

ABU DHABI **معرض** INTERNATIONAL **أبوظبي** BOOK FAIR **للكتاب**

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2021 SHOW MAGAZINE



PUBLISHING PERSPECTIVES

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#ADIBF: Get More 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

We're providing ongoing coverage of the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair during the show and beyond, including reports on events, announcements, and more

[ABU DHABI COVERAGE](#)

Event Recommendations

Visit our landing page of curated digital events taking place during the fair.

[EVENTS PAGE](#)

ADIBF Videos and Online Events

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

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Email Newsletters

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

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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 German Book Office New York and now a project of the Frankfurt Book Fair New York, *Publishing Perspectives* works with our colleagues in Frankfurt and the fair's international offices to share with you the latest publishing trends and opportunities, people to know, companies to watch, and more.

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From the Editor: A Fair Piled High With Books



As we've interviewed key figures in Arab region publishing for this special magazine, our *Publishing Perspectives* team has heard one thing emphasized perhaps more than any other: the critical importance of book fairs. And this has to do with one of the most striking elements of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair when you walk onto its exhibition floor.

Spacious and modern, the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre's vast lobbies alone could house some of the world's largest book fairs on their gleaming marble floors.

But walk from those lobbies onto the exhibition floor, and you find that the 73,000-square-meter space is filled with stacks and stacks of books. Unlike book fairs in Europe at which a publisher might display one copy of each key book on its new season's list, the stands at Abu Dhabi are brimming with books. There's no empty counter space at a stand—it's covered with books. So is the floor underneath that counter. Strike up a conversation with a friendly publisher and you'll find that she or he has a chair in the stand, but that chair is surrounded by boxes of books.

All these books, of course, are the inventory. And youngsters visiting the fair pull vibrantly colored wheeled trolleys behind them—they look like rollboards—filled with the books they've chosen. Some of the kids are barely as big as their trolleys.

It's an unforgettable sight. And it's an indispensable part of an Arab world publisher's annual revenue. As Arab Publishers Association president Mohamed Rashad tells us in our interview for this magazine, some publishers in the Middle East may have two major streams of revenue: government programs' purchases of books and book fair sales. Clearly, the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic's initial cancellation of book fairs dealt a severe blow to publishers, right across the region.

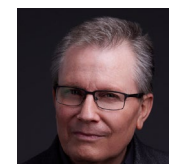
The Sharjah Book Authority's fair in November was the first pandemic-era attempt to stage a physical show in the region, and reported an avid attendance of 382,000. And as the Sharjah Children's Reading Festival goes forward this month, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair now joins the effort to restart this pivotal element of the region's literary life and business: a major fair that was sorely missed in 2020.

In our magazine, you'll learn about the fair as one in which you can participate, either on the ground or from continents away. The entire show's programming is being streamed for domestic and international viewers. In our pages, you'll meet some of the exhibitors, speakers, and key leadership figures involved. Here, you'll find everything you need to get the most from the show, either in person or online—from a huge offer of 300 grants supporting translation, to sessions from Guest of Honor Germany; from facts and figures, to observations and news about the Sheikh Zayed Book Award and the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. And **look for our coverage** of selected moments from the ADIBF.

In our story with Dr. Ali Bin Tamim, the chair of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre, you'll hear the goal of this year's show. He's calling for Abu Dhabi International Book Fair to provide "a restorative economic and cultural space."

After such a difficult 15 months—placing the lives and livelihoods of publishing's people under so much pressure—"restoration" is an apt term, indeed.

Welcome back to the book fair.



Porter Anderson
 Editor-in-Chief,
Publishing Perspectives

Dr. Ali Bin Tamim: ADIBF as a 'Restorative Economic and Cultural Space'

Heading the fair's 2021 program, Dr. Ali Bin Tamim knows the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's critical role in helping the book industry recover from the pandemic.



Dr. Ali Bin Tamim (Image: DCT Abu Dhabi)

"We're harnessing the power of technology to bridge gaps and ... expand our reach and maximize opportunities."

Dr. Ali Bin Tamim

By Porter Anderson

While some might think that the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's hybrid format this year suggests a small physical fair, that's hardly the case.

As Dr. Ali Bin Tamim has announced, there are more than 104 sessions being staged in the physical setting and digitally in this fair, and the show is to be fully streamed for those watching from many parts of the world, with translation provided. He also has cited more than 800 exhibitors, more than 500,000 titles on display both on-site and in the digital space, and participation from at least 46 nations including as many as 260 guests and speakers.

"We're prepared to launch the region's largest international book fair" this year, Bin Tamim says.

In heading up Abu Dhabi's specially devised 2021 program, Bin Tamim is a particularly interesting leader, widely recognized in the emirate's and nation's robust cultural scene.

Operating here as chairman of the recently established Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre—which stands as part of Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism—Bin Tamim is also secretary-general of the 15-year-old Sheikh Zayed Book Award, and he speaks with the literary grace of deep study, based in his doctorate in literary critique from Yarmouk University in Jordan.

Hardly limited to the academic setting, however, he knows the business imperatives

of the Arab world's pandemic-weary publishing industry.

One of these solutions involves the fair's launch of the first digital platform for literary rights sales in the Arab region. It's a timely step—as many in the region tell us that the pandemic has brought into sharp relief the industry's need for more fluency in online sales and e-commerce. Bin Tamim also has overseen an expansion in the number of translation grants available this year to an unprecedented 300, under the fair's "Spotlight on Rights" initiative.

Bin Tamim and his team have a proud track record on which to stand up this year's special edition of the fair. In its last all-physical evocation in 2019, the show registered 149,000 visitors and saw a total of 119,633 books sold by 1,065 exhibitors.

Asked how the 2021 fair's COVID-19 infection precautions are being handled, he says that his team began its coordination with the United Arab Emirates' public health authorities very early and says, "We're working to make the process as safe and simultaneously as seamless as possible." For international publishers, should any special measures be required, "We will ensure that this is covered by us," he says.

And he reveals a particular understanding of the focus of youth in the Arab region and its literary life.

"We think there's a true gap in Arabic authorship among the youth," Bin Tamim says. "And we think this crisis is closely tied to weak research targeted at young people. The UAE places high strategic significance on the

younger demographic, and we're working in line with that vision to extend our support to them in multiple ways."

Bin Tamim refers to a Ministry of Culture and Youth report that has indeed pointed out, as he says, "the need to drive younger people toward reading and authoring." And, of course, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award program he leads includes among its eight book categories a Young Author prize, which this year has gone to Saudi Arabia's Asma Bint Muqbel Bin Awad Al-Amadi.

Bringing together such a large and complex project as the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair in a time of such crisis, needless to say, is no walk through the park. But Bin Tamim draws on a broad range of experience in challenging and substantive projects. In the past, he has served as chair of the soaring Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Centre, for example, and managed both the Kalima Translation Project and the general manager's duties for the Abu Dhabi Media Company between 2016 and 2019.

Now his focus is on a critically needed book fair for a region and culture and industry under the sustained pressure of the pandemic.

"We're committed," Ali Bin Tamim tells *Publishing Perspectives*, "to providing a restorative economic and cultural space to those who take part in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year. Simultaneously, we're harnessing the power of technology to bridge gaps and further study innovative ways in which we can expand our reach and maximize opportunities using state-of-the-art digital solutions." •

Mouza Al Shamsi: 'Global Aspirations' at the Arabic Language Centre

In her new role as executive director of the Arabic Language Centre, Mouza Al Shamsi presents a strategic, international vision for supporting culture and the Arabic language.

By Porter Anderson

Just when you thought Mouza Al Shamsi couldn't handle any more work than she had taken on in 2017 when she became the director of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, she has added a new role to her career.

Al Shamsi this year has become the executive director of the newly established Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and the director of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, which operate under the emirate's Department of Culture and Tourism. In her multiple roles, Al Shamsi has a front-row seat on some of the United Arab Emirates' most consequential literary programs.

"At the Arabic Language Centre," she tells *Publishing Perspectives*, "we work toward advancing the [Arabic] language through leading efforts in research and linguistic development. As a crucial component of these efforts, we're focused on supporting creativity, authorship, translation, and publishing.

"Nevertheless, our very ethos is not solely focused on promoting the Arabic language locally or within the region—we have a truly global aspiration.

"To that end, we have a host of initiatives ranging from supporting learning among native and non-native speakers alike, to forging strategic alliances with regional and international partners who will expand our reach globally."

One of those initiatives is a new collaboration with the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at New York City's Columbia University. With sessions planned for this summer and autumn, a conference program titled "The Foundations and Transformations of Arabic Theory" has been announced, with topics expected to include classical and modern epistemic systems and the emergence of Arabic narrative writing.

And when it comes to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, Al Shamsi points to connection as a key effort of the language center. "We aim for the fair this year," she says, "to be the leading forum that connects Arab publishers with their international counterparts."

Streaming the fair's programming (with translation to English provided where needed) is a large part of what she's describing, as it widens the audience to viewers from other countries. "Through the language center's work on Arabic language digitization, technology solutions development, and support for creative and literary talent," she says, "we look to add more depth to programming, par-



Mouza Al Shamsi (Image: DCT Abu Dhabi)

ticipation, and discourse in this year's edition of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair."

A part of this year's hybrid programming, she says, is aimed at children and students. Al Shamsi says that more than 50,000 students are registered on the fair's digital platform. Those students will see "a mix of recorded sessions as well as live sessions tailored to certain age groups and school years," all developed in cooperation with the UAE's education system.

Al Shamsi says that this year's hybrid evolution of the book fair will be its 30th edition.

And when asked about some of the COVID-19 precautions in place, she points to a capacity of 3,547 people at the sprawling exhibition facility, a limit of three hours on each visit, wider aisles on the exhibition floor, social distancing requirements, and—perhaps most important—the requirement of a negative PCR test within 48 hours of entry, or the "E" sign on the Al Hosn contact-tracing app. In addition, masks will be required, thermal screening cameras will be monitoring those entering, and paperless ticketing is being employed for touchless access.

Watching over this blend of book fair business and public health safety, Mouza Al Shamsi and her team will be handling myriad details as the week-long fair plays out.

"We aim for the fair this year to be the leading forum that connects Arab publishers with their international counterparts."

Mouza Al Shamsi

Al Shamsi was recently all smiles as she welcomed journalists to a press conference. "As the organizing entity for the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair," she said, "the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre will bring an exciting contribution to this year's edition as it looks to invigorate the fair's offering and enrich cross-cultural and intellectual dialogue." •

Abu Dhabi International Book Fair: 30 Years

Organizers expect some 800 publishers to participate in this year's fair—May 23–29, 2021—which offers a hybrid physical/digital program and expanded translation grants.



From the 2019 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

By Publishing Perspectives Staff

The 30th edition of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF) is set to take place this year May 23–29, 2021 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre as people, governments, and companies continue to navigate the challenges and changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite having to cancel its physical show in 2020, ADIBF organizers have laid out a book fair this year that includes physical and digital elements, new health and safety measures, and expanded support for the publishing industry.

“We are pleased to be able to offer stakeholders and visitors a physical event once again,” said HE Saood Al Hosani, undersecretary of the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, in a press release in April. “Our commitment to organising the 30th edition of the fair at ADNEC reinforces the readiness of Abu Dhabi to host major events while working to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants and visitors.”

What to Expect in 2021

Registrations indicate that around 800 publishers and companies from 46 countries are expected to participate in ADIBF this year, either in person or digitally.

On the show floor, various stages will host a wide range of programming, created in partnership with some 20 cultural and international institutions. In some cases, speakers will be delivering their insights from stages, and other speakers will be tuning in remotely.

All events will be streamed online to ADIBF's YouTube channel.

In all, ADIBF is offering 104 events this year with 260 speakers across its cultural and professional programs.

ADIBF is also expanding its “Spotlight on Rights” program, which provides translation grants to both physical and digital exhibitors ([more on page 7](#)), and the fair will host virtual programming from its 2022 Guest of Honor, Germany ([more on page 10](#)).

The Physical Fair and the Pandemic

Organizers are keen to see a physical fair return to Abu Dhabi this year, in large part because the direct-to-consumer book sales that take place at this and other regional fairs keep many publishers in business.

In 2020, most book fairs did not take place physically. This, along with lockdowns and bookstore closures in some countries, deprived publishers across the Arab world of much-needed sales opportunities.

In a press conference in April, chair of the Arabic Language Center Dr. Ali Bin Tamim told journalists, “The significance of platforms such as the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is underscored by years such as 2020, in which the knock-on effect of the pandemic has reverberated through different industries and hit the publishing sector especially hard.

