

# BiblioPride 2014

For AIB (Italian Library Association) October 2014 has been above all the month of the BiblioPride. After the first edition in Naples in 2012, and the second in Florence in 2013, the AIB National assembly of associates decided that it will take place every year, as the BiblioPride constitutes the main advocacy initiative of the Association. This invested AIB with a huge responsibility and also with a relevant organizational load.

The concept of advocacy has been broken down into more specific meanings: first of all as an attempt to communicate to the 'other' world – the one outside libraries – the legitimate 'pride' of professionals animating libraries; in addition, as the commitment to involve in the BiblioPride initiatives the world of culture, politics and institutions – without forgetting of course the citizens-users – and to ask all these subjects to express the idea they have of libraries and how they perceive their service.

For AIB BiblioPride is not merely a marketing issue, but a combination of actions aiming at strengthening and raising awareness in the network of alliances already supporting the work of the librarians, so that it will keep on standing by, appreciating and legitimating the latter's activities.

The response was very encouraging: we remind here particularly the participation – also in the press – of celebrities of national relevance such as Corrado Augias (who championed the 2014 edition), Massimo Bray, Luciana Castellina, Piero Dorfler, Cecilia Mangini, Eugenio Barba, Nuccio Ordine, Luciano Canfora, Giuliano Montaldo, Guido Oldani, Nandu Popu, Mario Desiati, Lino Angiuli, Raffaele Nigro, Michele Santeramo, Edoardo Winspeare and many others.

Besides, it is a great comfort to observe that many public administrators, also in the South, showed great interest and promoted, together with the libraries in their towns, specific initiatives dedicated to the BiblioPride.

The third edition of the National library day took place in 2014 during the whole month of October: it may seem a contradiction in terms, but it isn't: in fact, the BiblioPride as a whole is constituted by an opening day and many other initiatives taking place during the whole month. The third edition was inaugurated in Lecce on 4 October, and included many events in Apulia, articulated according to themes relevant for society: the valorization of the cultural heritage through synergy and integration between museums, archives and libraries, an active role of the libraries in environmental preservation, the sustainable use of common goods, the contribution of libraries to the education of children and young adults, the promotion of library networks and of functional solutions for library buildings. Every theme was developed in meaningful and peculiar regional contexts; as a clarifying example we remind that the issue of 'eco-libraries' was developed at a 'border' library open in the devastated Tamburi district, few steps away from the ILVA chimney stacks in Taranto.

To the initiatives of the hosting region we must add the tenths and tenths of events which, as is the tradition, took place all over Italy and also abroad. The data recorded in the dedicated area on AIB-WEB, the website of the association, registered approximately 400 initiatives, 130 of which took place in Apulia and about 30 outside the Italian borders.

The leading theme chosen for BiblioPride 2014 was Libraries have social value, thus siding with the contemporary idea that libraries must accept as their core value the service they offer to their users and the aspects which have a direct impact on their areas and users rather than the primacy of merely technical issues. From here we derive that the profession is strongly oriented to the service it offers to citizens.

As it can be read in the presentation to BiblioPride 2014 on AIB-WEB, «libraries constitute the knowledge infrastructure collecting, organizing and making available products of creativity and intellect, giving access to plural knowledge and information, fostering researchers' and scholars' activity, protecting the nation's cultural memory, offering all citizens opportunities for personal and cultural growth by facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and skills which can be spent in social and working life. But libraries nowadays are also the places for discovery and participation, learning environments where people can learn to dominate technology and to move around in the increasingly wider world of information and knowledge, and which only await to be discovered and appreciated»<sup>1</sup>.

It is a duty, however, to reflect on what could be the future of the BiblioPride also in the light of the three past editions. First of all, we can consider the BiblioPride an initiative identified with the mission of AIB itself, for the reasons we already expressed above (focusing on the role and social value of libraries and on the advocacy function). Besides, we can consider the choice that North-South cities alternately hosted the opening day as an efficient method for succeeding in bringing together – through the BiblioPride themes – the libraries of the whole country. All in all, it seems necessary that in perspective the BiblioPride focuses more, with a qualified approach, on the themes engaging library community at an international level: we will need to involve more and more the international bodies, contributing on our side to highlight the meaning of the library projects and services in the Mediterranean area with greater commitment and care.

The BiblioPride is becoming an important public event for AIB, as it does not only represent the librarians' pride, but also and above all the citizens' and public administrators' pride whenever they can rely on library institutions serving the growth of society, genuine oases of freedom and community awareness. As Guglielmo Petroni reminds us in his unforgettable and precious *Il nome delle parole* (Sellerio, 2011), it is likely that people entering libraries look at the reality 'with an eye only' and that they exit libraries conquering 'the two eyes' which the spreading of culture only can ensure for everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <<http://www.aib.it/attivita/bibliopride/bibliopride2014>>.