

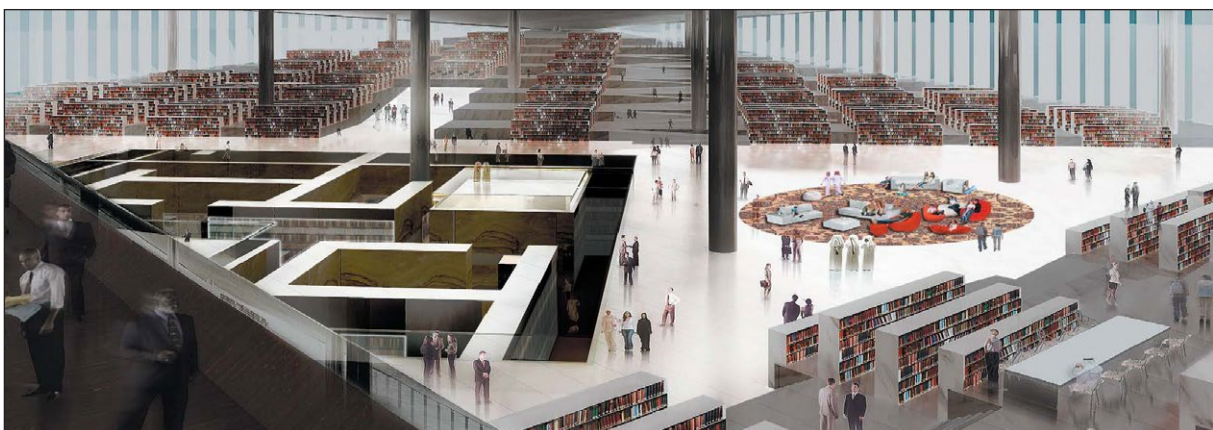
People in the News

Henry Owino and Katarzyna Dudek

At the Charleston Library Conference your *Insights* Editors were intrigued to read a presentation abstract which stated: *"A library collection should fit the mission for which it is created. The number of books it holds does not determine its worth."* (E J Loveland, 2000). If so, how do we create a national library and how do we build its collection from scratch without making many mistakes? We went along to the presentation and were privileged to meet Henry Owino and Katarzyna Dudek, who talked about their involvement in the project to develop a collection for the Qatar National Library (QNL), which is due to be opened shortly. Their presentation focused on their three years' experience of selection, acquisition and processing of library materials in order to achieve the Opening Day Collection.

The building of a national library from concept to completion is a rare and substantial project, so we were eager to interview them to learn more. We asked Henry and Katarzyna to tell us about how the new library will serve the people of Qatar. They explained that the QNL's building will provide a public platform for knowledge and a creative space for all the members of the diverse community of Qatar. It will help QNL in its efforts to support Qatar National Vision 2030 that aims to shift Qatar's economy from a carbon-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

'a rare and substantial project'



Computer-generated image of the Qatar National Library, soon to be opened

85 A definition of 'national library' is a library which has the duty of collecting and preserving the literature of the nation within and outside the country. Often, the national library building becomes an icon for knowledge, located in the heart of the arts, cultural, entertainment and municipal district of the country where, as a prominent landmark, it should showcase the nation's lifelong passion for knowledge and learning. What makes the Qatar National Library unique is the fact that it will serve the country and people through its three functions: national library, university and research library, and metropolitan public library. By combining those three library functions in one, the QNL will fulfil all the functions of a national library as defined by UNESCO.

'its three functions: national library, university and research library, and metropolitan public library'

Collection building, both print and digital, on the scale of a national library – and meeting these expectations – represents a huge undertaking. We asked Henry and Katarzyna about the planning and what they have found to be the greatest challenges. They told us that prior to the official announcement of the establishment of QNL, a lot of background work and negotiation on strategic sourcing had already commenced, but there were also purchases of a single-source nature to be negotiated, especially from antique book dealers' collections suitable for the heritage collection. Once the Blanket Purchase Agreements came on board in 2013, there was a vigorous acquisition of academic and non-academic public library, children's and young adult materials, mainly English-language. Other sourcing of materials has been based on specific individual collection purchases through Arabic single-source vendors as well as through attendance at local and regional book fairs, which have accounted for a significant proportion of Arabic books. The other category of acquisition has been the licensed content for electronic and digital resources that have required individual negotiations with the vendors and aggregators, as well as with the producers in some instances.

