

Qatar National Library
Annual Report

2023



مكتبة قطر الوطنية
Qatar National Library

2023

Growth, inspiration, education
and enjoyment: a year in the life of
Qatar National Library.



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Foreword

Cultural Horizons: A Year in the Spirit
of Understanding and Hope



At the beginning of 2023, it was my great hope and aspiration that the mutual respect and understanding engendered by the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 would endure, and that Qatar would continue to be a destination for international tourism and cultural exchange.

I am heartened to say that, in Qatar at least, this has proved to be the case, with Qatar's time on the international stage encouraging increased numbers of people to visit our nation and learn about the cultural, religious, and social heritage of the Middle East. This, in turn, has led to increased numbers of tourists visiting Qatar National Library, admiring the architecture and learning more about the history of the Gulf. Of course, this positivity has been diminished by the horrific war in Palestine, the ongoing fighting in Ukraine and the myriad other conflicts around the world, but I hope that Qatar will continue to remain a beacon of respect, justice and most importantly dialogue during these dark times.

The importance of dialogue is epitomized by the Library's new Cultural Salon series, which I myself have championed. In the spirit of open discussion and intellectual freedom, experts are invited to give their opinions on topics which affect us all and debate those opinions with each other and with the audience members. As in all matters, dialogue is vital if we are to achieve a consensus, and I am proud of the Library's continued investment in lectures, panel discussions and events that encourage understanding between nations. This is perhaps exemplified by the Qatar-Indonesian Year of Culture, which brought Indonesians, Qataris, and other nationalities together in a weekend of superlative events.

Qatar National Library has always been a place of learning, multiculturalism and respect – we are a community that reflects the values of the nation and we pride ourselves on the atmosphere and culture that permeates our building. Over the coming year, I hope the ethos of mutual understanding will spread to more countries in the world, creating bridges between them and ending the cycle of violence that afflicts so many.

Dr. Hamad Bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari

Minister of State, and President of
Qatar National Library

Introduction

A Chapter of Growth and Engagement: QNL's Year in Reflection



I am delighted to welcome you to the Qatar National Library (QNL) 2023 Annual Report. The past 12 months have been one of growth – in our community, in our commitment to research, and in our work to support lifelong learning.

As the custodian of Qatar's rich documentary heritage, our commitment extends beyond mere collecting and preservation; it is a dynamic engagement with stories that shape the nation and its culture. In the past year, our collecting efforts have expanded, capturing not only manuscripts, artefacts and books, but also modern-day experiences. The Library not only ensures that the stories of our past and present are preserved and made accessible to the current and future generations, but also provides opportunities for the community to engage and contribute to those stories.

Supporting research in and about Qatar has been a guiding force in our mission. We recognize the importance of providing a fertile ground for intellectual exploration. Scholars and researchers find a haven in our Library, equipped as it is with an extensive array of resources and a supportive environment that encourages the pursuit of knowledge. Our commitment to facilitating research goes beyond that, as we support open access publishing, and our new platform, Manara - Qatar Research Repository, provides a place for academics to highlight their research and data which the Library will then preserve.

Lifelong learning and discovery are the cornerstones of our vision for a vibrant and intellectually thriving community. In the past year, our Qatar Reads program has been a catalyst for remarkable growth in community outreach. Through innovative initiatives and partnerships, we are helping to ignite a passion