“These fairs are not only an opportunity for direct sales, but a hub where the industry can come together to consolidate efforts, explore new approaches to addressing challenges, share best practices, and come up with innovative solutions.” •

COVID-19 Safety Measures at ADIBF

As one of the first major book fairs to open its physical doors in 2021, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair is introducing a comprehensive list of safety measures during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, aimed at keeping visitors and exhibitors healthy, including:

- Visitors must register in advance before visiting the exhibition
- All visitors and exhibitors must wear face masks at all times and maintain a minimum distance of two meters between them and others
- The maximum visit duration is three hours
- To gain access to the exhibition, all visitors must present proof of a negative COVID-19 test conducted in the past 48 hours
- Thermal cameras will be installed at the gates
- Exhibitor pavilions have a maximum capacity of one person per four square meters
- Exhibitors must place clear signs specifying the number of visitors allowed inside the pavilion
- Meetings should not exceed four people
- Exhibitors are not permitted to use touchscreens in their pavilions

For a complete list of safety measures and requirements, visit the ADIBF website:

COVID-19 INFORMATION

Spotlight on Rights: Expanded Translation Grants for ADIBF Exhibitors

Fair organizers have increased the number of translation grants available in 2021 as part of ADIBF's bid to support the publishing industry through the pandemic.

By Publishing Perspectives Staff

Now in its 30th year, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF) has become one of the major professional gatherings for publishers in the Gulf region and beyond. With exhibitors from some 40 countries registered to participate in 2021, this international fair is not only a place for publishers to sell books to the public, but also to sell translation rights to each other.

With the growth in international visitors over the years and the growing importance of rights sales at the fair, ADIBF launched its Spotlight on Rights program in 2009, which provides translation grants to all exhibitors who buy and sell rights during the fair.

Since the program began, Spotlight on Rights has awarded more than 120 translation grants to publishers in amounts ranging from US\$2,500 to \$4,000 per title, for translations into French, German, Swedish, English, and other languages.

Last year, the program was expanded to include grants for audiobook and ebook categories. And in 2021, ADIBF is expanding the number of translation grants available—up to 300—as part of what organizers describe as its “relentless efforts” to support the book

publishing sector during the pandemic, which has been particularly hard on publishers in the Middle East.

Another change coming to the program this year is an expedited payment schedule, in which the fair will pay 60 percent of the grant upon approval of an application, and 40 percent in the following months, when the publisher is able to present a draft of the translation.

Speaking for the organizers, Dr. Ali bin Tamim, secretary-general of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award and chair the Arabic Language Center, told journalists at a news conference in April how much of a priority the Spotlight on Rights program is for the fair this year.

“We at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair are especially proud of our initiatives to support publishers this year with the largest number of grants in ADIBF's history to date,” bin Tamim said. “Under our Spotlight on Rights program, we've allocated 300 grants to supporting print, digital and audio books for publishers attending the fair physically or participating virtually.

“Through this comprehensive set of incentives, we're committed to providing a restorative economic and cultural space to those who take part in ADIBF this year.” •

Spotlight on Rights

Translation grants from the Spotlight on Rights program will be available to the publishers participating in the physical edition of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2021 as well as to the parties participating in the digital edition of the fair.

How to Submit Applications

- Submit requests in person to the “Spotlight on Rights” program at the fair or via email to: MAhad@dctabudhabi.ae.
- Submissions are open from April 15th until May 30th, 2021
- Applications are available in Arabic and English, and can be [downloaded here](#)

Grant Amounts (in USD, per title)

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

Click here for more information and application forms:

[SPOTLIGHT ON RIGHTS INFO](#)



Translated titles at the 2019 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

Arab Publishers Association President on Publishing in the Pandemic

APA president Mohamed Rashad offers a broad look at publishing in the Arab world, the impact of the pandemic, and what the book industry needs to recover.



Mohamed Rashad

“Some of our publishers had already achieved sales activity in e-commerce ... but after a year of COVID-19, the numbers doubled.”

“The recovery can really only come about if publishers develop themselves to go into new fields, adapting with the new era.”

Mohamed Rashad

By Porter Anderson

Arab Publishers Association president Mohamed Rashad is one of the most astute observers of Arab world publishing. He’s also the CEO and founder of Al Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah, a publisher of academic and educational materials, as well as literature and children’s books ([read more on page 23](#)).

Ahead of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, *Publishing Perspectives* had a chance to interview Rashad about the experience of the Arab world’s publishers in the pandemic and what issues the association is working on.

We begin by asking just how difficult the pandemic has been for publishers in the region. And one of the most revealing points Rashad brings forward is that the rush to help publishers develop their online sales capacities has proven to be something for the long-term, not just for the moment.

Mohamed Rashad: Certainly, the spread of COVID-19 had a very large negative impact, and publishers were shocked by the

cancellation of both book fairs and of many governments’ budgets for the purchase of books directed to the health sector.

The Arab Publishers Association conducted a survey during June 2020, and our results showed that 75 percent of our publishers’ sales decreased compared to 2019. In fact, 34 percent of the publishing sector exited.

The number of titles normally published annually decreased between 50 and 75 percent, and there were no longer any distribution ports.

Our association has focused its activities in our Professional Performance Development Committee’s workshops, so we could provide publishers with data on how to create online platforms. We thought that this would be temporary, but it seems now that the future will be in sales made online, whether a book is paper or digital.

We also were able, with the help of experts, to find some reliable e-commerce sites that our publishers can deal with—as well as in some cases having publishers create their own digital outlets. And in that sense, then, this

has become, as we say, “a blessing in disguise,” helping us prepare for the future and develop the marketing of the Arabic book.

Some of our publishers had already achieved sales activity in e-commerce, up to some 10 percent in print books and 15 percent of sales in digital titles. But after a year of COVID-19, the numbers doubled, especially through global platforms such as Amazon and Google, and they had a great impact on the publishing sector.

Publishing Perspectives: As the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair goes forward, is it too early to see some signs of recovery in the market?

MR: I think that Arab publishers who are most interested in recovery are placing their attention on producing content [in] whatever is the most effective medium, whether it’s paper, audio, digital, or any other medium that appears in the future—as long as that publisher is convinced that entering these sectors can achieve good rates.

Recovery depends on the ability of Arab governments to allocate budgets *next page »*

Arab Publishers Association



The Arab Publishers Association was established in 1995 with the mission to, "defend and develop the Arab publishing industry and protect intellectual property rights, and defense of Arab culture in all its components."

The APA has 30 board members, 15 of whom represent local publishers' unions and an additional 15 members elected to the board at the general assembly meeting. The headquarters of the secretariat are located in Beirut and the president's office is in Cairo.

Among the APA's objectives are to expand cooperation between Arab publishers and associations, facilitate cultural awareness and book promotion, hold conferences and training seminars, and protect the rights of publishers, including freedom to publish and intellectual property.

The association also organizes collective participation at international book fairs and represents Arab publishers at international events.

Committees of the APA

- Arab Intellectual Property Committee
- Arab and International Relations Committee
- Committee on Information and Public Relations
- Disciplinary Committee
- Grievances Committee
- Resource Development Committee
- Development of Professional Performance Committee
- Disputes Resolution Committee

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« from previous for specialized authorities to acquire books such as ministries of culture and youth, education, information, universities, and schools. These disciplines can contribute to the recovery movement.

Selling through the Internet, whether in paper, digital, or audio, won't achieve a great recovery in our region. The difference between us and publishers in advanced countries and Europe is that our publishers depend on official authorities such as public, school, and university libraries and cultural centers. This can mean 70 to 75 percent of the business. The rest depends on the readers, but in our Arab world, unfortunately, the publisher depends so much on official authorities, and these authorities don't have large budgets for the acquisition of books.

The recovery can really only come about if publishers develop themselves to go into new fields, adapting with the new era, making deals via the Internet, and at the same time benefiting from the support of their governments in acquiring books.

PP: Do you feel that having the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair hold a physical exhibition floor this year can help the region's publishers? We remember that the Sharjah International Book Fair was held in November in a hybrid format, and the Sharjah Children's Reading Festival is going forward this year, too.

MR: Any book fairs held at this point are beneficial to publishers. At least the fairs can stimulate activities and give us a kind of revival to help achieve part of the industry's income.

Of course, the Sharjah International Book Fair, thanks to the initiative made by His Highness Sheikh Sultan Al Qasimi, exempted publishers from renting, easing a great burden on publishers, in addition to the donation he provided of 10 million dirhams (US\$2.7 million), relieved many negative effects.

For the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, the Arab Publishers Association contacted its management and some positive agreements were reached on behalf of publishers. I think the fair will have a good effect, and that we'll see some bright signs during the exhibition of publishers coming out happy and making some reasonable income from their book sales there.

PP: Finally, in looking ahead, what do you think are the main factors that the Arab world's publishing community needs to focus on the most?

MR: First, our future cannot depend on paper publishing alone. Print must go along with digital publishing. The content now becomes the most important part rather than the format or the medium. The emphasis must be on conveying the thoughts and creativity of our writers, and all of these factors will need the support of the governments.

Second, an effort must be made by our countries in protecting intellectual property rights, our copyright. And what's most important there is launching social and media awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of respecting copyright and tighten-

ing penalties for violators.

Another point critical for the prosperity of publishing in the Arab world is an expansion of the reading population. Reading must be stimulated, and this needs national programs from the governments, especially where there's illiteracy. We need programs that build and promote literacy.

Also censorship must be reduced. In the Arab world, a book can face more than 20 censors. We have to deepen freedom of expression and freedom of publication. This is a human right.

And Arab countries must intervene by reducing customs duties on production requirements. Our countries aren't producing what the publishing industry needs locally.

We need to see a reduction in taxes on publishing houses in the Arab world because publishers have a role to play in trade and industry.

We also need to stress the importance of establishing more public libraries, as they can be centers of distribution for Arab books.

All of these factors can help the publishing community in the Arab world increase its presence and influence as publishers develop their levels of professionalism by training themselves and their staffers. This is, of course, is part of the role of the Arab Publishers Association, and that's amplified by the work of the local associations.

In short, the Arab Publishers Association is working to keep pace with developments in the wider publishing world, so we can help our publishers be international rather than local. •

"The difference between us and publishers in advanced countries and Europe is that our publishers depend on official authorities such as public, school, and university libraries and cultural centers. This can mean 70 to 75 percent of the business."

Mohamed Rashad

Germany in the Spotlight at ADIBF 2021

Forced by the pandemic to delay its Guest of Honor program by one year to 2022, Germany will be present at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair this year with digital programming and a German collective stand.



Claudia Kaiser (Image: FBM / Bernd Hartung)

By Porter Anderson

As the circumstances of this spring's status in the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic have evolved, one challenge for book fairs has been the scheduling of their guest of honor programs, which highlight a specific international publishing market.

With Germany scheduled as the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's guest of honor, it's been arranged by the fair's organizers in association with Frankfurter Buchmesse that this year's program will be primarily a digital one—with a German Stories stand on the physical exhibition floor, stand 8A05—and that in 2022, Guest of Honor Germany will return with a complete large-scale presentation and extensive programming.

In effect, then, we're looking at two years of Germany's presence at the Abu Dhabi fair, with instructive and illuminating programming in both 2021 and 2022.

In preparing for this year's Guest of Honor Germany program of both professional issue-driven sessions and cultural conversations, we've turned to Claudia Kaiser, Frankfurt's vice-president for business development with several questions for some context.

We start by asking Kaiser to tell us a bit about this special two-year approach.

Claudia Kaiser: This year's edition of the show marks the start of the Guest of Honor

Germany program at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, which will culminate in 2022 with its large-scale presence.

In 2021, Germany will present itself with a professional program on topics of interest to the Arab market, with an aim of stimulating exchange within the industry.

We're pleased that we can use this year to initiate important contacts in the rights and licensing business digitally. Furthermore, we can still offer our exhibitors the opportunity to present their books at our stand, and we'll put together an attractive hybrid trade program that will showcase trends and aspects in the publishing and creative industries, as well as cultural diversity.

Highlights of the program include talks and panels with German writers Navid Kermani, Ulla Lenze, Pierre Jarawan, author and translator Stefan Weidner and with the historian Joseph Croitoru.

Publishing Perspectives: Indeed, we're glad to have interviews here in our magazine with Lenze and Jarawan about their work, as well. How do you see the level of trade in rights and licensing between the United Arab Emirates and other parts of the Arab world and Germany?

CK: Publishers from the Arab world are important licensing partners for German publishers, and we're pleased about the continuing high level of interest in German titles and authors. But there's a lot of room for growth.

"We're pleased that we can use this year to initiate important contacts in the rights and licensing business digitally."

Claudia Kaiser

We still need to learn more about each others' publications, and one of our aims with our guest of honor presence is to improve that.

Our professional program will look at this topic from different angles. While most seminars are about the selling and buying of rights in a general sense, the seminar you mentioned focuses on co-productions and contracts with illustrators, as opposed to authors. Illustrators are very much in demand in Abu Dhabi, and this should be an important part of the business to discuss.

