

Gozo Cathedral  
Public Library  
AD 1979

The Gozo Cathedral Public Library started to serve the student population of Gozo on Monday, **1 October 1979**. Its inception goes back to the 1970s, when Monsignor Paolo Cauchi, archdeacon of the Gozo Cathedral (died 1980), donated his personal library of several thousand books to the Gozo Cathedral.

One fine day while on holiday, Reverend Anthony Mercieca, a priest from the parish but who at that time was doing pastoral work in Miami, United States, saw the collection and it dawned on him to found a parish library. He was further convinced in his decision by a resolution taken during a Pastoral Congress held in Gozo in 1975. This suggested that: “a parish library provided with worthy books and useful publications is to be established in each parish so that young and old may enhance their culture.” Monsignor Carmelo Scicluna, archpriest of the Cathedral (1976-1995), concurred and the Cathedral Chapter approved the foundation. The Archpriest invited parishioners to donate new and used books to the library and it soon began to take shape.

The library was first set up in the Cathedral annex and on 1 October 1979, a lending service was launched. Acquisitions reached around 3000 books a year, the bulk donated by Anthony Mercieca. The place soon proved itself too small and it was moved to the parish centre in Triq l-Arcipriet Saver Cassar. Bishop Nikol Cauchi officially inaugurated the new premises on 7 August 1987 and the library operated from the centre until 1999.

Monsignor Dr Joe Vella-Gauci, archpriest of the Cathedral (1996-2007), decided to house the library in still better premises. The parish forked out about Lm70,000 (€163,000) to acquire a hall in triq Qasam San Gorg. The new library was inaugurated by Anton Tabone, Speaker of the Malta Parliament, on 5 August 1999.

By the year 2000, the end of the twentieth century, the library had 103,000 books. A fair estimate would be that Reverend Anthony Mercieca donated around 75% of the collection. The books were classified according to an adapted Dewey Decimal Classification.

The chief librarian, from 1979 to date, has been Anton Farrugia. He first worked part-time, but when he retired from Government service – he was the first Chemistry master in Gozo – he directed the library full-time on a total

voluntary basis. His exemplary dedication led others to volunteer to help in the running of the library. A staff of ten helpers, presently led by Lily Xerri, offer their free time for the running of the library. This include a British resident in Gozo.

In August 1996, Anton Farrugia was honoured with *Gieh il-Parrocca* for his outstanding service to the Cathedral parishioners. He dedicated it to all the staff.

Besides lending books, the Cathedral Public Library has organized a host of educational activities throughout the years, ranging from courses in computer studies and foreign languages, to book fairs, exhibitions, and library awareness weeks.

The library depends entirely on voluntary offerings and voluntary work. So as to benefit from the many services offered, one has to be enrolled as a member paying a small membership fee. Close to four hundred persons are enrolled.

The Librarian appreciates contributions and the organization of fund raising activities for the running costs, especially the upgrading of the library holdings. Anyone can volunteer to help by phoning or calling in person.

On the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation, the number of books is close to 150,000.

*Opening hours*

Monday to Friday	08.30 – 12.00	17.30 – 19.30
Saturday	08.30 – 12.00	

Staff:

- Abela Annie
- Bezzina Mgr Joseph – Chairperson
- Bugeja Joseph
- Buhagiar Anthony
- Calleja Lucy
- Caruana Lina
- Farrugia Anton – Chief Librarian
- Grech Anna
- Grech Joe
- Haber Joseph
- Mercieca Rev Anthony – Hon President
- Muscat John
- Xerri Lily