



uni
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THINK
SPECIAL FEATURE

For a week, thousands of people came to University to take part in over 200 events. The open week took place between the 5–10 November 2012, with school children and adults all taking part in tours, exhibitions, talks, pottery-making workshops, and a lot more. At **THINK** we have selected some of the best events for you to leaf through in the following pages.

The University of Malta (UoM) is mostly financed by the public purse. Yet, its inner workings can appear obscure to the general public. Universities throughout the world are central to the economic, scientific, and cultural lifeblood of a country. UoM is no exception, and Discover University is an opportunity for students and the public to peer under the University's bonnet and watch it at work and play.

Under the colourful Discover University tent, the International and EU Office, Communications and Alumni Relations Office, Engineering, Science, ICT, Researchers, and Student Advisory Services presented activities, as well as workshops with dancers from the School of the Performing Arts. Open Week 2012 was enjoyed by over 3,000 secondary and sixth form students, and the general public.

FESTA ITALIANA

Songs, activities, and short plays all presented by Secondary school children. The items were based on Italian regions and their own Italian experience. The staff and students of the Department of Arts & Languages (Italian, Faculty of Education) wanted to show, in action, the richness and diversity of Italian Culture, while helping the children to express themselves and communicate effectively in Italian.



BOTANICAL WALKS

The campus of the University of Malta is home to several species of plants. Some plants grow wild, but others have been introduced for study or embellishment. The walks went around the Mediterranean Garden introducing walkers to a number of plants, plant adaptations, and survival strategies.

FROM THE MOVIES TO ICT

Talks, career guidance, and interactive sessions were held by the Faculty of ICT. Movie secrets were revealed in the talk entitled 'Multimedia, Special Effects, and more...!', which showed how special effects are created in movies. In the Signal Processing Laboratory students could experience a virtual flight over the Maltese islands or a virtual chat with famous people! These work using real-time signal processing algorithms. These algorithms can convert Maltese text to speech and correct Digital TV picture errors. Multimedia signal processing is used in just about every aspect of our daily life — for work and play!





MAKING LITERACY COME ALIVE

“Literacy is enjoyable, fun and bursting with life”, said the Centre for Literacy. Reading is one of the most important skills in life which helps to improve creativity and build up self-esteem. This 45-minute fantasy interactive show engages the imagination of the audience with fictional characters. Boys and girls from Form 1, 2, 3, and 4 all enjoyed the show.



FROM CHINA TO KUWAIT

Australian, Chinese, Japanese, Kuwaiti, Omani, and American students brought their diverse cultures to University. Chinese and Japanese students with University of Malta staff performed traditional Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, traditional Chinese fan dance, and Tai Chi performances. A replica of the Royal Fort of Oman was set up at University by Kuwaiti and Omani students who also helped visitors wear traditional dress and served Arab coffee, food, and sweets prepared by the students themselves. The American students ran a ‘USA Fun Fact Sheet’, while Australian students hosted an ‘Aussie Slang Session and Quiz’. Both student groups offered homemade apple pie and sandwiches with Marmite.

The International & EU Office organised the event. It manages the University’s International Relations and the welfare of its international students. Foreign students account for 10% of students.



YOUR DAILY DOSE OF ENGINEERING

Day-to-day activities such as washing with clean water, turning on a lamp, using transport, a computer or TV — almost every man-made object — are shaped by engineering. The Faculty of Engineering opened its labs to the public giving presentations and tours showing their interesting research that is using the latest technology to solve Malta’s problems.

DANCE: PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, THOUGHTFUL

For *Discover University* rather than a performance, Mavin Khoo (School of Performing Arts) presented a dance coaching session: "I thought that it was really important that we [...] revealed the kind of process that goes into the creation of a work. [...] We sometimes fail to consider dance as a genre or a study that demands a lot of time, [...] thinking, and physical and emotional investment because we are not aware of the process that leads up to that one [performance] night".

Foreign choreographers are brought in. Choreographies developed. Then the whole performance is constructed. At the same time the academic work continues. Then the tour. Every student (total: eight) had to renegotiate themselves as members of a company — eight different personalities being consistently made to attempt different ways of moving their bodies, living the life of a professional dancer, re-shifting mindsets, and their "philosophy of living".

As Mavin puts it, "you are imparting, you are giving them your life. Everything that you in your life have experienced, you're giving it to someone else [...] to use



and develop for themselves". And therefore, the coach or choreographer becomes THE research. But also, "YOU are your point of research. It is practice as research. YOU are the subject of your research. You, literally, not just your body, but you and the understanding that the construction of this is layered" with history, politics, semiotics, academia, lineage. Practice, coaching, observing, all form part of dance research.

The third year students were preparing for a tour in Malta and in the UK, which went very well.

Words by Daphne Pia Kelleher



ANCESTRAL VOICES: WRITINGS FROM THE PAST

Artefacts were littered all around the Faculty of Art's farmhouse. Phoenician/Punic, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, and Maltese experts gave presentations on how the ancients wrote and what they wrote.

Visitors discovered how these different writing systems work and about the history of these languages in the Maltese Islands. The displayed artefacts were a window into the past, they showed how archaeologists and historians use them to piece together the daily lives of the ancients. Learning and researching ancient languages can still enlighten today's world.

This activity was organised by the Departments of Classics and Archaeology, of Oriental Studies, and of Maltese, in collaboration with the Departments of History, History of Art, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta, and the Archaeological Society Malta.

