

## NEUE ENTWICKLUNGEN

### Come! I'll see you in the Library

**A Project Implemented by Public Libraries in Milan in Collaboration with "Fondazione Cariplo" and "Fondazione Vodafone" to Foster Social Integration**



**Armando Vimercati**

Comune di Milano  
Settore Biblioteche  
Corso di Porta Vittoria 6  
I-20122 Milano  
Italien  
E-Mail: armando.vimercati@comune.milano.it



**Aldo Pirola**

Comune di Milano  
Direttore Settore Biblioteche  
Corso di Porta Vittoria 6  
I-20122 Milano  
Italien  
E-Mail: aldo.pirola@comune.milano.it

The article describes the initiative "Come! I'll see you in the Library", projected by Milan Public Library System. The initiative, involving five neighbourhood libraries, located in peripheral areas, is centered on animation activities (lectures, cooking courses, information literacy lessons ...) organized together with cultural associations. The aim is to strengthen the role of public libraries of Milan in supporting social cohesion (especially towards immigrants).

Keywords: Multicultural integration; promotion of public libraries; Milan Public Library System; sponsoring libraries

#### **Komm! Wir sehen uns in der Bibliothek**

Der Beitrag beschreibt die Initiative „Komm! Wir sehen uns in der Bibliothek“, ein Projekt des Mailänder Öffentlichen Bibliothekssystems. Die Initiative verknüpft fünf Nachbarschaftsbibliotheken, die sich in Randgebieten befinden und zentriert sich auf Animationsaktivitäten (Lesungen, Kochkurse, Informationskenntniskurse ...), die zusammen mit kulturellen Vereinen organisiert werden. Ziel ist es, die Rolle der Öffentlichen Bibliotheken in Mailand durch die Unterstützung des sozialen Zusammenhalts (besonders hinsichtlich der Immigranten) zu verstärken.

Schlüsselwörter: Multikulturelle Integration; Förderung Öffentlicher Bibliotheken; Mailänder Öffentliches Bibliothekssystem; Bibliothekssponsoring

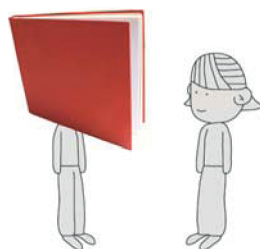
#### **0 Introduction**

In November 2009 Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione Vodafone, well known sponsors in the world of Italian culture, issued an announcement of competition of 1,200,000 euro for projects in partnership between libraries and non-profit organizations aiming at "easing integration as well as social inclusion through public libraries". Despite the very close deadline (January 15th 2010), lots of applications were put in basically for two reasons:

- libraries were regarded as the main aim of the competition;
- libraries, because of their territorial diffusion and their traditional care to meet the needs of users, are very attentive to the social worth of people's integration.

For these reasons the Library System of the Municipality of Milan has started the project called "Come! I'll see you in the library" which involves five branch libraries (Crescenzo, Venezia, Tibaldi, Chiesa Rossa and Baggio) in an experience bound to be extended to the whole System. By means of four initiatives described in this article (Living Library, Animateca, Let's surf together, Babel's feast) we intend to implement various social and cultural activities together with private partners, cultural associations and social cooperatives. Integration is our aim and we also mean to call on new patrons belonging to socially weak groups, such as women, children, teenagers, foreigners. In this way public libraries can increase the number of users in collaboration with private subjects and find out new guidelines to achieve new models of architecture and furniture, to achieve the mission of social integration.

#### **1 Living Library**



This part of the project intends to create occasions to foster meetings, mutual knowledge and comparisons between different cultures in a socially-critical area. It tends to help foreigners to get to know Italian cultural inheritance encourage

ing, at the same time, Italians to move towards the knowledge and culture developed by foreign communities. By using new sorts of languages, such as theatre, visual art and storytelling, libraries can become a special place where users can also become promoters of unknown cultures, to spur dialogues, becoming a vehicle of social integration. According to the project visits and researches will take place “on the spot” for the students of the school of Italian language called Villa Palavicini. The results of these activities will be translated into their own languages and made available to their compatriots. Foreigners are also invited to tell stories that are part of their own culture to be transformed occasionally into plays to be performed in theatres. The scope of these researches is very wide. It ranges from the experiences of the locals, born in the area who still remember the air raids of the Second World War and, in some cases, the deportation to Nazi concentration camps, up to the groups of inhabitants who settled in the areas, during several decades, after migrating to different parts of Italy and the world. In addition to that, there are the stories of the new citizens coming from different parts of the world with their cultural heritage: some of them are perfectly integrated in the new society, some of them still suffer from serious social discomfort. Enabling new users, both Italians and foreigners, to meet and better know each other in a library, exchanging stories belonging to their culture, is certainly the peak of social integration. Bringing the culture of the library to the district and, vice versa, the culture(s) of the district to the library, is one of the aims of the project. Here are some examples of this mutual approach.

