

# The importance of data to understand the profession

## Are librarians still necessary in 2025? And are they still in demand?

AIB believes that in 2025 librarians will still be necessary, indeed essential, for a democratic and inclusive society, and it is convinced as well that they will continue to be in demand. However, these beliefs need to be supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence collected in a systematic and reliable manner.

Our role has evolved significantly over the past decades. The increase in digital content has expanded our responsibilities beyond the traditional management of books and printed periodicals, beyond ensuring the availability of comfortable reading rooms.

Every librarian knows how much their activities have diversified over time, but these subjective insights must be transformed into objectively grounded descriptions that allow for a better understanding of the new roles within our profession.

In other countries, there are systematic surveys on labor market conditions and the skills required for many professions, including, of course, librarians.

Unfortunately, in Italy, we currently lack public resources that would allow us to understand the career prospects for our profession and what skills and knowledge will be required now and in the future.

To address this gap, AIB decided to launch a research project, funded with an amount of 10,000 euros, entitled *The Labor Market of Library Professions: Analysis and Evolving Scenarios*.

The aim of the research is to significantly map the situation of our profession in Italy.

The research has been assigned through a public call to the project designed by the project leader BIBLAB - Lab of Social Library Science and Libraries Applied Research, a unit of the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures at Sapienza University of Rome - in collaboration with Rete delle Reti and Federculture.

The choice, made among four projects, was based on the in-depth description provided. This not only illustrates analysis and representation methods useful to describe and map the current labor market of librarians, but also highlights several research directions the group of scholars considers essential. Those are necessary to understand the peculiarities of the library profession in Italy, develop strategies to address its challenges, and, finally, enhance all the opportunities that the project offers.

The project will be divided into two phases:

1. Analysis of the state of the art of studies on the profession in Italy, with in particular collection of datasets from various research projects with the aim of systematizing them;
2. Design and implementation of a quantitative-qualitative questionnaire, which, when administered to a carefully selected sample, will allow an investigation into the contractual situation of librarians, their working conditions, job satisfaction, and their educational background.

The research group will regularly discuss results and findings with the AIB Executive Committee, allowing for adaptations and revisions of the ongoing work based on any new needs that may arise.

It is hoped that BIBLAB's experience in this type of study, Rete delle Reti's in-depth knowledge of the library sector, and Federculture's broad vision will ensure the most comprehensive mapping possible of the current situation. The goal is to provide a detailed overview by the end of the year, in order to have a chance to also explore potential future scenarios, confirming AIB's dedicated commitment to the people who work in and experience libraries.

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