



MALTA
LIBRARIES



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

MALTA
LIBRARIES
ANNUAL
REPORT
2024

maltalibraries.gov.mt



MALTA
LIBRARIES

CONTENTS

42

PUBLIC LIBRARIES'
NETWORK

62

GOZO
LIBRARIES

70

NATIONAL
BIBLIOGRAPHIC
OFFICE

06

MISSION STATEMENT
& FUNCTIONS

88

ICTSU

08

FOREWORD FROM
THE CEO

94

OPERATIONS
DEPARTMENT

10

NATIONAL LIBRARY
OF MALTA

122

FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS

Malta Libraries

Annual report 2024 / Malta Libraries. - Valletta : Malta Libraries, 2025

128p : col ill.,charts, facsims, maps,ports. : 21cm

ISBN 978-99957-932-7-2 (print), 978-99957-932-8-9 (ebook)

1. Malta Libraries 2. Libraries-Malta-Statistics.
3. National Libraries-Malta-Statistics. 4. Public libraries-Malta-Statistics.
I. Title.

027.04585-dc2018ed.

National Bibliography of Malta Registration Number – **MT20240400**

MISSION STATEMENT

MALTA LIBRARIES ACT 2011

“

The mission of Malta Libraries is to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations, to maintain and develop the libraries regulated under the Malta Libraries Act, and to encourage reading for study, research, self-development and lifelong learning information and leisure purposes.

FUNCTIONS

As established by the Malta Libraries Act, the functions and responsibilities of Malta Libraries are:

- to continue to acquire, assemble, conserve for posterity, and make accessible to the public, the collection of the nation's documentary heritage and published current output, regardless of form or medium, to be found in the libraries;
- to continue to acquire, assemble, conserve for posterity, and make accessible to the public, the collection of the nation's documentary heritage and published current output, regardless of form or medium, to be found in the libraries;
- to assist Local Councils which run a public library to ensure that the library maintains high standards;
- to enhance the quality of life of the public by providing library reference and lending services and library material, in whatever form or medium, for education, self-development, lifelong learning and recreation purposes;
- to foster and strengthen reading habits and support literacy and other cultural activities and programmes for all age groups;
- to accept and acquire private records of significance by gift, purchase, bequest or deposit;
- explore innovative services, including information, communication and technology services, that can benefit patrons in accessing and using information;
- serve as the role model library system for other libraries in Malta;
- to perform such other functions as may from time to time be assigned to it by the Minister.

MALTA LIBRARIES ACT 2011

**CHERYL
FALZON**
NATIONAL
LIBRARIAN &
CEO



FOREWORD FROM THE CEO

The year 2024 was marked by significant transition, renewed energy, and a continued commitment to excellence across Malta Libraries. One of the most notable developments during the year was the retirement of Ms Maroma Camilleri, who had served with distinction as Deputy Librarian since 2016. Ms Camilleri's long and dedicated career within the entity left a profound impact—her deep knowledge of the Library's unique collections and her unwavering dedication earned her the respect and admiration of colleagues, researchers, and the wider academic community, both in Malta and internationally.

Succeeding Ms Camilleri in this key leadership position is Ms Michelle Buhagiar. With a solid background in curatorial practice and libraries, along with her professional experience and a close collaborative history with her predecessor, Ms Buhagiar brought continuity and fresh perspective to the role of Deputy Librarian.

Throughout 2024, the National Library continued to serve as a vital hub for academic research and cultural exploration. A total of 2,482 researchers made use of its services—a modest but welcome increase over the 2,187 recorded in 2023. This upward trend was mirrored in Reading Room activity, where item requests rose to 5,511 from 5,289 the previous year. Requests peaked during the summer months, with notable spikes in July (518 items) and August (523 items), largely driven by a significant increase in consultations of Library Manuscripts.

Public libraries also experienced continued growth and strategic development. Guided by a revised collection development policy designed to attract new members and respond more closely to user needs, investment in both print and digital resources was significantly enhanced. A key initiative during the year was the integration of Maltese fiction and non-fiction publications into the Libby App through Malta Libraries' aggregator agreement with

OverDrive, improving access to local literature through digital platforms.

Malta Libraries also maintained active engagement with local authors, purchasing multiple copies of their works and making them available across the network's branches. These efforts contributed to a notable rise in library usage, with public libraries registering 710,399 book loans in 2024—an increase of 24,930 over the previous year.

Meanwhile, libraries across Gozo experienced a period of dynamic growth and community engagement. From the National Library Gozo (NLG) and its branches to the Gozo Central Public Library (GCPL), institutions worked collaboratively to enhance services, safeguard cultural heritage, and foster lifelong learning. While spatial and infrastructure constraints—especially at NLG—remain a challenge, the library teams have met these with innovation, partnerships, and a steadfast focus on accessibility and inclusivity.

The National Bibliographic Office (NBO) remained proactive in its mandate to recover publications omitted from Legal Deposit. In 2024, a significant focus was placed on collecting annual feast publications issued by local band clubs, resulting in a large volume of incoming material. To manage this growth, the NBO initiated discussions with Malta Libraries' administration to secure approval for outsourcing storage to third-party facilities—an important step toward maintaining effective archival standards.

As we reflect on 2024, we do so with appreciation for the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our users, and the partnerships that continue to strengthen the value of libraries in Maltese society. With change came opportunity, and with growth came renewed purpose. We look forward to building on these achievements in the year ahead.

**MICHELLE
BUHAGIAR**
DEPUTY
LIBRARIAN,
NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF
MALTA



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

The year 2024 was a pivotal one for the National Library of Malta, marked by a significant transition brought about by the retirement of Ms Maroma Camilleri, who had served as Deputy Librarian since 2016, following many years of service within the same institution. Her contribution to the Library, and her knowledge of its unique collections - particularly its Archives - were widely recognised and appreciated by colleagues, researchers, and the broader academic community, both locally and internationally.

Ms Camilleri officially retired in July 2024. Ms Michelle Buhagiar, who had been serving as Manager Curatorial Affairs since 2018, applied for the vacant position and was eventually successful in getting the post.

The transition into the role proved challenging from the outset. First of all, a handover was not possible. Reviewing and understanding the extensive work archive left by Ms Camilleri - covering duties, responsibilities, ongoing initiatives, operations, and projects - was a demanding task in itself, separate from the actual execution of the role's core responsibilities. However, Ms Buhagiar's experience in various sectors of the Library, along with her frequent collaboration with Ms Camilleri, provided her with a solid grounding in many key areas of operation.

The strong perception that Ms Buhagiar was replacing Ms Camilleri had to be consistently addressed, as she emphasised that her appointment marked not a replacement, but the taking on of a new role as Deputy Librarian with a distinct approach and set of priorities.

Drawing on her background in heritage management and her central role in establishing the Curatorial Affairs Unit at the Library, Ms Buhagiar chose to approach the new position holistically. She opted to integrate curatorial functions with traditional library duties, assuming direct responsibility for both areas. In doing so, the Curatorial Affairs Unit was formally placed under her management. To clarify the scope and streamline the Unit's work, its focus was redefined: it would now concentrate on the needs of the Library building - particularly restoration and maintenance - as well as on research initiatives.

The successful implementation of this vision is heavily dependent on the recruitment of additional staff, which remains a critical need.

Given the nature of this transition, the Deputy Librarian's report for 2024 reflects a year of two distinct phases: the first half, from January to June, during which Ms Maroma Camilleri served as Deputy Librarian and Ms Michelle Buhagiar held the position of Manager Curatorial Affairs; and the second half, from July to December, during which Ms Buhagiar assumed the role of Deputy Librarian while retaining management of the Curatorial Affairs Unit.

READERS' SERVICES

The principal centre of activity within the National Library of Malta is the Reading Room, welcoming researchers and visitors throughout the year. Housing a historic collection, including books once belonging to the Knights of St John, the Reading Room is administered by three Senior Assistant Librarians who provide a professional and efficient service to patrons both onsite and remotely.

The Readers' Services Unit supports users conducting research in person or through digital means, such as email and social media. Access to the Reading Room is granted by appointment to ensure the orderly management of services. Staff responsibilities include registering users, guiding them to appropriate sources and finding aids, recommending titles for consultation, and efficiently addressing queries, both verbal and electronic.

In addition to assisting patrons, the Senior Assistant Librarians perform essential back-office tasks, such as the retrieval and shelving of library material throughout the Library building. They also liaise closely with the Deputy Librarian and coordinate with the Conservation and Digitization Units to ensure operational efficiency. They also process orders for digital images, which are edited and sent via WeTransfer, and handle payments for National Library publications and digital services.

The familiarity of the librarians with the Library's history and its holdings enables them to conduct specialized tours for students, school groups, tourist groups, and distinguished visitors.

Through the diligent work of the Readers' Services Unit, the National Library of Malta continues to uphold its commitment to providing an efficient, and professional service to all patrons.



REQUESTED ITEMS 2024

During 2024, the Library welcomed a total of 2,482 researchers, representing a slight increase over the 2,187 researchers recorded in 2023. The number of items requested in the Reading Room also rose, reaching 5,511 compared to 5,289 the previous year. Requests peaked during the summer months, with 518 items requested in July and 523 in August. This surge can be attributed in part to a notable rise in the consultation of Library Manuscripts, with 65 requests in July compared to 19 in July 2023. Additionally, requests for volumes from the Archives of the Order of Malta (AOM) doubled in August, increasing from 41 in 2023 to 82 in 2024. As in previous years, newspaper material remained the most frequently consulted, accounting for 2,812 requests. Consultation of Melitensia material continued to be significant, with 1,166 requests, followed by 892 requests for volumes from the Archives of the Order of Malta. Reading Room staff retrieved 439 Library Manuscripts and 63 volumes from the Adami Collection. Requests for volumes from the Archives of the Università remained stable when compared to 2023, with a total of 56 volumes consulted. Notably, the Treasury Record group saw an unprecedented 83 requests in 2024, more than double the number recorded in 2023.

REQUESTED ITEMS 2024

| | AOM | TREAS. | UNIV. | AD | LIBR. MSS | MELIT. | N/PAPERS | TOTAL |
|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Jan. | 26 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 19 | 78 | 292 | 423 |
| Feb. | 85 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 29 | 115 | 259 | 494 |
| Mar. | 134 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 62 | 77 | 212 | 493 |
| April | 44 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 22 | 77 | 131 | 287 |
| May | 59 | 4 | 2 | 21 | 75 | 97 | 207 | 465 |
| June | 45 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 57 | 119 | 148 | 379 |
| July | 106 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 65 | 98 | 243 | 518 |
| Aug. | 82 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 34 | 104 | 295 | 523 |
| Sept. | 103 | 55 | 6 | 4 | 22 | 60 | 221 | 471 |
| Oct. | 63 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 19 | 92 | 323 | 507 |
| Nov. | 73 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 18 | 173 | 206 | 476 |
| Dec. | 72 | 2 | 29 | 4 | 17 | 76 | 275 | 475 |
| TOTAL | 892 | 83 | 56 | 63 | 439 | 1166 | 2812 | 5511 |

QUERIES 2024

Another important function of the Reader Services Unit is to assist individuals who wish to conduct research remotely by sending written requests via email or through the National Library’s social media platforms, as well as by telephone. Each year, the Unit handles hundreds of queries, covering a wide range of areas.

In 2024, most queries originated from Malta, with researchers primarily requesting information from local newspapers and the Library Manuscript collection. Queries from abroad were mainly received from Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Requests from Italy and France frequently focused on tracing family ancestors who were Knights of the Order of St John, requiring detailed research in primary sources.

Other researchers, often Maltese emigrants residing in Australia, the UK, and the US, inquired about Maltese traditions, family history, or incidents reported in Maltese newspapers. A number of new scholars and students also sought to consult rare items from the Library’s collections, particularly the Archives of the Order of Malta. Many of these were MA or PhD students conducting research for their theses. In line with the National Library’s policy, students were required to submit letters of recommendation from their universities or recognised academic institutions, while established scholars provided their CVs.



DIGITISED IMAGES

In 2024, the Digitisation Studio continued its work on scanning a wide range of items from the National Library's collections, including books, manuscripts, newspapers, and archive volumes. Over the year, a total of 24,118 new images were captured in response to readers' requests, a figure closely aligned with the 26,921 images produced in the previous year. These figures indicate a stable demand for digital images, particularly when compared to the average of approximately 16,500 images per year recorded over the preceding three years. In addition to fulfilling requests from researchers, the Studio also digitised a further 88,209 items from the Library's collections. These were selected primarily for their conservation needs, uniqueness, or rarity, as well as for internal use.

| DIGITISED IMAGES 2024 | |
|---|----------------|
| Researchers' Requests | |
| January | 3745 |
| February | 1836 |
| March | 1476 |
| April | 1245 |
| May | 4353 |
| June | 709 |
| July | 1383 |
| August | 1762 |
| September | 1355 |
| October | 2311 |
| November | 1825 |
| December | 2118 |
| Total | 24,118 |
| Additional Images | 88,209 |
| Grand Total Of All Digitised And Edited Images | 112,327 |

ACQUISITIONS

An important mission of the National Library is the development of its collection, a process through which the Library's holdings are curated to meet the information needs of its users. Since the establishment of the National Bibliographic Office in September 2015, the collection and preservation of Legal Deposit copies have no longer been carried out by the National Library. Nevertheless, the Library continues to purchase second copies of most local publications, making these available for consultation by patrons.

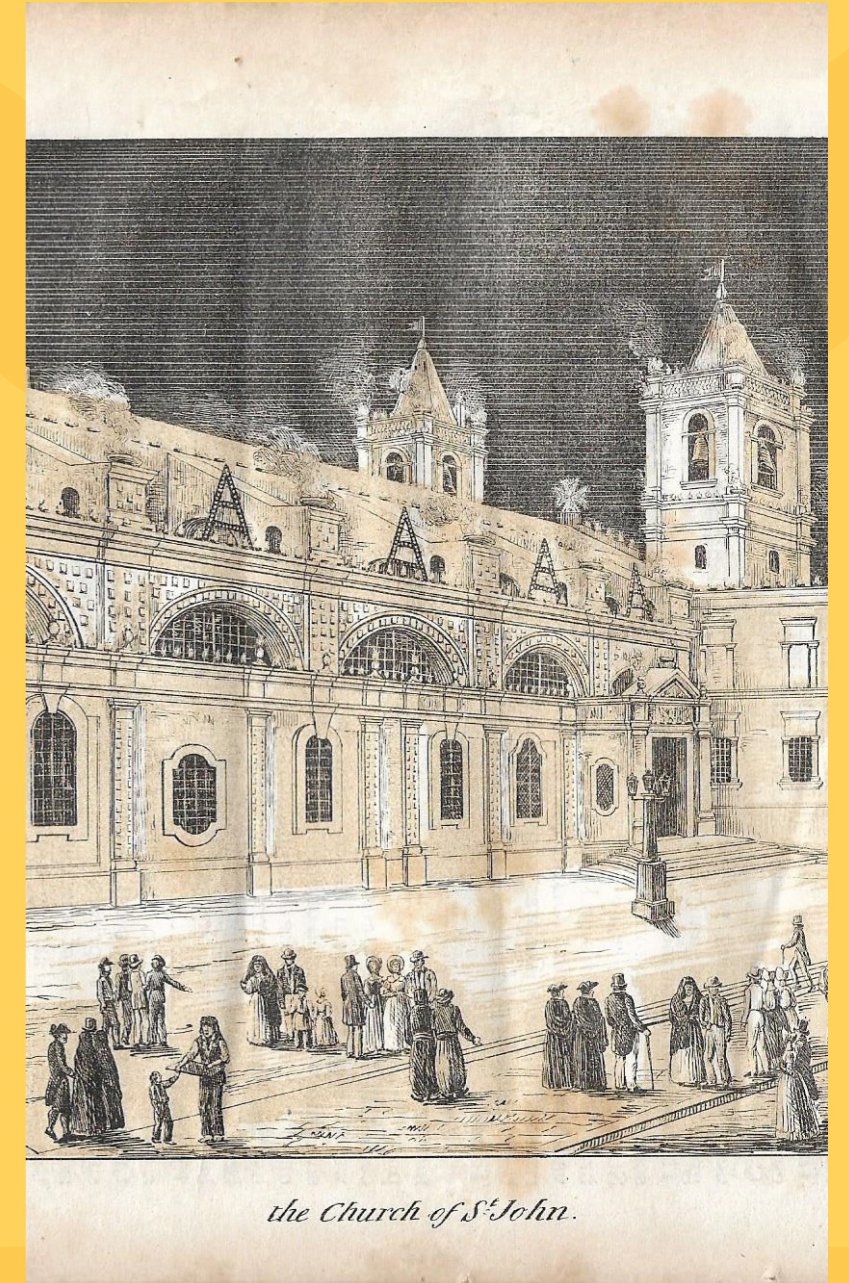
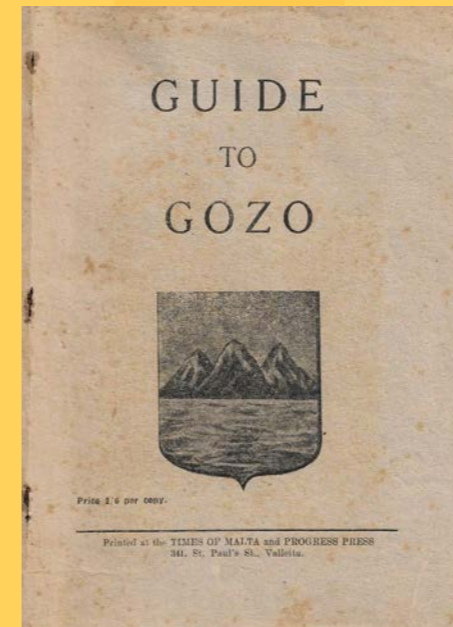
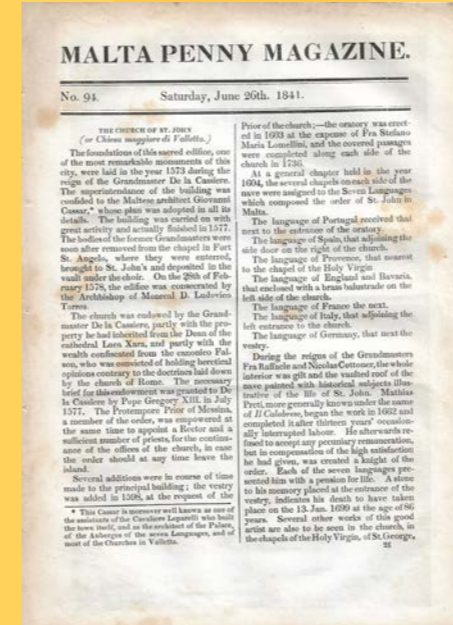
During the year under review, a total of 251 local publications were acquired at a cost of €6,033.76. In addition, 27 books either authored by Maltese nationals or focused on Maltese-related themes, though published abroad, were purchased to further enrich the Melitensia collection. It is important to note that such publications are not covered by the Legal Deposit requirements stipulated in the Malta Libraries Act. Furthermore, subscriptions to foreign journals were maintained throughout the year. The total expenditure on foreign publications, including these subscriptions, amounted to €2,984.00.

Acquiring rare and valuable items remains a key strategy for enriching the National Collection. The National Library actively collaborates with booksellers and antique dealers, both locally and internationally, to source rare books and other unique materials related to Malta and its history.

During the reporting period, 55 individual Melitensia items and rare books, along with 3 sets of items, were purchased from local private sources at a total cost of €22,515.

Among the most significant of such acquisitions were:

- Two sets of **Ordinance Survey Maps** dating from 1895;
- A complete and extremely rare set of the **Malta Penny Magazine** (1839–1941);
- A set of 19th- and early 20th Century proceedings of the **Società Economico-Agraria di Malta**;
- **A Guide to Gozo** published in 1937, containing over 100 early-20th Century photographs of Gozo;
- A collection of 20 rare issues of the **Archivio Storico di Malta**.



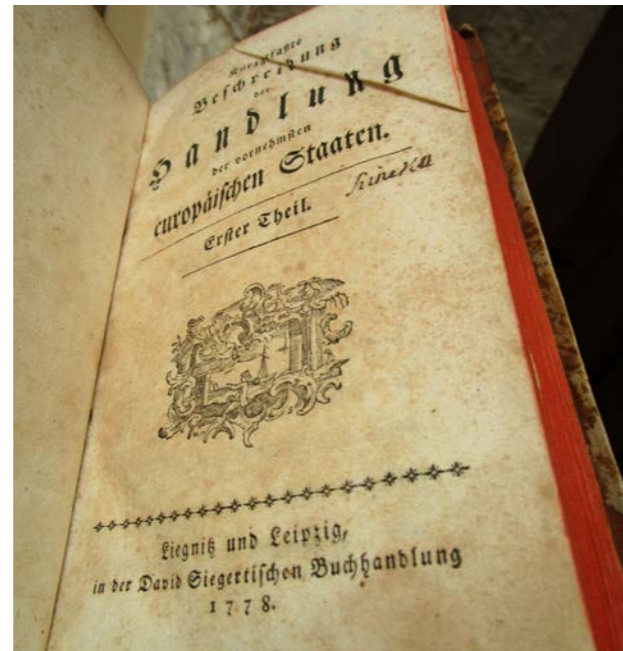
The most noteworthy local acquisition of the year was made from the collection of Dr Albert Ganado, consisting of an atlas in Arabic, drawn and lithographed by Federico Brocktorff: *Atlas, ay majmu` kharitat rasm al-ard...* Its full title in English is 'Atlas or a collection of maps, drawings of the earth comprising: first Eastern half of the globe, second Western half of the globe, third Europe, fourth Asia and Australia, fifth Africa, sixth America, seventh the Land of Egypt, eighth the Land of Shām, and offers it in a valued printing for the benefit of schools: Malta 1833'. This atlas, published by the Church Missionary Society Press was the first Arabic atlas to be published. The copy acquired by the National Library for the sum of €30,000 is the now unobtainable first edition; Besides the one from Dr Ganado's collection, the only other known copy is held at the British Museum.

In addition to the significant Melitensia items acquired through local sources, a number of noteworthy acquisitions were made through purchases at foreign auctions, further enriching the National Library's holdings. These included:

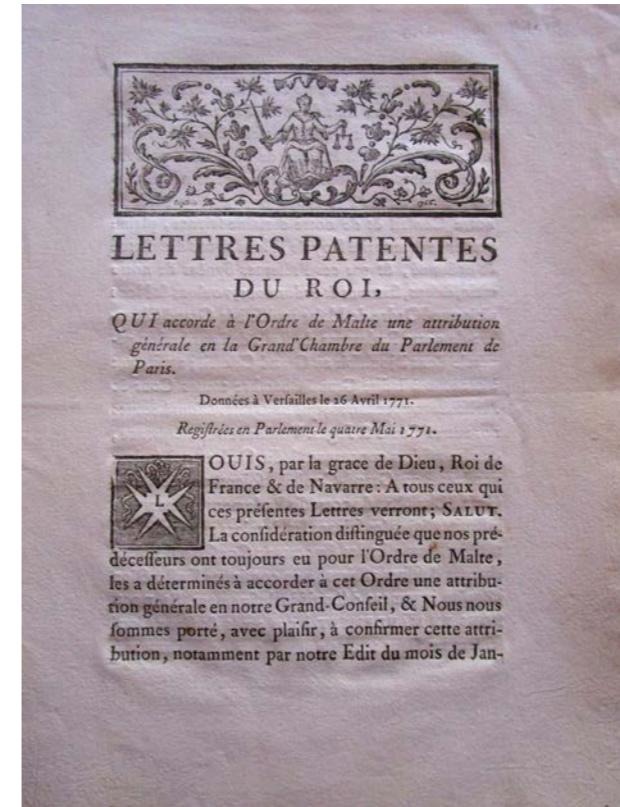
- **Celio Agostino Curione, *Sarracenicæ historiae libri III* (Basel: Ioannem Oporinum, 1567)**
This work offers a concise history of the Saracens, Turks, Egyptian Sultans, Mamluks, Tartars, and Persians over a span of seven hundred years. It includes a brief account of the Great Siege of Malta of 1565. It was purchased from Pieter Kiefer Buch und Kunstauktionen, Pforzheim, Germany, for €1,475 (including buyer's premium, shipping, and tax).



