

# Digital publishing: what issues for bibliodiversity in the Arabic-speaking world?

From 30 April to 3 May 2014

*With the support of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, the International Organisation of La Francophonie and the Prince Claus Fund*

s Afriques en fête  
nce internationale des éditeurs indépendants

International Assembly of independent publishers



International  
Alliance  
of independent  
publishers

## **BACKGROUND**

Following the digital publishing meeting organised by the Alliance in Tunis in 2011, several Arabic publishers members of the Alliance started producing and commercialising ePub files. These recent experiments have revealed several obstacles faced in the Arab world: Arabic font particularities, challenges to commercialise publications in online sales platform, etc.

In the context of the International Assembly of independent publishers (<http://www.alliance-editeurs.org/-assises-internationales-de-l-121->), publishers from the Arabic-speaking world have decided to focus on digital publishing. The workshop will aim at drafting recommendations and proposals towards the creation of digital tools adapted to their contexts and concerns. While Arabic digital contents are still very few, it is of essential to support traditional publishers, in their transition to digital publishing. This workshop will be the 7<sup>th</sup> of the International Assembly of independent publishers.

In partnership with the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, the Alliance convenes in Abu Dhabi, from 30 April to 3 May 2014, ten publishers from various Arab countries (Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, and Egypt) and digital publishing experts from Lebanon, Jordan and Argentina.

## **WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES**

- Help publishers to overcome technical obstacles met while creating ePub format digital books in Arabic;
- Discuss existing distribution platforms in the Arab world;
- Discuss promotion and e-marketing practices;
- Exchange techniques and tools amongst publishers from the Arab world;
- Draft recommendations to enable traditional publishers' transition to digital publishing and ensure a better distribution and diffusion of digital publications in the Arab world.

Recommendations resulting from this workshop will then be shared at the level of public authorities and also to international standardisation authorities such as the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF).

Following this workshop, a round table will provide an opportunity to present the workshop's conclusions in the context of Abu Dhabi International Book Fair's professional programme.

Finally, the [Alliance's Digital Lab](#) will publish the experiences of Arabic publishers and will support their projects in the medium term.

**Warning:**

1/ We thank you to prepare beforehand each session of this workshop, to be able to share concretely your experience. Each session will give you the opportunity to discuss with the panelists about your experiences and practices, but also to share your difficulties and concerns. Moreover, do not hesitate to bring with you some examples of ebooks you have made, or any other support that could be interesting for the debates. To reach efficient results, your participation before and during the workshop is essential! Some of your contributions may be then shared on the [Alliance digital Lab](#).

2/ The workshop will be held in Arabic and English, with the assistance of interpreters.

## **AGENDA**

### **Tuesday 29 April 2014**

**Arrival of participants** at the **Rotana Centro Capital Centre Hotel**

**Address:** Al Khaleej Al Arabi St. - Abu Dhabi - United Arab Emirates

**Phone:** +971 2 409 6666

**Web site:**

<http://www.rotana.com/centrohotels/unitedarabemirates/abudhabi/centrocapitalcentre>

The hotel is located 2 minutes on foot from the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre.

### **Wednesday 30 April 2014 (12.00 – 6.00 pm)**

#### **Morning**

Inauguration of the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair

#### **Afternoon (12.00 – 6.00 pm)**

**Workshop venue:** Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre

**Introduction** by the Alliance team, presentation of the International Assembly of independent publishers and workshop issues/objectives – *15 minutes*

**Presentation** of participants – *15 minutes*

**Panorama of international digital publishing:** what are the main markets, the main trends? (Octavio Kulesz) – *30 minutes*

## Digital publishing in the Arab world: what technical limitations and how can we overcome them? – 4 hours

### Reading devices (e-book readers, tablets, Smartphones, laptops) – 1 hour

- What digital reading devices are available in Arab countries? What are the best selling devices in the Arab world? (*Salah Chebaro*)
- Reading devices, typographies and reading direction in the Arabic language: advantages and disadvantages of the various devices? (*Salah Chebaro*)

### Coffee break (15 minutes)

### Production of digital content in Arabic – 3 hours

- International standards: EPUB2, EPUB3, Mobi, HTML, App... (*Octavio Kulesz*)
- In-house production of e-books: what skills and tools? Presentation on the various working streams (*Octavio Kulesz*)
- Typographies, reading direction: what problems are encountered during the production of e-files in Arabic? (*Wael Abid*)
- Overview of existing formats: advantages and disadvantages for Arabic contents? (*Salah Chebaro*)
- Importance of metadata (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** Do you produce your e-books in-house? What technical difficulties do you encounter? Do individuals responsible for the production have specific training?

