

18th CENL Meeting, Rome, Italy

MALTA REPORT

Introduction

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 mission of the National Library is to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations. The National Library acquires, assembles, conserves for posterity and make accessible to the public, the collection of the nation's documentary heritage, regardless of form or medium, to be found in the libraries. It manages, administers, and develops the libraries under its control, and provides leadership to other Maltese libraries in such areas as management and conservation of library materials, and promotes national cooperation schemes and the professional training of librarians.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

The National Library serves as a research and reference library and collects every item of Melitensia by way of the Legal Deposit Act 1925. It also houses the Library and Archives of the Knights of St. John, the Archives of the Università' and an almost complete collection of Maltese newspapers and periodicals.

Inauguration of the Custodian's House – at the National Library by the Hon. Minister of Education, Dr.Louis Galea

The Custodian's House was inaugurated on Wednesday, 4th June 2003. The Director of Libraries made an introductory speech. After his speech the Hon. Minister officially opened the House which was blessed for the occasion. An exhibition entitled "The National Library of Malta: a documented history" was mounted and the House was opened to the public. The exhibition, which was on display in the Reading Room of the Library, recounted, by means of documents, Government Gazette notices and photos, the history of the library as from its inception in 1555 and included early catalogues, fine bindings and rare books from the library collection. The inauguration coincided with the date of the official inauguration of the then Malta Public Library on 4 June 1812. The Custodian's House today serves as new furnished offices for the Acquisition, Bibliography and Cataloguing Units.

CD about the National Library

During this year, the Department collaborated in the production of a **CD** about the National Library, sponsored by the Maltese Commission for UNESCO and produced by Alert Communications Ltd. This features a detailed history of the origins of the library and the building, its past librarians, its archives and collections as well as an interesting gallery of rare books and outstanding manuscripts and the Brocktorff watercolours. It is hoped that the CD will be a stimulus for researchers and the public in general to tap the unfathomable resources available at the National Library.

The CD was launched on 20th January 2004.

Web-site

During the year under review, the Libraries and Archives Department web-site was launched under the address www.libraries-archives.gov.mt. The site is divided into four sections - the National Library, the Central Public Library, the Gozo Public Library and the National Archives. Although the Gozo section only carries contact information, the other three feature details about the entity concerned – general information, history, collections, services and regulations. Judging by the number of e-mails

entering the Department's mailbox, it seems that the web-site has been a great success and is accessed regularly by both Maltese and foreigners alike. Most of the queries request information regarding books or manuscripts in the library collections. Others seek information regarding entry requirements and other regulations in view of a possible visit to the library for research purposes.

Participation in Conferences Abroad

The Pulman Policy Conference

The Conference entitled "Libraries, museums and archives learning from each other in e-Europe" was held in Tagus Park, Oeiras, Portugal between 13 – 14 March 2003. The Conference turned out to be a full and excited one as the organisers concentrated on the position of public libraries and their partners at the local level in e-Europe. The participants consisted of high-level politicians and key players from public libraries in Europe.

69th IFLA General Conference and Council

The 69th International Federation of Libraries Associations (IFLA) General Conference and Council was held in Berlin, Germany between 2nd and 8th August 2003. This was the first time that this biggest annual international conference of librarians was held under a new title, "World Library and International Congress". The theme of this year's conference was "Access Point Library: Media – Information – Culture" and it focussed on all aspects of a future-oriented library, its up-to-date media offerings and its creative and modern services. The subject aimed to enable us to demonstrate that libraries in all parts of the world fulfil their tasks as important centres for information provision in their communities and in the international network.

On Wednesday 6th August 2003 I attended and participated at the Conference of Directors of National Libraries held at the Reichstag, Berlin, Germany.

CENL Annual Meeting

The 17th annual meeting of the Conference for European National Librarians (CENL) was held in Vilnius, Lithuania between 25th to 26th September 2003. The CENL is an effective body for increasing and reinforcing the role of national libraries in Europe, in particular in respect of their responsibilities for maintaining the national cultural heritage and ensuring the accessibility of knowledge in that field.

National Experts' Meeting on Archives

A National Experts' Meeting on Archives was held in Brussels on Tuesday 14th October 2003. The Directors of the National Archives from the 15 Member states of the European Union and the 10 acceding countries met together in Brussels in a preliminary session to work on the preparation of an exhaustive report on the subject and orientations for increased future co-operation on archives at the European level. This report is to be sent by the Commission before mid 2004 to the European Council as requested by the Resolution of 6 May 2003.

Malta Book Fair 2003

In November the Department of Libraries and Archives in full co-operation with the National Book Council organised the 19th edition of the Malta Book Fair. As in previous years nearly 29,000 visited the Fair at the Naxxar Fair Grounds. An average of six thousand school children from state and private schools visited the Fair in organised parties.

Thirty-four exhibitors set up thirty-seven stands. Between them they offered a large variety of books with topics covering all subjects and thus the thousands of visitors had the opportunity to browse and purchase books according to their interests and tastes.

An exhibition of Posters was organised by the Department. It featured a wide selection of posters printed in Malta during the last forty years.

Publication of '*Giuoco d'Arme dei Sovrani e degli Stati d'Europa*'

In April 2004 the National Library of Malta published a facsimile of the 1725 original of the '*Giuoco d'Arme dei Sovrani e degli Stati d'Europa*'. The book consists of a card game involving the European States, among them Malta, existent in the 17th-18th centuries. For this reason we felt it would be very appropriate to publish the facsimile of this rare book to coincide with Malta's entry into the European Union on 1st May 2004. All work except for printing was done by the National Library's employees in the Restoration and Bindery Sections.

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