- **François Emmanuel Guignard, Comte de Saint Priest, *Malte par un voyageur Français* (1791)**
Comprising two parts in one volume, this travel guide contains an engraved dedication leaf, two folding maps, and 24 plates. It provides insights into Malta's significance during the 'Grand Tour' period, making it an important resource for understanding Malta's place in European cultural itineraries. It was purchased from Pieter Kiefer Buch und Kunstauktionen, Pforzheim, Germany, for €253 (including buyer's premium, shipping, and tax)
- **Carl August von Struensee and Johann Christian Sinapius, *Kurzgefaßte Beschreibung der Handlung der vornehmsten europäischen Staaten, Vol. 1* (Leipzig, 1778)**
This book offers descriptions of prominent European countries, including Malta. It was acquired from Pieter Kiefer Buch und Kunstauktionen, Pforzheim, Germany, for €240 (including buyer's premium, shipping, and tax).



- ***Lettres Patentes du Roi* (Versailles, 26 April 1771)**
This royal document grants the Order of Malta a general attribution in the Grand Chamber of the Parliament of Paris during the reign of Louis XV. Printed by André François le Breton, notable as one of the four publishers of Diderot's Encyclopédie, it highlights the privileged relationship between the Order of Malta and the French monarchy. The document was purchased from Antiquariato Librario Bado e Mart di Bado R, Padova, Italy, for €575 (including buyer's premium and shipping costs).

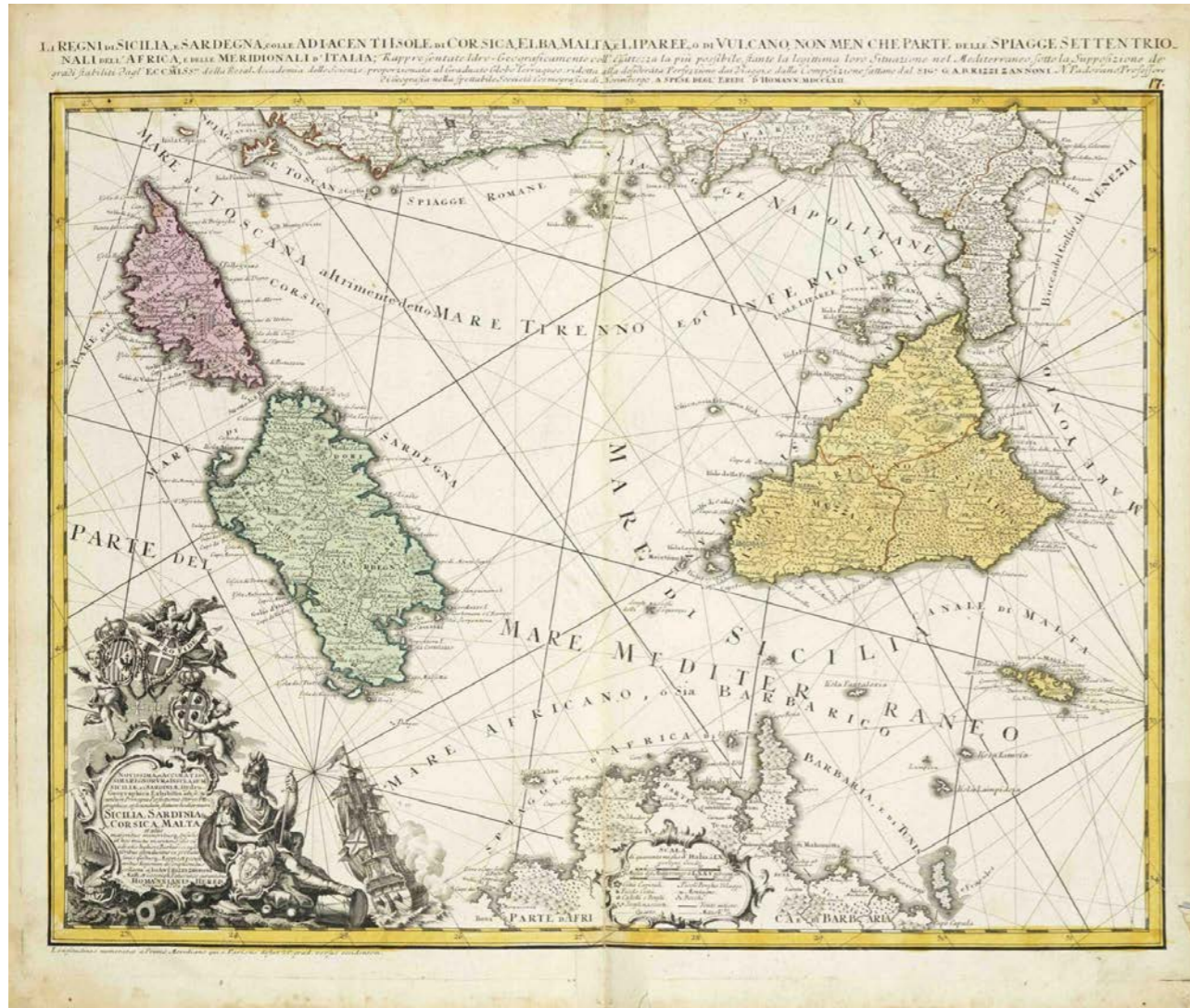


- **Johann Baptist Homann, *Regnorum Siciliae et Sardiniae nec non Melitae seu Maltae Insula cum adjectis Italiae, et Africae Litoribus Nova Tabula* (Nuremberg, 1716)**

A highly decorative map of Sicily, Sardinia, and Malta, featuring an allegorical cartouche, compass rose, depictions of a Knight of St John, and inset plans of Catania (with Mount Etna erupting) and Valletta's harbours. It was acquired from the Potomack Company, Virginia, US, for €612.65 (including buyer's premium and shipping).



- **G.A.B. Rizzi Zannoni, *Li Regni di Sicilia e Sardegna colle Adiacenti Isole di Corsica, Elba, Malta e Liparee* (1762)**
Published by the Homann Heirs (the printing press established by Johann Baptist Homann), this is one of the finest maps of southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and surrounding areas, including Malta. It features an elaborate title cartouche with armorial shields and mythological imagery. It was purchased from Historia Auktionshaus GmbH & Co, Berlin, Germany, for €612 (including buyer's premium, shipping, and tax).



- **Petrus Bertius, *Descriptio Melitae* (c. 1616)**

A rare map of Malta by the renowned Flemish geographer and cartographer, Petrus Bertius, enriching the National Library's map collection. It was purchased from Pieter Kiefer Buch und Kunstauktionen, Pforzheim, Germany, for €188 (including buyer's premium, shipping, and tax).

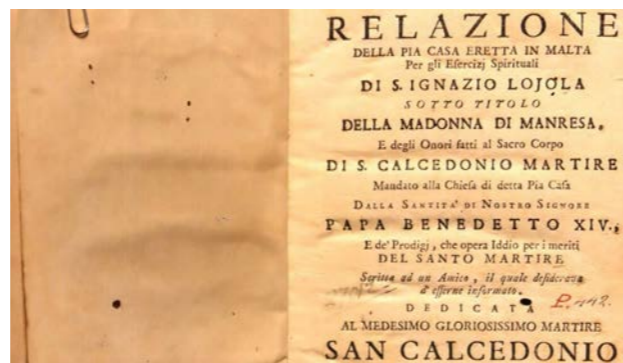
ACQUISITIONS 2024

| ITEM | NUMBER | COST |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| Local Publications | 251 | €6,033.76 |
| Foreign Publications | 27 + Subscriptions | €2,984.00 |
| Melitensia and rare books from private sources | 55 + 3 sets of items | €22,515 |
| Atlas from Dr Albert Ganado's collection | 1 | €30,000 |
| Items from foreign auctions and antiquarians | 7 | €3,687.26 |
| Total | | €65,220.02 |

RETRIEVAL OF MATERIAL

During 2024, two items formerly belonging to the National Collection that were identified as being for sale by private sources, were retrieved:

- A lithograph of Bishop Francesco Buttigieg, showing the Library's official stamp, which appeared for sale on Ebay. This lithograph originally belonged to a mid-19th Century book held at the National Library (Gozo), to where it was sent following retrieval.
- A copy of St Ignatius of Loyola's *Relazione della pia casa eretta in Malta per gli esercizi spirituali di S. Ignazio Lojola sotto titolo della Madonna di Manresa: e degli onori fatti al sacro corpo di S. Calcedonio martire mandato alla chiesa di detta Pia Casa dalla santità di nostro signore Papa Benedetto XIV e de' prodigi, che opera iddio per i meriti del santo martire scritta ad un amico, il quale desiderava d'efferne informato dedicata al medesimo gloriosissimo martire San Calcedonio primario protettore di quell'Opera Pia*, published in Naples in 1753. This item, also bearing the Library's stamp, was successfully retrieved from a local auction house.



DONATIONS

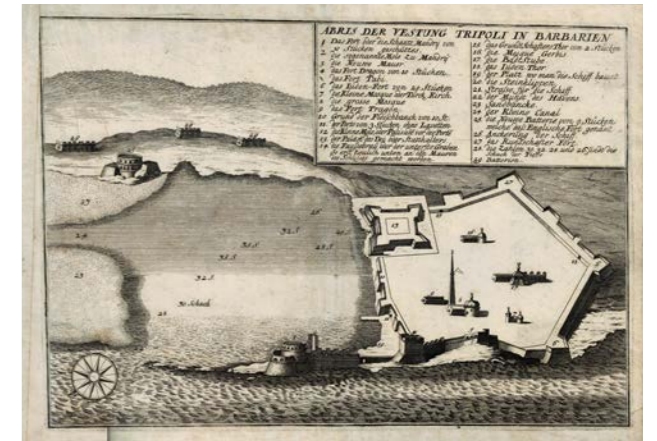
During the year under review, the National Library received several donations, notably comprising recent publications by foreign authors. In addition to these, the Library was also presented with two donations by Maltese contributors.

Mr Simon Ellul Sullivan, on behalf of the family of Dr Albert Ganado, donated a total of 21 maps from Dr Ganado's personal collection. Although these maps primarily depict foreign countries, many of them maintain a connection to Malta through geographic or historical relevance, such as depictions of Italy, Sicily, Lepanto, Rhodes, and the Near East. These valuable additions further enriched the Library's Maps and Plans Collection. The following is a list of the donated maps, including the author, title, and date of publication:

- Domenico Zenoi, *La Città di Lepanto*, 1572
- Johann Bussemacher, *Italia*, 1596
- Jodocus Hondius, *Peregrinatio Pauli*, 1620
- Joseph Furtenbach, *Architectura Navalis – Lepanto*, 1629
- Alain Manesson Mallet, *Isle de Madagascar*, 1685
- Nicolas De Fer, *Plan de Tripoly en Barbarie*, 1690
- Mattheus Merian, *Abris der Vestung Tripoli in Barbarien*, 1691
- Vincenzo Coronelli, *Isola di Gerbi*, 1697
- Claude-August De Berey, *Plan de Rhodes*, 1720
- Pieter Van der Aa, *Plan de Tripoly en Barbarie*, 1725
- Robert de Vaugondy, *Carte de L'Ancien Continent*, 1749
- Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, *Plan de la Rade et Ville de Tripoli*, 1764
- D. Fenning & J. Collyer, *Naples and Sicily*, 1765
- Thomas Stackhouse, *A Map shewing the general Dispersion and settling of the Nations*, 1780
- Rigobert Bonne, *Judæa Seu Duodecim Tribus Israelis*, 1787
- D. Macpherson, *Judea et Regiones Finitimæ / Terra Filiorum Israelis cum Terra Philistæorum, parte Phœnices*, 1809
- J. & C. Walker, *Corsica and Sardinia*, 1829
- Joshua Archer, *Diocese of Gibraltar*, 1842
- J. Geisendorfer, *États Successifs de La Palestine*, mid-

19th Century

- Jules Blouzet, *Vue de Sébastopol*, second half of the 19th Century
- Thomas Cook Ltd, *Map of Central Europe*, 1924



Another notable donation was made by Dr George Azzopardi and comprised a collection of 19th Century artworks. This included two watercolours depicting traditional figures: a Calabrian bagpiper and a female figure holding a vine branch. Of particular interest was a set of six colour prints portraying individuals in traditional costumes, all mounted on cardboard. Most bear handwritten titles suggesting that the figures are Maltese, including: *A Maltese Wood Cutter*, *A Maltese Charcoal Carrier*, two showing *A Maltese Peasant*, *A Maltese Lady*, and two images titled *A Maltese Lady in Full Dress*. Also attached to the cardboards were two engravings: one depicting a *May Queen*, and the other of religious significance titled *The Temptation on the Mount*. These artworks were acquired through a foreign auction and generously donated to the National Library.



A donation was received from Mr and Ms Dennis and Sandra Sheal of the United Kingdom, consisting of a historical pamphlet entitled *The Solemn Entry of His Grace*

Mgr. Michael Gonzi, Archbishop of Malta into the Cathedral Church of the City of Notabile, Malta. The pamphlet outlines the programme of celebrations held in 1944 to mark the consecration of Sir Michael Gonzi as the first Archbishop of Malta. Mr and Ms Sheal acquired the item from an antique shop in Portsmouth and made a dedicated visit to the National Library to present the donation in person.

As part of the celebrations marking the 55th Anniversary of the British Residents' Association, an exhibition featuring the Association's magazine was organised at the National Library. In conjunction with this event, the British Residents' Association donated a complete set of magazine issues, spanning from January 1972 to July 2008, amounting to a total of 281 issues.

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

In 2024, the National Library launched a large-scale and strategically important Project focused on the movement and organisation of numerous books and other library materials. This initiative forms part of a wider, ongoing effort to assess the full extent of the Library's holdings - particularly those that had been relocated over the years without proper documentation - and serves as a foundational stock-taking exercise. This is with the aim of safeguarding the Library's holdings, ensuring accessibility, and addressing long-standing challenges related to limited space and structural problems in parts of the Library building.

The first phase of this operation involved identifying and retrieving several misplaced books originally belonging to the Reading Room but found scattered across various halls and rooms within the premises. These volumes were thoroughly cleaned and restored to their correct locations, thereby helping to re-establish the integrity and coherence of the Library's historic Reading Room.

A more urgent and logistically complex aspect of the Project concerns the transfer of thousands of volumes to external

storage facilities. This measure has become essential due to acute space shortages, floor load concerns, and the need to comply with health and safety regulations. The relocation was organised into three distinct phases: the first prioritised volumes posing immediate health and safety hazards; the second addressed books stored haphazardly in unlabelled cardboard boxes; and the third targeted foreign publications with no direct relevance to Malta, which have seen little or no use.

During the year under review, significant preparatory work was undertaken to support this transfer. This included the careful compilation of detailed lists and inventories, particularly for materials in the second phase, which had previously been undocumented. The contribution of foreign interns was instrumental in this process, as they played a key role in drawing up the required inventories and lists in anticipation of the eventual move to off-site facilities.

Concurrently, progress was made in the management of modern publications of which the National Library holds extra copies, apart from the Legal Deposit versions stored elsewhere within Malta Libraries premises. This involved assigning permanent shelf locations for hundreds of these volumes within the National Library itself, ensuring they are properly stored and easily accessible. Each newly located item was also updated in the online catalogue, thus enhancing public access and resource visibility.

These coordinated efforts reflect the National Library's commitment to the proper organisation of its holdings, to their responsible maintenance, to space management, and ultimately to the long-term preservation of Malta's documentary heritage.



CONSERVATION UNIT

The preservation and conservation of library holdings remain a core priority for the National Library, particularly in view of the rarity and delicate condition of many items in the collection. The Library's Conservation Unit is committed to preventive conservation practices and strives to stay up to date with the latest techniques in the field.

During the year under review, the services of SalvArti, a professional conservation company, were once again engaged to carry out the disinfestation Project in the Library's reference sections. The treatment employed was anoxia, a highly effective pest control method that is both safe and non-damaging to books. As part of this initiative, approximately 187 metres of books were sent for disinfestation, while the associated wooden shelving was thoroughly cleaned and fumigated.

In parallel with this Project, the Conservation Unit continued with its regular conservation tasks. Throughout the year, 88 archival manuscripts and Melitensia items were repaired and/or rebound. Additionally, staff bound 94 volumes of daily newspapers and restored a further 33 older volumes. To support long-term preservation, 23 custom-made preservation boxes were constructed for artefacts. A total of 399 periodicals and Melitensia publications were bound in hardback, and 206 Miscellanea items were repaired and newly bound. Conservation efforts extended to flat works as well, with 38 maps and plans cleaned and mounted.

The Conservation Unit also played a key role in supporting exhibitions and public engagement activities held at the National Library. In the early part of the year, staff assisted two artists in the production of their works and the mounting of their exhibitions as part of *maltabiennale.art 2024*, launched in March. In April, the Unit mounted the annual *Mixjet il-Malti* exhibition and coordinated related activities. In June, staff mounted the *British Residents Association Magazine* exhibition. Another notable exhibition was *Cartographia: Map Treasures of the National Library of Malta* in October, where the team was actively involved in both design and installation. In addition, the Unit mounted 13 displays of library material to accompany the Library's annual public lecture series.

The Conservation Unit also contributed to educational initiatives by hosting three Erasmus students, providing them with training in basic bookbinding and best practices in conservation. Staff further supported the Library through a range of ancillary tasks, including assisting with the reorganisation of furniture in the Reading Room, transporting materials to SalvArti Ltd. for treatment, and participating in the substantial relocation of library material as part of ongoing logistical improvements.

CONSERVATION UNIT 2024

BINDING OF 399 MELITENSIA BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

REPAIR AND REBINDING OF 88 MELITENSIA BOOKS

NEW BINDING OF 94 VOLUMES OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS

REPAIR AND REBINDING OF 33 VOLUMES OF OLD DAILY NEWSPAPERS

MANUFACTURING OF 23 CUSTOMISED PRESERVATION ACID-FREE BOXES

CLEANING AND MOUNTING OF 38 MAPS AND PLANS

REPAIRS AND NEW BINDING OF 206 MISCELLANEA ITEMS

CLEANING, FUMIGATION OF BOOKS AND DISINFESTATION OF 187 METRES OF WOODEN SHELVING

MOUNTING OF 'CARTOGRAPHIA: MAP TREASURES OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA' EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

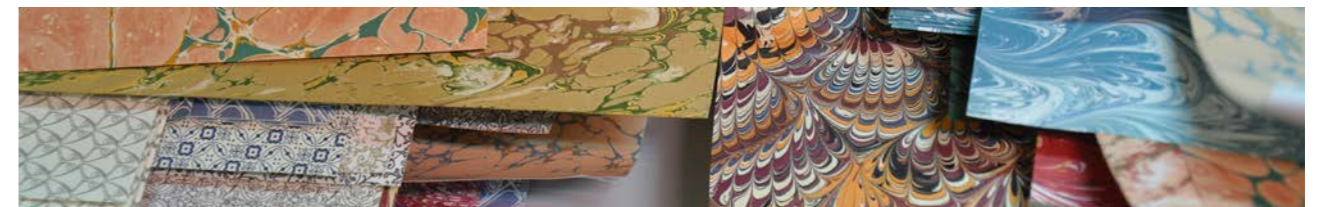
MOUNTING OF 13 DISPLAYS OF LIBRARY MATERIAL ACCOMPANYING PUBLIC LECTURES

MOUNTING OF 'MIXJET IL-MALTI' EXHIBITION AND CONDUCTING VISITS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE EVENT

MOUNTING OF THE BRITISH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

ASSISTING TWO ARTISTS AND MOUNTING THEIR RESPECTIVE EXHIBITIONS AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA DURING THE 'MALTABIENNALE.ART 2024'

TRAINING AND SUPERVISING THREE ERASMUS STUDENTS IN THE TECHNIQUES OF BOOK CLEANING, BINDING AND REPAIR



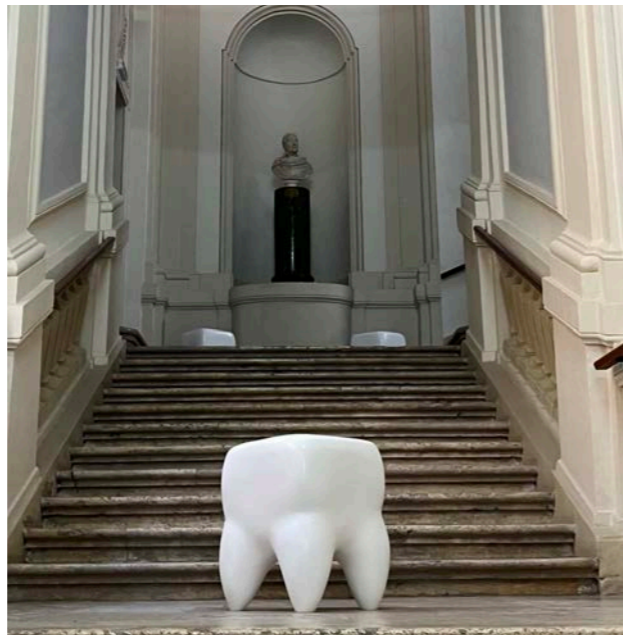


EXHIBITIONS

The year 2024 opened with the exhibition *In the Footsteps of the Hospitallers: 900 Years of Chivalry, Faith and Charity*, curated by Maroma Camilleri and inaugurated in December 2023. Featuring documents, books, and artefacts from the Library's collections and private loans, it traced the history of the Knights of Malta from their origins in Jerusalem through their various headquarters. Focusing on the Order's history, the exhibition also highlighted its dual mission of defending the Catholic faith and aiding the vulnerable, while also showcasing the Order's ongoing humanitarian work worldwide.



Between 13 March and 31 May 2024, the National Library hosted two artistic exhibitions as part of *maltabiennale.art 2024*. These installations formed part of the *Matri-archive of the Mediterranean* thematic section and featured Sandra Zaffarese's exhibition *By a Lady* and Madeleine Fenwick's *Granny's Giant Teeth* respectively.



In April, during Libraries Week, the annual exhibition *Mixjet il-Malti – Minn Caxaru sa Aquilina* was organised in collaboration with the Maltese Section of the Curriculum Department. The exhibition displayed original manuscripts, journals, and publications that have contributed to the growth and development of the Maltese language over the centuries. It was visited by students from various colleges across Malta and Gozo as part of their preparation for the SEC examinations. In addition to viewing the exhibition, students also attended informative sessions held by the Library's Conservation Unit.



