

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

Name of country: **MALTA**

Name of library or equivalent national-level organisation: **NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA**

Name of Chief Executive: **OLIVER MAMO**

Name of contact person for international matters: **JOANNE SCIBERRAS**

Mailing address: **joanne.a.sciberras@gov.mt**

Telephone: **0035621243230**..... Fax: **0035621233109**.....

Web address of the Library: www.libraries.gov.mt

Email address for contacting the library: joanne.a.sciberras@gov.mt

The National Library of Malta

General Overview of recent major developments

During 2011 the Unit welcomed a total of 6807 visitors, a 10% decrease from last year, with an average of 23 visitors per day of opening. The majority of visitors hailed from Spain, but Germans, French and Italians visited the Library in fairly large numbers too.

A total of 6086 persons – an average of 20 per day – used the Library for research purposes, a 12% drop from last year. Reading Room staff fetched an average of 1 item per researcher. Apart from the delivery of requested material and its re-shelving on a daily basis, the staff in this Section also handled researchers' queries and direct readers to the various sources at the Library. In cases where the requested material was not available, the public was directed to other sources outside the Library. This occurred especially in the case of genealogy-oriented requests. The majority of researchers who patronized the Reading Room in 2011 conducted research in the Library's newspaper collections. Others came to trace their relatives or made specific or general queries usually regarding family surnames, genealogy and sports events. Many consulted documents from the archives of the Order of St John.

Most of the material at the Library is in closed access areas and the main task of the Readers' Services Section is to deliver books and manuscripts from these rooms to the researchers. This year the Reading Room staff fetched a total of 8259 items comprising manuscripts, newspapers and printed material, a 4% increase over last year. The total consisted of 1405 Archives manuscript volumes both from the Archives of St John and the Università, 352 Library manuscript volumes, 243 volumes from the Adami Collection, 4374 volumes of newspapers and periodicals, as well as 1885 printed books, both Melitensia and reference. These items averaged 27 per day of opening.

The Legal Deposit Act plays an essential role in the preservation of our national memory, since it ensures the continual growth of the Melitensia collection at the National Library. This Act stipulates that authors or publishers are legally bound to deliver to the National Library two copies free of charge, of any work printed and published in the Maltese Islands. Throughout 2011, 483 distinct books were deposited in total, together with approximately 523 local periodical titles that include journals, newspapers and magazines.

Supplementing the works received by legal deposit, the Acquisitions Section purchased an extra copy of most titles published locally. With regard to books published abroad, the usual emphasis was made on acquiring works published overseas by Maltese nationals as well as works whose subject was directly related to the Maltese Islands. Several reference works and foreign periodical subscriptions of interest to the general public were also purchased.

In 2011, the sum spent on books published locally amounted to a total of € 5, 182.35, while a total of € 1, 592.14 was spent on books published abroad. In all, € 3, 787.25 was spent on subscriptions and memberships to foreign periodicals. In 2011, 28 new serial titles were entered into the computer database

Libraries Relationship to Government

The year 2011 was a decisive year for the libraries sector in the Maltese Islands. Through the Malta Libraries Act (Act No. VII of 2011), which came into effect in August 2011, a totally new set-up for the libraries sector in Malta was established. The former Department of Libraries was replaced by Malta Libraries, the entity now responsible for the National Library, the Central Public Library, the Gozo Public Library, and the Regional and Branch public libraries. The management of Malta Libraries is made up of the National Librarian and CEO and two Deputy Librarians. The Act also established the setting up of the Malta Libraries Council, which is primarily an advisory body on any matter arising from the provisions of the Act. The Council began operating in August 2011.

Key facts and figures

Size of Major collections: **The National Library of Malta is the custodian of three archival groups:**

- 1) **the Archive of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta (AOM), consisting of 6576 manuscript volumes.**
- 2) **the Archives of the Treasury of the Order (Treas.), consisting of 513 manuscript volumes.**
- 3) **the Archives of the Universitas of Mdina and Valletta (Univ.), consisting of 658 manuscript volumes.**

The Library collection consists of: 21 codices, 1600 library manuscripts, 600 newspapers, 731 maps and plans, 60 incunabula, 200 fine bindings.

Number of staff at National Library: **26**

Total Operating Budget: **EUR 185,500 +EUR 100,000 for acquisition of books**

Collaboration between the National Library and other National Institutions

During the year 2011 the National Library organized two major exhibitions, and another two on a smaller scale.

Exhibition – Dun Karm Psaila 1871-1961: Dokumenti u Kotba mill-Biblijoteka Nazzjonali: In October 2011, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the death of Dun Karm Psaila, an exhibition was set up at the National Library, which showed numerous books, photographs and newspapers related to the National Poet. Apart from these, the exhibition included several original letters written by Dun Karm to Karmen Mikalleg Buħaħar and others he wrote to Laurent Ropa. All these letters had been preserved by Karmen Mikalleg Buħaħar. The exhibition also included panels showing poems by Dun Karm and a selection of related photographs.

