

FOREWORD



President of the International Council on Archives

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ARCHIVAL DIMENSIONS

In my roles with the National Archives of Australia and the International Council on Archives I often reflect on how information differentiates the 21st Century from previous periods of human history. This includes how we make it, how we keep it, how we find it, and of course, how we use it.

In a hyper-connected world that is flooded with data it is vital to have access to information that can be relied on to be authentic, complete, usable and accessible. In this, the role of archivists and information managers is essential.

It appears that much of the world's focus on concerns about data is devoted to technology. Of course technology is important and I am confident that new and emerging technology will continue to deliver solutions for the Archival community, but our use of technology must be shaped by the more fundamental core values – Archival values - that transcend technology.

Archivists have always touched every part of society, whether it's business, government, or individuals and their communities. We are performing our role in an increasingly globalized world community and we do it across space and time.

Across space, the archivist can make it possible for people to connect with their documentary heritage even if it is located in a distant part of the world. Across time, we make it possible for societies to hear the voices of the past, and to speak to the unborn generations of the future.

As archivists we must influence the creation of new technology and we must hold decision-makers accountable for their actions. We must promote open access to archives because it enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life. But archivists do not hold these responsibilities alone.

The Universal Declaration on Archives, which was initiated by the International Council on Archives and adopted by UNESCO in 2011, describes the essence of Archives and the value that they provide to communities across the globe. Importantly, it recognises a collective responsibility for the management of archives. That includes citizens, public administrators and decision-makers, owners or holders of public or private archives, as well as archivists and other information specialists.

We are all global citizens with a responsibility to treasure archives as unique and irreplaceable heritage that is passed from one generation to another, and archivists have the essential role of ensuring that information can be relied on to be authentic, complete, usable and accessible.

PROLOGUE



Director of the Historical Archives of the European Union

Dieter Schlenker

Let me first congratulate the Maltese National Archivist for this publication. This comes after the successful archivists' meetings during the Malta Presidency of the Council of the European Union some years back. The publication contributes to highlighting the dynamic relationship between archives and society and places the Maltese Archives in a European and international perspective.

While the Maltese archives hold records as early as from the 12th century onwards, the archival holdings on European level are of a very recent date starting in the 19th century. These records mainly relate to the project on European integration and cooperation that arose from the ashes of World War II.

The Historical Archives of the European Union, together with its sister archives at the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to name a few, document this unique political project in Europe that aimed at overcoming nationalism, warfare and protectionist economies through political, economic, social and legal integration. The Historical Archives of the European Union documents this process since the ground-breaking Declaration of French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950, the inception of the European Coal and Steel Community with the Treaty of Paris of 18 April 1951 and, even more importantly, the Rome Treaties of 25 March 1957 creating the European Economic Community. This common European experience of a transnational union, which in 2017 celebrated its 60th anniversary, has profoundly changed the lives of millions of people.

The Historical Archives of the European Union is part of this dynamic process of societal change in Europe in that it documents the development of a common European identity and citizenship and the definition of common values. The documents preserved represent a common European memory based on the experience of overcoming war and following a path of peace, cooperation, economic wealth and social cohesion.

As Member State of the European Union since 2004, the recent history of Malta and its relations to the European Communities and later the European Union is well documented in the Historical Archives of the European Union. The documentation reaches from the first negotiations of the independent State of Malta with the European Communities and the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1967, through the association agreement with the European Communities in 1970, until the accession of Malta to the European Union in 2004.

A selection of these rich archival records on the relations between Malta and the European Union was exhibited for the first time at the seat of the Historical Archives at Villa Salviati on 12 April 2016.

PREAMBLE

Researcher

Judge Giovanni Bonello

Many have toyed with the interplay of history and actuality, of past and present. I believe no one carved the essential concept so powerfully as William Faulkner did: “The past is never dead. In fact, it is not even past.”

A nation’s archives are the more reliable part of a nation’s memory. If the past is always present, the archives are not only its commemoration, but sometimes a working model too. They can be the smoking gun, the paper trail from history to future. They store the wisdoms of ages as much as their follies, equally the defeats and the achievements, the routine and the extraordinary. More than anything else, they profile the identity of a people, its glories and its decay, its moral insolvency, its jubilees and its falsehoods.

Malta, a parched ring of rock, surrounds a huge archival reservoir. Perhaps an addiction to parchment and paper by the few literate scribes, a hoarding instinct tucked in the infinite layers of bureaucracy, have ensured for Malta shelf-kilometres of old and ancient documents – civil, administrative, judicial, notarial, religious and private archiving that has survived the centuries and has helped the past possess the present.

For years this Aladdin’s cave remained latent and shamefully neglected, but the ethos surrounding the evaluation of history is now pulling itself inside out – and quite drastically. I can herald a soft revolution on the archival front. More resources, more trained experts, more consciousness by the authorities, more curiosity from the non-chattering classes. The setting up of the National Archives in 1990 and the enactment of the second National Archives Act in 2005 “to preserve the collective memory of the Maltese nation” made the public archives a protected national value, and through an ink stain process, has thrust the archives on a wider public.

Today the National Archives, the Notarial Archives, the unique Inquisition Archives, those of the Order of Malta, and the Curia repositories are either better housed or in the process of receiving better protection. There are still scores of other archives crying for loving attention: all the parishes, all the religious convents, all the bands, cultural and social clubs, the political parties, the trade unions, many families have their paper memories awaiting valorization or deterioration. A document preserved may be worth anything or nothing. A document destroyed has neither of these options.

