

Newsletter

Digital Archives Website

Archdiocese of Malta

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We are one year old!

We wish you to join us in celebrating this website's birthday. It was officially launched one year ago on 7th November 2012.

The digital archive is the culmination of work which began in 1973 when the archival collections started to be microfilmed. We started planning the digitization project in September 2010. In January 2011 we bid for EU funds to help fund this project, but this bid proved to be unsuccessful. The Archdiocese of Malta decided to go ahead with the project just the same. The digital archive was set up in collaboration with *Exigy*. Computer Solutions Ltd installed the required hardware infrastructure in December 2011.

Initially we started digitizing the microfilm edition of the manuscripts. The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library microfilmed the archival collections between 1973 and 1989 under the direction of Mgr John Azzopardi. The laborious process to transfer all microfilms to digital media started on 9th January 2012.

It was decided that the website will be hosted on our servers at the Archbishop's Curia and kept under the maltadiocese domain. Hence the website address was agreed to be archives.maltadiocese.org.

We have already set up another scanning room where the original manuscripts can be digitized directly. Pastoral Visits are among the manuscripts already online that have been digitized in this manner. Presently we are digitizing the manuscripts from the Siggiewi Parish Archive which will be put online in the very near future. Other parishes will follow suite.

The Digital Archives website was soft launched on 27th September 2012. Archbishop Paul Cremona O.P. officially launched the website on Wednesday 7th November 2012. The website was an immediate hit with 22,437 visits on its first day of public operation.

On 6th August 2013 we suffered a major electrical failure at our premises even though we had invested in the installation of an electrical generator. As a consequence we had serious problems with our servers including the ones hosting the Archives Website. This resulted in a period of time where the website had to be kept down. Thanks to our Technical Support Team we were up and running after a short while and no data was lost.

To date 1,584 users are registered with the Digital Archives Website. The website was accessed 374,112 times since the official launching last year.

Understandably, not all manuscripts found in the Archival Collections of the Archdiocese have been digitized. We are still digitizing manuscripts from our various Archives. Presently we are digitizing the manuscripts found at the Cathedral Museum Archive. This phase is calculated to take another two years. After that, we plan to continue digitizing manuscripts from the various parish archives which are very popular with the website's users.

Since the manuscripts available online do not comprise the Archdiocese's entire archive, researchers can still visit the Archbishop's Curia in Floriana (Malta) – or the relevant parishes – to carry out their research.

We wish to thank you for your continuous support. You are the reason behind this website's success. We shall be very grateful if you suggest what topics you wish to read in this Newsletter.

I trust that you keep finding our website useful.

Fr Vic George Vassallo
Webmaster

New Additions

Though presently our efforts are focused on the digitization of the manuscripts housed at the Cathedral Museum Archives we have managed to digitize some manuscripts from Our Lady of Porto Salvo (St Dominic's) Parish in Valletta. The digitized manuscripts are the following:

- **Baptisms** 1573 - 1805 (13mss)
- **Marriages** 1651 - 1802 (8mss)
- **Funerals** 1728 - 1830 (4mss)
- **Status Animarum** 1726 -1835 (13mss)



Researching your Own Family Tree

Researching a family tree is one of the most popular pastimes around the world and is the most searched topic on the internet. In the past, genealogy was used to argue or demonstrate the legitimacy of claims to wealth and power. In the last two decades, genealogy has become more widespread with people researching and maintaining their own family trees.

What is a family tree?

A family tree is a chart representing family relationships in a conventional tree structure. The more detailed family trees used in medicine, genealogy, and social work are known as genograms.

The image of the tree probably originated with one in medieval art of the *Tree of Jesse* used to illustrate the Genealogy of Christ in terms of a prophecy in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah, 11, 1).

Possibly the first non-Biblical use, and the first to show full family relationships rather than a purely patrilineal scheme, was that involving family trees of the classical gods in Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles), whose first version dates to 1360.

The longest family tree in the world today is that of the Chinese philosopher and educator Confucius (551-479 BC). The tree spans more than 80 generations, and includes more than 2 million members.

Where do you start?

The first step before you do anything else is to write down your own details (a family tree always starts from you). Write down or find out the following things:

- Date and place of birth
- Education and where you have lived
- Religion
- Important dates and places including your marriage and baptism (if applicable)
- Important dates and places for your children (births, marriages, baptisms, etc) – again if applicable
- Interesting facts about you for any future genealogists

The second thing to do is to speak to your Grandparents and/or Parents. They will be able to provide you with details on two or three more generations which will be a good start. If it is not possible to ask them, why not try asking cousins or aunts, uncles, or older siblings – every little fact will help you in your research! Once you have the basic details on your family, you can start the next step.

The Public Registry in Malta was set up on the 3rd August 1889 although the records date back to 1863.

Until recently, the Public Registry was housed at Merchants Street (Valletta) at the “Palazzo della Citta” or as it was also known the “Consolato del Mare”, “Banca Giuratale” or “Palazz Municipali”. It has recently been moved to the Evans Building in the same street.

Records kept at the Public Registry include acts of birth, marriage and death and adoption registrations. Annotations to the mentioned acts/registrations are made following court decrees/judgements. Certificates of the above are issued accordingly on request.

Our advice would be to find your grandparents first, and work backwards. Also, make sure you start with one line (paternal is best, i.e. your father’s father and onwards), because you could end up with quite a nightmare job if you research lots of different ancestral lines. You will have at the most eight great grandparents and sixteen great great grandparents – that’s sixteen possible ancestral lines to research! So, do take it one at a time, and slowly. It can be a long process, but well worth it when you discover your many ancestors in amongst the records.

Pre-1889 records were handled by local parishes from 1572 onwards. We are putting a digital version of some of these parish records on the Digital Archives Website.

Other records you can look at include war records, army records, grave records and so much more. It’s also fascinating to “flesh out” your ancestors in other ways too.

Important Tip

Always ask your family for details first – whether its your grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, siblings – someone in your family is likely to know more. Information from family members will help you find cousins and other relatives, and will save a lot of time.

