2024

ANNUAL REPORT



F.O.R.M.

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14615083
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Work with FORM to support the development and implementation of Open Science policies and practises in research communities across the Arab world.

Connect with us at: www.forumforopen.org or email us at: contact@forumforopen.org

Working together

Towards a more open Arab world

Welcome to our Annual Report, a showcase of our achievements and commitment to supporting the advancement of open science across the Arab world.

About FORM

The Forum for Open Research in MENA (FORM) is a non-profit membership organisation supporting the advancement of Open Science policies and practices in research communities and institutions across the Arab region.

The Arab states have the resources and capability to play a pivotal role in the global transition towards more accessible, sustainable and inclusive research and education models. However, while many institutions and organisations are at the forefront of this change, there is a clear need for something more focused on the specific needs of research communities and research institutions just starting out on their journey towards openness.

Our focus is on empowering libraries, higher education institutions, research councils and policy makers to collaborate on activities, projects and resources that promote engagement with, and the generation of, open research – enabling them to better serve the needs of local research communities. We want to support all our stakeholder groups in the journey towards a more 'open' world by facilitating the exchange of actionable insights and the development of practical policies, and by encouraging the evolution of a strong cross-regional collaborative community.



SUPPORT
The advancement of Open Science ecosystems in HEIs and RLs across Arab world



CREATE
Accessible and localised resources relating to the implementation of Open Science policies and practises



ENCOURAGE
Collaborative community partnerships and cooperation between members and partners of FORM



CHAMPION
The development of RTL functionality in key open source and open science technological solutions

A catalyst for positive action, we work with key stakeholders to develop and implement a pragmatic programme to facilitate the transition towards more accessible, inclusive and sustainable research and education models in the Arab region.

Vision & Mission

Vision

Unlocking research for and in the Arab Region and working towards a more 'open' world.

Mission

To support the advancement of Open Science practices in libraries and universities across the Arab region by facilitating the exchange of actionable insights and the development of practical policies.

Meet the Team



DR EMILY CHOYNOWSKI
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



NAHIL HASSAN
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



JACIR HILMI
TRANSLATION & OUTREACH



LISETTE VAN KESSEL
EVENT MANAGEMENT

and special thanks to



KAMRAN KARDAN
CHAIRMAN OF OUR FUNDER, THE KNOWLEDGE E FOUNDATION

Meet our Funder

FORM is an independent venture founded and funded by the Knowledge E Foundation.

The Knowledge E Foundation is a UK-registered community interest company that is constantly growing and intensifying its activities to contribute to more diverse causes and offer aid wherever possible.

As the philanthropic arm of Knowledge E, the Knowledge E Foundation tends to focus its efforts on funding education projects, building and renovating schools in remote areas around the world, contributing to disaster relief efforts, empowering research, and endorsing the movement towards Open Science (via activities such as funding the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and founding FORM).

The Foundation's initiatives have left a lasting positive impact on many countries around the world, including in Cambodia, Egypt, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, and the UAE.

Knowledge E Foundation



The Knowledge E Foundation donates to Education...

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Knowledge E is supporting GEMS World Academy in their...

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Knowledge E Signs the Dignified Storytelling Pledge

Read more



Knowledge E adopts a school in Malawi and fulfils its pledge

Read more



A meaningful overseas visit to Malawi

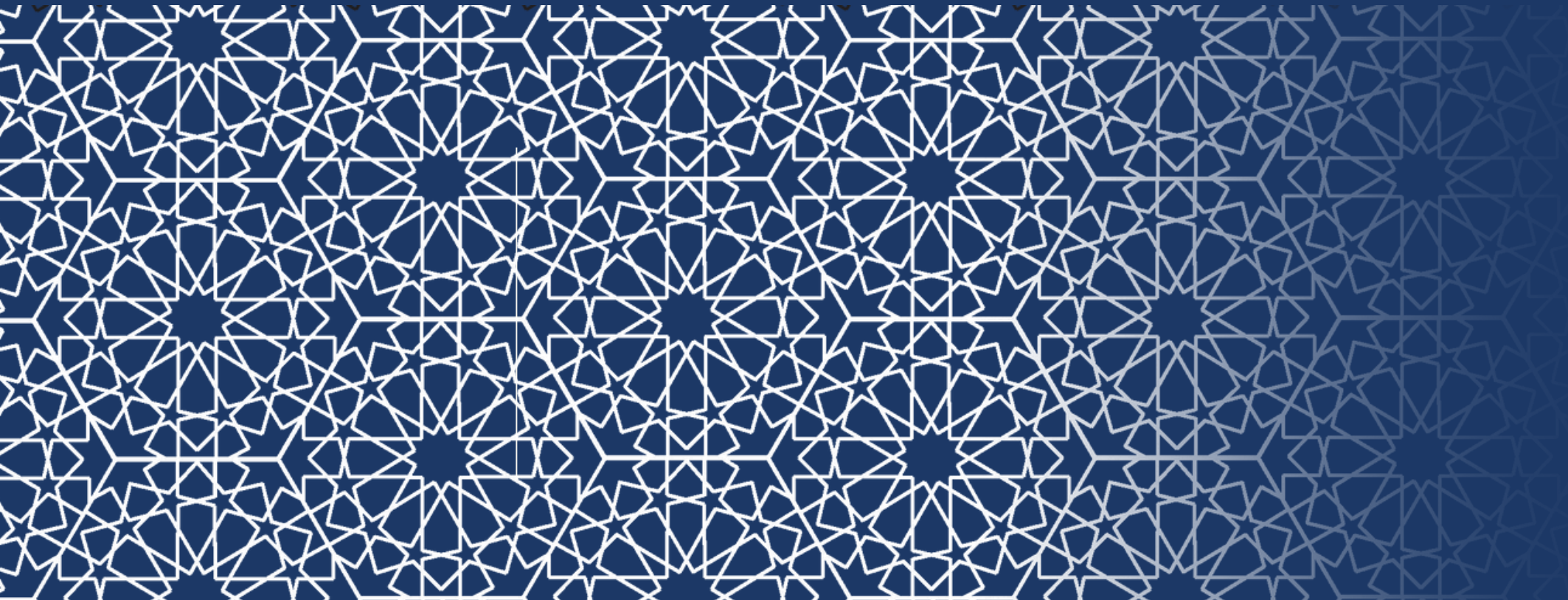
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Knowledge E gives hope to children in Cambodia...

