

MEDIA & CULTURE



Reorganisation of ministries in 2006 led to the closure of the Ministry of Information and Culture and establishment of a National Media Council and a new Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development.





The UAE printing industry is growing at 15 to 20 per cent annually with total worth estimated between Dh8 to Dh10 billion.



MEDIA AND CULTURE

MEDIA

A reorganisation of government ministries in 2006 led to the closure of the Ministry of Information and Culture and to establishment of a National Media Council and a new Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development. The core media bodies of the old Ministry of Information and Culture, in the form of the Press and Publications Department, the External Information Department, Emirates News Agency (WAM) were placed under the authority of the National Media Council. The aim of these moves was to streamline the different and varied functions that previously fell under the remit of a single ministry. The Government was also of the opinion that the culture and media fields are both in the process of rapid development and it was necessary to take a fresh look at how government support could be most effectively structured.

NATIONAL MEDIA COUNCIL

The National Media Council has been established to oversee media development in the UAE and to support certain media initiatives. It has the power to cancel or suspend media licences if there are violations of conditions attached to these. All jurisdictions and responsibilities concerning media affairs that previously fell under the Ministry of Information and Culture were transferred to the Media Council. In July 2006 the Council of Ministers appointed Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, as Chairman of the Council and Mohammed Abdullah Al Gergawi, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, as his deputy.

The National Media Council has been established to oversee media development in the UAE and to support certain media initiatives.

EMIRATES MEDIA

Emirates Media Inc. (EMI) is a multimedia pioneer in the Arab region. Its origins in television, radio and press go back as far as 1969 with the establishment of *Al Ittihad* newspaper, UAE

Emirates Media's operations currently include three satellite television channels (Abu Dhabi TV, Abu Dhabi Sports Channel and the Emirates Channel); and six radio channels (Abu Dhabi Radio, Emirates FM, Holy Qur'an, Sound of Music, English FM1 and FM2).

Television from Abu Dhabi and Abu Dhabi Radio. Television and radio were incorporated under Emirates Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) in 1996 and three years later EBC was reincorporated as EMI, with its television and radio services expanded to include *Al Ittihad* newspaper, *Zahrat Al Khaleej* and *Majed* magazines. Today, EMI's diversity provides a unique advantage as it continues to reach millions of Arabs from around the world. The broadcasting group's coverage extends from the Middle East to Europe as well as North America, whilst its operations currently include three satellite television channels (Abu Dhabi TV, Abu Dhabi Sports Channel and the Emirates Channel); six radio channels (Abu Dhabi Radio, Emirates FM, Holy Qur'an; Sound of Music, English FM1 and FM2) as well as the above mentioned publications. Additionally, EMI's electronic services include a number of internet websites with more planned. Its *Al Ittihad* newspaper website (www.alittihad.ae) as well as its main corporate website (www.emi.ae) were among the first Arabic websites in the region and EMI's new media division has considerable in-house capabilities in the IT field.

EMI's satellite coverage of the latest events around the world attracts international recognition and acclaim. Since its inauguration, EMI has been the recipient of many prestigious accolades for all sectors of their operations.

With so many people commuting between work and home in their cars, radio is a very important element of the UAE's media mix. Emirates Radio Network, owned by EMI, recently assigned the running of ERN's existing English-language channels Radio 1 and Radio 2 to Al Nisr Publishing LLC, which has also been engaged in launching a new English-language station. The management deal covers the editorial and advertising operations of Radio 1, Radio 2 and the new station, to be called Radio 3. Radio 1 and Radio 2 will be revamped as part of the agreement, which does not cover ERN's Arabic stations.

DUBAI MEDIA INC.

Dubai Media Inc. (DMI) is a semi-government company that owns and runs the major TV and radio stations in the Emirate of Dubai.

Formed in 2003 to replace the Dubai Department of Media, DMI currently runs four TV channels including Dubai TV, ONE TV, Sama Dubai and Dubai Sports. Keen to support excellence, quality and reliability in the UAE's emerging media sector, DMI recently introduced a media ethics charter as a step towards corporate commitment to achieve the highest standards of transparency, credibility and objectivity. Speaking at the launch of the charter, DMI's chief executive commented that the ethics criteria are focused on the customer both in terms of understanding their needs and in building a larger customer base. This is being achieved through high quality programming and marketing and the charter provides a framework to promote innovation and development of new services across all media platforms. The charter also calls on all DMI employees to conduct DMI business with honesty, integrity and in a professional manner and to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest in transactions on behalf of DMI.

EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY

The Emirates News Agency (WAM or Wakalat Anba'a al-Emarat) has been in operation since 1976. It transmits news on national, regional and Arab affairs and is a widely respected source for international media. WAM is a member of the Group of Arab Gulf Cooperation Council news agencies, the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA), the Islamic News Agencies Union, the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and of the Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA). Its headquarters is in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, with other offices in Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ra's al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Al Ain and Madinat Zayed. Since mid-2006 the news agency is under the authority of the National Media Council.

