
National Library of Malta

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2011

Name of country: **MALTA**

Name of library or equivalent national-level organisation: **NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MALTA**

Name of Chief Executive: **JOANNE SCIBERRAS**

Name of contact person for international matters: **JOANNE SCIBERRAS**

Mailing address: **joanne.a.sciberras@gov.mt**

Telephone: **0035621243230**..... Fax: **0035621233109**.....

Web address of the Library: www.libraries.gov.mt

Email address for contacting the library: joanne.a.sciberras@gov.mt

Number of staff at National Library: **25**

Total Operating Budget: **EUR 164,500 +EUR 100,000 for acquisition of books**

Introduction

The Department of Libraries consists of the National Library and the Central Public Library together with its Regional and Branch Libraries. The National Library will continue to acquire, assemble and preserve for posterity the national collections of printed and audio-visual material, as well as material in electronic format. The Public Library System will provide the public with well-selected and contemporary reading material for both educational and leisure purposes.

The National Library

General Overview of recent major developments

This year a total of 7,554 persons, an average of 25 per day, called to visit the Library, a 61% increase over last year. The majority of them were Spanish, followed closely by German, French and Italian tourists.

During 2010 total of 6,947 persons frequenting the Library's Reading Room with a view to carrying out research, an average of 23 researchers per working day and a 12% increase over last year. Research was mainly conducted in the newspaper and Melitensia collections, but some researchers, especially foreign scholars, consulted the archival sources and library manuscripts. The Adami collection remained popular this year among professional genealogists and others who simply wished to dig into their personal genealogy. Most of the simpler queries were handled by Reading Room staff while others were referred to senior staff for direction.

This year, a total of 7,905 items with an average of 26 per day of opening were delivered to researchers in the Reading Room, a 10% increase over last year. As usual, the bulk concerned newspapers with a total of 3879 requests, followed by Melitensia items with 2100. The Archives of the Order of St John, including the Treasury archives, attracted a total of 1216 requests. Reading Room staff fetched 404 and 253 volumes from the Library Manuscript and Adami collections respectively. The least sought-after category of items was, as usual, the *Università* archives with only 53 requests by scholars for consultation.

The Library welcomed ten new Maltese and foreign scholars this year, a 9% decrease from last year.

271 requests from all parts of the world reached the Library mostly by electronic mail, a 54% increase over last year. Queries requested information mostly about Knights of St John and National Library holdings. Others required copies of newspapers reporting events that occurred in 19th and 20th centuries..

In 2010, the sum spent on books published locally amounted to a total of €5, 222.28, while a total of €3, 857.04 was spent on books published abroad. In all, €2, 477.21 was spent on subscriptions and memberships to foreign periodicals. In 2010, 7 new serial titles were entered into the computer database.

Developments in Restoration Field

In January 2010, Lions Club Sliema contacted the National Library to sound the idea of initiating a long-term project whereby sponsorships could be acquired in order to restore as many books as possible from the National Library collection. A list of titles was drawn up and it was decided to select the 7-volume *Hortus Romanus*, of which four volumes had been, restored some years back by the then Book Restoration Laboratory of the National Library of Malta, and three volumes had not yet been restored. The restoration work is currently being carried out at the Malta Institute for Conservation, Bighi. Meanwhile other smaller volumes are being restored by the Restoration/Bindery Unit of the National Library.

Collaboration between the National Library and other National Institutions

During the year 2010, the National Library organized three major exhibitions, *Kampanja Libreriji*, *Servi Servorum Dei*, and *The Book is a Step Away from You*, and another five on a smaller scale on the premises, as well as contributed to exhibitions in other venues. These were:

1. Respicite Astra: A Historic Journey in Astronomy through Books

On the occasion of Notte Bianca on 25th September 2010, an exhibition organised by the Astronomical Society of Malta and the National Library of Malta was inaugurated at the National Library, showing some of the significant books relating to Astronomy that form part of the Library's collections.

2. 150th Anniversary – First Malta Stamp – 1st December 1860

On the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the first stamp issued in Malta, namely the Halfpenny Yellow, an exhibition by MaltaPost plc was inaugurated by the Hon. Prime Minister Laurence Gonzi at the National Library on 2nd December 2010.

3. In April, the National Library was approached by the Office of the Prime Minister with a request for nine volumes also from its book and manuscript collections, to be displayed in an exhibition mounted in honour of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Malta. The exhibition, entitled "*Il-Kult Pawlin u l-Identità Nazzjonali*", was held between 8th and 30th April at the Auberge de Castile, Valletta and aimed at illustrating the profound psychological and cultural Pauline effect on the forging of Maltese national identity.

4. Between 23rd April and 30th May, the Ministry for Gozo in conjunction with Heritage Malta and the Commission for Sacred Art in the diocese of Gozo organized an exhibition about the Busuttil

family. The National Library was asked to lend out Alberto de la Marmora's work *Lettre à Monsieur Raoul Rochette* from its Melitensia collection. The exhibition was set up at the Ministry for Gozo, Victoria.

5. In September, APS Bank approached the National Library, requesting the loan of two items to be displayed in an exhibition commemorating 100 years since its existence. The two items consisted of the 1st issue of the newspaper *Il-Habib* dated 1st February 1912 and P.F. Bellanti's work *Ittra Enciklika tal-Papa Ljun XIII "Rerum Novarum"* published in Malta in 1921.

Participation in Conferences Abroad

1. Participating in Seminar: *The Digitization of Cultural Material. Digital Libraries and Copyright, 12th – 14th April 2010, Madrid.*
2. Participating in conference organized by CENL: *24th Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation CENL, 26th-28th September 2010, London.*

New Developments in Managing Collections & Providing Access to Collections

Restoration Works at the National Library

This year, employees from the Restoration Unit completed the restoration works entrusted to them on the façade of the National Library as well as its portico. Restoration works started being carried out on one of the sides of the building. Other ongoing restoration works are being carried out at one end of the Main Hall of the Library.

Digitization Strategy and Framework for the National Library of Malta

The Library succeeded in procuring European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) in order to establish a framework to digitize part of its collections, including its archives, thus ensuring preservation of the original material. This project aims at providing digital access to Library's collections to researchers and the public alike. It is an ICT project which is aimed at enhancing e-accessibility.

On 12th January 2010, a tender was issued for the purchase of digitization equipment but could not be awarded due to the fact that all three suppliers exceeded the budget. In order to keep abreast with the rising prices of the equipment, an additional sum of €64,000 was granted by the Managing Authority. Besides, the project duration was extended until 30th June 2012. A new tender was drafted and will be published in January 2011.

A Curatorial Unit was set up, primarily aiming at addressing issues regarding restoration, conservation, and presentation of the Library building itself, as well as its archives and historical collections.

The National Library joined Facebook on the 30th March 2010. The aim of the Facebook Profile for the Library is to reach local and foreign audiences through social networking, which has become an important aspect of everyday life, and can be more effective and more cost-effective than other means.

JOANNE SCIBERRAS

*Senior Principal Officer
Officer-In-Charge Libraries Administration*