindler; <b>Nasser Assi</b> , founder of several publishing houses in Lebanon and UAE<br><b>Languages:</b> Arabic and English   |
| May 26<br>18:00 - 19:00 | <b>HISTORICAL NOVELS BETWEEN REALITY AND IMAGINATION</b><br>German author <b>Jo Lendle</b> and <b>Salha Obaid</b> speak about their novels and the thin line between engaging the readers' fantasies and bearing the historical responsibilities.<br><b>Languages:</b> English-Arabic simultaneous interpretation   |
| May 28<br>13:00 - 14:00 | <b>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE ART OF LITERARY TRANSLATIONS</b><br>Literary translations are a labour of love. How do AI applications support literary translations? What are the prospects of these applications? Speakers: <b>Dr. Guenter Orth</b> , translator and interpreter; <b>Dr. Abdel Wahab Khalifa</b> , lecturer in translation and interpreting, Cardiff University<br><b>Languages:</b> English-Arabic simultaneous interpretation  |

All events listed here take place the Germany Guest of Honor pavilion, stand 8Bo5.

For more of Germany's professional and cultural event listings, visit [german-stories.de](https://german-stories.de) or scan the QR code here:



# Aufbau Foreign Rights Manager Inka Ihmels on Attending ADIBF

Ihmels is in Abu Dhabi—along with other German publishers in the country's Guest of Honor program—to make new connections in Arab-world publishing.

By Jarosław Adamowksi

Established in 1945 and headquartered in Berlin, Aufbau Verlage is one of the most widely recognized publishing houses in Germany.

The publisher's list includes modern classics, contemporary literature, nonfiction titles, as well as bestsellers in the world of upmarket commercial fiction.

For our article, Inka Ihmels, foreign rights manager at Aufbau Verlage, talks with *Publishing Perspectives* about the publishing house's plans and objectives for this year's Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

We begin by asking how Ihmels describes the work that Aufbau publishes, which includes a broad program of German-language and international contemporary literature, rediscovered classics, and nonfiction books, often with strong opinions.

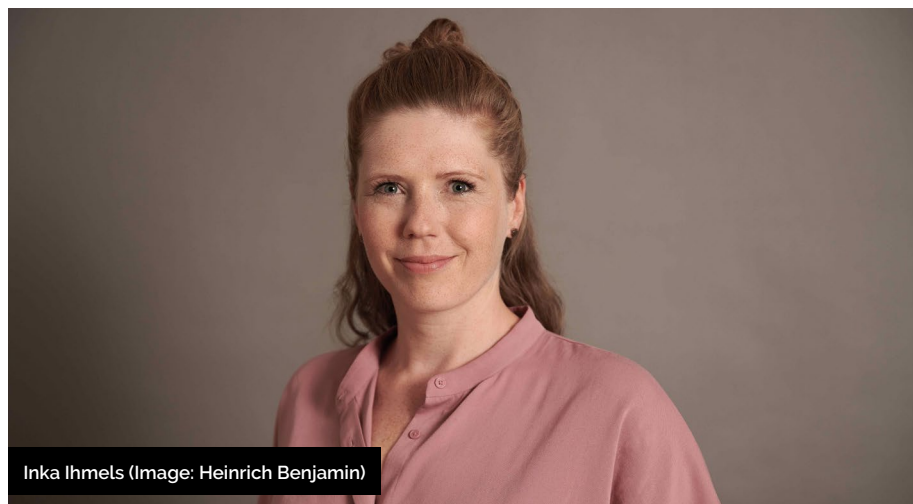
"There are additional imprints for extraordinary lives and love stories," Ihmels says, as well as "opulent historical novels and suspenseful crime novels.

"Aufbau's great successes have included several rediscoveries and modern classics. For example, Victor Klemperer's diaries, the works of Brigitte Reimann, Werner Bräunig, Anna Seghers, and Hans Fallada. During the last few years, Aufbau has landed a major success with the development of the series 'Courageous Women Between Love and Art' with several bestsellers and up to 20 rights deals for the most prominent titles. It features commercial fiction novels about the lives of extraordinary women who made history, for example: Coco Chanel, Frida Kahlo, Jane Austen, and others."

**Publishing Perspectives:** What's the current situation of your publishing business, particularly in the light of the pandemic's impact on book publishing?

"I'd love to learn a lot about what kinds of genres work in [Arab-world] markets and what readers like."

Inka Ihmels



Inka Ihmels (Image: Heinrich Benjamin)

**Inka Ihmels:** After the first few weeks of worries and adaptation to new working and consumption processes, 2020 and 2021 were particularly successful years for print editions, but of course also for the strongly growing digital sales of ebooks and audiobooks. The year 2022 confronts us with the paper crisis and the complications of the war in Ukraine. Because of these concerns, we see slower sales than during the previous years.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Do you see book reading and publishing in the Arab world growing at this point? What's the relationship of publishing in Germany and the Arab world today?

**Inka Ihmels:** I must confess that I know very little about reading and publishing in the Arab world at the moment. That's exactly one of the reasons to attend the Abu Dhabi book fair. As I'm the only person in charge of foreign rights at Aufbau, it's impossible for me to handle all territories with the same intensity.

I'm very much looking forward to ex-

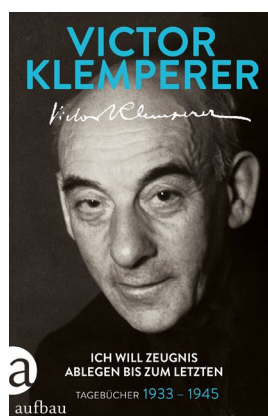
changing ideas with Arab publishers, and also with readers.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What does Aufbau Verlage hope to achieve by participating in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year? Do you have plans for programming participation with the program of this year's guest of honor, Germany?

**Inka Ihmels:** I hope to establish contacts with interesting publishers in different countries of the Arab world. And I'd love to learn a lot about what kinds of genres work in their markets and what their readers like. I'm absolutely open to be participating in all kind of different formats and features that Guest of Honor Germany offers. •

Find Aufbau at ADIBF: Stand 9H26

[AUFBAU-VERLAGE.DE](https://aufbau-verlage.de)





# Müller & Schindler Features 'Masterpieces of Islamic Book Art'

'It's our aim to grow our business and engage with old and new business partners in the Arabic book market,' says Müller & Schindler's Charlotte Kramer.



Müller & Schindler's 'Masterpieces of Islamic Book Art'  
(Image: Müller & Schindler Verlag)

By Jarosław Adamowksi

The 2022 iteration of Abu Dhabi International Book Fair marks the fourth year of exhibition for Müller & Schindler, based in Simbach am Inn, Germany.

This publishing house specializes in facsimile editions of medieval manuscripts and incunabula as well as topographic and scientific prints. The first work chosen for production by the house was the famous *Nibelungenlied*, or *Song of the Nibelungs* (manuscript C in *Karlsruhe*). The facsimile edition of the German heroic tale soon was a success.

Charlotte Kramer, Verlag Müller & Schindler's publisher, tells *Publishing Perspectives* that Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is "considered to be one of the most important book fairs in the Arab world, and therefore we've repeatedly participated in this event.

"It's our aim," she says, "to grow our business and engage with old and new business partners in the Arabic book market, sharing our know-how as well as introducing our facsimile editions to an international audience."