Read more

A Year in Review
Executive Summary



Highlights
Inspiring Progress

Network

194%
Growth

2,211
Institutions

110
Countries

Activities

16
Activities

1,145
Attendees

89
Countries

Members

9
Member Organisations

5
Strategic Partners

Summary
Plans for the Future

This has been a significant year for Open Science advocates across the world, with a range of developments and advancements - with new initiatives, infrastructures, policies, practises and funding bodies emerging to support the progression of Open Science activities in their myriad forms. FORM has been honoured to be able to participate in, and support, many of these advances – both globally and locally.

In addition, it has been a busy year for us as an initiative. We have expanded our membership, and are delighted to be able to formally welcome our new Member Organisations and Strategic Partners.

We have also augmented our Community Development Activities to include a new workshop series, 'How to be Open', providing targeted capacity building opportunities for researchers, librarians and institutional administrators. These workshops are complemented by our recently launched resource series containing short guidelines and useful tips for our stakeholders. We also launched a new diamond open access journal, *Al Wusul: The Arab Journal of Open Science Policies and Practises*, and hope to launch the inaugural issue before the end of 2024.

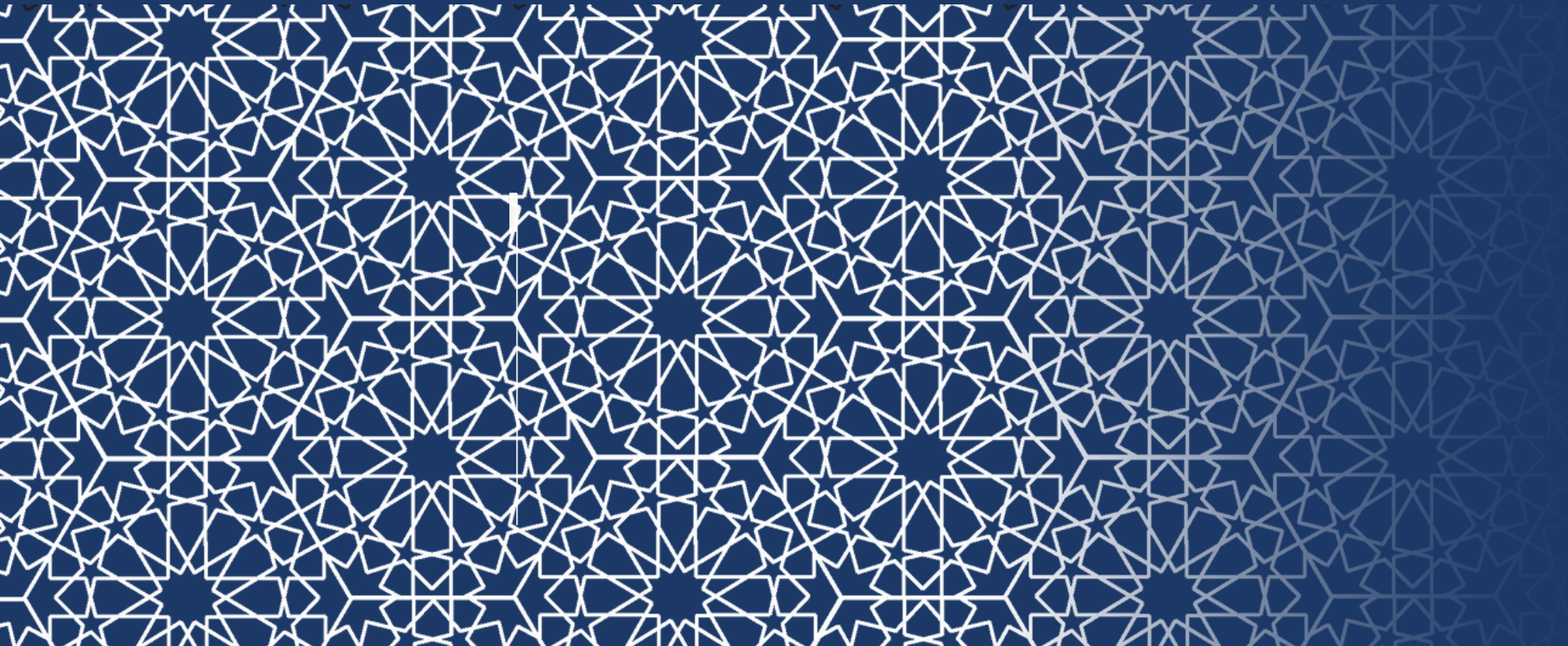
In addition, we were also invited to convene a special regional session at the 10th Science Summit, taking place in New York alongside the 79th UN General Assembly, to discuss key challenges and opportunities for fostering equitable and sustainable research ecosystems within the Arab states, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue concerning the visibility of Arab voices and research within the global scientific community.

Finally, we have collaborated with the Qatar National Library to organise the 3rd Annual Forum for Open Research, with a record-breaking 1,400+ registrants.