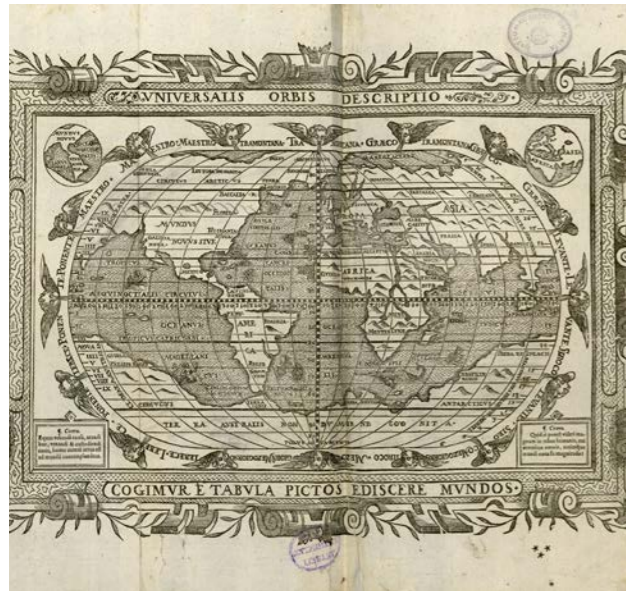
From 15 to 19 May, the National Library participated in the *Public Sector EXPO 2024* at the Malta Libraries stand. The Library contributed a live demonstration of bookbinding techniques, accompanied by a small exhibition of tools used in the process.



Between 11 to 21 June, an exhibition organised by the **British Residents' Association** in conjunction with the National Library was set up as part of the celebrations marking the Association's 55th Anniversary. The exhibition showcased exemplars of the Association's historical issues of the magazine, highlighting an array of its aspects including the changing front covers from the 1970s all the way to 2008, interesting articles, stories, poetry, and advertisements over the years. A number of photographs highlighting various occasions of the B.R.A. were also displayed. As part of the event, the British Residents' Association donated a complete set of magazine issues from January 1972 to July 2008, amounting to a total of 281 issues.



From 5 October to 16 November, an outstanding exhibition of maps titled **Cartographia: Map Treasures of the National Library of Malta** was organised by the National Library of Malta in collaboration with the Malta Map Society as part of the activities held on the occasion of the latter's hosting of the *41st IMCoS Malta International Symposium*. The exhibition featured a selection of valuable cartographic treasures from the National Collection, including a number of items exhibited for the first time, reflecting the richness of the Library's holdings. Among the highlights were several *Lafreiri atlases*, the unique *Antonio Saliba Map of the World*, the *Cavalleris' map of the Battle of Lepanto*, the *Arcano del Mare* by Robert Dudley, the rare Spanish edition of the *Atlas Maior* by Johannes Bleau, and the *Perez d'Aleccio and Lucini albums of the 1565 Great Siege maps*. One of the featured treasures was a rare copy of the *Kitab-Cihannüma (The Book of the Cosmos)* by *Katip Çelebi*, containing 13 astronomical and 26 geographical maps. A good section of the exhibition was dedicated to Maltese cartographers, featuring the oldest map by a Maltese cartographer, Johannes Myritius (or Giovanni Miriti), titled *Universalis Orbis Descriptio* found in the book *Opusculum geographicum rarum...*, published in Ingolstadt, Germany in 1590.



LOANS

The National Library of Malta collaborated with local entities by providing items from its collections on temporary loan for public exhibitions. Notably, a number of historical documents were lent to Heritage Malta for two exhibitions: *Betrayal and Vengeance: The Slaves' Conspiracy of 1749 in 19 Historical Drawings*, held at the Inquisitor's Palace in Birgu, and *The Republic of Malta: The First 50 Years, 1974–2024*, held at the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta.

In addition, several plans and maps were loaned to the Malta Map Society for the exhibition *British Maps of Malta*, which was hosted at MUŻA as part of the programme of events marking the Society's organisation of the *41st IMCoS Malta International Symposium*.

PROJECTS AND COLLABORATIONS

A collaborative Project was continued with the Embassy of Spain, in partnership with Bank of Valletta (BOV), MAPFRE, Heritage Malta, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, focusing on the historic **Deed of Donation** of the Maltese Islands. This significant document, signed by Emperor Charles V in 1530, represents the formal cession of Malta to the Order of Saint John and is a cornerstone of Maltese history. The Project successfully achieved its first milestone:

the production and installation of a museum-standard display showcase for the document. This important development was marked by two special events held at the National Library of Malta. The first was an official unveiling of the new showcase, presided over by the Hon. Minister Owen Bonnici, Minister for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government. The second was a cultural event, a musical concert entitled *Music at the Court of Charles V*, performed by the renowned Spanish ensemble *Cantoría*.



The **Incunabula in Malta Project** progressed steadily throughout the year. This initiative aims to identify and comprehensively catalogue all known incunabula in Malta, with the ultimate goal of publishing the first-ever catalogue of incunabula held in Maltese public, ecclesiastical, and private collections. The National Library of Malta collaborated closely with Dr Anna Scala, who represented the Project Team comprising both Maltese and Italian scholars. The Maltese contingent includes Prof. William Zammit from the University of Malta's Department of Library, Information and Archive Sciences, and Krystle Farrugia, Principal Curator at MUŻA and PhD candidate at the University of London's School of Advanced Study. The Italian contributors include Dr Anna Scala, Prof Marco Palma, and Dr Rosalia Claudia Giordano. By 2024, the Italian-language text of the catalogue was completed. Malta Libraries played a significant role in supporting the Project by fully sponsoring the translation of the text from Italian to English, carried out by a British expert. To formalise this contribution, two agreements were prepared and signed between Malta Libraries and the Project Team's representative, Dr Anna Scala.



In 2024, the National Library launched a new Project focused on **the restoration of a portrait series** housed in the Reading Room, featuring former directors and benefactors of the Library. This initiative is being carried out in collaboration with Heritage Malta, with the restoration work undertaken by the Paintings & Polychrome Sculpture Conservation Department within the entity's Conservation Division. During the year, two portraits in the series, those of Dom Mauro Inguanez and Justus Alvarez, were successfully restored and returned to the National Library. Additionally, two further portraits, depicting Count D. Giovanni Messina and Magistrate Edgar Parnis, were transferred to Heritage Malta's Conservation Division to undergo restoration.



On 3 December, an agreement was signed between Malta Libraries and the University of Malta at the National Library.

This agreement is for a Project of collaboration between the two entities about a manuscript of an unpublished **Maltese-English and English-Maltese dictionary** by Salvatore Mamo, compiled over a century ago, rediscovered by Dr Steve Borg, Senior Manager at the National Bibliographic Office of Malta Libraries. Under this agreement, a team from the Department of Maltese within the Faculty of Arts, led by Mr Dwayne Ellul and including graduates Javier Degiorgio and Maria Simiana, will study, transcribe, and prepare the dictionary for co-publication with Malta Libraries.



In 2024, the National Library of Malta initiated a Project for the production of a **360° Virtual Reality (VR) experience** aimed at enhancing public engagement with the institution. The production is being carried out by Heritage Malta's Digitisation and Digital Curation Department (Digiarc). The National Library played a key role in the development of the Project, particularly in the writing of the film script and in the provision of hundreds of images from its collections, many of which will be featured in the final VR experience.



The collaboration between the National Library of Malta and the **Malta Study Center of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML)** continued successfully in 2024, as part of the ongoing Project *France and Malta in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1815*, which was launched in 2018. The Project's objective is to digitise and catalogue records from 1775 to 1815 held in various European archives, creating a unified digital resource for the study of Malta during the Age of Revolution. A dedicated digitisation studio was established within the premises of the National Library to support this initiative. Materials selected for digitisation from the National Library include sections of the Archives of the Order of Malta related to France, as well as the entire Correspondence series. The digitised content is uploaded by the Malta Study Center to the online platform vHMML.org, in accordance with an agreement signed between Malta Libraries and the Malta Study Center in 2021. These resources are now publicly accessible for research and consultation. Additionally, discussions were held with the Malta Study Center to explore the possibility of expanding the Project to include further archival material beyond the original scope.



In 2024, the National Library of Malta continued its collaboration with **E-RIHS (European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science)**, a European initiative supporting research in heritage interpretation, preservation, documentation, and management. E-RIHS aims to provide integrated access to expertise, data, and technologies through a standardized framework, bringing together Europe's leading heritage science facilities under a unified organisation with a strong global presence.



The Library also sustained its involvement in **NARCH, the National Research Agenda for Cultural Heritage**, which aligns with and supports the objectives of E-RIHS. NARCH’s mission is to foster high-quality and innovative scientific research in cultural heritage, improve the mapping and understanding of heritage assets and their conservation needs, enhance access to archives and databases, and support the creation of innovative heritage experiences and services.

As part of an initiative led by Gabriel Farrugia and Matthias Ebejer, the National Library contributed to the establishment of a Melitensia collection at the **European University Institute (EUI) Library**. This contribution consisted of a donation of monographs focusing on Malta’s political and social history, offering valuable resources for researchers examining the development of a Mediterranean island-state from its 18th Century foundations to modern interpretations of nationalism and post-colonial identity.

Collaboration with **iVision Malta** continued in 2024 with the production of the television series **Kitbiet Minsija**, for which the National Library made a wide range of library material available to the production team for research and filming purposes. In addition, collaboration was extended to support a new series entitled *L-Arkivju tal-Ordni ta’ San Ġwann*. For this production, the Library provided access to extensive archival resources from the Archives of the Order of St John, playing a key role in making these historical documents more accessible to the public and enhancing public awareness of Malta’s documentary heritage.

Additionally, throughout the year, the National Library maintained its representation on the **National Archives Council** and continued its membership in the **Malta Map Society**, contributing to broader national efforts in heritage preservation and historical research.

STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

In 2024, the National Library of Malta continued to provide valuable opportunities for both local and international interns. A steady intake of foreign interns, along with one Maltese intern, made significant contributions within the Digitisation Studio and the Conservation Unit, assisting in various preservation-related tasks. Additional support was also provided in the Office of the Deputy Librarian, particularly in the area of Collections Management.

INTERNS 2024

| NAME | NATIONALITY | INSTITUTION / PROGRAMME | AREA OF WORK |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|---|
| Bahovic, Benjamin | German | Erasmus | Reading Room, Digitisation and Conservation |
| Boichon, Maeva | French | CNED AGOrA programme | Digitisation and Conservation |
| Borg Montesin, Xavier | Maltese | CRS | Digitisation and Conservation |
| Burrichter, Tatjana | German | LaVia-project | Collections Management |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--|---|
| Drotleff, Sarah | German | Erasmus | Curatorial Affairs Unit, Reading Room, Conservation |
| Eichberg, Tom | German | Erasmus | Collections Management |
| Engelmann, Fenja | German | Leibniz Information Centre for Science and Technology and the University Library of Hannover | Collections Management |
| Fernandez, Nine | French | Universite de Brest | Digitisation and Conservation |
| Giraud, Stella | French | CFA de l’Académie de Nice | Collections Management |
| Legras, Lou | French | Erasmus | Digitisation and Conservation |
| Palm, Runa | German | N/A | Digitisation and Conservation |
| Pascucci, Isabella | Italian | Università del Salento, Erasmus | Archival Research |
| Sail, Laura | French | Erasmus | Digitisation and Conservation |

Throughout most of the year, work progressed on the collection and organisation of *Festa* programmes, a Project originally initiated in 2022 through the initiative and dedication of volunteer Danica Abela. By the end of 2023, what had begun as a modest collection occupying just two metres of shelving had expanded impressively to over 40 metres, comprising more than 5,000 publications sourced from local band clubs, parishes, warehouses, and fireworks factories. However, in the last quarter of 2024, due to the development of a parallel project undertaken by the National Bibliographic Office in its role of collecting Maltese publications under Legal Deposit, Danica Abela had to conclude her valuable involvement in the *Festa Programme Project*. As one of the most dedicated volunteers, she played a central role not only in initiating the Project but also in overseeing the extraordinary growth of this significant collection. She formally handed over all the material she had collected, meticulously organised, and listed to the National Bibliographic Office, ensuring the continued preservation and development of this important collection.

As of April 2024, Vince Scerri began volunteering on a regular basis at the Conservation Unit, where his contributions have proven to be both timely and highly beneficial. His support has been particularly valuable in a section that consistently experiences a high volume of work, helping to alleviate pressure on the team and enhance the overall efficiency of operations. Vince’s commitment and collaborative approach have made him a welcome addition to the Unit.”

VISITORS

During 2024, the National Library of Malta welcomed a significant number of visits by high-profile individuals, further reinforcing its role as a centre of national and international interest. In addition to these distinguished guests, several specialised academic visits were facilitated throughout the year.

Numerous groups of university students, accompanied by their tutors, visited the Library as part of their academic programmes. These visits included on-site lectures delivered by University of Malta faculty members and focused on

familiarising students with the Library's collections, research tools, and finding aids. Particular emphasis was placed on the use of original archival material to support their studies and, in many cases, their thesis research.

Visits from schoolchildren, both primary and secondary, also increased notably during the year. These visits were led by Reading Room staff, who often engaged the students by showcasing selected highlights from the Library's collections.

A number of visits were also organised for elderly individuals through collaborations with day centres managed by the Active Ageing and Community Care (AACC) agency.

VISITS 2024

In February, in collaboration with the AACC, the National Library of Malta hosted several groups of **elderly visitors** during cultural tours of Valletta. Participants were welcomed to the Library where they were given a guided tour of the historic building, introduced to its rich collections, and provided with insights into its heritage role. These engaging visits included a special stop at the Conservation Unit, where visitors observed first-hand the intricate processes of book cleaning and traditional bookbinding, offering a meaningful and educational experience that highlighted both the cultural value and the behind-the-scenes preservation work of the National Library.



On 16 April 2024, **Dr Daniel Gullo**, Director of the Malta Study Center, visited the digitisation studio set up at the National Library of Malta by the HMML for the digitisation of manuscript volumes at the National Library. The visit took place in the context of the ongoing collaboration between the Malta Study Center and the National Library, which was then focusing on the digitisation of Series 9 of the Archives of the Order of Malta. This significant initiative forms part of a long-standing partnership aimed at preserving and enhancing access to Malta's documentary heritage.

On the following day, **Dr Daniel Gullo** returned to the National Library and the HMML digitisation studio, accompanied by **Dr Valeria Vanesio** from the Department of Library, Information and Archive Sciences at the University of Malta, along with a group of guests. The visit included a guided tour of the Library, offering insights into its collections, historical significance, and ongoing digitisation efforts.

On the same day, 17 April, the National Library of Malta also welcomed participants of the international conference **People, Books, and Models: The Order of St John and the Circulation of Architectural Ideas between Malta and Europe (16th–18th Century)**. A special exhibition was set up specifically for this occasion, showcasing items from the Library's collection relevant to the conference themes. Guided and explanatory sessions were delivered by Dr Valeria Vanesio from the University of Malta, providing valuable insights into the historical, architectural and archival context of the displayed works. As part of the event, a presentation titled *For a Census of Early-Modern Architectural Treatises at the National Library of Malta: The Librarian Perspective* was delivered by Steven Terence Camilleri and Gabrielle Cachia, shedding light on the ongoing efforts to catalogue and study early-modern architectural texts within the Library's holdings.

On 26 April, the Library had the honour of hosting a distinguished delegation from the Order of St John (USA) as part of their **Pilgrimage to Malta** tour. Among the esteemed guests were renowned art historian **Prof. John T. Spike** and his wife Prof Michèle Spike, a lawyer and a historian too, **Dr. Columba Andrew Stewart**, Executive Director and CEO of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML), and **Dr.**

Daniel Gullo, Director of the Malta Study Center at HMML. During their visit to the Library, the group had the opportunity to view significant documents from the Archive of the Order of Malta as well as other items from the Library's collections.



On 23 May, the Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, **Mr Kevin Mahoney**, paid an official visit to the National Library of Malta. During his visit, Mr Mahoney met with various members of staff from both the National Library and Malta Libraries, expressing his appreciation for their continued dedication and commitment to the preservation and promotion of Malta's documentary heritage. To mark the occasion, a small display featuring highlights from the Library's collections was prepared. Mr Mahoney was also presented with a selection of recent publications issued by Malta Libraries.



On 21 June, the National Library welcomed participants of a workshop involving European land registry agencies, organised by the **Malta Land Registration Agency**. The group was given a guided tour of the Library, with particular emphasis on the historical significance of the building and its collections. For the occasion, a special display of selected maps and documents was prepared, highlighting key aspects of the foundation of Valletta and historical land surveys. The display focused on *cabrei* - detailed property surveys from the time of the Knights of Malta, dating from the 16th to the 18th Century - providing participants with valuable insight into early land documentation practices in Malta.

One of the highlights of the year was the distinguished visit of **HRH Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh**, and **Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh**, to the National Library of Malta on 9 October. The royal couple was given a guided tour of the Library and viewed a specially curated exhibition prepared to mark the occasion. The display featured several exceptional items from the Library's collection, including an autographed letter by King Henry VIII, addressed to Grand Master L'Isle Adam from the Palace of Windsor and dated 1 August 1524. Other notable items included a book authored by King Henry VIII in defence of the Seven Sacraments, two books sent to the Library and autographed by Queen Victoria, and the royal decree by Queen Elizabeth II authorising Prince Philip to open the Maltese Parliament under the new Independence Constitution.



Among these, a noteworthy visit took place in April, when **Dr Valeria Vanesio**, **Dr Daniel Gullo**, and **Professor William Zammit** accompanied their students for a session focused on historical research and source analysis. In November, the Library hosted two groups of M.A. students enrolled in the **Cultural Heritage Management** and **Archaeological Practice** programmes, together with their lecturers **Professor Reuben Grima** and **Mr Mevrick Spiteri**. These visits offered students an opportunity to engage directly with primary sources relevant to their fields of study.

During the same month, the National Library also welcomed a series of visits led by **Dr Nicole Talmacs** from the Department of Media and Communications within the Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences. Accompanied by groups of journalism students, Dr Talmacs conducted sessions focused on the Library's newspaper collections, with particular emphasis on the use of archival material in journalistic research and the ongoing digitisation efforts aimed at preserving and enhancing access to these historical resources.



On 30 October, the National Library welcomed **Dr Jiří Vnouček**, a parchment expert from the Royal Library of Denmark, together with **Ms Chanelle Mifsud Briffa**, Head of Conservation at the Notarial Registers Archive. The visit featured a specialised demonstration showcasing a curated selection of parchment documents from the National Library's collections. The session provided an opportunity for expert discussion on the material composition, preservation, and historical significance of these valuable artefacts.

A number of specialised academic visits were facilitated at the National Library of Malta during 2024, further strengthening its role as a centre for higher learning and scholarly engagement. University of Malta lecturers delivered on-site lectures and supervised student research using original sources from the Library's extensive collections.



Also in November, a group of students following the course *PHI2029 – Early Modern Ideas: Science, Politics, and Religion*, led by **Professor J.P. De Lucca**, participated in an on-site lecture held at the National Library in Valletta. During this session, students were introduced to rare works

by early modern philosophers, printed between the 1470s and the early 1700s. Highlights included rare first editions of Aristotle's works and Marsilio Ficino's translations and commentaries on Plato's dialogues. Beyond examining the physical characteristics of books once held by 16th and 17th Century readers, students were also encouraged to observe variations in printing techniques over time, and to appreciate the significance of marginal annotations and provenance notes as part of historical interpretation.



The National Library also welcomed a number of exclusive group visits organised by high-end travel agencies, including Exclusively Malta, Maltese Details International Ltd, Swiss Luxury Group, German Luxury Group, and Bureau Iniala. These curated tours were led by Reading Room staff, offering visitors a tailored introduction to the Library's history and collections.

In addition to scheduled group visits, the Library remained open to walk-in visitors during regular opening hours. While these visitors could explore the exhibition area and view displays of selected library materials, guided tours were not provided for drop-ins.

In 2024, the National Library recorded a remarkable **27,662 visitors**, representing a significant increase in international interest. The majority of visitors came from **France, Italy, Germany**, and the **United Kingdom**, further underscoring the Library's appeal as a cultural and scholarly destination.

VISITORS 2024

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3370 FRANCE | 2989 ITALY | 2540 GERMANY |
| 2151 UK | 1926 SPAIN | 1890 POLAND |
| 1742 MALTA | 1427 USA | 861 BELGIUM |
| 762 GREECE | 737 NETHERLANDS | 566 AUSTRALIA |
| 504 CANADA | 472 PORTUGAL | 320 BULGARIA |
| 285 IRELAND | 280 ROMANIA | 280 LITHUANIA |
| 275 SWITZERLAND | 258 BRAZIL | 246 CROATIA |
| 242 HUNGARY | 242 AUSTRIA | 241 JAPAN |
| 225 SERBIA | 225 DENMARK | 201 UKRAINE |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 186 CHINA | 168 SLOVENIA | 148 SWEDEN | 148 CZECH REPUBLIC | 145 COLOMBIA | 143 TURKEY | 2 MONGOLIA | 2 MAURITIUS | 2 LIECHTENSTEIN | 2 LEBANON | 2 IRAN | 2 ICELAND |
| 130 SLOVAKIA | 100 MACEDONIA | 86 MEXICO | 85 NORTH KOREA & SOUTH KOREA | 70 LATVIA | 70 ARGENTINA | 2 HAWAII | 2 GEORGIA | 2 ANDORRA | 1 PARAGUAY | 1 PAKISTAN | 1 KYRGYZSTAN |
| 67 NORWAY | 61 INDIA | 60 FINLAND | 47 ESTONIA | 42 CHILE | 38 RUSSIA | 1 KUWAIT | | | | | |
| 36 KOSOVO | 36 BOSNIA- HERZEGOVINA | 32 PHILIPPINES | 31 ALBANIA | 28 CYPRUS | 27 LUXEMBURG | | | | | | |
| 26 ISRAEL | 22 BELARUS | 19 SOUTH AFRICA | 22 SINGAPORE | 19 MALAYSIA | 16 TUNISIA | | | | | | |
| 14 TAIWAN | 13 VENEZUELA | 13 NEW ZEALAND | 13 AZERBAIJAN | 11 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 11 MOLDOVA | | | | | | |
| 9 URUGUAY | 8 UZBEKISTAN | 8 MONTENEGRO | 6 TENERIF | 6 PANAMA | 6 MADAGASKAR | | | | | | |
| 5 VIETNAM | 5 JORDAN | 5 EGYPT | 5 ARMENIA | 4 THAILAND | 4 PERU | | | | | | |
| 4 NEPAL | 4 IRAQ | 4 ETHIOPIA | 3 LIBYA | 3 INDONESIA | 3 HONG KONG | | | | | | |
| 3 EQUADOR | 3 COSTA RICA | 3 AFGHANISTAN | 2 SYRIA | 2 NIGERIA | 2 MOROCCO | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | 27,536 TOTAL |

**DOREEN
BORG ZAMMIT**
DEPUTY
LIBRARIAN,
PUBLIC
LIBRARIES'
NETWORK



THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES' NETWORK

The Malta Public Libraries network comprises 56 libraries including the Central Public Library (CPL), the Gozo Central Public Library (GCPL), seven regional libraries, 36 branch libraries in Malta and another 11 branch libraries in Gozo.

The mission statement of the public libraries is to promote reading habits and support literacy by providing open and equal access to resources and library services to meet the educational, informational and recreational needs of the community. The Central Public Library continues to outreach its service through its regional and branch libraries around Malta and Gozo.

The main objectives of the public libraries are:

- to foster and strengthen reading habits for informational, educational and recreational purposes
- to offer support and information assistance to individuals, local enterprises and associations
- to participate in formal and non-formal education and literacy initiatives
- to promote Malta Libraries' services and collections regulated by a collection development policy
- to act as a community centre

The Deputy Librarian Public Libraries is responsible for the day-to-day running of the CPL and the regional and branch libraries. The sections at the Central Public Library include the Adult and Junior Counters, the Reference Section, the Talking Books Service, the Acquisitions and Collection Management Section and the Cataloguing and Classification Section.

