



UCL Qatar students visit Muscat to debate the role of librarians and managing big data at a conference

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Students from University College London Qatar (UCL Qatar) spent last week in Oman on an education and culture exchange as part of their Library and Information Studies MA programme.

Qatari students joined classmates from 10 countries including Ghana, Brazil, Canada and India on the trip, to share knowledge with students from Oman and Kuwait and touring Muscat's National Records and Archives Authority. The trip was part of the regular programme of overseas trips and placements that UCL Qatar provides to help educate and develop Qatar's future knowledge and information management workforce.

The visitors also attended the 24th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Special Libraries Association - Arabian Gulf Chapter (SLA AGC), which attracted over 500 participants. This year's SLA AGC focused on data management and big data, a topic that students at UCL Qatar are taught about during their MA studies.

Successful UCL Qatar alumni, now working in senior positions in Qatar such as Samia Al Shiba, Director of the Library of Qatar University and Milan Vaisljevic, Head of Electronic Resources & Licensing at Qatar National Library, ensured that the Education City-based university had a big presence at the Conference. Samia and Milan are just some of the many former UCL Qatar students now contributing to a vibrant library sector in Qatar.

Discussing the importance of overseas trips during higher education, Milena Dobrova, Senior Lecturer in Library and Information Studies at UCL Qatar, said: "The trip to Oman was a great experience for students, helping them to understand the importance of Library and Information Studies in the region and think about its role in the developments of preserving the history of the Gulf. This opportunity was especially beneficial since UCL Qatar will hold a conference on Research Data Management in Digital Humanities on the 17th and 18th of April and offer various courses on the topic of data management and archives this year."

Hashim Kallungal, a first-year MA student said: "Being able to speak with professionals and fellow students from both Oman and Kuwait about the critical role of librarians and the future of managing big data in developing countries has given us invaluable insight into the future of this field."

Aisha Al Abdulla, a second-year student said: "The hospitality of Oman has been outstanding as we visited the National Records and Archives Authority to explore the different techniques used to restore, preserve, and digitise documents. The highlight of this trip in my opinion was visiting their special collections department and the incredible permanent exhibition that displayed among other items Qur'an verses on a camel shoulder bone!"



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UCL QATAR - A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE STUDIES

UCL, in partnership with Qatar Foundation, has created UCL Qatar, a centre of excellence for the study of cultural heritage. UCL Qatar welcomed its first intake of students in August 2012 and has since enrolled more than 230 students from over 40 countries. Drawing upon the renowned expertise of the UCL Institute of Archaeology, London; leading academic scholars, teachers and scientists implement our unique curriculum and research.

Today, UCL Qatar offers a rigorous and dynamic learning environment with two Master's degree programmes, the MA Museum and Gallery Practice and the MA in Library and Information Studies. Specifically designed to meet the needs of both International and Qatar-based students looking for careers in the cultural heritage, library and knowledge management sectors.

UCL Qatar seeks not only to create a centre of excellence in the Gulf region for studying but to strive, with the community, to bring cultural heritage to the widest possible audience. Mid-career heritage professionals can sign up for UCL Qatar's short courses, and members of the public can get a taste for all things cultural heritage via the UCL Public Lecture Series.

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