This better accessibility of the archives reflects itself in the current standards of teaching and writing of history. For years, quite a number of those who called themselves historians believed they would be fined if ever caught setting foot in an archive. History often ended as the regurgitation of old myth, better still if it served some political agenda of the powerful. The denuding of these myths through the exploration of the archives was condemned as an outrage against patriotism, treachery targeting the nation, archives servicing sedition. Faux history often props faux nationalism. The debunking, through historical evidence, of popular idols and legends, was reproached as unpatriotic. My credo encourages the opposite: gag emotion and let the archives speak.

MY CHOICE!

Author and Editor
Dr Charles J. Farrugia



A lantern slide prepared for the 8 September celebrations, then the National Day of Malta. During the immediate post-WW II years, the narrative comparing the recent siege to the 1565 events was developed and celebrated.
NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF MALTA – 1950s

Archives preserve the dreams of many. They preserve for posterity ideas and thoughts that often remain on paper, confined to drawers in offices. For every project there are often multiple proposals, most of which never materialise and end up shelved away. Public administration and private lives generate large amounts of records which immortalise for posterity not only the management structures of the time but also the ideas, skills, wishes, desires and preoccupations of human beings. In a number of my writings I have often quoted a world renowned Dutch archivist whom I had the honour to meet, discuss with and learn from. Eric Ketelaar rightly argues that “archives are by the people, about people and for the people.”¹ It is the spirit which this book aims to convey. While I am presenting my choice of items from over sixty Maltese archival repositories, the scope is not merely for the reader to stop and ponder on the items themselves. Each record is just a fragment from a chain of evidence. Its relevance transcends the walls of the archive in which it is in custody and in most cases even transcends national boundaries. The philosophy of archives of the people and for the people is also highly promoted in this work as a cure to the ever present malady of territorialism, personal pretensions on rights of access and the view still prevalent in a number of local repositories that “these records are ours”. Nevertheless, before delving into the theoretical basis underpinning this work, allow me to start with a few personal reflections.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The title of this book describes Maltese archives as *My Choice*. Were archives always my choice? Not till age eighteen when the death of my father at a very young age made me question the whole scope of tertiary education and pushed me into the direction of early employment. The first job opportunity that came up for grabs was that of a library assistant with the then Libraries Department. It was a time when the Department was evolving into one catering for both libraries and archives. This was in line with the reforms promised at the time to transform the holdings until then held at the Palace Archives in Valletta into fully-fledged National Archives. That made the director at the time assign me with the person who had already single-handedly managed, efficiently one must say, the archives from the early 1970s. Joseph Caruana was a draughtsman by profession and a self-taught archivist. He was probably the best person during that period to be tasked with carrying forward the logistics emanating from the archives reform.² The change was to see Malta have the first National Archives legislation and to convert three historical buildings into archival repositories, not only to custody, but more importantly, to provide professional access services to the public.

Working in the field made me realise that there was a dose of satisfaction in the job. I realised that my inclination towards the appreciation of archival heritage had its roots in my early childhood. I recall the time when the day-to-day records of the Confraternity of which my father was procurator were cared for at our house.³ Each death of a member (*confratello*) meant that I had to strike the name off from the register. Without knowing, I was nurturing my first love for archives. The unconscious message I was getting from this experience was that archives are not merely for research, but also as tools to administer. A name found in the register entitled the deceased to have the banner of the Confraternity on display in Church during the funerary mass. A lapse in such an obligation could cause big disappointments. Such an act would not be forgiven by the close relatives. Life at village level meant close scrutiny, ties of friends of friends and family networks that were too risky to disturb. It was my first experience, at around twelve years old, of handling original nineteenth century manuscripts.

Confraternity Archives hold important documentation - A description of the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and other land at Fawwara donated to the Confraternity of Our Lady of Charity at the church of St Paul's Shipwreck Valletta. CONFRATERNITY OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY



My new job at the Archives was a baptism of fire. On one hand, trying to understand the bureaucracy of public administration, and on the other, supporting the efforts of a person who dedicated his life to set up the archives, often against all odds. Active participation in the transfer of a whole archives from Valletta to Rabat was a learning experience, but also a nightmare. Migration planning was non-existent. If it were not for the direct orders by the Minister at the time to start the transfer of the archives from Valletta to Rabat, certain quarters within public administration would have persevered in dragging their feet to the move. Ironically, later I had the opportunity to study migration planning for archives at University College London (UCL). This was under the expert tutorship of Helen Forde, at the time Head of Department of the Conservation Laboratory at The National Archives (TNA). All seasoned archivists agree that migrating repositories is a big challenge. For us it was even bigger. Most holdings were not yet listed, others not even sorted properly. The speediness of army personnel tasked with the transportation process made things happen, though often not in the sequence, order and meticulous manner any archivist would have hoped for.

One major achievement for the whole team was that research services were not interrupted for long. As soon as we could set up a reading room, after just a few weeks, access to the records resumed. The contact with researchers instilled in me the willingness to learn more and the hesitation in answering technical questions whenever they arose made me ‘rebel’ in my own timid way. I was continuously questioning “why are we trying to re-invent the wheel?” There must be solutions to all these technical questions. In the absence of archives and records management training in Malta at the time, and aware that librarianship is a totally different set of procedures, I enrolled myself on a B.A. course offered by the History Department at the University of Malta.⁴ There I spent six years that gave me a good basis in historical methodology, historiography, research, and the possibility to build contacts with the top researchers of the time. This however, also made me aware that the importance assigned to archives was minimal and at the time most archives were rather exclusive in their access. While some established researchers managed to gain access through their network of friends and collaborators, young inexperienced researchers often found all the doors closed. At times, they were asked to write an official request to the Office of the Prime Minister, lengthening, complicating and at times consciously blocking the access.

