

MALTA

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA

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ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2002 – 2003

INTRODUCTION

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

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE

In December 2001 a customer care service was introduced at the National Library. Its intention was to ameliorate the services given to better control access at the National Library. To further Improve the management at the Library, the Library Regulations were amended and made compatible with the new service. A distinction was made between researchers and other visitors visiting the National Library. In 2002, 16,014 clients visited the National Library. These were divided into 9,595 researchers and 6,419 visitors.

Before accessing the Library every visitor is registered. Researchers can access the Reading Hall while other visitors can access only the Exhibition Area of the main hall. Services rendered by the library were improved and every customer is given the opportunity to submit his suggestions or complaints on specific forms. These are acknowledged within one working day and reply is forwarded in not more than ten days.

NATIONAL LIBRARY REGULATIONS

The new National Library regulations implemented a year ago were generally very well received by the public. The regulations, which aimed at improving security and ensuring a smoother running of Library procedures, had been introduced following consultation with a study of the practices used by national libraries abroad. Personal details of researchers or visitors calling at the Library as well as all the material requested, be it books, periodicals or manuscripts, have since December 2001 been recorded on a database from which important statistics may be extracted.

Another significant innovation included in the regulations was the prohibition of children under 15 years from entering the Library to carry out research. Children had previously been utilizing the Library more as a common room rather than as a place of study, to the detriment of both local and foreign researchers who often voiced complaints about the children's behaviour. The new measure received a positive response from adult researchers.

PURCHASE OF MICROFILM READERS AND OVERHEAD SCANNER

During the year under review, another three microfilm readers were purchased. They now amount to seven and are sufficient to cater for current needs. Original manuscripts and newspapers are thus saved being handled by readers and are better preserved for posterity.

It is an acknowledged fact that photocopying damages books and therefore restrictions on the amount of photocopying were introduced. As in the case of microfilming, this measure is ensuring the better preservation of books.

Following the introduction of the above measures, the standard practice is currently to make reproductions of newspapers and manuscripts from microfilms. However, in order to make up for the deficiency of microfilms in the case of rare books, or manuscripts where the microfilm has decreased in quality through frequent use, an overhead scanner was purchased whereby material is copied face up. This ensures the preservation of brittle spines of old books and manuscripts. The overhead scanner, which is the only one of its kind on the island, is used in foreign national libraries with very satisfactory results. The use of this machine at the National Library of Malta has so far also yielded positive results.

ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPTS

On 5 October 2002, an exhibition of drawings by Mattia Preti, a native of Taverna, Italy, was opened. The exhibition consisted of the recent discoveries from the National Library of Malta and the National Museum of Fine Arts. The National Library manuscript "*Historia dell'Ordine Sacro Militare de Cavalieri de San Giovanni Gierosolimitano scrilla dall' Abbate Cenni*", (NLM, Libr. 163) was the main attraction bringing the Italian visitors and scholars with a special interest in the famous artist who settled in Malta for the second half of his life until his death in 1699. It is hoped that the project, undertaken by the Libraries and Archives Department within the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Museo Civico di Taverna, will contribute towards furthering international interest in Preti studies.

EXHIBITION IN CONNECTION WITH UNESCO CONFERENCE

On the occasion of the Archives conference organised in Malta by the Libraries and Archives Department and the Maltese National Commission for UNESCO between 21 and 23 October, an exhibition entitled "*Norum sit omnibus: a selection of documents from public and private archives in Malta and Gozo*" was mounted at the National Archives, Santo Spirito, Rabat, between 21 October and 8 November 2002. The exhibition consisted of original documents borrowed both from public and private sources. Although not necessarily the most important original documents, the items on display constituted a fair cross-section of Malta's archival heritage and the aim of the exhibition was to show the wealth and diversity of our archives. Four main classes of archives were represented in the display – archives of Government departments, those found in ecclesiastical institutions, in parastatal entities and in private bodies. All, irrespective of their type, provided a wealthy source of information for the visitor.

INTENSIVE TRAINING COURSE ON FIRE DETECTION

During the period 23rd to 27th August 2002 the Director and Principal Technical Office in charge of the Fire Detection and Suppression System at the National Library attended an intensive training course on site practical exercises and visits on Fire Detection in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland. Contacts with Scottish Fire Companies were made by Mr George Barbaro Sant, Managing Director of Alberta Fire Detection and Security Equipment in Malta.

Mr Gordon Hayes, Technical Sales Manager of McDougall Systems Ltd of Alexander House, 91 Holmfauld Road, Glasgow in Scotland, prepared for us, an intensive course and visits on Fire Detection. The subjects which were covered included:

- Overview of fire system design techniques
- Design considerations
- Real Design Applications
- Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems

- Site Visit to Special Projects

The first visit covered was Agilent Technologies Ltd of South Queensferry, West Lothian, Scotland. Agilent Technologies purpose is: "To revolutionize the way people live and work through technology".

Another factory which also owns a Fire Detection System is Grampian Country – Food Group. A visit was paid to this firm on Tuesday 27th August 2002. McDougall System Ltd are the owners of the Fire Detection System installed.

Mr Gordon Hayes was very helpful and cooperative in discussing and answering the many questions put to him. He was willing to analyse and discuss the cooperation agreement that the Malta National Library has signed with Alberta Fire Fighting in Malta.

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