At the fair, the company will be exhibiting *Masterpieces of Islamic Book Art*, which Kramer describes as "a unique collection, showing the artistry of calligraphers and book illuminators from more than 10 centuries and from different cultural backgrounds in the Islamic world.

"Another masterpiece," she says, "is our new release *The Stars of Samarkand: Ulugh Beg's Book of the Fixed Stars* by Al-Sufi."

The company was founded in 1965 and for nearly 20 years, Kramer has managed its work.

"One of our consistent working principles," she says, "is to meet the highest quality requirements. The production of each of our titles is carefully monitored, from the first inspection to the taking of photographs and printing, through to the process of gilding and binding.

"Both the protection and safeguarding of the original as well as the publication and scientific treatment in the course of facsimile reproduction have always been a top priority. The manufacture of each of our facsimile books requires considerable technical knowledge and craftsmanship. Each individual book is the result of many different working phases, all carried out by hand, comparable only to the work in a medieval scriptorium."

"We use real gold" at a minimum 22 carats, Kramer says, "in all our facsimile editions, in order to render the true appearance of the gold leaf employed in the original books." •

Find Müller & Schindler at ADIBF: 8B05

[MUELLERUNDSCHINDLER.COM](https://www.muellerundschindler.com)



Charlotte Kramer



## Sheikh Zayed Book Award in 2022: 16 Years and a Record Number of Submissions

After hosting a digital ceremony in 2021, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award returns to the Abu Dhabi Book Fair with an in-person celebration of its 2022 winners.

By Hannah Johnson

Now in its 16th year, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (SZBA) has built up an impressive list of laureates and international recognition. In the last several years, translations rights to winning and shortlisted titles have sold to numerous countries, and organizers have hosted events in cities and book fairs around the world.

The award honors the outstanding achievements of innovators and thinkers in literature, the arts, and humanities in Arabic and other languages. It aims to advance Arabic literature and culture, providing new opportunities for Arabic-language writers.

In 2022, submissions for the award hit a record high across all nine categories, say organizers. They received more than 3,000 submissions from 55 countries, including 20 Arab nations and 35 nations outside the Arab world. These numbers are 28 percent above 2021, when the award counted 2,349 submissions.

Operating under the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC), the award continues its work, as ALC chairman and SZBA secre-

tary-general Dr. Ali Bin Tamim, says “of promoting culture and creativity, and empowering talented individuals in various literary and intellectual fields.”

As one of the most generous prizes for literature, SZBA’s winners in each of its eight categories receive a prize of 750,000 UAE dirhams (US\$204,200), and the Cultural Personality of the Year receives 1 million UAE dirhams (US\$272,300).

On announcing the 2022 winners, Bin Tamim said in a statement, “I congratulate this year’s winners, whose brilliant work will contribute to sharing Arab culture with new audiences around the globe. With each edition, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award further advances the cultural ecosystem in the Arab world, highlighting brilliant works of intellectual, linguistic, and creative diversity.

“One of our main aims is to support creators, and it’s our hope that this platform will serve to introduce these authors to wider audiences, not only in the region but around the globe.”

This year’s winners are honored at an in-person ceremony on May 24, 2022, parallel to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. •

### Translation Grants: Eligible SZBA 2022 Winners and Shortlisted Titles

The world’s leading Arab literature and culture prize, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, offers translation grants for its winners and shortlist in the categories of Literature and Children’s Literature. Selected titles in the Young Author category are also eligible.

Here are this year’s Sheikh Zayed Book Award honorees eligible for translation grants:

#### LITERATURE WINNER

*Eyes on Egypt: Alreesh Café* by Maisoon Saqer (Nahdet Misr Publishing, 2021)

#### LITERATURE SHORTLIST

*Strangers at Home* by Ezzat Elkamhawwy (Al Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah, 2021)

*Composition Biography: Thoughts and Confusion Carry Me* by Said Bengrad (Le Centre Culturel Du Livre, 2021)

#### CHILDREN’S WINNER

*The Mystery of the Glass Ball* by Maria Daadoush (Dar Al-Saqi, 2021)

Read our interview with Dar Al Saqi’s Rania Mouallem [on Page 30](#)

#### CHILDREN’S SHORTLIST

*A Laughing Sun* by Bayan Al-Safadi (Dar Al Banan, 2020)

*My Date with the Light* by Raja Mellah (Al Mu’allif for Publishing, Printing, and Distribution, 2021)

Learn more online:

[ZAYEDAWARD.AE](https://www.zayedaward.ae)



# Sheikh Zayed Book Award's 2022 Winners

## Literature:

*Maq'ha Reesh, Ain Ala Massr (Eyes on Egypt: Alreesh Café)*

Author: Maisoon Saqer (UAE)

Publisher: Nahdet Misr Publishing, 2021

From the jury: "This book ... documents an important era in Egypt's cultural history by examining the cultural and social transformations in modern Egyptian history and highlighting prominent intellectuals and creators associated with the cafe and the history of intellectual life in Egypt."

## Children's Literature

*Loghz al Kora al Zujajiya (The Mystery of the Glass Ball)*

Author: Maria Daadoush (Syria)

Publisher: Dar Al-Saqi, 2021

From the jury: "the tale of a 12-year-old boy who accompanies his grandfather on a train ride into the desert and embarks on a series of exciting adventures ... a beautiful narrative."

## Young Author

*Al Badawa fi al She'er al Arabi al Qadeem (Bedouinism in Ancient Arabic Poetry)*

Author: Mohamed Al-Maztouri (Tunisia)

Publisher: Manouba University and the GLD Foundation, 2021

From the jury: "... a serious academic study of bedouinism in ancient Arabic poetry."

## Translation

*Nash at al Insaniyat Einda al Muslimeen wa fi al Gharb al Maseehi (The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West)*

Author: George Makdisi

Translator: Ahmed Aladawi (Egypt)

Publisher: Madarat for Research and Publishing, 2021

From the jury: "The translator has excelled in creating a balance between faithfulness in highlighting the purposes and accurate connotations of the original text, and the keenness to adhere to the spirit, style, and aesthetic standards of Arabic."

## Art and Literary Criticism

*Al Sarid wa Taw am al Rooh: Min al Tamtheel ila al Istinaa (The Narrator and the Soulmate: From Acting to Faking)*

Author: M'hamed Aldahi (Morocco)

Publisher: Le Centre Culturel du Livre, 2021

From the jury: "Aldahi presents the complex relationship between writing, existence, text, and what they embody in the real self-representation and its transfer to the book."

## Arab Culture in Other Languages

*The Arabian Nights in Contemporary World Cultures: Global Commodification, Translation, and the Culture Industry*

Author: Dr. Muhsin J. Al-Musawi (Iraq/USA),

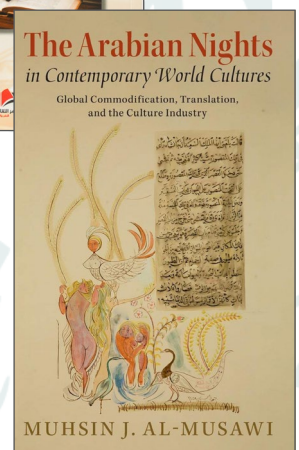
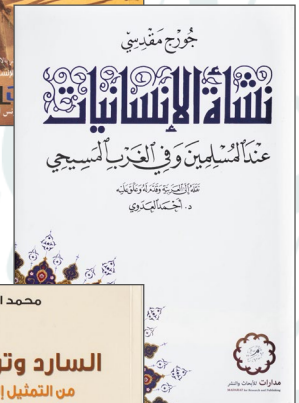
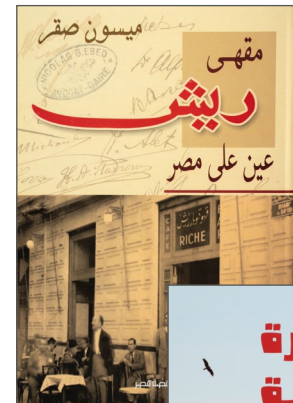
Publisher: Cambridge University Press, 2021

From the jury: "Al-Musawi provides a deep and ingenious analysis of the intellectual visions in the tales and their authentic narrative techniques."