SPORTS: MALTA-STYLE

Children's laughter was heard across the Msida campus and Three Cities as they took part in some traditional Maltese games. The games on offer included boċċi, kantunieri, passju, il-borża, bum bum il-bieb, iz-zunzana ddr iddur, lastku, amongst others. These games were chosen since they build social skills, require the participants to cooperate, and help train the brain.

Students from the Institute of Physical Education and Sport organised the event. With the support of their supervisor Ivan Riolo, they chose the games to be played. To research these activities, they performed some online searches and consulted a local publication about Maltese Folklore. This study helped place the traditions into the school and community context.

The event was held during *Skopri l-Università fit-Tlett Ibliet* and *Discover University*.



Words & photo by Daphne Pia Kelleher

MEDIEVAL MEAL

The Senior Common Room at University House was transformed into a medieval banqueting room. Candles, a beautiful centre-piece, and a medieval backdrop provided the right atmosphere.

The guests first devoured *Zanzarella* soup and a *Green Broth of Eggs and Cheese*, with a very tasty *Pork Pie*. The second serving consisted of minced veal with prosciutto and currants, lamb casserole, stuffed sardines, broad beans in the Mediterranean style, and chickpeas with herbs. Dessert was the most unusual: ham and herb fritters, marzipan pastries, *Angel's Food* and spiced wine.

Professor Carmel Cassar, Dr George Cassar and Mr Noel Buttigieg researched the meal to deliver an authentic medieval experience true to the period's ethnographic roots. The ingredients and cooking process of the dishes were very similar to contemporary methods, and seasonal fruits and vegetables were used. With waiting staff in costume, madrigals, delicious authentic food and wine, the atmosphere was complete!

The meal was provided by JMOperations.



SKOPRI L-UNIVERSITÀ FIT-TLETT IBLIET

The Inner Harbour area (l-Isla, Bormla, il-Birgu) has a low number of students at the University of Malta. *Skopri* is part of a strategy to lift the area towards the national average. It evolved from the University Structures Committee coordinated by Prof. Carmel Cefai and chaired by the University Rector.

When averaged, every citizen should have the same potential whether they come from the Three Villages

or the Three Cities. Many young people are missing out on realising their possible achievements. If they do not achieve their full intellectual strength, the community loses. Finally, it is a waste of resources for the whole country. In an island whose best asset is its people and therefore its workforce, it is inconceivable that we should be allowing these potential wealth providers to slip through the tertiary education net.

WRITERS, ART, AND SCULPTURES FILL THE LIBRARY

The Library was transformed for a week. Library Tours were given a twist. Visitors were able to visit restricted areas to learn how a book is processed from the moment it arrives by post to the moment it is available on the shelves. The Library was full of exhibitions. The *Treasures of the Library* exhibition showcased its best archives, which go through the works behind Malta's *alma mater* and other rare exhibits. The *Children and the Sea* exhibition had thought provoking artworks inspired by our oceans and coastal environments. Children from all over the world painted the art, which was on loan from the International Ocean Institute, Malta. The exhibition *How Biology Can Save the World* exhibition features photos that show the importance of biology in everyday life. It was organised by the Science Students' Society (S-Cubed) in collaboration with the Society of Biology (UK). At *Meet the Author!*, students could meet celebrated Maltese authors Charles Casha and Kenneth Caruana for a chat about being a writer. Across the terrace, ceramist Paul Scerri (Faculty of Education) created beautiful sculptures live with his students.



The *Skopri* experiment aimed to bring the University closer to the Three Cities. By disseminating information and engaging the local population, we want to create a continuous dialogue with University. The event was a wonderful opportunity to introduce the new Cottonera Resource Centre to those who will benefit from it and to find out what the people from the Inner Harbour Area really want from the Centre.

By extending the *Discover University! Open Week*, 2012 to include a 'prequel', University came to the Three Cities. The activities were housed in a large tent. The local councils and Student Advisory staff helped disseminate information and bring the public to the open discussions.

Public engagement happened through various events: games for young people organised by students from the University's Institute for Physical Education and Sport, an exhibition that listed famous local personalities and big achievers, as well as presentations on subjects relevant to the Three Cities by University academics. Professor Carmel Pulé created a small exhibition of engineering materials, closely connected to the sea, while Junior College students played and sang every evening. The highlight of the event was three debates organised through youth and drama groups, which discussed issues chosen by them and moderated by University academics.

The debates were organized through local youth workers, drama, and youth groups. Many common issues came up during all the debates and included the perceived stigma of coming from Cottonera and the area's negative image as it appears in the media. People from Cottonera showed an obvious pride. Clearly, although they might be rivals they would put up a united front if they felt threatened.

The young people complained that new gardens are barred to bikes and footballs, while other areas have been given to private companies. They also asked for support for those who found it difficult to study at home. This revealed a need for better links between the home and the school from primary education onwards, and the importance of information about their options.

All three groups spoke about the economic situation of families and the strain it put on the young peoples' desire to study. They discussed the vicious circle of reliance on the state. Other issues were truancy, the importance of the historical areas of Cottonera, and the value given to local skills such as boat building. ●

Special thanks are in order for all three Local Councils without whose help and enthusiasm this event would not have been possible and Ms Maria McNamara, Principal of St Margaret College for her invaluable assistance.