After our first Annual General Meeting, the following objectives were identified for 2025:

- Establish a temporary executive committee
- Explore concepts for establishing individual (as well as institutional) membership. A working group will be established to define membership types, rights, and benefits.
- Refine the governance documents, to ensure EDI principles are firmly embedded. These should also include rights and responsibilities of each set of member categories. This will be the responsibility of the temporary executive committee to produce and circulate for input.
- Create a code of conduct for FORM members - this will be the responsibility of the temporary executive committee to produce and circulate for input.
- Keep updating and refining the glossary (Jacir Hilmi and Hadeer Mohammed will lead this, but circulate for input)
- Boost awareness of FORM by increasing support mechanisms for the local open science communities – suggested measures included: developing more resources and guidelines, expanding the How to be Open workshop series, and launching a podcast. The operations team will lead on this, but suggestions from AGM attendees are welcomed.
- Expand scoping project to identify and understand stakeholder needs and priorities, with a view to producing a set of principles for the initiative and for members to adhere to and work towards. A working group will be established to lead this project.
- Aim for 20 institutional members and 1000 individual members

Building the Foundations
Activities & Resources



Activities

Our Community Development Series is a key part of our strategy, designed to provide insights and learning opportunities for all stakeholders looking to engage with Open Science at an institutional level, including funding groups and government ministries, libraries and universities, non-profit solutions providers, and all members of the region's wider research communities.

These free events are held on a monthly basis, online, in collaboration with non-profit organisations and open source solutions providers. The goal is to offer practical guidance on a broad array of issues relating to the implementation of Open Science policies and practices in scholarly ecosystems, from leading global experts.

Over the past 12 months, we have organised 10 Community Development Activities for our stakeholders, covering various topics including:

- Open Data and PIDs
- Metadata and visibility
- Decolonisation
- Open peer review
- Transformative agreements

We had over 3,000 registrants for these events and over 1200 attendees from 73 countries around the world.

We conducted these events in English and Arabic, and also provide complete translations of the event recordings, making them freely available on our website for future access.

"The meetings I have attended virtually were very informative and I look forward to attending more. Thank you team F.O.R.M for the wonderful work you do."

"It was a privilege to attend this event."

"Thank you for this opportunity to learn."

"I would love more sessions like this."

"Thanks 👍, you are the best!"

For 2024, we listened to the community and, after identifying their needs and priorities, we developed a new range of Community Development Activities to include:

1 Symposia

Longer Symposia formats, with multiple panelists debating key issues and providing a diverse range of insights and approaches.



2 'How to be Open' Workshops

The 'How to be Open' series offers tailored workshops for our key stakeholder groups (researchers, librarians, institutional administrators and journal editors) and certificates for completion.



3 Coffee Drop Ins

Drop in Coffee-Hours on our Slack Channel to allow our network to have a more informal discussion with us and share key concerns and priorities



Resources

The production and promotion of open research is becoming increasingly important; it is not only a primary concern for all areas of the academic ecosystem, but also impacts the commercial and industrial sectors, and is crucial to the development of successful knowledge economies across the world.

Our aim is to provide a library of educational resources in Arabic and English, relating to the development and implementation of Open Science policies and practices in higher education institutions and research communities. Our goal is to empower libraries, higher education institutions, research councils and policy makers to collaborate on activities, projects and resources that promote engagement with, and the generation of, open research – enabling them to better serve the needs of local research communities.



Open Science Arabic-English Glossary

Read more »



Presentations and Recordings

Read more »



Reports and Guidelines

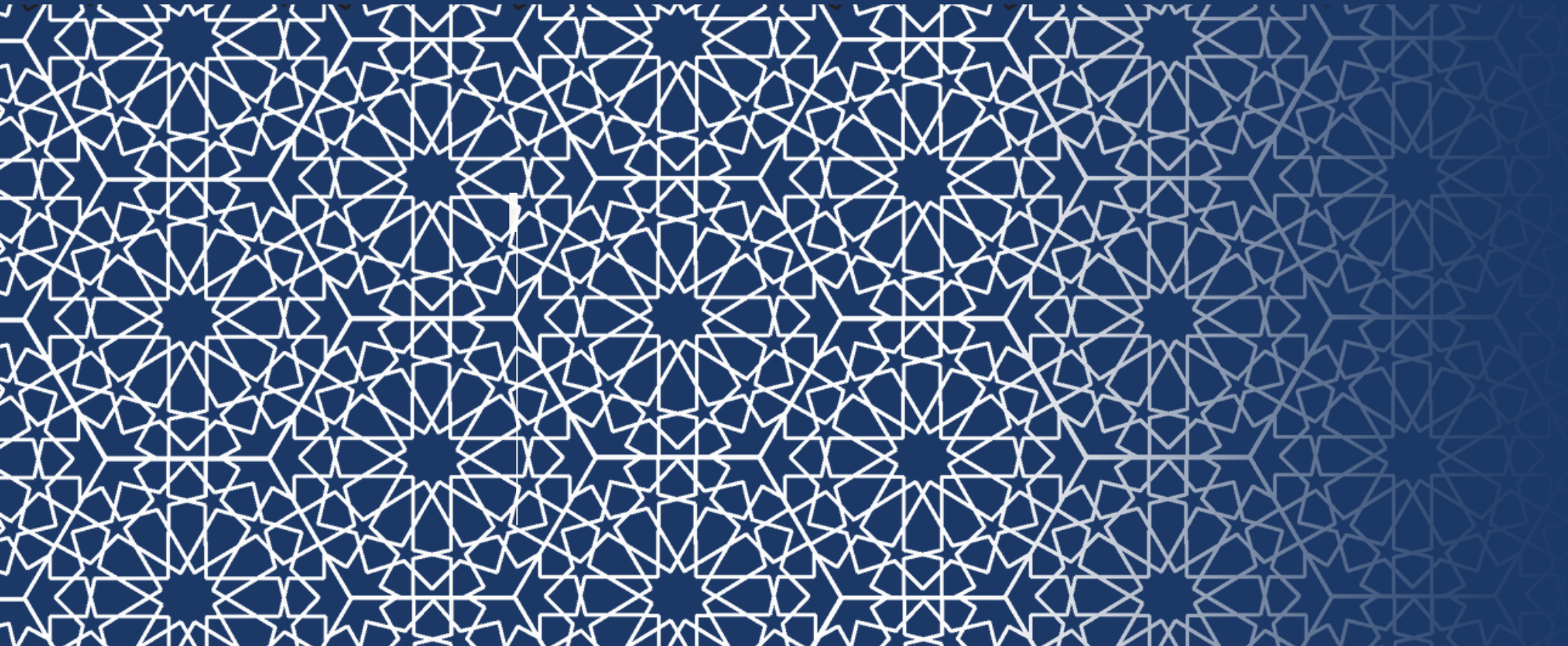
Read more »