## Publishing and Technology

Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria (Egypt)

From the jury: "Inaugurated in 2002, this new library is the largest of its time and contains millions of books in multiple languages and a digital archive that caters to the needs of readers."



# International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries: Program

This new event on May 22, 2022 showcases the latest trends in publishing and brings together publishers, content creators, thought leaders, and entrepreneurs from the Arab and international creative industries. More information at [congress.adbookfair.com](https://congress.adbookfair.com).



| TIME (GST)    | SESSION AND SPEAKERS   |
|---------------|--|
| 10:00 - 10:30 | <b>OPENING CEREMONY</b><br><b>WELCOME:</b> HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman, Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi<br><b>SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:</b> Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi, President, International Publishers Association (IPA)<br><b>OPENING REMARKS:</b> HE Dr. Ali Bin Tamim, Chairman, Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC)   |
| 10:30 - 10:50 | <b>KEYNOTE SPEECH: "The 70-20-10 Model for Innovation in Publishing"</b><br><b>Ann Hiatt</b> , bestselling author, Silicon Valley veteran, and investor  |
| 10:50 - 11:05 | <b>Q&amp;A</b>   |
| 11:05 - 11:50 | <b>PANEL DISCUSSION: ARABIC PUBLISHING: WHERE ARE WE, AND WHERE ARE WE HEADING?</b><br>What are the top Arabic publishing markets? Which genres are most popular, and what are their market shares? How big are digital books? How important are imports? Are imports and exports fully serving the Arabic market?<br><br><b>PANELISTS:</b> Rüdiger Wischenbart, president and founder, Content and Consulting; Shereen Kreidieh, general manager, Asala Publishing House; Sherif Bakr, publisher, Al Arabi Publishing and Distributing; Stefanie Lamprinidi, regional content expansion manager, Storytel; Moderator: Carlo Carrenho, publisher   |
| 11:50 - 12:30 | <b>PANEL DISCUSSION: EDUCATION AND PUBLISHING IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD</b><br>Few sectors are more affected by Covid than education. The pandemic heightened the importance of and brought significant attention to digital learning platforms. Are these new platforms here to stay? What is their role in higher education? Will open access become a reality?<br><br><b>PANELISTS:</b> John Russell, director of education, Alef Education; Cristóbal Cobo, senior education specialist, World Bank; Bissan Korban, head of higher education products and services, MENAT region, Pearson ME Publishing; Al Kingsley, CEO of NetSupport and chair of multiple educational boards; Moderator: Hanada Taha Thomure, endowed professor of Arabic language and director of the Arabic Language Center for Research & Development, Zayed University  |
| 12:30 - 13:30 | <b>LUNCH</b>   |
| 13:30 - 13:55 | <b>KEYNOTE SPEECH: "READING IN A TIME OF DISTRACTION"</b><br><b>Nicholas Carr</b> , Pulitzer Prize finalist for "The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains," and New York Times bestselling author  |
| 13:55 - 14:05 | <b>Q&amp;A</b>   |
| 14:05 - 14:50 | <b>PANEL DISCUSSION: IS SOCIAL MEDIA THE NEW BOOK MARKET?</b><br>Social media is playing an increasingly important role in book publishing. Big western houses now want authors with a platform, usually in the form of thousands of followers on social media. Publishers invest heavily in digital marketing as e-commerce comprises an increasing portion of the book market. Is this a bubble or a solid trend? Does the Arabic market have the same relationship to social media as other markets? How influential are booktubers and TikTok influencers in terms of book sales?<br><br><b>PANELISTS:</b> Sami Al-Batati, founder and presenter of YouTube channel the Shadow of the Book; Annie Arsane, head of platform strategy, METAP, TikTok; Joelle Yazbeck, partner manager, MENA, Twitter; Moderator: Ed Nawotka, international and bookselling editor, Publishers Weekly |



## International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries: Program

| TIME (GST)    | SESSION AND SPEAKERS   |
|---------------|--|
| 14:50 - 15:30 | <p><b>PANEL DISCUSSION: EXPORTING ARABIC TO THE WORLD</b></p> <p>What are the challenges of selling Arabic translation rights to other markets? What are the best practices and success stories? How can Arabic literature reach more readers around the world?</p> <p><b>PANELISTS:</b> <b>Saeed Al Tunaiji</b>, acting executive director, Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre; <b>Rawan Al-Dabbas</b>, MENA regional director, International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI); <b>Juergen Boos</b>, president and CEO, Frankfurt Book Fair/Frankfurt Buchmesse; <b>Persa Koumoutsis</b>, writer, translator of Arabic literature, and co-founder and director, the Centre of Greek and Arabic Literature and Culture in Greece; Moderator: <b>Hannah Johnson</b>, publisher, Publishing Perspectives</p>   |
| 15:30 - 15:45 | <b>REFRESHMENTS BREAK &amp; NETWORKING</b>   |
| 15:45 - 16:05 | <p><b>KEYNOTE SPEECH:</b></p> <p><b>Michael Tamblin</b>, CEO of global digital bookseller Rakuten Kobo</p>   |
| 16:05 - 16:20 | <b>Q&amp;A</b>   |
| 16:20 - 17:05 | <p><b>PANEL DISCUSSION: ARABIC MEDIA CROSSOVER: ADAPTING BOOKS INTO AUDIO, FILM, AND GAMES</b></p> <p>Streaming video is becoming the main source of content for users all over the world, and companies are seeking localized, original content in numerous languages. This has inspired production companies to generate creative content in multiple formats, including music, film, TV, and digital gaming. How can the Arabic publishing industry maximize the appeal of original Arabic content around the world while maintaining its cultural distinctiveness?</p> <p><b>PANELISTS:</b> <b>Jonathan Knight</b>, General Manager, Games, the New York Times; <b>Maha Abdullah</b>, MENA Localization Consultant at Disney+ Streaming Services, and former regional language manager, NETFLIX; <b>Sultan Al Ryami</b>, head of gaming and esports, AD Gaming, Creative Media Authority, Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi; <b>Ahmed Saadawi</b>, novelist, screenwriter, documentary filmmaker and winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction for "Frankenstein in Baghdad"; <b>Todd Gallicano</b>, author, Hollywood screenwriter, and podcast host; Moderator: <b>Michael Garin</b>, Director General of Creative Media Authority, Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi</p> |
| 17:05 - 17:50 | <p><b>PANEL DISCUSSION: IS THE READER THE NEW AUTHOR?</b></p> <p>New digital platforms have facilitated content creation and publication to such an extent that traditional publishers are no longer required. Are digital platforms the future of publishing? What are the advantages and risks of this market? Will the trend have a significant effect on the Arabic language market?</p> <p><b>PANELISTS:</b> <b>Giacomo D'Angelo</b>, CEO, StreetLib.com; <b>Mohamed Ellabban</b>, head of Arabic community, Quora; <b>Alan Lee Janney</b>, award-winning self-published author; Moderator: <b>Ed Nawotka</b>, international and bookselling editor, Publishers Weekly</p>  |
| 18:00 - 18:20 | <p><b>FIRESIDE DISCUSSION: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR ARABIC CONTENT ON THE INTERNET?</b></p> <p>Good-quality Arabic content on the internet is limited, despite Arabic being the fifth-most spoken language in the world. Trusted sources are very difficult to find, leading to less trust and high levels of frustration among knowledge seekers. This is an opportunity loss for the region. Can we bridge this divide before the knowledge gap with the rest of the world widens further? If so, how?</p> <p><b>SPEAKER:</b> <b>Abdulsalam Haykal</b>, executive chairman, digital knowledge and platform provider Majarra</p> <p><b>INTERVIEWER:</b> <b>Nafez Dakkak</b>, managing partner at work and learning venture studio BLDR</p>   |
| 18:20 - 18:30 | <b>CLOSING REMARKS</b>   |



