



**Aga Khan University**

(International) in the United Kingdom

**Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISM)**

# **The Landscape of Arab Publications: Challenges and Opportunities**

**Wednesday 31 January 2018**

**Leif Stenberg:**

Introducing the Muslim Civilisations Abstracts project and the speakers

**Andre Gaspard:**

1. The size of the Arab publishing market (number of published books, selling rates, genres, reading rates and segments of audience) and highlighting the changes over the last 40 years (the impact of the lack of any live bibliographic data of publications in the Arabic language)
2. Current challenges that face publisher to publish academic and non-academic books (selection criteria and other publishers and non-publisher related factors)
3. The impact of censorship, piracy and the buying power in most Arab countries
4. The market of translated books from Arabic or into Arabic
5. Digital vs hard-copy publications
6. Private or self-funded publishers vs governmental or governmentally supported publishers and capital-based publishers vs outside capital-based publishers
7. Street markets and their role in the publication landscape (destructive economic element vs popular and cheaper way to distribute books)
8. Book fairs and their influence on Arabic publications

**Mohammed Almahfali:**

1. Relationships between Arab academics/authors and publishers (private, governmental and institutional)
2. Sensitivity and censorship as determining factors of authors' selections of topics to write on

3. Lack of national recognition of authors' achievements and insufficient economic rewards of publishing
4. The socio-political atmosphere and the quality of writing for publication, RAPP project as an indicator
5. Endangering academic life and the existence of academic institutions and its influence on publications (Yemen, Syria, Iraq, etc.)

**Walid Ghali:**

1. The role of Arab world libraries (national, public, university) in encouraging/discouraging publication in the Arab world (as a meeting space for authors and publishers)
2. Policy making in relation to national and public library and its influence on the publication market (acquiring policies, political restrictions to collect or not collect certain types of books, copyrights, deposit legislations)
3. National bibliographies (lack of reliable statistics about publications of the Arab world)
4. The role of unions such as Library Union, Arab Writer Union, Arab Publisher Union in creating a better environment for publication
5. Public libraries and the increase of readership (the effect of borrowing books from public library on the expansion of the book market)

**Charlotte Whiting:**

1. AKU-ISMC's in Translation: Modern Muslim Thinkers series: selection criteria – which titles succeed and why?
2. Not-for-profit mission-based publishers versus commercial publishing
3. The role of copyright in promoting titles for translation

**Mohamad Meqdad:**

MCA project as an attempt to counteract the loss of produced knowledge in the Arab world by making Arabic published works known internationally and attempting to give an online access to them through abstracts and later on books through the MCA's website

**Leif Stenberg:**

Concluding remarks on the relationship between current scene of publications and the process of producing knowledge in the Arab world

**Questions and answers**

**Refreshment and continuing discussions**

## Chair

**Dr Leif Stenberg:** Director of AKU-ISMC in London and a Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Aga Khan University. Prior to joining ISMC, he was an Assistant Professor in History of Religions at Uppsala University, a visiting scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University and at the Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas (IFEAD) in Damascus, Syria.

## Speakers

**Mr André Gaspard:** The founder of the Middle East specialist Saqi bookshop and publishing houses in London and Beirut. Mr Gaspard has dedicated his life to promoting international culture and literary excellence, encouraging dialogue between the Arab world and the West. He has published critically acclaimed, award-winning books, originally written in Arabic and other languages. Mr Gaspard previously worked as a journalist and solicitor in Beirut. He lives in Beirut, Lebanon.

**Dr Mohammed Al-Mahfali:** Currently, Dr Al-Mahfali is a researcher at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, LU on a fellowship from International Institute for Education, Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF). He works on two projects *Research and Public Policy Making in the Arab World RAPP* and *Political and Social Transformations in Egyptian Woman Short Story 2011-2017*. Previously, he worked at Hadhramout University, Yemen as a lecturer (2006-2010) then as an Assistant Professor in Arabic literature (2014-2016).

**Dr Walid Ghali:** Dr Ghali is a chartered librarian of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). He joined the AKU-ISMC in July 2012 and was appointed as Head Librarian for the joint library of the Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and the Institute of Ismaili Studies in February 2014. Prior to that, he worked in various librarian roles at the American University in Cairo.

**Dr Charlotte Whiting:** Dr Whiting is the Manager of the AKU-ISMC's Publications Department as well as the Governance in Muslim Contexts Programme. Previously, Dr Whiting was Deputy Manager of the Iraq Programme at the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), an initiative working to build research capacity at Iraqi universities

**Mr Mohamad Meqdad:** Mr Meqdad is the Arabic Editor of the Muslim Civilisations Abstracts Project since 2011. Prior to joining the AKU-ISMC, he worked as a professional archaeologist in several national and international archaeological expeditions in Syria for over four years exploring hidden cultures, preserving and displaying them to the public.