We have started to produce localised guidelines on key topics for our stakeholders. Topics so far include ‘What are Preprints?’; ‘How to Safeguard Your Open Access Copyrights’, ‘Becoming an Open Peer Reviewer’.

We are also providing translation support to global open science advocacy organisations to ensure their toolkits, guidelines and solutions are accessible for Arab research communities. Groups we have supported include: PKP, DOAJ, and ASAPBio.

Sharing the Knowledge

The Annual Forum




3rd Annual Forum 2024
F.O.R.M.
21-24 October | Qatar
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Knowledge Into Action
WITH THANKS TO OUR PATRON
HE DR HAMAD AL-KAWARI
State Minister of Qatar & President of Qatar National Library
AND OUR PARTNERS


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F.O.R.M.
Forum for Open
Research in MENA
Founded by Knowledge E Foundation





F.O.R.M.
منتدى البحوث المفتوحة في
الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا

Highlights

We quoted a noted philosopher from the region, Abu Bakr, in our call for papers for this year's Annual Forum: "Without knowledge action is useless, and knowledge without action is futile". This ethos lies at the heart of the Annual Forum – which aims to bring together researchers, librarians, policy makers and university leaders, to support the exchange of actionable insights and practical experiences, and facilitate the development of new collaborative communities and partnerships.

This year's Annual Forum, our third, was held in Doha, at the Qatar National Library who generously agreed to be our host partners, and was undoubtedly the most productive and successful event we have organised so far.

With 21 sessions, 67 speakers, and 1457 delegates from 89 countries (representing 760 institutions) across the world – this was a truly rich event filled with valuable insights, allowing delegates to share ideas, discuss challenges and exchange solutions.

The event was further enriched with two outstanding workshops on the final day for in-person delegates, one for librarians offering an in-depth exploration of how to set up institutional repositories, and the other offering a valuable overview of best practises for engaging with open science in scholarly communications.

In addition to the scientific programme, we also had a number of other additions to the schedule, including our first Annual General Meeting (to establish the community's objectives for the coming year and elect a temporary Executive Committee) and a Signing Ceremony (to welcome new member organisations joining FORM).

We also included a tour of the strikingly beautiful Education City Mosque, and held our Gala Dinner at the fabulous Museum of Islamic Arts in central Doha.

The overarching message of this year's Annual Forum was the prioritisation of communication, collaboration and localisation to ensure the successful adv advancement of open science policies and practises in the Arab region's research communities and research institutions.

- The need to **communicate** clearly and effectively with each other and with our stakeholders, and the importance of ensuring the arab voice is visible and heard in global discussions.
- The need to **collaborate** as individuals, as institutions, as communities and countries – within our local environment and as a region.
- The paramount importance of **localising** discussions, activities, outputs, tools and solutions relating to open science, of encouraging innovation and adaptation to develop processes and policies for individual communities and the region as a whole.

These priorities have also informed our own objectives for the coming year, as we focus on how best to help empower local stakeholders to establish and address local priorities in a manner appropriate to the needs and priorities of their research communities; how we can facilitate the development and implementation of open science policies and practises in research institutions across the region; and what we can do to support the amplification of equitable production of, and equitable access to, research in and from the Arab States.