# Maha Abdullah Says Localization Can Accomplish More Than Translation

In taking books to film or television, consultant Maha Abdullah tells publishers, full 'localization' may be a better route than mere translation.

By Porter Anderson

Ask someone what the 1957 Sondheim-Laurents musical *West Side Story* is, and they'll tell you it's a Broadway show made into two films (1961 and 2021) about a love story between two warring New York City gangs.

Ask Maha Abdullah what *West Side Story* is, and she'll tell you it can be understood as a localization of Shakespeare's 1597 *Romeo and Juliet*, taking the "star-crossed lovers" out of 16th-century Verona and "localizing" them to 1950s Manhattan.

Abdullah, a native of Baghdad, is so highly respected as a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) localization consultant and regional languages expert that she spent more than five years with Netflix and now is on contract to Disney Streaming Services. This is what she explains to the audience for Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries in a session on "Arabic Media Crossover: When Books Become Sound or Go Into Film or Turn Into Games" ([more on Page 25](#)).

"At Netflix," she says, "we would take a show, put it into the process of localization, and then from there it would go all over the world."

And yet, she says, many in the book publishing industry are less familiar with localization than film and television professionals are. And one way, she agrees, that publishers might think about localization would be the production of tie-in editions of books that had been developed for film and then localized.

In an interview with *Publishing Perspectives* from her San Francisco Bay area base of operations, Abdullah says, "This is something that we, as the localization industry, really strive to make people understand: the difference between translation and localization."

"Translation," she says, "is words, from source to target" interpreting "the main intention of the text" into another languages.

"Localization doesn't simply mean translation. Localization accomplishes much more, since it will also include adaptation—of image, of color, of formatting, of the user's experience of the fonts of the design, and even the payment methods, as in localizing US currency into the [Iranian] rial or the [Iraqi] dinar."

One of the elements of successful localization, Abdullah says, often involves a title that's "catchy" in the adaptation's new context, and by "catchy," Abdullah says, she means, "Make it sensitive. Why else would I hit on a title."



Maha Abdullah

First images are important, too, Abdullah says. Netflix's three-season/five-part *Money Heist*, for example, is being remade. Also known by its Spanish title, *La Casa de Papel*, (*The House of Money*), the show will be released June 24 as *Money Heist: Korea*. One element of the localization in Seoul's new version of the show is that the original's Salvador Dalí masks have been traded out for Korean Hahoe face coverings.

"You make that first impression good," Abdullah says, in part to show sensitivity to the cultural region it's going into.

One of the most interesting elements of taking Western content into Middle Eastern localizations, she says, has to do with the fact that Arabic is read from right to left.

"The UI [user interface] also needs to be mirrored from right to left. When I was at Netflix, I was the one guiding the engineers and the developers on how to imagine their product—their baby they'd worked on for years—to be all flipped" for an Arabic localization. "Every single image, every single text, every single box, there's something you need to adapt."

"And when we mirror everything" for a production being readied for Arabic audiences, "One of the questions I always get," she says, "is what do you guys mirror?"—what needs to be reversed, and what doesn't? "Do we mirror everything?"

The answer, she says, is "No, of course

not. Some things are universal. And I can give you an example: the 'Play' button, which is the same triangle everywhere."

And a bit like good stage lighting—which won't be consciously noticed by the theatergoer when it's done correctly—a localization, Abdullah says, "has to look and sound organic. We can't accomplish that unless we get a good sense of localization that won't have the feeling that it's been localized."

Dialects can be pitfalls, of course, in that a grocer supposedly in Cairo mustn't be heard speaking Modern Standard Arabic. Instead, Egyptian is the choice for that character in a piece being localized for regional audiences.

But it's with care for such details in localization, Abdullah says, that Netflix has been so successful in its international editions of shows. "They had a regional team that was all from the Middle East," she says. "They brought their vision and their kind of understanding of a region to the platform. That's exactly what we need."

And, she says, it's exactly what the book publishing industry needs to think about. With the right editors onboard—and the right choices of properties being made for localization—could this concept help more Arabic literature to find traction in the West and other parts of the world? And could certain properties going to the Middle East find more uptake if handled as localization efforts? •



# Majarra: Building a Digital Business Model for Arabic Content

'Digital acceleration' is on in the Arab world, and Abdulsalam Haykal says his Majarra platform is the framework publishers need to access digital subscribers.



Abdulsalam Haykal

By Porter Anderson

Majarra.com is a digital content platform from Abdulsalam and Ammar Haykal in Abu Dhabi. As you explore the site, you'll recognize the potential almost immediately.

Think of Majarra as a pilot, a demonstration, even a "proof of performance"—a fully working one—of the concept that Haykal Media is putting forward.

On it, you'll find that Majarra is a subscription service that provides readers with Arabic-language content from a network of some of the world's most trusted management and business content sources: *Harvard Business Review*, *Popular Science*, *Psychologies*, *MIT Technology Review*, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, and *Fortune*.

While each of these content providers offer their own, individual subscriptions, Majarra licenses the material from them and offers Arabic-language readers access on one platform, for one subscription fee.

The reason that book publishers and others in the business might look at this is because it holds, per our interview with its co-creator Abdulsalam Haykal from his offices in Abu Dhabi, what may become a real chance for book publishers to place their content onto a major aggregate regional platform, riding an already functioning channel into the growing

digital development of the Arab world, thanks to the presence of this ready-made, functioning offering.

We all know of the "digital acceleration," as we say, that occurred during the pandemic, in its first year especially, and prompted many consumers to access digital publishing products (audio, ebooks, and so on). The question now is how to help that new energy keep growing.

As Abdulsalam is explaining during his May 22 talk at the International Congress of Arabic Publishing and Creative Industries (see Page 25), the Haykal brothers felt that push of the digital acceleration, themselves.

"We've been in the business now for almost 20 years," Abdulsalam Haykal says. We've been publishers of high-quality Arabic content since 2004. We moved to Abu Dhabi 10 years ago, and this is where we started focusing more on digital. But when COVID hit, we accelerated our plans.