All these circumstances triggered in me the resolute decision to identify archive and records management courses abroad and further my studies there. In the absence of the luxury of scholarship opportunities that our students currently enjoy, I decided to enrol on an online M.Sc. in Records Management at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle. Apart from learning the concepts of records management under specialists like Professors Julie McLeod and Catherine Hare, I also met the first group of international colleagues representing diverse backgrounds in the profession. After one year, I was successful in winning a Commonwealth Scholarship at the School of Library, Information and Archive Studies (SLAIS) at UCL. The reputation UCL has together with the thrill of a one year study period in London were too tempting to resist. Thus, I ended my studies with Northumbria and embarked on a new course in London. SLAIS gave me the opportunity of studying under other important names like Geoffrey Yeo and Elizabeth Danbury.

The training at UCL came at a time after I had already worked for ten years at the Archives. This prepared me from a practical point of view – a requirement of the course as anyone applying for the Master’s level training needed at least a one year practical experience in archives. The course also facilitated contacts with the main players in the archives domain in the UK such as Kelvin Smith, Margaret Crockett and Margaret Turner. All this paved the way for me to return to Malta full of ideas. These I tried to implement and on taking up the role of Head of the National Archives twenty years ago, I lobbied for reform. Amongst the achievements I managed to steer were the new Archives Act in 2005; the separation of the sector from the Department of Libraries; the setting up of an entity with a distinct legal personality; and the introduction of archives and records management training at the University of Malta. My training in London inspired me to insist on having something similar locally and after a number of refusals the archives and records management training at our Alma Mater was born.⁵



Coats of Arms defaced by the new rulers at the Loggia tal-Palju, Saqqajja, Rabat, Malta. The *Damnatio memoriae* (erasure of memory) was a radical penalty across the ages. During the French occupation (1798-1800), the order to remove the Coats of Arms related to the previous administration was promulgated.

of the need to put the records system of the Bank on a solid footing. They sent her to train in both the UK and USA and she delivered a programme of reform. Together with her, I set up the Friends of the National Archives in 2000 and lobbied for reforms and a new law.⁶ On her losing the struggle with cancer, I took over the two modules she had been delivering already at the University. It was a huge responsibility for which I was not yet prepared, but the needs of the sector demanded that we keep providing services to the few students interested in the subject. It was also her stamina that inspired me to take up self-financed doctoral studies, notwithstanding that the department at the time was not supporting my inclination to continue with my studies.

My wish to go for doctoral studies was fulfilled when I enrolled at the Department of Information Studies, at Aberystwyth University. My studies spanned a number of years as I had to keep up with the developments at the Archives and the teaching at University. The support by the department at Aberystwyth was outstanding and the nearby institutions such as the National Library of Wales and the Sound Archives were ever willing to support and accommodate my visits. Academics Sarah Horton, Christine Urquhart, Julie Dawn Mathias and Professor David Ellis accompanied me through a most enriching and satisfying voyage up to my graduation day.

Looking back at these thirty years of service I cannot but thank all those who have supported me through good advice and academic direction. And those rather lengthy reflections on my academic and professional upbringing lead me to the second discussion of this foreword – the different archival dimensions that have also influenced the moulding of the ideas for this publication.

In 1999 I attended the Conference of the Round Table on Archives (CITRA) in Budapest. This was my first international specialized archives event. It was another baptism of fire where I needed to initiate contacts with archivists who were much older than me. It was the time when the International Council on Archives (ICA) was led by Professor Lorenz Mikoletzky (Austria) as its President and Joan van Albada (The Netherlands) as Secretary General. That event was to instil in me the desire to have the National Archives of Malta play an important role on the international archival stage. In hindsight, I feel I can look back with a certain degree of satisfaction at the last twenty years during which our country chaired the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM) and the European Branch of the International Council on Archives (EURBICA). We also brought 251 archivists from 91 countries for the CITRA conference in Malta in 2009.

One of the persons who supported me throughout was the late Hella Jean Bartolo Winston. Her career at the Central Bank of Malta made her appreciate the importance of efficient and effective records management. She convinced her superiors (and convincing was one of her strengths!)

ARCHIVAL DIMENSIONS

Two names that over the years have become intertwined with the development of archival theory are those of Hilary Jenkinson (1882-1961) and Theodore Schellenberg (1903-1970). Jenkinson is regarded as the figure most responsible for bringing continental European concepts of archival theory to the English-speaking world. Schellenberg's publications and concepts provided the central thinking for archival theory and practice in the United States, in particular in the field of appraisal. The visit to Malta by Jenkinson in 1944 had a lot of relevance. He analysed the local sector and came up with a set of recommendations, some of which we are still working to implement, seventy five years later.⁷ On one hand it is another affirmation of Jenkinson's foresight. On the other hand, it can also be taken as a not so complementary reflection on our political class.

One big drawback the Maltese archives sector had and still has is the small number of professionally trained archivists. This leads to decisions being taken by politicians, public servants or amateurs. One of the academics who studied and practiced the archival profession for long spans of time was Dom Mauro Inguanez (1887-1955). He was an archivist of world calibre. As often happens, he was much more appreciated and recognised abroad than in his own country of birth Malta.⁸ He was a Benedictine monk despised by some of his staff at the National Library for not allowing them to continue with the tradition of going to hear mass during work time. He was later highly criticised for the binding works he personally carried out at the National Library where he served as Librarian (1947-1955). Notwithstanding his good intentions, some precious bindings were lost, after being replaced with neat yet valueless bindings.⁹ However, while one can criticise Inguanez on his conservation skills (which must also be assessed in the context of the profession at the time), I feel that we still need to appreciate his archival greatness.