In addition, the network of public libraries incorporating the regional and branch libraries is continuously being maintained and updated, in joint co-operation with the Regional and Local Councils being involved and advised in the administration process according to the standards of best practices regulating libraries.

With the objective of ameliorating standards in regional and branch libraries and as projected in a budgetary measure which focuses on a thorough evaluation and analysis of the present situation in the area libraries, the exercise of visiting the libraries of the Eastern and Western Regions, continued

during the year. Much detail was elicited from a detailed checklist to then formulate a comprehensive report dwelling on each aspect that pertained to the library: namely the site, building, interior design and facilities, acquisition of library material, collection development, services and the staff managing the library.

The report on every library visited also includes tangible and workable solutions in ameliorating each aspect falling short of the standard required and it will then be discussed with the respective Local Council. It is worth noting that progress is already evident in certain libraries visited in the Northern and Southern Regions where two of the Local Councils took the offered advice and found a better building for the library. As expected, such actions are already leading to positive outcomes.

The plan for next year is to visit the libraries within the Port and Gozo Regions.

Additionally, Malta Libraries was also involved in other events organised by third parties, governmental or otherwise, constantly promoting its physical and digital collection and leading to an uptick in membership through on-site enrolment of new members. Recruitment drives were also held in various schools and venues, upon invitation, which also subsequently resulted in successful promotion of library services and a jump in registrations.

The year 2024 was another busy and challenging year where preparations for structural works within the present Central Public Library buildings and other additional building extension permits were sought to pave the way for another extension to the existing block. During this year the initiation of the compilation of two important policies namely those of Collection Development and Cataloguing were undertaken to strengthen the processes analogous to these contributing factors of having a dynamic collection and a uniform cataloguing system that is consistent and coherent in all fields of a cataloguing entry.

Overall, projections and objectives for 2024 have been satisfactorily reached and will serve as a bridge to continue fulfilling Malta Libraries' mission statement.

READER SERVICES

An increased investment in books and digital media based on a revised collection development policy targeted to attract more new members and satisfy user needs, was given utmost importance especially in the initiation of a project concerned with the upload of Maltese fiction and non-fiction publications on the Libby App through the digital platform OverDrive.

It is worth noting at this point that Malta Libraries was constantly in touch with local authors to promote their work in purchasing multiple copies of their publications and making them available for loan at the libraries forming part of the Malta Libraries network.

During 2024, a total number of 19,098 people visited the Central Public Library, an increase of 5,329 when compared to 2023. The busiest month was August with 2,359 visitors while the slowest was April with 1,075. The table below shows the number of visitors per month during the year in question.

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1,297 | 1,192 | 1,106 | 1,075 | 1,098 | 1,385 | 2,221 | 2,259 | 1,995 | 1,905 | 1,931 | 1,534 |

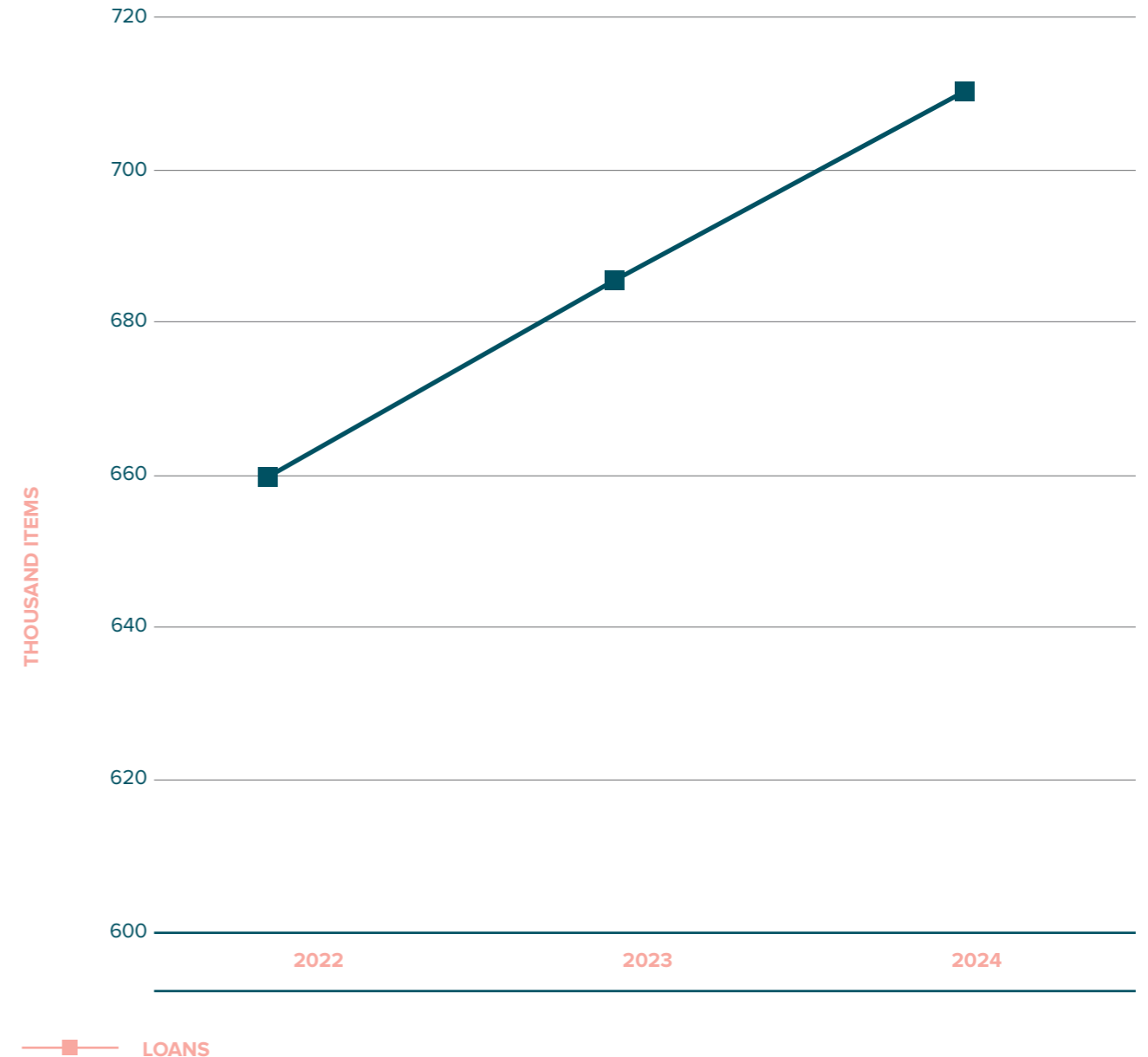
When comparing the number of visits over the last five years as shown in the table below an overall record over the previous three years is recorded.

| YEAR | NUMBER OF VISITS | YEAR | NUMBER OF VISITS |
|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| 2024 | 19,098 | 2022 | 11,251 |
| 2023 | 13,769 | 2021 | 9,828 |

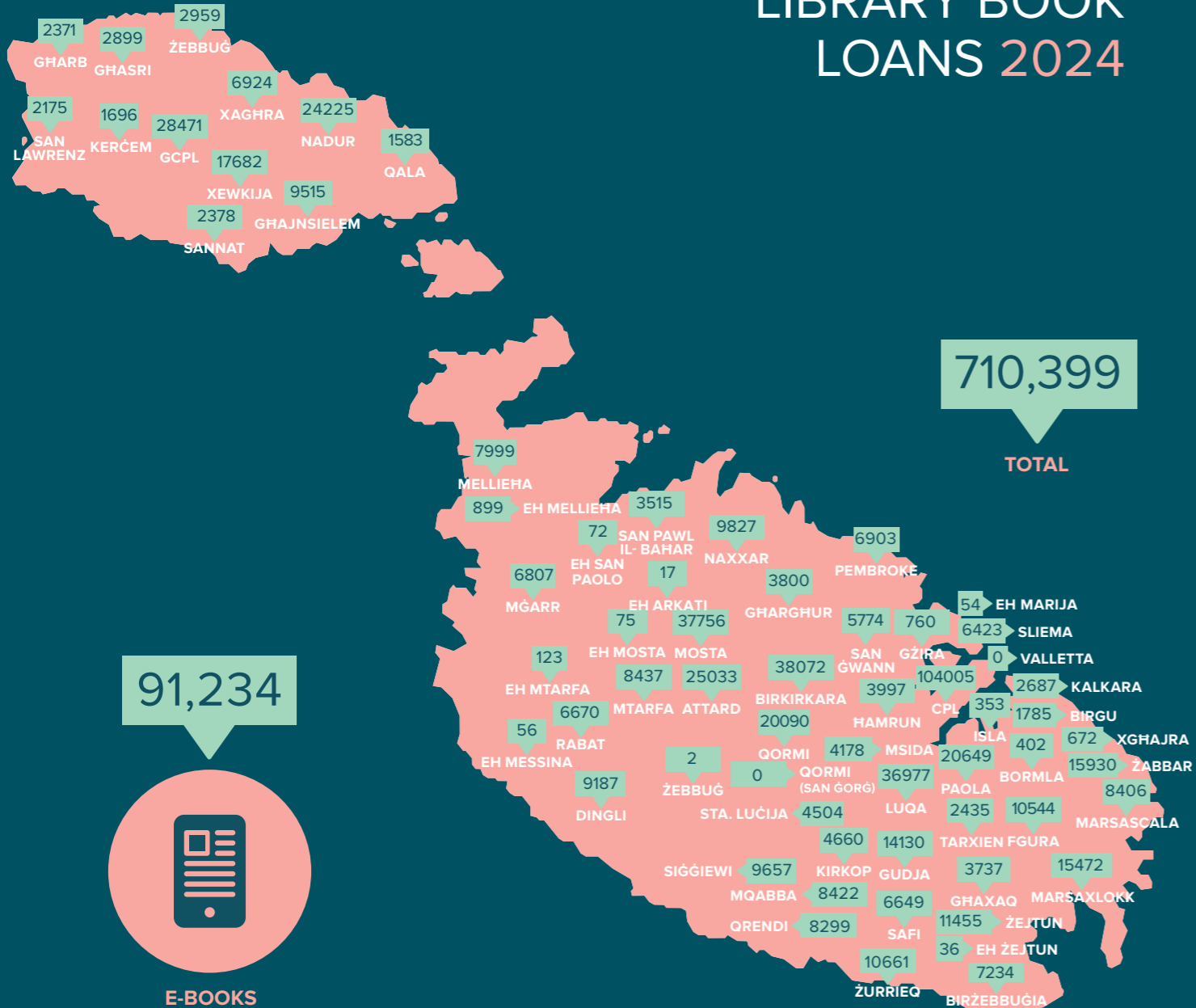
Another good result was obtained regarding book loan statistics where the number of book loans for 2024 totalled 710,399, which when compared with the previous year's checkout counts of 685,469, shows an increase of 24,930 book loans. Out of the 710,399 book loans; 619,165 consisted of physical book loans issued from the whole network of libraries comprising all public libraries spread across Malta and Gozo. The top five libraries with the greatest number of physical book loans were as follows:

| LIBRARY | BOOK LOANS |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Central Public Library Floriana | 104,005 |
| Birkirkara Regional | 38,072 |
| Mosta Regional | 37,756 |
| Luqa Regional | 36,977 |
| Gozo Central Public Library | 28,471 |

CHART 1: TOTAL BOOK LOANS 2022 - 2024



LIBRARY BOOK LOANS 2024



The number of new members registered with the Public Libraries Network was 7,954. From these a total of 4,428 new members were under the age of 18 of which 91% were children within the 0-12 age group.

| TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP | 2024 NUMBER OF MEMBERS |
|---|---------------------------|
| ADULTS - 18 AND OVER | |
| Adults ¹ | 3,299 |
| Adults residing in Malta without Maltese citizenship ^{1&3} | 89 |
| Adult foreign visitors ^{1&3} | 1 |
| Total | 3,389 |
| JUNIORS - UNDER 18 | |
| 0-12 years | 4,044 |
| 13-17 years | 216 |
| 17 years and under with additional adult lending rights ² | 15 |
| 0-12 years residing in Malta without Maltese citizenship ³ | 129 |
| 13-17 years residing in Malta without Maltese citizenship ³ | 20 |
| Junior Foreign visitors ³ | 4 |
| Total | 4,428 |
| OTHERS | |
| Guests ⁴ | 110 |
| Staff members | 4 |
| Teachers | 18 |
| Students attending post-secondary ⁵ | 5 |
| Total | 137 |
| TOTAL | 7,954 |

¹ From 2014 all adults have additional junior lending rights

² Require a written permit from a parent or guardian

³ Require a Maltese citizen guarantee

⁴ Temporary borrower category for new members who enrol themselves online

⁵ New borrower category for student attending post-secondary

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIRECTORATE, LOCAL COUNCILS AND OTHER THIRD PARTIES

A budgetary measure concerning the study and reporting on the operational and infrastructural factors in regional and branch libraries by region was completed in the Northern and Southern Regions. The libraries of Attard, Mellieħa, Mosta, Mġarr, Mtarfa, Naxxar, San Gwann and St Paul's Bay pertaining to the Northern Region and those of the Southern Region, comprising Birżebbuġa, Gudja, Hamrun, Luqa, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Qormi, Santa Luċija and Żejtun were all visited, checked, evaluated and reported upon in a detailed individual report dwelling on all their library aspects with related suggestions of how tangible improvement could be achieved. The visit to Ghaxaq Branch Library was postponed since it is undergoing refurbishment but will be visited along with other libraries that have been found closed due to various reasons. These remaining libraries will be examined and vetted after the whole process is concluded in all the six Regions namely those of the: North, South, West, East, Port and Gozo.

During the year 2024, the libraries of the Western and Eastern Regions: Birkirkara, Dingli, Gżira, Kirkop, Mqabba, Msida, Qrendi, Rabat, Safi, Siġġiewi, Sliema and Żurrieq, (with the exception of Żebbuġ which is still not operational due to renovation and refurbishment) were all visited and vetted against a checklist containing questions related to the library site (location, accessibility and size

of library), building (library premises, interior and exterior signage), interior design and facilities (design, facilities and convenience facilities); collections (acquisitions/sponsorships/donations), services and activities, ICT, electrical and other telecommunication equipment, funding and human resources.

It is intended that these reports will form the basis for discussion with the respective Local Councils in plotting the way forward towards an improved and revamped service in the regional and branch libraries forming part of the Malta Libraries Network. Moreover, it is worth noting that certain Local Councils, namely those of Birżebbuġa and Attard, have already taken on board report recommendations with Attard Branch Library shifting the library to new premises situated at the Old Railway Station, which is more adaptable, transforming part of the library shelving in the form of a wagon train to honour its historical location.

Building plans for a new Birżebbuġa Branch Library are at an advanced stage and have already been submitted to the Planning Authority for approval. It is expected that the Birżebbuġa Library will occupy one of the floors of a new building being built within the school premises that will house the new Health Centre plus a multipurpose hall. The area of the library is expected to be around 180 m² according to standards based on the number of residents living within the community.

On 19th December 2024 the Mayors and Executive Secretaries of the Local Councils forming part of the Northern Region, namely those of Attard, Mellieħa, Mġarr (Malta), Mosta, Mtarfa, Naxxar, St Paul's Bay and San Gwann, met at the new premises of the Attard Local Council to sign the revised and updated Co-operation Agreement with Malta Libraries. Among those present were the President and Executive Secretary of the Northern Region, who endorsed the agreement, along with Malta Libraries National Librarian and CEO, Ms Cheryl Falzon, accompanied by the Deputy Librarian, Ms Doreen Borg Zammit.

Preparations are underway to sign Co-operation Agreements in 2025 with Local Councils of the Eastern Region, namely those of Birkirkara, Ghargħur, Gżira, Msida, Pembroke and



Sliema and the Southern Region comprising the Local Councils of Gudja, Hamrun, Luqa, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Qormi, Santa Luċija and Żejtun. Birżebbuġa Local Council had already signed the Co-Operation Agreement at the end of 2024.

Besides committing to signing these Co-operation Agreements, the Central Public Library also collaborated with the Local Government Directorate in continuing to refurbish various libraries within the network as detailed by the following sub-sections.

ATTARD BRANCH LIBRARY

Extensive weeding was carried out, eliminating publications which were torn or damaged and books were also checked for any outdated material. During the exercise precautions were taken to put aside any Melitensia publications better suited to be housed in the National Library collection in the case of a copy having failed to be legally deposited. The team also removed seldom-borrowed books from the collection to disseminate them to other libraries where they could be of more use. Any missing volumes pertaining

to book series were carefully noted so that these could be replenished either through purchasing or by obtaining duplicates from other libraries. Finally, books that were considered out of print had their collection type changed to form part of the Reference Collection. The following procedure was conducted to be coherent with the new Collection Development Policy that was being compiled for public libraries.

Prior to the weeding process which was initiated on 13th March, continued on 27th March and completed on the 4th of April, the team had a meeting with the Attard Local Council Executive Secretary and the Attard Branch Librarian to inspect the new premises and formulate an action plan that comprised a diagram of the setup of the new room where library shelving and other furniture was going to be placed. The new look of the library and the excellent premises which historically formed part of a chain of railway stations in Malta was the chosen venue where the first batch of Co-operation Agreements pertaining to libraries within the Northern Region were signed.

FGURA BRANCH LIBRARY

Infrastructural works taken in hand at the Fgura Branch Library were finished and completed during the year thus enabling the re-opening of the library.

GŻIRA BRANCH LIBRARY

Refurbishment works started in December 2023 were completed and finished in October 2024. On visiting the Gżira Branch Library on 13th November as part of a comprehensive exercise relating to a budgetary measure, a radical change was noted especially in the lighting and shelving added to house the collections. This notable upgrade will undoubtedly promote a better service to the public.

GĦAXAQ BRANCH LIBRARY

Maintenance works at the Għaxaq Branch Library continued during the year and finished in May 2024. All books that were out on loan and temporarily returned by clients and deposited at Paola Regional Library during the library closure, were collected and transported back to their place of origin.

ISLA BRANCH LIBRARY

The repairs being carried out due to damage caused by buildings above the library were undertaken and completed

in good time to restore the library to its former room. Naturally, this move mitigated any stoppage time for service to be rendered.

QORMI (ST GEORGE) BRANCH LIBRARY

Unfortunately, this Branch Library at Qormi is still non-operational due to ongoing maintenance and renovation works being carried out in the school where the library is housed. As yet there is no fixed date for the completion of works which would enable it to re-open its doors and resume service.

XGĦAJRA BRANCH LIBRARY

Renovation and maintenance works were completed during the year as planned. A thorough clean-up of the place was carried out while taking care to tidy up shelving units before shelving the books again correctly.

ŻEBBUĠ BRANCH LIBRARY

The building to house the Żebbuġ Branch Library which was planned to be completed in a couple of months is now ready. What remains is the issue of a tender for electrical installation and the laying of tiles. Hopefully, the library will soon be operational again without undue delay.





MELITENSIA PROJECT

The two pioneering Branch Libraries of Safi and Żurrieq continued with their preparations regarding the collection of material pertaining to their village with the intention of concluding the project as early as possible. In fact, the Safi Local Council with the collaboration of the Branch Librarian in charge of the library managed to finalise the collection of material having it catalogued and processed accordingly before the official ceremony took place at the premises of the Safi Branch Library on Saturday, 13th April 2024. The Hon. Minister for Heritage, Culture and Local Government presided for the occasion and was accompanied by the Safi Mayor and the National Librarian and CEO of Malta Libraries.

The project was extended to two other libraries namely those of Mellieħa and Birgu. Preliminary meetings were held with the librarians in charge of the libraries concerned with further meetings held with the respective Local Councils during the month of October 2024.



COLLECTION MAINTENANCE AND WEEDING

It was a busy year for the team responsible for library maintenance and weeding especially due to the new school libraries expected to be incorporated in the Malta Libraries Network. This entailed various visits to libraries especially that of St Monica School which was visited three times during February and once in March.

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2024, a visit was conducted on 28th August to view the premises for a new library funded by the RISE foundation based on the premise of providing library services to the local community and to educate and assist inmates in their reintegration into society. During the visit it was agreed that Malta Libraries will stock the initial collection with a good selection of titles and install the V-smart computerised system and provide necessary training of the librarians going to be in charge. It was also agreed that RISE Library will benefit from a Malta Libraries annual allocation for the purchase of new publications to augment and enrich the collection that will relate to the main mission statement of the foundation.

Various visits were carried out during the year to the President's Library in San Anton Palace where newly acquired publications were catalogued and added to the inventory which in due time will form part of the Malta Libraries Catalogue with the principal aim of creating a Union Catalogue.

Another library that prospectively will be joining the Malta Libraries Network is that of MUŻA Library. A preliminary visit was organised in order to evaluate the state of the library and organise the book collection which was classified with different classification systems such as Dewey and that of the Library of Congress.

Since weeding forms an integral part of a Collection Development Policy, care was taken to revise the present norms of weeding and include other measures such of those of legal deposit, Melitensia, multiple copies, published books in series and other important factors that form a dynamic collection. Along with the writing of a Collection Development Policy a Cataloguing Policy was also taken in hand with the primary objective of harmonising the Authority List pertaining to authors.



SPONSORSHIPS

An excellent resource for libraries to acquire new publications and supplement their collections is through donations offered by banks. During 2024, Mosta Regional Library and San Ġwann Branch Library were presented with a number of books purchased according to the requirements of the libraries concerned and donated accordingly to these libraries to enhance their collections. On the same principle and through the initiative of the librarian in charge, Pembroke Library benefited from a good selection of new publications subsidised by Bank of Valletta.

Other new publications were also donated by established and emerging authors who besides depositing their normal two copies as legal deposit, go that extra mile and donate a number of their new publications to be disseminated in regional and branch libraries.

Donations were also received from private and public entities that added to the variety of books on different topics especially those much demanded and searched for by the public.

LIBRARIES AT ELDERLY HOMES

Continuous support was provided during the year to libraries that operate at elderly homes where priority was given to see that the collections were kept updated and supplemented with new titles.

DONATIONS BY MALTA LIBRARIES

As customary, once again Malta Libraries donated books to St Joseph Home during the month of December. Besides books, educational toys were also distributed during this festive season as an enjoyable boost for the children. The National Librarian/CEO and staff members attended the presentation.





LIBRARY TRAINING

Once again MaLIA and Malta Libraries teamed up to offer another course including various core subjects in librarianship. The venue chosen was the newly renovated Adult Library which provided the facilities to run the course which was well subscribed and attended by persons already in the field of librarianship and others who were interested in getting to know certain aspects related to library work.

CPL RENOVATION

Now that infrastructural works have been completed in the Adult Library the next step is the issuing of a tender regarding the provision of shelving and furnishings. The tender for the construction renovation of the present Administrative Block (which was the first existing block of the Central Public Library premises) has now been approved and preparations are in hand to start the necessary works.



