



# Information Literacy in Maltese public libraries

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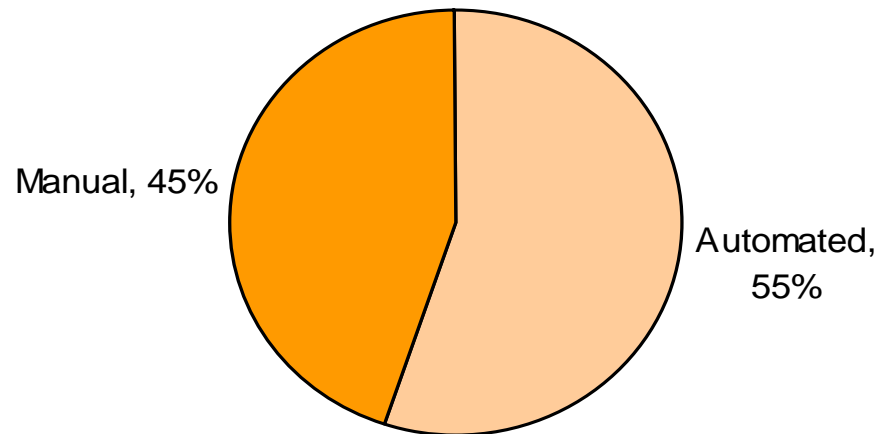
# The current situation in Maltese public libraries

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- A public library system that includes one Central Public Library, 7 Regional libraries and 47 branch libraries. There are also the Gozo Public and Gozo Lending libraries.
- Not all libraries are yet networked. As on end 2005 the situation was as follows:
  - 5 out of 7 regional libraries networked
  - 24 out of 47 branch libraries networked
  - The Gozo Public and Lending libraries are networked

# Percentage of automated public libraries

**Percentage of automated / manual public libraries as on 2005**





## Recent developments

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- A number of cooperation agreements (43) have been signed with local councils regarding the management of public libraries – this is part of the devolution process being adopted by government.
- This had led to the setting up of a committee on the “Development of Public Libraries under Local Councils” on which MaLIA is represented.



# Information Literacy activities

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- Following various contacts with authorities and personal visits to public libraries only minimal information literacy activities were found in any of the public libraries.
- These included:
  - *A user guide for the OPAC*
  - *A leaflet promoting the "Talking Books" service*
  - *A bookmark with information on the e-libraries service*
  - *A Quality Server Charter booklet explaining the services of the Central Public Library*



## MaLIA activities - Information Literacy

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- In 2001, MaLIA had organised an Information Skills Course for staff working in libraries.
- MaLIA has written several times publicly, and to the authorities about the need for public libraries to assume a new pro-active role.



# The root of the problem

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- An ingrained mentality, even amongst decision makers and staff at public libraries, that public libraries are there only to circulate books.
- Public libraries are grossly under- funded.
- Non-print material available in public libraries in minimal.
- Only 3 libraries have Internet points available for the public.



## Skills gap

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- There is a skills deficiency amongst public library staff especially in dealing with electronic resources.
- Research\* carried out in 2004 showed that only 31% of the public library staff could indicate 2 evaluation criteria for electronic resources.
- The same research indicated that only 16% could name one Internet directory and only 21% could indicate the name of one electronic journal.

\*unpublished dissertation by the author of this presentation



## The risks

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- Public libraries risk becoming marginalised if they do not assess their positions, assume new roles and undertake initiatives. Other entities are taking over activities that could be provided by public libraries:
  - The FES are establishing Lifelong Learning Centres / Family Literacy Clubs / Id f'Id (self empowerment of parents) and other projects that could have seen the active involvement of public libraries
  - The MIIT have organised My Web courses for the public.
- It must be noted that a number of libraries do not have the facilities and resources to organise such activities.



## The way forward

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- MaLIA is involved in talks with MIIT and the Department of Libraries and Archives re the introduction of Internet in public libraries.
- All public libraries in Malta need to be networked as soon as possible.
- A course on Information Literacy Skills for public librarians will be organised by MaLIA (talks have already started with relevant authorities).



## The way forward

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- Special emphasis needs to be made on the role of public libraries in the information society.
- MaLIA will continue to promote the importance of continuing education for public library staff.
- MaLIA must stress the changing role of public libraries and insist with government on adequate funding for the changes to take place.



# The potential barriers

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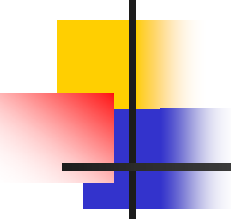
- A change in mentality is required – the new role of public libraries must be discussed and agreed upon by all parties involved.
- Implementation of technology. Networking libraries is a necessity.
- A financial investment is required by central and local government.



## Points for discussion

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- Should central government cover the costs of IL services in public libraries?
- Are Local Councils interested in such a service?
- Who will be responsible for introducing and managing this service?
- User-education implies the establishing of new services. Are our libraries prepared (or preparing) to offer such services?

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- Thank you
  - Any Questions?