



ARABOH.com

Tepper graduate turns entrepreneur

Growing up in Scotland, Carnegie Mellon senior Jinanne Tabra 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 we had were given to us from an Arabic country's government's curriculum so they 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.

Tabra had what she called a light bulb moment 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. "I thought, if there aren't enough books here in Qatar, then there are definitely not enough in the U.S. and other countries," she says.

And so ARABOH.com was born. Founded to promote the education of the Arabic language, particularly among Arabs living outside the Arab world, ARABOH.com is an online community for educational books with an Arabic theme that



“This is a movement. This is about teaching our children to embrace their Arab pride. This is about giving the gift of the Arabic language to your family, to your friends and to the world.”

**-Jinanne Tabra
Business Administration senior**

At left, Araboh and his camel Jameela are the mascots of ARABOH.com. Together they are trying to encourage young Arabs to read in their mother tongue. Above, Jinanne Tabra selects books to sell on the Web site.

will allow future Arab generations to grow up reading, writing and thinking in their mother tongue. “I saw the need and decided to do something to fill it,” Tabra says. “I knew exactly what I wanted to do.”

But it was not that easy. Tabra contacted many publishing houses across the world and began hand picking more than 700 titles to carry. Book are categorized by age range, and can help anyone from a pre-schooler 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.” Because most of the publishing houses didn’t have summaries of the books, Tabra had to read each book and write summaries in both English and Arabic.

To make her Web site lively and informative, she also began scanning book jackets and excerpts from the stories to post to the site.

She decided to set up in Sharjah, U.A.E., because there is a free

zone there where she can import and export her products without paying a duty. Qatar is setting up a similar zone but it’s not yet up and running. She is also donating a portion of her profits to charities that aid children in the Arab world.

أنا عربي!

Tabra launched ARABOH, which is slang for Arabs, in December of 2007 while still in her senior year at Carnegie Mellon Qatar. She worked with Communications Professor Patrick McGinnis on developing her logo, vision and mission. And she worked with George White, 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 e-commerce,” McGinnis says. “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, schools 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.com up and running,” she says. “I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this four years ago. My education at Carnegie Mellon has equipped me to start my own business and fill 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.com 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 list of available books, log onto www.ARABOH.com. **Q**