### Coffee break (15 minutes)

- Via a service provider: costs involved? How can we assess the quality of an e-book produced by a service provider? (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** Do you ask to external service providers to produce your e-books? What price for what quality?

- Apps: what are the solutions for Arabic? (*Salah Chebaro*)
- Producing enhanced e-books in Arabic: current opportunities (*Salah Chebaro*)

## Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 (9.00 am – 7.00 pm)

*Morning (9.00 am – 1.00 pm)*

**Workshop venue:** Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre

**Production of digital content in Arabic (cont.) – 1 hour**

**Digitalisation of printed books**

- How can we digitalise publishing funds of traditional publishers in the Arab world? What good/ bad practices? (*Mohamad Al-Baghdadi*)

**All participants:** What support is available for the digitalisation of publishing funds of traditional publishers in the Arab world?

**Marketing of digital content: what economic and legal models for digital publishing in Arabic? – 3 hours**

**Economic models – 1 hour and 15 minutes**

- Presentation of various economic models for digital publishers: copy model; membership model; open access model (*Octavio Kulesz*)
- How can we include digital publishing in a traditional publishing economic model? Print first, digital first: two ways of including digital publishing in a printed publishing economic model (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** How have you integrated digital publishing into your printed publishing economic model? Are your digital publishing activities currently profitable?

*Coffee break (15 minutes)*

**Formalisation of agreements with authors – 50 minutes**

- How can we update traditional publishing contracts to include digital publishing? Exclusivity, territory, and duration: what are the good/bad practices? (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** Have you included clauses related to digital publishing in your publishing contracts? Would you need legal advice to formalise agreements with your authors?

*Lunch (1.00 am – 3.00 pm)*

Lunch is taken at the Rotana Centro Capital Centre Hotel.

**Afternoon (3.00 pm – 7.00 pm)**

**Distribution platforms and online booksellers – 3 hours**

- Overview of main online stores worldwide and in the Arab world, including the Neel Wal Furat platform (*Salah Chebaro*)
- Overview of main international and Arab e-books aggregators (*Mohamad Al-Baghdadi*)
- How can we distribute our e-books in libraries and universities? Presentation of the Almanhal platform (*Mohamad Al-Baghdadi*)
- Streaming, downloading, etc.: various delivery modes of files to readers (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**Coffee break (15 minutes)**

- Distribution contracts? (*Mohamad Al-Baghdadi*)
- Protection of digital files: DRM, watermarking, etc. Quality, costs, advantages and disadvantages of existing solutions (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** *Are you a user of one or several distribution platforms? What is your feedback on this experience? On which online shops are your books available? Are you able to market them outside of the Arab world?*

**Friday 2 May 2014**

**Morning (10.00 am – 1.00 pm)**

**Meeting of the Arabic-language network of the Alliance – 3 hours**

**Venue of the meeting:** Rotana Centro Capital Centre Hotel

**Warning:** *This meeting will gather exclusively the publishers members of the Arabic-speaking network, of the International Alliance of independent publishers:*

- Debrief of the projects realized in the network since 2011: co-publishing and translation projects, meetings...;
- Election of the coordinator of the network for the period 2014-2016;
- Discussion about the development of the network (new memberships);
- Focus on the International Assembly of independent publishers, and on the representation of the Arabic-speaking network in the Cape Town Assembly (17-22 September 2014);
- Preparation of the public speech at the Fair, on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

**Afternoon (5.00 pm – 9.00 pm)**

**Workshop venue:** Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre

### **Distribution platforms and online booksellers (cont.) – 1 hour and 30 minutes**

**Website – 1 hour and 30 minutes**

- How can a website be transformed into an online shop? Overview of existing solutions (*Octavio Kulesz*)
- Implantation of an online payment system. Advantages and disadvantages of existing solutions (*Octavio Kulesz*)

**All participants:** *Are you satisfied with your current website? Does your website enable online shopping? Do you want to move towards an online shop?*

### **Digital promotion and marketing: what strategies? – 1 hour**

**Digital marketing and communication: main tools – 30 minutes**

- Implement promotion and partnership strategies with digital distributors and booksellers (*Mohamad Al-Baghdadi*)
- Identifying and communicating with our readers (*Salah Chebaro*)