Building the collection has involved the following stages of planning and implementation:

- budget allocation to cover the acquisition and licensing of content as identified
- production of collection development guidelines – a tool to guide our requirements
- selection of titles for both approval and firm orders using profiles and the subject specifications, which enabled effective choices of the right books for the QNL collection
- documentation of orders, invoices and accounts, and receipts and payments were discussed and clearly understood by the Library staff and vendors from the beginning of the contract implementation
- shelf-ready technical specification. The only issue here was the slow response and delivery times from the providing radio-frequency identification (RFID) company.

'a significant proportion of the Arabic books acquired are having to be catalogued and processed in house'

The main challenge has been with the limited presence of Arabic aggregators with matching shelf-ready services like those of large English-language content suppliers. This is why a significant proportion of the Arabic books acquired are having to be catalogued and processed in house. It is also worth mentioning that the volume of Arabic publishing is comparatively low and considered to be around 15,000 new titles (annually). This is exclusive of reprints of existing titles, which is common.

'QNL offers free access to a wide variety of online resources'

Although the physical building – which looks amazing – is not yet open, the QNL online resources are already up and running. We were keen to know how this is being promoted and what the take-up has been so far. Henry explained that the QNL offers free access to a wide variety of online resources through its website. These resources meet the information needs of all members of society.

86 The online resources include the following:

- Arabic books and journals through Arabic Online Databases
- academic and research databases, such as ProQuest, SpringerLink, and Oxford and Cambridge Journals
- children's and teen resources
- encyclopaedias and dictionaries
- audio books and e-books
- international magazines, such as Zinio, Vogue Archives
- arts and humanities, including the Literature Resource Center and Naxos Music and Video Library
- economics and business resources, such as The Economist Intelligence Unit
- engineering and technology journals.

Anyone who lives in Qatar and has a valid Qatari ID/Residence Permit is eligible for free library registration through the Library's website (<https://library.qnl.qa/selfreg~S1>). Details on registrations are also available on the QNL's website. All children and teens under 18 years must have a parent or legal guardian's consent to register to use the Library collections.

The promotion of the new Qatar National Library services takes many forms. Librarians have already started to provide special services and many active monthly programmes for the Qatar community, like book club meetings in English and Arabic, reading activities for children and teens, book discussions, database training sessions and so on. The QNL currently organizes and partners in local community events, regional initiatives and programmes, and international exhibitions and conferences. Some of the activities and programmes launched to promote the library include:

- Document Delivery Service (DDS): QNL provides users with materials in electronic format for studies and research that are not found through QNL resources
- 'Ask a Librarian' Service: a 24/7 service where any member of the community of Qatar can ask a question of a resident librarian through the website
- The Qatar Research Portal: QNL and Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) has teamed up to bring the outcomes of QNRF-funded research through an advanced online, searchable database that allows users to search for, or browse, any published outcome of QNRF-funded research projects. The online portal is now live and can be accessed by students and QNL patrons
- The Open Access Authors Fund, which pays article processing charges for articles in open access journals that use this funding method, and is available till the fiscal year ending 30 June 2017.

More information on any of the above programmes and activities can be found on the QNL website.

QNL's online databases seem to be a most fantastic resource, but national libraries are also important repositories for special collections. We asked Henry and Katarzyna to tell us how the new National Library will fulfil that important cultural function. Henry told us that His Excellency Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali Al Thani founded the Heritage Collection in 1979, and it now provides an unparalleled contribution of historical sources about Qatar and the region. It includes precious Arabic manuscripts illuminating centuries of Arab and Islamic contribution to the world civilization, as well as writings by travellers and explorers who visited the Arabian Gulf region over the centuries, historical maps and globes, scientific

87 instruments and early photography. In 2000 the collection was transferred to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage, and in 2006 the Library joined Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. In 2011 the collection became an integral part of the Qatar National Library. Preparations are under way to relocate this unique collection in its own purpose-built location within the new National Library building in Education City.



Preservation of the cultural heritage of the region is an important role of the Library

In its mission statement, QNL specifically highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage. To build such a repository has tremendous value to the nation and the whole region, to organizations, communities and individual people in Qatar. This special collection provides evidence of activities which occurred in the past – it tells stories, documents people and identity, and is thus a valuable source of information for research now and in the future. This recorded memory is an important part of a country's community, cultural, official and unofficial history which should be available for every citizen in Qatar. The QNL has a professional preservation and conservation laboratory fully equipped to handle any kind of preservation needs. The laboratory has four sections:

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- preventive conservation section
 - biodeterioration analysis and treatment section
 - conservation section
 - materials analysis to support conservation actions as well as codicological studies.

One of the most important QNL projects is the Qatar Digital Library (QDL), which was launched in October 2014 as a result of an ongoing partnership between Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, the Qatar National Library (QNL) and the British Library. QDL is creating a vast archive featuring the cultural and historical heritage of the Gulf and wider region freely available online for the first time. It includes archives, maps, manuscripts, sound recordings, photographs and much more, complete with contextualized explanatory notes and links in both English and Arabic. More about the project is available at <http://www.qdl.qa/en>.

