

# Communicating the Past ... preserving the Present

Roles and challenges of memory  
institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century scenario

Dr William Zammit

# Why preserve knowledge?

- Obviously because knowledge is **valuable asset**.
- It consists of **the cumulative effort of humankind to understand its surroundings and to improve human life**.
- If knowledge is not preserved, we may end up **'re-inventing the wheel'** ... this has actually happened! (Fall of the Roman Empire resulting in a regression of civilisation for many centuries).



# But is ALL knowledge worth preserving?

- A theoretically-safe answer would be YES!
- However, this is not practical, so a **selective process** has always been in place to preserve what is deemed as worth keeping for posterity.
- Knowledge transmitted **only in a verbal format has been lost** since for thousands of years the only way to preserve it was through writing...



# From manuscript to print...

- Different writing systems evolved, precisely to record for posterity knowledge worth saving...
- From the 1450s onwards printing resulted in a vastly-increased capacity to both **preserve** and **share** knowledge ... Printing quickly spread throughout Europe and beyond, and resulted in an expansion of human knowledge as never before.



**Manuscript books as art forms...**



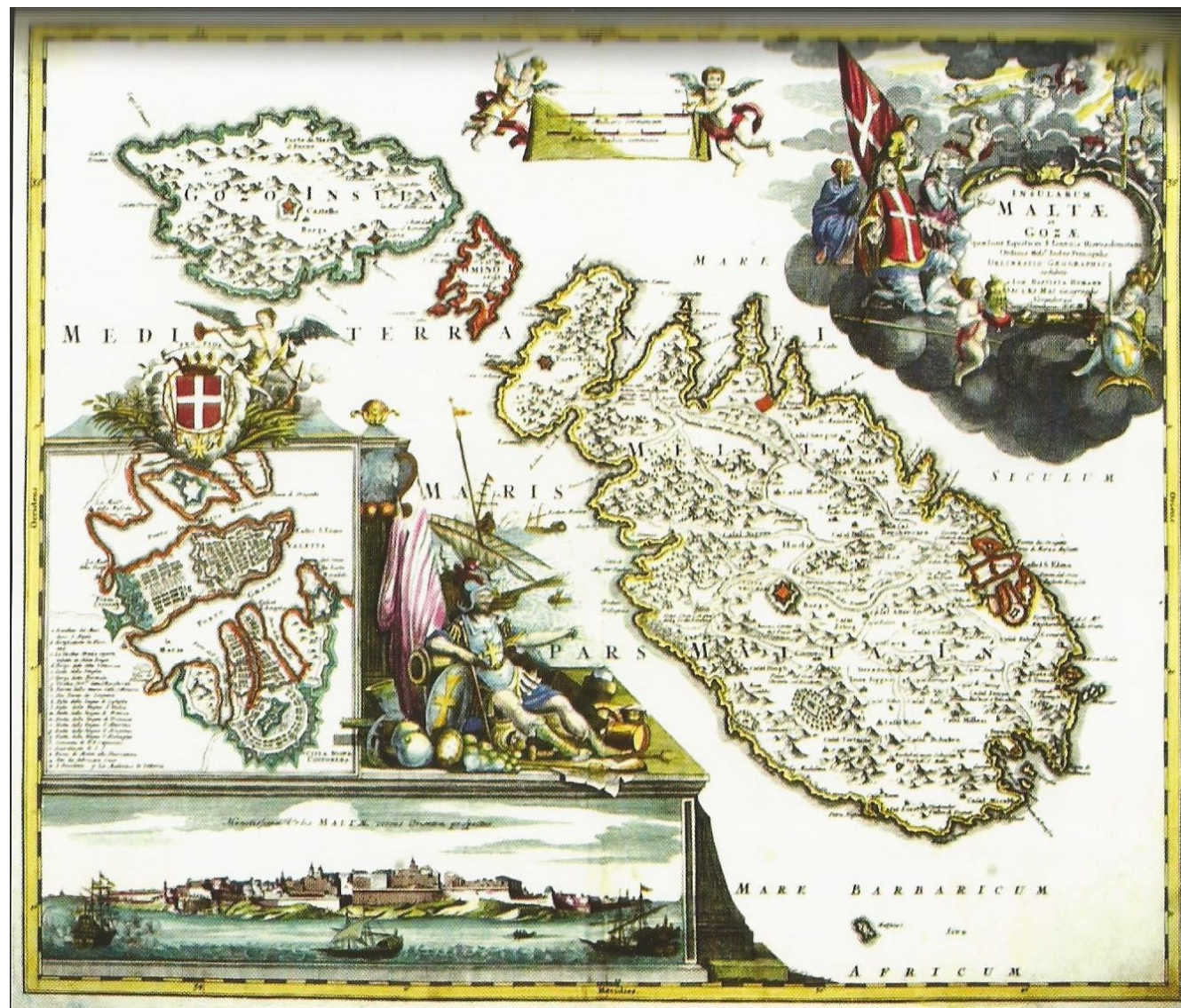














# Malta on Sale

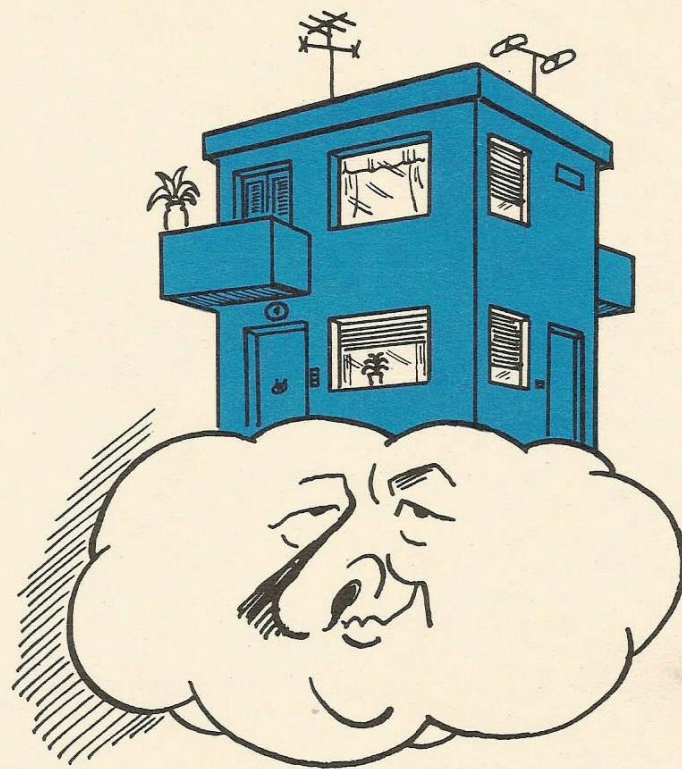
apply:

**Dom. Mintoff,**  
**B.Sc., B.E. & A., A. & C.E., M.A. (Oxon.)**  
**Villa "THE OLIVES",**  
**TARXIEN.**

Dan hu uiehed mil leaflets li fuku gejna liberati mill korti.

~~~~~  
Universal Press 25-2-55





DRÖTT

ID-DJAR  
BAQGHU  
HOLMA

- Compare life between the year 1000AD and 1450 with that between 1450 and 1900 ...
- The development of printing was as revolutionary as the development of the internet and digital data taking place during the last 25years.



# Libraries and other repositories of published knowledge

- Traditionally, the role of libraries has been to preserve knowledge which was **published in printed format**.
- National libraries all over the world do this by means of **legal deposit legislation**. Thus a **copy of every printed work published in that country has to be given to the National Library to be kept for posterity**.

# Legal deposit law in Malta...

- First form of LD law in Malta ... Copyright Act of 1888. Copyright given on those works, a copy of which was deposited in the National Library.