Key Statistics

Scientific Programme

4 Days

21 Sessions

61 Speakers

Delegate Demographics

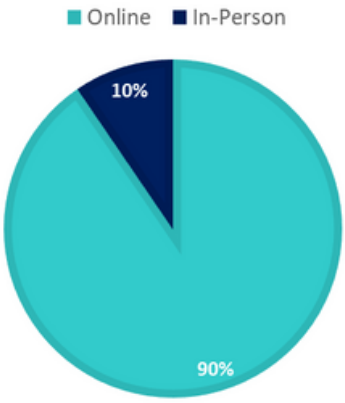
1457 Registrants

760 Institutions

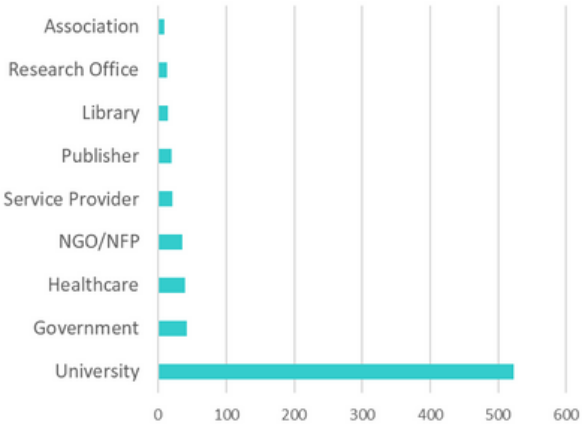
89 Countries

Delegate Overview

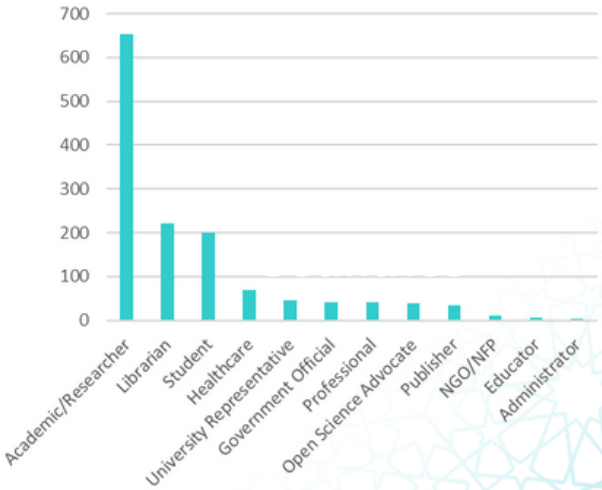
90% of registrants and attendees were online, and 10% in person. 35% of online registrants attended the majority of the event, while 94% of in person delegates attended (this latter drop-off was predominantly due to ongoing political issues in the region impacting travel routes).



Of the 760 institutions which were represented at the event, the majority (68%) were from universities. However, there is evidence of growing interest from healthcare organisations and government policymaking organisations - and both categories saw a significant increase this year.

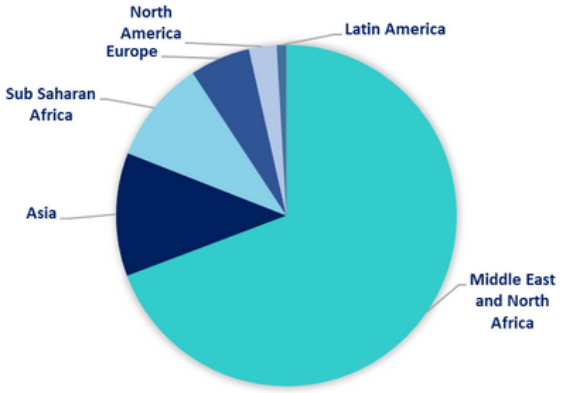


Of the 1457 delegates and speakers, the majority (43%) were academics and researchers. A further 14% were librarians, and 12% were students (the latter highlights a substantial expansion of interest in open science activities in student populations). The presence of individual open science advocates is also rising.

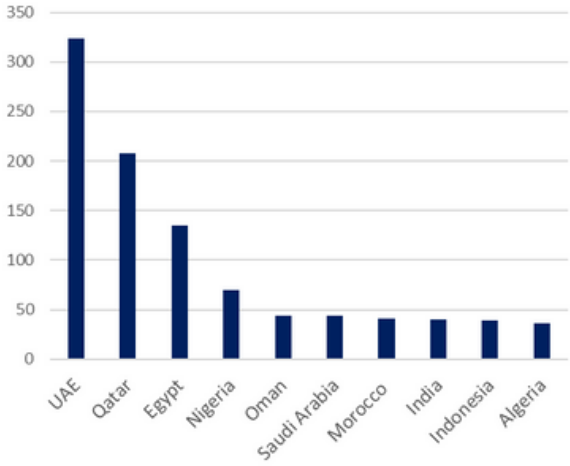


Countries Overview

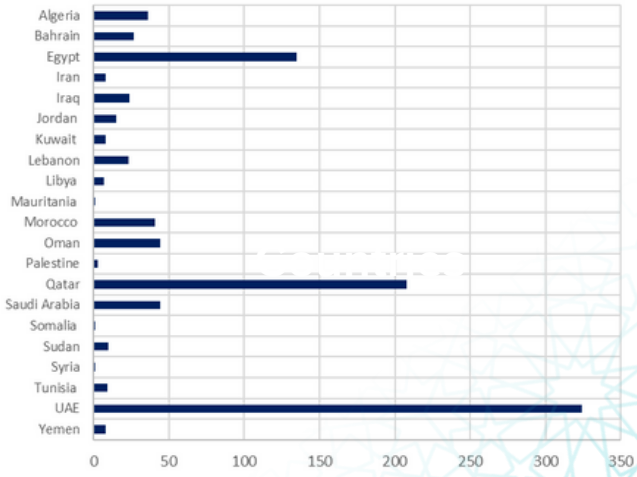
The MENA states account for a comfortable majority (67%) of delegates, with the various Asian states also accounting for a further 11% of delegates. Sub Saharan African delegates accounted for 9%, and Europe a further 5%.



The top ten source countries for delegates were predominantly Arab States (most notably the UAE, Qatar, and Egypt - accounting for 22%, 14% and 9% of delegates respectively). However there were also sizeable contingents from Nigeria (5%), India (3%) and Indonesia (3%). Overall the top 10 countries accounted for 67% of the delegates



20 of the 22 Arab states were represented at the conference. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries accounted for 32% of Arab State delegates, Levant Arab nations accounted for a further 26% as did North African Arab nations, while Sub-Saharan Arab nations accounted for just under 16% of Arab state delegates.



Delegate Feedback



97%

Conference format was successful and appropriate for delegates



100%

Conference content was useful and valuable for delegates



97%

Conference sessions and insights will support professional goals of delegates

I want to thank you all for a really insightful and inspiring conference. I was really impressed at the intraregional and international collaboration on display, the commitment to open science, and the inclusion of people from countries that have been through some very difficult times in recent years.

Thank you for the wonderful conference and being able to attend virtually.

Both informative and inspiring, paving the way for a stronger presence of the Arab world.

From my point of view, the Forum is an interesting organization, it is extraordinary. The discussions introduced necessary topics to help us understand and be convinced that Open Access is important for libraries in higher education. Congratulations, thank you, and I hope to participate in other Forums as well.