"The problem with Arabic is quite unique," he says. "English is 50 percent of the Web. So the lingua franca is English." Russian, he says, is another major language of the online world. And yet Arabic, he says, may be represented on the Internet as only 1 percent of what's out there, despite the hundreds of millions who speak Arabic.

"So yes," he says, "we have in many countries, specifically in the United Arab Emirates

and the Gulf, some excellent Internet infrastructure, great bandwidth, fast Internet, and so on. But we don't have the content."

With necessity becoming the mother of innovation, the Haykals decided, "The reason there's so little content is that there's no business model that makes this an industry. With big tech taking all the advertising revenue, people have realized that here in the Arab world, there's a content gap. It's something we need to address."

If original Arabic content comes to the Majarra platform, as well, "We become a hub of excellence for Arabic content," Haykal says. "On top of that, we want to build local content at the same level of quality, and then put all that behind a paywall."

"You subscribe once, and then your credential will give you access to all" the platform offers. "We have the Majarra subscription. Basically, we're saying, 'We're going to give this part of the world a chance to have access to good-quality content' and not based on advertising "which we can't control. It's based on subscription."

Details of contracts made with his various content providers, Haykal says, aren't something he wants to discuss publicly. Going forward, will content providers be paid by the subscriber? By the amount of time or number of pages a subscriber might access? There are other possible models, and discussions are underway, Haykal says.

But he sees the potential for Majarra to help stimulate the migration toward digital that many parts of the region may well be ready for. "This is a region that's hungry for good-quality content," he says, "for content that helps people with their lives, for content that helps them grow, understand the world around them, understand the risks, understand the opportunities."

Much of the existing online content in the region today, Haykal says, is "mostly entertainment, celebrity news, religious content. And I'm not saying that's content we shouldn't have. We will have that all the time. But we also need other types of content, and this is the mission we're on."

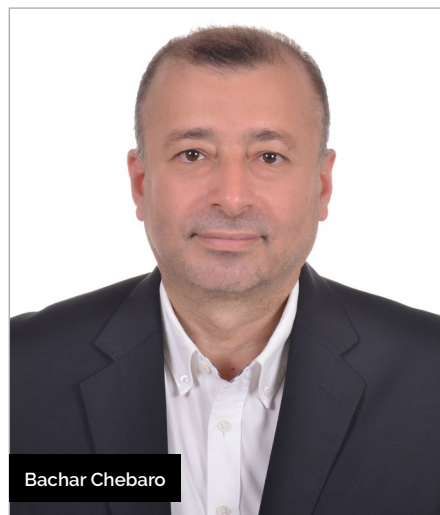
"We're in the 'enablement' business," Abdulsalam Haykal says. "If you're a publisher, this is what you do now." •

Find Majarra at ADIBF: Stand gC01

[MAJARRA.COM](https://majarra.com)

# The Chebaro Brothers: Publishing in the Pandemic and Looking Ahead

Bassam Chebaro, founder of Arab Scientific Publishers, and Bachar Chebaro, executive director of HBKU Press, share how the pandemic affected the region's book business.



Bachar Chebaro

By Olivia Snaije

**T**wo brothers are at the head of a pair of Lebanese publishing companies that produce award-winning books.

The first, Arab Scientific Publishers (ASP), was founded by Bassam Chebaro as a printing house in 1973. It evolved into a publishing house in 1987. Arab Scientific has published more than 6,300 titles in various genres of categories including children's books, young adult, fiction, and nonfiction. The house publishes bestselling Arabic authors and also works in translation from 17 languages, including English, Turkish, Russian, Danish, French, Ukrainian, Chinese, and Norwegian.

Chebaro's son Salah runs the Beirut-based online bookstore Neelwafurat.

And as for the second publishing company, Chebaro's brother Bachar is the executive director of Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press (HBKU Press) based in Qatar. Originally founded in 2008 as Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing—a partnership between the Qatar Foundation and Bloomsbury Publishing—it became Bin Khalifa University Press in 2015. The press publishes fiction and nonfiction for adults and children, as well as academic and reference materials. Bachar Chebaro is also secretary-general of the Arab Publishers Association.

While the pandemic has had a negative effect on publishing houses in the Arab world in general, Arab Scientific Publishers has also been dealing with the devastating economic and political crisis in Lebanon while many still are traumatized by the cataclysmic explosions

in the Port of Beirut in 2020.

Bassam Chebaro says his business was severely affected during the pandemic and that he has lost about 40 percent of his business during this time. Pre-pandemic, he says, "we were publishing almost a book a day. Now we're publishing almost half that quantity."

The crisis in Lebanon "has had a very serious effect on management and employees," Bassam Chebaro says. "Although the Lebanese have long experience with troubles and war, the explosion was a heavy mental and nervous load on everybody."

The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 percent of its value in the past two years. Though Lebanon was formerly a center for printing in the Arab world, Arab Scientific has had to print several times in Riyadh to deal with urgent deliveries as needed. Bassam Chebaro has also registered a new publishing house at Sharjah Publishing City—Sharjah Book Authority's free trade zone for the book business developed by Ahmed Al Ameri.

He says he's not sure about the evolution of readers in the Arab world these days, but as far as publishing, "it's growing with the current assistance of Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Qatar. Moreover, there will be a big growth in publishing in the coming 12-24 months with support and encouragement for policies coming from KSA [the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia]."

His greatest challenges today, he says, "are the coming technical innovations of combining print, digital, audio, and video."

On the positive side, in 2020, Bassam Chebaro was awarded a "Special Book Award of China." This spring, he won a 2022 Istanbul Copyright Award.

His brother Bachar Chebaro says that

his business, like other publishing houses in the region, has felt the negative effects of the pandemic, particularly during recurring lockdowns.

"While we tried to use new platforms based on hand delivery," he says, even "taking into consideration the highest sanitary measures. People were not keen to use these platforms. On the other hand, we witnessed a rise in the purchase of digital books, which readers believed were safer. On the editorial side, and despite the fact that we were working remotely from home, book production never stopped. On the contrary, the target of 100 titles to be published every year was exceeded, and we reached the record figure of 136 published titles."

Since pandemic restrictions have eased locally, Bachar Chebaro says he has noticed a rise in sales, particularly during book fairs.

"Readers of titles in various genres were more eager to buy books than they were before the pandemic. Children and schools were also among the greatest readers."

Currently, Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press is focusing on partnerships "with an increasing number of platforms," more than 70, "that are able to offer our titles to readers all over the world in various formats: print, ebooks, and audio. Our strategy is to provide readers with the tools that serve their preferred method of purchasing and reading books." •

Find Arab Scientific Publishers at ADIBF: Stand 12L05.

[WWW.ASP.COM.LB](http://WWW.ASP.COM.LB)



Bassam Chebaro, center, at the 2022 Istanbul Copyright Awards



# Rania Mouallem of Dar Al Saqi is Focused on 'Books That Interest Arab Readers'

After enduring economic and pandemic-related challenges, Lebanon-based editorial director Rania Mouallem is now looking forward 'with hope for the future.'



Rania Mouallem

By Olivia Snaije

Although many in Lebanon have come to hate the word *resilient*, Rania Mouallem, Dar Al Saqi's editorial director, is one of the publishing professionals there who seems to be bouncing back after experiencing the most challenging period in their working lives: the economic crisis in Lebanon paired with the pandemic.

Dar Al Saqi's Syrian author Maria Daadoush is the winner of the 2022 Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the Children's Literature category for *Loghz al Kora al Zujajiya* (*The Mystery of the Glass Ball*).