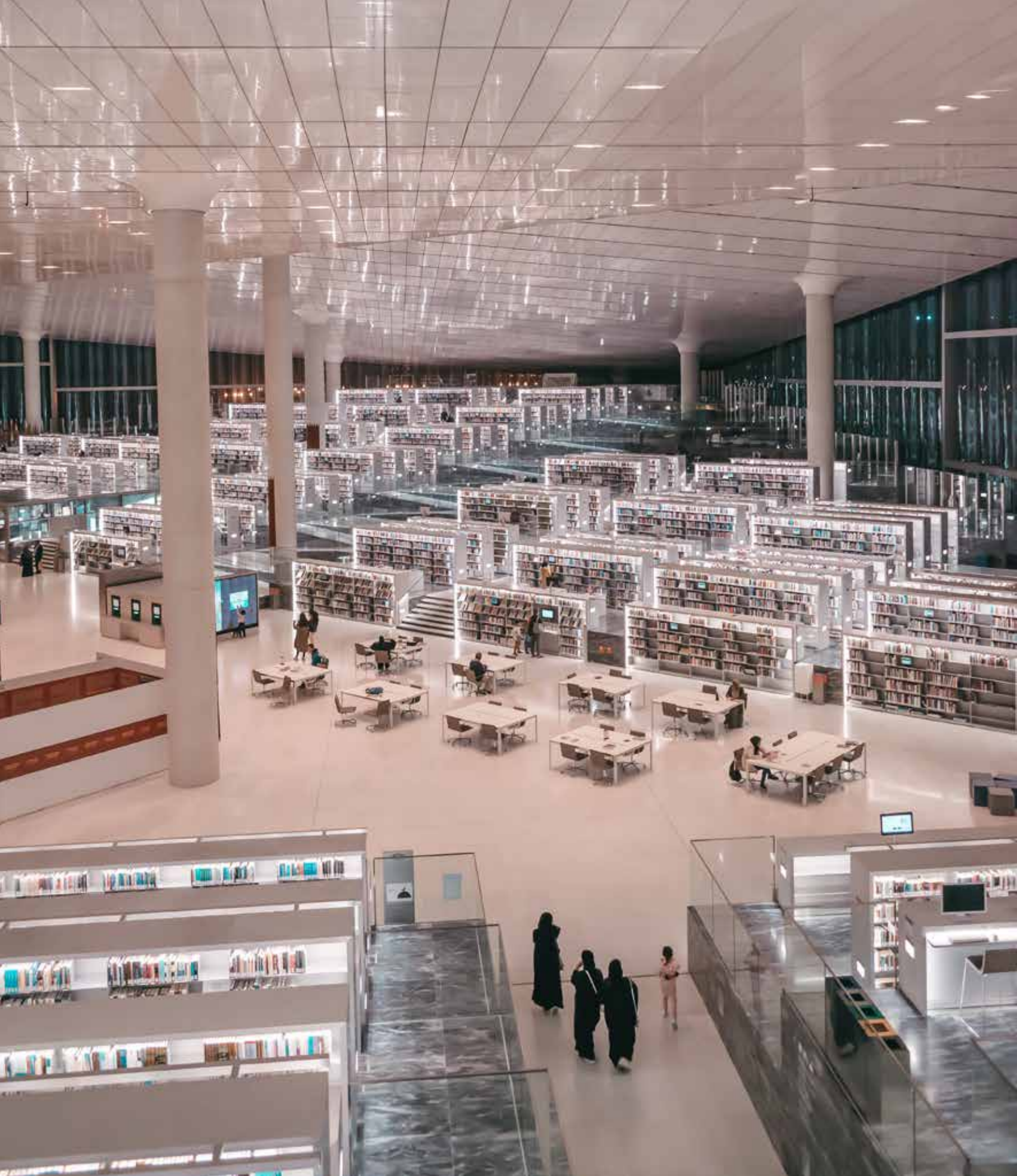
for reading and learning, thereby extending our influence across diverse demographics.

This year, our membership base has seen remarkable growth and the footfall to the Library is the highest since our opening – over one million visits – a testament to our community's value on the resources and programs we offer. Book loans, whether physical or digital, have also seen a year-on-year increase. The Library has never been only about access to books; it is a dynamic hub where individuals come together to share ideas, explore new horizons, and connect with a wealth of knowledge. Dozens of workshops, lectures and panel discussions have been held, including workshops about the uses of artificial intelligence, mental health symposia, book clubs, and talks by authors. We also hosted delegates from 29 national libraries as part of the Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania. All were impressed by our facilities and the beauty and hospitality of Qatar itself. We've also sadly watched the horrors in Gaza, and held events in solidarity with Palestine, including some for children to help them understand what is happening.

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the unwavering support of our community. Qatar National Library is not just a repository of books; it is a living testament to the immense power of knowledge, research, and lifelong learning. I would like to thank the QNL team for their hard work and dedication. Together, we will continue to build a future where the pursuit of knowledge knows no bounds.

Tan Huism

Executive Director of
Qatar National Library



Vision

To be one of the world's preeminent centers of learning, research and culture; a guardian of the region's heritage; and an institution that promotes imagination, discovery and the nourishment of the human spirit.

Mission

The mission of Qatar National Library is to preserve the nation's and broader region's rich heritage and enable the people of Qatar to positively influence society by creating an exceptional environment for learning and discovery.

The Library will achieve its mission by creating and sustaining an intuitive and trusted information environment in a culturally and technologically exceptional setting and by developing innovative programs and services.

Values

Qatar National Library is dedicated to the foundational values of librarianship as a profession to include:

1. **Openness and Transparency** with all patrons and organizations we deal with, where privacy and confidentiality are observed.
2. **Education and Lifelong Learning**, where we strive to offer services that facilitate equitable learning.
3. **Open Access**, where we are committed to free, open, unrestricted access to our collections and services.
4. **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Respect and Fairness**, where our patrons are valued regardless of race, color, sex, gender, religion, disability, age, genetic information, socioeconomic status, or national or ethnic origin, and where their opinions, needs and viewpoints are considered in every decision we make.
5. **Growth and Innovation**, where we encourage creativity, continuous learning, experimentation and the generation of ideas.
6. **Stewardship** of all the resources with which we have been entrusted and are accountable for, ensuring the proper use of state funds and the preservation of the nation's heritage and intellectual output.
7. **Intellectual Freedom**, where we are committed to facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas.



Qatar National Library is more than shelves of books; it is the beating heart of community learning. In a world increasingly dominated by digital solitude, institutions like QNL play a pivotal role in fostering connections and shared experiences. Beyond its role as a literary and intellectual treasure trove, the Library is a vibrant meeting ground, where friends can meet, students can work together, and diverse individuals converge to exchange ideas, learn, and collectively contribute to the culture of the nation. This connection with the community is vital, serving as a space where knowledge is not just consumed but actively shared. With the myriad programs that are developed at QNL, our aim is to do just that – facilitate the sharing of ideas and the creation of new knowledge with our community.