Exhibition – Maps of Malta at the National Library: In November, an exhibition about Maps of Malta was organized by the National Library of Malta in collaboration with The Malta Map Society on the occasion of the IMCoS Malta International Symposium 22-25 September 2011.

Lectures: Two public lectures were held at the National Library this year. On 4th March 2011, a lecture entitled “The National Library and the Study of Hospitaller Military Architecture” was given by Dr Stephen C Spiteri. On 22nd March 2011, a lecture was organized by the Maltese Oriental Society in collaboration with the National Library on Biblical Archaeology. The lecture, entitled “Psalm 104 and Akhenaten’s Hymn to the Sun”, was given by Prof John Day from the University of Oxford. Both lectures were accompanied by small exhibitions, each showing original works found at the National Library intrinsically related to the topic of each specific lecture. Attendance and participation in these events proved highly satisfactory.

Participation in Conferences Abroad

London Bookfair 11th – 13th April 2011: Ms Joanne Sciberras, Senior Principal and Chairperson of the Organising Committee of the Malta Bookfair, attended for the first time the London Bookfair (LBF), a three-day large book-

publishing fair held annually, usually in April, in London. Attendance to this fair is to be considered as a great opportunity for the Malta Libraries to learn more on digital libraries, school libraries and the role of public libraries through the participation in various seminars which were held during the days of the LBF.

25th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation CENL, Copenhagen, 26th-27th Sept 2011:

Ms Joanne Sciberras, Senior Principal, attended a two-day conference organized by CENL – Confederation of European National Libraries at the Black Diamond Royal Library in Copenhagen. This annual event brought together representatives from 28 national libraries across Europe and representatives from The EUROPEAN LIBRARY (TEL) to discuss the way forward for national libraries in Europe. One of the main topics discussed during this year's meeting focused on the identity of national libraries in Europe and how budget cuts affect their strategies and priorities.

3rd LIBER-EBLIDA Workshop on the Digitization of Library Material in Europe, The Hague, 5th -7th October 2011: Ms Maroma Camilleri, Senior Assistant Librarian, attended a three-day conference organized by LIBER-EBLIDA in the Dutch capital. The event brought together representatives from national and university libraries and commercial entities across and outside Europe to discuss the way forward for the digitization of library material in Europe. The conference focused on the post-digitization phase and sought to explore the potential that the libraries now have for developing the digital data itself.

Conference - Photo Archives IV: The Photographic Archive and the Idea of Nation, Florence 27th – 29th October 2011: Ms C Michelle Buhagiar, Assistant Curator, attended a three-day conference organized by the *Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz* and the *Università degli Studi di Firenze*. The Conference formed part of a series of international meetings dedicated to the photographic archives sector and the interaction between photography and the academic and scientific disciplines. The Conference brought together a number of international specialists in the field of photographic archives. The Conference particularly aimed at studying the relationship between photography, or photographic archives, and the idea of “nation”, through the sharing of experiences of different countries on an international level.

New Developments in Managing Collections & Providing Access to Collections

Restoration Works on Collections

In June, the National Library of Malta was presented with a leaf casting machine by Mr Alfred Micallef Attard on behalf of Lions Club Sliema who since last year have been helping the library with donations towards the book restoration fund. The leaf casting machine is an indispensable aid to paper restoration since it fills with paper pulp the holes and grooves made by bookworms in the paper. It offers a quick and viable alternative to traditional repair techniques whereby the holes are filled in manually. It is therefore time-saving and cost-effective for the restoration of priceless books and documents some of which are extremely damaged and in a very poor state of conservation. Meanwhile repairs of books sponsored by private persons through the initiative of Lions Club Sliema proceeded steadily throughout the year.

Digitization Strategy and Framework for the National Library of Malta

In 2008, the National Library of Malta succeeded in procuring European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) in order to establish a framework to digitize part of its collections, ensuring preservation of the original material. The main activities comprise: planning of the project down to the least detail, issuing of tender for the purchase of the equipment, the actual purchase and installation of the equipment and the training of staff regarding the digitization process. The digitization process is currently still in the initial stages of data capturing and its benefits cannot yet be gauged since the service is not yet available to users. The projected end date is June 2012. It is envisaged that by that date, important library holdings such as newspapers and manuscripts will be available to one and all through a portal on the National Library website. The e-accessibility of National Library material to all users falls in line with Government policy regarding the availability of government documents to the general public. Such a project would also generate innovative activities, thus fitting into the country's policy which aims at improving the quality of life and forming a society capable of making full use of information and communication technology.

JOANNE SCIBERRAS

Deputy Librarian, National Library of Malta