

CYPRUS MISSION *

by Paul Xuereb, COMLA RVP, European Region

I carried out my first overseas mission as Regional Vice President (Europe) in Cyprus during the first week in June. The visit had been agreed upon at the meeting of the European Regional Council in Valletta in April and had two main aims: to enable me to contribute professionally to a seminar due to be organised by the Cyprus Association of Professional Librarians (CyAPL), and to give me an opportunity, as RVP, to put over to the authorities in Cyprus COMLA's enthusiastic support for the execution of the Cyprus Government's plans to set up The Cyprus Library (a national library in everything save in name) and to voice its preoccupation about delays in appointing librarians with the task of setting up and managing this library.

In Nicosia I received a warm welcome from Savvas Petrides, CyAPL Hon. Secretary and the leading spirit in Cypriot professional library circles.

I was agreeably impressed by the enthusiasm of both the organisers and the other participants at the Workshop which had the theme *Automation of Government Libraries*, and was held in the pleasant premises of the Productivity Centre, in cooperation with the Cyprus Government's Department of Personnel and Public Administration, and with the Cultural Service of the Ministry of Education.

Petrides directed the Workshop and there were two more foreign speakers. These were Nina Skandali, formerly of the Library School in Athens, and now President of the Association of Greek Librarians, and Thomas Papadopoulos of the Greek Parliamentary Library in Athens and a highly distinguished bibliographer as well as a historian of the Greek diaspora in the Mediterranean. Mrs Skandali spoke about cataloguing in an automated environment, while Mr Papadopoulos spoke on automated reader services. My own paper was of a more general nature and dealt with services in a Government special library. It was the only paper delivered in the English language, the rest being in Greek.

The main purpose of the Workshop being to introduce library software written for the Government by the Cyprus Development Bank and to pave the way for its possible adoption by all public

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sector libraries, great emphasis was laid on the analysis of this software and here the two people who had designed it, Litsa Maimari and Athos Eleftheriades, played an important part. Most exciting for the participants was a hands-on session in the Productivity Centre's computer room which is designed for instruction.

I was left with the impression that the Workshop had fulfilled the CyAPL's aim to raise local librarians' consciousness about automation in the library and its need in order to bring the library fully within the contemporary information picture. I am glad that COMLA was associated with this project.

My other purpose was to discuss with the Ministry of Education its plans for the setting up of The Cyprus Library and to offer what assistance COMLA's Regional Council for Europe can afford. I had a brief but cordial meeting with the recently-appointed Minister of Education and a longer one with the Director-General in the Ministry, and I was glad to see that the principle of appointing well-qualified professional librarians with wide experience was accepted.

COMLA has urged, and will continue to urge, the need to appoint as the Director of The Cyprus Library a person whose qualifications and experience will enable him to see that the Library's multifold functions as listed in Section 6 of the Cyprus Library Act are successfully carried out. COMLA is also sure that within Cyprus itself there is at least one person who could be appointed immediately to this key post, thus enabling the planning of The Cyprus Library to begin without delay.

Through CyAPL I was able to meet a number of Cypriot librarians at the Association's premises in a building allocated by the Government to it and to a number of other cultural associations.

On my last day I was invited to speak at a press conference, covered by four newspapers, given by CyAPL, and took the opportunity to emphasize yet again the need for professionalism in librarianship.

Among the libraries I visited was that of the Paedagogical Academy in Nicosia. This Academy is scheduled to grow into a University in the fairly near future, so the Academy's librarian, Mrs Frederike Schama, has a huge task ahead of her. She and her fellow librarians hope that before any Faculties of the projected University are set up, the library will be given the considerable financial resources needed to create the basic collections. The premises themselves will have to be greatly extended in order to house such collections.