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One Book, One Doha

The timeless Arabic literary masterpiece *Hayy Bin Yaqdhan* was brought to life through Qatar Reads’ One Book, One Doha program.



The Hayy Bin Yaqdhan exhibition was visited by hundreds of schoolchildren.

The annual reading campaign brings the community together to share an appreciation of Arabic literature and promote a love for reading. The influential *Hayy Bin Yaqdhan*, written by the philosopher Ibn Tufail in the early 12th century CE, was this year’s choice and a special exhibition was thoughtfully designed and installed at Qatar National Library to accompany the campaign.

Visitors were immersed in the fascinating narrative of Hayy’s life growing up in isolation on a deserted island, making the exhibition a uniquely enriching way to experience the power of reading and the timeless wisdom embedded in Arabic literary classics.



Highlighting the transformative phases of Hayy’s development, the exhibition insightfully explored the book’s different themes, such as the relationship between humans and the natural world. The Library also showcased three Qatari publishers who adapted the iconic story for different age groups: Dar Nabjah for children, HBKU Press for young adults, and Dar AlWatad for adults.

The campaign culminated with the One Book, One Doha festival, held at Katara Cultural Village, where people gathered to enjoy and discover the year’s selected book through a wide array of fun and engaging activities. In addition, the Fables in Fashion exhibition held at M7 in Msheireb, focused on the creative expressions inspired by the story, and featured an impressive collection of 60 works produced by 25 local artists and designers.



The One Book, One Doha campaign incorporated a range of different events and activities.

A Platform for Dialogue

The **Cultural Salon** series, which has been championed by His Excellency Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kawari, Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library, held its inaugural event in March 2023. This opening session featured a high-level discussion focused on the wide-reaching impact of the 2022 FIFA World Cup™ on Qatar and the broader region.



HE Dr Hamad Al-Kawari (center), with panellists (L-R) Dr. Ahmad Hasnah, Ayman Jada, HE Saad Al-Rumaihi and Dr. Ibrahim Arafat.



Left to right: Dr. Mohammed Ghaly, Dr. Ghanim Al-Sulaiti and Dr. Ahmad Elmagarmid discuss the challenges of artificial intelligence.



The inaugural discussion was followed later in the year with a second public event that brought together prominent academics in the fields of computing and ethics to explore the topic, 'Artificial Intelligence: Science, Work, and Ethical Challenges'. This was followed at the end of 2023 by an

examination of how Palestine is portrayed in the digital world and the challenges it faces. The goal of the series, which is held in collaboration with Hamad Bin Khalifa University, is to create a positive atmosphere that enriches culture and raises public awareness

about contemporary topics of national and international interest and the impact they have on the lives of people in Qatar. It seeks to inspire insightful dialogue, encourage a deeper understanding of complex issues, and promote a more informed and connected global community.

Chess Club

Intellect and strategy were in abundance as the Library held its inaugural **Chess Open tournament**. This remarkable event transcended age and expertise, uniting the community in a collective appreciation for the game.

QNL has held a weekly chess club for several years, drawing in a crowd of between 75 and 125 enthusiasts each week. Participants range from novices eager to learn the basics of the game to seasoned players looking for competition or a chance to sharpen their skills. In response to the game's widespread appeal and the community's growing interest, the Library organized the Chess Open in November so that people of all ages and skill levels could test their mettle against each other.

In total, 142 people signed up, engaging in a rigorously competitive knockout format over three days. The tournament was a gripping affair, culminating in an intense final showdown where only one participant would emerge as the undisputed champion, standing tall as the sole king left on the chessboard.



Concentration and tactics were on display at the inaugural Chess Open.

Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture

A weekend-long festival of Indonesian culture saw cookery demonstrations, batik-making and a talk and workshop by Indonesia’s best-selling writer, Andrea Hirata, the author of the critically acclaimed *The Rainbow Troops*, at events to mark the **Qatar-Indonesia Year of Culture**. This celebration was enriched by the vibrant stalls set up by the Indonesian community in Qatar, offering visitors a taste of Indonesia’s rich cultures and diverse traditions.



Many participants wore traditional Indonesian dress.



His Excellency Ridwan Hassan read Indonesian stories to children at the Library.



Indonesian food was served as part of the celebrations.



Hundreds of visitors came to the Library to celebrate the occasion, eager to delve deeper into Indonesia’s rich heritage and strengthen the enduring bonds of friendship between Qatar and the Indonesian archipelago. Adding to the festivities, Indonesia’s ambassador to Qatar, His Excellency Ridwan Hassan, generously dedicated his time to enchant young minds with traditional Indonesian stories, fostering a love for storytelling and cultural heritage among the next generation.

The celebrations were further enriched by a creative competition aimed at redesigning Qatari or Indonesian book covers, alongside the creation of a book display that highlighted the literary treasures of both nations. These events successfully bridged cultures, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds on a journey of discovery and enjoyment, highlighting the power of cultural exchange.

The Year of Culture celebrations encompassed numerous events and activities.

Good Habits Start Young

Research shows that the presence of a home library boosts children’s academic performance, accelerates vocabulary growth, and leads to improved job attainment later in life.

The simple act of keeping books within arm’s reach at home is instrumental in defining a child’s educational journey and professional achievements.