WAM maintains a team of around 25 reporters outside the UAE, with offices in the Arab cities of Cairo, Beirut, Rabat, Riyadh, Damascus, Sanaa, Algiers, Jerusalem, Gaza, Khartoum, Amman, Baghdad and Tunis. Other offices and reporters are located in London, Paris, Brussels, Geneva, Moscow, Washington, New York, Tehran, Islamabad, New Delhi, Istanbul and Canberra. The Agency also operates a website (www.wam.ae) with services in both Arabic and English.

Emirates News Agency transmits news on national, regional and Arab affairs and is a widely respected source for international media.

WAM receives the transmissions of 30 Arab, Gulf and international news agencies and has cooperation and news exchange agreements with 20 Arab, Asian and international news agencies.

Since it was established, WAM has kept abreast of changes in technology and now distributes its news and picture services by satellite and internet, both locally and internationally. Over 90 per cent of its photographs are available in digital format, which has helped both to expedite performance and to cut costs.

WAM provides daily news coverage of official and other events throughout the country and is one of the key sources of information for all media establishments in the Emirates. It provides coverage of around 85 to 90 per cent of official activities, as well as the activities of official delegations abroad. WAM also plays an important role in documenting development in the country, and in providing information to researchers and others.

WAM receives transmissions from 30 Arab, Gulf and international news agencies and has cooperation and news exchange agreements with 20 Arab, Asian and international news agencies, part of an effort to strengthen collaboration between the media of the UAE and other countries.

Meanwhile WAM presently transmits its daily news service to more than 3000 newspapers, TV and radio broadcast stations around the world via a central news portal run by IPS. The portal relays WAM news in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Swahili languages to over 1000 newspapers and 2000 broadcast stations worldwide. A weekly UAE news digest in Japanese has recently been added to the agency's news services. The IPS news portal is www.ipsnews.net, while WAM's daily English news as well as selected news service in Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili and Japanese languages are relayed over the internet.

ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) acquired rights to 225 digital channels at the 2006 ITU Regional Radio Communication Conference (RRC) held in Geneva from 15 May to 16 June 2006. The Conference was focused on establishing the technical foundation for the planning of digital terrestrial broadcasting of television and radio services for Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Islamic Republic of Iran. The 2006 conference

rescheduled digital broadcasting channels in the 174–230 MHz and 470–862 MHz frequency bands to pave the way for digital channel growth.

Digital broadcasting is roughly six times more efficient than analogue, allowing more channels to be carried across fewer airwaves. Digital terrestrial television broadcasting offers the advantage of better signal quality with higher throughput resulting in more channels. In conjunction with the scheduled worldwide transition to digital broadcasting in 2009, the Authority is aiming to further its scope of service delivery by utilising the opportunities offered by the new paradigm.

RADIO STATIONS

The UAE has over 20 radio stations – more than any other country in the Arab world. In addition to the channels mentioned above, owned by EMI, some of which are operated in cooperation with Al Nisr, there are radio stations based in Dubai, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman. And not all of the UAE's radio stations are aimed at national listeners.

Channel 4 Radio Network, headquartered in Ajman, commenced transmissions in mid-2006 from the first Arabic music-based radio station in Iraq, 98.8 FM Channel 4 Radio Network, which is part of a joint venture that obtained an Iraqi broadcasting licence. The UAE company will manage the operations of the radio station, which will initially cover a population of 8 million within a 100-kilometre radius of Baghdad. In time, the promoters expect to cover the whole of Iraq. A similar station, concentrating on music for Arab audiences, was also opened in Khartoum, Sudan.

Competition among radio broadcasters is very healthy and quality has improved as a result of this. Emirates Media broadcasts seven channels and is the biggest radio broadcaster in the UAE, but other stations are also making an impact on the air waves. Arabian Radio Network (ARN) is a 'young kid on the block', but one that is proving to be a fast learner. Like Emirates Media, ARN addresses the interests of various audiences, communities and cultures, through genre-specific programming.

Competition among radio broadcasters is very healthy and quality has improved as a result of this. Emirates Media broadcasts seven channels and is the biggest radio broadcaster in the UAE, but other stations are also making an impact on the air waves.



More than 40 television stations broadcast from the UAE.

ARN started Al Arabiya 98.9 FM, a round-the clock Arabic music and news station, in 2001. Soon afterwards, the network launched an English Radio Service, Free FM (96.7 FM) and City FM (101.6). In January 2003 the network launched Al Khaleejiya, thus creating a new platform for Khaleeji (Arabian Gulf) music and giving it a wider reach reflective of the UAE's inherent roots and traditions. HIT 96.7 FM followed and was designed to serve the interest of the largest expatriate community in the Gulf, the Malyalees.

