

4th Annual Forum for Open Research



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20th-23rd October | 2025

Becoming Open

Building Capacities and Communities in the Arab world



Our Partners

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of Sharjah





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Highlights

We believe that open science is vital for the sociocultural and economic development of the Arab world, and we therefore want to place accessibility at the heart of the region's scientific and research ecosystems – and encourage the evolution of strong, sustainable open research infrastructures.

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 fourth, was held in Sharjah (UAE), at the American University of Sharjah who generously agreed to be our host partners. With 154 in person delegates from 14 countries and 84 institutions, and 794 online delegates from 73 countries and 600 institutions – 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 four outstanding workshops on the final day for in-person delegates, which were offered for free to everyone in the UAE's research and librarian communities. These workshops covered key themes including pivoting university research cultures to prioritise sociocultural impact, publisher agreement negotiation tactics for libraries, AI for librarians and researchers, and research integrity practises.





But in addition to the scientific programme, we also had a number of other additions to the schedule, including our second Annual General Meeting and a Signing Ceremony (to welcome new member organisations joining FORM).

The overarching message of this year's Annual Forum was the crucial importance of community, communication, and collaboration. What really came across during the event is that we as a community, as a diverse group of open science supporters and advocates from libraries, research centers, medical organisations, universities, and advocacy groups from across the arab states and beyond – we have already achieved so much. We've started from scratch and achieved tangible change. And that's really inspiring – and that has been very clear in the responses we have got from the audience both here and online, from the testimonials from people listening to what you are sharing.







Key Statistics

Scientific Programme

4

Days

26

Sessions

83

Speakers

Delegate Demographics

827

Registrants

600

Institutions

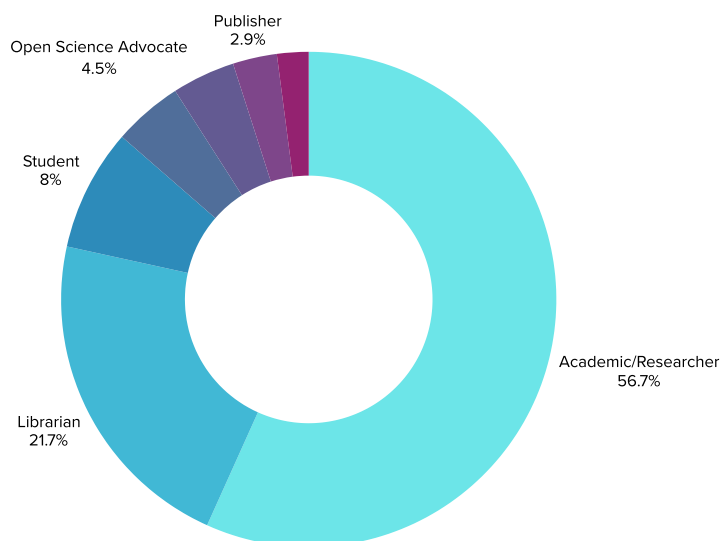
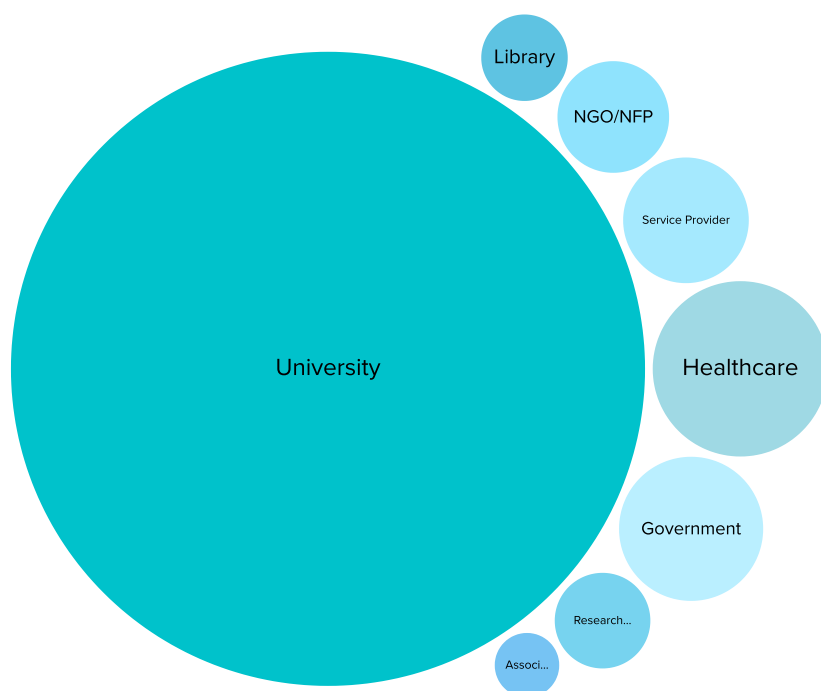
73

