

Vast Gulf history website celebrates four years and ten million page views

- *Qatar Digital Library now makes 1.5 million pages of Gulf history available to scholars around the world*
- *Initiative is the result of longstanding partnership between Qatar Foundation, Qatar National Library, and the British Library*
- *Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Qatar National Library, visits the British Library digitisation project making India Office Records, Arabic scientific manuscripts, maps and sound recordings available online*

The Qatar Digital Library this week celebrated the fourth anniversary of its launch. The bilingual website, which comprises content in both Arabic and English and provides free public access to an important range of historical collections held by the British Library, has now been visited by more than 1.2 million users, generating more than ten million pages views.

The website is the result of a partnership between Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, Qatar National Library, and the British Library to digitise historical collections relating to Gulf history and Arabic scientific manuscripts. Metadata and descriptions of the digitised items are in both Arabic and English, and the Qatar Digital Library transforms access to these collections – previously only accessible via the British Library’s reading rooms – for academics, researchers, students and the wider global community.

Initially agreed in 2012, the partnership was extended earlier this year so that a further 900,000 images will be added to the 1.5 million already available online.

To celebrate the anniversary, **Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani**, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Qatar National Library, and **Dame Carol Black**, Chair of the British Library Board, attended a reception last night at the British Library in London.

In advance of the reception, Her Excellency Sheikha Hind toured the digitisation studio on the sixth floor of the British Library, where Gulf-related material – including music, maps,

ships' logs, reports, letters, private papers and historic publications – is digitised, fully catalogued and uploaded onto the Qatar Digital Library (www.qdl.qa).

Speaking at the reception, Her Excellency Sheikha Hind said: "It is said that libraries give us power – the power to cast our eyes across the sweep of history and discover what the past can tell us about our present and future. But harnessing this power depends on accessibility. Across the world, physical access to such a vault of knowledge is not universal.

"Thankfully, the digital age means access to libraries is no longer purely defined by buildings. We are here to celebrate a project that epitomizes how libraries, and all that they hold, can truly be available to everyone. Libraries open up our world. That is why they must be opened up to the world."

Dame Carol Black said, "The collections held at the British Library are the raw material of historical research. Over the past four years the Qatar Digital Library project has helped to make our rich and fascinating collections relating to Gulf history and Arabic science available to researchers around the globe. Working in close and fruitful partnership with Qatar Foundation and the Qatar National Library, we are delighted to have made this valuable resource freely available as never before, and expect to unlock access to many more collections as the third phase of the programme begins in the New Year."

Dr. Sohair Wastawy, Executive Director at Qatar National Library, who was also in attendance at the reception, said: "The Qatar Digital Library embodies of the core missions of the Qatar National Library, which is to provide free access to a wealth of information to everyone. The Qatar Digital Library has already supported numerous researchers and scholars across several disciplines, ranging from history to science, from archaeology to sociology, among others."

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Notes to Editors

Qatar National Library (QNL) acts as a steward of Qatar's national heritage by collecting, preserving and making available the country's recorded history. QNL provides equal access to all types of information and services and aims to enable the people of Qatar to positively influence the society by creating an exceptional learning and discovery environment.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, officially inaugurated Qatar National Library on 16 April 2018. QNL was granted the status of national library under the Emiri Decree No.11 of 20 March 2018.

www.qnl.qa

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, science and research, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir of Qatar, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months old through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit www.qf.org.qa

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest research libraries. It provides world class information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities and offers unparalleled access to the world's largest and most comprehensive research collection. The Library's collection has developed over 250 years and exceeds 150 million separate items representing every age of written civilisation and includes books, journals, manuscripts, maps, stamps, music, patents, photographs, newspapers and sound recordings in all written and spoken languages. Up to 10 million people visit the British Library website - www.bl.uk - every year where they can view up to 4 million digitised collection items and over 40 million pages.