The broadcasting field is one where technologies are constantly changing and improving. Various strategic alliances ensure that UAE stations keep abreast of these developments. ARN recently created a strategic tie-up with KLOTZ, the leading Radio System, to enhance ARN's hardware solutions.

TELEVISION STATIONS

More than 40 television stations broadcast from the UAE (see panel). Once again Emirates Media is a dominant force in the country's broadcasting profile with three major satellite channels in operation.

Dubai's well known CH33 was closed down at the end of 2004 and was replaced by 'One TV', a new channel with a new look and a new line-up of Western-style programming. With 27 movies a week and some of the biggest box office titles, such as Harry Potter, The Matrix, Lord of the Rings, Austin Powers, Rush Hour and The X-Men, One TV is unashamedly popular in its approach and is focused on providing entertainment.

The international news channel CNN has offices in Dubai Media City where it is equipped to produce local reports and to provide services for its regional reporters. CNN also produces its Arabic website (www.cnnarabic.com) at its DMC offices.

PRINTING, PUBLISHING AND ADVERTISING

The UAE printing industry is growing at 15 to 20 per cent annually with total worth estimated between Dh8 to Dh10 billion. Approximately 500 printing presses are operating in the country, many of which are expanding due to the high proliferation of local and foreign publications. The UAE is the regional hub for the publishing, printing and advertising industries and is expected to receive the largest single share of the estimated US\$1.7 trillion

worth of business that is predicted will be generated in this sector in the Middle East by 2008.

Dubai Media City has attracted many major international media companies and the number of partners in DMC increased by 20 per cent from 880 in 2004 to approximately 1077 in 2005, with a considerable number of companies on the waiting list to enter the zone. There are currently eight media segments in the DMC, of which marketing, broadcasting and publishing have been experiencing the most rapid development.

Over US\$900 million was spent on advertising in the UAE in 2005, up from just under US\$700 million in 2004. Advertising spend in the UAE's print media rose by 70.43 per cent to reach Dh2.15 billion (US\$588 million) in 2005, compared to Dh1.26 billion (US\$345 million) the previous year. The main advertising groups were the car trade, banking, telecommunications and real estate sectors. Mobile handset maker Nokia and real estate major Emaar Properties jointly topped the list in 2005 with nearly US\$8 million in annual advertisement spending, followed by Dubai Shopping Festival and Damas Group, which spent about US\$6.7 million and US\$5.8 million annually respectively.

Advertising expenditure in the Gulf has been growing at 15 per cent per year and is expected to reach US\$5 billion in 2006. The UAE has about 400 advertising agencies, but 90 per cent of the business is controlled by the top 20 companies, including the world's leading names.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

According to the Business Software Alliance (BSA), software piracy levels in the Middle East declined in 2005, and the UAE led the way with the lowest piracy rate in the region. In fact, the UAE has posted the lowest piracy rate in the region for the past ten years, and is the only Middle East entry in the worldwide list of 20 nations with the lowest piracy rates. At 34 per cent, the UAE's piracy level is lower than that of several European countries, such as France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland, and is comparable to the piracy rates of the United Kingdom (27 per cent), the Netherlands (30 per cent) and Australia (31 per cent).



The UAE is the regional hub for the publishing, printing and advertising industries.



Not satisfied with this situation, the UAE authorities have stepped up efforts to further reduce software piracy levels in the country and have reinforced their association with BSA. Proposed measures include organising more awareness campaigns to create better understanding of the detrimental impact of software piracy, and ensuring rigorous enforcement of IPR and copyright laws.

A study on this subject pointed out that by bringing piracy down in the UAE by ten percentage points, the country could generate more than 667 new jobs and result in an additional US\$357 million in contributions to the UAE's GDP. With the help of a ten-point reduction in its 34 per cent software piracy rate, the IT sector could grow to nearly US\$2.3 billion by 2009, creating new business opportunities for entrepreneurs and new jobs possibilities for employees.

MEDIA ZONES

The UAE's first media zones were Internet City and Media City in Dubai. They have been a resounding success, so much so that demand for space in the free zones exceeds the available places. Construction has begun on the International Media Production Zone (IMPZ) in which investment in the first phase will touch Dh1 billion (US\$272 million). The 4-million-square-metre area will cater to the printing, packaging and publishing sectors and is

due to be completed in 2007. Investment in the second phase, which comprises mainly offices, will approach Dh700 million (US\$190 million). Printing and packaging companies within the zone are expected to invest Dh1.5 billion (US\$408 billion) in IMPZ as they prepare to move in.

PUBLICATIONS

The UAE Government supports the production of a number of special books each year. In addition to publications prepared by individual ministries, dealing with matters of special interest, the *UAE Yearbook* is an annual publication that is now produced in cooperation with the National Media Council. This unique series, of which the present volume forms a part, is published in Arabic, English, and French. The book covers a wide range of topics on the United Arab Emirates and seeks to focus attention on developments over the previous 12 months. The *UAE Yearbook* is accompanied by a DVD-rom containing a range of media resources on the country, in addition to several e-books.