Countries



Delegate Overview

Of the 600 institutions and organisations which were represented at the event, the majority were from universities. However, there is evidence of growing interest from healthcare organisations and government policymaking organisations - along with charitable and advocacy groups.



The majority of delegates and speakers (57%) were academics and researchers. A further 22% were librarians, and 8% 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, as senior university representatives (4%) and government officials (2%).

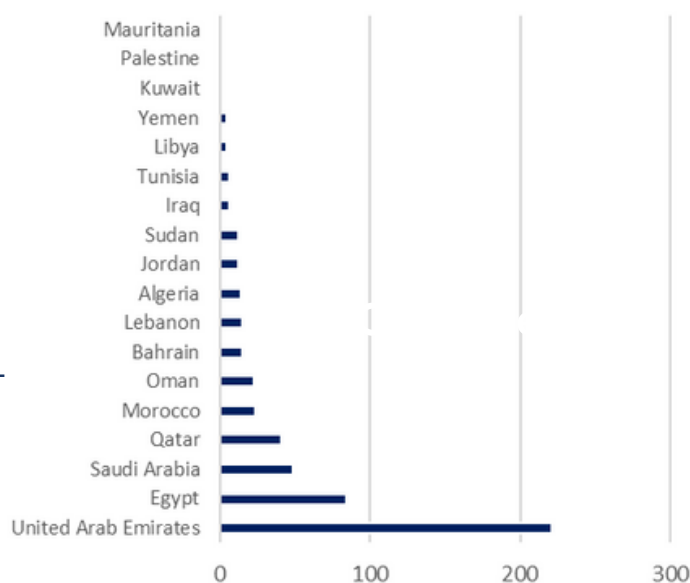
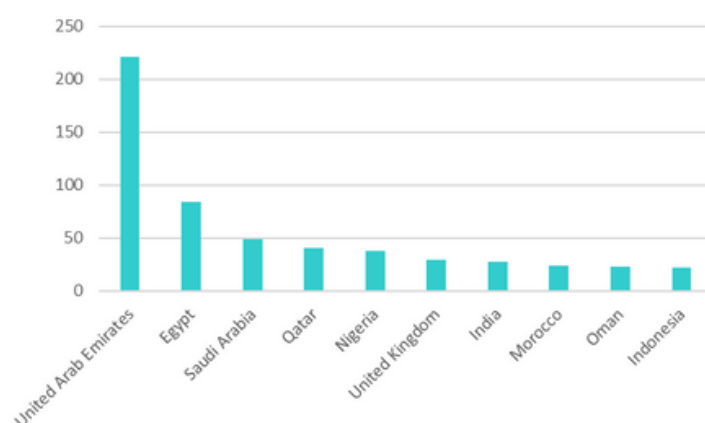
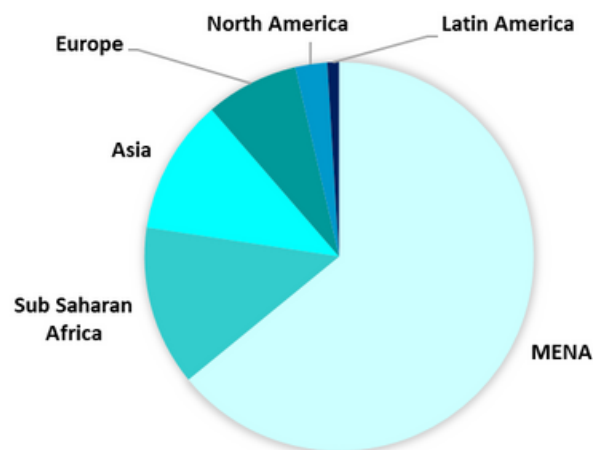


Countries Overview

The MENA states account for a comfortable majority of delegates, however we saw strong growth in attendance levels from Sub Saharan African states. Asia and Europe delegate figures held steady year-on-year.