Dom Mauro was born on 21 September 1887 in Senglea and reached the peak of his archivist profession at Montecassino. There he worked hard to sort and catalogue as much as possible from the richness of holdings amassed by the Benedictines. His most renowned publications are the *Codicum Casinesium Manuscriptorum Catalogus* which he published in three volumes between 1915 and 1941. He published several studies and brought to light several documents related to the history of Montecassino and nearby dioceses. His publication in 1936 of a 12th century Passion play was of fundamental importance for the study of the Italian language and the way a number of vulgar Italian words found their way into works written in Latin.¹⁰

It is not the scope of this work to enter into an academic debate about the different schools of thought and the way we are applying these in Malta. It is more fitting to simply mention some of the uses of archives. Amongst these I will mention just three: employment in the sector; the governance role of archives; and identity issues.

For certain people, archives provide a livelihood. There are millions around the world who work in archives, libraries, museums, conservation units or institutions whose main or peripheral business deals with record keeping. While the Maltese sector is very limited when it comes to employment opportunities directly in the sector, it is estimated that the international community employs thousands around the world. Unfortunately the profession of archivist and records manager does lack comparative statistics of an international nature.¹¹ There are some statistics at country level. The Society of American Archivists has about 6,200 registered members.¹² Numbers are much larger for larger countries and especially where the country operates a rather centralised and rigid regime of record keeping. A case in point is China where conservative estimates indicate that the archives sector employs more than 80,000 persons.¹³

Apart from the employment dimension of archives, more important is the governance dimension. Through the 'freezing' of information in documents, archives keep decision makers accountable for their actions. This is more needed in a world dominated by fake news and increasingly challenging processes to verify authenticity. At times records can be incriminating for some, while liberating for others. Even in this publication, I have referred to certain documents connected with Mikiel Anton Vassalli and Nerik Mizzi, amongst others, whose destiny was very much influenced by rulings or political decisions documented in the archival records. It is in the interest of any democracy to keep authentic records and preserve them for future generations.



The author of this book Dr Charles J. Farrugia during one of his research visits in preparation for this publication. He is assessing one of the parchments at the Cathedral Archives, Mdina, accompanied by the main research assistant in this work, Leonard Callus.

Archives are also indispensable tools in the search for individual or national identity. Throughout my career I have come across persons searching for their identity, trying to trace their roots and their parents.¹⁴ I have seen the tears on faces of people coming to terms with truths they never knew.¹⁵ I have witnessed the happiness of others putting a face to a name of a loved one they never saw. It is our duty to continue developing the sector and providing bigger circles of clients with professional assistance in their search for truth.

Although the publication of this book coincides with my thirtieth anniversary in the profession, I must acknowledge that the revolutionary developments the sector passed through during the last three decades could never have been accomplished by single persons. There are persons in the field who have done so much for the sector, often in silence and without any form of recognition. I cannot conclude this foreword without formally endorsing the contribution of highly committed persons as Dun Ġwann Azzopardi, Maroma Camilleri, Lillian Sciberras, Joseph Schirò and my deputy for the last two decades Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina. They worked hard, without pretensions, away from publicity, and in search of the improvement of the sector rather than personal glory or financial benefits. Their achievements have to be framed in the context they worked within – rigorous public administration or ecclesiastical rules and regulations that instead of fostering empowerment often presented insurmountable hurdles.

We were also lucky to have a very confined circle of politicians who empathize with the sector and made best use of their political authority to take decisions in favour of an organised and professional service. Without doubt one has to mention President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, the late Magistrate Dr Joseph Cassar, the previous Minister for the sector Hon. Dr Louis Galea and the current Minister Hon. Evarist Bartolo who were the front line defenders of the archives sector in Malta for the last three decades.

STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLICATION

As with any publication, certain decisions had to be taken. First of all, there was a deliberate exclusion of libraries, collections and museums from this book. This was not always easy as it required to water down the enthusiasm of some librarians and curators. In other cases, the hybrid nature of the repository posed considerable challenges to draw strict lines and in a few instances some compromises had to be made. A number of small organisations apply a mixed approach to record keeping. A case in point is band clubs where usually a small room is used to cram all kinds of records, photos, publications, ephemera and trophies.

A point of criticism to this book that I anticipate rises from the question “Why these themes and not others?” It is fitting to clarify that themes were not selected but as archives originate from the natural accumulation of records, the idea was to have themes surface naturally from the outcomes of visits to the respective archives, lengthy brainstorming sessions with archival guardians or the users of the holdings themselves. Thus, the conscious non-inclusion of certain core documents is justified through the moral conviction that no document is important in isolation as much as it is when viewed as one loop in a chain of evidence.

One challenge I faced as an author and editor of this publication was the representation of certain categories of archives. How can one represent the archives of band clubs without including an item from each one of the more than eighty repositories? The same question haunted me over and over again throughout this research, writing and publication journey. Parish archives, those of religious orders, NGOs and other categories posed the same challenge. Options of going for some scientific representative methodology were evaluated but discarded. The decision which had to be taken was to consciously allow the documents to speak for themselves. The process of letting the records speak out resulted into eighteen themes. The amount of material identified in the initial phases, and which was photographed, totalled almost ten times what could fit in this volume. Thus, injustices towards individual items will probably allow scope for a dose of justified criticism. Allowing the records to speak comes at a cost! Not all records have the same voice. Like human beings, records co-exist in a wider environment. Some are well kept, others neglected. Resources for their upkeep are often limited. Not all are lucky enough to be guarded over by dedicated personnel.

Each of the eighteen themes tackled in this volume conveyed to me particular archival messages and what follows are some comments and views on the different themes represented in the chapters of this book, and what reflections they inspired in me.

The research on the **governance** theme made me ponder on the ‘deliberate gaps in documentation’. What is written, what is implied and what is hidden from the public are characteristics that whoever is interpreting the records must be aware of. In the academic world we often use methods of triangulation to ascertain a fair perspective. This approach is also possible archivally. It requires that enough archives of different genres be open to the public. Diversity of sources provides the type of archival triangulation which will surely impact positively on the writing of Maltese history.