REFERENCE SERVICES

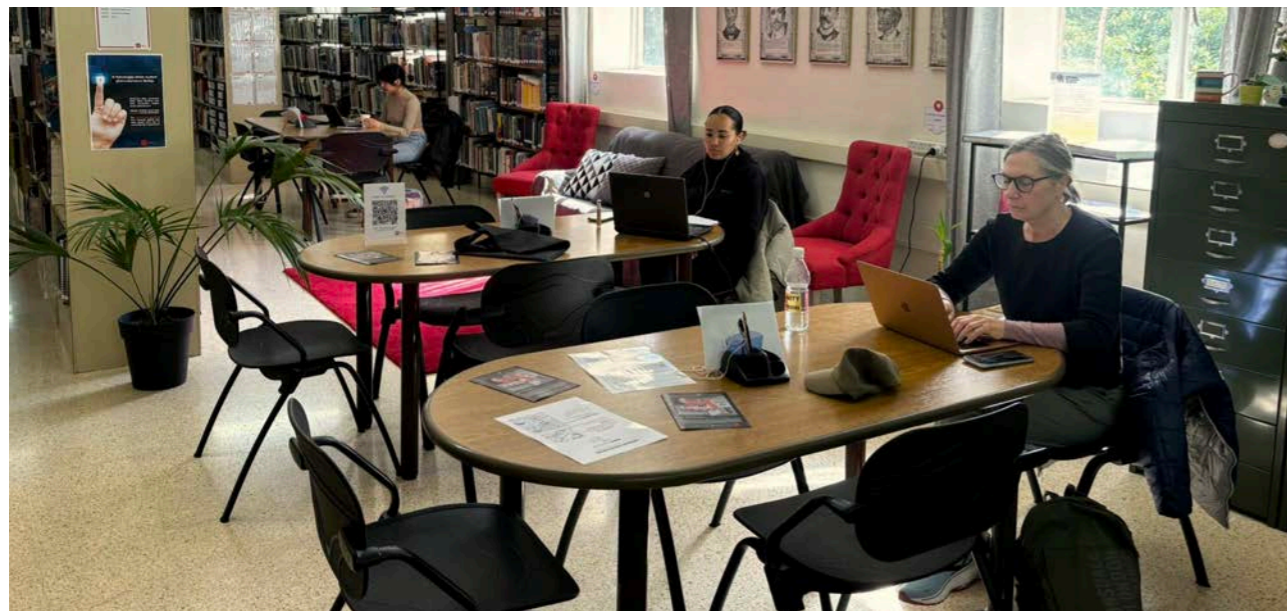
The Reference, Melitensia and Audiovisual Section at the Central Public Library welcomes all researchers, students and visitors. The collection of books comprises reference material for research purposes and a vast collection of Melitensia monographs including reference material published in Malta or abroad by Maltese and foreign authors.

Moreover, the library provides the service of scanned library material to borrowers either by email or other means upon request. In the year under review, patrons were accepted by appointment.

During the year the library welcomed 398 patrons who visited the library in person for research purposes to study or consult newspapers and periodicals, and another 177 patrons who visited the Audiovisual Section. Therefore, a total of 575 people visited the Reference and Melitensia Section. Meanwhile other clients preferred to contact the Unit for research assistance either by email or telephone.

Various activities were held at the Reference and Melitensia Section during the year, including book donation presentations, author interviews, filming sessions, school visits and meeting concerning publishers. Moreover, during summer, several students worked in this section as part of their summer work phase.

New books were added to the collection and daily newspapers were reviewed and indexed daily with any material selected, copied, classified and filed. These were then made available to the public for research purposes. Through this initiative, aspects of the collection were highlighted and organised for easy information retrieval.



TALKING BOOK SECTION

The Talking Book Service (TBS) provides accessible reading options for visually impaired individuals and those with print disabilities, ensuring inclusive access to library resources.

In 2024, the number of registered members reached 144 including 16 new members who joined the service. Unfortunately, eight members either discontinued their membership or passed away. Members may be categorised as follows: 121 visually impaired and 23 others having additional impairments. It is to be noted that some of the individuals fall under multiple categories.

During the year the number of Talking Book loans reached 3,649, reflecting a decrease of 53 loans when compared to the previous year. This reduction in loans was mainly attributable to some elderly homes discontinuing the service for various reasons.

To promote the Section an information session was held at the Spero Day Centre for the visually impaired, highlighting Talking Book services and their importance for individuals unable to access the printed books.

In preparation for the compilation of an additional catalogue, 11 readers participated in the recording of new audiobooks and 21 new audiobooks were added to the Talking Book Section collection, covering adult fiction, non-fiction and children's titles.

The Talking Book Section collaborated with NGO Inspire on a broadcast series aimed at empowering individuals with disabilities. Participants shared their experiences and insights on various topics. One episode featured the Deputy Librarian, Ms Doreen Borg Zammit, discussing Talking Book Services along with other inclusive reading resources such as dyslexia-friendly books, Braille books and ebooks.

Additionally, the Talking Book Section assisted a local publisher in recording audiobooks, ensuring that these were available together with their printed versions. These audiobooks will be uploaded on the OverDrive platform.

A Memorandum of Understanding regarding the development of a modern Maltese speech engine was signed between Malta Libraries represented by the National Librarian and CEO, Ms Cheryl Falzon, and Mr Chris Grech with the objective of enhancing accessibility to new platforms.

Regarding the procurement of additional USB drive players to clients of the Talking Book Section, new devices were purchased for resale at a non-profit price of €55 each. The ICT Section at the Central Public Library were instrumental in sourcing these devices from RNIB UK, while the Talking Book Section handled the logistics.

Regarding promotional activities the Talking Book Section benefited from participation on radio programmes and the distribution of information leaflets. Most importantly, word of mouth by members also contributed considerably to the increase in membership.

Overall, the Talking Book Section remains a valuable service as shown in the positive user feedback received and the growing demand for audiobooks. At this point the Section takes the opportunity to thank Maltapost plc in offering the postal service free of charge to our subscribed clients.

It is worth noting after a gathering for readers and staff in March 2024 which was well received and appreciated, a plan is under consideration to present readers with a certificate and a token in recognition for their services and dedication besides providing them with parking facilities for their vehicles. In order to strengthen the Section in its administrative role to meet the ever-growing necessities to run the service more weight and consideration is being given to increase the staff complement and to give more participation leeway to the Talking Book Section in decision-making regarding its operations.

ACQUISITIONS AND COLLECTION MANAGEMENT SECTION

The Acquisitions and Collection Management Section is responsible for purchasing books and ebooks for the Central Public Library as well as for coordinating book purchases for regional and branch librarians within the Malta Libraries Public Library Network who choose to avail themselves of the CPL's centralised acquisition service. Each year public libraries are allocated a book budget reflecting the previous year's loan performance which serves as an incentive to increase user borrowing. Regularly, new publications are promoted to all librarians within the network and subsequently book orders are coordinated and purchased through the Section. It also works in liaison with librarians within the entity who seek advice on book selection, relay feedback on clients' book requests or signal any gaps within their library collections. In this manner, the public libraries' collections can keep developing organically while striving to constantly adapt to and fulfil the informational, educational and recreational needs of their patrons.

It is also essential to monitor and keep up to date with constant developments in the local and international publishing scene, and the Section's remit is also to analyse Malta Libraries' online and ebook catalogues and loan statistics for the purpose of gauging borrowing trends, subsequently compiling lists and categorising new acquisitions for promotional and marketing purposes by the Outreach Team on Malta Libraries' social media platforms. During 2024 the Public Libraries acquired a total number of 17,074 books and ebooks, spending €111,451.06 in all. This figure comprises 11,216 books costing €73,437.36 and 5,858 ebooks and audiobooks from the digital suppliers OverDrive and Octavo. The sum of €32,113.70 was spent on OverDrive and €5,900 was spent on Octavo from May to

November 2024, with both figures including the cost of the digital licences required.

Malta Libraries' collections are also greatly enriched by donations. This year, a total of 25,775 books were donated to Malta Libraries, with a generous 13,141 originating from the public. Other donations amounting to 12,634 books were received from a diverse mix of organisations, companies, Local Councils and individual authors. Of these, the largest donation was courtesy of the National Literacy Agency with 4,552 books, followed by Local Councils who donated 2,804, the National Book Council who donated 2,586 books and Eco Gozo who donated 1,015 books. All donations add value and diversity to Malta Libraries' collections.

CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION SECTION

The Cataloguing and Classification Section is one of the major units of the Central Public Library. Its primary objective is to provide access to the volume of material at the respective public libraries in Malta and Gozo. The main task is to create and maintain a database of bibliographic records for reading material – be it educational, informational or recreational – in a variety of reading formats. These records enable members to conduct searches for relevant material via the library's online catalogue. The preparation of bibliographic records consists of descriptive cataloguing and subject classification. Malta Libraries adopts the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (23rd ed.) system, the Dewey Decimal Classification Subject Headings and the MARC 21 format standards of cataloguing.

Cataloguing tasks are carried out by the Cataloguing Section at the Central Public Library in Floriana as well as by individual members of staff operating from various libraries. The cataloguing team is made up of 26 members. In 2024, the cataloguing team catalogued 7,766 items and added 50,335 items to different libraries and elderly

homes. Of these, 13,141 items were generously donated by members of the public. Additional contributions included 2,586 items from the National Book Council, 4,552 from the National Literacy Agency, and 2,804 from various Local Councils. Throughout the year, the team also catalogued over 90 items for the Institute for Education, 233 for the Rise Foundation, and 10,511 for Church Schools that transitioned to Malta Libraries' V-smart system.

Continuous training is provided to ensure that all cataloguers remained abreast of the latest advancements in cataloguing and classification. In 2024, cataloguers participated in a training session conducted by Axiell, the company responsible for our Library Information System. During this session, they covered the recent enhancements to the Cataloguing module, including those implemented in the October V-smart upgrade. The session also featured a Q&A segment, where cataloguers were encouraged to prepare any questions or concerns, they wished to address. The Cataloguing and Classification Section made significant strides in improving the organisation and accessibility of library resources. With the adoption of updated cataloguing standards and classification systems, we have maintained high-quality records that enable users to easily locate and access information regarding library materials.

INTERNSHIPS AND VOLUNTARY WORK

In 2024, the Public Libraries accommodated a total number of 22 students and volunteers. The Central Public Library hosted 16 students and volunteers, while two regional libraries, Birkirkara and Qormi, together accommodated another six.

One of these students was pursuing a bachelor's degree in Library, Archive and Information Studies at the University of Malta and was required to complete a 100-hour practicum under supervision at the Central Public Library. Her placement started on 14th February and was successfully completed on 20th March.

Another four students were studying for an MCAST diploma and were required to complete 20 hours of unpaid work, while two other students participated in a brief work experience as part of their job exposure programme, particularly motivated by their interest in pursuing librarianship as a career.

Six out of the 22 were volunteers who conducted unpaid work at the library to gain hands-on experience in the field of librarianship. Their interest in volunteering at the library derived from a desire to understand library operations and explore whether a career in this sector would align with their personal and professional goals. Various library-related tasks helped them gain valuable insights into the day-to-day responsibilities of a librarian and allowed them to determine if this career path was suitable for their skills and aspirations. These volunteers contributed a total of 175 hours between them.

As part of the students' Summer Work Opportunities Scheme 2024, nine full-time students who had completed compulsory secondary education and were in their final year of studies, or were studying at post-secondary and tertiary levels, were also given the opportunity to work at the Central Public Library. The first batch of students began their paid employment on 8th July and finished on 2nd August 2024. The second batch started on 15th July and completed their work experience on 9th August 2024. The third batch started on 19th July and ended their experience on 13th September 2024. Each student completed 80 hours of work respectively.

During their work or voluntary experience, all students and volunteers received a general tour and orientation of the library, training on general library tasks, and familiarisation with the main library services. They primarily carried out tasks at the Junior and Adult Counters, the Reference Library, and the Talking Books Section. Other tasks included book processing, shelving, basic circulation, and assisting the Administration and Outreach team with preparations for school visits and other library events. All students and volunteers had the opportunity to work in teams and participate in micro assigned projects.

**ELIZABETH
EBEJER**
DIRECTOR,
GOZO
LIBRARIES



GOZO LIBRARIES

The year 2024 marked a period of dynamic growth, structural development, and community-centred initiatives across the library network in Gozo. From the National Library Gozo (NLG) to its branch libraries and the Gozo Central Public Library (GCPL), significant strides were made to enhance library services, promote cultural heritage, and foster lifelong learning. While challenges such as limited space and infrastructure persist – particularly at NLG – these have been met with innovative solutions, collaborative projects, and an unwavering commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. As Gozo prepares to celebrate its designation as the Region of Culture in 2025, the island’s libraries continue to strengthen their role as essential cultural, educational, and social pillars within the community.

NATIONAL LIBRARY GOZO

Although the primary school vacated the building in June 2024, by the end of the year there was still no official



information regarding the acquisition of the building or any part of it. Several meetings were held to follow up on our request.

A holistic restoration project was initiated by a restoration architect focusing on the facade and roof of the National Library. It is of utmost importance to safeguard the building in which the library is hosted. Moreover, in the last quarter of the year, a comprehensive Risk Assessment was carried out, covering both the library and its ancillary rooms. This action supports efforts to identify vulnerabilities and proactively manage risks associated with the building and its contents. Ongoing restoration ensures long-term preservation of the structure and the materials it houses. Given that Gozo has been designated the Region of Culture for 2025, discussions have been held regarding the role of the NLG in collective memory and cultural programming. These conversations aim to position the library as a central figure in regional heritage and identity.

The National Library Gozo currently operates under constrained conditions from the Reading Room, lacking a proper, dedicated workspace. Due to the ongoing lack of space, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Gozo National Library to accept further donations of work or legacy materials. The library is struggling with properly processing and storing book donations from bequests, leading to them being left in boxes.

BRANCH LIBRARIES

The branch libraries in Gozo have undergone a remarkable transformation, emerging as inclusive and vibrant community hubs. Through structural renovations, creative cultural initiatives, and dedicated community engagement, these spaces now reflect a strong commitment to improving access to books and nurturing cultural connections across the island. Qala Branch Library has set a regional precedent by introducing a Sensory Corner – a first for Gozo – catering to a more inclusive reading environment. The branch also features a dedicated Nook Area and a co-working space, offering a flexible and modern environment for learning





and collaboration. Għajnsielem Branch Library is now part of a maritime education centre. This innovative setup blends traditional library services with modern, interactive educational exhibits focusing on the sea – covering topics such as maritime heritage, fisheries, traditional Maltese boats, and marine conservation. Għarb Branch Library features a multifunctional space incorporating a co-working area and a focus on ongoing collection development to keep resources relevant and engaging. Xewkija Branch Library has embraced a colourful new look, creating a vibrant atmosphere. The branch enjoys strong collaboration with the local primary school, hosting regular weekly visits from students. Nadur Branch Library has returned to its original location after extensive refurbishment, now offering a modern, accessible, and comfortable space, including a dedicated storytelling area for young readers.



In July 2024, a team-building session for Gozitan librarians was held at the Għajnsielem branch. The productive meeting addressed future goals such as strengthening book collections, identifying libraries as platforms for cultural events, and continuing refurbishments. Discussions also focused on recent successful open days and activities that foster community engagement.

The libraries' visibility soared in 2024 with the launch of individual Facebook pages and creative outreach programs. One standout initiative is 'Dawra ma' Kylie fil-Libreriji Għawdxin', launched on World Book Day 2024 in collaboration with Eco-Gozo – A Better Gozo. This mobile literacy project features "Kylie," a gold-coloured car pulling a trailer full of books for children aged 0–7. By visiting various branch libraries, it brings early literacy directly into communities. EcoGozo's donation of 1,000 books to support the project highlights strong community partnerships.

Gozo's libraries are redefining their roles in the community – becoming inclusive, educational, and cultural spaces that inspire people of all ages.

GOZO CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Gozo Central Public Library continued its commitment to being an open and inclusive space. In 2024, efforts were made to host and support a diverse range of ideas and cultural activities, reinforcing the library's role as a community hub. Numerous free educational and recreational activities for children were held throughout the year.

One of these was the DICE Project, where the GCPL collaborated with the College for Gozo, Esplora, and the Regional Council for Gozo to implement this cross-institutional initiative. DICE (Developing Innovation and Creativity in Education) is an international project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Its primary aim is to foster innovation and creativity within the field of education. The project aspires to be a leading initiative that empowers the educational community to

advance in these areas through actions that are effective, authentic, practical, and sustainable.

GEMMA Workshops were held at GCPL, consisting of three informative sessions for adults organised by GEMMA in collaboration with the MBA and the MFSA, which focused on financial literacy and money management. Additionally, targeted digital skills training was provided for both children and adolescents in collaboration with the eSkills Malta Foundation. Qawsalla ta' Frott u Hxejjex was an 8-week summer initiative promoting healthy eating habits, a collaboration between GCPL and Let's Talk Farming. Let's Talk Farming also invited GCPL to various programmes on television stations. THE NEXT CHAPTER: A long-term collaborative project with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, was launched in 2024 and will continue through April 2025, focusing on youth engagement and creative development using weeded books. Apart from these activities, the GCPL held other activities such as 'Easter Fun at the Library', 'Shaħar u Iħirsa Jħawru Borma Msaħħra' (a STEAM activity) for Halloween, and as a Christmas activity, 'Night at The Library' which took the form of a special Christmas Stuffed Animal Sleepover.

All reading sessions were conducted in collaboration with the National Literacy Agency to promote literacy and foster a love for reading.

All events and activities were promoted, not only on the Malta Libraries social media, but also via the Events Gozo platform, ensuring broader outreach and engagement with the community.

Throughout 2024, various initiatives were carried out at GCPL as well as other branch libraries to encourage more people to visit them. Among these, the libraries in Gozo participated in the ID-DENFIL project, marking 50 years since its initial launch.

The Gozo Central Public Library was one of the Finalists in the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR), for its submitted project during 2023, for outstanding environmental initiatives. This year's activity was 'Nippreparaw L-Ikla Tal-Milied Flimkien...Bla Hela'. Apart from exploring a Christmas cake recipe and other traditional festive foods, the focus was on buying just the right amount of ingredients for the upcoming Christmas lunch. This activity was submitted for the 2024 EWWR.

In 2024, the internal system of book distribution was revised to enhance accessibility and streamline the borrowing process. These improvements have helped more patrons explore and familiarise themselves with different sections of the library, encouraging greater use of resources.

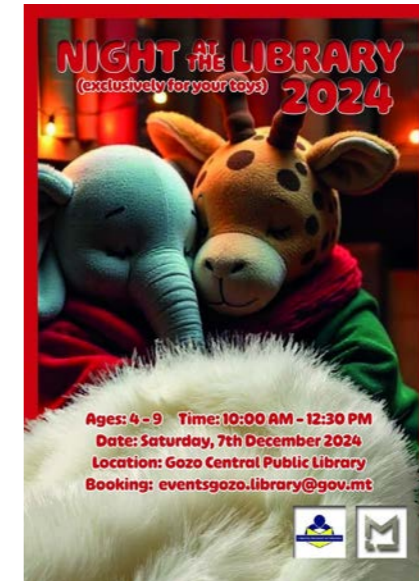
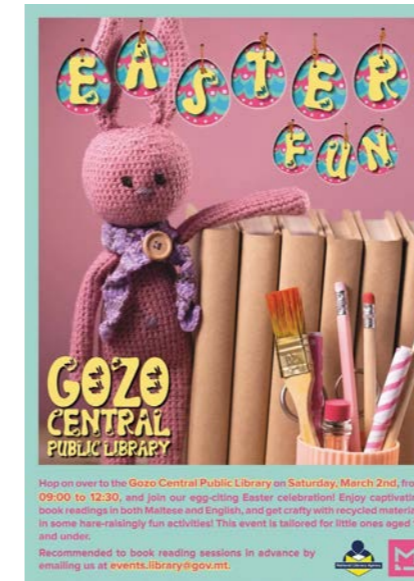
The weeding of books in the Non-Fiction section continued as a priority throughout 2024. This process, which began in previous years, was maintained not only in the first half of the year but as a continuous effort to ensure the collection remains current, relevant, and accessible to all users.

At GCPL, we are dedicated to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible space for all members of our community. We believe that libraries are for everyone –

regardless of age, background, identity, ability, or belief – and we strive to ensure every visitor feels respected, safe, and valued.

We celebrate the richness of our diverse community by offering inclusive resources, culturally responsive programming, and accessible services. Our commitment to equity and belonging is reflected in our collections, our staff, and our spaces, which are designed to meet the varied needs of our patrons.

Through continual learning, listening, and engagement, GCPL is a place where everyone belongs and can freely explore, discover, and connect.



**OLIVER
MAMO**
DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL
BIBLIOGRAPHIC
OFFICE



NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC OFFICE

Like the preceding year, 2024 saw continued efforts in recovering material which was never captured by Legal Deposit. On the forefront of such material is the band clubs' annual publications of their local village feast. This influx of publications created a significant volume of material entering the NBO. Consequently, the NBO engaged in discussions with Malta Libraries' administration, seeking approval to outsource its spatial requirements and start storing publications in third-party storage facilities.

From NBO's end, preparations have been carried out so that such a new system would still be reflected in the online catalogue, meaning that storage locations even in third-party storage would be integrated in the library management database. While this recovery effort is a significant achievement, it has also brought challenges, particularly in the area of cataloguing. So far, the NBO has no dedicated office space in Gozo and consequently, no recruits have been engaged on such work, except for temporary internships intended to assist in processing material more efficiently.

The following is a detailed account of the work carried out by the NBO during the year under review.

CATALOGUING

Retrospective work is important because it sheds light on similar work carried out previously and spanning across decades. It became apparent that there was an anomaly in cataloguing practices on how annual publications were catalogued. Certain government departments, entities and commercial companies' annual reports were catalogued as monographs whilst others were treated as serials. The same could also be observed on certain school yearbooks and prospectuses. To address this, a new cataloguing principle was introduced, where any publication which is serial in nature, whose frequency of publication is yearly or less, would be catalogued as monographs. On the other hand, when a serial publication has a frequency of publication which is higher than once yearly, these would be catalogued as pure serials. This decision ensures a more standardised approach across the National Collection, independent of

format and subjectivity. However, this decision also meant an increase in workload, since there is a good percentage of publications that are annuals and each of these publications would now require a specific bibliographic record.

As stated above, the NBO's cataloguing resources are limited to circa 1,000 monographs per annum. However, the engagement of interns working on the Gozo project beefed up our efforts and during 2024, 4,000 monographs were added to the catalogue of the National Collection held in Gozo reaching a total of 6,000 books fully catalogued. These figures contributed towards achieving 9,000 retrospective monographs catalogued across the islands. All the 6,000 books catalogued are shelved in the Melitensia Room of the National Library in Gozo using the Fixed Shelving Location System.

Work was continued on budgetary measure AM/144/2021, namely that of enriching the catalogue with an image of the publication attached to the bibliographic record. The total figure of images attached to their corresponding records has reached the 18,000 mark.

LEGAL DEPOSIT

Dr Steve Borg – NBO annual report 2024

RECOVERY OF RETROSPECTIVE MATERIAL

Primary recovery exercise

This involves regular scrutiny of material in charity shops, with verification being made either by correlating every item of interest with data available online or through direct communication with both the NBO office in Floriana or the National Library in Gozo. Once the Melitensia items are recovered from site they are placed in carton boxes and transported to the NBO awaiting evaluation. Whereas legal deposit indicates one copy of each publication, in order to determine if document was already held in both national library repositories, a second copy for NLM was recovered when an item was chanced on.

All pre-1940 books were held, given that in the pre-war period the malpractice of removing original covers to replace with 'in house' binding deprived the NLM of possessing them as true whole copies. The chosen documents were cleaned from any residue or particulate matter, checked for missing pages, scribbling, enclosures or attachments. Where there was an evident presence of silverfish (*Lepisma saccharina*), the holding was covered in thin tissue paper to isolate it from the other documents. Material relating to the Maltese festa, recovered from the Junior College Library in Msida, is cross-checked with updated lists of publications held at our repositories and the NBO.

Printed documents

All approved documents were listed in a spreadsheet that had been created with relative mandatory fields, including bibliographic data and physical status. These included the name of the author or corporate body, title and subtitle, publisher and place of publication, year of publication, number of pages, physical condition, number of holdings (if any) and general remarks. The physical condition was noted as poor, fair, very good or mint. References were made in the remarks section for documents that had a specific attribute, such as being signed by the author, of limited circulation or requiring repair or fumigation.