Our professional program however also includes sessions on the development of audiobooks in the Arab world and Europe and the business models being used. We're also looking at how ebooks and online book sales are developing in our parts of the world. And we'll take a closer look at the market for books in Arabic in Germany and Europe.

PP: We're glad to hear about the value of these connections between Europe and the Middle East and the chance the guest of honor program has to explore this. There's quite a legacy of cooperation, isn't there?

CK: Frankfurt Book Fair has been active in Arab countries for many years, organizing German collective stands at book fairs in Cairo and Abu Dhabi. We've also been present in the past at Beirut, in Oman, and in other places. We offer cultural programs and professional seminars throughout the Arab world on topics such as copyright, trade in rights and licenses, and translation.

Our offerings are aimed at the book industry, but also at consumers, with a goal of connecting both worlds and facilitating a knowledge transfer.

In this way, a network of competent literary mediators, translators, and partner institutions has grown over decades and we use these contacts to introduce German readers to Arabic literature and culture—and vice-versa. •

Germany's Hybrid Guest of Honor Program at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair

Moving its physical Guest of Honor programming to 2022, German organizers plan a hybrid this year, including digital programming and a physical stand.

By Publishing Perspectives Staff

Germany will extend its Guest of Honor presence at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair to two years, as the pandemic disrupted original plans for Germany's physical program in 2021. Instead, German organizers will present a full program in 2022, with a hybrid model this year, including a physical stand (8A05) and digital programming at ADIBF.

"Publishers from the Arab world are important licensing partners for German publishers," said Frankfurter Buchmesse CEO Juergen Boos, "and we're pleased about the continuing high level of interest in German titles and authors. ... We're pleased that we can still offer our exhibitors the opportunity to present their books at the [German collective] stand, and we'll be offering an attractive hybrid trade program that will showcase trends and aspects in the publishing and creative industries as well as cultural diversity."

Programming will include a cultural presentation of German and Arab authors, as well as a series of professional events aimed at the publishing industry.

And speaking from Abu Dhabi, Dr. Ali Bin Tamim—chair of the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre and secretary-general of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award—said, "The United Arab Emirates and Germany share deep cultural and intellectual ties that we'll continue to champion until our guests can honor us in person come 2022." •

German Publishers and Organizations at ADIBF 2021

- Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA)
- ArsEdition
- Avj - Arbeitsgemeinschaft von Jugendbuchverlagen e.V.
- Delius Klasing
- Discover Middle East Publishers
- Frankfurter Buchmesse
- Georg Olms Verlag
- Goethe-Institut Gulf-Region
- Lars Müller Publishers
- Lesekidz Books trading
- Majoba
- Müller & Schindler Publishers
- Redsea Bookstores
- Tessloff Verlag
- Verlag die Werkstatt



German stand at the 2019 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

Events: German Authors at ADIBF 2021 (times in GST)

	GERMANY AND THE 'ORIENT'
Tue, May 25 16:00 – 17:00	Historian and journalist Joseph Croitoru talks with UAE diplomat Omar Ghabash and writer Stefan Weidner about German views and attitudes, past and present, towards Islam and the so-called Orient.
	ESSAYS, REPORTAGES AND STORIES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST
Wed, 26 May 14:30 – 15:30	Navid Kermani , among the most thoughtful intellectual voices in Germany today, speaks with Fareed Majari about his reportages based on his travels in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, the Arab world to Europe.
	ULLA LENZE & HISHAM EL KHESHEN IN CONVERSATION
Thu, 27 May 13:30 – 14:30	Writers Ulla Lenze and Hisham El Khesheh exchange their ideas about working with historical material for their latest novels.
	GROUND ZERO
Thu, May 27 15:00 – 16:00	For writer Stefan Weidner , the story of 9/11 only ends when we free ourselves from the ideological shackles of the past two decades and try to rethink our world. The pandemic opens up the opportunity to look at a better future. Weidner speaks with journalist Bilal Qureishi about his latest book, <i>Ground Zero – 9/11 and the Birth of the Present</i> .
	THE POWER OF WORDS
Sat, May 28 15:00 – 16:00	Bestselling author Pierre Jarawan started his literary career as a slam poet. He speaks with Emirati award-winning spoken word poet and scholar Dr. Afra Atiq about the slam poetry, fiction and the respective slam scenes in Germany and the UAE.

Germany Guest of Honor: Professional Events

Topic	Time (GST)	Event Title and Description
Bookselling	Sun, May 23 17:00 - 18:00	THE MARKET FOR BOOKS IN ARABIC IN GERMANY How can Arab publishers get their books in Arabic to readers in Germany? Bookshop owners will share their experience, challenges and needs. Speakers: Fadi Abdelnour (Khan Aljanub), Samer Al Khadri .
Rights	Mon, May 24 12:30 – 13:30	RIGHTS PITCHINGS: WHAT NOT TO DO! Best practices for Arab-world publishers selling rights for your books to another country. Speaker: Sylvia Schuster (Carlsen Publishing House)
Education	Mon, May 24 16:00 – 17:00	EDUCATIONAL STARTUPS Online education has become more important all over the world. What kind of startups have fared well? Hear from startups in Germany, Europe and the Arab World. Speaker: Oliver Hengstenberg , CEO and co-founder of Cribster; Babar Baig , co-founder WriteReader
Publishing industry	Tue, May 25 13:30 – 14:30	EBOOKS IN THE TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC Ebooks have grown immensely during the pandemic. What are the challenges and what is the future looking like, even after things have "returned" to a "new normal"? Speakers: Jens Klingelhöfer (Bookwire), Kassem Al Tarras (Pioneers)
Bookselling	Wed, May 26 12:00 – 13:00	ONLINE BOOK SALES – ANYTHING TO LEARN? When book fairs were all cancelled across the Middle East and publishers had to turn to online sales. Hear details of best practices and experience from the past year. Speakers: Marco Plitsch (KNV Zeitfracht), Salah Chebaro
Publishing industry	Wed, May 26 16:30 – 17:30	GROWTH IN AUDIOBOOKS In the Arab World, audiobook startups like KitabSawti were bought by big international players like Storytel. What is the future of audiobooks and what business models are being used? Speakers: Kurt Thielen , (Zebralution), Cécile Palusinski , Ramy Yaacoub (Maktabi)
Film	Thu, May 27 17:00 - 18:00	FILMS AND BOOKS: SUCCESS STORIES AND CHALLENGES Many films are based on books, and film adaptations can turn books into bestsellers. How can Arab publishers sell the rights to their books to film producers internationally? Speaker: Elisabeth Ruge
Rights	Fri, May 28 14:00 - 15:00	RIGHTS AND LICENSES: COPRODUCTIONS AND ILLUSTRATOR'S CONTRACTS This seminar focuses on coproductions and contracts with illustrators, as opposed to authors. Speaker: Angela Schaaf de Lavado , (Duden Publishing)



German stand at the 2019 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (Image: ADIBF)

Top Arab-World Authors in Abu Dhabi

The cultural program at this year's Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, curated by the Emirates Literature Festival, features top writers from the Arab world.



Sultan Al Ameemi
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

Sultan Al Ameemi, UAE

Sultan Al Ameemi is an Emirati writer, researcher and storyteller who has published 22 popular culture and poetry books in different languages and dialects.

Al Ameemi works as director of the Academy of Arabic Poetry in Abu Dhabi and is president of Emirates Writers Union.

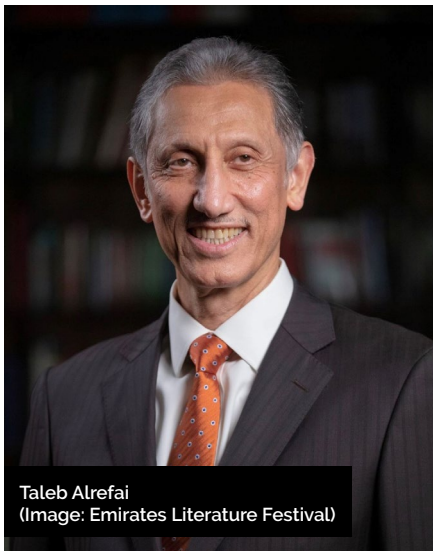
BOOKS TO KNOW: His novel *P.O. Box: 1003* was adapted for television, and *One Room Is Not Enough* was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Literature and translated into French, Portuguese, Russian, Hindi, and Spanish.

He has published five short story collections, including *A Blue Creature or Maybe; A Sign That Doesn't Get Attention*, won the Sultan Al Owais Award for Creativity in 2019; and *The Verification of the Shaboori Journey*, which won a 2021 Ibn Battuta Prize for Travel Literature.

Professor of the Arabic Language.

Eman is also a regular columnist in Emirati print media, and since 2019 she has hosted the "Seven" podcast on soft power and cultural diplomacy.

BOOKS TO KNOW: She has published three novels: *The Window Which Saw, Guard the Sun*—winner of the 2016 Emirates Novel award and translated into seven languages—and *The Resurrection of Others*. Her short stories include "A Bird in a Fish Tank" and "Many Faces of a Man."

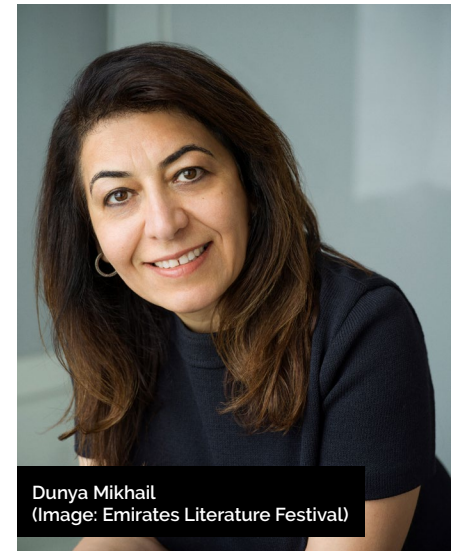


Taleb Alrefai
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

Taleb Alrefai, Kuwait

Taleb Alrefai is a Kuwaiti novelist, storyteller and cultural advisor to Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature. The founder and director of the Cultural Forum in Kuwait, chairman of board of trustees of the Forum Prize for Arabic Short Story, and vice president of the Forum for Arab Awards, he also works as a visiting professor for creative writing at Arab and international universities. Taleb was a visiting lecturer at the University of Iowa's International Creative Writing Program in 2012.

BOOKS TO KNOW: His published work includes *In Al Hana, Najdi, Habi, and Dark Gray*, in addition to studies such as *Principles of Creative Writing for Short Stories and Novels* and *The Arab Intellectual's Perspective of the Post-Covid Era*. His books have been translated into English, Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Turkish and Hindi.



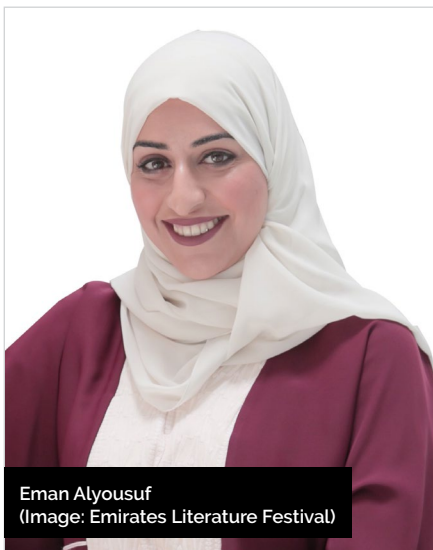
Dunya Mikhail
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

Dunya Mikhail, Iraq

Dunya Mikhail was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and moved to the United States in 1996.

She received a United States Artists Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, a Knights Foundation grant, a Kresge Fellowship, and the United Nations Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. Her writing has garnered attention from such outlets as The PBS News Hour, The New Yorker, New York Times, The Guardian, and Poetry, among others. She currently teaches Arabic at Oakland University in Michigan.

BOOKS TO KNOW: Mikhail's books include *The War Works Hard*, shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize; *Diary of A Wave Outside the Sea*, winner of the Arab American Book Award; and *In Her Feminine Sign*, named by The New York Public Library as one of best ten poetry books of 2019. Her non-fiction book *The Beekeeper* was a finalist for PEN/John Kenneth Galbraith Award and *next page* »

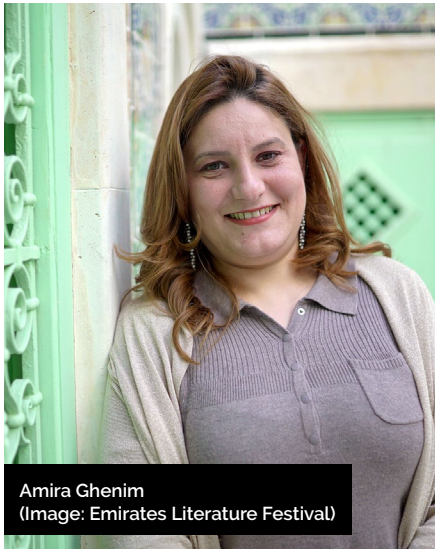


Eman Alyousuf
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

Eman Alyousuf, UAE

Emirati writer, researcher, and lecturer in cultural diplomacy, Eman Alyousuf holds MBA in knowledge management and chemical engineering.

