

The Public Library, Victoria

Those of you whose concept of a public library is a musty place reserved for nerds and bookworms are in for a big shock. In recent years the Public Library in Vajringa Street, Victoria has transformed itself into a modern institution linked up with various other bodies and possessing all the latest in information technology.

Under the indefatigable and ever-helpful guidance of the librarian, Mr George Borg, one is pleasantly surprised at the welcoming atmosphere: the young as well as the more advanced in years can

spend an hour leisurely and profitably.

Apart from being a repository of an extensive collection of reference works, it also houses all publications, books periodicals and newspapers that are published locally. There is an impressive Melitensia collection, with books going back over 400 years. There is, for instance, a

copy of the original *Insulae Melitae Descriptio* by Johannes Quintinus, first published in 1536, just three years after the Knights of Malta landed on these islands. There is also of course a copy of *De Soldanis: Il Gozo Antico-Moderno e Sacro Profano* (1746).

Since 1925 when the Legal Deposit Act

was passed, authors, editors or publishers are required to deposit free of charge a copy of every publication printed and published in the Maltese Islands. These are all available at the Library. A new book acquisition list is published every quarter to enable you to track those books you may have just missed on.

Those of you who remember the difficulties one had in locating any particular book or piece of information may now be surprised to find that in Gozo too we have access to the latest electronic technology for cataloguing and researching. Books available at the National Library in Malta may be accessed on micro-film. There is of course an inter-library loan system through the University of Malta, which should prove a bonus to our students.

I was particularly impressed with the collection of new books that have just arrived at the library, dealing with all aspects of life: from psychology to business administration, from philosophy in ancient Greece to the latest political movements in Europe and elsewhere. Here is an opportunity to read about topics which you may not even have heard about, in pleasant, refreshing surrounds. One could spend hours here in the company of the best brains in the world.

But perhaps the most popular of all, as well as the most recent advance here is the introduction of the Internet and audio-visual services provided by the library. A whole row of tables with computers linked to the internet enable students and all those interested in researching a particular topic to do so. But remember the price of popularity is



ever-increasing queues! Make sure you book a place in advance, otherwise you may be disappointed.

Other audio-visual services include the use of video tapes and CD-ROMs, which also need prior booking to make sure that when you go there you will find one available.

Even children are catered for: Every Wednesday, between 4.00 pm and 5.00 pm there is a story-telling session aimed at strengthening reading habits in children from an early age. The importance of getting children into the habit of reading needs no emphasising. It is at this impressionable time that long-life habits are formed and sustained.

Situated within the library complex we also find an Archives collection under the direction of Rev Dr J Bezzina. This should prove of great interest to the specialised researcher. More about this in a future issue.

There are a number of other services which students as well

as the casual reader might find interesting and useful. Government Department Reports, Past examination papers (Primary, Secondary, Junior. Oxford, London, etc), information about job opportunities, as well as a wide range of newspapers and periodicals - the library receives annually 500 local periodicals and about 20 foreign ones.

Give yourself a treat and visit our Gozo Public Library for the experience of your life.

Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday: 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.

Saturday: 7.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

Wednesday 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

(between 1st Oct 31st May)

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