

22nd CENL MEETING – ZAGREB, CROATIA

ANNUAL REPORT - MALTA

The National Library

The National Library acquires, assembles and preserves for posterity the national collections of printed, audio-visual and electronic documents and which shall include past and current published and unpublished documents as well as publications by Maltese authors, or about Malta, or in the Maltese language or about any aspect of Maltese studies whenever they are published.

Exhibition – The art of Fortress Building in the Maltese Islands (1530 – 1798)

A joint exhibition between the National Library and Dr Stephen C Spiteri, a renowned expert in the Art of Fortress Building in the Maltese Islands with the assistance of the Fortress Explorer Society and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage under the auspices of the International Institute of Baroque Studies at the University of Malta was inaugurated on Saturday 15th September and lasted till end of December 2007. The exhibition focused on the architecture, craftsmanship, and building and engineering skills that went into the construction of fortified structures.

The National Library displayed some of the plans, manuscripts and documents in our collection that were relevant to the central theme. This rendered the exhibition even more appealing and unique.

Guided tours were organized to higher secondary classes and local councils. Dr Spiteri elaborated on the detailed display which aimed to show how fortresses were built as structures, from the moment of their inception to the point where they were being carved out of the rock to the final stages. The exhibition is to be considered a huge success since it attracted hundreds of locals and foreigners.

Restoration works at the façade of the National Library

The National Library of Malta was purposely built by the Knights of St. John in 1776 to serve as a national library.

Restoration work on the façade of the National Library together with its portico started in October 2006. This work is being performed by the Restoration Unit under the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure. This goes according to the cooperation agreement our Department had signed with the said Ministry. This year the workers working on the project managed to complete another two-fifths of the work.

Brocktorff watercolour collections

One of the main aims of the National Library of Malta is to make available some of its treasures to the general public, both local and foreign, since many of them are of international interest. The two Brocktorff volumes belonging to the National Library consist of 89 watercolours depicting views of Malta by Charles Frederick de Brocktorff (1777/85 – 1850), an artist of Northern German origin who visited Malta and opened an art shop in Valletta in the 1820s. Many of his family members were painters and lithographers.

In January 2006 the National Library enquired about the possibility that UNESCO provides funds for the publication of the 71 Brocktorff watercolour collections to be published by the National Library in two volumes in 2007 and 2008. We filed an application with UNESCO and we were pleased to be informed that our project was accepted and placed first on the list of eligible projects. This is a golden opportunity for the National Library of Malta because a dream which had always been put aside due to lack of funds could now be made a reality. Immediately we set a committee and two distinguished writers together with a coordinator were chosen to start working on the publication. These include Judge Giovanni Bonello as a coordinator of the whole project, Ms Bernadine Scicluna and Ms Therese Vella as authors. Other meetings with the Director of the Government Printing Press were also held. The first publication is expected to be published in February 2008 with the other volume to be published in November 2008. This project coincides perfectly with the restoration of the façade of the National Library which has been started and is expected to take two years to complete.

Launching of brochures in different languages and postcards about the National Library of Malta

The National Library of Malta dates back since 1776. It is the last building built by the Knights of St John to serve as a National Library. Many Maltese and foreigners alike visit the Library and are curious to know about its history and the collections most of which are rare or unique.

On Wednesday 16th May 2007 the National Library launched interesting brochures in six languages namely Maltese, English, Italian, French, Spanish and German outlining its basic history. Also for the tourist to serve as a souvenir to take back home, we launched two sets of postcards one containing ten informative cards and the other five cards in a plastic bag. The cards demonstrate the main reading hall of the National Library, the deed of donation, an ancient map of the Maltese islands, the first newspaper – *Journal de Malte*, amongst others.

Official Visit by the President of Hungary at the National Library

On 1st June, the President of Hungary, H.E. Mr. Laszlo Solyom, paid an official visit to the National Library as part of the programme of his two-day visit to Malta. Being a former librarian himself, he expressed his pleasure at being among books and showed a lively interest when he was shown some of the Library's treasures, among them the Papal Bull dated 1113, Charles V's Deed of Donation and the 15th-century codex illustrating the Life of St Anthony the Abbot. At the end of the 30-minute visit, Mr. Solyom was presented with a copy of the prestigious *Giuoco d'Arme dei Sovrani e degli Stati d'Europa* which the National Library had published as a facsimile in 2004. In turn he presented the Library with a lavishly illustrated, coffee-table book entitled *Maps of Europe 1520-2001*.

Digitization Programme

In September 2007 the National Library applied for funds under the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) scheme to start its digitization programme. Once the application is approved, as a first start we aim to start digitizing the most important rare and unique documents, including the manuscripts of the Order of St. John, newspapers and maps.

Security Services at the National Library, Valletta

In order to secure the preservation of its collections, the National Library has, over the past few years introduced a range of security services including a Fire Detection and Suppression System and a CCTV system. To better preserve and safeguard the library's collection for posterity purposes the National Library will be monitoring the premises on a 24 hour security service system. To this effect the National Library decided to outsource the job to a security services company.

The Department in conjunction with the Contracts Department formulated the tender document and now it is in its process to be adjudicated.

Philip Borg
Director
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