Guided by these valuable insights, QNL’s Qatar Reads’ **Family Reading Program** (FRP) was developed, with additional objectives being to promote a love of books, foster family bonds and enhance the Arabic language skills.

The program works by charging a monthly subscription fee to families. A mailbox is then fitted, and the children receive two books each per month in Arabic or English or both, plus comics, activity sheets and themed events.

In 2023, these included activations at Al Shaqab, Education City Mosque, the Embassy of Indonesia, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and more.

In 2023 alone, more than 1,000 children subscribed to the FRP, and 19,766 books were distributed.

The program has strong Qatari participation, with 78 % of people who sign up coming from local families.

“

I read primarily in English, and as a mother, I try to ensure Shoug my daughter has a strong Arabic foundation. Without Qatar Reads, I wouldn’t know which Arabic books to get and when. Thanks to our monthly deliveries, she now instinctively chooses Arabic books at any bookstore.

Sara Al Fardan

This year, when we got the Ramadan package, it was really cool. Charlie was super excited and really loved learning about Ramadan traditions as they are practiced in Qatar.

Jessica DuPlessis



The Family Reading Program provides subscribers with a postbox for books, and holds numerous events each year.

Based on a study, an impressive 82% of children who participated in Qatar Reads’ programs, spent an increased time reading. Furthermore, 70% of parents observed a meaningful increase in the time spent reading together with their children after joining the FRP, leading to improved family dynamics, with children becoming more eloquent, confident, and engaged, underscoring the transformative power of shared reading experiences.



78% Qatari participation
19,766 books distributed
in 2023

Research has shown that a love of books and reading can lead to greater success in later life.

The Crossroads of Leadership and Learning

The Power of Culture by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, the Chairperson of Qatar Museums, and the range of projects that have significantly shaped and enriched Qatar’s cultural landscape and creative economy, were discussed at the Library’s ‘Read to Lead’ event.



Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa, the Chairperson of Qatar Museums, discussed her book, *The Power of Culture*.

Hosted under the Qatar Reads initiative, the session successfully underscored the critical role of libraries, museums, and creative hubs in developing platforms for inspiration, innovation, and creativity, demonstrating their unparalleled power to bring artists, architects, writers, designers, and creators together to maximize their collective impact and broaden the potential for achievement across the local, regional and international stage.

The aim of the Read to Lead program is to provide engaging and interactive book discussions that foster meaningful connections, idea-sharing, and fresh perspectives on leadership and success.

Read to Lead has influenced me to be better. After I had attended Read to Lead, I was motivated to become more active. I started leading more workshops and encouraged those around me to do the same. I feel like these events helped me find like-minded individuals, and I can grow alongside them.

Zubaida Faisal, Author



Skills for the Future

Technology continues to move apace, and the emergence of artificial intelligence will have major implications on the lives of everyone in Qatar.

As part of its commitment to lifelong learning and ensuring the community is up to date with new technology, the Library held a series of events in 2023 about the AI revolution. These included **workshops, panel discussions and podcasts on AI** to enable our public to better understand and explore the use of this new technology in their careers and their daily lives.

This commitment to embracing technology and its uses continued in the work of the Library itself, with the QNL app. An instant hit when it was launched, the app has now been downloaded more than 39,000 times, enabling more people to read books and other literature digitally. The app has been of obvious value to its users, as the average amount of time that people spend on the app when they open it is 1hr 12 mins.



An update in 2023 even allowed members to borrow books from the Library by scanning the book’s barcode using their mobile device.



A lecture about artificial intelligence attracted a full house.



More than 39,000 app downloads
1hr 12 mins of app usage time

Talking to Each Other

Ten-year-old Aisha Mohamed has utilized the Library’s facilities to full advantage, reading dozens of books and using the resources to help her learn Arabic.



Aisha, who was born in Qatar but is of Sri Lankan nationality, said: “We’ve been coming to the Library ever since it opened. It’s like we grew up there and I could say it feels like our second home. It is one of my favourite places in Qatar; we usually visit the Library at least four times a week.

“The Children’s Library is my favorite place; I spend a lot of time reading books at QNL and I take them home as well. I was one of the top 50 borrowers at QNL and I had to use both my parents’ membership cards as well, as my card was not enough!

“My education is in Arabic because it is close to my faith and, most importantly, helps me to understand the Qur’an, but the Library staff have helped as well, especially Ibrahim. He inspired me a lot to read Arabic.”

Promotion of the Arabic language is high on Qatar National Library’s agenda. As such, QNL held a series of free classes so people could learn the basics and improve any Arabic language skills they already had.

Over three sessions of the **Let’s Speak Arabic** classes, 34 people of numerous nationalities came together for the basic course, learning phrases and vocabulary for things like greetings, colors, transportation, numbers, directions and conversational Arabic. Twenty-seven of the people continued onto the two-day advanced course, where they were shown QNL resources that would help them to continue learning Arabic in their leisure time.



The course for Talabat drivers was developed to help them better communicate with customers.

As a proponent of lifelong learning, QNL also provided 50 Talabat drivers with English language skills that would help them in their day-to-day lives in Qatar.