She is the first Emirati woman to attend the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. She received a Fulbright Scholarship and is now studying at the University of Western Kentucky as an Assistant



Amira Ghenim
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

«from previous long-listed for the National Book Award. Her debut novel *The Bird Tattoo* is currently shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction.

Amira Ghenim, Tunisia

Amira Ghenim is a Tunisian writer, novelist, professor of linguistics at the Tunisian University, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Sousse, and member of its Scientific Council.

She holds a PhD in linguistics and Tabriz in Arabic language and literature, and the Tunisian President's Award for Professor of Arabic Language and Literature.

She received numerous awards and honors, including the Tunis International Book Fair in translation (2017) and the National Award for Translation (2018).



Muhsin Al-Ramli
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

BOOKS TO KNOW: She received the Sheikh Rashid bin Hamad Al Sharqi Prize for Novels for her novel *The Yellow File* (2020), and the Alcomar Prize for her novel *The Calamity of the Nobility*, which has also been shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (2021).

Muhsin Al-Ramli, Iraq

Muhsin Al-Ramli is a writer, poet academic and translator, born in the village of Sudara in northern Iraq in 1967. He has lived in Madrid since 1995 and received his doctorate in literature and philosophy from Madrid University. He writes in both Arabic and Spanish.

He has worked as a journalist and cultural editor for the Arab, Spanish and Latin American press and has translated a number of literary works from Arabic into Spanish and vice



Jalal Bargas
(Image: Emirates Literature Festival)

versa. He has published more than 30 books, ranging from short stories to plays, translations and novels.

Al-Ramli was a mentor on the IPAF Nadwa in 2019. He currently works at Saint Louis University in Madrid.

BOOKS TO KNOW: The English translation of his novel *Scattered Crumbs* (2000) won the American Translation Award sponsored by the University of Arkansas Press in 2002, and his novels *Dates on My Fingers* (2008) and *The President's Gardens* (2012) were longlisted for the IPAF in 2010 and 2013. The English translation of *The President's Gardens* won the 2016 PEN Translates Award and the 2018 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Literary Translation. His 2015 novel *The Wolf of Love and Books* was shortlisted for the 2015 Sheikh Zayed Book Award, and *Sons and Shoes* (2018) was longlisted for the Award in 2019.

Jalal Bargas, Jordan

Jalal Bargas is a Jordanian poet and novelist, born in 1970. He works in the field of aeronautical engineering. For many years, he wrote articles for Jordanian newspapers and headed several cultural organisations. He is currently head of the Jordanian Narrative Laboratory and presents a radio programme called "House of the Novel".

BOOKS TO KNOW: His published work includes two poetry collections, short stories, travel literature and novels. His short story "The Earthquakes" (2012) was winner of the Jordanian Rukus ibn Za'id Uzayzi Prize. His novel *Guillotine of the Dreamer* (2013) won the Jordanian Rifqa Doudin Prize for Narrative Creativity in 2014, and *Snakes of Hell* won the 2015 Katara Prize for the Arabic Novel, in the unpublished novel category, and was published by Katara in 2016. His third novel, *Women of the Five Senses* (2017), was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2019. •

Tune In: ADIBF Events Featuring These Authors (times in GST)

Tue, May 25 15:00–17:00	WRITING MASTERCLASS IN ARABIC WITH MUHSIN AL RAMLI Muhsin Al Ramli will support those wanting to write in Arabic and share some of the wisdom discovered during his own writing journey.
Thu, May 27 12:00	THE STATE OF LITERATURE DURING THE PANDEMIC Literature during the pandemic has been heralded as the calm many of us have needed, but is that true? Panelists Taleb Alrefai and Eman Alyousuf will explore these questions and more.
Thu, May 27 18:00	IPAF: HONOURING THE 2021 WINNER AND SHORTLISTED AUTHORS Bilal Orfali will interview each author and track their journey from idea to finished book. The shortlisted authors are: Abdelmajid Sebbata , Abdulatif Ould Abdullah , Dunya Mikhail , Habib Selmi , Jalal Bargas , and Amira Ghenim .
Fri, May 28 18:00	SULTAN AL AMIMI: A BLUE CREATURE, OR MAYBE A conversation with Emirati author Sultan Al Amimi , in which he will introduce his new short story collection <i>A Blue Creature or Maybe</i> and discuss the short story form.

Showcasing Important Arabic-Language Literature: Banipal Magazine

Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon have built Banipal magazine into one of the best resources for discovering emerging and established Arabic writers.



Margaret Obank, left, with Egyptian writer Iman Mersal, winner of this year's Sheikh Zayed Award for Literature

By Roger Tagholm

Founded in London in 1998 by Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon, *Banipal* is an independent literary magazine dedicated to the promotion of contemporary Arab literature through translations in English. Last year it received the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the Publishing and Technology category.

Publishing Perspectives: Congratulations on your Sheikh Zayed Book Award. How have you used the handsome purse the prize offers?

Margaret Obank: After 24 years producing this rather unique magazine, it was a tremendous honor to receive this award. Being a totally independent magazine, of course, it was a huge help, especially in getting the new Spanish edition of *Banipal* started.

PP: Speaking of that new edition, you opened *Revista Banipal*, the Spanish-language version, in March 2020. Do you have plans for editions in other languages?

MO: *Revista* has been received encouragingly and very warmly by Spanish Arabists, some publishers, broadcasters, and of course translators. Now we're thinking about a German-language edition.

PP: What is it like publishing a magazine during a pandemic?

MO: It's weird in a number of ways, but first I have to give a huge shout-out to the printers and distributors and the postmen and -women who have kept working all through. Without them, print publication would have been impossible. Editorially, particularly for *Banipal*, with all our authors, translators, and editors always all over the world in different time zones, working during the pandemic hasn't really been much different. We're rarely face-to-face with our authors, translators, and editors.

PP: What trends do you notice in Arabic literature?

MO: Over the last few years, a number of major poets have become novelists, such as the late Amjad Nasser, and also Abbas Beydoun and Dunya Mikhail. All three have had their novels translated and published in English. Over the last few years, there's a kind of opening up, in authors writing fiction about what's been happening in their own countries, a kind of telling literary truth to power. A sense of freedom together with a sense of necessity to write about all this.

A novel such as Said Khatibi's *Sarajevo Firewood* concerns the traumatic legacy of civil wars in both Bosnia and Algeria. We're publishing this book in English in September. And there's Iraqi Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* or Sinan Antoon's *The next page* »

"The [Abu Dhabi book] fair is the best occasion at which to meet authors, publishers, and also translators. It's almost like a literary festival."

"Distribution is the big question for Arab book publishers ... publishers have to be their own distributors. So book fairs are a major point of distribution, trading, and marketing."

Margaret Obank

«from previous *Corpse Washer*. A way of opening up about civil society's corruption, inequalities, Islamic fundamentalists. And seeing the future in the disasters of the past and present—which has produced a number of dystopian novels, particularly in Egypt.

PP: What do you think are the main issues facing Arab publishers beyond the pandemic?

MO: I always think that distribution is the big question for Arab book publishers because, instead of there being distributors working with all publishers, like Gardners, IPG, Ingram, Turnaround, etc. in the UK and US, for instance, publishers have to be their own distributors. So book fairs are a major point of distribution, trading, and marketing.

PP: What are you showing at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair that you're particularly excited about?

MO: We have a stand at the fair (8I40) and have just published *Banipal 70: Mahmoud Shukair, Writing Jerusalem* with an 80-page feature on Shukair, the great Palestinian author. Strangely timely. It's a coincidence that as the issue is published, Jerusalem is erupting.

We'll be showing some of our recent books, particularly the first nonfiction work by Tayeb Salih in English, a memoir, *Mansi, A Rare Man in His Own Way*, (April 2020) and Fadhil Al-Azzawi's *Beautiful Creatures*, the iconic Iraqi work by Fadhil al-Azzawi published to great acclaim in 1969 and now in English for the first time.

PP: What are your publishing plans for the year ahead?

MO: Later this year, we're publishing Said Khatibi's novel *Sarajevo Firewood* (shortlisted for the 2020 International Prize for Arabic Fiction), and Omani author Ghalya FT Said's *The Madness of Despair*, which unpacks the emotional turmoil when a family of Arab immigrants to London develops polar opposite expectations for their new life. We're working on a book of short stories by Emile Habiby for early 2022, as January 28 will mark the centenary of his birth. And also, there's an anthology of Palestinian poetry entitled *The Tent Generations*, compiled, translated, and introduced by Mohammed Sawaie.

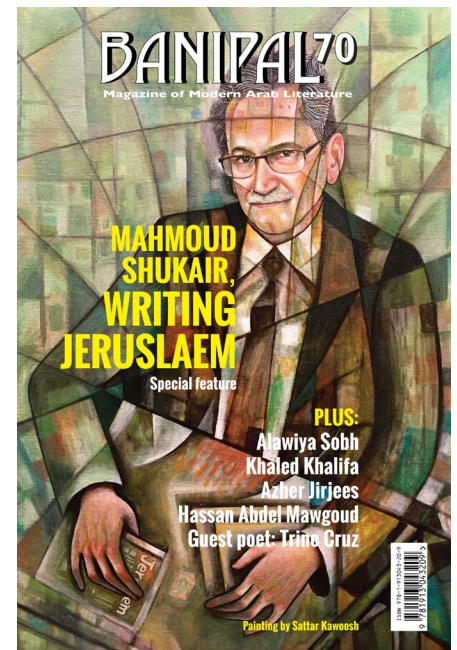
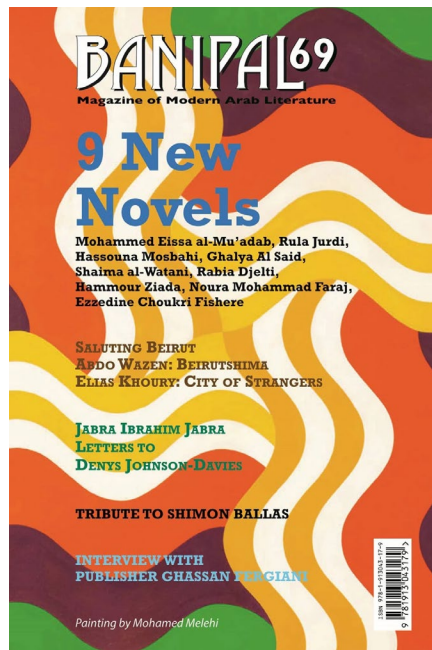
PP: Why are book fairs like Abu Dhabi so important?

MO: *Banipal* has a good relation with the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and we've held a number of events there over the years. The fair is the best occasion at which to meet authors, publishers, and also translators. It's almost like a literary festival. As I mentioned before, Arab book fairs are so important to publishers for getting their books distributed.

PP: What initiatives from Arab publishers have caught your eye in the last year?

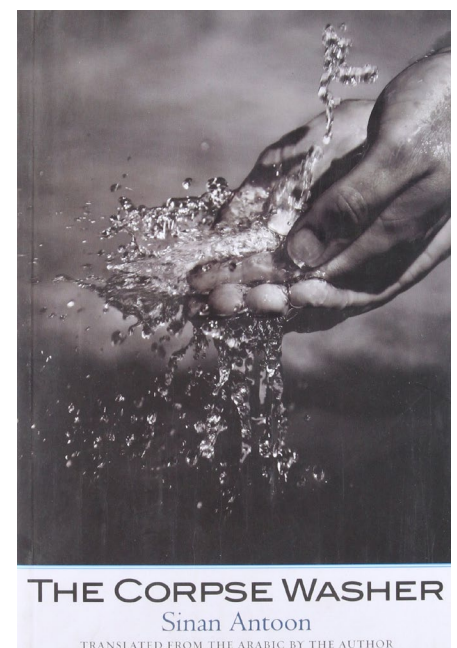
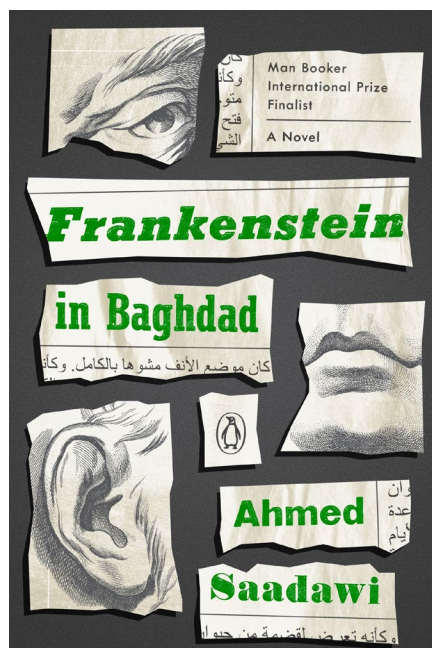
MO: Two main changes I've noticed: One is that publishers seem to be collaborating more frequently to jointly publish a book, so that a book will then be available directly in a number of countries—say, Lebanon and Morocco and Egypt, rather than just one nation.

