

Member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA),
the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA)

Editorial



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MaLIA Appointments

- Representatives from the MaLIA Council will be meeting with the National Book Council in the coming weeks to discuss important issues concerning libraries and the promotion of reading.
- MaLIA is in contact with the Ministry responsible for libraries and archives and has requested a meeting with the new Minister, the Hon. Dolores Cristina, to discuss important pending issues concerning libraries.

The MaLIA Register of Library and Information Professionals

Submit your application to join this Register. **Why?**

- It enhances the possibility of recognition of the profession;
- Increases awareness of our work;
- Helps to dispel the myth that anyone can work in a library;
- Improves employment possibilities;
- Is a tool for better working conditions

NB The MaLIA website is frequently updated with new information, visit the URL www.malia-malta.org.

by Joanne Carabott

I have been a librarian for the past 5 years, however libraries have been in my heart ever since my first library visit more than 30 years ago. Since then I have learned that Maltese libraries lack one important substance, innovation.

It is true that innovation and creativity alone could not provide results; resources and encouragement from higher authorities are also needed. Foreign libraries have successful library resources. Why can't Maltese libraries have the same? What do we lack? Money? There are funds, schemes and grants for a number of governmental projects, but rarely any projects are mentioned in favour of libraries. Perhaps we lack creativity? As a patriotic Maltese Citizen I believe that any Maltese could be creative, given the tools needed. So what are we doing wrong?

It is known fact that modern European libraries are quite successful. They have the resources and ideas but they also input intensive research of what users need. They provide statistical research projects to come up with conclusions and new ideas how to attract library customers. Over the year stereotype libraries have become extinct and replaced by enchanting ideas. Details in building architectures, designing projects, and satisfying user needs are all taken into consideration.

Maltese libraries and librarians have been forever trying to push a little bit harder to see a satisfactory change in the services they provide. But MaLIA feels that it is time to take new approaches in tackling the stagnant Maltese library system. As an association we have to stick together and I am sure that MaLIA would be able to make some important breakthrough.

Web Links

Keeping Within the Law (KWtL) - <http://www.kwtl.co.uk>

This new website, available from Facet Publishing, is the definitive online reference resource, containing accessible, relevant and up-to-date content on all aspects of information law.

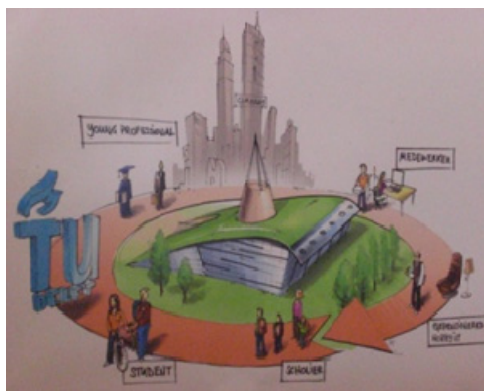
Blogging Section of SLA-IT

<http://sla-divisions.typepad.com/itbloggingsection/>
Weblog of the Blogging Section of SLA's Information Technology Division

DESIGN FEATURES OF SOME LIBRARIES IN SWITZERLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS

Tuesday 23rd June at MCAST Library

A very interesting talk was delivered by Mr Laurence Zerafa, at the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centre. The talk focused on modern library design and services of some libraries in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Mr Zerafa has compiled this information following a visit to a number of libraries a few weeks ago in view of future projects concerning the MCAST Library and Resource Centre.



Participants enjoyed the different approach and design regarding libraries and their services. During his talk, Mr Zerafa stressed that libraries should be purposely designed and built. The idea of having an unwanted room turned into a library should not be the norm but the exception. Mr Zerafa presented images and photographs of award winning library buildings, which also included innovative and modern décor and electronic library services.

There was a general consensus amongst the participants that the University of Delft Library has the most remarkable architectural design (see picture on left and graphic above) which is a seven story building, having a 45° slope where one could have a stroll on the lawn all the way to the top of the building! Mr Zerafa concluded his talk with hope that similar libraries will be built in Malta.

Memorandum of Understanding on Diligent Search Guidelines for Orphan Works

The European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) has published a memorandum in the framework of the European Digital Libraries Initiative, which aims to provide a common multi lingual access point to Europe's cultural heritage. The memorandum, was signed on the 4th of June 2008 at the Berlaymont building in Brussels, in the presence of Commissioner Viviane Reding and covers important aspects concerning the digitisation of orphan works. This project will enable users to access works that were difficult to find until recently. Representatives of libraries, publishers and trade societies have signed this 'memorandum of understanding'. Next year EBLIDA has recommended a review which includes a feasible study and guidelines in implementing this important project.

More information is available on the EBLIDA website at <http://www.eblida.org>



Selected newspapers' articles and letters

- 1) Thrust where? Three years later (TDMI, 26th May 08) - by Claudio Laferla
- 2) The Maltese Book (The Times, 16 June 08) - by Dr. Ġorġ Mallia
- 3) Displeasure of Reading (The Times, 19 June 08) - letter by Joe Busuttil
- 4) Navigating the Internet (The Times, 1 June 08) - Fr Peter Serracino Inglott



SPECIAL FEATURE

STATUS CONFIRMED
DISTANCE UNKNOWN

Reference Interviews at the University Library

by Joanna Felice

Article continued from Jan-Feb Newsletter Issue No. 124

Directional Interviews (continued)

In the past, librarians referred patrons to Special Libraries when the information sought was not found in the Reference Collections. Such requests related to the Financial Times, Standards and specific works in Theology. Patrons were referred to the Central Bank Library for back issues of the Financial Times, to the Malta Standards Authority for any Standards in full-text and Seminary Library for works in Theology. Currently patrons are directed to the online catalogues of these libraries.

