

Chairman's Report

Annual General Meeting 2009

Introduction

This year, I would like to start with a message of thanks. This goes to all the MaLIA Council members that have, since the beginning of this association forty years ago, worked towards the improvement of the library and information profession. It is by no means an easy feat to survive forty years, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and this achievement has been reached thanks to the hard work that has been done by the various councils throughout the years.

The Council met 11 times during the last year. A word of thanks goes to Mr Anthony Mangion, Director and the University Library and Mr Laurence Zerafa, Manager at the MCAST Library for hosting the Council meetings as well as other events during the year.

Activities

This year, MaLIA focused on the establishing of communications with the local authorities and raising the profile of MaLIA. During the course of this year, we had a new minister being appointed in charge of libraries and archives. The Hon. Dolores Cristina was appointed as Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport following the results of the General Elections held in March 2008 and MaLIA sent a letter of congratulations whilst asking for a meeting to discuss important library issues.

On the 10 October 2008, MaLIA published a press release proposing that a cultural centre be built in place of the Royal Opera House ruins. The press release emphasized the need for a state-of-the-art public library to be at the heart of the proposed cultural centre. An iPetition was also launched concurrently with the press release with the objective of collecting signatures online from persons who supported our proposal. A Facebook group was also created to support this idea. This has been a successful campaign and the response from the general public to our proposal has been very positive.

Talks with local authorities and political parties

MaLIA Council members were involved in various talks during the year with local authorities and political parties.

- Following the launch of Europeana, the MaLIA Council participated in two meetings organized by the Culture and Audiovisuals Unit within Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. The objective of these meetings was to ensure that content emanating from local entities is available on this European wide project.
- The proposal for a state-of-the-art library within a Cultural Centre in place of the Opera House ruins instigated meetings with the Alternattiva Demokratika, the Allejanza Nazzjonali as well as the Partit Laburista. These meetings raised the profile of MaLIA amongst the local political parties as discussions on the profession, the current state of local libraries, as well as our proposal for the building of a state-of-the-art library were held with all parties.

- A meeting with the new Minister for libraries and archives was held during the month of January 2009. During this meeting, MaLIA discussed the current state of libraries and the importance of a new Act for libraries that should aim at improving the situation. MaLIA also enquired about the possibility to have a fixed contact point within the Ministry and about the fact that MaLIA is not represented on the National Book Council.

Cooperation with the US Embassy

The excellent links between MaLIA and the US embassy continued during the year. The US Embassy agreed to donate a number of academic books related to the library and information profession. Further talks also led to the organizing of two talks by the visiting Information Resource Officer of the US Embassy during the month of February 2009. Other cooperation projects are planned for the future. A note of thanks goes to Ms Louise Falzon and Ms Cynthia Ehrlich for their support to MaLIA.

Visit of the Career Development Group (CILIP)

During the month of March 2009, members of the CDG at CILIP will visit Malta. Although this activity will take place when the new Council for 2009 has been appointed, communications started in mid 2008 and Mr Laurence Zerafa, the MaLIA PRO, has been working hard to ensure that this visit to Malta is a success. The CDG have accepted our suggestion for a talk to our members during their stay. An opportunity not to be missed!

Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

MaLIA is now officially part of the Register for Voluntary Organisations. Following several discussions by the MaLIA Council, it was decided that we should apply to be part of this register as this should be beneficial in our quest for recognition of the library and information professional.

Register of Library and Information Professionals

Unfortunately, the Register has not been the success we expected. There is evidently still a lot of work to be done, including enticing fellow library and information professionals to apply for inclusion in the register but I believe that one major step is required. This is the endorsement of the Ministry responsible for libraries and archives of this Register. The new Council should emphasise this need in future talks with the Ministry.

Conclusion

It is my intention to step down as MaLIA Chairman following 4 years at the helm of this association. In fact, it was my intention to step down last year but the circumstances dictated otherwise. I would like to thank all those who have shown trust in my leadership and who have collaborated with MaLIA over recent years. I firmly believe that MaLIA needs fresh blood on Council – persons who can contribute with new ideas and have the energy to implement these ideas - and would like to encourage members to contest for Council as this is a positive experience. From my part, I will continue to support MaLIA, either as a Council member or as a member in all its activities.

I sincerely hope that MaLIA is recognised as an association that has strived to improve the situation in the local library and information scene. If the competent authorities take MaLIA on board and cooperate with the MaLIA Council on the various issues that are pending, I am sure that MaLIA can contribute effectively to improve the local scene in the coming years.

Robert Mizzi
Hon. Chairman