

Google launches user-led Q&A service in Arabic

September 8 2009, By ADAM SCHRECK , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- Google Inc. launched an online tool Tuesday that allows Arab users to answer each other's questions, a move designed to boost the amount of Web content available in Arabic.

The new service comes two weeks after [Yahoo](#) Inc. bought one of the Arab world's largest online portals. Like [Google](#), Yahoo wants to better serve the rapidly expanding population of young and tech-savvy people in the Middle East.

Google decided to launch its tool, called Google Ejabat after the Arabic word for "answers," after discovering many of its Arabic users' searches failed to turn up relevant results. The Mountain View, Calif.-based company estimates that less than 1 percent of information online is in Arabic.

"We recognize that users are the best at answering each other's questions within a community and this product is the perfect way to be able to share and contribute information," said Wael Ghonim, the company's product and marketing manager for the Middle East and North Africa.

Google already offers Arabic-language search pages, and its Blogger publishing platform is popular among the region's growing corps of online writers.

The company does not offer a service like Ejabat in English, but has launched similar tools in Russian, Chinese and Thai, Dubai-based

spokeswoman Joanne Kubba said.

"We pushed it ahead in Arabic since we know it to be a very useful tool to help generate ... content," she said.

Google's move follows Yahoo's announcement last month that it had reached a deal to buy the Arab online community Web site Maktoob.com for an undisclosed amount.

Yahoo said that deal allows it to offer Arabic versions of its e-mail and messaging services as it expands to fast-growing markets where it has a chance to become the online "destination of choice."

On the Net:

<http://ejabat.google.com>

<http://maktoob.com>

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