**All participants:** *What digital tools are you using to identify and communicate with your readers? Do you implement visibility or promotion campaigns for your books via your digital distributor?*

**Coffee break (15 minutes)**

**Digital marketing and communication: main tools (cont.) – 30 minutes**

- Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, etc. What 2.0 tools for what kind of communication? (*Octavio Kulesz*)
- Communities of readers and social networks in the Arab world: how can they be used effectively? (*Salah Chebaro*)

**All participants:** *What 2.0 tools are you using to enhance the visibility of your books and publishing house? Do you take part in communities of readers in the Arab world?*

### **Conclusion and closure of the workshop – 1 hour**

**Digital publishing: what issues for bibliodiversity?**

- Recommendations and proposals from Arabic-speaking publishers as an outcome of the workshop

*These recommendations will be shared during the International Assembly of independent publishers, to be held in Cape Town (17-22 September 2014), and will be included in the Assembly's final Declaration.*

*Some tools mentioned during the workshop as well as feedback from publishers and specialists could be integrated in the Digital Lab of the Alliance.*

## **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2014**

**Public speech (11.00 am – 12.00 am)**

**Public speech venue:** Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre

### **“Words & Money”: André Schiffrin’s struggle for independent publishing**

#### **Speakers:**

- Nouri Abid, General Manager of Med Ali Editions (Tunisia),
- Nabil Mroueh, General Manager of Al Intishar / Arab Diffusion (Lebanon)

Nabil Mroueh and Nouri Abid are both members of the International Alliance of independent publishers. Thanks to a partnership between the Alliance and the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, they took part in a workshop about “Digital publishing in the Arabic-speaking world”, with 15 publishers and digital publishing experts from various Arab countries. They will introduce briefly this workshop and its conclusions, before talking about “bibliodiversity” and independent publishing.

#### **Description of the public speech:**

In 2012, three publishers from Lebanon (Al Intishar), Syria (Altas Books) and Tunisia (Med Ali publishers), all members of the International Alliance of Independent Publishers, translated and co-published André Schiffrin’s essay entitled *Words & Money*, in Arabic. In this book, originally published by Verso Books in the United Kingdom, André Schiffrin explores new ways -both simple and innovative- to safeguard independent publishing and bookselling, but also cinema and the press.

While André Schiffrin left us recently, Nouri Abid publishers (Med Ali, Tunisia) and Nabil Mroueh (Al Intishar, Lebanon) will pay tribute to the French-American publisher by introducing his book *Words & Money* to the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair public, thus offering a great opportunity to discuss the relevance of André Schiffrin’s analysis with contemporary eyes.

The two speakers will also introduce the concept of “bibliodiversity”, as promoted by independent publishers and supported by the International Alliance of Independent Publishers. The notion of bibliodiversity refers to the necessary diversity of publishing outputs available to readers, and positions the central role of independent publishers in this book ecosystem. Bibliodiversity is in line with André Schiffrin’s thoughts.



## **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

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## **INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS**

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# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## Useful addresses

### Rotana Centro Capital Centre Hotel

Al Khaleej Al Arabi St. - Abu Dhabi - United Arab Emirates

Phone: +971 2 409 6666

### Web site:

<http://www.rotana.com/centrohotels/unitedarabemirates/abudhabi/centrocapitalcentre>

**Workshop venue:** Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre

**Abu Dhabi International Book Fair:** <http://www.adbookfair.com/>

## Useful contact details

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### Abu Dhabi International Book Fair:

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## Support from the Alliance

In the context of this workshop, the Alliance will fund your plane tickets back and forth.

KITAB will provide your hotel accommodation, 4 nights (from 29th of April to 2nd of May) full-board. The lunches and dinners are taken at the Rotana Centro Capital Centre Hotel buffet.

The additional expenses (extra nights, taxis expenses, etc.) have to be paid by the publishers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

كتاب Kitab

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We also thank the **Prince Claus Fund** who has contributed to the establishment of this workshop.

Prince Claus Fund for  
Culture and Development

This meeting would not have been possible without the **publishers themselves**, who are the core and the **main actors** of our Alliance, working day after day to defend independent publishing and bibliodiversity.

A special thanks to **Nouri ABID, Samar HADDAD and Nabil MROUEH** for their fantastic assistance in the organization of this workshop.

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