"A few months ago," Mouallem says, "business began to improve with the cessation of quarantine, the organization of international and Arab book fairs, and the restoration of Arab bookshops' activity and the demand for books. Of course, the years 2020 and 2021 were very difficult in terms of publishing, in addition to the economic crisis that erupted in Lebanon since the end of 2019.

"But we were able to persevere," she says, "and today we look forward with hope for the future."

Before the onset of the pandemic's outbreaks, Dar al Saqi usually published 70 titles a year, but that number dropped to 30 in late 2020 and the company is currently focused on restoring its levels of productivity. Although Mouallem says she believes "the publishing and reading sector is recovering today" to something near the situation it was in before



the pandemic, she also points out that she doesn't see any tangible growth right now.

Challenges for Arab publishers remain much the same, she says, and there still are many.

For Mouallem, the most important are "selecting and publishing books that interest Arab readers in various fields, resilience in the face of paper and electronic piracy—because it turns out to be impossible to confront it thoroughly in the Arab world—and finally, making sure a book remains accessible to all readers around the world."

Despite the challenges, 2022 has started well for Dar al Saqi with readers eager to buy books, Mouallem says—especially at book fairs—and an increase in demand from bookshops.

In addition to seeing its author Maria Daadoush of Syria win the 2022 Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the Children's Literature category, in the first months of this year, Dar al Saqi has won awards or has been shortlisted for the following books:

- *The White Line of Night* by Khaled Nasrallah, shortlisted for International Prize for Arabic Fiction, 2022
- *Alef, Ba'... Ya'*, winner of Etisalat Award for Arabic Children's literature 2022, Early Reader Category, 2021
- *Ana Moumayyaz*, shortlisted for the Best Children's Book Award, Early Reader Category, 2022
- *Endi Khotta*, shortlisted for the Best Children's Book Award, Middle Childhood Category, 2022

Find Dar Al Saqi at ADIBF: Stand 11E17

[DARALSAQI.COM](http://DARALSAQI.COM)

## Dar Al Saqi's 2022 Sheikh Zayed Book Award Winner

**THE MYSTERY OF THE GLASS BALL**  
By Maria Daadoush (Syria)

From the jury: "This book addresses two issues, the international pollution crisis and some youngsters' obsession with video games. It tells the tale of a 12-year-old boy who accompanies his grandfather on a train ride into the desert and embarks on a series of exciting adventures. The novel features captivating prose, a beautiful narrative, and a well-structured plot."



# Polish Book Institute: 'Deepening Our Ties With Arabic-Language Publishers'

Following Poland's turn as the 2018 guest of honor at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, Dariusz Jaworski is seeing rising interest in Polish literature from Arab publishers.



Dariusz Jaworski  
(Image: Daniel Bednarz)

By Jarosław Adamowski

The influence of Polish literature continues to expand, not least because Olga Tokarczuk, the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature laureate is up for a second International Booker Prize in 2022.

Before the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair closes, as a matter of fact, we'll know whether Tokarczuk and her translator to English, the American Jennifer Croft, have won the Booker prize for *The Books of Jacob* (Fitzcarraldo Editions). The announcement is to be made on May 25. Tokarczuk and Croft won their first International Booker Prize—which of course is split evenly between author and translator—for *Flights*, which, as Tokarczuk pointed out in her interview with *Publishing Perspectives* on the night of her win, had been published 10 years earlier, in 2008 in Poland.

Tokarczuk is only one of many gifted Polish authors, and the Polish Book Institute focuses is on stimulating book readership in Poland while also encouraging international readers to discover Polish authors.

Dariusz Jaworski, the institute's director, has spoken to *Publishing Perspectives* about his teams plans for presenting his organization's work and plans at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

In our exchange with Jaworski, we begin by asking him to talk about the main activities of the Polish Book Institute in regards to the Polish publishing scene and international readers.

**Dariusz Jaworski:** Since 2016, I've had the pleasure to manage the institute, a national cultural institution overseen by Poland's ministry of culture and national heritage.

Its main goal is to promote Polish literature worldwide and to promote books and reading in Poland. As part of our activities targeting foreign markets, we inform, encourage, and persuade Polish-language translators to translate Polish books; international publishers to publish those translations; and organizers of the most interesting literary events in the world to feature Polish writers in their programs.

Naturally, the book institute also reaches out directly to international readers through subsequent editions of our #NewBooksFrom-Poland campaign. Our objective is to raise awareness of Polish authors and their work.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What are some the institute's most recent accomplishments regarding international book markets?

**Dariusz Jaworski:** Our 2021 *New Books from Poland* campaign reached more than 30 million people in many parts of the world, including readers from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Israel. Poland was also presented as a focus market at the London Book Fair in 2017.

If you ask me about one particular program that has brought the highest tangible yield, I'll without hesitation say that our flagship initiative is our ©Poland Translation Program, which targets foreign publishers and has supported publication of some 2,800 books by Polish authors in more than 50 countries and 50 languages.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What's the current situation for Poland's book industry? Is it possible to assess yet the kind of impact the pandemic has had on Poland's book business?

**Dariusz Jaworski:** The coronavirus pandemic has violated certain mechanisms and routines that this industry has developed over the years. While our citizens were trapped in their homes for months during lockdowns, book festivals and book fairs were frozen. And while literature could still be created at that time, the patterns that shape book promotion and distribution were fundamentally changed.

Online sales have captured an increased portion of the market. At the same time, we're concerned about the fate of small, independent bookstores, which operate outside the large chains.

With this in mind, in 2021, we implemented significant financial support mechanisms in this field in Poland. In this respect, the pandemic has also generated positive stim-

ulus by forcing market participants to adapt to new market conditions, triggering greater innovation, better use of remote communication tools, and creating new opportunities for some industry players.

Unfortunately, not all players have made it through the pandemic. What's worse, this time of turbulence is not over yet due to the disruptions in supply chains and rising prices of paper, which is a key raw material for the majority of the world's publishing industry.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Have you seen an increased interest in Polish authors and literature in the Arab world?

**Dariusz Jaworski:** The Arab world has demonstrated rising interest in Polish books over the past few years, among others owing to the fact that Poland was the guest of honor at the 2018 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. We receive numerous inquiries from Arab publishers who are interested in publishing books by Polish writers.

However, there are definitely too few translations of Polish-language books into Arabic, if you take our literature's importance and the size of the Arabic-language market into consideration.

I hope the project we implemented in 2021—targeting beginning translators of Polish literature into Arabic—will improve this situation, and in the coming years we'll enjoy a higher number of translations of books by Polish writers in the Arab world.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What would you like to accomplish by taking part in this year's Abu Dhabi International Book Fair?

**Dariusz Jaworski:** At the Polish Book Institute, we perceive our involvement in carefully selected international book fairs as a long-term investment. We invest in deepening our ties with industry partners, in this case with Arabic-language publishers. We also want to develop more recognition of Poland's literature in the United Arab Emirates, an important market which is key for this region.

At the Polish stand, we'll present a selection of the most interesting and most important books from Poland, with which we intend to delight local book readers and publishers from across the Arab world. We cordially invite all those who love excellent literature to our booth. •

Find the Polish Book Institute at ADIBF: Stand 9F29

[INSTYTUTKSIAZKI.PL](http://INSTYTUTKSIAZKI.PL)



# Dar Al-Muna: Based in Sweden with Operations Across the Arab World

Mona Henning-Zureikat, the founder of Swedish publishing house Dar Al-Muna, is on a mission to bring more international literature in translation to Arabic readers.



