

Arabic Translation of Obama's biography announced at London Book Fair

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Kalima, an independent project funded by the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, announced its latest licensing agreement, the translation into Arabic of Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father* at this year's London Book Fair held in mid-April. Since appearing at the fair last year 150 titles funded by Kalmia have been published.

Kalima aims to increase the number and choice of books available in Arabic by translating 100 titles every year: As well as supporting publishing houses across the Arab World in the distribution and marketing of selected titles, Kalima invests in the training of new translators and looks towards developing the translation of international literature into Arabic in the long term.

Publishers from Egypt, Lebanon, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen had stands at the fair which attracted exhibitors from 54 countries.

Following on from the Arab world as the market focus at last year's fair, a seminar assessed publishing opportunities in the Arab world, where major awards stimulate reading and encourage translation. They include the

Sheikh Zayed Book Award now the British Council's website in its third year and the shop on new Arabic books, International Prize for Arabic Fiction sponsored by the Emirates Foundation in association with the UK's Booker Prize. The two winners Baher Taher, author of *Sunset Oasis* and Youssef Zeidan, author of *Azazeel* have acquired a London agent as a direct result of the prize. There is also the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation and

the British Council's website shop on new Arabic books, which joins Banipal as a kind of showcase of what is available to translate from Arabic.

Sales of more than a quarter million copies of the Yacoubian Building by Alaa Al Aswan dispelled the popular myth that Arabs don't read. The book has been translated into 20 languages and is available in 100 countries.

Book fair at Earls court





Despite the huge potential market in 22 Arab countries with 330 million people major obstacles face publishers including high illiteracy, the lack of marketing and distribution networks not only across the Arab world but also within Arab countries, a lack of sound information and statistics about what is being published in Arabic, a lack of respect for copyright law, banning, self censorship and harassment through individual law suites.

Government subsidies from state publishing arms undercut commercial presses and exert

control over what gets published and what gets read. There is an absence of literary agents which leads to uncertainty over copyright ownership and a paucity of first rate translators.

Bachar Chebaro Secretary General of the Arab Publishers Association pointed out that there are no book distribution companies in the Arab world and some countries do not use the ISBN. Many associations have been founded to encourage translation with emphasis on scientific and academic books.

Jonathan Nowell, President
Nielson Books, which runs the
ISBN agency in the UK

proposed three solutions to
creating a more efficient supply
chain for book sales in the Arab
world.

A major research project is
needed to identify who the
publishers are, what is being
published, the retail channels
(book fairs are the largest retail
channel at present), and
opportunities for book shops to
grow.

Education is important. Arab
publishers would engage in
subsidiary rights training if
certain fundamentals were in
place such as ISBN's. In Egypt
only 50 percent of books carry
ISBN's. In some Arab countries
ISBN's are used as a means of
controlling what is published.
The international ISBN agency
and local publishers need to
insist that every book carries a
unique ISBN that is allocated by
the local agency.



"We should not look at dialogue between local traditional distribution channels publishers and international for the Arab world. There is an opportunity for print on demand players is pivotal if we are to without the traditional large raise the bar for the region's warehouses, carrying and publishing industry. Since the introduction of the Arab book holding stock for a long time", market at the London Book Fair in 2008 there have been a number of successful Nowell said.

Sharing her thoughts and expertise on the Arab world's Arab publishers. A year on from the publishing industry, Claudia the Market Focus this is an Kaiser, General Manager of the opportune time to review Abu Dhabi International Book progress and celebrate the Fair, said: "Facilitating the success we've achieved." ■