Secondly, there are many new, young publishers, particularly in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. •



Over the last few years, there's a kind of opening up, in authors writing fiction about what's been happening in their own countries, a kind of telling literary truth to power.

Margaret Obank



Connect with the Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Events with SZBA Winners and Shortlisted Authors

SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD CEREMONY

May 24 at 18:00–18:30 GST

The world's leading Arab literature and culture prize, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, presents the 2021 winners in nine categories.

THE ART OF TRANSLATION: MY WORDS, YOUR VOICE

May 24 at 20:00 - 21:00

A trio of expert translators—Marilyn Booth, Hamid Al Gaithi, and Michael Cooperson (2021 Sheikh Zayed Book Award winner in the Translation category)—explain the art of balancing the many difficult choices and compromises from both author and translator.

SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE WINNERS

May 25 at 19:00–20:00 GST

Hear from the Sheikh Zayed Book Award's 2021 winners about their work and approach to writing. Literature and Children's Literature winners are eligible for translation funding from the award's generous Translation Grant.

HISTORICAL FICTION: WRITERS IMAN MERSAL AND SALHA OBAID

May 26 20:30 GST

Writers Salha Obaid and Iman Mersal, (2021 literature winner of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award) explore what makes effective historical fiction and discuss how they approach their work.



[DOWNLOAD THE RIGHTS GUIDE](#)

Get a Copy of the 2021 Rights Guide

Since 2018, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award (SZBA) has offered generous translation grants for its literature and children's literature winners. Starting in 2021, shortlisted titles in these categories will also be eligible to receive translation grants.

Download the SZBA 2021 Rights Guide to the award's winners and shortlisted titles, which includes:

- Descriptions of each book
- Author bios and photos
- Title information (ISBN, publisher, etc)
- Complete list of titles eligible for translation grants

You'll also find a link to Frankfurt Rights on each page, which allows editors to contact rights holders and submit offers online.

Visit the Sheikh Zayed Book Award online at zayedaward.ae and tune in to the award's events at the [SZBA YouTube channel](#).

2021 Winners and Shortlisted Titles Eligible for Translation Grants:



Literature Winner:

In the Footsteps of Enayat Al-Zayyat by Iman Mersal (Al Kotob Khan Library, 2019)

Children's Literature Winner:

An Artist's Journey by Mizouni Bannani (Dar Al Mua'nasa Publishing, 2020)

Literature Shortlist:

To Love Life by Alawiya Sobh (Dar Al Adab Publishing & Distribution, 2020)

The Passengers' Hall by Ezzat El-Kamhawi (Al Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah, 2020)

Children's Literature Shortlist:

The Emerald Garden by Raja Malah (Dar AlMoualef and Maalem, 2019)

The Beast and the Blackberry by Naseeba Alozaibi (Dar Ashjar Publishing and Distribution, 2019)

Young Author Shortlist:

Yalda's Night by Ghada Al-Absi, (Dar Al Tanweer in 2018)

What I Left Behind by Shatha Mustafa (Nofal/Hachette Antoine, 2020)

ADIBF Event Highlights: Watch Live Online

For a complete, up-to-date list of events, [visit the ADIBF Program Calendar here.](#)

Topic	Time (GST)	Event Title and Description
Publishing industry	Sun, May 23 14:00 - 16:00	ARAB WORLD PUBLISHING: SPOTLIGHT ON RESPECT An international discussion on the challenges of respect within the industry. What are the pertinent issues, who is best placed to tackle them, and what support can the industry as a whole give to those with that responsibility? The panel will discuss their ideas and answer questions from the wider audience joining digitally from around the globe. Speakers: Mohamed Al Fraih (Obeikan Publishing); Mohammed Rashad (Arab Publishers Association); Khaled Alnassiry (Almutawassit Publishing); Bassam Chebaro (Arab Scientific Publishers)
Copyright	Mon, May 24 14:00 - 16:00	PIRACY IN PUBLISHING: THE BIG ISSUE An international conference on the issue of copyright, piracy and parallel exports: HE Sheikha Bodour Bint Sultan Al Qasimi , President of The International Publishers Association, will give a keynote speech on the major issues facing the industry in the 21st century. Richard Charkin , a British publishing executive of world renown, will join the panel of senior industry executives to discuss the challenge of this major issue.
Current events	Mon, May 24 17:00 - 18:00	PLAGUES AND PANDEMICS: SHAPING CIVILIZATIONS The experiences of the last 12 months have shaken the world. Events we had only read about in history books have become unbelievably real in the 21st century. Plagues have often been catalysts for change, impacting human history with meteoric force. Our distinguished speakers, historians Bettany Hughes and Peter Hellyer , consider what we can we learn about the effect on civilisations from pandemics in the past. Moderated by writer Rehan Khan .
Authors	Mon, May 24 18:00 - 18:30	SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD CEREMONY The world's leading Arab literature and culture prize, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, presents the 2021 winners across 9 categories. The winners of the literature and children's literature categories— <i>In the Footsteps of Enayat Al-Zayyat</i> by Iman Mersal, and <i>An Artist's Journey</i> by Mizouni Bannani—are eligible for translation funding.
Translation	Mon, May 24 20:00 - 21:00	THE ART OF TRANSLATION: MY WORDS, YOUR VOICE How do you faithfully reproduce someone else's writing into a different language? Our trio of expert translators – Marilyn Booth , Hamid Al Gaithi , and Michael Cooperson – explain the art of translation, the relationship they have with the author and how feeling and creative writing are expressed in another tongue. This challenging job is beset with many difficult choices and compromises from both author and translator. Hear how these experienced translators achieve the balance.
Education	Tue, May 25 11:00 - 12:00	THE ARABIC LANGUAGE ACROSS BORDERS Arabic and its different dialects are spoken by around 422 million people in the Arab world as well as in the Arab diaspora, making it one of the five most spoken languages in the world. What are the major challenges facing the future of the Arabic language in the 21st century? Is there too much emphasis on teaching English in schools to the detriment of Arabic? With the many varieties of spoken Arabic, does modern standard Arabic sound too formal at times?
Authors	Tue, May 25 15:00 - 17:00	WRITING MASTERCLASS IN ARABIC WITH MUHSIN AL RAMLI In this masterclass Muhsin Al Ramli will support those wanting to write in Arabic and share some of the wisdom discovered during his own writing journey. With support and excellent advice, you will come away from this session inspired. Muhsin Al-Ramli is an expatriate Iraqi writer living in Madrid, Spain since 1995. He is a translator of several Spanish classics to Arabic. He produced the complete translation of <i>Don Quixote</i> from Spanish to Arabic. He teaches at the Saint Louis University Madrid Campus.
Authors	Tue, May 25 19:00 - 20:00	SHEIKH ZAYED BOOK AWARD: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE WINNERS Get to know the Sheikh Zayed Book Award's 2021 winners. Hear from the authors about their work and approach to writing. The Literature and Children's Literature titles are eligible for generous translation funding under the award's Translation Grant.

ADIBF Event Highlights: Watch Live Online

Topic	Time (GST)	Event Title and Description
Education	Wed, May 26 11:00 - 12:00	A NEW LOOK AT ARABIC DICTIONARIES & TEACHING ARABIC Through Literature For teachers of Arabic: Senior Lecturer of Arabic at New York University in Abu Dhabi, Dr. Laila Familiar presents a new Arabic dictionary featuring the 2,000 most commonly used words in contemporary Arabic fiction. The session is aimed at teachers of Arabic interested in using engaging teaching materials, and to authors who would like to write literary Graded Readers that can effectively develop students' reading skills in Arabic.
Authors	Wed, May 26 19:00 - 20:00	FROM WEST TO EAST: HOW HAVE THE EVENTS OF THE LAST YEAR CHANGED THE OUTLOOK FOR THE MIDDLE EAST? USA-based author and expert on global geo-political risk and geo-economics Afshin Molavi considers "The New Silk Road" and the meeting of West Asia and East Asia. How have the events of the last year changed the outlook for the Middle East? Molavi is in conversation with the editor of The National, Mina Al Oraibi .
Authors	Wed, May 26 20:30	HISTORICAL FICTION: WRITER IMAN MERSAL IN CONVERSATION WITH SALHA OBAID In this timely conversation about historical fiction, historical fact, and where the two intersect, writers Salha Obaid and Iman Mersal , (2021 literature winner of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award) explore what makes an effective period novel and discuss how they approach the past and present in their works. Both are known for their extensive research and expert craft
Publishing Industry	Thu, May 27 12:00 - 13:00	THE STATE OF LITERATURE DURING THE PANDEMIC With national lockdowns and travel restrictions forcing us to spend more time at home, did we turn to books to escape the woes of the pandemic? The generosity of the pages of a book, be it fiction or fact, can transport us to new places, stretch our minds and settle our restless souls. Literature during the pandemic has been heralded as the calm many of us have needed, but is that true? Writers Taleb Alrefai (Kuwait) and Eman Alyousuf (UAE) will explore these questions and more.
Authors	Thu, May 27 18:00 - 19:00	IPAF: HONORING THE 2021 WINNER AND SHORTLISTED AUTHORS To celebrate the 2021 winner and shortlisted authors, Bilal Orfali will interview each guest, track their journey from idea to finished book and let them share their experiences with our audience. The International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) is the most prestigious and important literary prize in the Arab world. The shortlisted authors are: Abdelmajid Sebbata , Abdulatif Ould Abdullah , Dunya Mikhail , Habib Selmi , Jalal Bargas , and Amira Ghenim .
Authors	Fri, May 28 18:00 - 19:00	SULTAN AL AMIMI: A BLUE CREATURE, OR MAYBE Join us for this enjoyable conversation with Emirati author Sultan Al Amimi , in which he will introduce his new short story collection <i>A Blue Creature or Maybe</i> . He will also discuss how the short story form offers some unique benefits to the writer in terms of brevity, voice, and opportunities to introduce the reader to unusual topics and aspects of society, catching their curiosity and encouraging them to read between the lines. Moderated by Salha Obaid .

How to Watch ADIBF Events Online

In its hybrid physical/digital iteration this year, the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair will stage more than 80 free sessions from its **cultural, professional, and educational programming**. All events will be live-streamed to the ADIBF YouTube channel and other social media channels so that international viewers can engage with sessions featuring authors, cultural personalities, publishing figures, and others.

Featured speakers in this year's program include the American author Tayari Jones, the British motivational speaker Vex King, International Publishers Association president Bodour Al Qasimi, bestselling writer Mitch Albom, and the Emirati author Sultan Al Amimi.

And from the Germany Guest of Honor, participating authors include Ulla Lenze, Navid Kermani, Stefan Weidner, Joseph Croitoru, and Pierre Jarawan. •



ADIBF EVENTS ON YOUTUBE

Salha Obaid: Fiction Rooted in Historical Fact

Emirati writer Salha Obaid's fiction explores the rapid changes in her home country in recent decades, with factual research as a foundation for the story.

By Chip Rossetti

The Emirati novelist Salha Obaid says that she has given some thought to how fiction—including her own work—treats the past.

On May 26 at 20:30 GST, Obaid will speak at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair about the relationship between historical fiction and historical fact. History can be tricky to portray accurately on the page, and when novels set in earlier periods get made into films. Netflix's recent hit *The Dig*, based on John Preston's novel and the upcoming film version of Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* are two recent examples. The stakes can be high.

Among other things, Obaid says she expects that her event, which is titled "The Postman of Happiness Meets the Spartan Court," will address the dilemma that audiences often confuse fictionalized history on the big screen with fact.

Originally from the Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, Obaid is the author of three short story collections and two novels.

Her first book of short stories, *Alzheimers*, appeared in Arabic and 2010 and was also published in German. Since then, her fiction has won awards including a Young Emiratis Prize in the creative writing category. Although she has a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Sharjah, her career path has led her to writing.

Now based in Dubai, she works as a columnist for the newspaper *al-Ruya*.