UAEINTERACT

The website www.uaeinteract.com provides daily updates of news on the United Arab Emirates in English and provides links to many other information sources on the UAE. In operation since the dawn of the 'Internet Age' in 1997, the website stores all news stories, photographs and other data in an archive that is freely available to users and which offers several search options. It is of particular help to researchers following any particular aspect of the UAE's recent development. The user base of UAEINTERACT has been steadily increasing year by year. Preliminary results indicate that the 2006 figures were 2.6 million visitors creating 64.8 million hits compared to 1.9 million visitors and 51 million hits in 2005, a growth rate of 37 per cent for visitors and 27 per cent for hits. The number of page views also climbed in 2006, to reach around 8.4 million compared with 6.7 million in 2005, a growth rate of approximately 25 per cent. This *Yearbook* identifies web pages on UAEINTERACT where regular updates can be found throughout the year and the two media products are thus linked.



UAE Interact is one of the top websites on the country with over 2.6 million individual visitors per year making over 64 million 'hits' on the site.

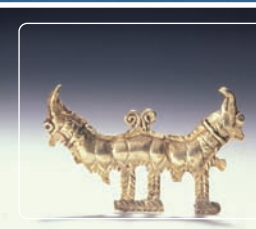
CULTURE

Culture and heritage are crucially important aspects on the UAE Government's list of development priorities. Since it is a relatively young country with a burgeoning youthful population, its older generation is deeply concerned that the strengths of character and identity that were nurtured by the lifestyle, customs and traditions of the past could be lost as a result of a new affluence and the effects of globalisation. There is good cause for this concern, especially with the pervading influence of satellite television and the internet, but there is also considerable cause for optimism: the context may have altered but core values have been preserved. As a visit to a local school or activity group is likely to confirm, cultural ethnicity is alive and well in terms of Emirati music, dance, poetry, storytelling, art and sports such as falconry, camel-racing, and sailing.

Part of the process has involved making sure that physical evidence of the UAE's rich heritage is not lost. Preservation of many of its unique archaeological and architectural sites and its manuscripts has been given top priority. Literature and customs are widely studied in schools, while museum displays, heritage villages and the rebuilding of vanished monuments (based on photographs, local memory and documentary evidence) have helped to create a context and feel for this cultural legacy. Recognising that preservation of culture is not just a social obligation but a commercial necessity, the UAE is also focused on ensuring that its cultural richness is given centre stage in shaping its modern development, particularly with regard to tourism.

More contemporary activities, such as theatre and film, also play important roles in nurturing the cultural side of Emirati society, feeding the soul and enhancing that widespread spirit of well-being that both Emiratis and expatriates enjoy in the UAE.

While much has been achieved in the past, the time was considered right to undergo a root and branch assessment of the Government's role in cultural enrichment. The newly established Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development clearly links three key areas of social development that feed into the UAE's cultural climate.



Preservation of many of the UAE's unique archaeological and architectural sites and its manuscripts has been given top priority.





The UAE is committed to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and continues to sponsor the Sheikh Zayed Prize for Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

In mid-2006, the UAE was elected as a member of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The elections for the 18-member committee were held during the general assembly of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (CSICH). The UAE is committed to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and continues to sponsor the Sheikh Zayed Prize for Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. It has also been working on a bid to register falconry as a world heritage activity that is being practiced in over 70 countries. UNESCO set a series of conditions for registering falconry on the list, including creation of a national authority to put the Convention in place. The UAE met this condition by setting up the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority (see below).

ABU DHABI CULTURE AND HERITAGE AUTHORITY

In October 2005 a law was passed in Abu Dhabi establishing Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority. Based in Abu Dhabi, the new Authority's remit is to sponsor intellectual and artistic activities as well as preserve the cultural heritage of the emirate.

This includes directly promoting Abu Dhabi's cultural heritage; drawing up and implementing cultural policies, plans and programmes; reviewing cultural heritage projects; and organising exhibitions and conferences on cultural heritage.

The Authority's jurisdiction also includes management of lectures, conferences and cultural shows, together with organising symposiums, seminars and intellectual, scientific and art gatherings; publishing studies and research; preserving archaeological and heritage buildings and historic sites; locating and excavating archaeological sites as well as issuing the necessary licences for such activities; restoring archaeological sites and heritage buildings; overseeing scientific and archaeological expeditions; establishing a department to manage, develop and supervise museums and other buildings where cultural artefacts are housed; recommending laws and regulations to protect, promote and preserve cultural heritage; providing support for training and educational activities in the Authority's field of specialisation, as well as developing resources in the fields of documentation, archiving and preservation of cultural heritage; taking legal action, where necessary, against the perpetrators of damage to the cultural heritage and antiquities of the emirate; providing support and assistance to bodies working in the field of the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage; exercising control over heritage and cultural property, whether public or private; managing the National Library so as to enrich and promote intellectual, artistic and scientific activities in Abu Dhabi; and recording national history through the collection of documents, the registering of the heritage of the emirate and through the publication of works in this field. The Authority is run by a Board of Directors, consisting of a chairman, a deputy chairman and seven members, who serve for a renewable term of five years. The Authority has its own budget, which is approved by the Executive Council.