“

All the trainers took special care to help each participant and the sessions were useful; I’m looking forward to more advanced classes in the future. Thank you to the whole team for their kindness and dedication to the program.

Abdul Wahid,
Arabic language learner

The workshop has helped me greatly in understanding the best ways to communicate with customers. It has been very helpful.

Kasagga Frank,
Talabat driver

Mommy-to-Be

Pregnancy is an anxious time, both for expectant mothers and their families, so the Library’s Qatar Reads’ initiative has developed the Mommy-to-Be program to provide vital information and reassurance throughout the pregnancy journey as well as advice for new parents navigating the early stages of parenthood.



The Mommy To Be Festival featured a range of experts and attractions tailored to expectant women and families.



The program supports parents with pre-natal and post-natal reading activities and community engagement, with the annual flagship event being the **Mommy-To-Be Festival**, held in 2023 at Qatar Foundation’s Ceremonial Court. Families were able to come together and hear from a variety of experts, discover new parenting books and enjoy the Mommy Market.

Regular workshops, lectures and discussions aimed at supporting parents through various aspects of pregnancy and early childhood care were also held at the Library. Topics have encompassed a wide range, including the importance of healthy eating during pregnancy, breastfeeding while returning to work, and understanding and improving childhood sleep patterns.

“

I found the books and resources from the Mommy-to-Be Program to be incredibly helpful and informative, providing valuable insights, practical tips, and emotional support throughout my motherhood journey.

Mashael Al Qattan

Partnerships with Schools

Lifelong education is at the heart of everything that Qatar National Library does, so it is no surprise that we have strong relationships with schools and programs for children of all ages.



School tours ensure that young people know about the resources that QNL can offer them.

In addition, the Science Book Forum continues its mission to promote scientific reading among young adults, creating opportunities for students to learn and practice hands-on projects related to science, and address scientific misconceptions, fostering a deeper understanding of critical scientific topics.

Finally, Qatar Reads also has strong relationships with schools, particularly through its **Schools Membership Program**. A further 36 schools enrolled in the program in 2023 and in total we distributed 1,482 books. The membership program also held 60 school visits, two workshops and attracted 120 students to an annual schools' competition.

In 2023, these included health awareness sessions for students, **story-telling** events at Qatar Academy – Al Wakrah, and Qatar Academy – Doha, and sessions to inform children and their families of the resources available at the Children's Library. QNL also hosts regular school tours with 281 held in 2023 and more than **8,000 children** and their teachers experiencing what the Library has to offer.



QNL works with schools across Qatar to improve literacy.



281 school tours

1,482 books distributed

36 schools added to the School Membership Program

Qatar's Future Authors

Children with a passion for writing and storytelling came together at Qatar National Library to learn more about the creative process – and create a book of short stories. The annual Qalamy [My Pen] program is a cultural initiative for children held by QNL's Children's Library. In collaboration with the country's cultural institutions and local authors, the program aims to develop creative writing skills in Arabic for students in grades 5 and 6.



In all, 25 children from six local schools participated and attended workshops designed to help them learn about coming up with ideas, crafting a plot and developing characters. They also worked with a local artist to illustrate their stories. The aim of the program is to uncover, develop and refine children's writing talents, and instill the spirit of creativity and imagination.

A limited-edition book was created by Qatar National Library containing the children's stories and illustrations, with each participating child and their school receiving a copy.



These stories go beyond words on paper; they're a reflection of the vibrant creativity and the limitless imagination of our children.

Maram Al Mahmoud,
Children's and Young Adults' Library Manager

Diverse Learners



QNL's sensory room offers support for children with special needs.

All of us are different, with different strengths and weaknesses. Diversity and inclusion are at the center of QNL's value system and as such the Library offers workshops, resources, training and events for a wide range of children and adults.

These include a training session on the use of **databases for people with dyslexia**, **workshops for the parents of children with autism**, and a **weekly session for the special needs Awsaj Academy** where the children come to the Library to learn chess and have fun.

These and many other events complement the QNL Assistive Technology Center, where a plethora of learning aids exist, particularly for those with impaired vision.

2

Heritage and Collections

Preserving the country's documentary heritage is the duty of a national library, safeguarding the soul of a nation for future generations. As the guardian of collective memory, it captures and protects the narratives that define a people.

Of course, a collection only has true value if it is seen, studied and appreciated and public engagement is fundamental to our collecting role. Through workshops, exhibitions, lectures and children's events, we bring our collections to life and ensure that the knowledge and culture of the past has relevance in the present.

Two Countries, One Faith

An exhibition to examine the ties that bind Indonesia and the Arab world was held as part of the Qatar-Indonesia Year of Culture celebrations. This was the Library’s first Indonesian-themed exhibition, spanning from 1 November 2023 to 25 April 2024.



A 19th century Qur’anic manuscript from Aceh in Sumatra.

Titled **Letters of Faith: The Arabic Script in Indonesia**, the exhibition showcased an array of items from the Library’s collection, in addition to those sourced from both Indonesian and local cultural institutions. Among the rare and remarkable collections on display were a 19th-century manuscript of the Qur’an from Sulawesi, exquisite 19th-century batik textiles

intricately decorated with calligraphy, along with a curated selection of photographs and wood carvings. These pieces collectively illuminated the country’s rich Islamic heritage, demonstrating how the Arabic script has been skillfully and creatively woven into various forms of media by diverse communities across Indonesia.



