Birzeit University won the "Arabic Language Award" for its Lexicographic Search Engine

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Birzeit University was awarded Mohammed Bin Rashid's Award for the Arabic Language 2019 for the development of an innovative Lexicographic Search Engine -the first of its kind worldwide.

The award is given annually for the efforts and intelligent applications in preserving, promoting, and facilitating the learning of Arabic. The award was given to the university by his Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum in a large ceremony in Dubai.

The lexicographic search engine is built on top of the largest Arabic multilingual database, allowing people to search and retrieve translations, synonyms, definitions, and more. The database contains about 150 Arabic multilingual lexicons that have been digitized over 9 years at Birzeit university computer science department.

[The University President (https://www.birzeit.edu/en/about/president-office)](https://www.birzeit.edu/en/about/president-office) Dr. Abdullatif Abuhijleh stated that this award is important as it is a recognition of the university's leading role in science and innovation. He added that by digitizing this large number of dictionaries – despite the limited resources – Birzeit University has realized an old dream for many Arab organizations to digitize and preserve Arabic lexicons.

As Dr. Mustafa Jarrar explained, "Imagine having the Oxford English Dictionary, the Merriam-Webster dictionary, and all other English dictionaries collected in one place, integrated and

unified into one database; and offered online using an innovative search interface". He added "we did this for 150 dictionaries and from scratch, as we had to type everything by hand".

The university launched the search engine in September 2018. It was developed as a voluntary research by Dr. Jarrar and his team, without receiving any support or funding from any party. Their main motivation was to offer students, writers, translators, and others a language resource that is more precise and richer than automatic machine translation tools like Google Translate. Modern IT applications can also access the lexicographic database through an API to better support the Arabic language.

The search engine is publicly available online at (https://ontology.birzeit.edu (https://ontology.birzeit.edu)).