The theme on **food** made me much more aware of how most themes are multi-dimensional. Food is a daily necessity with so many diverse political, economic, social, anthropological and a multitude of other dimensions. This is the reason why research in archives can rarely be conducted in just one archive and why archives do not use subject categories to organise their records.

Fellowship related records put the focus on the sad reality of several important archival holdings that risk extinction due to their orphan status. Our nation took long to acknowledge and accept the fine territorial lines of ownership of such records. There is an urgent need to allocate funding by the State to support this sector. A system of central funding managed by the National Archives can help a lot to give a boost to those semi-private or private organisations that are ready to preserve and open their archives. It can also encourage registration of the same material in the National Register of Archives and also justify Government intervention on material that is owned by third parties including the Catholic Church.

The documentation in a number of archives hints towards a Maltese economy entirely dependent on the **sea** for a number of centuries. Whole fonds such as the *Consolato del Mare* shed light on the dependence of the population on seafaring activity.

The theme **death**, which also covers the concept of an afterlife, is a constant occurrence applicable to all and thus, is well documented in our archives. The process of documentation is often succinct and well-regulated. Thus, it is wanting in portraying the feelings, rituals and human element that surrounds the event. Oral evidence collected through the *Memorja* project run by the National Archives of Malta is managing to introduce into our archives a component of feelings and emotions not necessarily captured in official documentation.

Visitors tries to depict the impact of those arriving in Malta. Some have their story well-documented as in the case of St Paul or Garibaldi. Others had their story buried with them on the Mediterranean seabed.

Archives do have a duty to capture the widest depictions of community memory, and again the oral archives initiative *Memorja* is filling a lot of gaps.

For a number of years the Teachers' Documentation Centre ably led by librarian Charles Cilia did a sterling job at preserving educational records. Nowadays this process is centralised at the National Archives of Malta but the sector still faces big challenges. In particular, the upkeep of adequate documentation of current events is proving challenging. The overcautious approach and narrow interpretation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in Malta is endangering the future documentation of educational activities. In this publication I opted for the theme **education** to focus on some of the rich records of the country's educational services in years gone by.

The research in just a few band clubs strengthened my belief that these repositories are invaluable for a holistic history of the country. This came as no surprise as I had already researched intensely in a number of band clubs for my previous historical dissertations. Grouped under the theme **leisure**, drawings of festa decorations and also the record of band performances are just a few indications of the potential of these holdings. However, drilling down to the sources requires well structured and designed finding aids. Good inventorying and cataloguing is a must for effective access to the research community. The initiatives taken lately by the *Għaqda Każini tal-Banda* and in which I was actively involved were a first for the sector. Through financial support from the Government, band clubs are being invited to receive free of charge digitisation of their archives. Yet work still has to be done on convincing these clubs that by sharing their archival richness they strengthen and not weaken their scope in society.

The documents published in the section **national consciousness** are enough to emphasize the role of archives as guardians of national memory. Reading the secondary sources only is risky and often relays perceptions that are biased on purpose due to political agendas. Archives safeguard the behind closed doors dealings and the intentions rather than the *fait accompli* that is often the publicised outcome of long and complex dealings.

This book is being published at a time when Malta is experiencing an unprecedented wave of aggressive construction and **infrastructure** projects. In all this the archival record assumes an added importance. Most of the records reacquire a primary purpose as indispensable tools in the planning and design process.

The topic of **design** was inspired by the identification of two drawings from the hands of Emvin Cremona found at the parish archives of Mosta. What was surprising was that these were for feast banners. Thus these two rather small sketches provide an archival link between prominent Maltese artists, the outdoor decorations for feasts and the parochial church authorities. The items provide art historians interested in the theme an opportunity to study to what extent the designs by Cremona gained ground or not in Mosta. It was for this reason that I asked our photographer Daniel Cilia to revisit Mosta during the feast and capture on camera the banners designed by Cremona that actually materialized and are still in use. In my opinion the Cremona involvement in Mosta was a missed opportunity for the sector to break from the past and shift away from the Baroque inspired designs of our festa decorations.

Another observation was that in most cases works of art differ in detail from the drawing board to the actual artefact. A case in point is the design by Salvu Bugeja for the Mqabba bandstand and the final more elaborate artistic product. This is often the result of a complexity of factors. Thus, one needs to appreciate more the value of archives in providing us with context and the initial idea of the designer up to its development to the final product.

If there is a proof that archives are worth keeping it is the documentation especially visual of what is no longer in existence – **vanished Malta**. We treasure photos and letters of our deceased family members. There would not have been any controversy on City Gate and whether or not to rebuild the Middleton Barry theatre in Valletta had we not seen the photos and designs of the previous edifices. And this can only be achieved through archives.

The **language** debate is ever ongoing in Malta. The language question was never really entirely resolved. Archives do help us to better understand this never ending debate. Due importance must be given to private papers for a holistic understanding of the issue. Capturing dialects, sayings, idioms and soundscapes have also



One of a series of images taken by Richard Ellis during the rescue operations carried out by the British Navy stationed in Malta at Messina following the earthquake in 1908.

RICHARD ELLIS ARCHIVE

entered the job description of archivists. The interviews added on the online component of this book just give a small taste of the wealth of data oral archives will preserve for future researchers.

One other desire for the future is that the considerable amounts of religious and church archives documenting **religion and ritual** aspects are upgraded to reach the levels of service of central archives like the one of the Mdina Cathedral. The challenge is huge but the research for this publication reaffirmed my belief of the enormous wealth that exists in our archives that deserve the best.