The different formats recovered were books (including monographs of more than eight pages), periodicals, compact discs, digital video discs, audio cassettes and ephemera, which included calendars, recipe cards and posters.

The evaluation process undertaken took several factors into consideration. These included a thorough inspection of all documents, regarding the complete text as published by verifying page number sequencing, fragility or brittleness of paper, as well as the removal of third matter irrelevant to document – such as paper scraps or rusting paper clips, creases on the spine area that signified that the book had

been opened and leaved through, stains, moisture or fungal growth, silverfish and so on, and whether VHS copies retrieved had fungal growth or vinegar syndrome.

RECOVERED PRINTED MELITENSIA MATERIAL

The majority of the 4,160 recovered during 2024 were in the Maltese language, followed by those in English. As in the previous years, there were also several instances when similar holdings that had been recovered in previous years were encountered in the process and therefore uncollected.

Audit of Air Malta periodicals list

During November 2024, the NBO retrieved a collection of Air Malta publications, having evaluated its holdings at its former SkyParks offices. Upon retrieval of material, the audit of their periodicals held at our repositories was initiated. This included the inhouse issues of *Flying Colours* from 1979 until 1992 and *KM Newslines* and the in-flight publications *Malta This Month* from 1977 to 2005, *Skylife* 2006-2012, *KM* and finally *Bizzilla* from 2013 to 2024, either bound in volumes or as loose copies. All the retrieved issues of the aforementioned publications have been barcoded, and missing issues sent to Gozo. Promotional audiovisual material was also retrieved. The processing of Air Malta publications, including the printed annual reports, is ongoing.

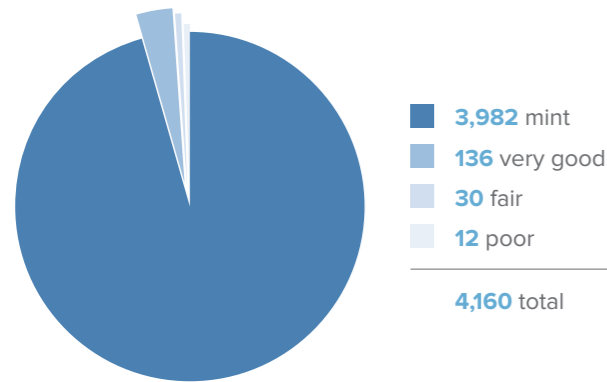
Also recovered were **525** periodicals which included many from a substantial bequest from the Junior College of material formerly belonging to the now defunct Gozo Cathedral Library. Verification of periodicals already in repositories has already been initiated. All the selected missing issues have now been placed in our repositories, mostly in Gozo.

Extra copies of recovered or bequeathed books and periodicals that were already held in our repositories were handed to the Central Public Library Reference Collection to



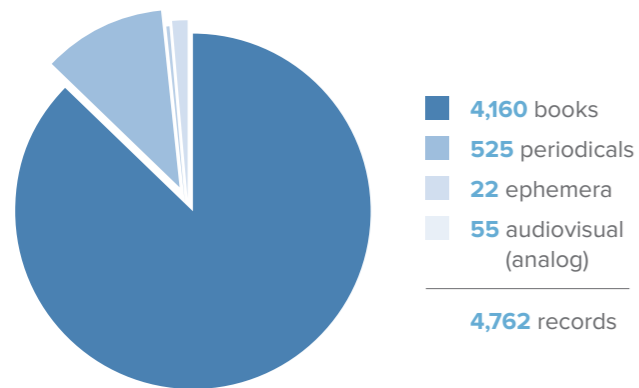
consolidate the existing collection, that is on open access for clients. The NBO also recovered **55 audiovisual records** and **22 ephemera documents** were also registered, mainly flyers and calendars.

CONDITION OF THE 4,160 BOOKS RECOVERED



From this pie chart one considers the high number of mint publications (95.7%), or in very good condition (3.3%), that were acquired. The absolute majority were festa publications retrieved from the Junior College Library in mint condition.

TYPES OF RECORDS RECOVERED



AUDIT OF AIR MALTA PUBLICATIONS HELD IN OUR REPOSITORIES

The NBO went through every single issue of all the volumes at NLM. Data was created stating issue number, date of issue, number of pages, if the issue is an original print or in photostat format. The photostat format bound in separate volumes were found to be a poor copy of the original, also held in repository, mainly in faint print or with cropped text and no margins.

HARVESTED MALTESE E-DOCUMENTS

The previous year saw the content analysis and file-naming of local council e-documents, financing e-reports, NGOs & associations' e-reports and e-magazines, government entities' e-annual reports including for 2023 and from previous years, retrospective governmental e-magazines, **747** SCH e-documents and governmental strategic plans, policy papers and their annexes and attachments.

The comprehensive mapping of governmental content creators continued with the identification of small units that generate reports. Additional harvesting was done in the financial sector, with a total of **143** e-documents from Malta-based auditing and banking institutions, in respect of European Union and Maltese financial reporting obligations.

Acquisition of the SCH national inventory e-documents continued with **747** new files and now all the existing 2450 records are deposited, with the next phase being file-naming by site and locality.

Throughout 2024, **1,676** audiovisual e-publications available on YouTube were downloaded and file-named in order of their date of upload on the social platform and harvested. These included material published by both **1,331** governmental and **182** NGO productions in the environmental, cultural and scientific fields. A total of **163** podcasts uploaded by independent publishers with social, political or cultural content were also harvested. These included those hosted by Jon Mallia, Ricky Caruana, Miirko Santa and Clare Agius. A total of **3,960** e-documents were harvested during 2024.

LEGAL DEPOSIT AND BARCODING

The NBO is also the receiving office for the legal deposit of Maltese publications. During 2024 it received **471** titles published locally for the current year, and an additional **377** titles that were published in previous years. It also received **332** printed periodicals published during the year. Efforts by correspondence or telecons are also being made to recover printed or digital copies of past periodicals, as well as the process of barcoding past publications held at the National Library of Malta.

The NBO has also continued the ongoing task of registering and barcoding the volumes of Maltese newspapers kept at the NLM and salient Melitensia periodicals held at the NLM and the NBO into the V-smart system. The new accounts shown online include *Unity*, *L-Impenn Kristjan*, *The Bailey News*, *Il-Belt Beland: Lehen il-Parrocċa taż-Żejtun*, *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, *Mis-Sillabu*, *Il-Ħsieb*, *Holqa Bejnietna*, *Lehen iż-Żgħażaġh: Fergħa Żgħażaġh Pawlini*, *L-Istandard: mahruġ mill-Każin tal-Banda Santa Marija Dingli*, *MASP Review*, *Il-Miżjura*, *Wirt iż-Żejtun*, *Fondazzjoni Kulturali Il-Mellieħa and Bliet u Rhula Maltin*.

An audit and barcoding exercise of the Moviment Azzjoni Soċjali newspaper *Il-Qawmien*, published between March 1960 and December 1999, was also completed, accounting for 726 issues bound in 24 volumes. A similar exercise was held for St Paul's Shipwreck Parish Church newsletter *San Pawl Nawfragu* from 1968 onwards and the missing festa annuals published by Il-Għaqda tal-Pawlini from 1987 onwards were also recovered.

Barcoding of the Union Press daily *I-Orizzont* is ongoing, with 5,485 issues barcoded in 2024, increasing the overall tally to 15,784 from its inception on the 19th November 1962 until the 30th September 2013. The barcoding on this publication is ongoing.

RE-DISCOVERY OF THE SALVATORE MAMO DICTIONARY MANUSCRIPT

During an audit of Melitensia material in a private household, where the resident had recently been deceased, Dr Steve Borg identified a manuscript that contained folios of handwritten entries of a Maltese to English and English to Maltese dictionary. His immediate thoughts were confirmed when a typewritten note declared that it was the manuscript collated by educator Salvatore Mamo (1838-1918). This manuscript had long been declared – by none other than Dun Karm Psaila (1871-1961) – to be destroyed when the Auberge de France was bombed on 7th April 1942 during the Second World War.

The manuscript was immediately recovered and following an urgent meeting with Malta Libraries CEO Ms Cheryl Falzon, digital scanning of all folios, amounting to over **1,800** exposures, was undertaken by Ms Gaëlle Lesenne, a French Erasmus student who was assigned to this task. A subsequent MoU was signed in December 2024 between

Ms Falzon on behalf of Malta Libraries and University of Malta rector Prof. Alfred Vella, represented by pro-rector Prof. Valerie Sollars and in the presence of Prof. Adrian Grima, head of the Department of Maltese as well as Dr Olvin Vella. This collaboration with the Department of Maltese shall see the digital transcription of all folios, linguistic analysis and an eventual co-publication between the two parties once the academic studies have been concluded. This rediscovery was lauded by both academia

and the public due to its extremely high-value linguistic and cultural importance related to the Maltese language. This project is currently being supervised by Assistant Lecturer Mr Dwayne Ellul, supported by Dr Olvin Vella, on behalf of the Department of Maltese at the University of Malta. Ellul is leading two graduates, Javier Degiorgio and Maria Simiana, in the folio transcriptions. Project updates shall be given on various media platforms.



ERASMUS+ INTERNS

In 2024, the National Bibliographic Office hosted 14 Erasmus students for internships at the Malta Office. The students came from France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Their tasks included stamping, plating, and barcoding retrospective Gozo legal deposit publications and annual feast publications, scanning frontispieces, and downloading audiovisual files for harvesting.

Additionally, one student assisted in scanning a recovered manuscript and original photographs from theses written from 1947 onwards, which had been donated to Malta Libraries. All students worked under the supervision and guidance of the Office. The Gozo Office also hosted two Erasmus students from Germany and France, who were assigned cataloguing tasks.

AUDIT OF BAND CLUB ANNUALS HELD IN OUR REPOSITORIES

As referred to in the previous Malta Libraries annual report, the NBO prioritised this recovery exercise in early 2023 with the awareness that Malta had applied to UNESCO for the Maltese festa to be recognised on the list of intangible cultural world heritage. This status has been awarded very recently. The NBO opted to prioritise its audit of band club publications, of which 96 were identified. This included those that are now defunct, co-publishers or others whose activities are featured solely in parish publications. This project is being conducted by Dr Steve Borg, senior manager of legal deposit at the NBO.

The project was initiated by Mr Donald Briffa from the National Library, who was assisted by intern Ms Danica Abela,

both of whom are thanked for their efforts. In the meantime, the NBO, through the assistance of our colleague Mr Chris Galea, audited the holdings held at the NLM repository in Gozo. This then permitted the NBO to triangulate data of known publications with the Junior College Library of the University of Malta and acquire additional raw data from the band clubs themselves through direct communication. This was a time-consuming and arduous task, considering that these are administered by volunteers, some with very scant human resources. Several identified lacunae in their own archival records with missing issues, or else confirmed instances when their publications were irregular.

Thus, the chart presented here with an original legend, holds new data with regards to the known annual festa band club publications, excluding the singular occasional souvenir programmes. A total of **3,562** annual feast issues have been identified, of which the NLM repositories in Malta or Gozo have at least **3,220** copies. The chart is subject to slight updates and amendments since the NBO is awaiting the confirmation of publication frequency to be provided by the band clubs themselves.

The NBO acknowledges with thanks the Junior College Library UoM, Msida, with special thanks to the librarians Mr Mark Anthony Poulton, Ms Katja Zahra Camilleri and Mr Ivan Portelli for their whole-hearted assistance in permitting us to recover our missing issues from their surplus stock. Dr Steve Borg also sought to recover undeposited material from the band clubs themselves and on the delivery of the requested legal deposit Ms Margaret Bugeja of the NBO, Officer in Grade C, issued a prompt receipt. Recovered issues are subsequently assigned to the specific repository. They are processed with stamps and plating and frontispiece scanning and a new bibliographic entry with classification and cataloguing data is created on the online public access catalogue (OPAC) by NBO director Mr Oliver Mamo.

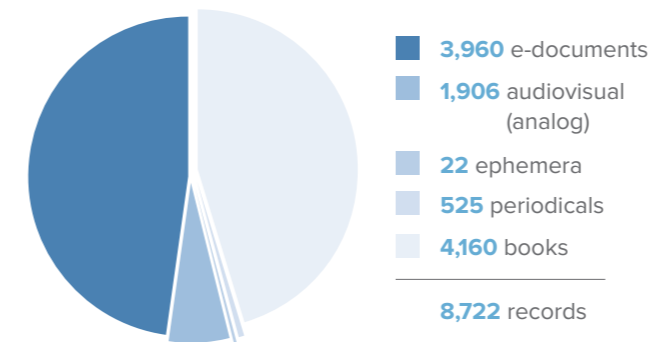
It is pertinent to note that from the initial audit, which identified that only 25% of publications had been deposited, this figure has now reached 90.4% of which at least a singular copy is held by our repositories. The percentage is expected to increase as copies from the missing retrospective issues are being requested as overdue legal deposit by the NBO,

and these continue to be recovered. It is noticeable that this chart is overwhelmed by orange shading, the colour code signifying that Malta Libraries now hold three copies of those publications. An update will feature in next year's annual report.

EXTERNAL FESTIVITIES AND PYROTECHNICS ANNUALS HELD IN OUR REPOSITORIES

Festa publications issued by external festivities committees or commissions and pyrotechnic societies are also being identified and known missing issues are being requested. The more frequent parish publications, until the 2000s, mostly published as periodicals are also being audited and missing issues requested. Focus on these thematic publications shall be forthcoming during 2025.

TYPES OF RECORDS RECEIVED



The total number of 8,722 records recovered in one calendar year surpasses that of 8,351 of 2023.



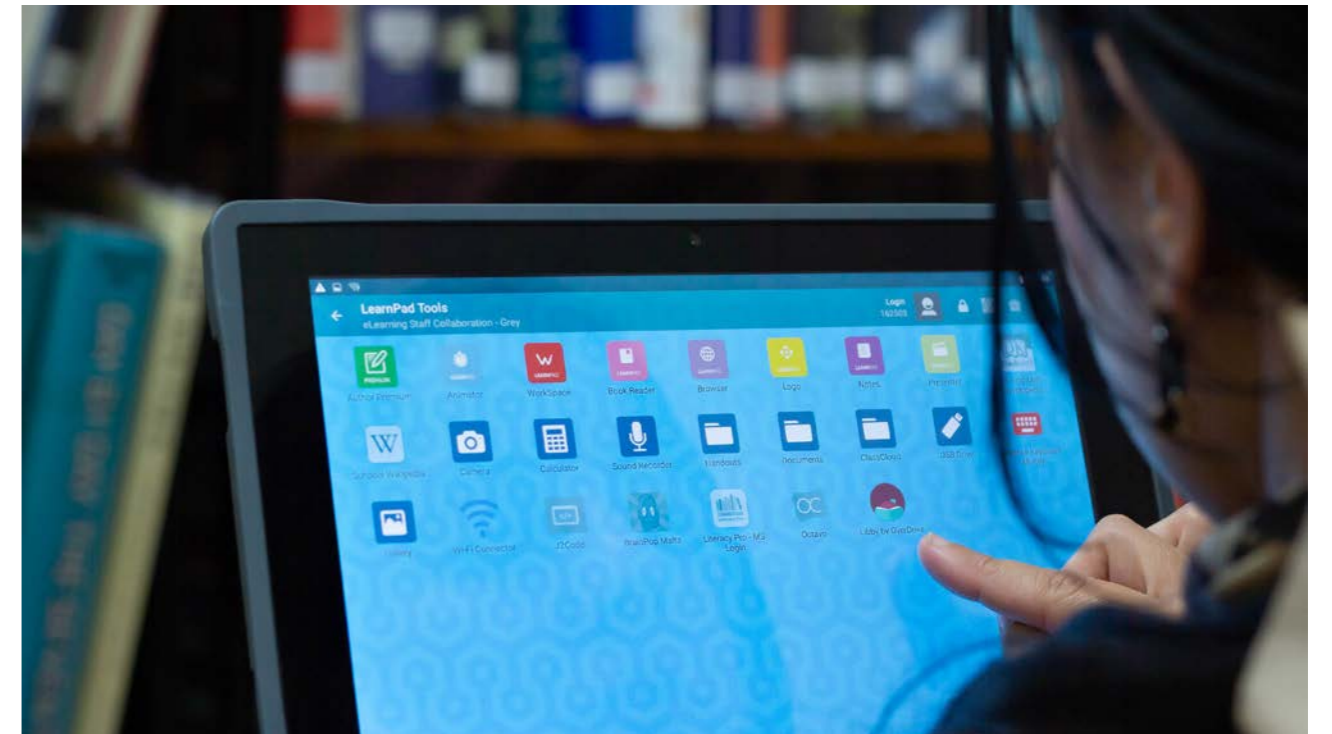
SIMON CUTAJAR
MANAGER,
ICT SUPPORT

ICTSU REPORT

THE INFORMATION &
COMMUNICATIONS
TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT UNIT
WITHIN MALTA LIBRARIES

THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT UNIT WITHIN MALTA LIBRARIES

The ICT Support Unit (ICTSU) is responsible for the management of all the ICT-related functions within Malta Libraries including the Library Information System and other ancillary systems such as the entity's public-facing platforms, including the Malta Libraries Portal, the Libby App, and the Iguana Library App. It manages all ICT-related contracts with third-party suppliers, including MITA and the enterprise system's supplier. All ICT-related support to staff including the Library Information System, as well as requests for the configuration of various ICT-related accesses to Malta Libraries' employees, are channelled through this Unit. The ICTSU is also responsible for the maintenance of all ICT-related hardware in all 58 libraries and the network infrastructure within the four main libraries, seven regional libraries and all the telephony services within the entity. It also supports the respective Local Councils on the network requirements of the respective branch libraries that are co-managed with Malta Libraries. There are 47 branch libraries distributed between Malta and Gozo and all receive Library Information System support and training from the ICTSU.



The Unit also contributes directly to the creation of the entity's ICT-related policies and is responsible for their implementation while also monitoring Malta Libraries' adherence to general Government ICT-related policies and standards.

The ICTSU also supports State and Church School Libraries, and other Government Department/Entity Libraries that are migrated onto the Malta Libraries' Information System. It also conducts all the required training in the use of the Library Information System for these same libraries.

SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL BOOK COUNCIL

The ICTSU, on behalf of Malta Libraries, undertakes the task of issuing the Public Lending Rights Report on a quarterly basis, submitting it to the National Book Council, which then issues payments to Maltese authors for loans performed from libraries within Malta Libraries. A total of four quarterly reports are issued to the Council every year.

SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL LITERACY AGENCY

Twenty-five State School Libraries have already been merged within the Malta Libraries Information System. The ICTSU provides continuous support to the respective Teacher Librarians where the Library Information System

is concerned. This support includes the configuration of specific circulation policies that are endemic to Government School Libraries, training, and monthly reports that are submitted to this Agency.

SUPPORT TO CHURCH SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The St Monica Primary and Secondary School Libraries in Birkirkara and the Bishop's Conservatory Secondary School Library in Gozo also started using the Malta Libraries' Library Information System, early in 2024. There are now 14 Church School Libraries that currently make use of the same Library System. As previously mentioned, the ICTSU conducted training for these Church School Libraries in 2024. The ICTSU continues in the meantime to provide continuous support to the respective Teacher Librarians where the Library Information System is concerned, including the configuration of specific circulation policies into the Library System that are endemic to Church School Libraries together with all the training required.

SUPPORT TO OTHER LIBRARIES

At the start of the year, the Institute for Tourism School Library also joined the Malta Libraries' Library Information System, together with the already merged library of the Institute for Education. All related training was conducted by the ICT Support Unit while maintaining regular support to both libraries.

UPGRADE OF THE LIBRARY INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Malta Libraries' Library Information System is used by over 1,000 institutions across the globe. It is therefore constantly being enhanced and upgraded by its international owning company. The year 2024 was no exception with a major upgrade that had to be catered for in the last quarter of the year, including an upgrade in its servers' operating systems. Various information sessions were conducted between the supplier's technical team and the ICTSU in this regard. Moreover, the ICTSU sent various informative memos to all Malta Libraries personnel to guide its staff through these new enhancements.

MEMBERSHIP EXPIRY NOTIFICATION

Library Memberships normally expire every 24 months so that personal data can be regularly updated. Up till now, Library Memberships automatically expired without the respective patrons being notified, except for a small note in the Malta Libraries' portal once they logged in with their library credentials. However, library members are now receiving an automated email three weeks in advance of their membership expiry, and also instructed on how to proceed to get their membership renewed in time.





ENHANCEMENTS ADDED TO ALREADY EXISTING ONLINE SERVICES

To complement the introduction of the Secure Online Payments Service in 2023, the ICTSU has now introduced an Uploads Portal where any personal documents that are requested through the Customer Care Email and Social Media Services, can be safely uploaded through this secure portal which is also being hosted at MITA.

MIGRATION OF ALL HARDWARE FROM MICROSOFT WINDOWS 2010 TO 2011

All PCs and laptops within Malta Libraries have been replaced by new MS Windows 2011 machines or upgraded to the mentioned operating system where possible. All migrations were handled by the ICTSU including the purchasing of the new hardware and the coordination for their installation in the 58 libraries that fall under the direct remit of Malta Libraries.

NEW NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY – GOZO ANNEX (NLG)

The NLG is currently being upgraded to an almost completely new Wi-Fi network infrastructure to avoid the laying of as many network cables as much as possible seeing the historic nature of both the building and shelving furniture installed on this site. The laying of the required cabling and new Network Cabinet has just been completed and the aim is to have all the new network hardware and Wi-Fi access points installed by January 2025.

**JOANNE
SCIBERRAS**
DIRECTOR,
LIBRARY
OPERATIONS



OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This report reflects the Operations Department's efforts, achievements, and financial stewardship in supporting Malta Libraries' mission to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations, to maintain and develop the libraries regulated under the Malta Libraries Act, and to encourage reading for study, research, self-development and lifelong-learning, information and leisure purposes.

2. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Operations Department serves as the backbone of Malta Libraries, ensuring the efficient allocation of resources and the smooth operation of administrative functions. It is responsible for overseeing and managing day-to-day activities essential for the effective functioning of the entity. The Department also oversees the Outreach Unit.

Responsibilities include:

- Programme initiation and implementation
- Preparation and administration of the Malta Libraries' annual Financial Estimates and Budget
- Capital Projects and Capital Expenditure
- Preparation and delivery of Strategic and Business Plans
- Personnel administration for library staff
- Day-to-day running of Finance, Administration, HR, and Outreach
- Management and co-ordination of cultural/literary events
- Revenue-generating activities

3. HUMAN RESOURCES – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights the Department’s continued efforts to build a resilient, motivated, and well-supported workforce across all libraries in Malta and Gozo.

