

Inspiring Global Dialogue: Northwestern's Public Symposium on Arabic Storytelling in AI, Film, and Media



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Safa, who leads audience-specific programming and community initiatives at mm:museum, shared her insights on the planning and vision behind orchestrating this impactful event. Known for its intellectual depth, mm:museum serves as a critical platform, offering events like the Symposium on Arabic Language to bring thought leaders, academics, and industry experts together to address pressing issues and share pioneering ideas.

In discussing her role, Safa highlighted mm:museum's strategic approach to curating annual exhibition themes, detailing how the museum selects topics that resonate with contemporary global challenges. "It's about creating a lasting impact and addressing questions that matter both now and in the future," she noted, explaining that these themes drive accompanying exhibition events and programming. This year's Fall 2024 exhibition, *Limits of my language are the limits of my world*, delves into Arabic language and explores themes of control, influence, and cultural impact. Through this exhibition, the museum reveals how language shapes cultures, examining its influence over 1,000 years across religion, politics, trade, and science.

"We're focused on fostering dialogue that welcomes diverse perspectives," she added. "Our goal is to create a space where visitors and program attendees can engage deeply, reflect, and bridge fields to generate new ideas." As a founding member of the museum, Safa's role encompasses

program design, outreach and audience development and engagement. She explained, “We strive to bring voices from various fields and backgrounds. Whether it’s leaders in artificial intelligence, creatives, media, or museum professionals, our events must be engaging and relevant to everyone.”

One unique feature of mm:museum’s programming is its audience-centric approach, which Safa and her team have refined to encourage active participation. An example is the Symposium, which includes workshops, panel discussions, and open Q&A sessions to engage attendees.

“People absorb more and connect with the material when they’re actively involved,” she explained.

Managing an event of this scale comes with logistical challenges. With high-profile speakers, students, and international guests, coordinating schedules and handling venue logistics requires meticulous planning. Despite the complexities, Safa finds the work highly rewarding. “The most fulfilling part is seeing participants leave inspired and eager to collaborate,” she shared.

“Knowing that we foster real connections and fresh perspectives makes the effort worthwhile.”

Reflecting on the symposium’s broader impact, Safa emphasized that it’s more than a one-time event—it serves as a launchpad for collaborations that continue throughout the year. “Connections made here often translate into partnerships, other opportunities, and international projects,” she

noted, adding that this ongoing impact is among mm:museum's greatest strengths.

Her dedication helps ensure that the museum remains a leading forum for thought leadership.

“Our aim is to make a difference, push boundaries, and support meaningful work that extends beyond the event, in line with the academic mission of the university,” Safa concluded.