The section entitled **trauma** was the one which presented me with great difficulty in cutting down on the number of items eligible for inclusion. The reason is that most of the instances documented originate from war, death or other calamities. In most of these cases the event generates compulsory documentary evidence. It is a case in point that the instigators of tragedy, crime and illicit activity are more prone to find themselves recorded in the annals of state memory.

Some of the documents identified and grouped under the theme **night and time** resulted from gradual transitions from a life dictated by religious festivities, rituals and time-frames, to one that is more secular. Innovation led to tools aimed at overcoming darkness and extending the work and leisure time brackets beyond the restrictive natural night and day time zones.

The movement of people also leaves traces in our archives. Thousands of Maltese moved outside Malta to find a better future, employment opportunities or to conduct missionary work. The archival holdings created by **Maltese out of Malta** and those which do not reside in a local repository were not included in this book. However, there is an urgent need for action to safeguard the archives of Maltese communities abroad that are gradually winding up their operations.¹⁶

The concluding theme of the book relates to the **family** and the way family matters are documented in the formal records such as births, marriages and deaths and other not so formal documentation, such as personal diaries and ephemera. Family trees, Coats of Arms and other genealogical sources have been researched to put together a diverse selection of items around this theme. Even in this area, the State needs to be more proactive by digitising and putting online the Public Registry records. Acquiring more Giuliani from private hands will also make it possible for family research to acquire the same status it has in other European countries.¹⁷



A sepia-toned print showing the extended Ellis family. The three generations of photographers are considered as the most important creators of photographic records in Malta. The original negative of this print no longer exists.

RICHARD ELLIS ARCHIVE

READING THROUGH THE BOOK

This publication gives preference to the visual element and transmits to the readers a sense of touch and feel of the documents discussed. It does not try to portray a romantic perspective of archives. It is an effort to present the documents as they are – at times with their imperfections and ageing signs. The selection of the records was not driven by aesthetics but by importance in terms of content, format or uniqueness of typology. It is for this reason that in each caption I give prominence to the date (when available) and the typology of the record.

The captions do not aspire to transmit any in-depth academic assessment but the basic facts and interesting aspects of each document. In some instances, originating offices did provide detailed write-ups about artefacts. In other instances, the institution was not able to provide any type of information, not even a reference number. This diversity is reflected in the captions of the book. It should not be interpreted as a weakness of the research or the sector itself. It is a reflection which in itself is insightful of the diversity in the level of sophistication of the archives sector in Malta.

Going through the pages should instil in readers the inquisitive spirit to ask for more, to open up research about specific items. I hope that readers come to know about a number of archives that were unknown to them. As much as the compendium of archival institutions in Malta that I published in my *L-Arkiivji ta' Malta* in 2006 aimed to act as a quick directory to archival services, this book tries to do a similar job in a visual manner. It is also hoped, that the process of research makes a number of custodians of archives realise the wealth of holdings they are entrusted with.

A significant challenge was how to present the audio-visual archives that are as rich as the traditional archives. Initially we planned to have a CD or a memory pen attached to the book. Arguments about the longevity of these media remind us all of the major issue archives are facing – the challenge of the digital disruption. There were also cost considerations that the publishers had to deal with. At the end it was decided to build up a web-site, linked to the book by a number of QR codes. The advantage of this approach is that it will make the audio-visual section of the book dynamic. It is hoped that we will keep updating this part of the publication and render it as an interactive link with the readers of the book.

THE FUTURE OF MALTESE ARCHIVES

The Maltese archives sector has come a long way. From an exclusive club it has opened up its doors. From a sector in which volunteering was extremely limited, it has become “fashionable” to volunteer in an archive. From a sector begging for resources from other sectors it has started to attract direct funding, although the level of such funding is still disproportionately small. The domain has also found itself included in electoral manifestos, even for a large investment in a new National Archives building. On 4 June 2019 a number of Ministers presided over the signing of a contract between the Lands Authority and the National Archives, granting a 12,000 square metre plot of land at Ta’ Qali for the building of an iconic National Archives. I do consider this as the major challenge I will face in my professional career. There is a great responsibility in such a project and I am confident that with the capacity building we gradually carried out over the last decades, we will rise to the occasion.

The political decision for this country to invest in the first purpose-built National Archives was to some extent the crowning of the work by a group of dedicated people mentioned above. It is a confirmation that separating the archives sector from the libraries domain in 2005 made sense. The setting up of an entity with a distinct legal personality made it possible to focus on priorities. It also made it possible to launch specialised archives training courses at the University. It also paved the way for the setting up of a network of records professionals in public administration and the National Forum on Archives that convenes every two years.

Notwithstanding all this, limitations still abound. In my view these are the main limitations we need to overcome:

1. There is still the attachment with personalities rather than institutions. The main risks of such an approach are the threat to the guaranteeing of continuity and the unwarranted territorial battles and turf protection that often results. Archivists or guardians of records need to understand that the records they guard are not theirs. They are ‘hired guardians’ entrusted over their protection for a short period of time.

2. Finding aids are either non-existent or if available are rather amateurish. We need urgent investment in finding aids developed by professionally trained archivists.

3. General ignorance amongst decision-makers on the intellectual and physical aspects of archives. Decisions are often taken by politicians, top civil servants or pretentious persons who are articulate enough to put together nicely structured proposals not always inspired by sound archival thinking.

4. Shifting archives into the realm of decision-making. Records should be the driving force of decision-making. Most of our archives are looked upon as antiquarian collectors’ dens. The hurdles to arrive at information at the right place and time is rendering the potential of our records dormant.

5. The digital disruption should be turned into an opportunity. Innovative IT solutions such as blockchain poses big challenges ahead. It is a shift from the traditional trusted repositories to distributed repositories built on distributed trust. This challenge comes at a time when most archives have not yet gained the desired trust levels in the public eye.