STAFF COMPLEMENT

Malta Libraries’ headcount at the end of 2024 stood at 102. This figure includes all the employees in Malta and Gozo and incorporates 4 RSSL employees and two other employees from ERL as can be seen in the table below:



The following vacancy calls were issued during the year:

Malta Libraries issued the following Posts/Positions during the year 2024:

- Internal Position of Deputy Librarian (National Library) – position filled on the 8/7/2025
- External Post of Library Attendant – post filled on 16/9/2024
- External Post of Transport Coordinator – post filled on 1/12/2024

OTHER HR MATTERS



TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Malta Libraries’ investment in employee growth underscores our commitment to individual and organisational success. Once again employees were encouraged to participate in seminars and training offered by the Institute for Public Services (IPS). Several employees are also attending courses at UoM as follows:

1. One officer continued a UoM Degree in Public Sector Accounting
2. One officer continued a UoM Degree in Public Management
3. Two officers continued attending a UoM Degree in Librarianship
4. One officer started attending a Master of Arts in Archives and Records Management

REGISTRY

- This Unit is also responsible for the Registry of Malta Libraries. A total of 49 files were opened. During 2024 the Unit continued to work on the Registry Project for Malta Libraries focusing on two key deliverables. The first involved the continued data inputting of file numbers predating 1990, contributing to ongoing archival enhancement efforts. The second target entailed liaising with the appointed *Perit* to facilitate the procurement of hanging cabinets, alongside the preparation and issuance of a Request for Quotation (RFQ) for the necessary works to improve the Registry’s physical infrastructure.

4. FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT

In 2024, Malta Libraries continued its commitment to financial transparency and modernisation of payment systems. The following report presents a summary of the finance and procurement operations within Malta Libraries during the past fiscal year. It outlines major accomplishments, challenges encountered, and the strategies adopted to maintain sound financial oversight and efficient procurement practices.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

Malta Libraries was allocated an annual budget of €3,850,000, disbursed in quarterly tranches of €925,000. In addition to this core budget, supplementary funding was provided through Capital and Programme and Initiative Votes as follows:

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Item 5538 | Acquisition of Books | €180,000* |
| Item 7188 | National Bibliotheca | €100,000 |
| Item 7605 | Property, Plant & Equipment | €150,000 |

***TABLE ON EXPENDITURE – ACQUISITION OF BOOKS**

€65,220

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

€82,660

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

€32,113

EBOOKS

During the reporting period, several key initiatives were undertaken to strengthen financial and operational processes within Malta Libraries. The audited accounts for 2023 were successfully published, reflecting the organisation’s continued commitment to transparency and accountability. A pilot project introducing a POS machine at the National Library of Malta was launched to modernise payment options. In anticipation of the upcoming abolition of cheque payments, a comprehensive review of the existing payment systems was also carried out. Additionally, the tender for Security Services at both the National Library and the Central Public Library was successfully published and evaluated, resulting in the selection of six competent service providers.

OUTREACH AND MARKETING

OUTREACH AT FESTIVALS, EXPOS AND FAIRS

In May 2024 Malta Libraries once again participated in the five-day Public Service Expo, focusing on promoting the libraries’ digital services on a stand curated by the Ministry of National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government. The team included Conservation Unit staff who conducted live demonstrations of traditional bookbinding techniques, offering attendees an engaging and educational experience, which also included information about the endangered Maltese terminology relating to the field. The demonstrations were complemented by a curated display of historical and contemporary bookbinding tools, showcasing the craftsmanship and expertise involved in the preservation of library collections.

Notte Bianca

For Notte Bianca 2024, the National Library opened its doors to the public, offering an engaging cultural experience. Visitors had the opportunity to view *Cartographia: Map Treasures of the National Library of Malta*, an exhibition

organised in collaboration with the Malta Map Society. The display featured a selection of valuable cartographic treasures from the National Collection, including several items exhibited for the first time, showcasing the richness of the Library’s holdings.

Younger audiences were treated to *The Great Big Book Adventure*, a lively and imaginative performance by *Bouncy Zebra Theatre*, aimed at young audiences. The story followed George, a boy who loves books, as he faces off against the mischievous Bo, who wants to make books disappear. As George’s vibrant world begins to fade, the young audience is invited to help save the books and restore colour to the story - encouraging children to discover the joy of reading in an interactive and memorable way.

Malta Book Festival 2024

At the Malta Book Festival 2024, Malta Libraries hosted a dedicated stand showcasing a selection of its publications. The display highlighted works of historical and academic significance, including material that focus on rare and special items from the National Library’s collections, as well as scholarly publications produced under the institution’s remit. The stand served not only to raise awareness about Malta Libraries’ publishing initiatives but also to underline the National Library’s ongoing role in preserving and disseminating Malta’s documentary heritage. In addition, a series of info panels were launched together with a set of bookmarks containing information on the various services offered by Malta Libraries, which were distributed to the public.





PUBLIC LECTURES

Since 2018, the National Library has hosted an annual series of free public lectures, each centred around a specific theme. These lectures are part of the Library’s ongoing commitment to promote lifelong learning and intellectual engagement. The initiative aims to reinforce the National Library’s role as a leading hub for knowledge, education, and cultural enrichment.

In 2024, the National Library of Malta continued its long-standing commitment to public education and cultural engagement through the sixth and seventh editions of its annual lecture series.

In June 2024, the sixth series, *Knowledge in the Making: Towards an Intellectual History of Early Modern Malta*, concluded with a number of insightful lectures exploring Malta’s early modern intellectual landscape. Meanwhile, the seventh series, *Collective Memories of an Island: A Lecture Series in Honour of Prof. Henry Frendo*, was launched. This new series, coordinated by Prof. Carmel Cassar, Dr André P. DeBattista, and Mr Mevrick Spiteri, explores themes related to Malta’s collective memory and national identity. Organised in collaboration with the Institute of Maltese Studies at the University of Malta, it pays tribute to Prof. Henry Frendo’s significant contributions to the field of Maltese history. As Frendo noted, Malta has been shaped “by history, geography, and ethnic admixture.”

The 2024 public lectures covered the following topics:

From Knowledge in the Making:

- 26 January – “Contested Identities in the Antiquarian Imagination: Reflections on the Intellectual Milieu of Abela’s *Descrittione di Malta*” – Prof. Reuben Grima
- 16 February – “Malta and the Enlightenment: Intellectual Activity of Some French Knights of Malta” – Prof. Carmen Depasquale
- 15 March – “The Jesuits and Their Missions in Early Modern Malta” – Prof. Carmel Cassar
- 23 April – “Philosophy Books at the National Library:

Windows into an Uncharted Intellectual Culture” – Prof. Jean-Paul De Lucca

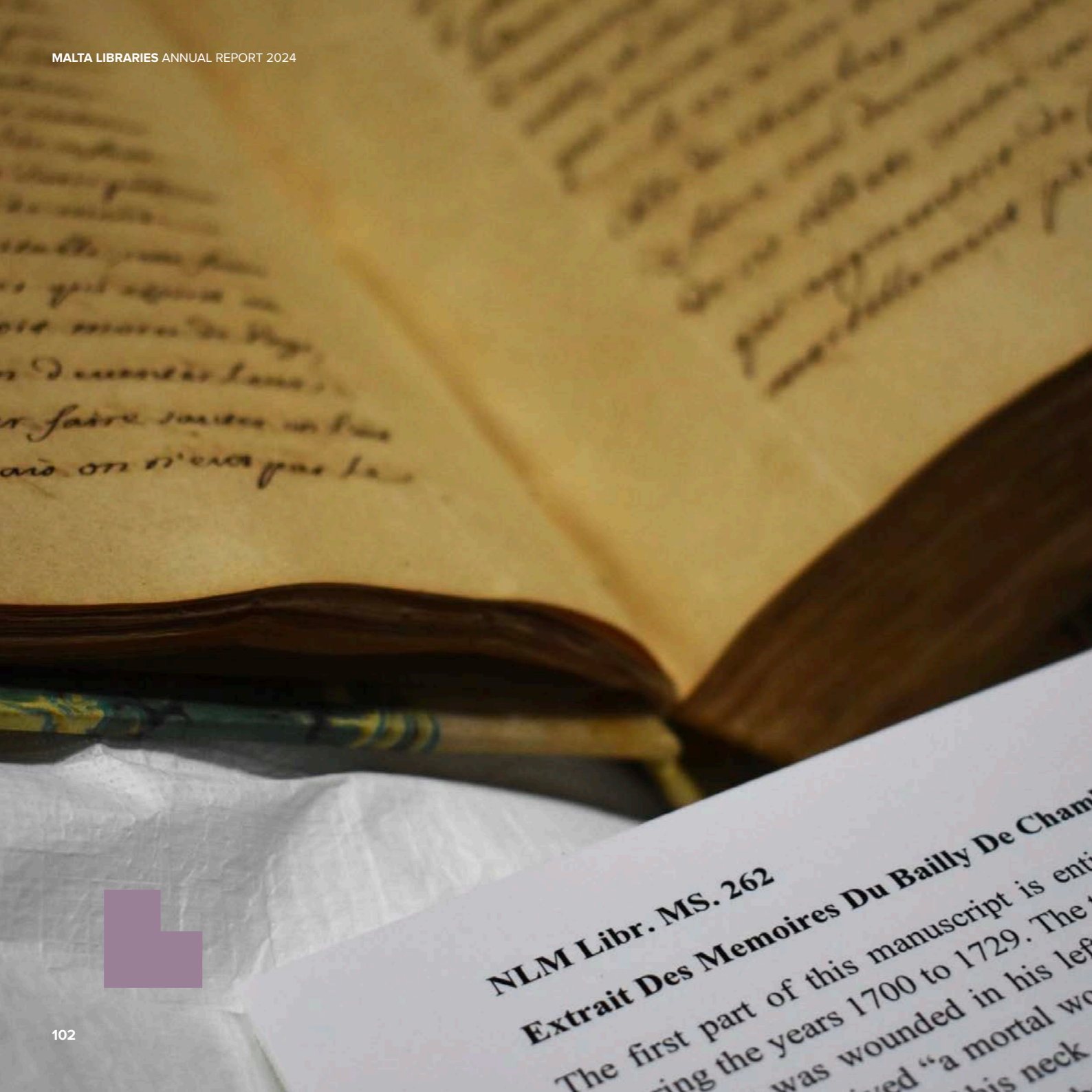
- 8 May – “Peering into the Realm of the Dead: Athanasius Kircher and the *Mundus Subterraneus*” – Dr Carmel Serracino
- 31 May – “Prohibited Literature in a Catholic Collection: The Case of a Hospitaller Library in Malta, 1760–1798” – Prof. William Zammit

From Collective Memories of an Island:

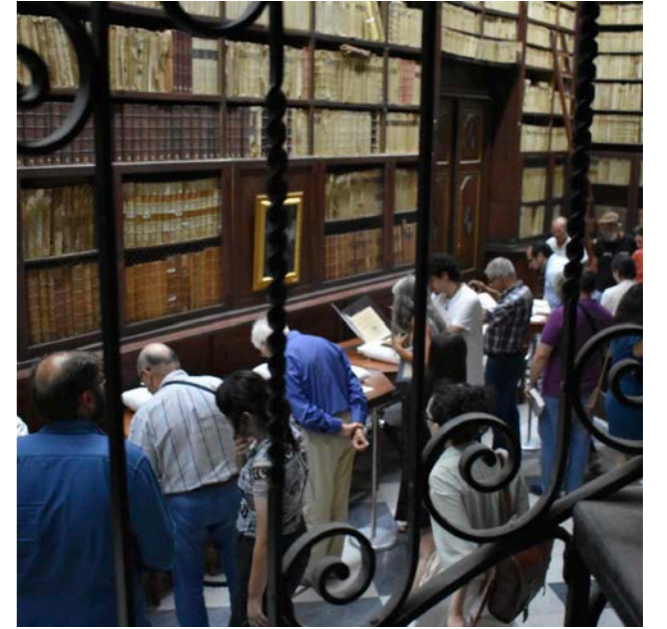
- 23 October – “The Ottoman Turk in Maltese Collective Memory” – Prof. Carmel Cassar
- 27 November – “Shaping ‘Public History’ in a Post-Colonial Malta: An Analysis of Two School Textbooks” – Dr André P. DeBattista
- 11 December – “France in the Maltese Collective Memory: Meeting the Challenges of a Lingering Manipulated Perception” – Dr Charles Xuereb

Each lecture was complemented by a one-night-only exhibition featuring related items from the National Library’s collections, alongside artefacts on loan from both public and private collections. These exhibits served to enrich the lectures by providing historical context and tangible connections to the topics discussed.





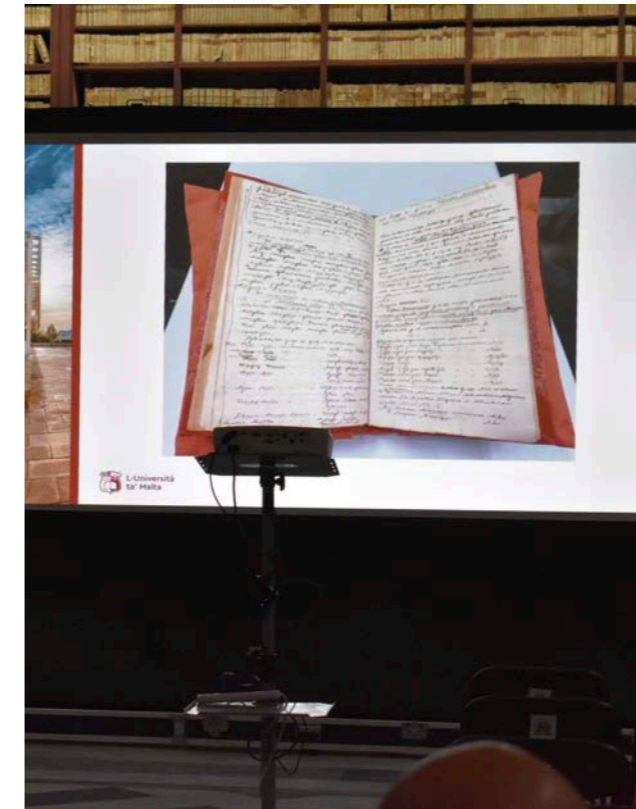
NLM Libr. MS. 262
Extrait Des Memoires Du Bailly De Cham
 The first part of this manuscript is enti
 ing the years 1700 to 1729. The
 was wounded in his lef
 ized "a mortal wo
 his neck





In addition to the main public lecture series, several other talks were held at the National Library during 2024.

On 25 April, in collaboration with the University of Malta, two lectures were delivered focusing on unique collections and curatorial practices. Mr Matthew Cuschieri presented an overview of the *Archives* and *Rare Books Collection* at the University of Malta Library, highlighting the responsibilities and ongoing work of the team tasked with its preservation and curation. This was followed by a presentation by Ms Katja Zahra Camilleri on the "Kollezjoni Programmi tal-Festa", with particular emphasis on the digitisation efforts being undertaken. She also discussed the use of an in-house authority list designed to enhance the discoverability of articles within the collection.



On 5 December, the National Library hosted a lecture by Ms Svetlana Spiteri, based on her undergraduate dissertation titled *Origin and Life of Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar from his Acceptance in the Order of St John till his Election as Grand Master*. The talk explored the early life, noble lineage, and ascent of Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar (1560–1657), a Provençal knight who rose through the ranks of the Order of St John to become Grand Master. The presentation shed light on an important historical figure whose leadership significantly influenced the Order's history.

These additional lectures enriched the Library's annual programme and reinforced its commitment to fostering academic exchange and making Maltese history more accessible to the wider public.



PUBLICATIONS

In 2024, Malta Libraries published a significant commemorative volume celebrating the career of Ms Maroma Camilleri, former Deputy Librarian, on the occasion of her retirement. Titled *Scientiæ et Patriæ*, the Festschrift was edited by Mr Gabriel Farrugia and Dr Theresa Vella.

The volume recognises Ms Camilleri's exceptional contributions throughout more than thirty years of service at the National Library of Malta. Her work has been instrumental in shaping the National Library's development, disseminating the wealth of its holdings, and advancing archival research in Malta and beyond. The volume stands as a testament to her dedication and enduring influence within the field.

The book was officially launched on 18 July during a special event marking Ms Camilleri's retirement. The occasion brought together colleagues, scholars, and friends to honour her remarkable career and lasting impact on Malta's cultural and academic heritage.



To order a copy of the publication please send an email to customerscare.nlm@gov.mt
The book can also be purchased from overseas.

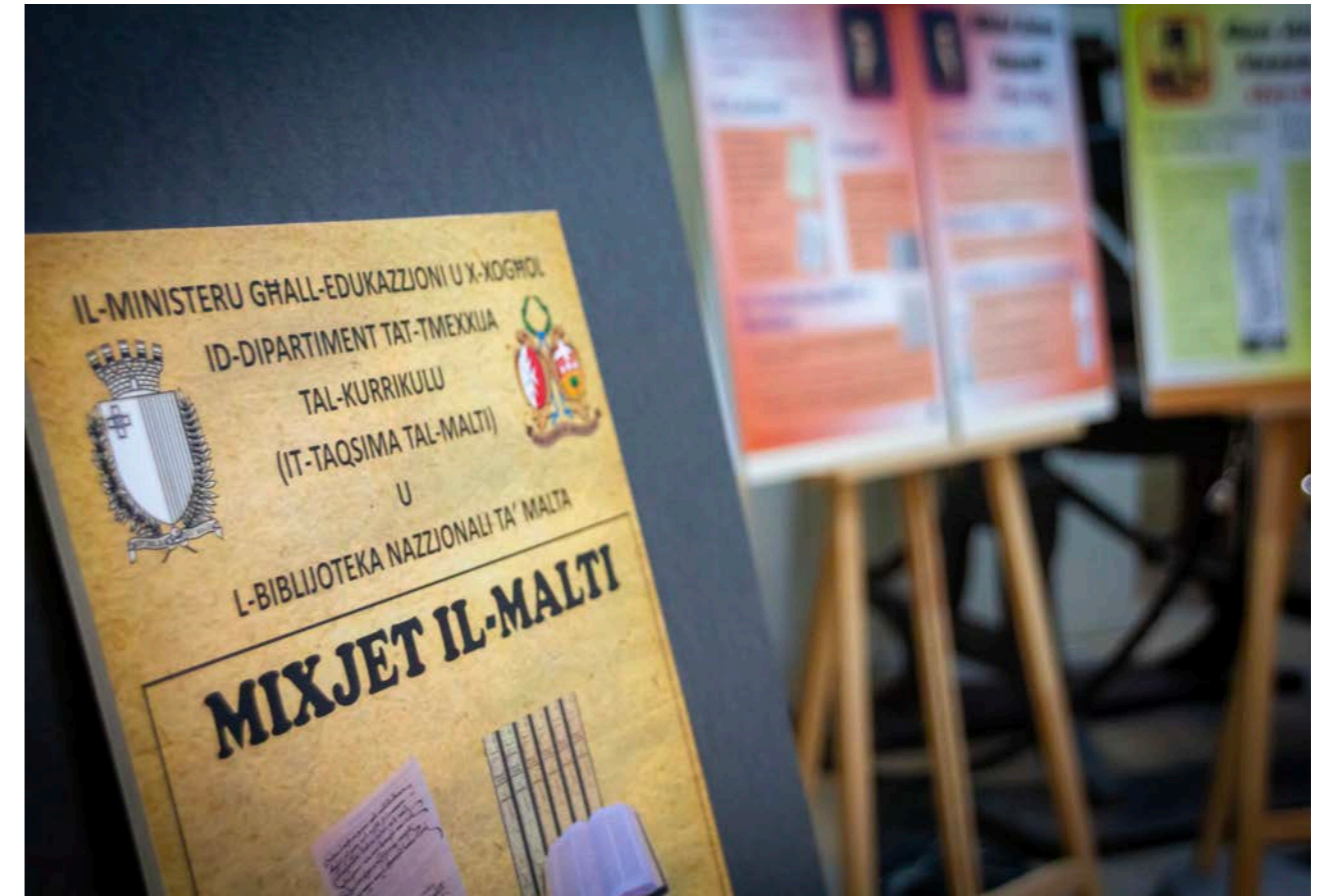


INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIONS

Libraries week

As part of Libraries Week between 22 and 26 April, the annual exhibition *Mixjet il-Malti – Minn Caxaru sa Aquilina* was held in collaboration with the Maltese Section of the Curriculum Department within the Ministry for Education. The exhibition showcased a curated selection of original manuscripts, periodicals, and publications that have played a significant role in the evolution of the Maltese language throughout history.

As in previous years, the event attracted students from several colleges across Malta and Gozo, many of whom visited as part of their preparation for the SEC Maltese examinations. Alongside the exhibition, students participated in educational sessions led by the Library's Conservation Unit.



On the other hand the Public Libraries kicked off Libraries Week celebrations with an extensive activity whereby six libraries from Malta and another six from Gozo exhibited roll-up banners containing a different story taken from the *Denfil* series of books, a much-loved supplementary reader used in Primary Schools for many years which celebrated its 50th birthday in 2024. Children were required to visit the libraries concerned where the roller banner was displayed, read the excerpt and get a rubber stamp on a coupon. After the closing date of the competition that was set for the end of August, the winners were presented with a symbolic trophy of a dolphin to mark their achievement.



Every year it is the custom for Malta Libraries to celebrate World Book and Copyright Day. The activity organised for the occasion consisted of a Reading Marathon held on Wednesday, 24th April 2024. Several authors, librarians and collaborators read excerpts of their choice in Maltese from favourite books, scripts or poetry collections during a marathon that was livestreamed on Malta Libraries' online platforms (Facebook and YouTube) as well as on one of the local radio stations. The event was well attended by special guests and included groups of residents from elderly homes.



On 18th May an activity was held with the theme: **Digital Discovery Day: Exploring the Wonders of Technology** which was open for children between 8-10 years. During

the activity, children were invited to ignite creativity and gain vital internet safety skills in exploring coding, robotics, digital storytelling and digital literacy.

With the intention of increasing library membership, the Central Public Library took part in an activity '**Family Fest**' organised by St Benild School, Stella Maris College, on 12th June. That day 45 new members were enrolled while 27 others subscribed to receive information about Malta Libraries activities organised from time to time. During the event, care was taken to inform the public and raise awareness of the regional and branch libraries and the online book borrowing service including the library apps available.



An exhibition with the theme: **The Story of Europe, Map by Map** was organised and exhibited at the Central Public Library on June 15th – highlighting 12 maps that delved into Europe's intricate identity. Presented in collaboration with the Representation of the European Commission in Malta, the Embassy of Spain in Malta and Malta Libraries, the event included a special map workshop for children overseen by Mr Joseph Schirò. The exhibition was open to the public till July 13th, 2024.



School Visits

During 2024 various library visits were organised by schools, with students visiting the Central Public Library and the Regional Libraries to learn about library operations and the building of library collections. Moreover, important events such as World Book Day were highlighted not just in the Central Public Library but in the Regional and Branch Libraries as well.

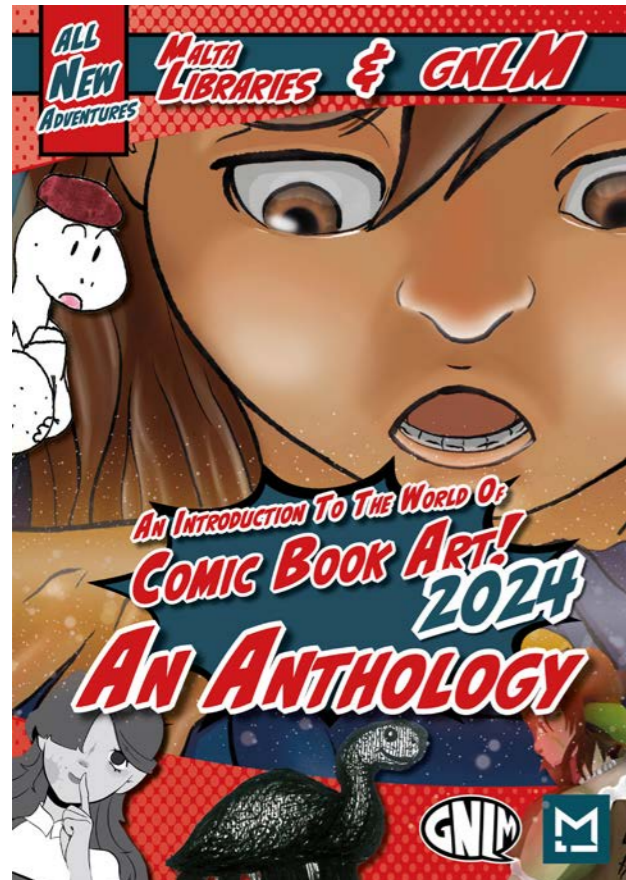
The National Library also hosted a number of special visits and guided tours aimed at engaging students of all ages with the National Library of Malta as a major cultural and educational institution. A particular highlight was recorded in April and May, when the Library received an exceptional influx of over 300 students across just six days - an unprecedented turnout. These visits were linked to the first-ever Malta Biennale, organised by Heritage Malta, where students explored contemporary art installations displayed within the Library's historic setting.