'QDL is creating a vast archive featuring the cultural and historical heritage of the Gulf and wider region'

During their presentation at the Charleston conference, Henry and Katarzyna had mentioned that the Library will have a collection especially for children. We were eager to know why a collection for children is an important component of a national library. They explained that due to the three functional roles at the heart of its mission, QNL needs to provide access to international information and knowledge, hence the development of a national knowledge base. It is within this tripartite role and as part of the Metropolitan Public Library function that the children's collection becomes an important part of the overall collection. The Library staff have worked tirelessly, within the collection development guidelines and using feedback from the numerous contacts with clientele, to develop a significant collection for children, teens and young adults. The Technical Services Directorate and especially the Acquisitions section have implemented the requisitions and requirements through purchases from tenders, book fairs and single-source purchases.



Story time at the QNL

'To fulfil the QNL mission we need to think about the future', explained Katarzyna. 'What we are creating and building now should serve the next generations. It is important to teach children what the Library is, why we have it and how to use it now, because it will equip them with lifelong learning and literacy skills enabling them to participate in their society later. That is why children should be encouraged to use the Library from an early age as this will make them more likely to remain users in future years.' By providing a wide range of materials and activities, the QNL gives an opportunity for children to experience the enjoyment of reading and the excitement of discovering knowledge and works of the imagination. A good example of QNL's activities for the children in Qatar was signing the co-operation agreement with the Childhood Cultural Centre (CCC) in August 2016. This partnership is built on the

'What we are creating and building now should serve the next generations.'

89 shared objective of developing a love for books and reading in the country. Children are the Library users of tomorrow and QNL is aware that a good collection will keep them interested in coming to the Library.

This is clearly the most exciting of projects – indeed the project of a lifetime – for the librarians involved. Henry agreed: ‘It has been extremely exciting to be part of the QNL project. It is not always that a librarian participates in such a historical event. So, the expectations for excellent outcomes have placed extreme pressure on all of us to consistently perform well. The Opening Day Collection project has been a complete success. QNL has met the target set and doubled the amount including titles in Arabic, English and other languages.’

‘Children are the Library users of tomorrow’

We asked Henry and Katarzyna about what they consider to be the greatest success of the project so far. They told us success is attributed to the provision of financial and human resources and the management support for the successful accomplishment of the project.

From a technical services perspective, the successes have been:

- the continuous roll-in and roll-out of the acquired resources; a revolving number of incoming resources for receipt and processing as well as outgoing amount of resources to QF central storage is handled through the temporary office accommodation. The central storage location came on board late 2015 for all of Qatar Foundation institutions and the QNL has been able to make significant use of the state-of-the-art storage facility
- the receipt of several large containers of books within several pallets shipped at various agreed times
- flexible customs and other routine clearances made promptly have enabled the convenient delivery and storage of the books awaiting the move to the new QNL Library building. At all times the locations of the materials were tracked as being in overseas storage or as now in local Doha storage. As the move occurs, the materials will be cross-checked for accuracy of supply
- the electronic opening of the Library through the availability of the hundreds of online databases to the Qatar population and residents. The access to these resources was negotiated and licences signed to enable the registered users of the QNL to enjoy electronic access to the services through QNL.

Other successes, not necessarily collections related, include (but not exhaustively): partnership agreements (e.g. the Memorandum of Understanding with the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) and successful projects (e.g. Qatar Digital Library), all attendance at the annual book fairs and conferences (including hosting the 48th Metropolitan Libraries Conference, MetLib 2016 Qatar), and many training sessions, workshops and services given by QNL librarians.

As the opening of the new Library building draws nearer, all QNL librarians are focused on the preparations. The Central QF storage is a success story but also a challenge as the materials must now relocate and be shelved appropriately in the new building. Henry expressed the aspirations of the team: ‘We are all very curious how the QNL Library will be received by the people of Qatar. It is our hope that this building will become a global centre for information, knowledge and technology but also will invigorate the imagination of the people with the creative possibilities of good design.’ Katarzyna added: ‘Above all, it is a great pleasure to work in such a multicultural and international environment, with all experienced librarians. It helps finding an inspiration to achieve goals, succeed in everyday work, think creatively and finally to grow professionally.’

‘It is our hope that this building will become a global centre for information, knowledge and technology’

Your *Insights* Editors feel sure that their hopes will be realized and look forward to updates when their beautiful new building opens its doors to the people of Qatar.

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