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October | Qatar

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3RD ANNUAL FORUM FOR OPEN RESEARCH
21ST- 24TH OCTOBER 2024 - DOHA, QATAR

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Main library
The Engineering library



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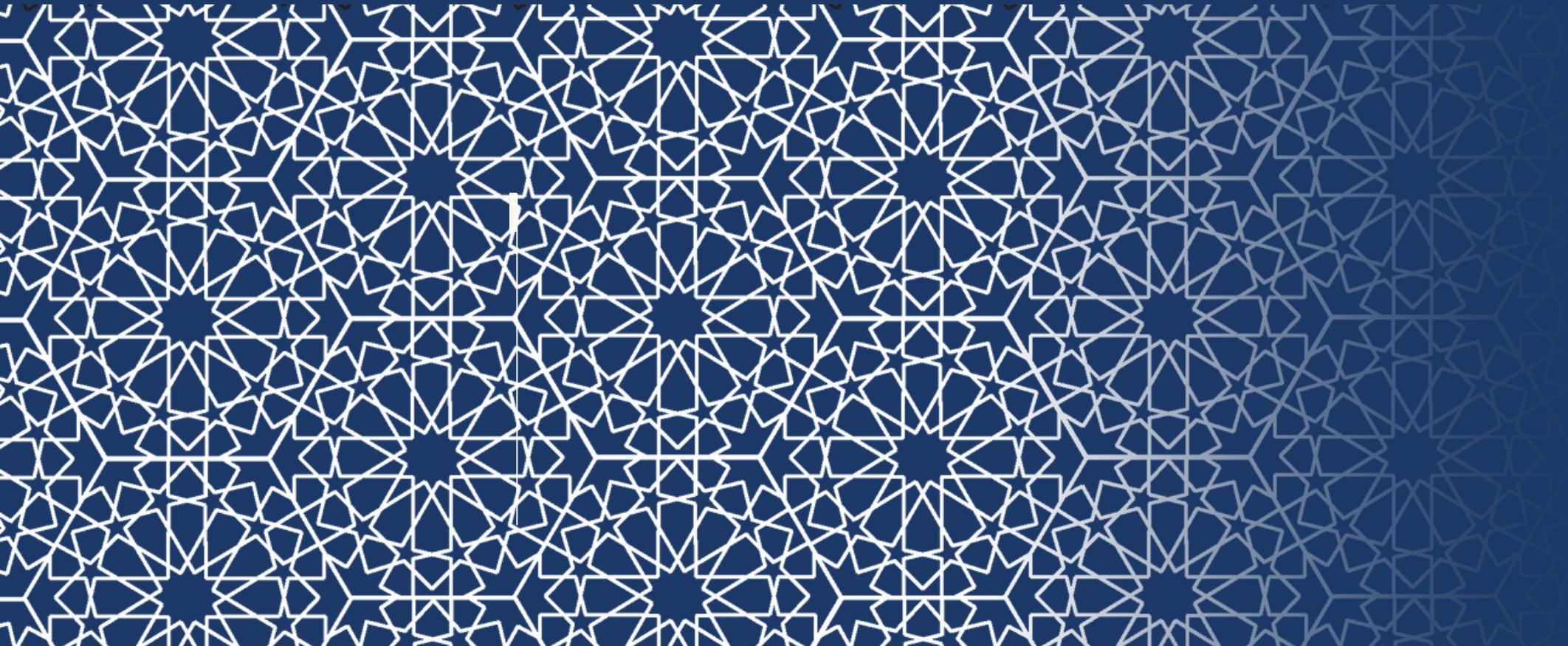
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Developing the Connections
Network & Community



Members

Any research institution or research community that desires to support the mission and purpose of FORM may apply to become a Member.

Over the past year, FORM has cultivated a unique network of member organisations who are all working tirelessly to advance the Open Science agenda within the region and beyond.

FORM's membership offers them an opportunity to engage with each other and our growing network for the collaborative goal of enhancing Open Science's presence and value across the Arab world. These members include:

We also have a number of strategic partnerships with leading global open science advocacy groups. These include:

Network

Over the last year, FORM has worked to enlarge our network. Our efforts have been hugely successful, with 194% growth to a network of just under 4,000 individuals from 110 countries.

Our network is comprised of:

- Researchers
- Policymakers
- Librarians
- University leaders
- Professors
- Open Science advocates

The Arab States currently represent 61% of this network. However, we are also seeing strong growth in awareness of our activities in African nations who are not member states of the Arab League, while Asia and Europe account for a further 12% and 11% respectively – demonstrating the value of our activities for people beyond our core stakeholder group.





Our stakeholders work collaboratively with us to develop capacity building strategies and resources that bolster our mission of promoting and implementing localised Open Science policies and practices to the region.

