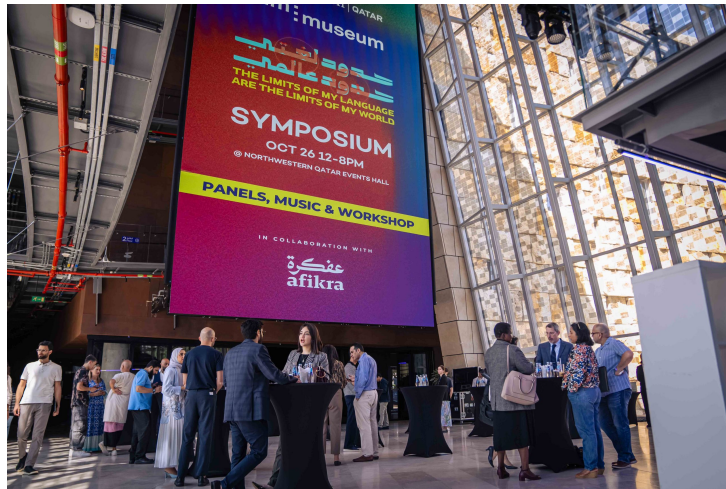

Northwestern Qatar's media majlis museum and afikra conclude a public symposium on Arabic storytelling in AI, film and media



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Doha, Qatar – October 28, 2024 – media majlis museum (mm:museum) at Northwestern

University in

Qatar, in collaboration with the global media and educational platform afikra, hosted a public

symposium on the future of Arabic storytelling through artificial intelligence (AI), film, and media.

Hosted on the sideline of mm:museum's ongoing exhibition on Arabic curated by Northwestern Qatar

alumna Amal Zeyad Ali, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world," the full-day,

multidisciplinary event explored the intersection of technology and storytelling in the Arab world.

It

included several panel discussions with local and regional voices, each focusing on a unique theme, two

performances, and various collateral activities, drawing a diverse, engaged audience who actively

participated in discussions with experts and innovators.

Alfredo Cramerotti, director of mm:museum, said, "Our aim is to promote and feature conversations,

debates, performances, and networking focused on the Arabic language in media, tech, and publishing.

With this event, we wanted to speak to a young audience through relevant and interactive content, providing a platform to experiment and question contemporary issues, and inviting young people to explore different perspectives.”

Safa Arshad, manager of audiences and community outreach at mm:museum said, “We are thrilled to

have brought together such a dynamic group of thinkers and creators to explore the intersection of Arabic storytelling with cutting-edge technologies. This symposium not only highlighted the richness of

Arabic narratives but also sparked vital conversations on how AI and media are reshaping the way these

stories are told and shared with the world.”

Panel 1: Screens and Scripts: The Future of Arabic in Media

The first panel explored how the Arabic language is evolving across different media platforms, from

traditional outlets to modern media and social media. Lebanese director Amanda Abou Abdallah, award-winning filmmaker and Northwestern Qatar associate professor Rana Kazkaz, and producer

Hussein Fakhri shared insights on how Arabic is being adapted to reach global audiences while maintaining its identity.

Kazkaz said “The use of the Arabic language in media is not just a means of communication; it is a bridge

to our cultural heritage and a vessel for knowledge production, innovation, creativity, and intellectual

growth. Crucially, it ensures that our narratives have a part in shaping the global story.”

Abou Abdallah said, “It’s not enough to create media that speaks in Arabic; we must think in Arabic and

create from an Arab mindset to truly capture the essence of our culture, articulate our narratives, and preserve authenticity in our stories.”

Panel 2: Algorithms and Alphabets: Advancing Arabic in Technology

The second panel highlighted the intersection of Arabic and AI technologies, discussing the use of AI in the Arabic language. Nizar Habash from NYU Abu Dhabi and Salma Alkhoudi, PhD in anthropology graduate from Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences, discussed the potential to transform how we interact with the Arabic language.

Habash said, “The remarkable advancements in AI and NLP have the potential to shape a new writing and communication culture for the Arabic language in the 21st century. These technologies make it

easier for native speakers, who primarily use dialects, to write and communicate in Standard Arabic.

Additionally, they offer valuable support for non-Arabs who are interested in learning and using both

Arabic and its various dialects.”

Panel 3: Arabic Publishing in Transition

The last panel explored the evolving landscape of Arabic publishing, this session brought together literary and academic experts such as Enam Al-Wer from the University of Essex and Layan Abdul Shakoor, founder and creative director at Saudi-based writing and publishing house Mauzoun, and the

Lebanese author Omar Thawabeh. They explored the interaction between Classical Arabic and various dialects in contemporary literature.

Enam Al-Wer said, “This panel brings together publishers, linguists, and translators to explore innovative

methods of collaboration to foster empirically informed publications that embrace the rich diversity of

Arabic. Findings from academic research into the history and evolution of Arabic, along with its sociolinguistic dynamics in contemporary Arabic-speaking societies, provide the basis for a linguistic

style that mirrors how Arabic is used, rather than how its native speakers should use it.”

The event is part of a broader collaboration between mm:museum and afikra, which also includes a

three-episode podcast series exploring the Arabic language, culture, and identity. The series is jointly

produced and published on The Afikra Podcast Network, furthering the conversation on these vital

themes.

mm:museum is the Arab world’s first media museum, dedicated to exploring, innovating, and celebrating media. Going beyond traditional museum roles, it promotes intellectual exploration,

open dialogue, and innovation at the intersection of art, communication, and technology.

Through a

vibrant program of public initiatives, exhibitions, and workshops, mm:museum demonstrates its

commitment to inclusivity and global perspectives, actively partnering with international

institutions,

artists, and technologists. Aimed at engaging young audiences, it provides a platform for

experimentation and encourages discussions on contemporary issues from diverse perspectives.