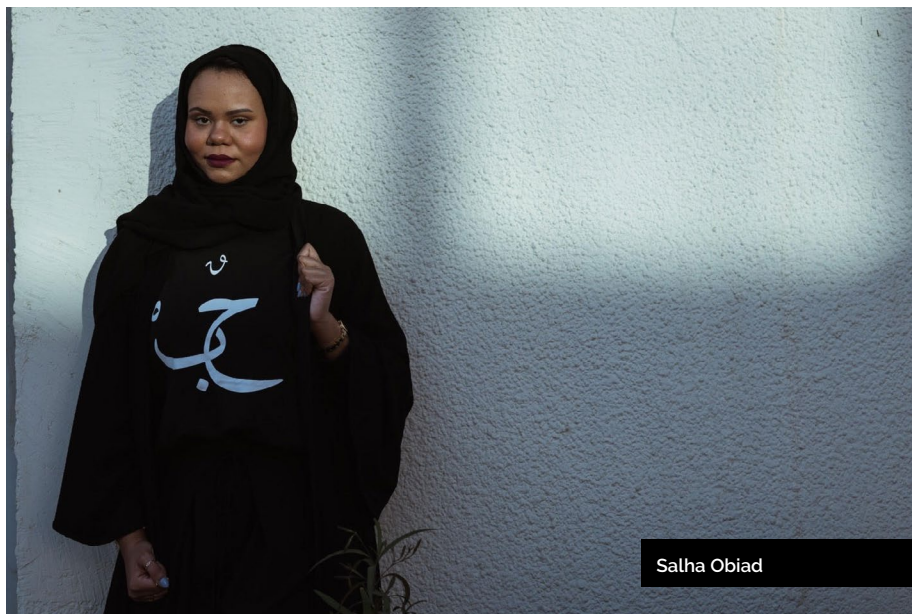
Her 2018 novel, *Maybe It's a Joke* (La'llaha Mazha) was published by Dar al-Mutawassit and deals with the dizzying transformations of Gulf societies over the last several decades.

"My last novel focused on historical Sharjah, starting from the 1930s," she says, "and on how what happened in the past affects modern life, especially psychologically."

In the novel, a young Emirati woman, Mera, comes to know her elderly one-eyed neighbor, Musallim. The novel portrays an unusual intergenerational friendship that uncovers how the "shock of the modern" has played out in society, politics, and beliefs.

"I was trying to uncover through this novel the deep questions that people in the past had about their lives and how those questions persisted through the huge, rapid changes the UAE underwent," Obaid says.

She's currently at work on her next novel. As in her previous books, her fiction is buttressed by good research—and she plans to put her time at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair to good use by taking advantage of easy access to thousands of new books. "Besides



"I was trying to uncover through this novel the deep questions that people in the past had about their lives and how those questions persisted through the huge, rapid changes the UAE underwent."

Salha Obaid on her novel, *Maybe It's a Joke*



meeting authors and readers," she says, "what I'm most excited about at this book fair is trying to get hold of as many reference books as I can, to use for my new novel."

Like so many, Obaid admits that the past 15 months of the pandemic have been hard for her.

"It's been a very intensive year in many ways and, as with the rest of the world, it was difficult for me to cope, especially since I usually write outside my office and in broad daylight

among crowds of people. People inspire me. Losing that affected my writing."

The pandemic also took its toll on her reading, she says, something she found more difficult to deal with than the effect on her writing. "I see myself firstly as a reader."

But with her talk at Abu Dhabi, she says she's looking forward to seeing crowds of people who keep her creative juices flowing—especially when those crowds are made of up of her fellow readers. •

Writer Pierre Jarawan: Lebanon to Germany, Slam Poet to Bestselling Novelist

At home during the pandemic with his world book tour canceled, Pierre Jarawan has hosted slam events from his base in Munich and spent more time writing novels.



Pierre Jarawan (Image: Marvin Ruppert)

By Chip Rossetti

Slam poetry is big business in Germany, according to novelist and veteran slam poet Pierre Jarawan.

“Germany has the biggest and most professional slam scene in the world,” he says. After all, a typical German slam poetry event draws a crowd of 500 people and sometimes fills 1,500-seat theaters, making it, in his words, “a mainstream event.”

Jarawan should know: he performed for more than 10 years as a slam poet and a made a living at it, which required him to do more than 100 shows pre year.

Born during the Lebanese Civil War to a Lebanese father and a German mother, he moved with his family at age three to Germany and now resides in Munich. After a decade in poetry, he made the impressive switch to international bestselling author with his first novel, *Am Ende bleiben die Zedern* (In the End, the Cedars Remain) which was published by Piper in 2016 to great acclaim in Germany, earning comparisons to Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*.

It was eventually translated into Portuguese, French, Dutch, Spanish, Polish, Italian, and English (from World Editions under the title *The Storyteller*.) The novel’s protagonist is a Lebanese-German, Samir, who returns to Lebanon as an adult to attempt to track down

his long-lost Lebanese father, who had abandoned his family years ago.

At the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, Jarawan returns to his slam poetry roots in an appearance with the Emirati performance artist Afra Atiq, in a program titled “The Power of Words” (May 28, 15:00 GST), a part of the cultural program being presented during Germany’s first of two years as guest of honor at Abu Dhabi.

“We’ll be talking,” he says, “about the power of writing—of both slam poetry and fiction—and about the different forms of slam poetry in Germany and the UAE.”

The life of a novelist is far more amenable to him these days, Jarawan says, particularly as a new father of twins.

“I’m actually very glad I don’t have to travel as much as I had to before,” he says, “and I really enjoy writing novels now.”

But he’s still very involved with the world of poetry, and hosts a slam event in his hometown of Munich. Given the necessity of live crowds, slam poetry was hit especially hard by the pandemic, and with the closure of theaters and clubs, his former colleagues were stranded without bookings.

“In that regard, I consider myself lucky,” he says.

But of course, the pandemic had its effect on his new writing career as well: his follow-up novel, *Ein Lied für die Vermissten*, came out in Germany in March 2020 from Berlin Verlag. “I had a huge book tour planned,” he says, “more than 60 events. And they all had to be canceled.”

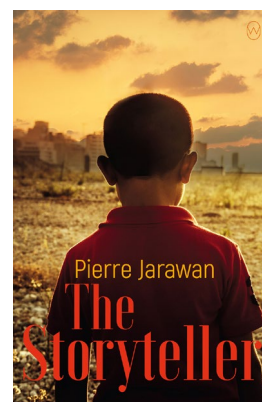
Ein Lied für die Vermissten will be published in English early next year under the title *A Song for the Missing*. Like *The Storyteller*, it also deals with Lebanon, family secrets, and betrayal, although it’s set during the Arab Spring.

“The novel speaks about the 17,500 people that disappeared in the Lebanese Civil War and that are still missing,” Jarawan says. “It’s the story of a man who discovers that in Lebanese society—and in his own family—there are many secrets.”

Jarawan is no stranger to the United Arab Emirates. His father lives there now, and he has visited before.

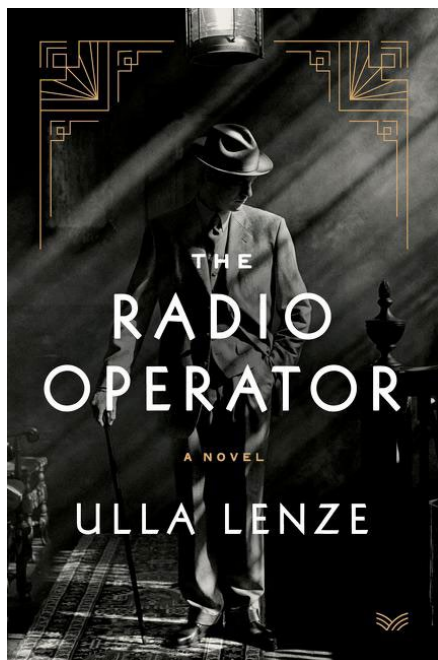
And in particular, he says, he’s looking forward to his talk at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair—digitally this year, and hopefully in person in 2022—when *A Song for the Missing* will be out.

“I expect to have a very interesting conversation with Afra,” in the book fair session, he says. “And I hope the book fair can bring back a bit of normality to people.” •



Ulla Lenze Explores Family History in Fiction

Speaking in Germany's Guest of Honor program at ADIBF, writer Ulla Lenze will discuss the craft of writing with Hisham El Kheshen and Eman Al Yousuf.



By Chip Rossetti

One of the literary artists scheduled to appear in Guest of Honor Germany's program at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, Ulla Lenze is an author whose writing has always had a wide geographical scope.

Her previous novels have been set in Turkey, India, and her native Germany, and she contributed to a nonfiction travel narrative on the nation of Georgia. She has also worked as a writer-in-residence in Damascus, Istanbul, Mumbai, and Venice.

Her newest novel is *The Radio Operator*, just published on May 4 in an English translation by Marshall Yarbrough by Harper Collins. It originally was published in German by Klett-Cotta in 2018 as *Der Empfänger* (The Recipient).

And the book takes a similarly broad sweep to Lenze's earlier work, its settings moving from New York to Germany and South America, even as it draws on the author's own family history.

The novel is based on the life of her great-uncle, Josef Klein, who was involved in a Nazi spy ring operating out of New York City just as World War II was beginning. On May 27 at 13:30 GST, she's scheduled to speak with the Egyptian author Hisham El Kheshen and moderator Eman Al Yousuf about the book and her connection to this unusually personal story of espionage.

Lenze says the story began for her when



Ulla Lenze (Image: Julien Menand)

her mother handed her a bundle of letters between her grandfather Carl and his brother, Josef.

"In the family," she says, "we knew there was this somewhat adventurous uncle who had emigrated to the United States and later, after a prison sentence, was deported to Germany. But we didn't know anything more specific."

Those letters were the springboard for her own research into a great-uncle she'd never known. "Through the letters I began to delve into his psyche, into his life," she says.

As a German living in New York City, Klein was recruited for his expertise in short-wave radio as part of a network known as the Duquesne Spy Ring. The discovery of the ring, while the United States was still neutral in the war, led to 33 convictions, including a prison term for Klein.

But Lenze hadn't yet thought to do any more with this remarkable piece of family history. "At first, I had no intention of writing a novel about him," she says. "I was simply fascinated by the search for clues. Gradually, however, it dawned on me that I could make a book out of it."

It required a good deal of research, she says, including a trip to New York City and interviews with intelligence experts and historians.

Although Klein's story is the stuff of spy novels, Lenze says she's not a fan of the genre

herself. "My novel is not a classic spy thriller," she says.

In writing the novel, she says, she was more interested in "the illumination of a morally highly ambivalent character. Josef Klein is an average man, a 'little' man who becomes a follower because he doesn't have the strength to resist."

When reading his letters to her grandfather, she says, she was impressed by Josef Klein's "friendly" and "cosmopolitan" character, but found herself preoccupied with the question of how someone like that could allow himself to serve the Nazi regime. "I think this question was the reason for my writing" the book.

Lenze studied music and philosophy at the University of Cologne, before turning to a career in fiction, and now lives in Berlin. She says the pandemic has been a trying time for her, as it has for so many, and that it has hindered her writing in particular.

"In my experience," she says, "writing needs a sense of expansiveness and freedom, and that's missing now." Fortunately, she recently started work on a new book and says she's looking forward to her talk at the book fair, fondly recalling a visit to Abu Dhabi in 2007. On that trip, she attended a literary salon and gave a reading from her first novel.

"It was an impressive experience," she says. "It's a pity I won't be able to travel this time." •

In Egypt, Publishers Turn to E-Commerce

Egyptian publisher and bookseller Ahmed Rashad says the loss of book fairs and bookstore closures during the pandemic makes the digital transformation more urgent than ever. He outlines some of the steps publishers are taking to move online.



Ahmed Rashad (Image: Egyptian Publishers Association)

By Porter Anderson

Our interview on [page 8](#) with Mohamed Rashad—president of the Arab Publishers Association—brings to light many of the policy-level issues encountered by publishers in the region during the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and looking at details of what publishing needs to recover and grow.

Publishing Perspectives is also glad to have had a chance to interview Rashad's son, Ahmed, for his ground-level viewpoints of a publisher and bookseller in Cairo.

Ahmed Rashad is the executive director of two publishing houses, Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah (ADIBF stand 8B27) and Dar Al Arabia lel Ketab. He also is chief executive of the high-end bookstore named al Masriah Al Lubnaniah. And he is a board member of the Egyptian Publishers Association.

We begin our exchange with sRashad by asking him to give us a sense for the challenges he has noticed as standouts during the pandemic era in Egypt.

Ahmed Rashad: The first challenge for us as publishers was the cancellation of all Arabic book fairs. As you know, Arabic fairs are the main market for selling books to the public in the Arab world, and they represent a large percentage of any publisher's sales during the year.