The Letters of Faith exhibition highlighted the shared heritage of Qatar and Indonesia.

Through this experience, visitors were offered an enriching insight into the shared heritage and enduring ties that link these two cultures. The exhibition provided a window into a world where faith, art, and cultural exchange converge, fostering greater understanding and appreciation, and marking a pivotal chapter in the cultural dialogue between Indonesia and the Arab world.

Qatar National Day

QNL held a diverse range of events designed to showcase the nation and its achievements in celebration of Qatar National Day.

These included a new episode of the **QNL Engage podcast series**, which looked at the history and heritage of pearl diving. Other events included a tour of Al Shaqab to learn more about Arabian horses, and workshops about traditional women’s fashions and the Bedouin craft of *al sadu* [weaving].

QNL also provided a captivating glimpse into social history, the journey of families and their rich cultural legacies, by hosting a seminar titled “The Memories in a Private Collection in Qatar: Al Jaber Family Archive”, which highlighted the Al Jaber family collection, a trove of rare books and documents that mirrors the scientific and cultural development witnessed by the people of Qatar. The collection has been digitized and is currently being catalogued, making it soon accessible to the public for research and learning.



A host of activities celebrated the rich history and culture of Qatar.

Protecting the Past for the Future

Experts from across the world gathered at QNL for its second staging of the Doha Workshop on Countering the Trafficking of Cultural Property with a Focus on Documentary Heritage.

First organized by the Library in 2022, the workshop emphasized the importance and the urgent need to protect the Arab and Middle Eastern region’s rich history from illicit trafficking.

Top professionals in the field, from policymakers and consultants to high-ranking law enforcement officials from Europe, the US, the Gulf, and the broader Middle East, gathered at the Library to discuss the need for international collaboration and knowledge exchange to mitigate and combat illegal trafficking in cultural heritage.



The workshop attracted local and international stakeholders.

The delegates concluded that improved messaging that demonstrates the link between heritage trafficking, terrorism and organized crime would be beneficial, as would field studies for those fighting against trafficking, to better understand the work of judicial systems and archaeologists.

Sharing our Collections



Maghrib Astrolabe
(Probably Morocco, 1816 CE)

This finely-engraved astrolabe, loaned to the Jeddah Islamic Arts Biennale, is the first astrolabe to be associated with the Marsil al-Andalus family working in, probably, Morocco during the late 18th/early 19th centuries. It indicates the continued interest in astronomy and technical competence in the Maghrib circa 1800 CE.

Navigational instruments, horse genealogies and Qur’anic manuscripts were among the items loaned out to other institutions and exhibitions over the course of 2023.

As a guardian of the region’s heritage, the Library holds many items that have relevance to people around the Gulf, and as an organization that promotes discovery and learning for all, we were proud to be able to lend artefacts that complemented external exhibitions. These included the inaugural **Jeddah Islamic Arts Biennale**, which borrowed items relating to travel and navigation, photographs of Islamic sites across India and Uzbekistan, and Qur’anic manuscripts from China and Malaysia, including a Chinese blue Qur’an.

When the **Museum of Islamic Art** held its exhibition about the Safavid Empire, QNL provided maps and travelogues from explorers who had visited Iran during that era. Similarly, at the Katara Arabian Horse Festival, we opened our archives and loaned books and photographs related to equestrianism.



The Kalta Minor Minaret
(Uzbekistan, 1940–1950)

This photo, also loaned to the Jeddah Islamic Arts Biennale, shows the Kalta Minor (short minaret), an unfinished minaret located near the west entrance of the Ichan Kala, the old city of Khiva. It was commissioned in 1851 CE by the Qungrat ruler Muhammad Amin Khan (r. 1845 -1855 CE) as an architectural marvel intended to rise over 70 meters.

A Bird’s-Eye View of Qatar

Qatar National Library has acquired almost 10,000 aerial images of Qatar taken in the 1940s and 1980s. The images were all captured in high-resolution, meaning that streets and houses – many of which may since have been demolished – can be identified.



The high-resolution photography means that neighborhoods and even individual houses can be zoomed in on.

Taken during the Second World War and throughout the Cold War period, the aerial photographs provide a detailed and unique perspective of the country and is a unique source for the study of Qatar and surrounding regions.

The images are from the National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP), managed by Historic

Environment Scotland. During 2024, the QNL collection will be expanded to include all photos of Qatar that NCAP has identified, a total of 28,000 images from more than 100 flights.

These aerial photographs are an incredible tool for historical research that can be used by environmental consultants, the media and private researchers.

3

Qatar National Library Internationally

A national library is a representative and indeed a mirror of its country. It reflects what is important in society, demonstrating the importance that a nation places on community, heritage, literature and knowledge. But Qatar is not an island, isolated from the world around it, and we are constantly striving to work as a member of the international community, sharing expertise and developing programs with others. As a custodian of knowledge, the Library fosters a sense of shared humanity, highlighting the interconnectedness of our stories and emphasizing the importance of a collective, worldwide perspective in shaping the narrative of our shared future.



