

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

ANNUAL REPORT 2000

The Department of Libraries and Archives comprises the National Library in Valletta, the National Archives at Rabat and Mdina and the Public Libraries in Malta and Gozo.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

Staffing and Finance

Different reports on the need of restructuring the Libraries and Archives Department have been compiled over the years. The Department continued with the exercise of recruiting Library Grade employees as contemplated in the Agreement on the Classification, Regrading and Assimilation process of the Library Grades signed in July 1995. The following grades were recruited to work in the various sections of the Department:

5 Restorers of Documents

8 Senior Operatives (Libraries)

3 Operatives (Libraries)

10 Library Assistants

The Department encourages members of the staff to take the Diploma in Library and Information Studies of the University of Malta. Two employees were awarded the Diploma in November 2000 after completing successfully a two-year evening course.

The operating budget for the whole Department was decreased by Lm107,000, from Lm710,000 in 1999 to Lm603,000 in 2000. Personal emoluments, i.e. salaries, social security contributions, bonuses and allowances, account for Lm484,000 or 80.27 per cent of the Department's running costs.

The Fire Detection and Suppression System

No other building in Malta can boast of holding within its walls the nation's written and printed heritage spanning a thousand years. The thousands of documents, manuscripts, engravings, collections, books and other material lodged in every corner of this building, constitute some of the most priceless treasures to enrich our nation.

It would be a calamity were this heritage to be destroyed; an inestimable loss not only on a national level, but also on a global one. The legacy bequeathed to us by our ancestors should be passed on intact to future generations. If potential disaster is to be prevented, it is essential to establish safeguards against all possible damage, of which fire is perhaps the most deadly. In view of the above, during the last few years, the Department undertook the realisation of a reliable system of protection, in order to safeguard the National Library's treasures. Works on this system were intensified and eventually completed during the year 2000.

The Fire Detection and Suppression System, costing Lm700,000, was inaugurated on Thursday, 7th December, 2000. This project was financed under the 4th Italo-Maltese Financial Protocol.

New doors were installed wherever necessary. These doors were designed to provide a two-hour resistance to fire spread. Many of these doors are designed to close automatically the instant smoke is detected anywhere within the building. Two-hour, fire rated windows have also been installed. These were designed to keep fires originating from external sources, out of the building. Other windows allow a degree of natural ventilation but are designed to close automatically in order to contain the extinguishing gas inside the respective compartment.

A detection and alarm system consisting of point type smoke detectors was designed to cover all parts of the building. Halls containing books with a particularly high value or books that were deemed irreplaceable were identified and given special attention. Such halls have all been protected using a very early aspiration type of detection. These systems have been designed to raise the alarm within the library and to call the fire brigade automatically.

In order to supplement the detection system, several types of fire fighting systems have been included in the design. These systems are meant to come into operation in a staged sequence with the lowest possible level of intervention activated first. The next and more onerous stage would only come into operation if the previous level of intervention has failed. The systems in ascending order are:

- Portable extinguishers located in strategic positions for First Aid fire fighting by the staff.
- An extinguishing gas total flooding system, using an ozone friendly fire extinguishing gas for critical areas.
- A hose reel system designed to reach all areas
- A completely new sprinkler system designed to cover all areas deemed necessary or practical

The project included also the installation of a new electrical system and a new lightning protection system. Having secured the safety of the treasures of the National Library, the administration of this prestigious institution, sought to benefit from every opportunity that presented itself to make the general public aware of the richness and importance of the National Library, while not neglecting in mentioning the services offered by the National Library and by the other two sections of the Department of Libraries and Archives. This publicity was achieved by means of features, write-ups and interviews, printed on national newspapers or broadcasted on national media.

Bibliographic Section

One of the main functions of the National Library is the preservation of the national imprint. This is achieved through the Legal Deposit Act, which stipulates that authors or publishers are bound by law to deliver two copies free of charge to the National Library, of any work printed and published locally. Throughout 2000, a total of 414 distinct books were deposited, together with around 575 local periodical publications, which include journals, newspapers and magazines.

Once again, the cuts in its budget restricted the number of books purchased by the department. Whereas before two copies were purchased in addition to each book received by legal deposit, the lack of funds dictated the acquisition of only one extra copy by the department. Similarly, with regard to foreign books, only those with a tangible Maltese link were purchased, together with very few reference works. A total of Lm1, 380 were spent on books published locally while Lm250 accounted for foreign books. The lack of funds also affected foreign periodical subscriptions, with two being cancelled this year. An approximate total of Lm1,293 were spent on subscriptions and memberships to foreign periodicals. 4 titles of last year's periodicals amounting to Lm330 still remain to be paid from this year's budget. The receiving, acknowledging and chasing of books and serials are all done via computer. An additional 60 serial titles were entered into the database this year, complementing last year's overall number of 503 serial titles.