The second challenge was the complete closure of most bookstores in some Arab countries and the reduction of working hours for bookstores in other countries as a result of the curfews imposed in many places. Re-

member that we'd started with a fundamental problem even before the pandemic, the small number of bookstores in the Arab world.

And as for a third challenge, the market in the region was basically not prepared enough to accept the idea of reading online through platforms such as Amazon, Google, and so on. That issue arrived on top of the small number of services we have that sell print books and deliver them to homes. So in many cases, we were without the digital "magic solution" which, in other parts of the world, was helping publishers withstand the pandemic.

PP: In the Cairo market, how has book-selling fared? What has been your experience with your bookstore?

AR: The situation at the beginning of the pandemic became extremely difficult in Cairo as a result of a curfew and reduced working hours.

In addition, there was a decision to close all restaurants and cafés for a period of approximately three months, and our bookstore is located in a mall with restaurants and cafés.

So we resorted more to relying on selling online through our site and through our pages on social media and used boosted ads in which we explained a lot of our precautionary measures for the delivery of books. This solution greatly helped us withstand the situation and that's why we're now working on developing our site. We've increased our marketing budget through social media, as of the beginning of this year.

PP: How ready do you feel the region's book business was to take advantage of e-commerce and other digital responses to the crisis?

AR: In the Egyptian Publishers Association—and particularly on the Marketing and Public Relations Committee, which I head—we've been working since before the pandemic to persuade publishers of the necessity of pursuing digital transformation and working to evolve traditional selling methods to new sales methods, such as selling print books through online sites or social media networks.

These approaches aren't only good in confronting the pandemic, but also are solutions that help publishers solve the problem of there being too few bookstores. And this goes back to poor distribution. There are no distribution companies inside or outside the Arab world to distribute Arabic books.

As for other actions we took, we made a list last year of all sites that sell ebooks and then were able to instruct our Egyptian publishers on how to contact those sites. In addition, the leadership of the Egyptian Publishers Association has made an agreement with a vendor to digitize books for our publishers at a reasonable price.

In terms of public-facing efforts, the Egyptian Publishers Association also launched a campaign called "Stay Home With Your Book." That initiative has worked to encourage our publishers to raise their sales presence on social networks and on their sites, with free delivery for consumers.

And in the near term, we're preparing to conduct a workshop for Egyptian publishers with one of the biggest companies in the world on how to digitally convert books, the importance of digital transformation, and the latest statistics that explain how a publisher can survive in our world now if he takes the step of digital transformation.

PP: Lastly, are there points you think the Egyptian and Arab world industry should carry forward into our post-pandemic future?

AR: I think that the lesson learned throughout this pandemic is that there's simply no alternative to digital transformation and e-commerce. Even on a personal level, I've benefited from this both as a publisher and as a bookseller.

Any publisher in our Arab world who was taking steps toward digital before the pandemic hit has seen its sales double over what he or she was making before the crisis.

I can agree with those who say it didn't solve the problem as a whole, but the digital transformation and e-commerce actually helped some of us to withstand these circumstances.

The pandemic has helped us all start thinking about alternatives for distribution. •

Obeikan Publishing Embraces Digital Change

From printer to retailer to digital publisher, Saudi Arabia-based Obeikan has formed international partnerships and digital initiatives to meet changing business trends.



Mohamed Abdulah Alfriah



One of Obeikan's stores in Saudi Arabia

By Roger Tagholm

Founded as a printer in 1981 by Dr. Sheikh Fahad Obeikan, Saudi Arabia's Obeikan Group (ADIBF stand 8I25) opened its first store in 1991 in Riyadh and later added publishing to its portfolio.

By 2015, it operated 20 stores across the country. Since then, it has fine-tuned its operations to reflect changes in the market, as Obeikan Publishing's manager Mohamaed Abdulah Alfriah tells us.

Publishing Perspectives: How many stores do you have now?

Mohamed Abdulah Alfriah: We've changed our business strategy. Today, we utilize technology to reduce our operational costs and improve our service. We have reduced our outlets gradually but have maintained our market share by partnering with global and local e-commerce players. Currently, we have two physical stores and more than 12 e-commerce business partners, as well as our own digital store.

PP: How many titles does Obeikan Education publish?

MAA: We've reached 3,600 titles in 40 diversified categories—almost 4,000 volumes. In April of this year, Obeikan Publishing was honored with a first-place prize from the ministry of culture in its National Culture Awards. The award is designed to recognize Saudi publishers with the most influential achievements, generally the most beneficial and innovative presses in the Saudi publishing market.

PP: What's happening with digital publishing and Obeikan?

MAA: We've partnered with international and local digital content platform providers such as Google Play, Amazon, Apple, and Overdrive. We were aware of the digital transformation in publishing and became the first Arabic publisher to support digital content and partner with platform providers. Today we have our own digital Arabic content platform that offers almost 125,000 Arabic titles.

PP: You have a joint venture going with Cambridge University Press, don't you?

MAA: We have several notable partnerships with around 70 international publishers. Our partnership with Cambridge University Press is distinguished by its diversity in a number of academic, educational, and cultural titles, and it's an excellent and long-term partnership.

PP: What are the main challenges facing Arab world publishing?

MAA: I can summarize those challenges in a list this way:

- Transparency in market data
- Lack of market information and research
- Digital and paper piracy
- Not enough companies focused on distribution and redistribution
- Little government funding for book purchases
- Disorganized book events
- Low income level in most countries of the Arab region
- An increase in the production and printing of books, in relation to income levels

"We at Obeikan stress reaching out to our followers and readers around the world through participation in all major book events."

Mohamaed Abdulah Alfriah

PP: What do you hope to achieve at the 2021 Abu Dhabi International Book Fair?

MAA: Our slogan is "Spread Education and Knowledge" and we at Obeikan stress reaching out to our followers and readers around the world through participation in all major book events.

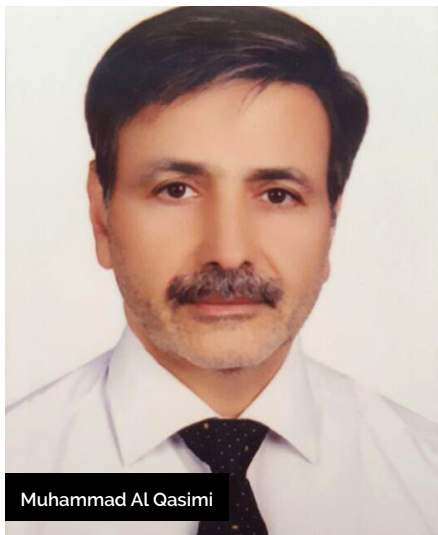
It's important for Obeikan to participate in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair since the event brings together the key stakeholders in the publishing industry on a single platform with major support from the organizers and HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed.

We hope to achieve:

- Ideas for establishing distribution companies in the Arab region
- Reports on the size of the market and sales of Arabic books, creating central information databases
- Unifying procedures, terms, and costs to participate in international exhibitions.

Dar Al Buragh Publishes Children's Books 'To Develop a Generation'

A pioneer in independent children's publishers in Iraq, Dar Al Buragh is on a mission to help kids celebrate Arabic 'language, culture, and history' through its books.



Muhammad Al Qasimi

By Olivia Snaije

Muhammad Al Qasimi opened his children's publishing house Dar Al Buragh in 2003, when a number of houses were founded following the invasion of Iraq.

At the time, Dar Al Buragh was the only independent children's publisher. Although Dar Al Buragh was established in Baghdad—and one of its listed addresses still is in the historic literary neighborhood of Baghdad—the company was moved to Najaf, south of Baghdad, following the devastating March 2007 car-bomb explosion that killed 26 people on Mutanabi Street in 2007.

Al Qasimi, with Ali Al Qasimi, Malek Al Amiri, and Safa' Abdelrazak, created Dar Al Buragh for readers 12 and younger with a mission of nurturing "a spirit of tolerance and cooperation, promoting nonviolence, and helping to develop a generation that can master its language, culture, and history."

"We wanted to contribute to the education of young children," Al Qasimi says. "Over the past 30 years of wars and sanctions, economic conditions hadn't allowed people to focus on reading. We used very low prices to make books attractive. In fact we sold books at cost. There are 40 million Iraqis, and we should have been able to make a mark. Unfortunately this was not the case."

Although Dar Al Buragh's books are translated into Kurdish, Azeri, Persian, Turkish, Indonesian, and English, books are exported primarily to countries in the Gulf, and the number of books sold in Iraq is fewer than one might expect, Al Qasimi says.

Today, Dar Al Buragh publishes 20 to 25 books a year, with print runs of 2,500 over 18 months. Of these, Al Qasimi says, 3,000 to 4,000 copies are for export. Another thorn in Dar Al Buragh's side is piracy, which affects all publishers in the Arab world. Forty of the company's books have been pirated, with illegal editions found in the Iraqi market selling for US\$1 instead of the official US\$2 for a genuine edition.

The company's authors and illustrators are from all over the Arab world, but many of the illustrators are also from Iran because of their extensive experience in the field.

Fereshteh Najafi illustrated author Mihned al-Aqous' 2016 *The Open Window*, a book selected as a favorite by France's *National Library* magazine for its poetry and sensitivity on the subject of war. Several Dar Al Buragh books have won an Etisalat Award, including *The Judge's Mule* (2015) by Shafeek Mehdi and illustrated by Taibah Abdullah; *The Secret of the Well* (2019) by Ali Qasem and illustrated by Masoumeh Haji; and *The Apple* (2020) by Asma Amara with illustrations by Atifa Abdullah.

Al Qasimi says that Dar Al Buragh's books are all in standard Arabic. He says he's opposed to the idea of publishing in colloquial Arabic, although some parents and educators say children can relate to it better because it's less formal.

"We put vowels on all our words," Al Qasimi says, "so it's clear for everyone and they can learn more easily."

The publishing house has a game app that can be found on Google Play and in the App Store, but developing ebooks is not a profitable model for him, Al Qasimi says, because,

"The Arab customer is not used to paying for digital books."

Audiobooks are not on his radar either, for the moment. "You need specific skills to produce and distribute audiobooks," he says, "which we need to investigate further."

He adds that exporting Arabic-language books is the heart of the business.

Dar Al Buragh has five full-time employees, and Al Qasimi says that books are printed in Iraq, Lebanon, or Iran, depending on their type and where the market is. Distribution is managed from a warehouse in the United Arab Emirates, a facility that Dar Al Buragh opened several years ago. They'll be sending a shipment of books printed in Iran to the UAE for distribution at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (stand 8A51).

Al Qasimi says that printing in Lebanon has been less affected by the country's economic crisis (they pay for printing in US dollars) than by the various lockdowns of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

But the health crisis has had a big impact on business, Al Qasimi says, as all book fairs in the region that they would have attended in 2020 were cancelled except for Sharjah International Book Fair in November.

"We were happy to go," he says. "The attendance was low, but we sold books and got in touch with booksellers and had virtual meetings."

Twelve books that Dar Al Buragh had postponed last year will be published in time for this year's Sharjah fair, and the company will be at Sharjah Children's Reading Festival just before attending the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. •



Dar Al-Tanweer: Active Across the Arab World

Tackling import and export logistics, book piracy, and pandemic challenges, Dar al-Tanweer is licensing foreign books and optimistic about book sales at regional fairs.

By Olivia Snaije

The publishing house Dar al-Tanweer (stand 8E27 at ADIBF) operates in three countries and publishes fiction and nonfiction. Although the company is older, it became active in its present incarnation in 2008, with its offices in Beirut, Cairo, and Tunis sharing resources and printing costs to better cover the international Arabic-language market. This past April, it joined the International Alliance of Independent Publishers.

Arab publishers have been dealing with regional instability and other recurring problems such as distribution challenges and piracy for many years, but the coronavirus pandemic has been a particularly difficult hurdle because of publishers' reliance on book fairs as important points of sale in the region. Moreover, the unprecedented economic crisis in Lebanon has been devastating for publishers there.

Dar al-Tanweer's Beirut director, Hassan Yaghi, tells *Publishing Perspectives* that the biggest challenge for his branch this year has been "the vast hijacking operation by Lebanese banks in which a great deal of capital simply vanished."

This was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of book fairs, which created further turmoil, says Yaghi. The current challenge, he says, "is at the level of bank transfers which, overnight, have become extremely complicated. And if the banking situation does not change, we'll unfortunately be obliged to leave Beirut."

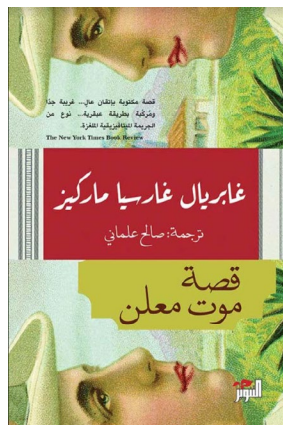
In addition, he says, there are increasing complications regarding imports. "We work on a day-to-day basis."