The main ambition in my career is to inspire others to follow in my footsteps and make archives their choice. It is not a choice in favour of old paper! Nor is it one that chases exhibition openings, launching of books and feasting on shrimp-filled barquettes and champagne. The satisfaction of any archivist rests elsewhere. It is a choice in favour of the people, good governance, accountability and the preservation of the community memory for future generations.

The holdings in archives can also be considered as identity-building blocks. Whether it is the identity of individuals or of localities or whole ethnic communities and nations, there is no better tool to identify our roots, foster and celebrate them through archival records. It is hoped that this publication will be another small contribution towards a more educated public about the role, diversity and importance of archives in society.

This venture would not have materialized without the support of many. Thus, final words of thanks go to all those who supported this venture. It all started with a discussion with Medelaine Vella de Fremaux who also treasures a love for archives, inspired by Hella Jean Bartolo Winston. Gradually the idea of the book



The largest grouping of international archivists in Malta so far. Between 8 and 21 November 2009 the 41st International Conference of the Round Table on Archives met in Malta. This commemorative photo on the steps of Auberge de Castille was taken on 22 November 2009. PHOTO: STEPHEN BUSUTTIL

was formed and a formal proposal submitted. Once there was a decision by Miller Publishers to invest in this project, work started. Hundreds of people who have some connection with archives helped in the identification of documents, providing information for captions and negotiating access to archival holdings – some of which were rather obscure and inaccessible. This joint effort was in itself a positive collaborative experience for the sector. It helped to raise awareness, build new friendships between professionals and volunteers and put a focus on a number of forgotten holdings.

A small team of colleagues from my staff at the National Archives made this project possible. Leonard Callus was present throughout with his enthusiasm, historical knowledge and readiness to work against strict deadlines. Support was also received from Rita Vella Brincat who did a lot of logistical work and Ivan Ellul who helped with the identification of certain material, especially of an audio-visual nature. The representation of the audio-visual aspect of archives was put together by Etienne Ferrito who developed the whole web-site. Other persons from the National Archives were always willing to help with identifying material, scanning documents and all that needed to be done.

Daniel Cilia supported this journey through his artistic skills in both the photography and design of the book. He also obtained the voluntary support of Anthony Mifsud who did the proof reading of the book. Valuable comments on the introduction and the work came from Dr Lillian Sciberras who, apart from her life of dedication to the information profession in Malta, is also an inspiring friend. The Miller team, mainly Michael Vella de Fremaux and Clive Perini kept believing and supporting the book even after the complexity of the task led to a number of delays in arriving at the final product.

A final word of thanks goes to my family. My wife Rosette, son Gabriele and daughter Mikela who, once again, had to be deprived of a lot of quality time for this product to be developed. I do hope that their sacrifice will be compensated for by instilling the love for the protection of the nation's memory in a number of readers of this book.

Endnotes

- 1 Eric Ketelaar, 'Archives of the people, by the people, for the people', in Eric Ketelaar, *The Archival Image: Collected essays*, 1997, p. 15.
- 2 Caruana was for years blocked in the Executive Officer grade and it was only the few researchers who made use of the services who appreciated his work in silence and behind closed doors. To add insult to injury, on accomplishing the move of the archives to Rabat and Mdina, the public administration system reached out to this public officer. Surprisingly, this was not to honour him but to transfer him elsewhere. On his receiving a promotion to the grade of Administrative Assistant as part of a normal seniority process, he was transferred to the Law Courts. It was through the insistence of some researchers and fellow colleagues that after about a month this administrative blunder was rectified.
- 3 The Confraternity in question was that of the Immaculate Conception established in Mqabba in 1772. My father served as procurator of that Confraternity between 1970 and 1979.
- 4 It was also at a time when the Diploma in Librarianship was not available for some years due to some issue between academics and the University. Soon after I started my history course, the diploma programme recommenced with a student intake in February. However, my attempt to follow two courses concurrently was not acceptable to the University. Thus, I continued with my history course and never actually read for any librarianship qualification.
- 5 As a past student of the History Department at the University of Malta my first wish was to have the archival training delivered in that department. This did not work out and my second approach was to the Public Administration Department. Although the determination to go ahead with this new area of training was stronger in this department, financial limitations seemed to have blocked that possibility also. With a stroke of luck, the Centre for Communication Technology established by Professor Salvo Chircop had been teaching Librarianship for a number of decades under the dedicated direction of Dr Lillian Sciberras. The proposal fitted perfectly in Chircop's vision to transform the Centre into a Faculty – which is today the Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences.
- 6 More on Hella's contribution to the sector is documented in Charles J. Farrugia, *Guardians of Memory: Essays in remembrance of Hella Jean Bartolo Winston*, National Archives of Malta, 2008.
- 7 Charles J. Farrugia, *L-Arkiwi ta' Malta*, PIN, Malta 2006, p. 33.
- 8 Faustino Avagliano, 'Mauro Inguanez: Monaco ed archivista di Montecassino', in Farrugia, C. (ed.) *Guardians of Memory: Essays in Remembrance of Hella Jean Bartolo Winston*, 2008, pp. 309-334.
- 9 Carol J. Jaccarini, *Don Mauro Inguanez, 1887-1955: Benedictine of Montecassino*, 1987.
- 10 Avagliano, *op. cit.* The contribution of Inguanez to the Maltese archives sector was celebrated and commemorated by the National Archives of Malta on 28 October 2005 when the current archivist of Montecassino Don Faustino Avagliano delivered a lecture on Inguanez in Malta as part of the Archive Awareness Week.
- 11 Communication with Anthea Seles, Secretary General of ICA on 19 August 2019.
- 12 Communication with Becky Haglund Tousey, Vice-President of the Society of Professional Associations (SPA) within ICA on 19 August 2019.
- 13 Communication with Chinese archivist Aming Shi on 25 February 2019. At the end of 1990, there were 39,467 full-time archivists at the county-level and above in China. These included archives bureaus and archives, including 8,326 professional-level and above-level professional positions. The figures also include full-time archivists of archives departments at provincial and above institutions and archives departments of large industrial enterprises. It is estimated that the total of archival professionals in China in 1990 stood at 81,147 people, including 16,627 professional positions above the intermediate level.
- 14 One of the most touching experiences throughout my working life at the National Archives of Malta was that of a youth from abroad trying to find details about his parents. Discovering that both his parents were in prison when he was born and having been taken to an institution was heart breaking. Even conveying the whole story through a welfare officer was touching. It is at those crucial moments in an archivist's professional life that he/she understands the importance of their role and how it directly effects the lives of people.
- 15 One of the most popular Australian comedians is Shaun Micallef. He is of Maltese descent and his link with Malta was revealed through the TV series 'Who do you think you are?' Available online at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2328461/>. Accessed on 2 February 2019. A similar case in which I was not personally involved was that of another popular comedian Adam Hills who traced his ancestors to Malta. His story was featured in Series 5, Episode 28 of the same TV series. Available online at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2477762/?ref_=ttpl_pl_tt. Accessed on 7 September 2019.
- 16 This theme was discussed with Fr. Mario Micallef MSSP and his dedicated team of volunteers and the Archive Museum Curator of the St Paul's Church in Dundas Toronto during a private visit on 25 August 2019. Other communities such as those in London, Canada have already passed through difficult times and had to close their clubs. I take this opportunity to thank also researchers Dan Brock from Canada and Mark Caruana from Australia for their continuous support in keeping the documentation of Maltese communities abroad alive.
- 17 Giuliani are extensive collections of copied parish records that have to do with births, marriages and deaths and are indispensable for family research. The state in Malta has two of these. One is the Giuliana compiled by Dr Goffredo Adami and is held at the National Library in Valletta. Another Giuliana is the one compiled by Pietru Attard and now known as Giuliana Masini, as it was donated to the National Archives Gozo Section by Franco Masini in 2011. Other Giuliani that are still in private hands are those compiled by Letard-Ciantar, Armando Mifsud, Arturo Scerri and Dun Ġan Karl Muscat.

