

AIB: a professional community for research, discussion, and innovation

I thank the National Executive Committee for having confirmed me in the role of President, and all the members who took part in the recent elections for AIB's governing bodies by casting their vote.

The challenges that lie ahead are becoming more complex every day and will require a shared commitment to making it clear that librarians and libraries, through their expertise, their ability to innovate, and the values they embody, represent an essential resource for the cultural and civic growth of the country.

As has happened many times over the past decades, we will have to face further processes of innovation. The innovation we need, however, cannot be limited to the passive adoption of new technologies. Our process of innovation must begin with the ability to re-read and further develop the heritage of knowledge that the history of libraries has handed down to us. This is not a matter of preserving an immovable legacy, but of putting it to work in order to address the problems of the present.

For this reason, dialogue among librarians, first and foremost among AIB members, will be one of the decisive elements of the coming years. Only through open and rigorous debate will we be able to understand how the principles that have guided our profession can also guide the use of new technologies, especially those of artificial intelligence, while preventing the heritage of knowledge of our profession from losing its context and meaning. Democratic access to information, the organisation of knowledge, and the development and care of collections must remain the criteria by which we assess which innovations to support and how to guide their development.

Within this perspective, the debate that the Association will have to promote in the coming years will be future-oriented, inevitably addressing artificial intelligence as an integral part of library work. We must not accept that the agenda for these technologies should be written by others, on the assumption that they can replace our work. On the contrary, technologies, if governed with expertise, can strengthen our ability to organise, interpret, and make knowledge accessible. We must ensure that this vision also finds a place in the policies of the institutions with which we work.

Dialogue among professionals will be essential if we are to understand how to face this transformation, and how to use artificial intelligence to explore, interpret, and understand the complexity of documentary ecosystems. It will be precisely this exchange that will allow us to identify how to place new technologies at the service of our role in documentary mediation, offering users new tools to explore, understand, and establish connections between documents. Only by consciously governing this evolution will we be able to offer services that are increasingly effective, inclusive, and capable of enhancing the heritage of knowledge we preserve.

We must not forget that no renewal of library knowledge can be considered complete unless it places reading at the centre. At a time when information is always available and summarisation is often entrusted to algorithms, deep, slow, attentive, transformative reading — reading capable of challenging the reader — acquires even

greater value. The mere availability of books is no longer enough to form readers: we must continue to promote the pleasure and habit of reading, especially among younger generations, for whom new technologies represent both an opportunity and a risk.

The library continues to be one of the main public spaces in which reading can become a social and shared experience: in reading groups, in read-aloud sessions, and in encounters that build communities around texts. If we want to pass on cultural memory to future generations, we must first ensure that there are people able to read it, understand it, and make it their own.

Library knowledge, artificial intelligence, and the promotion of reading are not three separate fields, but aspects of a single responsibility: preserving collections, making them accessible, and connecting them with the needs of our communities and contemporary society. It is on this ground that the future of our profession is being decided.

A stronger AIB is therefore not a bureaucratic goal, but the condition for building this path together, with the contribution of the entire professional community and with the authority needed to engage in dialogue with institutions and with the country as a whole.

The task that awaits us over the next three years is clear: to make the Association the place where librarians continue to discuss, with openness and a sense of responsibility, how to keep alive our fundamental mission: organising and building knowledge so that people can expand their own, especially in a rapidly changing world. The AIB of the next three years must be a true workshop for critical thinking and innovation, capable of transforming our communities.

A stronger AIB means a more authoritative voice in dialogue with institutions and a greater capacity to promote the value of libraries and of the library profession. Recognition of the Association is never an end in itself, but the indispensable tool for achieving ever broader social and institutional recognition of the role that libraries and librarians play every day in serving communities.

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