Mona Henning-Zureikat

By Jaroslaw Adamowski

Established in 1984, Dar Al Muna is based in Sweden, among one of the largest Arabic-language populations outside of the Middle East.

Mona Henning-Zureikat, Dar Al Muna's founder, tells *Publishing Perspectives* about her publishing house's progress and challenges in relation to its self-declared mission, beginning with the type of content her house produces.

**Mona Henning-Zureikat:** We publish books for readers of all ages—fiction for children, youths, and adults. Our focus is on Scandinavian and world literature translated into the Arabic language. We operate in most of the Arab countries as we have the exclusive Arabic-language rights for our books.

Dar Al Muna has accomplished great success with introducing many important authors from the West to Arabic readers.

For example, there's Jostein Gaarder and his *Sophie's World*.

Our authors include Astrid Lindgren, whose children's books have been a great suc-

cess for our publishing house; Indonesian author Andrea Hirata, his *Rainbow Troops* novel; and Jon Kalman Stefansson from Iceland.

Last but not least, we've published Kate DiCamillo, including her book *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*.

**Publishing Perspectives:** How has the publishing business gone for you in the light of the pandemic's effects? Do book reading and publishing in the Arabic-speaking world appear to be growing at this point?

**Mona Henning-Zureikat:** The pandemic was very tough for us in the Arabic region, but sales in Europe were not bad.

The book market is developing in the Arabic world and the number of readers is increasing, but we're still at the beginning of this journey.

The infrastructure is still not there. For example, not all Arab countries have enough public libraries for readers. And even if they do, very often their budgets aren't sufficient.

We also need professional bookshops that can handle and display many titles and expose them to readers.

Piracy is the biggest enemy of any prog-

"With more than 300 million speakers, the Arabic-language market could be major for the world book industry if copyright laws were respected there"

Mona Henning-Zureikat

ress, and we all lose because of it. With more than 300 million speakers, the Arabic-language market could be major for the world book industry if copyright laws were respected there.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Is the current shortage of paper in Europe impacting on your activities?

**Mona Henning-Zureikat:** Yes, I've just experienced this, myself. Because of this shortage, printing time is taking longer, as there's not enough paper—and the price of printing a book has gone up. This will have its impact on the final book prices in the market.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What do you hope to achieve by participating in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year? Do you have plans to hold talks with Arab booksellers, publishers?

**Mona Henning-Zureikat:** I hope to meet our wonderful readers who follow Dar Al Muna's releases, and I'd also like to gain new readers. We have great titles both for children and adults.

As for our activities, we're planning to host a book-signing event with author Athmar Al-Ghafri, who will sign a book of philosophy at Dar Al Muna's booth. I like the fair in Abu Dhabi because it's a shorter fair—that's how other fairs should be. •

Find Dar Al-Muna at ADIBF:  
Stand 9A36

[DARALMUNA.COM](http://DARALMUNA.COM)

# Rana Idriss: 'We're Back to Book Fairs, Which Is a Blessing'

'I've seen the young generations reading more,' says Rana Idriss, publisher of Beirut-based Dar al Adab—one of the region's oldest independent publishing houses.

By Olivia Snaije

Rana Idriss took over the reins of Dar al Adab in 1986, 30 years after her father, the journalist and author Souheil Idriss, had founded it.

One of the oldest independent publishing houses in the Middle East, the Beirut-based publisher has been struggling like all Lebanese publishers from the combined effects of the financial crisis, the pandemic, and the aftermath of the Beirut Port explosion. The number of Lebanese emigrating between 2020 and 2021 increased by 346 percent.

"We're back to book fairs, which is a blessing," Rana Idriss says, "because it's our major distribution channel, especially now that there are fewer bookshops and many are closing."

While the pandemic has become a lesser problem, however, other obstacles have appeared, such as the lack of paper, she says.

"The price of paper has gotten worse with the Ukrainian-Russian war," she says. "Not only is it 25- to 30-percent more expensive but it's becoming scarce. I think it's worldwide, but certainly we feel it in Lebanon. We've also noticed that in Arab countries, people have less money to spend on books. With the rising cost of paper and transportation, we can't increase the price of books. Everyone is making less money, and people are cautious about how they're spending."

An added setback to Lebanese publishers, many of whom export 60 to 70 percent of their books to Saudi Arabia, was a ban on all Lebanese imports by the kingdom in November following remarks made by a Lebanese cabinet minister about the war in Yemen.

"This was a major blow," Idriss says, adding that Dar al Adab exports at least 30 percent of its books to Saudi Arabia. The rest of the publisher's books are exported mainly to Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan. The company hasn't been paid for books that had been exported to Saudi Arabia prior to the ban because money transfers have been halted, Idriss says. In April there were indications that the diplomatic crisis was thawing.

Idriss says she's optimistic about the younger generation and its appetite for books. Even if she doesn't see any growth happening in the book market, "I've seen during book fairs the young generations in Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia reading more. At some point in my long career, readers of books in Arabic were between the ages of 40 and 60. Now they're between the ages of 18 and 40.



Rana Idriss

"In the past," she says, "people were more into reading in other languages. Now they're realizing that Arabic is indispensable, even if they want to work outside of the Arab world. It's an added value."

Some of the books that Idriss will be highlighting at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair include a new translation by Mohammad Asfour of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Idriss says that four translations in Arabic of *Orientalism* exist, and the late Said (1935-2003) hadn't been happy with any of them. This translation makes the work easily accessible to readers, she says, allowing them and researchers to compare translations and to get deeper into understanding the problems of colonialism.

Dar al Adab also will be launching a novel, *The Story of the Wall* by Nasser Abu Srou, a Palestinian serving a life sentence in an Israeli prison. Abu Srou was arrested in 1993 when he was 19. He has since gotten a master's degree in political science and has written poetry.

Idriss has spent May with her fingers crossed for her author Reem al-Kamali's book *Rose's Diary*, shortlisted for this year's International Prize for Arabic Fiction. The publisher says that al-Kamali, an Emirati, "talks in a modest way about feminism and the rights of women in education back in the 1960s."

"We try as much as we can to work normally," Rana Idriss says. •



Find Dar al Adab at ADIBF: 11A01

[DARALADAB.NET](http://DARALADAB.NET)



# Nahed AlShawa Publishes Children's Books to 'Empower Human Beings'

'Being a global citizen, the multicultural side of things' are part of Nahed AlShawa's focus at children's publishing house Noon Books in Montréal.



By Olivia Snaije

Montréal-based Nahed AlShawa began writing children's books when her own children were young, and she couldn't find quality books for them in Arabic.

AlShawa's first books were published in Jordan, but by the time she had 30 titles on the market, she decided to establish her own publishing venture. Called Noon Books, her mission as she created her press in the year 2000, was to publish 100 books on topics that she felt needed to be addressed in the Arab world, such as human rights, justice, and freedom of thought.

"The problems we're facing in the Middle East are problems of mindset," AlShawa says to *Publishing Perspectives*. "When my children were very young, the concepts in my books were behavioral. Then when they were 8 and older, I thought it was time to share messages that touch their spirits and their minds."