In April, four separate groups from San Andrea School participated in specially curated guided tours that introduced them to the Library's history and collections. That same month, the Library also hosted its youngest visitors – children from kindergarten – who took part in age-appropriate tours designed to spark curiosity and early appreciation for books and heritage spaces.

In addition, the National Library extended its educational outreach to international audiences, hosting guided tours for foreign students, particularly from France and Germany. These visits contributed to the Library's role as both a cultural landmark and an educational resource for local and international learners alike.

Summer Programme

A second **Graphic Novels course** for young adults was organised in July by the entity Graphic Novels Library Malta in collaboration with Malta Libraries. At the end of the course all works produced by the students that attended were to be collated and published as an anthology with the title: *An introduction to the world of Comic Book Art 2024*.



Between July and August, a very topical project by the name of **Timeless Tales: A Theatre Project** – organised and subsidised by APS Bank and intended for children between the ages of 9 and 15 – brought together a group of elderly people and children to work on a five-step intergenerational programme leading up to a performance for the community. The five sessions led by local experts revolved around scriptwriting, choreography and prop building, and ended with a final performance at the Central Public Library.



As per previous years, **Carnival, Halloween and Christmas** were celebrated in the newly renovated ground floor library at the Central Public Library. The train of events came to a close in December with a Santa Claus activity that consisted of one-to-one phone calls with infants and adolescents through a WhatsApp call. Since so many parents registered their children, the calls were spread out on the 10th and 12th December and by special request was also extended to two specific primary school classes. The activity revolved around Santa asking the children which toys or books they wished for and whether they had been well-behaved at home, and it all proved very exciting for the children involved. The activity culminated with Santa

meeting the children personally and posing with them in a special photo booth, with the photograph being given to the parents as a special keepsake of the event. Such was the spirit of Christmas at the library!

It is worth mentioning that during 2024 various library visits were organised by schools, with students visiting the Central Public Library and the Regional Libraries to learn about library operations and the building of library collections. Moreover, important events such as World Book Day were highlighted not just in the Central Public Library but in the Regional and Branch Libraries as well.



Visits for the Elderly

A number of visits were also organised specifically for elderly individuals through collaborations with various day centres managed by the Active Ageing and Community Care (AACC) agency. These visits formed part of broader initiatives aimed at promoting lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural inclusion among older adults. Participants were given guided tours of the National Library, with opportunities to explore its historical collections and learn about Malta's literary and archival heritage in a welcoming environment.



FILMING

In 2024, the National Library of Malta continued its collaboration with IVision on the production of the television series *Kitbiet Minsija*, which highlights intriguing and lesser-known items from the Library's collections. Filming took place over the course of eight days between January and June. Each session required the careful preparation and

handling of books and documents by Library staff to ensure the appropriate materials were available and preserved throughout the filming process.

Building on this successful partnership, the Library extended its collaboration with IVision in September for a new series titled *Mill-Arkivji tal-Ordni ta' San Gwann*. Scheduled to air in 2025, this series is aimed at making the contents of the Archive of the Order of St John more accessible to the wider public by presenting them in a scholarly yet engaging manner. As with *Kitbiet Minsija*, the involvement of Library staff was essential, requiring extensive and meticulous preparation to retrieve and present valuable manuscripts and documents—some of which are highly significant and stored under heightened security.

Despite the demanding nature of these preparations, the National Library views such collaborations as highly worthwhile. Educational productions like *Kitbiet Minsija* play a vital role in fulfilling the Library's mission to promote and disseminate the extensive knowledge preserved within its holdings to the broadest possible audience.



In addition to its ongoing work with IVision, the Library also accommodated two other filming companies during the year. Furthermore, an exploratory visit was carried out by a foreign film production company with a view to using the Library as a filming location. However, the proposed production required significant alterations to the Reading Room, including the movement of furniture, installation of props, and an extended closure of the Library to the public. After careful consideration, it was concluded that the

filming would be unfeasible for both the production team and the National Library due to the logistical challenges and potential disruption to the Library's operations and services.

THIRD-PARTY EVENTS

On 10 January, the National Library hosted the prize award ceremony for the *Konkors ta' Letteratura għaż-Zgħażaġh 2024*. The winning manuscript, titled *Kristalli tas-Silġ*, was submitted by Kirsten Spiteri. The winner was announced during the ceremony. The competition is co-organised by the *Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ktieb (KNK)* and *Aġenzija Żgħażaġh*.

On 25 January, the Reading Room of the National Library hosted one of the musical events of the Baroque Festival. The Baroque Festival is produced by Festivals Malta, in collaboration with Teatru Manoel, and supported by Visit Malta and the Ministry for Heritage, the Arts and Local Government (Kultura). The event featured a performance of *Bach's Goldberg Variations*, reimaged for solo violin by Jorge Jiménez. His unique arrangement offered a fresh and innovative interpretation of this classical masterpiece.

On 21 March, the National Library hosted *Piano Poetry*, a piano concert by pianist and composer Veronika Drozd. The event offered a warm and elegant evening featuring a blend of classical and neo-classical music, chill-out jazz piano, and modern poetry. The programme included pieces by Ludovico Einaudi, film music by Hans Zimmer and Ennio Morricone, viral piano compositions by Austin Farwell, works by British composer Alexis Ffrench, and romantic French music by Jordane Tumarinson.

On 26 April, the Spanish Embassy in Malta celebrated World Book Day with a session of readings of *El Quixote* at the National Library of Malta. To mark the occasion, historic editions of Cervantes' work from the Library's collections were put on display.

On 27 April, Merlin Publishers chose the National Library as the venue to launch the book *Mela ... l-istorja stramba*,

straordinarja (u sigrieta) tal-ilsien Malti kif ma jgħiduhilekx fil-klassi by Antoinette Borg, featuring illustrations by Mark Scicluna and design by Pierre Portelli.

On 1 October, the National Library hosted *Il-Konferenza Stampa tal-Festival Nazzjonali tal-Ktieb*, during which the programme for the Malta Book Festival 2024 was officially launched. Speakers at the event included the Chairman of the National Book Council, Mark Camilleri, the Irish Ambassador to Malta, H.E. Caroline Whelan, and the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Hon. Clifton Grima.

On 1 November 2024, the *Premju Emanuele Luigi Galizia Awards Ceremony 2024*, organised by *Kamra tal-Periti*, was held at the National Library. The awards ceremony not only provided a platform for architectural projects but also highlighted the efforts of architects and public figures to address the nation's urban and environmental challenges.

On 25 November, the Library hosted the official launch of the National Strategy for Reforming the Land Registration System 2025–2035. The Strategy was launched by the Minister for Lands and Implementation of the Electoral Programme, the Hon. Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi.


In addition to these events, the National Library was honoured to host a number of civil wedding ceremonies. As the Library has become an increasingly popular venue for such occasions, representatives from Identità Malta conducted a visit in July to view the space where these ceremonies are held - namely, the Reading Room. The visually striking Reading Room also served as the setting for several photoshoots throughout the year, including wedding photoshoots, graduation photoshoots, and fashion photoshoots.

Throughout the year, the National Library hosted a series of private group visits arranged by premium travel agencies, including Exclusively Malta, Maltese Details International Ltd, Swiss Luxury Group, German Luxury Group, and Bureau Iniala. These visits formed part of curated cultural itineraries and featured guided tours conducted by Library staff in the Reading Room. Visitors were offered a bespoke experience highlighting the Library's historical legacy and notable collections.

21 MARCH 2024, 7 P.M.
 "PIANO POETRY"
 Elegant Evening of Music at
 the National Library, Valletta
 by pianist & composer Veronika Drozd
 @veronikapianist

For registration please contact
 +35677044022 or
 veronikaseele@gmail.com

...music by Ludovico Einaudi,
 Hans Zimmer, Ennio Morricone,
 Austin Farewell, Alexis Ffrench,
 and Jordané Tumarinson...



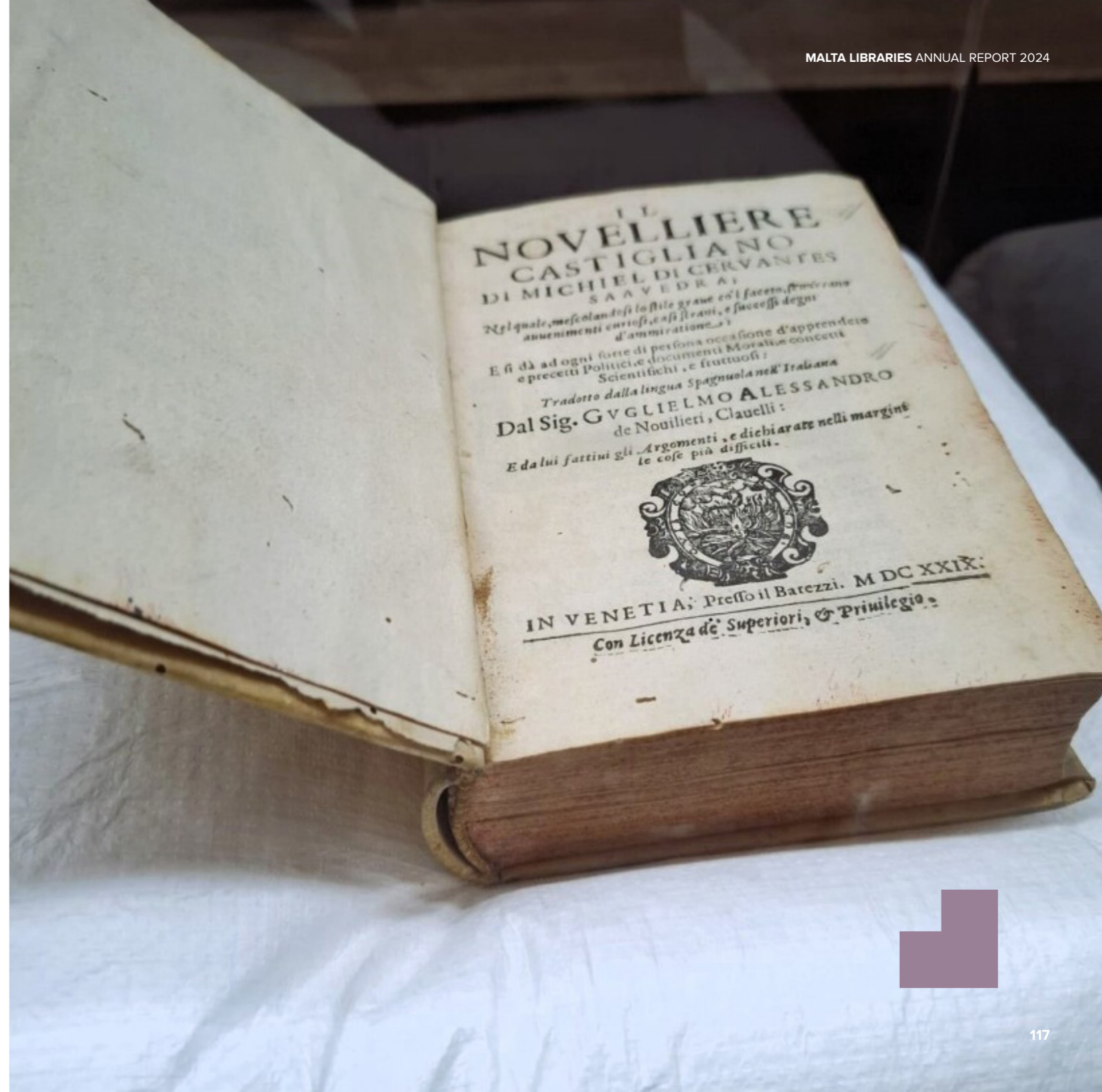
FESTIVALS Malta

VALLETTA BAROQUE FESTIVAL

Goldberg Variations on Violin
 Jorge Jiménez - Violin




(Photo: Danielle Cassar Photography)



CURATORIAL AFFAIRS UNIT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING

STRUCTURAL REPORT

Following numerous requests for a detailed inspection of the National Library building, particularly regarding potentially hazardous floors and ceilings, architects from the Restoration Directorate conducted a detailed survey of priority areas, namely areas with ceilings composed of stone slabs rather than vaulted structures. While the written report is still pending, several immediate safety measures have already been implemented to address identified risks.

LACK OF SPACE

The survey also highlighted critical space limitations, with heavy cabinets and shelving placed on floors all over the building. On one of the upper floors, which was heavily burdened by bookshelves occupying central areas of the floor, there was an urgent need for clearance. The substantial number of books that require relocation will be stored in external storage facilities. Similarly, another room on the first floor faced a comparable issue. The bookshelves that were positioned in the centre of the room were relocated to the sides, placed against the walls. These measures were implemented to reduce the structural strain on a number of floors, which had become a significant cause for concern. Efforts continued in earnest to secure additional property to accommodate the National Library's ever-expanding collection and to provide modern library facilities alongside much-needed office space to support enhanced operations and new initiatives. Particular focus was placed on acquiring part of the adjacent property located at the corner of Merchants Street and Old Theatre Street, which directly abuts the National Library building and offers strategic potential for expansion.

HAZARDOUS ELEMENTS

Repairs were carried out on several architectural features identified as posing health and safety risks. This included addressing issues with a lintel and the ceiling of one of the toilet rooms, as well as repairs to four lintels located in the Old Melitensia section. Inspections of other potentially hazardous elements were also conducted, including a crack in a window jamb and deteriorating decorative features overlooking the courtyard currently used by the Valletta Local Council. Plans to secure these elements started being explored.

READING ROOM CEILING AND SOFFIT

Discussions with architects from the Restoration Directorate resumed regarding the poor state of the wooden ceiling in the Reading Room. While plans for its restoration were thoroughly discussed, it was agreed that these works must take place after addressing the more urgent structural repairs to hazardous floors and ceilings. In the meantime, routine fumigation of the soffit has continued as a means of protection from pests.



LIFT INSTALLATION

Significant progress was achieved in the installation of the lift at the Library, especially when compared to the previously slow pace of work in past years. The lift was delivered to the premises, and installation of the supporting

metal structure began. Additionally, the plastering of the lift shaft was completed. Installation works resumed shortly thereafter but had to be postponed once again due to the need for clarifications regarding the finish of the lift cabin.

MAINTENANCE WORKS

Extensive maintenance efforts were undertaken to improve the overall condition of the Library. These included plastering and painting walls, repairing broken tiles, and removing obsolete wiring and cables.



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

On 15 March 2024, the National Library of Malta participated in the *National Cultural Heritage Research Seminar 2024*, organised by Heritage Malta in collaboration with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The seminar aimed to foster closer collaboration among cultural heritage entities and organisations by providing a platform for the presentation and exchange of ongoing research

developments, discoveries, and achievements in the sector. This initiative was a direct outcome of one of the proposals put forward during the NARCH survey and seminar held in 2023. Representing the National Library, Mevrick Spiteri from the Curatorial Affairs Unit delivered a presentation on ongoing research into the history of the National Library building and its various uses over the centuries. The presentation focused particularly on the identification of original furniture, particularly shelving, through the study of archival documents, literary sources, and visual analysis, offering valuable insights into the historical evolution of the Library's interior and its role as a cultural institution.



Between 17 and 19 April, the Curatorial Affairs Manager attended an international conference titled *People, Books & Models. The Order of St John and the circulation of architectural ideas between Malta and Europe* held in Valletta, which also included a visit to the National Library. The conference was organised through the international partnership and collaboration between Dr Armando Antista (University of Palermo - DARCH), Dr Valentina Burgassi (Politecnico di Torino - DAD and CHG), Prof Helena Pérez Gallardo (Universidad Complutense de Madrid - FRIAS) and Dr Valeria Vanesio (University of Malta - DLIAS). The conference aimed to promote a multidisciplinary discussion on the dissemination of architectural ideas, models, and techniques in early modern Malta through the networks of the Order of St John. It focused on the circulation of knowledge via books, treatises, drawings, and key figures such as architects and patrons. It also explored the complex history of the Hospitaller conventual library



and the development of architectural collections in Malta, particularly at the National Library, to better understand their provenance and context.

On 17 May, a conference titled *Documenting museums and private collections using digital tools*, organised by the International Council of Museums – Malta (ICOM Malta) in collaboration with Heritage Malta, was also attended. The conference aimed to support museum professionals, including curators and conservators, in improving documentation practices. The event featured contributions from local and international experts in the field of cultural heritage digitisation, who provided guidance on both advanced technologies and accessible tools for documenting collections. Emphasis was placed on the importance of thorough documentation for creating and managing coherent and meaningful collections.



THE BIBLIOTHECA HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Launched in 2020, the Bibliotheca History Research Project is an ongoing initiative aimed at conducting an extensive and in-depth study of the history of the National Library building and its various uses over time. During the year under review, significant progress was made through

continued research based primarily on archival sources. These included materials housed at the National Library itself, the National Archives of Malta, and the Archives of the Public Works Department. The work involved not only the identification and examination of relevant documents but also the systematic management and analysis of the resulting data. This research is expected to contribute meaningfully to a broader understanding of the historical, architectural, and institutional development of one of Malta's most significant cultural landmarks.

REPORT AND FINAN- CIAL STATE- MENTS

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
EXCERPTS FROM THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024 (UNAUDITED)

| ACCOUNT | ACTUAL |
|--|------------------|
| Income | |
| Government Subvention for Recurrent Expenditure | 3,850,000 |
| Income generated from own operations | 45,458 |
| Other contributions from other public administration | 223,595 |
| Total | 4,119,053 |
| Other Income | |
| Other Grants Received | 0 |
| Expenditure | |
| 50100 (SALARIES) | 2,908,645 |
| 60100 (UTILITIES) | 40,669 |
| 60200 (MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES) | 102,743 |
| 60300 (REPAIR AND UPKEEP) | 39,935 |
| 60400 (RENTS) | 45,475 |
| 60600 (OFFICE SERVICES) | 49,776 |
| 60700 (TRANSPORT) | 17,672 |
| 60800 (TRAVEL) | 332 |
| 60900 (INFORMATION SERVICES) | 10,474 |
| 61000 (CONTRACTUAL SERVICES) | 311,839 |
| 61100 (PROFESSIONAL SERVICES) | 454,479 |
| 61200 (TRAINING) | 4,315 |
| 61300 (HOSPITALITY) | 6,622 |
| 61400 (INCIDENTAL EXPENSES) | 1,183 |
| Depreciation | 228,000 |
| Other expenditure | 12,174 |
| Total | 4,234,333 |
| (Deficit)/Surplus for the period | (115,280) |

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

The Malta Libraries Act requires the National Librarian to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the Corporate Body and of the surplus or deficit of the entity for that year. In preparing these the management team are required to:

- adopt the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Corporate Body will continue in the business;
- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- account for income and charges relating to the accounting period on the accruals basis;
- value separately the components of asset and liability items; and
- report comparative figures corresponding to those of the preceding accounting period.

The National Librarian is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Corporate Body and to enable him to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Malta Libraries Act (Cap. 511) enacted in Malta. This responsibility includes designing, implementing and maintaining such internal control as the management team determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. The management is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Corporate Body and hence fortaking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE COMPANY

Report on the audit of the financial statements

OPINION

We have audited the financial statements of Malta Libraries, set out on pages 3 to 14 which comprise the balance sheet as at 31st December 2023, and the income statement, statement of changes in reserves and cash flows statement for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Corporate Body as at 31st December 2023, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Accountancy Profession (General Accounting Principles for Small and Medium-sized Entities) Regulations, 2015 and the Schedule accompanying and forming an integral part of those Regulations (GAPSME).

BASIS FOR OPINION

We have conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibility under those standards are further described in the Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Body Corporate in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in accordance with the Accountancy Profession (Code of

Ethics for Warrant Holders) Directive issued in terms of the Accountancy Profession Act (Cap. 281) in Malta, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MANAGEMENT

The National Librarian is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with GAPSME, and for such internal control at the National Librarians that is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the National Librarian is responsible for assessing the Body Corporate's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the Body Corporate or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

AUDITORS' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Body Corporate's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Body Corporate's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the

underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

OTHER MATTER

Malta Libraries implemented the Accountancy Profession (General Accounting Principals for Small and Medium-Sized Entities) Regulations, 2015 and the Schedule accompanying and forming an integral part of those Regulations ('GAPSME') as from 1st January 2018. Previously the entity kept the accounts on a cash basis whilst as from the 1st January 2018 the accounts were prepared on an accruals basis.

To provide a true and fair view of the current financial period a prior year adjustment was made for any accrued or prepaid expenses. However no adjustment was made for any Heritage Assets or Property, Plant and Equipment the Corporate Body might have owned previously. In view of this fact the Balance Sheet of the Corporate Body is understated by these assets.

Christian Zammit

For and on behalf of

Steven Galea and Associates Limited Certified Public Accountants

37, St. Mary Street Naxxar NXR 1406 Malta

Date: 31st October 2024

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

| | NOTES | 2023 € | 2022 € |
|---|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Revenue | 3 | 3,791,576 | 3,731,358 |
| Cost of sales | | - | - |
| Net Revenue | | 3,791,576 | 3,731,385 |
| Administrative expenses | | (3,979,881) | (3,882,895) |
| Other operating income | 4 | 167,271 | 143,043 |
| Operating surplus/(defecit) | | (21,034) | (8,467) |
| Accumulated (loss) brought forward | | (40,669) | (32,202) |
| Accumulated (loss) carried forward | | (61,703) | (40,669) |

BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 2023

| | NOTES | 2023 € | 2022 € |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|------------------|
| ASSETS | | | |
| Non-current assets | | | |
| Heritage assets | 7 | 223,402 | 147,010 |
| Property, plant and equipment | 8 | 1,039,302 | 707,877 |
| | | <u>1,262,704</u> | <u>854,887</u> |
| Current assets | | | |
| Trade and other receivables | 9 | 23,656 | 28,127 |
| Cash and bank balances | | 450,681 | 338,948 |
| | | <u>474,337</u> | <u>367,075</u> |
| Total assets | | <u>1,737,041</u> | <u>1,221,962</u> |
| EQUITY AND LIABILITIES | | | |
| Reserves | | | |
| Capital expenditure fund | | 921,014 | 666,357 |
| Accumulated fund | | (61,703) | (40,669) |
| Total equity | | <u>859,311</u> | <u>625,688</u> |
| Non-current liabilities | | | |
| Deferred income | | 439,546 | 240,683 |
| Current liabilities | | | |
| Trade and other payables | 10 | 438,184 | 355,591 |
| Total equity and liabilities | | <u>1,737,041</u> | <u>1,221,962</u> |

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board on 31st October 2024 and signed on its behalf by: Cheryl Falzon (National Librarian and CEO) and Joanne Sciberras (Director Library Operations).



MALTA
LIBRARIES
ANNUAL
REPORT
2024

maltalibraries.gov.mt



MALTA
LIBRARIES

