

# The Gozo Public Library and its Subsidiaries

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## Introduction

The Gozo Public Libraries network comprises the Gozo Public Library; the Gozo Lending Library; 11 Local Branch Libraries situated at Ghasri, Gharb, Ghajnsielem, Nadur, Qala, Sannat, San Lawrenz, Kerċem, Xagħra, Xewkija, and Żebbuġ; together with another library at the Gozo General Hospital.

## History

The origins of the Gozo Public Library dates back to 7 March 1839, when a group of 38 eminent persons, mostly professional persons, a few priests, and laymen, imbued with the love of culture and deploring the lack of reading material in Gozo, resolved to set up a Gabinetto di Lettura, a reading room. Sixteen days later, on 21 March, the Gabinetto di Lettura was renamed Libreria di Società, 'Library of Society'.

In 1852, the founder members decided to share their heritage with the public and pass the collection to the government on the condition that an annual sum of £40 would be allocated for the purchase of books. Governor Sir William Reid, acceded to their wish and the Public Library opened its doors to the general public on Monday, 21 November 1853. On 31 March 1896, the Public Library collection, which then amounted to 3,642 works in 6,693 volumes, was transferred to the new premises on the top floor of the government primary school in Vajringa Street. In 1925, the Gozo Public Library, along with the Malta Public Library, became depository for all locally-printed works. On 16 August 1948, the Gozo Public Library and District Circulating Libraries came under the direction of the librarian of the Royal Malta Library.

Another important development occurred on 10 February 1983 when the Public Library ceased to function as a lending library and its lending collection was transferred to the newly-established Lending Library in St Francis Square, Victoria. Six years later, on 24 November 1989, the National Archives / Gozo Section was opened at the new annex at the Gozo Public Library.



The premises that houses the Gozo Public Library, the National Archives/Gozo Section and Sir Arturo Mercieca Primary School at Vajringa Street Victoria

## Functions

The Gozo Public Library's dual role is to acquire and preserve for posterity the national collection of printed material and to provide academic material for research. The Gozo Lending Library and the Local Branch Libraries, on the other hand, provide educational, informative, and recreational books for home reading.

## Book Collection

The Melitensia collection at the Gozo Public Library consists of a substantial collection of books, either published locally or abroad about the Maltese islands. There is, for instance, a rare copy of the original *Insulae Melitae Descriptio* by Johannes Quintinus (1536). Moreover, the library is a depository of all government publications, newspapers, and periodicals published locally and dissertations by Gozitan students. The reference collection is enriched annually by the acquisition

of new academic books in all major fields being studied at secondary and tertiary levels, such as commerce, economics, accounts, sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, education, etc.

### **Computerization**

The implementation of the computerized system has proved fruitful. The launching of E-libraries proved a further step towards the promotion of library facilities. The library's electronic catalogue is accessible at [www.libraries-archives.gov.mt](http://www.libraries-archives.gov.mt) One can search an item by author, title, classification number, ISBN, subject, or even by entering a keyword. It provides information on where the wanted item exists, its availability, and whether it is out on loan or on order. Patrons can also renew their books on-line and reserve items that are out on loan. This service is also complemented by a selection of audio-visual cassettes and CD-Roms, which can be viewed at the premises.



The main reading hall at the Gozo Public Library.

### **Services offered**

The general public has access to Internet through 13 PCs at the Gozo Public Library and 1 PC at the Gozo Lending Library.

Another facility is the inter-library loan system with the University of Malta. Books not in stock at the library are borrowed on behalf of our patrons from the University Library.

A considerable amount of useful and practical information is available for the whole community. This includes information about courses and job opportunities; copies of past examination papers at all levels from primary school to Matsec; and research material for projects. The ultimate goal of our library is to serve its readers. In fact, at the library, a researcher is assured that the documents needed are brought to him for consultation and where he/she can have all the assistance, the advice of the staff and the facilities of photocopying.

### **Publicity and promotion**

People need to be constantly and efficiently informed of the existence of the library's services and resources. Library orientation visits are organized for students. Exhibitions to promote authors' works and to commemorate national events are held on regular basis, whereas the public is kindly asked to suggest new titles to be purchased. Story-telling sessions are held simultaneously on Wednesday afternoons from 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. at the Gozo Public Library and the Gozo Lending Library to promote reading habits at an early age.

The Gozo Public Library has proved to be an important factor in the educational development of Gozo. This is amply witnessed by the enrichment of its collections, the diversification of its services, and the thousands of esteemed members of the public whose necessity or love of knowledge have led them to make use of the Gozo Public Libraries. Its history and track record are the result of the determination extended by its librarians and staff throughout all these years, to better the services and facilities and to enrich its collections. One cannot but look forward with both confidence and determination towards a future where the library service in Gozo, would continue to render a valuable contribution towards the prosperity and welfare of the whole community.

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