Originally from Palestine, AlShawa grew up in Saudi Arabia and had established Noon Books in Amman before moving to Canada and setting up her company there. Her main market is in the Middle East, although she does distribute books in Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world. Her 5 to 15 new books per year are printed in Jordan, and sometimes in China, Saudi Arabia, or the United Arab Emirates.

Despite a trend for publishing children's books in *amiya*, or colloquial Arabic, AlShawa publishes her books in *fus'ha* or classical Arabic, because, she says, she believes that *fus'ha*

unites the Arab world. She's careful to use accessible words that are spoken in everyday language.

Moving to Canada, AlShawa says, "influenced me in my thinking about being a global citizen, the multicultural side of things," AlShawa says, and her books have moved in this direction. "They're universal books, books that will empower human beings and build the mindset of a global citizen."

Because her books often address climate change and promote social justice and freedom of expression, they've been used in programs for children at the United Nations, and this confirmation of universal appeal "gives me the energy to do more," says AlShawa.

During the still-ongoing pandemic however, business dropped, she says, primarily because so many book fairs were canceled.

"There were also logistical issues, some countries were closed, and shipping was very costly. At the same time, people wanted books. Things are not back to normal yet, but maybe when schools open regularly, they will be."

People were so hungry for books that at the Doha International Book Fair last January

that every book in her booth sold out, she says.

Her greatest challenges as an Arab publisher include distribution and marketing which for her, are linked.

"You have to be on social media," she says, "and this is very demanding, it requires a full-time person. You market your book, but then if the book isn't available on shelves and distributors don't take restocking seriously, then the time you spent on your social media is useless. There's an issue of professionalism that's lacking in the Arab world."

Another common challenge for Arab publishers is piracy, but AlShawa says, "I try to close my eyes to it because I can't control it."

She says she'd like to see more authors and illustrators writing and drawing for children. "The population in the Arab world is huge. How can there be so few authors and illustrators? There should be more academies and [art] schools. At Noon, we try to bring in talent and have a variety of illustrators."

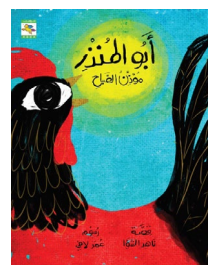
Children's book prizes in the Arab world, such as the Etisalat Award, are good incentives, says AlShawa, but she maintains, "There's still a way to go. Many people in the field are businessmen, they don't see the [importance of the] content. With children's books you have to work with passion, it's all about the words chosen, the concept, the design, the colors. It's science and art at the same time."

At the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, AlShawa will be launching a book for ages 8 and older called *Al Muthhelat (The Incredibles)* about 37 women athletes from across the world. Working with Arab women's organizations the book recounts the true stories of women athletes and the challenges they face.

"It's about empowering women," AlShawa says, "and breaking out of the frame that Arab women are put in."

Find Noon Books at ADIBF: Stand 8J30

[NOONBOOKS.COM](https://www.noonbooks.com)



# Dar Al Buragh Publisher Hails 'Book Fairs Returning to Life'

At Baghdad's Dar Al Buragh, Mohammed Al Qassimi says book fairs help him interact 'with partners, stakeholders, and readers.'

By Jarosław Adamowksi

Iraq is working to recover from economic effects of the still-ongoing pandemic, including the oil-price shock of 2020. The country's publishers—as in so many markets—have had to strive to operate in a difficult environment.

In spite of the odds, the children's book publisher Dar Al Buragh has successfully positioned itself as a leading player in its sector.

The publishing house's 2019 release *Baba Nuil Min Baghdad* (Santa Claus From Baghdad) by Iraqi author Raghda Adday was longlisted in the Children's Literature category for the 2020 Sheikh Zayed Book Award.

Mohammed Al Qassimi, general manager of the Baghdad-based publisher, has talked with *Publishing Perspectives* run-up to his publishing house's forthcoming presence as an exhibitor at the 31st Abu Dhabi International Book Fair.

We start by asking Al Qassimi what current challenges are specific to children's books in the Iraqi market?

**Mohammed Al Qassimi:** As an Iraqi publishing house specialized in children's literature and culture, we operate as a non-governmental organization. Our goal is to raise the level of quality of books directed to children in terms of form and content, in addition to spreading the love of reading among children in Iraq and other Arab countries.

Some of the most important challenges we face as an Iraqi publisher is the difficulty of participating in foreign book fairs, the lack of logistics in the field of shipping, banking and financial services, and the difficulties encountered in exporting our books.

But we haven't given in to these obstacles.

Instead, we try to face these difficulties with greater determination, and we find potential and find possible solutions at each stage.

**Publishing Perspectives:** What's the situation of the publishing industry in Iraq, in particular in light of the ongoing pandemic?

**Mohammed Al Qassimi:** Publishing in Iraq is very difficult, especially with regards to children's books, as we've been the only publishing house focused on kids' books. This is very worrying in a large country like Iraq.

The reason for this, of course, is the intended and unintended neglect of publishing by successive governments.

The publishing industry has started to develop in the last 10 years, and with all of these challenges I mentioned, we've succeeded and achieved outstanding results, both in Iraq and abroad, with our books that wind at won important Arab awards.

But as for the pandemic period that has swept through the world and Iraq, in the beginning, there was a complete halt in the publishing and sales processes, and we had to reduce our staff. However, after this period—that lasted for nearly two years—we began to gradually recover, in particular now that book industry fairs are returning to life.

We hope those tough days won't be back.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Do you observe an increase in book reading and publishing in Iraq and the Arab world at this time?

**Mohammed Al Qassimi:** Book reading in the Arab world is, in general, low and limited because it's not given enough attention by governments. Iraq, as I mentioned earlier, is also neglectful of this basic and important pillar of developing humanity. However, since the pandemic's outbreak, we've noticed an increase in the demand for children's books in

"We've sold the translation rights of a good number of our publications to publishers from Turkey and Middle Eastern countries at the Abu Dhabi fair."

Mohammed Al Qassimi

our online sales.

**Publishing Perspectives:** Is the current international paper shortage impacting your activities as a publisher?

**Mohammed Al Qassimi:** Paper is the basic material necessary to print books and publications. I do not know the real reason behind this scarcity of paper and the rise in its prices, but the result will certainly affect the volume of paper book production, which leads to a decrease in sales, of course. This is a dangerous trend that we hope won't continue.

**Publishing Perspectives:** And what do you hope to achieve by participating in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year? Do you plan to engage in talks with Arab booksellers and publishers?

**Mohammed Al Qassimi:** Participation in international fairs is one of our priorities because it's the easiest way to interact with partners, stakeholders, and readers.

We've sold the translation rights of a good number of our publications to publishers from Turkey and Middle Eastern countries at the Abu Dhabi fair.

And the United Arab Emirates' ministry of education has signed a contract with us on the ebook rights to a large number of our publications, which will be available in the digital libraries of their schools. •

Find Dar Al Buragh at ADIBF: 8G17

[ALBURAGH.COM](http://ALBURAGH.COM)





# PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

Read our latest news and feature articles online:  
[publishingperspectives.com](http://publishingperspectives.com)

Publishing Perspectives brings you  
news on international book publishing  
you won't find anywhere else.

---

Subscribe **FREE** to receive  
our email newsletters



Click the arrow or visit our sign-up page online at:  
[publishingperspectives.com/subscribe](http://publishingperspectives.com/subscribe)