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Carnegie Mellon Qatar 2008 Business Administration graduate launches business
Araboh.com is an online community for educational books with an Arabic theme

DOHA, QATAR – Growing up in Scotland, Jinanne Tabra (Tepper 2008) struggled to learn the Arabic language. Like most Arab children in non-Arab countries she had limited access to Arabic books, games, toys and other learning materials. The daughter of an Iraqi father and Scottish mother, Tabra went to an English-speaking school during the week and spoke Arabic in her home. On weekend her parents sent her to an Arabic school that was run by their small Arabic community.

“I complained every weekend. It wasn’t fun at all,” Tabra says. “The books given to us at school weren’t that interesting. They didn’t make learning the language fun.”

After moving to Qatar and being immersed in an Arab environment, Tabra’s Arabic fluency increased. However, it never left her mind that there were millions of Arabs around the world who were still struggling to learn the language. When her mother, Dawn, a library technician at The Learning Center told her that parents in Doha were always complaining that there were not enough quality Arabic books here, Tabra knew it was time to do something about it. “I thought, if there aren’t enough books here, then there are definitely not enough in the U.S. and other countries,” she says.

And so www.araboh.com was born. Founded to promote the education of the Arabic language, particularly among Arabs living outside the Arab world, Araboh is an online community for educational books with an Arabic theme that will allow future Arab generations to grow up reading, writing and thinking in their mother tongue. The business was launched online so that it can reach the Arab community around the world.

“I saw the need and decided to do something to fill it,” says Tabra. “I knew exactly what I wanted to do.” But it was not easy. Tabra contacted numerous publishing houses across the world and began the arduous task of hand picking more than 700 titles to carry. Book are categorized by age range, and can help anyone from a preschooler to a senior citizen learn the language. Some books are solely in Arabic, while others are in English and Arabic, French and Arabic, or all three. Books can be shipped anywhere in the world.

“We have everything from baby books to novels,” she says. “We even have Shakespeare in Arabic.” Since most of the publishing houses don’t have summaries of the books, Tabra has read every book and written summaries in both English and Arabic. To make her Web site lively and informative, she also began scanning book jackets and parts of the stories to post to the site.

(more)

Tabra began Araboh, which is slang for Arabs, in December of 2007 while still in her senior year at Carnegie Mellon Qatar. The Web site is being officially launched this week. A top student at Carnegie Mellon Qatar, Tabra worked with communications professor Patrick McGinnis on developing her logo, vision and mission. And she worked with George White, Ph.D., professor of entrepreneurship, on the proper way to go about her venture.

“We’re so proud of our newly-minted Tepper grad with her first foray into ecommerce,” says Patrick McGinnis. “We know that her Carnegie Mellon education will serve her well as she turns this important service into a successful business.”

Tabra is currently in the process of developing a marketing strategy that will reach Arab communities around the globe. She plans on contacting organizations, mosques and other groups that she can leverage to reach her audience. The young entrepreneur credits her years as a Business Administration student at Carnegie Mellon Qatar with providing her the skills necessary to bring her idea to fruition.

“The resources available here at Carnegie Mellon were crucial in getting Araboh up and running,” she says. “I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this four years ago. My education at Carnegie Mellon equipped me to start my own business and satisfy a need I know is out there.”

Tabra sums up her first business venture as a movement to keep Arabic heritage alive all over the world. “Araboh is about teaching our children to embrace their Arab pride. It’s about giving the gift of the Arabic language to your family, to your friends and to the world.”

To view the Web site and the books available, visit www.araboh.com.

About Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar is the first international branch campus operated by Carnegie Mellon University, a private American research university that's regularly ranked among the best in the world. Carnegie Mellon offers its highly regarded undergraduate programs in Business Administration, Computer Science and Information Systems to students in the Gulf Region. Carnegie Mellon plans to open a new facility on the Education City campus in late 2008. More information can be found at www.qatar.cmu.edu.

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