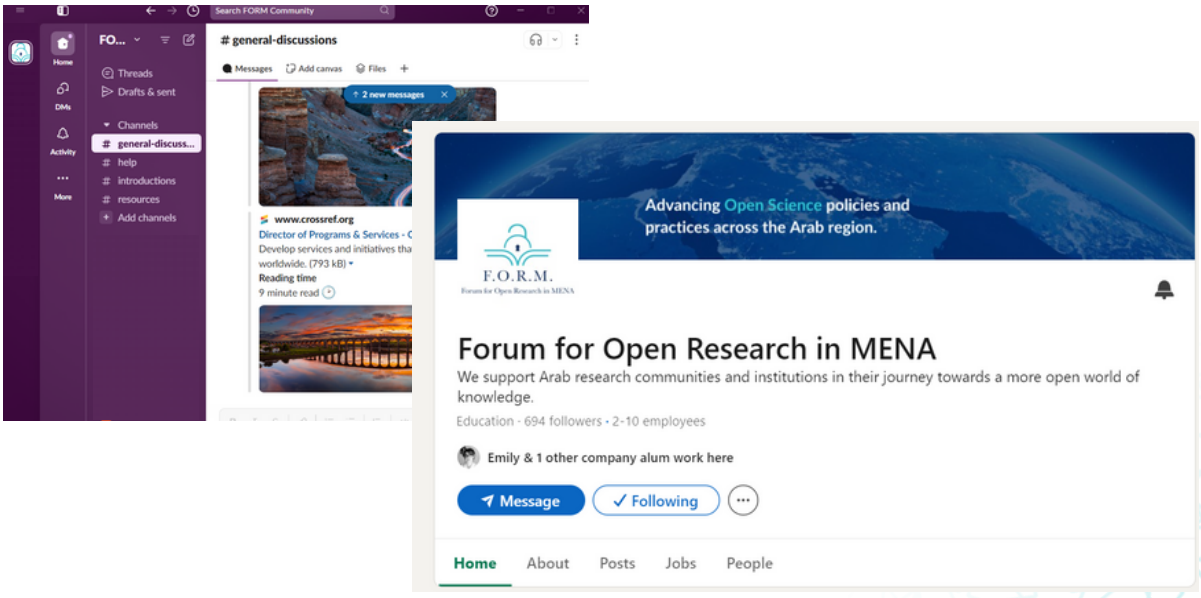
Community Engagement

One of our key objectives as an initiative is to support the development of (and foster collaboration between) local open science advocacy groups and research communities. In pursuit of this objective, we have a implemented a number of strategies to encourage inclusivity and enhance collaborative opportunities.

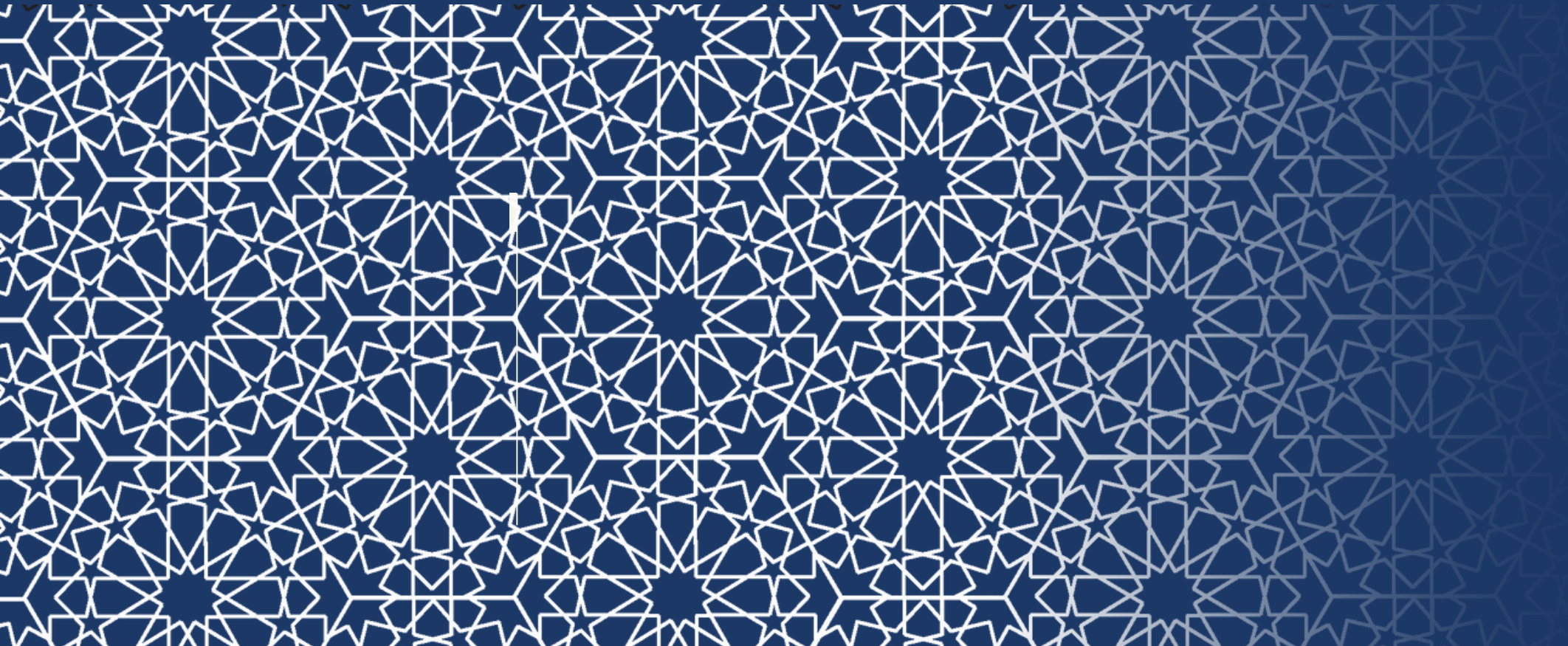
Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is the implementation of a fully bilingual communication strategy, with all social media posts, emails, website content and resources being produced in both Arabic and English.

In addition, following the successful launch of our FORM Slack Community last year (to provide a cost-free avenue for the region's open science advocates to exchange ideas, share announcements, and form partnerships) we now have over 600 community users. We also launched our Linked In profile to further increase engagement opportunities.

Finally, we launched a quarterly newsletter to share information about our activities and also circulate updates from our Members and Strategic Partners.



Enhancing the Visibility **Thought Leadership**



Enhancing Visibility

Over the past year, FORM has started to take on a new role as a facilitator connective global open science advocacy groups with those from the Arab region. This has encouraged us to enlarge our objectives to encompass supporting the visibility of Arab voices in global discussions.

We have undertaken a number of activities to support this objective. These include:



Providing translation support to global entities to ensure the accessibility of their work for the region's communities (enabling them to keep up to date with global developments) and ensure that the Arab world is visibly represented and acknowledged as a stakeholder.



Participating in working groups to ensure the representation of regional needs and priorities. This year we have participated in the International Science Working Group on Scholarly Communications, the UNESCO Working Group on Diamond Open Access Publishing, and recently joined the FORCE 11 Working Group on Developing research assessment criteria for the use of AI in scientific and scholarly publications.