GUGGENHEIM ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the New York-based Guggenheim Foundation to establish a world-class museum devoted to modern and contemporary art. To be



The UAE supports a strong arts movement with a number of its artists gaining international reputations. This painting is by Abdul Qader Al Rayes.

called the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (GAD), the museum, designed by internationally acclaimed architect Frank Gehry, will position the emirate as a leading international cultural destination. At 30,000 square metres, the Abu Dhabi museum will be the only Guggenheim museum in the region and will be larger than any existing Guggenheim worldwide. It is expected that the museum will be constructed within five years.

The museum will form its own major collection of contemporary art and will also exhibit masterpieces from the Guggenheim Foundation's global collections. It will be built in the Cultural District of Saadiyat Island, a natural island lying 500 metres off the UAE capital, which is being transformed into an international tourism destination. The Cultural District will also be home to a national museum, classical art museum, maritime museum, performing arts centre and an expansive arts centre park.

Abu Dhabi's Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC), which manages the Authority's tourism assets, will own the museum. The Guggenheim Foundation will establish and manage the museum's programme, which will include collection development, exhibitions and educational initiatives. Abu Dhabi's museum will join a highly exclusive Guggenheim museum network that currently includes New York and Las Vegas in the USA, Venice in Italy, Bilbao in Spain, and Berlin in Germany.

DUBAI OPERA HOUSE

A decision was finalised in late 2005 to construct an opera house, general museum and arts centre in Dubai. The three cultural landmarks are intended to be state-of-the-art facilities for those with an interest in arts, culture and aesthetics. They will reflect the UAE's passion for peace and cultural interaction. The 280,000-square-metres opera house will be built on a man-made island in the middle of the Dubai Creek and it will have a capacity to accommodate 2500 people.

MUSEUMS

In addition to the large number of forts and heritage buildings that house museums, the UAE has a rich selection of purpose-



built, modern museum buildings dedicated to specific subject areas, such as the discovery of petroleum, archaeology, natural history, science, popular medicine, astronomy, numismatics, philately, Islam, traditional jewellery, policing and aviation.

Al Ain Museum, run by the Department of Antiquities and Tourism in Abu Dhabi's Eastern Region, now part of ADACH, has an extensive archaeological and ethnographical collection, including some spectacular second millennium gold pendants and an important coin collection. Finds from excavations at Umm al-Nar and Qattarah are displayed and the museum also houses a reconstruction of the Great Hili Tomb with its distinctive rock engravings. Reconstructions of a traditional *majlis* and other aspects of life in the pre-oil era are also very interesting.

Sharjah is well known for its museums, heritage and environment centres, which include a number of world-class displays, not only of local interest but also dealing more broadly with the cultures and science of the Islamic world. Sharjah has now established a special department for museums as part of its ongoing effort to strengthen the emirate's role as a cultural tourism destination. The department's main task is to protect and promote museums in the emirate and foster a fertile environment to consolidate Sharjah's reputation as an attractive cultural heritage venue. The new

Dubai is constructing an opera house, general museum and arts centre.



Dinosaur display at Sharjah Natural History Museum

department is authorised to initiate cooperation with prominent international museums and research centres and can hire experts and seek assistance from other local bodies to support its administrative and technical mission.

Sharjah's Planetarium specialises in astronomy and celestial navigation. Its Police Museum has a good collection of armaments, riot and combat gear and models of old walls and forts. Its Archaeological Museum is a modern, lively interactive museum tracing the history of Sharjah from ancient times. A gold halter found with a ritually slaughtered horse in a grave near Mleiha is particularly beautiful. The museum's library houses a range of archaeological and historical books, magazines, periodicals and specialised reports. The Science Museum has 50 excellent interactive exhibits covering physics, chemistry, biology and astronomy, whilst the Discovery Centre is the first interactive 'hands-on' children's museum in the UAE and a very popular venue.

Meanwhile the grounds of Sharjah Desert Park, 25 kilometres out of town at Junction 8 on the Sharjah–Dhaid Highway, contain the Natural History Museum, a Children's Farm, the Arabian Wildlife Centre and the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife. The Natural History Museum opened in 1995 and was immediately very popular because of its state-of-the-art exhibits. Lively with light and sound effects as well as interactive video displays, the exhibits deal with local habitats, plant and animal life, geology and marine life. Outside are wildflower gardens as well as formal gardens. The Arabian Wildlife Centre is an impressive modern zoo that displays local wildlife in replicas of their natural habitats. Most of the displays can be viewed from inside an enormous climate-controlled building. Exhibits include a reptile house, a huge aviary with free-flying birds as well as rock-hopping hyrax, a night house with many desert mammals, an 'Ibex Mountain' overlooked by the restaurant, and a corridor with huge windows looking out onto enclosures for hamadryas baboons and large predators such as wolves, cheetahs and the Arabian leopard.