- By the 1930s..a proper Legal Deposit law.
- Today ... 2 copies to be deposited, with the possibility of a third for the University (Malta Libraries Act 2011).



# The National Library as a repository of Maltese published knowledge...

- Most books published in Malta and/or about Malta or the Maltese in the collection.
- Also, the largest collection of Maltese newspapers (from 1798 to date).
- Major challenge for all National Libraries ...
- where to draw the line...? They simply cannot cope with keeping a copy of ALL printed matter! Priorities (Collection Development Policies) are drawn up to address this issue ...

# Journalism in Malta

- Between 1798 –1838: only government newspapers, providing French and British propaganda.
- After Freedom of the Press (1839), private printing presses were allowed in Malta and is marked the real start of journalism.

# From paper-based to digital...

- A major challenge faced by memory institutions is the acquisition, preservation and making accessible of born-digital publications.
- E-books and E-journals, without a printed version have become standard. Also more Maltese publications are coming out in digital format only...



# The second major type of memory institutions...Archives


- Archives do not preserve **published works**, but unpublished, manuscript ones. These include the following:
- Government documents...National Archive
- Church-related documents...Church Archive
- Autonomous institutions...University
- Private companies...
- Private individuals...

# National Archives Act (Malta, 2005)

- All government documentation to be analysed and a decision taken on its preservation.
- Access issues...30 year rule, safeguarding both the state and the individual.
- Right to information within the context of data protection.

# Digital data issues...

- More complex to ensure the preservation of digital-born archival material. However unless this is done much important documentation will be lost
- (emails, reports, etc)... so easy to delete!



"Technology is so much fun but we can  
drown in our technology. The fog of  
information can drive out knowledge."

Daniel J. Boorstin

# Other types of archives...

- Unpublished music scores...
- Unpublished photographs... (the Ellis Archive)
- Unpublished interviews with relevant personalities...
- **Best of luck for your exams!**