Attending events and giving presentations to increase awareness of regional activities. We have presented at conferences including the AESIS Open Science and Societal Impact conference; the Al Qasimi Foundation Education Conference; the 2024 Science Summit; and will shortly be presenting at the UNESCO-ALECSO Open Science Forum and the Arab Open Access Congress.



We have launched a new journal - *Al Wusul: The Arab Journal of Open Science Policies and Practises*. This is a bilingual journal, publishing original research and localised case studies in Arabic and English, with a focus on the role, implementation and impact of open science policies and practises in Arab higher education institutions. We aim to provide a platform to showcase regional activities using emergent or innovative perspectives and approaches, case studies relating to specific challenges and solutions within individual institutions, and new inter-institutional and cross-regional collaborative projects and partnerships.



We have become a signatory of various open science and research equity advocacy groups and initiatives, including the new Knowledge Equity Network and COARA.



We convened a session at the Science Summit UNGA79, which takes place alongside the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA79). The session, on the topic of regional scientific cooperation and the advancement of open science practices and policies, provided a platform for dialogue and collaboration, addressing key themes and issues for fostering equitable and sustainable research ecosystems within the Arab states and paving the way for future collaborative opportunities with other regions.

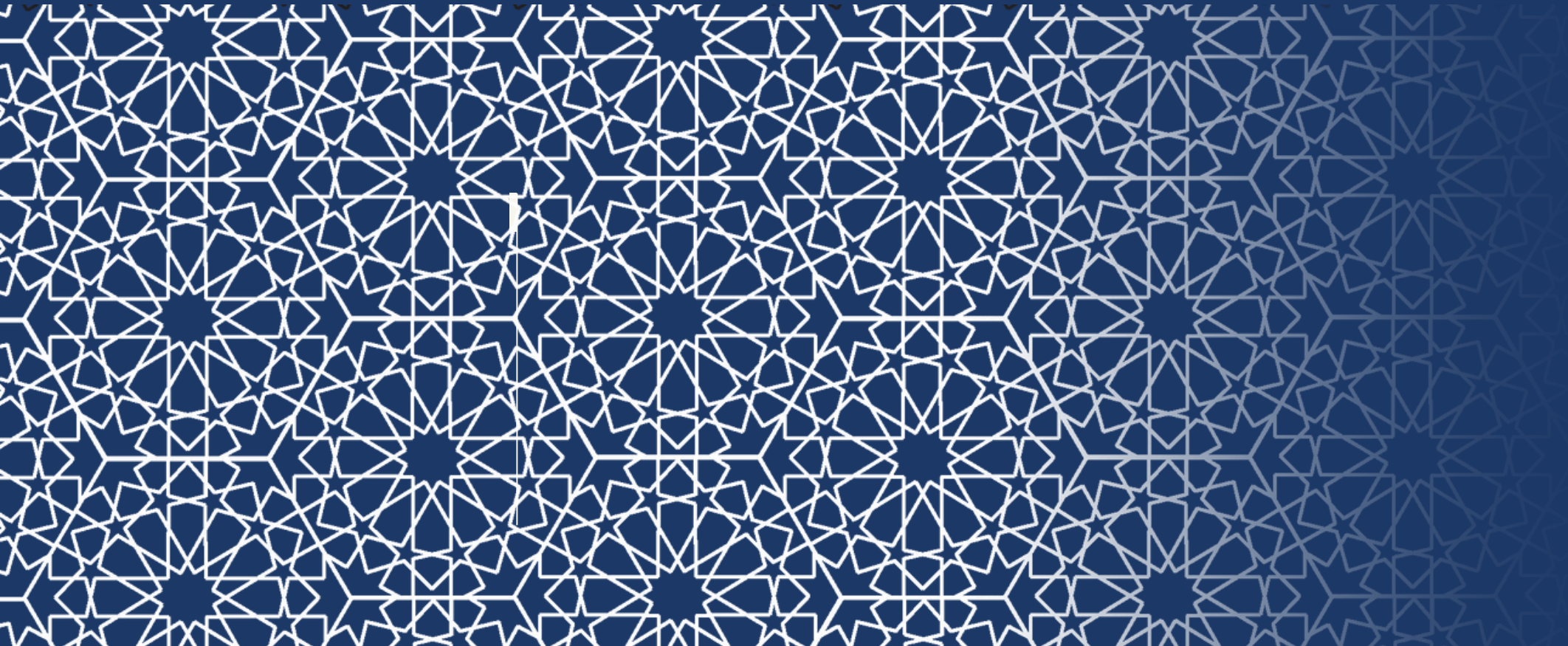


We have started work with various regional stakeholders to identify grassroots community needs and priorities and potential goals for supportive policymaking.



With permission from PKP, Crossref and DOAJ, we are working in collaboration with Knowledge E to develop a detailed data-map of the open access journal landscape in the Arab region. We hope to make this available before the end of the year.

Ensuring Sustainability
Financial Overview



Financial Overview

When FORM was initially launched, we received a commitment of three years' seed funding from the Knowledge E Foundation (for the period 2022-2024). We supplemented this grant with sponsorship fees from the Annual Forum, to enable us to partially subsidise the conference fees for delegates attending the Annual Forum.

From 2025, our sole source of revenue will come from the sponsorship fees raised during the previous year's Annual Forum. Below is a brief overview of our revenue and outgoings (as of 16th October 2024) and the funds reserved for our operations in 2025.

2024 Revenue Sources

Knowledge E Foundation Grant	$30,000
Sponsorship	$41,700
Delegate Fees (3rd Annual Forum)	$10,020

2024 Expenses

Operations (annual)	$8,000
Operations (annual)	$55,000
2025 Funds	**$18,520**



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