It is important to note that (almost) all directional questions were followed up, for example patrons looking for a particular article would be accompanied to the Periodicals Department and shown how to trace the journal article. Other patrons seeking books on a particular subject would be guided to the open stacks, taught how to follow the signage and understand the Library of Congress classification. One can *never assume* that patrons understand how resources are organized.

1,319 interviews pertaining to teaching are the next largest category (426 in 2004, 518 in 2005, and 375 in 2006). In teaching interviews instructions and explanations are provided along with the answer. Consequently teaching interviews run from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. This type of interview focuses on instructing patrons on how to operate and perform searches on the Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), CD-ROM databases, Internet Sources and Online Journals using Boolean logic, wildcard searching, truncation, and proximity searching. Often students ask for an interpretation of results or how to use the online thesaurus to look up related keywords. Users are also taught how to print, email and save material onto floppy diskettes, CDs and pen-drives. More often than not teaching is performed on a one to one basis or in small groups of three or two. It is important to note that in 2005 there was an 18% increase over 2004. The increase coincides with the introduction of EBSCO's online journal packages, Electronic Journal Service and Academic Search Premier. However, there was a decrease of 27.6 % in 2006. The downward trend may reflect users' enhanced facilities such as the publication of user-aids both in print and in electronic format on the Library homepage and the outreach information-literacy sessions held for faculty and students.

The teaching interview is also concerned with coaching students about web content and evaluation. Today higher education students search the Internet for information and arrive in the library with information they have picked up from the Web. Hence Reference Librarians must be careful that the user does not walk away feeling disappointed with the information provided to them. Having a sound knowledge of the web, being able to point out information that may not be absolutely correct and recommending quality sites are excellent examples of good practice.

Teaching interviews may involve the instruction of the card catalogue and the use of print indexes and abstracts, for example "*Can you show me how to use this book?*" Reference librarians have to learn how to integrate and balance the print and electronic sources of information and provide that something special which would give reason to students to return again and again.

Currently the interest in pursuing education by distance learning is on the increase. Oftentimes students ask about online journals, e-books, databases, and how to manage their usernames, passwords, accounts etc. Instructions provided electronically may not be clear to the distant learner and the reassuring hand of an experienced librarian is needed in this case.

Interviews of a bibliographic nature involve step-by-step instructions on how and where to locate information on a particular subject, or by a certain author, or with a specific title. A typical bibliographic question can run like this, "*I am doing a PhD. on David Hume and politics. I would like to know what Information is available*" or "*Do you have any books about qualitative research?*" In a bibliographic interview, the librarian advises the user what books, journals, indexes and databases to use.

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Reference Interviews at the University Library

by Joanna Felice *Continued from page 3*

The time involved in understanding and clarifying the student's research topic is essential. Consequently students have time limits for their degrees. The compilation of bibliographies is provided both to students reading post-graduate and undergraduate programmes. For the three years under study, questions pertaining to bibliographies registered the lowest number (64 in 2004 36 in 2005, and 34 in 2006). This phenomenon may be due to several factors, for instance patrons can browse through the library online catalogue, examine the areas around the class marks and find books related to their field of study. Similarly, students can make use of the online journal packages and databases to retrieve relevant journal articles, books and reports. The Web has opened up a number of reliable sources that can be retrieved from anywhere and anytime. One must keep in mind that the end result of a bibliographic interview does not provide the actual answer to a question. More often than not the reference librarian is merely leading the patron to the location of a set of titles of books and articles.

Bibliographic type interviews may require the use of basic reference tools, such as citation verifications and finding publisher addresses. This short question-and-answer interview occurs at that time of the year when dissertation submission dates are drawing near.

There were 244 technical questions throughout the three-year period under study. Questions of this nature were about the use of the photocopying machine, such as paper jams and paper feeds, photocopying cards, toner, and energy saver button. Technical interviews also included activating students' computer accounts, printing, saving and faulty computer hardware. The steady decrease from 100 in 2004, to 82 in 2005 and 62 in 2006 may reflect two contrasting points of view. On the one hand reference librarians, computer proctors and service technicians are tirelessly working together to keep workstations and photocopier of the Reference Department in good working order and on the other is that patrons have become more computer literate and have learnt the skills of operating a self-service photocopier.

The last category of interviews pertains to interlibrary loans and overseas photocopying services. For 2004 and 2005 the amount of interviews regarding this service increased insignificantly from 105 to 117. In 2006 there was a sharp drop to 34 interviews. This abrupt decrease must not be interpreted as a decline in overseas document supply. On the contrary, requests were handled directly by the librarian in charge, without the intervention of the reference librarian. Such requests were not quantified in this study.

The above discussion shows that the librarian is the link to the information sought by users. Whether the information is found through online catalogues, databases, websites, e-books, e-journals or print collections, librarians must have the capacity to blend and balance all these ingredients and serve the best information to the library patron.

References

Jennerich, E.Z., and Jennerich, E.J. *The Reference Interview as a Creative Art*. 2nd Edition. Libraries Unlimited, 1997.

Kluegel, K., Sheldrick Ross, C., Ronan J., Kern, K., and Tyckoson, D. *The Reference Interview. Connecting in Person and in Cyberspace. Presentations and Responses from the RUSA President's Program, 2002 ALA Annual conference, Atlanta, June 17 2002. Reference & User Services Quarterly* 43 (1): 37-43, 2003.



Saying

“To those with ears to hear, libraries are really very noisy places. On their shelves we hear the captured voices of the centuries—old conversation that makes up our civilization.” - Timothy Healy

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