2.22 United Arab Emirates

Libraries in the United Arab Emirates

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The history of libraries in what is now the United Arab Emirates (UAE) dates back over 100 years to the founding of the Taymiyah Library in Sharjah in 1907.[1] During the years before the establishment of the UAE, many other private libraries were established in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Ras al-Khaimah. The first true public library was established in Dubai in 1965. The first public libraries established at the federal level were those set up by the Ministry of Information and Culture in 1972 in many locations throughout the UAE. Some of the oil companies set up libraries as well.

Public Libraries in Abu Dhabi

The Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi was established in accordance with Amiri Law No. 7 of 1981, which also established the role of the National Library as an institution responsible for preserving the intellectual heritage of the UAE and providing a library service to the public.[2] The National Library opened its doors in April 1984. While there are other academic and special libraries in the capital, the National Library is the only truly public library in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It offers services for both adults and children, and has a substantial children's library with nearly 20,000 titles in English and Arabic, which it plans to expand. The library is open seven days a week. Over 130,000 individuals visited the library in 2009.

The National Library now holds approximately two million volumes (two-thirds in Arabic and one-third in English and other languages). It subscribes to approximately 650 Arabic-language and 500 English-language periodicals, and more than 3,000 electronic journals. In addition to its general collections, it maintains a special library containing publications of the GCC countries, a collection of over 6,000 rare book titles in various languages, a collection of over 4,500 manuscripts, the private collection of Sheikh Faleh bin Nasser Al-Thani which consists of about 15,000 volumes, a partially cataloged

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1   Ḥamdī Ḥanafī Ḥammūdah, Dalīl al-mu'assasāt al-thaqāfīyah wa-al-'ilmīyah fī Dawlat al-Imārāt al-'Arabīyah al-Muttaḥidah (Abu Dhabi: al-Mujamma' al-Thaqāfī, c2004): 4.
2   http://www.adach.ae/en/portal/national.library/history.aspx (accessed May 15, 2010).