Legal Deposits	Books	Periodicals
Total	414	575

Purchases	Local Books	Foreign Books	Foreign Periodicals Subscrip. & Member.
Amount spent	Lm1, 380	Lm250	Lm1, 293

In recent years, the staff shortage situation resulted in the production of the Malta National Bibliography falling in arrears. This year saw significant progress being made in the compilation of the 1995/1996 bibliography, due to two main factors. Firstly, in September, Mr John Sultana, former Librarian of the National Library, began to

meet library staff from this section on a weekly basis, carrying out supervision work on the National Bibliography, specifically to do with the classification of the bibliographic entries. Secondly, the customised GEAC software, which facilitates the compilation, editing, indexing and formatting of the bibliography, was fully developed, tested and finalized this year. As a result, in 2000, the 1995/1996 bibliography approached completion.

Microfilming Section

This section continued to copy originals on microfilms. The scope is that the original is presented for posterity. After microfilming the original, each film is developed, checked, edited and labelled. During the year 2000, the Library Manuscripts continued to be copied and over 48,000 frames were made. 11,600 frames were also made from the miscellaneous newspapers, while private orders for the public amounted to 8,200 frames making a total of 67,800 frames.

During the year the Malta Government Gazette and the first 19 volumes of the Library Manuscripts were copied on positive film to be used by the public. An exercise was taken on hand in the year 2000 to check both negative and positive films of the Archives of the Order of St. John. This was necessary to ensure good images on films which were taken during the 1990's.

Informative Publication regarding the National Library

In December 2000, the National Library published, *A Guide To The National Library Of Malta*. This is an informative booklet with full colour illustrations, highlighting the history of the National Library of Malta, the imposing building where the Library is housed and also information regarding the collections of books, manuscripts and documents found in the Library. The authors of this work were Major Albert E. Abela and Mr. William Zammit M.A., two patrons of the National Library. Typing, setting and proofreading was carried out by employees of the Library. This publication was sponsored by Mr. Anthony Miceli Demajo.

66th IFLA General Conference - Jerusalem, 13 to 18 August 2000

The 66th International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) General Conference was held in the Jerusalem International Connection Centre during the period 13th to 18th August 2000.

In all 1,470 participants consisting of delegates, accompanying persons and IFLA Executives coming from 140 different countries attended the Conference. The delegates meet to exchange experience, debate professional issues, see the latest products of the information industry, conduct the business of IFLA and experience something of the culture of the host country.

The theme of the Conference, **Information for Co-operation: Creating the Global Library of the Future**, focusing on global libraries reflects IFLA's role in this concept, with the creation of IFLANET, the IFLA's global communication system. IFLANET enables those not fortunate enough to participate in this exciting event to access the papers and proceedings immediately from any electronic site in the world.

14th Conference of European National Librarians 2000 (CENL) - San Marino, 27th September to 2nd October, 2000

The 14th Foundation Conference of European National Librarians Annual Meeting was organised by the CENL Secretariat of the National Library of the Netherlands. This year's Conference was held in the Conference Hall of Hotel San Giuseppe in Via delle Felci, Valdragone, San Marino.

The objectives of the CENL are to set up and enrich National Libraries in Europe. Such "places of knowledge" make an effort to collect data that document the national cultural heritage of the European Countries, make it accessible and disseminate it.

Computerisation

Four courses were delivered consisting of Circulation and three courses on E Mail version 5.3

Members of staff benefitted from these courses which were supplemented with hand-outs and practical sessions. Patch 15 was tested and installed to enhance the Library Information System. User Group meetings in connection with the use of the Library Information System were held regularly every 3 months and updates were implemented. Continual maintenance of hardware at the Central Public Library and Branch sites was maintained to ensure efficiency in the delivery of service. IT Business plans were submitted outlining and prioritising projects such as the purchase of a new server for the Library Information System; role out plan of LIS to all remaining Regional and Branch Libraries; Upgrading of LIS to version 6.8; launching of the Department's web site and Online Catalogue and the renewal of expired Secure ID Cards. A new virus scanner Dr Solomons was installed on all PCs in replacement of the present F Prot. The annual GAUG meeting organised in U.K. for all GEAC System Users was attended by two members of our staff. During the meeting problematic issues encountered in the use of the system are discussed and deliberated upon to arrive at solutions. With the help of the computerised system long overdue books were collected and the membership was updated to reflect a more potential and active pool of library users.

Co-operation Agreements with the Local Councils

During 2000 the Department continued with its initiative to sign Agreements with the Branch and Regional Libraries for the better running and administration of these libraries.

In all 14 Agreements were signed in 2000.

Book-stock, book donations and book loans

During the year 2000, Lm14,000 were spent on the purchase of new books and audio-visual material. 5,035 new books were bought and there were 10,986 book donations for the Regional and Branch Libraries and 975 books for the Central Public Library. In all 11,961 (an increase of 1,033 over last year). In addition 291 audio visual items including audio/video tapes and CD's were purchased for the Audio Visual Library and the People with Special Needs Section.

Local subscriptions include: Saghtar, Treasures of Malta, the Manoel and the Government Gazette which is also ordered for most of the Regional Libraries.

During 2000 the Central Public Library, Regional and Branch Libraries altogether issued out on loan 745,442 books, an increase of 12,407 over last year.

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