QNL Stands with Palestine

As the world watched with horror at the unfolding human tragedy in Palestine, Qatar National Library continued to reiterate its support for Gaza and Palestine through a series of dedicated events and programs.



QNL’s Cultural Salon initiative examined the portrayal of Palestine in the online world.

In a commitment to raising awareness, the Children’s Library organized special events aimed at educating young people about the history and story of Palestine, while a specifically designed activation for teenagers provided an in-depth look at Palestinian cities. This activity not only educated them about the geographical and cultural landscape of Palestine but also encouraged them to create their own map of Palestine in a gesture of solidarity with its people.



Workshops were held to teach children about the Palestinian cause.

Adults were invited to a webinar that delved into the broader scope of contemporary history, offering insights into the complexities and enduring struggles faced by the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the Library curated a selection of books near its main entrance, encouraging visitors from diverse backgrounds to engage with and learn more about the history of Palestine, its culture, and the ongoing occupation.

To further engage the community and support Palestine, Qatar Reads proudly announced that the featured book for next year’s One Book, One Doha campaign would be *Men in the Sun* by renowned author Ghassan Kanafani.



Cover of a new graphic novel adaptation of *Men in the Sun*.

In this powerful work, Kanafani tells the stories of Palestinian refugees navigating the harrowing decade following the Nakba, eloquently portraying the loss and suffering they endured.

1963: *Men in the Sun* first published



The Library has helped teach children about the Palestinian cause and the war in Gaza.

International Conversations

Qatar National Library brought hundreds of Library professionals from across the globe to Doha for two major conferences.

Firstly, the **Libraries Lead** Forum, explored the powerful role of libraries and other cultural institutions in soft power diplomacy. QNL invited scholars and representatives from galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAMs) worldwide to explore how these institutions shape national

interests and promote positive international relations through collections, programming, exhibitions, and collaborations. The dialogue explored frameworks and best practices in leveraging the role of GLAMs in cultural diplomacy at the inter-personal, institutional, and national level.



The Libraries Lead Forum discussed how libraries can shape international relations.



Delegates at the CDNLAO discussed how libraries could represent their communities.

Library executives from around Asia then gathered to network and learn of strategies in cultural preservation and engagement as QNL hosted the **29th Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNLAO)**. Over the course of the two-day conference, library directors participated in a series of sessions exploring various strategic

themes. These themes included evolving collection practices to better reflect and represent communities, improving public access to heritage collections, and methods to engage communities with their nation’s collection, thereby ensuring libraries continue to play a pivotal role in cultural preservation and community engagement.

ANNA CHULYAN, Director of the National Library of Armenia, said the CDNLAO had been a valuable experience for various reasons, including that it was a way of benchmarking how your own institution compares to others. In addition, she said: *“During this conference we have really decided to have more cooperation with different libraries like Lebanon, China, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE and Singapore and we have specific ideas, particularly on book exchanges.”*



A Global Community

Lifelong learning, equity, diversity, and inclusion are enshrined in QNL's values, and we strive to embody these principles by offering training, courses, and diverse resources to people across the Middle East and beyond.



Students in Gaza attending a workshop presented by QNL online.

Before the start of the war in Gaza, and in conjunction with Qatar's Education Above All foundation, we offered **workshops to more than 1,000 students across Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Egypt**. These workshops covered a wide range of critical skills, including interview techniques, crafting effective presentations, essay writing strategies, and utilizing language-learning resources to enhance their academic and professional capabilities.

The Library also extends a helping hand to those displaced by conflict. Understanding the challenges faced by the relocated **American University of Afghanistan** now based in Qatar, we offered a two-day career training program. This program included workshops and lectures, alongside practical exercises like mock interviews and personalized one-on-one consultations, all designed to

assist students in refining their resumes and preparing for future career opportunities.

Due to the war in Sudan, there has also been a large contingent of Sudanese parents in Qatar, with many children finding themselves outside the formal education system. Recognizing this, QNL organized three sessions for these parents, focusing on how to effectively homeschool their children. These sessions provided insights into the psychology of learning, offered practical tools and strategies for education at home, and introduced resources available for these families to utilize in supporting their children's education.

A Home for Research

Manara – Qatar Research Repository finished its first year on a high with 2,500 research items added to the database from more than 30 institutions.

The majority of these items are publicly accessible through open access and were viewed online or downloaded more than 150,000 times. Manara was also showcased at three significant international events: Open Repositories 2023 in South Africa, iPRES 2023 – the 19th International Conference on Digital Preservation, in the US, and the ICA Congress in Abu Dhabi, where it received attention and plaudits from attendees.

Manara was launched at the end of 2022 and aims to capture, preserve and promote all Qatar-based research outputs.



The majority of research uploaded to Manara is publicly available from anywhere in the world.

 manara.qnl.qa
2,500 items available & 150,000 views and downloads

QNL Selected as IFLA's Regional Office

In a historic first for the Gulf region, Qatar National Library was chosen as the inaugural Middle East and North Africa Regional Office for the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

The announcement comes as testament to the Library's achievements over the years, which includes its role as the IFLA Preservation and Conservation Center, which it has held since 2015. In this role, QNL takes a lead in coordinating conservation activities across the Middle East and North Africa, promoting best practice throughout

the region. Other achievements include providing insights into questions of equal access, creativity, and cultural development, further cementing the Library's position as a leading cultural institution.

