Opening of the Springer office in Dubai
In April, Springer opened a new office in Dubai.

LibraryZone spoke to Asdaa Kotani, Chris Bendall and Nadja Madani-Moudarres to find out a bit more about the team and their work. We also spoke with Samar Kai, e-resources librarian at Notre Dame University in Lebanon, to understand in more detail the issues facing the library market in this region.

LibraryZone: First of all, the Dubai office has been open a while now. How are things going and what services does the office provide?
Asdaa Kotani: The office will be serving all of our clients and potential clients for all Springer related products and services. This includes both academic and corporate library sales for everything from journals and ebooks to Springer-protocols, materials and images. It will also be a contact point for authors and institutions interested in publishing their journals, monographs, proceedings and reference works with Springer.

LibraryZone: Who are the key contacts? What are their roles and what support can customers expect from them?
Asdaa Kotani: Library Sales – Academic

Well, so far it is me and Chris plus Nadja Madani-Moudarres for the corporate sector, plus the agents are still playing a major role in the region in times of delivering some of the services.

Nadja Madani-Moudarres: Library Sales – Corporate & Health

Since 2006 I’ve been handling the corporate and health/medical sector in the MENA region and Turkey. Our corporate clients, mainly information specialists, are highly specialized and only interested in very customized collections suiting their needs, strictly related to the research fields of their scientists. For the corporate sector I am focusing on Petrochem, Oil, Gas, Chemical Sector & Energy industry – the most important sector in the Middle East with growing R&D activities – mainly in the Gulf region and in Saudi Arabia. With the support of our publishing colleagues, we are able to offer content solutions from all our products for their field of interest. This cooperation is crucial and has helped us to establish very good relations with our customers. Regarding the health sector, the situation is similar. Medical librarians head up the Health Sciences Libraries in very specialized medical research institutions in the region. The trend to establish their “electronic Medical Libraries” is growing and they expect us to offer easy accessible medical solutions for their doctors.

But we also have to be aware that the Arab world is very diverse and in some regions, we are faced with weak IT infrastructures, sensitive political situations plus very long sales cycles. We have to build awareness of the “online world” and to support them from all point of views.

With the opening of our Springer office in Dubai and a growing team we send a very important message to the key players of the information industry in the Arab World: "We are available – we are your partners – you can call us anytime– we will train and support you – and we take your needs seriously!"

Dr. Chris Bendall

I look after Publishing and consider all proposals for publishing books and journals with Springer. Each proposal is reviewed by experts in the topics discussed and is accepted to the Springer program once the quality and significance of the work is judged to be of the high standard we demand. Journal publication is always seen as a partnership between Springer, the Societies and the Institutions to which the journal belongs. Via the Dubai office, the region gains a local door to Springer’s global network of publishing expertise together with state of the art technology to develop journals to the highest standards and enhance their distribution around the world.

LibraryZone: Have there been any significant developments in the region that you can tell us about?
Dr. Chris Bendall: In general the region is growing rapidly and people are becoming increasingly aware of the online world. They
are very keen on raising the standard of their scientific knowledge and research and see the importance of providing access to electronic scientific content.

► **LibraryZone**: What publishing challenges do you face or have you faced?
► **Dr. Chris Bendall**: The central aim of our activities in the Middle East is to work together with our partners in the region to develop publications of international interest and reputation to our high scientific standards.

There are many journals in the region, most with a high standard of scientific peer-review. However, many of these journals remain unknown to the wider scientific community due to a lack of visibility and because they address topics which are very well catered for by many other well known international journals.

Regional journals can play an important role in addressing topics of importance to Middle East and describing phenomena of interest to the international community. Our challenge is to identify these topics and phenomena, consider how well they are catered for by the existing international journals and then to develop publications which will complement and not compete with the existing literature.

► **LibraryZone**: What do you think the key challenges are facing the library market in the Middle East? Do you think that they differ significantly from the issues experienced by the rest of the world?
► **Asdaa Kotani**: Budgets still play a big part in the issues they are facing for some of the countries here. Also the technical infrastructure is a big problem here as is user behavior and awareness.

► **LibraryZone**: How has e-content impacted on libraries in the Middle East? Do you see the role of the library changing? How do you think they should adapt?
► **Asdaa Kotani**: E-resources have made life much easier for every one as institutions can now get more content for less money. Plus accessibility is far greater as people can access content from home and so on. Libraries in general are moving from the traditional model and are becoming more virtual now.

► **LibraryZone**: Finally, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
► **Asdaa Kotani**: I joined Springer in 2008 as a licensing manager to cover the Middle East, and used to be based in the UK office. In 2009 the company decided to open a new office to cover the Middle East and that is when I was sent to Dubai to manage the office. Before Springer I worked for Informa Group, covering the Academic market as well.

► **Dr. Chris Bendall**: I joined Springer in 2006 as editor for our Geoscience program. My past work experience includes exploration geology and geochemical research with a PhD in geochemistry. Since 2008, I have become increasingly involved in the Middle East and am now responsible for coordinating Springer’s Middle Eastern STM publishing program.

► **Nadja Madani-Moudarres**: Before I joined the Corporate Licensing team in 2004, I worked in various positions in the Springer Editorial and Production Division in Heidelberg. This was the exciting starting time of Springer-Link. As I was involved from the beginning in new electronic workflows I could gain quite a lot of experience in production and diverse publishing processes. The Arabic World has always played an important part in my life, being of German-Arabic background, and I studied the dialogue and different cultural, historic and political subjects of the Islamic world through my Middle Eastern Studies.

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**Interview with Samar Kai, eResources librarian at Notre Dame University, Lebanon**

► **LibraryZone**: Please tell us about some of the challenges facing libraries in the Middle East or Dubai specifically. Have libraries in the Middle East been impacted by the global financial crisis as libraries have across the rest of the world? If so, how are libraries responding?
► **Samar Kai**: In our Country, we have been indirectly affected by the global financial crisis. Our library always has limited budget and we try to build robust print and electronic collections with the resources we are allocated.

► **LibraryZone**: How has the shift from traditional printed materials to electronic resources impacted your library?
► **Samar Kai**: We are shifting a lot of our print serials titles to e-only. We also started to build an eBooks collection with Springer eBooks (2005-2010) because of space restrictions and also because the users prefer to access the information electronically.

► **LibraryZone**: What is the reaction from Library patrons to using e-content? Do they seem to embrace it?
► **Samar Kai**: Our users seem to be happy with e-content, especially the fact that they can access it remotely at anytime. Nevertheless, some of the users still prefer to hold a book or journal physically.

► **LibraryZone**: What do you like about working with Springer? Are there any particular products or innovations that you are excited about?
► **Samar Kai**: What I like most about working with Springer is the transparency, the good products they offer and their good customer service. I am very excited about the new Springer interface and I hope that it will be more user friendly and that it will include more enhancements especially the "importing citations" feature.

► **LibraryZone**: What do you think about Springer’s move to open a new office in Dubai?
► **Samar Kai**: It is very important for Springer to have an office in the Middle East to be closer to us as customers, to better understand our needs and to visit us more frequently and help with training and demos.