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The audio-visual component of this publication was challenging and the professional input of National Archives IT Manager Etienne Ferrito was crucial to provide attractive and efficient IT solutions. Stephen C. Spiteri also dedicated his expertise, skills and energy to render a two dimensional historical documentation into an interactive three dimensional showpiece. Others who helped with providing accessibility, expert advice and academic insights are listed below according to archival institution. Heartfelt apologies in the case of omissions, which are possible in such a complex project.

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Addolorata Cemetery Archive – Eman Bonnici

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Albert Ganado Archive – Dr Albert Ganado

Archbishop's Seminary Archive – Dora Castorina; Irene Dyer

Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Valletta – Dr Mark Agius;
John Farrugia

Archconfraternity of St Joseph, Rabat – Jeremy Debono

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Archivum Paroeciale Sancti Georgii, Victoria, Gozo – Francesco Pio Attard

Carmelite Priory Archive, Mdina – Rev. Dr Charlò Camilleri O Carm

Cathedral Archives, Mdina – Rev. Mgr John Azzopardi; Mario Gauci

De Piro Archive – Marquis Nicholas de Piro

Dominican Priory Archive, Vittoriosa – Rev. Claudio Borg OP

Emigrants' Commission Archive – Rev. Mgr Philip Calleja; Rev. Alfred Vella; Charles Buttigieg

English Masonic Hall Archive, Valletta – Lawrence Porter

Fortunato and Enrico Mizzi Foundation Archive – Richard Muscat

Franciscans Capuchins Provincial Archive, Floriana – Rev. Dr Martin Micallef OFM Cap

Franciscans Conventual Priory, Rabat – Rev. Arthur Saliba OFM Conv;
Rev. Eugene Theuma OFM Conv

Franciscans Minors Provincial Archive, Valletta – Rev. Dr Noel Muscat OFM

Giovanni Bonello Archive – Dr Giovanni Bonello

Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation – George Azzopardi; Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi

Great Book of Malta, Hamrun – John Balardi

Gozo Cathedral Archive – Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina

Gozo Seminary Archive – Rev. Dr Joseph Bezzina

Heritage Malta Archives – Charles Debono; Lindsay Galea; Kenneth Gambin; Liam Gauci;
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House of Representatives Archive - Hon Dr Angelo Farrugia; Eric Frendo; Ray Scicluna

Hill Museum and Manuscript Library – Claudia Garradas; Dr Daniel Gullo

John Cremona Archive – John Cremona

Land Registry – Charles Attard; Matthew Bonett; Tonio Galea; Dr Claude Sapiano;
Vince Sladden

Lanfranco Genealogical Archive – Antoine Lanfranco; David Lanfranco
L’Isle Adam Band Club Archive, Rabat – Jeremy Debono
Malta Aviation Museum – Raymond Polidano
Malta Boy Scouts Archive – Mario Ellul
Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry – Kevin Borg; Joanna Calleja
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive – Victor H. Grech; Carla Hill
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St Paul’s Society, Count Roger Band Club, Rabat – Aristarco Cefai; Joseph Scerri
Tony Terribile Archive – Tony Terribile
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For the last three decades the ex-Santo Spirito Hospital in Rabat, Malta, has served as the main head office of the National Archives of Malta.



In 1988 the Banca Giuratale in Mdina was the first of three repositories opened to the public for research purposes. The Banca holds the records of various Tribunals covering the period from 1530 up to 1900.