It might seem that during a time of crisis having branches in two other countries could help relieve some of the stress, but Yaghi says that the Beirut office is the most active of the three as an import center because of easy customs procedures and zero-rating of books.

The Tunisian and Egyptian offices concentrate on their own domestic markets. "The Tunisian branch was an attempt to enter the North African market," he says, an effort "which unfortunately failed because of customs complications between these countries. As for Egypt, because of book piracy, our branch has turned to the Egyptian domestic market only."

Despite the economic crisis in Lebanon, Yaghi says that today, the greatest danger to publishing remains book piracy and a lack of legal enforcement.

Sherif-Joseph Rizk, who runs Dar al-Tanweer in Cairo, says he agrees with Yaghi about book piracy and goes a step further. He says he thinks that during the pandemic, book piracy



Dar al-Tanweer has bought Arabic translation rights to foreign titles including *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel García Márquez, and *Flights* by Olga Tokarczuk

cy increased, filling a gap in which book fairs were cancelled and book shops were closed. (Book fairs account for 40 percent of Dar al-Tanweer Egypt's sales.)

"When I look at numbers across the world in publishing," Rizk says, "things look rosy in developed markets. It made me question what's going on here. Overall sales have declined. Why hasn't the retail sector picked up lost revenue from fairs? We surmise that the drop in sales is connected to piracy. The difference is that in normal times, the official channels for selling books are open." By contrast, under the pandemic's constraints, Rizk says, "Pirates are going unchecked and can operate 'normally.'"

Egypt is the main hub for book piracy, Rizk says, adding that people think Egyptians are producing pirated books that they sell on the street. "But it's for export. There's a route via Jordan. And another route via Morocco."

Dar al-Tanweer subscribes to a service offered by the online Arabic bookstore, Neelwafurat. The company looks for book-pirate sites and tries to get them to close down. "Google isn't very helpful," Rizk says, "and they could do a lot by not showing these sites on their search engines. When you look up any English or French book online, you won't find a pirated copy. But an Arab book on these sites comes up right away. It makes a huge difference."

In 2020, at least half of Dar al-Tanweer's production was delayed, Rizk says.

"Little by little we're getting back to normal," Yaghi says. "For the moment we're printing books by Gabriel García Márquez, such as *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. These are books that have long been pirated on the market and are being published legally for the first time by Dar al-Tanweer."

Rizk signed a rights deal in 2017 with

"When I look at numbers across the world in publishing, things look rosy in developed markets. It made me question what's going on here."

Sherif-Joseph Rizk

Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells in Barcelona for worldwide Arabic rights to Márquez's catalogue.

Yaghi says the Lebanon office is printing another 10 books including Olga Tokarczuk's *Flights*, Alain de Botton's *The Art of Travel*, and Amor Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*.

In Egypt, Rizk says, Dar al-Tanweer prints at least 20 books per year. The rest are imported from Lebanon. "We're printing now, for example, *The Parisian*, by Isabella Hammad," he says, "but it's tricky because you can't suddenly print more than the market can absorb. It's very challenging because bookshops aren't paying on time as they have liquidity issues."

On a brighter side, Dar al-Tanweer was an exhibitor at Sharjah International Book Fair in November. There, Rizk says, sales were better than expected. Rizk is also a trustee for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, and the winner will be announced on May 25 during the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. •

Translator Marilyn Booth on 'Amazing Work' Written in Arabic

Among the leading Arabic-to-English translators in the literary field, Marilyn Booth speaks at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair about what she calls her 'vocation.'

By Olivia Snaije

Like most people, Marilyn Booth has spent a large part of these past 18 months working from home.

A translator of Arabic to English and a professor and director of research at the faculty of Oriental Studies at Oxford's Magdalen College, she has taught her classes remotely, and part of the time she's been on sabbatical. Although she says she has missed being in contact with people, "I'm a bit of a hermit, so in some ways working at home is very congenial," she tells *Publishing Perspectives*.

In February, Oneworld released Booth's translation of Lebanese author Hoda Barakat's novel *Voices of the Lost*, which won the 2019 International Prize for Arabic Fiction. Her translation of Omani writer Jokha Alharthi's new novel, *The Bitter Orange Tree*, is scheduled for release next month from Simon & Schuster Australia.

Booth translated Alharthi's novel *Celestial Bodies* (Sandstone Press, 2018), which won the 2019 Man Booker International Prize. She also just finished an extensive research book on the late 19th-century feminist Zaynab Fawwaz who was born in Lebanon and worked in Egypt. *The Career and Communities of Zaynab Fawwaz: Feminist Thinking in Fin-de-siècle Egypt* is to be published this autumn by Oxford University Press.

On May 24 at 20:00 GST, Booth will par-

ticipate in an event on the art of translation as part of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. She'll be joined by Michael Cooperson, a translator and professor of Arabic at the University of California in Los Angeles—and winner of a 2021 Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the translation category—and by Hamed Al Ghaithi, an evolutionary biologist and translator. The session is scheduled to be moderated by Bilal Orfali, holder of the Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies and chair of the department of Arabic and Near Eastern languages at the American University of Beirut.

In our interview, Booth underlines that she's not a full-time translator, but rather a full-time university professor and researcher. This means, she says, that she doesn't have time to read as much literature in Arabic as she might like to. So how does she choose which books to read?

"I don't have a formula," she says. "It's a matter of fitting it in when I can. I tend to be very loyal to people I've already translated; they're at the top of my list. I do read other people, in fact there are two novels that I'm very interested in, and neither one is by anyone I've translated before. Translation for me is a vocation. I love it."

Booth says she'd also like to translate 19th-century novels because that's when the novel was just getting started in Arabic. "Many early novels were by women," she says. "Those by both men and women put politics of gender at the center and there's a strong focus on mar-



Marilyn Booth (Image: Bette Chapman)

riage choice and rights of the young and this would be of interest to an audience. It also fits into my work as a gender historian."

These novels often have an element of melodrama in them, Booth says, adding that of all her translations the one that may have had the most reach—the one that's taught in university programs—was "quite melodramatic," besides being "political-feminist-edgy." *The Open Door* was published in Arabic by Latifa al-Zayyat in 1960, and in Booth's English translation in 2000 (American University in Cairo Press) and 2017 (American University in Cairo Press/Hoopoe). It's a feminist novel that remains relevant today. It won the inaugural Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 1996.

While interest in Arabic literature in translation appears to be increasing, it remains "pretty limited" today, Booth says.

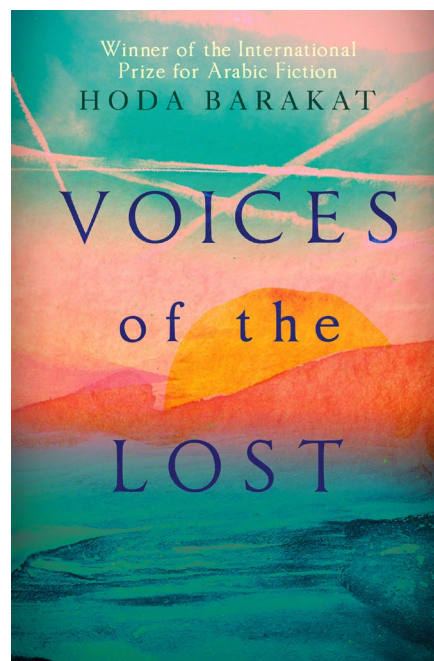
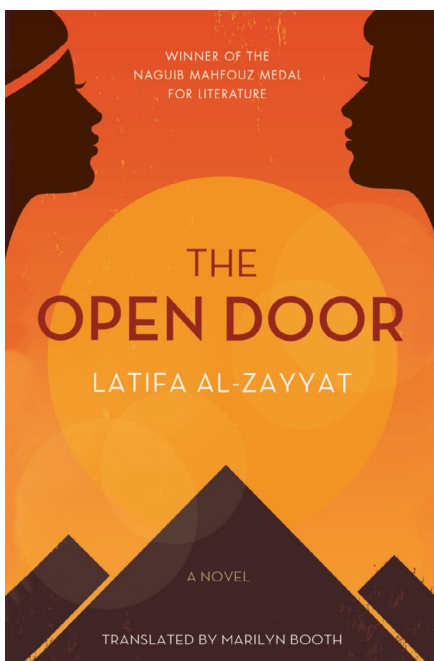
Winning the 2019 Man Booker International Prize with Jokha Alharthi for *Celestial Bodies* was a "small milestone, and it's great to have an Arabic work win it," she says.

"It has enabled young Arab authors to write. It made it more inviting, in terms of publishing and translating. I also loved the fact that it went to an Omani author because [Oman] wasn't on the map, even in terms of Arabic literature."

And yet, "Personally," she says, "I have to say it hasn't made a difference, other than I'm gratified. But to be honest, publishers aren't beating down my door."

Booth says it's important for people to understand that despite the problems of the last decade, "The whole [Arab] region has generated a lot of amazing work."

This leaves substantial room for publishers to commission more translations from Arabic, given that another project Booth and her colleagues would like bring to fruition is a collection of Modern Arabic classics. •



Bookwire CEO Jens Klingelhöfer on Digital Possibilities in Book Publishing

From ebook and audiobook distribution to a forthcoming NFT marketplace for books, Jens Klingelhöfer is constantly looking for the next big thing in digital publishing.

By Porter Anderson

When the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's Guest of Honor Germany program looks at "Ebooks in the Time of the Pandemic," one of the speakers in the session will be Jens Klingelhöfer, the co-founding CEO of Bookwire. This session in the professional program is set for 13:30 GST on May 25.

At 12 years old, the distributors of ebooks and audiobooks also provides publishing software that include its Bookwire OS program.

In addition, the company has produced a second year's iteration of "All About Audio," its international conference on issues and developments in audiobook publishing. And, in an entirely new offering, Bookwire has announced that in the autumn, it will open an "NFT marketplace" for blockchain transactions.

Publishing Perspectives has had a chance to put a few quick questions to Klingelhöfer ahead of his appearance in the Germany's guest of honor professional program, and we start by asking for a couple of his top-of-mind points about ebooks and their performance during the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

Jens Klingelhöfer: Above all, the pandemic has shown us how important digitization has become for the publishing industry, considering digital products, marketing and working culture.

Ebooks have seen significant increases in sales and consumption, even more so in the less mature markets and in certain categories. In this respect, the pandemic has greatly accelerated digital growth a lot, not only in ebooks, but also in audiobooks and podcasts.

Publishing Perspectives: The All About Audio conference has pointed out that some of the "digital acceleration" we saw during the deepest lockdowns of the pandemic are holding up—the business is staying strong. In Bookwire's data, do you see this, too?

JK: Absolutely. From what we can see at Bookwire, audiobooks are the strongest growth driver in digital publishing.

The growth of 2020 has continued in 2021, and we expect that to be sustained this year and in 2022. Clearly, there's a lot of momentum in the market on the publishers' side, but also on the retail and platform side, all competing with each other to offer consumers the best possible range of audio products and services, including podcasts.

PP: Can you give us a sense for how you see the importance of blockchain and Bookwire's coming NFT Marketplace. We should



Jens Klingelhöfer (Image: Mario Andreyva)

note for our readers that "NFT" stands for "non-fungible token," a unit of data stored on a digital ledger that underlies a blockchain.

JK: I could not be more excited. Of course, we don't have a crystal ball, but I am so intrigued by new product forms that benefit natively from blockchain and NFT technology.

Until now, digital publishing products have been more or less a digital copy of physical products. But with the ability to create digital originals, a new world of potential digital publishing products is opening up.

As we've said many times before, the digitization has just begun, and with NFTs, the new world is becoming more tangible. But of course we need to learn quickly about how consumers will adapt to it and what will work commercially. NFTs also provide the opportunity to reach Generation Z, which will develop a new perception of ownership in the digital world.

PP: With all your experience in Europe and the Americas and other parts of the world marketplace, what's the best advice you can offer the Arab world's publishers in terms of digital reading and sales?

JK: The Arab world is a huge publishing market, the potential is enormous. And I've met many great people, entrepreneurs, and publishers over the past years at publishing events, for example in Jordan.

The biggest challenge is still creating a functional payment and digital retail infra-

"The Arab world is a huge publishing market, the potential is enormous. And I've met many great people, entrepreneurs, and publishers over the past years at publishing events."

Jens Klingelhöfer

structure, and most importantly, trust and collaboration among the different players in the publishing industry.

We've seen some initiatives from international companies, but the big players still have not yet put much emphasis on the Arab world, which is of course very diverse. A lot of trust and collaboration is needed to make things attractive and compelling to consumers.

Only with joint strength and investment will growth in the digital market emerge. •

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