The top ten source countries for delegates were predominantly Arab States (most notably the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Egypt). However there were also sizeable contingents from Nigeria, the UK, India, and Indonesia.

18 of the 22 Arab states were represented at the conference. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries accounted for 67% of Arab State delegates, North African Arab nations accounted for a further 25% as did North African Arab nations, while Sub-Saharan Arab nations and Levant Arab nations accounted for 2% and 5% respectively. .





Delegate Feedback



100%

Conference format was successful and appropriate for delegates



100%

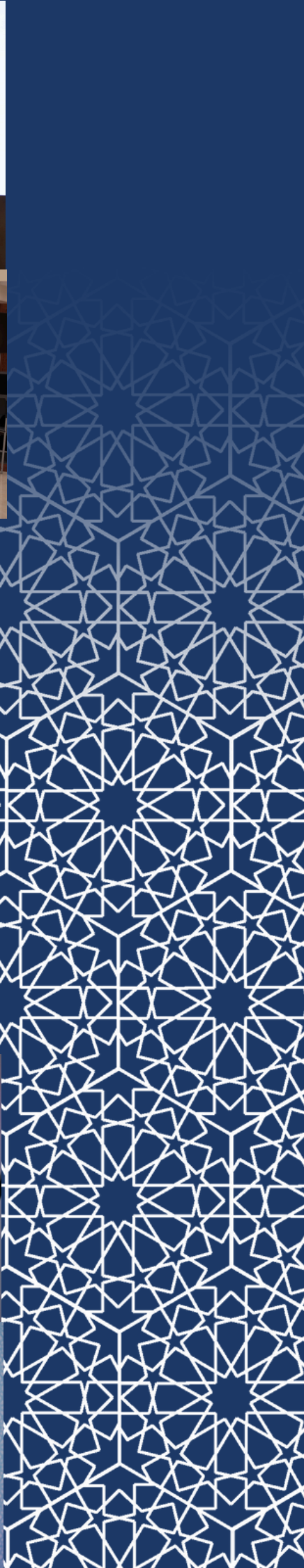
Conference content was useful and valuable for delegates



97%

Conference sessions and insights will support professional goals of delegates







Workshops

This year we had 4 specially curated workshops for our delegates. We also invited Library Directors, Research Office Managers and other key decision makers to join the workshops, as we wanted to share these important learning experiences as widely as possible. The workshops were hugely successful, with every space reserved, and excellent engagement and feedback from the participants - especially the 80+ key decision makers who attended specific workshops, but not the main Annual Forum.

WORKSHOP 1: Research Impact

This 2-hour workshop explores how to develop an effective research culture that focuses on long term impact that extends beyond the narrow boundaries of the individual academic institution. It will cover the scope and scale of potential impacts, pathways to impact, how to track and articulate impact, and how to suitably recognise and reward impact-centric activities and outputs.

WORKSHOP 3: Navigating Fully Open Access Publishing Agreements: From Workflows to Negotiations

This workshop will help participants understand how to set up and manage fully OA agreements. The workshop will guide participants through setting up fully OA publishing agreements, from assessment of institutional requirements, agreement evaluation, understanding publisher workflows, and negotiating the agreements.

WORKSHOP 2: Open Source AI and AI Scenarios

This workshop will connect the Forum for Open Research MENA to two international AI programs, the Open Source AI Definition (OSAID) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL)/Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) AI Scenarios: AI Influenced Futures.

WORKSHOP 4: Research Integrity in Open Science: A Regional Policy Analysis

Framed by comparative policy studies, international benchmarks, and empirical insights from the Open Science Monitoring Initiative, the session will dissect the regulatory instruments, governance models, and institutional mechanisms that facilitate the alignment of integrity norms with Open Science implementation.



Mangrove Planting

This year we decided to plant mangrove trees as a thank you gift for each of our speakers. Each tree will live for around 60 years, and will absorb over 300 tonnes of carbon during this period.

The FORM team planted the trees in the Mangrove in Ajman, a nearby Emirate, and provided a certificate with geolocation details for each speaker, and also provided a special photo of their individual tree.

Our speakers were delighted with the gesture, and appreciated both the thought and effort that went into this gift, and we hope to be able to continue this effort in the coming years.