The Breeding Centre is focusing on the breeding of endangered Arabian species with the hope of re-introducing some of the rarer species into the wild. This is where, for the first time in the UAE,



captive breeding of the Arabian leopard was achieved. For obvious reasons, this particular centre is not open to the public.

Over on the East Coast, at Kalba, an enclave of Sharjah, the former house of the local ruling family has been carefully restored, as has a rectangular Islamic fort nearby, while work is also under way on the restoration of a larger fortress at Khor Kalba that may rest on the site of a fort build by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century AD.

Dubai Municipality's old house was recently re-opened as a museum offering glimpses of local history. The re-opening took place after a renovation programme using traditional materials and methods. The two-storey building is located near the Deira Old Souk overlooking the Creek and was originally built in the mid-1950s with three shops in the ground floor. Later, another floor was added as a residence for visiting traders. Dubai Municipality, formerly a part of the Customs Department, moved to the building's first floor in 1957.

CULTURAL FOUNDATION

Situated in the centre of Abu Dhabi, the Cultural Foundation, now part of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH), is at the heart of the capital's cultural life, being used by young and

Arabian leopards, endangered in the wild, have been successfully bred at the Arabian Wildlife Breeding Centre in Sharjah.



Book cases at the National Library

old, UAE citizens and expatriates alike. Surrounded by gardens and with an open courtyard with fountains, the main building is a dramatic white structure of arches and colonnades, within which are lecture halls, libraries and meeting rooms, as well as ample space on its three floors for displays and exhibitions.

Perhaps the most important part of the Cultural Foundation is the National Library, which has well over a million books, most in Arabic, although there are also collections in a variety of foreign languages. Most of these are available for consultation by the public, once a simple registration process has taken place, although some of the rarer items, including a fine collection of Qur'ans, can only be examined with special permission.

A dedicated children's area is particularly popular, while there are a number of special events arranged for children, especially during the school holidays. An open area occupies much of the ground floor, this being used on a regular basis for exhibitions, which include displays of old photographs of the Emirates, paintings, handicrafts, archaeological artefacts and a wide range of other items. There are also rooms on the first floor suitable for smaller events.

Along the corridors are a number of small cases displaying a range of items reflecting the UAE's culture and history. These include postage stamps, coinage used in the country before the UAE was established, silver bedouin jewellery, small carpets and rugs, highly decorated wooden doors and other items.

The two large theatres are used for a range of cultural activities, including classical music concerts, some staged by the Abu Dhabi Music Foundation, which brings top artists and orchestras from Europe and elsewhere to Abu Dhabi; film shows, including regular film seasons from individual countries or directors; plays and meetings held by external organisations. The Emirates Natural History Group, the UAE's oldest environmental non-governmental organisation, has held its open meetings in the Cultural Foundation on a twice-monthly basis for 20 years. Other voluntary groups also make use of the facilities, including a gardening group and chess enthusiasts, while the Foundation's small and tastefully designed restaurant has become a popular meeting place.

Next to the building, an open area is used each spring for the Abu Dhabi Book Fair. Staged in a large tented compound, this brings dozens of publishers from the UAE and from the rest of the Arab world, as well as from further afield, to promote their titles at specially discounted rates.

EMIRATES HERITAGE CLUB

Established in 1993, Emirates Heritage Club (EHC) has as its core objective the preservation and promotion of the country's heritage to the younger generation that would otherwise be unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of their ancestors. EHC organises heritage exhibitions, oversees heritage centres and collaborates with all other UAE institutions sharing the same interests. Activities organised by the Club for all age groups not only cover traditional sports such as camel racing, boat racing and falconry, and traditional skills like tent-building and coffee-making, but also contemporary sailing, equestrian, shooting and other sports. EHC is instrumental in organising competitive events in these fields, as well as youth camps on the island of Al Sammaliah, north-east of Abu Dhabi City.

Heritage research is conducted through its affiliate, the Zayed Centre for Heritage and History in Al Ain, and environmental research through the Department of Environmental Research (DER) on Al Sammaliah. DER is primarily concerned with coastal biodiversity, conservation and sustainable development of coastal habitats. EHC formed the Amateur Astronomers Group (AAG) in May 1998 to spread astronomy awareness among all categories of society. Another affiliate, Emirates Sailing Academy (ESA-ESS), was set up in July 2000.