IFLA, the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users, said that Qatar National Library's involvement would contribute to ongoing efforts to bolster regional activities and to strengthen connections with key stakeholders across the MENA region.



“Our Impact

“In essence, Qatar National Library is more than a mere institution; it is a dynamic force that transcends its conventional role. It stands as a testament to the power of literature, knowledge, and cultural exchange in fostering unity and understanding among people from various walks of life. My admiration for QNL goes beyond the books on its shelves; it extends to the cultural tapestry it weaves and the enriching experiences it consistently provides.”

Maryam Al-Kuwari

“Thank you for creating a space that has enriched my life and the lives of countless others. I look forward to many more visits to the Qatar National Library and to continuing my journey of exploration and learning within its welcoming and inspiring walls.”

Ahmad Faraz

“Aside from the wonderful range of books, the Library is also a place for us to meet and learn together with other homeschooling children. It is our neutral and safe space where we like to come together to further the learning of our children in group settings. We look forward to creating more memories at our favorite library in the world.”

Umm Amatullah

“Our experience with QNL’s Children’s Library has been nothing short of transformational. From the enchanting story hours that captivate young minds to the diverse collection of books, the Children’s Library is a haven for imagination and learning. The Library’s commitment to fostering a love for reading has not only enriched our children’s literacy skills but has also engendered a thirst for knowledge in them.”

John Hayward

At a Glance

Membership & Visits

Total members **247,000**

New members in 2023 **37,000**

Library visits in 2023 **1.1 million**

Events & Programs

Events/Programs in 2023 **528**

Participants **152,672**

In-person events **450**

In-person participants **141,467**

Online events **73**

Online participants **4,671**

Hybrid events **5**

Hybrid event participants **6,534**

Programs for people with disabilities **23**

Library tours **333**

Digital Presence & Resources (2023)

Total downloads **5.4 million**

Total digitized pages in Qatar Digital Library **2.5 million**

Unique users of Qatar Digital Library **214,887**

Total visitors to all QNL websites **1.3 million**

Social media engagement **1.1 million**

Collections

Books borrowed in 2023 **608,000**

New items in Qatari National Collection in 2023 **1,648**

Total items in Qatari National Collection **12,904**

Open access articles funded since launch **4,732**

Heritage Library items **232,350**



Meet the Team

Qatar National Library can only be ever as good as the people who work for it, and we are fortunate that we have committed, professional and innovative employees who are passionate about their work and are constantly striving to improve the services that we offer the community.

Here, we introduce just four of them who help make the Library the center of excellence that it is.



Eiman S. AlShamari

“I’m Eiman AlShamari and I joined the Library in 2017 as an information services librarian, later becoming the head of the Young Adults Library and overseeing the section. While working, I also pursued and completed a PhD in Library and Information Science from the top-ranked information school, the University of Sheffield in the UK.

“Recently, I was thrilled to be appointed as QNL’s regional manager for the first Middle East and North Africa Regional Office for the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. This appointment is a great opportunity to positively impact QNL, libraries in Qatar and the wider world. Since 2017, I have made it my mission to constantly improve myself and I hope I can inspire others to do the same.”



Fatima Al Sahli

“I am Fatima Al Sahli, and I have been working at Qatar National Library for the past seven years, serving as an access officer. QNL has truly become a second home to me, and each day here brings genuine joy.

“Being an integral part of the Access Team feels like I’m doing something meaningful for the community. Working with my colleagues is not just rewarding, but together we are dedicated to making the Library experience better for everyone. What I find most fulfilling in my role is the chance to assist Library users, empower them with knowledge and see the smiles on their faces, especially when they find what they are looking for in the Library.

“I am happy to be part of the Qatar National Library family, contributing to our goal of making information accessible to everyone and I’m excited about continuing this journey and am committed to making a positive difference in our community.”



Haitham Othman

“I am Haitham Othman, and I work as a multimedia and photography specialist within QNL’s digitization services. As part of my daily work, I am responsible for the digitalization workflow for video audio materials, digitizing the 2D and 3D objects and monitoring the digital conversion process. This means I use 3D techniques to create an interactive and engaging experience.

“One of the main reasons that encouraged me to join the Library in 2014 was that it aims to preserve heritage and make it accessible to future generations by using the latest technologies. After 10 years in the Library, I have faced many interesting and challenging projects, which have allowed me to contribute to the preservation of our shared history.”



Chanaka Perera

“I am Chanaka Perera, and I have been working as a book and paper conservation technician since 2008 in Qatar National Library’s special collection. My responsibilities include preserving and conserving QNL’s heritage items, like manuscripts, maps, photographs and early books, assisting with exhibitions and giving recommendations for display conditions, and taking part in activities related to QNL’s status as the IFLA PAC Regional Center for Arab Countries.

“I enjoy my work immensely because I am always learning. Every day, I gain more knowledge about conservation and restoration, including bookbinding materials, and the diverse skills and techniques involved in bringing various items back to life.”



