

JOSEPH SCHIRÒ

Copying Presses

Abstract

In the nineteenth century, correspondence was principally written by hand using pen and ink. Indeed, heavy reliance on calligraphy continued in offices for decades and handwriting was part of the school curriculum in Malta until almost the 1960s, and was even a failing subject.

Before the introduction of sophisticated printing machines, electrostatic photocopiers or scanning equipment to copy incoming or outgoing documents, the copying press was the only mechanical method to produce copies in offices in Malta until the 1950s.

The article gives technical details on the type of copying ink or copying pencils used, explains the main qualities required for good copying paper and describes the mechanical copying process. The different styles and types of copying presses found in Malta and their ornamentation are illustrated with examples taken from the author's collection.