THE EMIRATES CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The ECSSR, founded in 1994, is an independent institution dedicated to the promotion of professional research and educational excellence in the UAE and the Gulf area. ECSSR serves as a focal point for scholarship on political, strategic, military, environmental, economic, and social issues pertinent to the UAE,





The main thrust of ECSSR's work lies in identifying and analysing issues of vital significance, predicting future trends and devising management strategies to cope with such issues.

the Gulf, and the greater Middle East through the sponsorship of research and studies conducted by scholars from around the globe. The core of its work lies in identifying and analysing issues of vital significance, predicting future trends and devising management strategies to cope with such issues. As well as maintaining and training its own staff of researchers, it hosts conferences, symposia, workshops and lecture series renowned for the eminence of the participants and the quality of their content and influence. Integral to the success of ECSSR's research programme are the annual *Trend Assessment Reports* prepared in the Centre's various units which, by providing a survey of major international and domestic developments and their possible implications, become a powerful tool in the task of prioritising the goals for the following year.

The ECSSR's publishing activities have made it a major source of specialised scholarly publications in the region. As well as publishing monographs in its *International Studies Series*, it also publishes the proceedings of conferences, symposia and lectures in *Emirates Occasional Papers* (an English series) and *Strategic Studies* (an Arabic series). In addition to these publications, ECSSR translates into Arabic works of importance to the Centre and its audience.

Recent publications include: *The Gulf Oil and Gas Sector: Potential and Constraints*; *Arab Media in the Information Age*; *Education Technologies and Their Impact on the Educational Process: A Case Study of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSC), UAE University*; *Governance and Globalization: An Economic Perspective*; *In the Shadow of Just Wars: Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action*; *NATO's Growing Role in the Greater Middle East*; *The Religious Right and US Middle East Policy*; and *The Role of Water Exports in Iranian Foreign Policy Towards the GCC states*.

RESTORED FORTS AND OTHER BUILDINGS

Abu Dhabi

Qasr al-Hosn, (often known as 'the Old Fort' or 'the White Fort.')

was founded by Sheikh Shakhbut bin Dhiyab, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, in 1795 and is the oldest building on Abu Dhabi Island, although it has been much enlarged over the last couple of centuries. Residence



of the rulers of Abu Dhabi until the 1960s, it served for many years as the home of the government's Centre for Documentation and Research. Surrounded by palm trees, and with old cannon outside its well-fortified door, the Qasr al-Hosn is now scheduled to become a national museum.

Al Ain has more than its complement of impressive forts and heritage structures, including the Eastern Fort, located within the compound of Al Ain Museum; Murabba Fort, which used to be the police headquarters and a prison; and Jahili Fort, a large restored fort in the city centre that has a distinctive corner turret with four levels or terraces. Going back much further in time is a superb renovation of an important Umm al-Nar tomb from the third millennium BC at Hili Archaeological Park in Al Ain.

A recent agreement between UNESCO and Al Ain Economic Development and Tourism Promotion Authority, now replaced by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA), has initiated a cooperative effort to protect the cultural and historical wealth of the city. The end-result, launched at a conference in Abu Dhabi in late 2005, is a cultural heritage strategy for the whole emirate, which is being implemented by ADACH and incorporates all

Qasr al-Hosn,
Abu Dhabi

The restored Al Fahidi Fort in Dubai was originally the ruler's residence; it subsequently became an arsenal, then a jail, and is now a thriving interactive museum with a wide range of archaeological and ethnographic exhibits.

aspects of the emirate's rich heritage, both man-made and natural, with a view to sustainable development of its assets in harmony with the growing value of cultural tourism.

Dubai

At least three of Dubai's major historical sites, Shindagha, Bastakia and Hatta Heritage Village, are already under consideration by UNESCO.

Dubai announced plans to restore over 300 historic buildings in the emirate by 2010 as part of the government's architectural conservation plans. Where appropriate, buildings will be submitted for inclusion to UNESCO's approved list of heritage sites. At least three of Dubai's major historical sites, Shindagha, Bastakia and Hatta Heritage Village, are already under consideration by UNESCO. The Shindagha Heritage Area alone contains around 65 heritage sites. Al Bastakia Quarter has around 55 heritage sites, about half of which were restored by 2005. Amongst these buildings are Sheikh Saeed house – an elegant late nineteenth century, two-storey building of Arabic design, complete with four wind towers, housing a unique collection of rare coins, photographs, stamps and documents; Bait Al Wakeel – Dubai's first office building dating back to 1934 and now housing a museum devoted to Dubai's fishing and maritime traditions; and Al Ahmadiya School, Dubai's first regular school, established in 1912 and now a museum of education.

The restored Al Fahidi Fort in Dubai was originally the ruler's residence; it subsequently became an arsenal, then a jail, and is now a thriving interactive museum with a wide range of archaeological and ethnographic exhibits. The underground section of the museum houses lifelike exhibits of an ancient souq, a Qur'an school, typical Arabic households and an oasis. There is also a display of the desert by night with interesting local wildlife.

Historical buildings are major tourist attractions in Dubai and are also used for commercial purposes to generate some income and support the restoration work. A hotel is being run in one of the restored buildings, while others are used for restaurants and coffee shops. Some of the restored buildings have also been rented out for residential purposes.



