

# DEBATING SPACES & PLACES

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## Dusty volumes to digital: Valletta's memory institutions as cultural spaces

### Context

Giving full access on a national/international level to memory collections. An integral part of an individual's cultural experience. Justifications:

- A truly democratic society requires this.
- Enables new interpretations of historical, social and cultural 'realities', not necessarily identical to traditional ones.
- The use of taxpayer's money to sustain such collections demands their full accessibility.
- In Valletta's case: a blend of public and privately-curated collections, each with its own set of challenges, sometimes even where the survival of the material is concerned.

### Public collections

- Such basic issues as ones of physical access still need to be addressed!
- Even on a traditional elite academic level, most collections still lack the standard services required: description tools, efficient copy services, etc.
- The digitisation, online cataloguing of collections and related online services are proceeding more or less by fits and starts.

### Private collections

- Some of the above issues, plus that of access.
- A variety of ways/models in which privately-held material of national importance is at least recorded but ideally made accessible.

### 'Catching them young': access to budding generations

- From financial/logistical help to such collection holders to the passing over of material to national collections in one form or another: The real challenge: inculcating interest in written/non-written cultural heritage in a global, social, visual and technologically-immersed Generation Z.
- The integration of cultural heritage into the formal and informal educational processes.
- Ironic that in a nation seeping with cultural heritage within easy distance, the vast majority of our history and culture-oriented teaching still takes place in a traditional classroom setting.



### Possible ways ahead

Number of models here, especially from Northern Europe:

Citizen Science projects: 'Digiroots' project for the Public Registry as a case-study

Well-structured educational experiences as part of the cultural institution services. This is a real challenge which needs to be faced. Such experiences becoming an integral part of the formal curricula.

At an informal level: increasing a relevant, meaningful presence on the traditional and online media.

