



Qatar's Northwestern University

Hosts International Conference



Global academics and media professionals have recently gathered at Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) for the international conference on media management, innovation, and industry-wide developments.

The International Media Management Academic Association's (IMMAA) 2019 conference was the first-ever international conference hosted by NU-Q in Doha. It welcomed participants from 15 countries, including France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Portugal, Russia, Spain, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.

In his opening remarks, the dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar Everette E. Dennis introduced the conference chair Paulo Faustino, a noted Portuguese media management scholar and publisher. By these means the dean acknowledged the Northwestern University's role in founding the IMMAA in 2004 under the leadership of the former dean of the Medill School, John Lavine, and Eli Noam of Columbia University, who was present at the conference. As Dennis stated, "the IMMAA has

championed the study of media economics and management in schools of communication, business, and journalism; and the process has both advanced theories and solved real-world media business problems." He added that "NU-Q's commitment to foster exceptional learning spaces for students and faculty will push the boundaries of the debates in this field even further."

There were 40 plenary sessions and panels over three days at the conference. The discussions were about education for media management, media cities, legacy and social media, media influencers, TV binge-watching, new media audiences and metrics, business models, cryptocurrency in the media, data journalism, and other themes. Regional and country-related sessions included discussions about the media in the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and East Asia, with specific case studies on Iran, Turkey, China, Russia, and others.

The association's co-founder, Eli Noam of Columbia University, led a discussion that urged the media management field to change its priorities and lean more towards the



management principles and practices rather than those taught in communication schools. Professor Joe F. Khalil, a media scholar at NU-Q, presented an analysis of the world's current media cities in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe – a timely topic as Qatar is about to launch a media city, announced in an Emiri Decree in July 2019.

Qatar's media scene was the focus of a panel led by Everette E. Dennis including NU-Q faculty Ilhem Allagui and Gregory Lowe, both media management scholars, and Gregory Bergida, NU-Q's director of planning and strategy. The Qatar media ecosystem was described as "bold and robust with such features at Al Jazeera, beIN SPORTS, legacy media, and heavy social media use." During the discussion, Allagui pointed out that "Qatar tops the list of countries in the region with not only the highest internet penetration rate but also in the shift to using smart devices as opposed to traditional ones to access the internet."

A separate session was held to discuss the latest findings from the NU-Q's longitudinal *Media Use in the Middle East 2018* survey. Those attending expressed interest in the study which has been conducted at NU-Q since 2013, with Noam calling it "an important and unprecedented effort by a school and a model for others." Several additional members of the NU-Q faculty made presentations and took part

in panel discussions, as well as chairing conference sessions.

Participants also toured the NU-Q's building and museum – The Media Majlis at Northwestern University in Qatar, as well as other sites across Doha including the Qatar National Museum, the Museum of Islamic Art, and took part in a hands-on workshop at Al Jazeera Network.

Operating since 2004, the IMMAA is comprised of researchers and professors committed to the study of media management to improve institutional practice and enhance education in media markets for current and future media managers. Media executives, managers, and employees in Qatar were invited to attend the sessions.

The Dean Acknowledges a Transformative Role of IMMAA

Eli Noam who attended the meeting affirmed at the conference: "No organization has done more to promote an understanding of the current disruptive media environment than this one," he said. E. Dennis headed the media management program at Fordham University for 14 years and was a founding director of the former Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia for a decade before coming to Qatar in 2011. "You and your colleagues have literally invented a new field of study with vision, given its inspiration and a unifying sense of

purpose. You have fostered and promoted rigorous scholarship and high-quality teaching while also serving the media industries and media professionals. The achievements of IMMAA are notable and cause for celebration as the field advances and pushes new boundaries. Anchored mostly in the information societies and with international reach across several continents, IMMAA can do what no other scholarly enterprise does very well — that is connecting longstanding research on mediated communication while tracking new developments from different research traditions and perspectives. You have welcomed different ways of knowing across quantitative and qualitative dimensions. IMMAA is on the rise, evolving and maturing as it extends its reach and depth of scholarship. It has the challenge of continuing to keep pace and being relevant to the contemporary media world amid the collisions caused first by technological convergence and subsequently by disruption. As is always the case, we are counselled to respect areas of settled knowledge while encouraging new and critical perspectives.”

Hosting the Doha conference was a historic moment for NU-Q as the first time the school had opened its doors to an international meeting. The Dean discussed the creation of NU-Q as itself a transformative venture in global and digital media education. Using the same framework that media management

experts employ, NU-Q began with a bold vision connected to a regional mission supported by a strong and growing faculty, student body and staff. With institutional, faculty and student research projects linked to thought leadership, the school is making its mark on the region and globally. The Dean’s remarks were connected to a panel discussion the presented NU-Q’s longitudinal study, *Media Use in the Middle East*, now in its 8th year. This study that embraces legacy and new media, as well as attitudes toward media, began just after the Arab Spring. This report annually surveys 7,000 people in seven countries and especially tracks internet developments. NU-Q publishes an annual monograph and also maintains an interactive website for the data and analysis. It is the sole source of data for the USC Annenberg *World Internet Project*, of which NU-Q is a member. The value of longitudinal research in looking at change, especially in social media and in tracking attitudes toward censorship, freedom of expression and functional changes in media is notable, it was argued. The study was said to have helped the school understanding the post Arab spring era while generating new knowledge useful for researchers, students and industry. This continuing research is fodder for thought leadership and the spread of knowledge about media in the region and internationally. It has received wide media coverage and is featured at several international meetings each year.





Annual conference of the International Media Management Academic Association (IMMAA)

For more information please visit: <http://www.immaa.org>

IMMAA (International Media Management Academic Association) is a global association of academics researching critical issues of media management with the goal of improving practice and understanding of media markets and institutions for the ultimate benefit of media managers and the students who will be the media managers of the future. Its diverse international membership fosters and promotes an appreciation for the differences among countries and cultures that contribute to characteristics that differentiate national media markets and shape relationships among them. Past conferences were held in Chicago, San Francisco, Saarbrücken, New York, Lisbon, Pamplona, Moscow, Seoul, Sao Paulo and Stuttgart.

IMMAA Conference

In 2019, IMMAA Conference will be hosted by Northwestern University in Qatar, between the 4th and the 6th of October. The IMMAA 2019 Conference welcomes contributions from diverse perspectives. Papers are encouraged to examine practical examples in case study approaches and all qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. Papers that address more general issues related to the below themes are also welcome:

- Value Creation and Business Models
- Disruption and Innovation in Media Markets
- Impact of latest Trends and Technologies
- Emerging Media Markets
- Media Entrepreneurship and Small Companies
- Venture Capital, Crowdfunding and Media Financing
- Cooperation and Competition in Media Markets
- Media Audience and Research Metrics
- Media Business Research Methods
- Innovation in Teaching Approaches and Formats