SHARJAH

Sharjah's renovation and restoration of architecturally significant heritage buildings and an old souq in the Sharjah Arts Area and Sharjah Heritage Area have earned it international acclaim. Many of these fine buildings house art, Islamic and ethnographic museums, including the country's first national art gallery, and one is also home to The Emirates' Fine Arts Society. Nearby is Sharjah Fort or Al Husn. Built by Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi in 1820, this carefully renovated fort was the residence of the ruling family for many years. It was torn down in 1969, but the present ruler, himself a prominent local historian, has restored it with the help of old photographs and documents, his own notes and the assistance of elderly residents. It now houses a museum with exhibits on pearl fishing, education, and trade, as well as jewellery, weapons and old photographs. Al Mahatah Fort at the old airport site right in the centre of Sharjah houses aviation memorabilia relating to the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

NORTHERN EMIRATES

The eighteenth century fort in Ajman switched in 1970 from being the ruler's palace and office to housing the local police force. In 1981, it changed function once again to become a museum housing an interesting collection of archaeological artefacts, manuscripts, old weapons and reconstructions of traditional life.

Sharjah's renovation and restoration of architecturally significant heritage buildings and an old souq in the Sharjah Arts Area and Sharjah Heritage Area have earned it international acclaim.

Another fort which reinvented itself as a police headquarters was that of Umm al-Qaiwain. This is one of the most atmospheric forts in the UAE, situated alongside Umm al-Qaiwain's creek, its main gates flanked by two impressive old cannons. Subsequently restored as a museum, the upper floor includes a high-ceilinged *majlis* (a meeting room and a place to receive guests) elegantly decorated with carved wooden balconies. The lower level is occupied by a cooking area and store rooms.

Situated behind the Police Headquarters on Al Hosn Road in the old town, the beautifully renovated Ra's al-Khaimah Fort, residence of the ruling family until the early 1960s, houses an intriguing collection of archaeological and ethnological artefacts, although plans are being drawn up for the construction of a purpose-built museum. An important series of surveys has been undertaken in Ra's al-Khaimah Emirate over the years, documenting mountain villages, towers, mosques, the old houses of the palm gardens of Al Nakheel and Shamal, and now the traditional buildings of Ra's al-Khaimah City. Archaeologists from the Ra's al-Khaimah National Museum are researching and cataloguing all traditional structures and the more important ones are being earmarked for restoration. Already, the museum has begun restoration of the atmospheric old souq area.

FUJAIRAH

The Emirate of Fujairah also has its fair share of historical buildings, particularly impressive forts and other defensive structures on the coast and traditional routes through the major wadis. Work by the Department of Archaeology and Heritage on restoration of Fujairah Castle, begun in the late 1990s, was completed in 2000, while many of the adjacent buildings, including walled courtyard-houses once occupied by members of the ruling family, have also been restored. The whole area is to be surrounded by a new wall, within which a number of new buildings will be constructed to act as a focus for the heritage of Fujairah. These new buildings are expected to include a three-storey museum, an amphitheatre, a souq, a mosque, a restaurant and a children's play area.



The Emirate of Fujairah has a wide range of historical buildings, particularly impressive forts and other defensive structures on the coast and traditional routes through the major wadis.



The Department recently completed the renovation of another major site at Awhala in southern Fujairah, where a Late Islamic fort sits on top of the foundations of a much larger Iron Age fortress. Work also commenced on restoration of the Late Islamic palace and adjacent buildings in Wadi Hayl, around 13 kilometres west of Fujairah City. Once the residence of a junior branch of the ruling family, this is one of the best-preserved sites of its type in the whole of the UAE.

INTERNET LINKS

Abu Dhabi Dramatic Society:	www.the-club.com
Advertising:	www.uaeinteract.com/advertising
Arts:	www.uaeinteract.com/arts
Breaking news:	www.uaeinteract.com/breakingnews
Copyright:	www.uaeinteract.com/copyright
Culture:	www.uaeinteract.com/uaeculture
Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi:	www.cultural.org.ae
Dubai Community Theatre & Arts Centre:	www.dubaitheatre.org
Dubai Drama Group:	www.dubaidramagroup.org
ECSSR:	www.ecssr.net.ae
Emirates Heritage Club.....	www.emirates-heritageclub.com
Emirates News Agency:	www.uaeinteract.com/wam
Falconry:	www.uaeinteract.com/falconry
Films:	www.uaeinteract.com/films
Media:	www.uaeinteract.com/media
Monuments:	www.uaeinteract.com/monuments
Public libraries:	www.uaeinteract.com/libraries
Publications:	www.uaeinteract.com/publications
Radio and television:	www.uaeinteract.com/radio_tv
Theatre:	www.uaeinteract.com/theatre
UAE Interact:	www.uaeinteract.com/uaeinteract