

The new Turin Central Library: redesigning the city with a great project

Turin's new Central Library represents the largest project the city has worked on in recent years in terms of size and impact on its urban, social and cultural redesign. The library is included, as the main project intervention, in the re-functioning of Palazzo delle Esposizioni and as a central element in the overall evolution of the city's entire library system, also enhancing its integration with the supra-municipal library cooperation structures, first and foremost with the Library System of the Turin Metropolitan Area. The new Central Library project is part of the broader project "Turin, its Park and its River: memory and future", which involves the Turin Exhibition complex, located within the Valentino Park, along the western bank of the river Po. The project also includes work on the green area, the Teatro Nuovo, and the medieval Borgo, and is financed by the PNRR - Supplementary Fund.

The Palazzo delle Esposizioni building will house the new Central Library in the main pavilion, Nervi 2, and in the Sottsass 2 b and Nervi 4 pavilions.

The architectural project was developed by a team led by ICIS with the Rafael Moneo (Spain) and Isolarchitetti (Italy) studios. The general outlines of the library project, supervised by Professor Maurizio Vivarelli of the University of Turin, were developed in synergy with the Library Service and the Central Services of the City of Turin, taking into account the architectural characteristics of the building. For the administrative and operational management of the project, the city relies on SCR Piemonte - Società di committenza regionale.

The Palazzo delle Esposizioni, one of the most significant architectural complexes of the Italian Twentieth century, has provided a predefined, aesthetically pleasing framework for the insertion of the various functional areas of the new library into the space, actually facilitating the reinterpretation of the building constructed between the late 1930s and the late 1950s.

The design of the new Turin Central Library combines memory and contemporaneity, multifunctional spaces and flexibility, accessibility and inclusiveness.

The library is characterised by several specific features that strengthen its position among the largest new library projects on a national and international level while remaining rooted in the specificities of Turin's history. It is characterised by an innovative organisation of contemporary, historical and special collections, realised also through the use of advanced and immersive digital technologies; by the presence of spaces and services to enhance the participatory dimension, intended for reading and lifelong learning (more than twenty laboratories, seminar spaces, a maker space area and a large multipurpose conference room), but also for the collaborative and laboratory co-production of content, thanks to the presence of seven laboratories dedicated to musical, audio and video productions, gaming, etc., in addition to the twenty mentioned above. Two spaces, located under the Nervi terraces, will be dedicated to the Levi Lab, realised in collaboration with the Primo Levi International Study Centre; a place of exhibition and work in which it will be possible to communicate

and enhance the work of Primo Levi. Two other spaces will host two narrative paths, dedicated to “The Changing City” and “The Library tells its own story”.

The relationship with books and reading constitutes one of the project's cornerstones, as it is strongly connected to the history of the foundation of the Civic Library, born in 1855 from a proposal by the publisher and town councillor Giuseppe Pomba and then inaugurated in 1869, in a historical phase in which the city was bidding, in the European context of the time, to become a modern industrial capital.

The new Library is the centre of a network of eighteen local libraries (twenty, including the two libraries in the Lorusso and Cutugno and Ferrante Aporti prisons), which have also been involved in a relaunch plan (Urban Integrated Plan) that includes the construction of a new neighbourhood library (in district 5) and two new bibliobuses in addition to the existing one, contributes in fact, together with the other book and reading players (International Book Fair, Readers' Circle, Holden School, bookshops, schools, etc.), to consolidating Turin's role as an authentic, widespread and polycentric book city.), to consolidate today Turin's role as an authentic and effective widespread and polycentric Book City. With its 36 urban regeneration actions, the Integrated Plan guides this path and is financed by PNRR Mission 5.2.2, as the main instrument for promoting integrated paths between the city's various services and Turin's civic libraries, in synergy with citizens and the third sector.

Work for the new Central Library is in progress and is in line with the deadlines required by the Ministry of Culture, which envisages completion in 2026. The executive design of the layout and the digital infrastructure is being developed. The latter in particular is a major tool for organising and communicating the new narrative of the contents of the Central Library and its collections.

The new Central Library of Turin will be located in an urban area that is being completely redesigned, in the context of the city's most important park (the Valentino), in connection with the Turin Polytechnic and the Faculty of Architecture. It will profoundly transform the position of public libraries, reinforcing the public's perception of their value, and will produce significant impacts not only in numerical terms (an estimated 5,000 presences per day) but also on models of public engagement and new forms of cultural and civic participation. The great flexibility of the spaces will make it possible to redesign and rethink functions and uses over time, to respond to the new needs of the public and to changes in the context; this is a fundamental component of any strategic planning that wants to look to the future.

The New Central Library of Turin project represents a fundamental step in the process of relaunching libraries from a perspective that integrates with the city's overall strategy. An integrated and unified path that intertwines the realisation of an innovative model of public library, deeply rooted in a broader strategy of urban regeneration and cultural welfare.

Cecilia Cognigni

Ai fini della citazione, utilizzare esclusivamente il testo in lingua italiana, che presenta il DOI, la paginazione, l'abstract e gli altri dati ufficiali.

When citing, please always refer to the Italian translation only, complete with DOI, page numbers, abstract and other data.

[Cecilia Cognigni, *La nuova Biblioteca centrale di Torino: un grande progetto per il ridisegno della città*. AIB studi, vol. 64 n. 1 gennaio/aprile 2024), p. 5-6. DOI 10.2426/aibstudi-14070]