Signing Ceremony

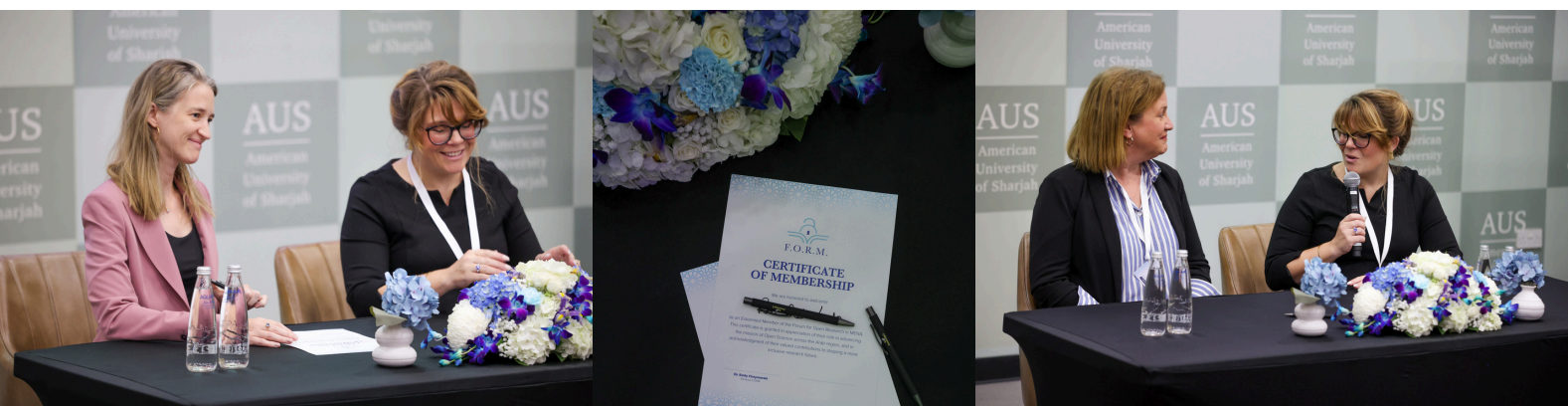
This year we held a Signing Ceremony to welcome members and strategic partners who had joined FORM throughout the intervening months since the last Annual Forum, and celebrate their commitment to advancing Open Science in the Arab world and beyond. This year, we were especially delighted to have a new member and a new strategic partner join during the Annual Forum.

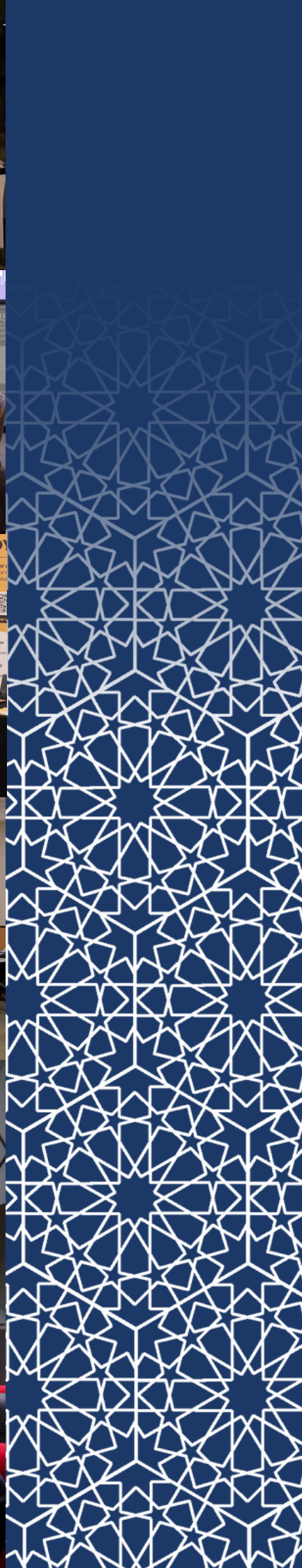
New Members

- American University of Sharjah
- Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi
- REDLab
- Arab Community of Open Access
- Arab Council for the Social Sciences

New Strategic Partners

- Science Integrity Alliance
- OAPEN
- DOAB
- BOAI
- COPIM







F.O.R.M.

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