PRESS RELEASE

**BrailleEasy app developed by HBKU researchers in Qatar launched on iOS store**

Doha, August 30, 2016 – BrailleEasy, a custom one-handed Braille keyboard developed in Qatar, has now been launched on the iOS App Store.

The application was developed by researchers at the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), one of Hamad bin Khalifa University’s three national research institutes.

The Braille keyboard was developed by Barbara Šepič, Abdurrahman Ghanem and Stephan Vogel, in close collaboration with the Qatar Social and Cultural Center for the Blind (QSCCB), Al Noor Institute for the Blind and MADA (Qatar Assistive Technology Center).

It combines the comfort of one-handed typing with the speed of two-handed Braille-like typing, and can be used by both Arabic and English-speaking users.

Ikrami Ahmad, QSCCB’s Activities Coordinator and Assistive Technology Specialist, described BrailleEasy as “a great achievement”.

“It comes with an extensive tutorial that walks the user through step by step, the set of gestures is easy to learn and execute, and being self-voicing makes it possible for those who do not depend on screen readers to use it fully,” Mr Ahmad said.

“It also paves the way for those with limited hand movement to type in Braille on their touch screen. I have personally heard from several people on forums and mailing lists that it enables them to use their working hand to type in Braille faster than the traditional way of typing.”

Stephan Vogel, the Research Director of QCRI’s Arabic Research Technologies, said the app was released for free and its code has been released as open source.

“The idea is to send BrailleEasy out into the community so that other developers, both local and worldwide, can add to it, improve it, adapt it to other languages,” Dr Vogel said.

“Developing the app in collaboration with the local community has been a very rewarding experience.”

BrailleEasy is available here: <https://itunes.apple.com/qa/app/brailleeasy/id1124391970?mt=8>

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**About Hamad bin Khalifa University**

Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, is an emerging research university that is building its foundation upon unique collaborations with local and international partners. Located in Education City, HBKU delivers undergraduate and graduate programs through its College of Science and Engineering, College of Law and Public Policy, College of Public Health, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, and its College of Humanities and Social Sciences. It also provides unparalleled opportunities for research and scholarship through its research institutes, and its Center of Executive Education delivers customized programs for the business community of Qatar and the region, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

**About Qatar Computing Research Institute**

Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) is a national research institute within Hamad bin Khalifa University. As a national research institute, QCRI aims to build Qatar’s innovation and technology capacity by focusing on large-scale computing challenges that address national priorities for growth and development, supporting Qatar’s transformation from a hydrocarbon-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. In doing this, QCRI conducts world-class multidisciplinary computing research that is relevant to the needs of Qatar, the wider Arab region, and the world. It performs cutting-edge research in such areas as Arabic language technologies, social computing, data analytics, distributed systems, cyber security and computational science and engineering. The research conducted at QCRI is aligned with the Qatar National Research Strategy and supports the strategic priorities outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Hamad bin Khalifa University, a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, is an emerging research university located within Education City in Doha, Qatar.

For more information, please visit www.qcri.qa