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## **MaLIA and AD discuss proposal for Opera House ruins**

**Msida, -- 14 January 2009 --** During a meeting held at the AD premises in Sliema on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009, MaLIA (Malta Library and Information Association - [www.malia-malta.org](http://www.malia-malta.org)) and AD representatives discussed the main issues concerning libraries and archives and librarians and archivists in Malta and the MaLIA proposal for a modern public library / cultural centre in place of the Royal Opera House ruins in Valletta. The MaLIA representatives (Mr. Robert Mizzi -Chairperson, Mr. Joe Grima -Deputy Chairperson and Mr. Laurence Zerafa-PRO) briefed Prof. Cassola and Dr Cacopardo about the role of MaLIA in the promotion of the libraries and the information profession emphasizing the important role of libraries in a modern society.

The changing role of libraries and the current status of libraries in Malta and Gozo were discussed. Both parties agreed on the clear need for improvement in the funding of local libraries and the recognition of the library and information profession. Serious investment in this area is needed if an effort is to be made to promote the culture of reading as a way of combating illiteracy. The importance of our libraries having professionally trained and qualified staff and modern management practices were also mentioned.

MaLIA's proposal for a state-of-the-art public library to include a culture centre to be built in place of the Opera House ruins was then discussed in some detail. The MaLIA representatives provided details about MaLIA's vision for this project. A Public Library / Cultural Centre in the heart of Valletta can become a landmark and a place where people meet and participate in various cultural activities, find opportunities for lifelong learning and satisfy their information needs.

Malta is currently lacking a modern public library that can offer innovative and traditional services in a family friendly environment and this is a lacuna that needs to be addressed. Having a state-of-the-art public library at the centre of the capital city and as an integral part of a cultural centre is considered an ideal solution by MaLIA. Reference was also made to the current iPetition in favour of this project that has so far gathered over 320 signatures and the Facebook group that has over 360 members.

The AD representatives agreed that a multi-purpose cultural centre is a feasible project for the Opera House ruins. It was suggested that this proposal should be endorsed by other NGO's and a common approach should be sought to promote this idea with the authorities.

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