#### **Librarian cooks in the market place**

Theatre actors wearing the white hat of cooks and a ribbon with the phrase “Living library” burst into the market place of the district, giving out notes with quotations from books, songs, films, freely available in libraries. They also invite people to make notes in a big book in their own language expressing commentaries, ideas, reflections about libraries, about the project “Living library”, their life in Italy, the prejudices against foreigners, about what they can hear among the stalls selling fruits and vegetables and about the good things that happen everywhere, including the district they live in.

#### **Walkers on stilts in the district**

The walkers move up and down the main street dealing out the folders of the project “Living library” described in the ten languages mostly spoken by the population in the area.

#### **Homer in the coffee bar**

In some coffee bars, shops, locals and restaurants in the district, twelve readers of different nationalities acting as many Homers read out, in front of a camera, the fifth book of the Odyssey in their own mother tongue. The ancient poetical text is enlivened through different languages and different alphabets.

#### **Reading and music without borders**

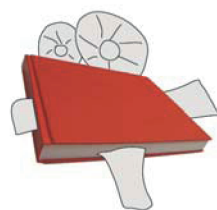
Both in the library and in other locations in the same district, meetings will be held in the evening to present books, stories, music, life experiences, encounters be-

tween people of different culture. The final phase of the project will end up in an event “human library” involving mainly the foreign citizens who took part in the project. They will be given the opportunity to talk informally to people as a sort of “living book”, to tell about their experience, to answer the questions of users, satisfy curiosities and clear doubts.

#### **More info:**

<[www.bibliotecavivente.wordpress.com](http://www.bibliotecavivente.wordpress.com)>,  
c.bibliocrescenzago@comune.milano.it

## **2 Animateca**



Through “Animateca” the creative generation of media explorers will invade libraries. The project aims at teenagers in order to increase the appeal of libraries for youngsters of this age by proposing them a range of innovative activities to raise their need to be protagonist, their imagination and creativity. Through a deliberate use of the collections and the services of the library, teenagers are involved in the production of video clips and original short films, film festivals and social events. This result is achieved by using medias as an instrument for communication and production of new items. The library in the Baggio district will house 18 free laboratories for audiovisual production. Two kinds of products are envisaged: the first one tends to foster public reading by producing short films. In this projects teen agers are busy to turn literary passages into films; the second one tends to optimize the use of other sections of the library, such as media, newspapers, reviews, serials and audiovisuals. It will keep teen agers busy in the production of different formats such as newsreels, advertising and video clips. In the course of the project the most enterprising teen agers will be involved to program and run effectively three film reviews mainly for teenagers but for other generations as well to pave the way to mutual understanding and better communication. Teen agers will be moreover involved, as part of the project in the selection, evaluation and acquisition of new materials for the library – books, music, films reviews – to be sure they meet the interests, the preferences as well as the taste of young users.

#### **More info:**

<[www.facebook.com/animateca](http://www.facebook.com/animateca)>,  
<[www.animatecaproject.tk](http://www.animatecaproject.tk)>, <[www.mediattivo.com](http://www.mediattivo.com)>,  
c.bibliobaggio@comune.milano.it

### 3 Let Us Surf Together

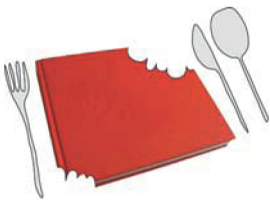


This experience aims to promote an appropriate use of Internet in public libraries. This library is located strategically at the crossroad of several tram and bus lines, which turns it into a highly-frequented place with a large variety of users, as far as age, origin, language, social and cultural conditions are concerned. In order to meet the needs of such a diversified kind of users, the library is called to reconsider its services and spaces to ease the social coexistence and integration, by involving actively the association of immigrants together with any other group in contact with foreigners. A number of social mediators are specially trained to form a bridge with people coming from other countries by setting into motion a “cultural service for community information”, which might be able to give an answer to as many needs as possible, a sort of special window to use Internet as well as the creation of a multicultural collection. In order to start and run a community service, specially devised for foreigners, partners and librarians have selected together a group of people coming from different countries belonging to different linguistic families (French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese) with a good knowledge of Italian, a more than acceptable level of competence with computers together with very good capacity for interpersonal relationship. The selected persons have attended special training courses held by librarians. Inside the Tibaldi library, spaces have been reconsidered and book collections have been relocated to run most adequately the service of “Community Information”. Suggestions and proposals from foreign users for new books and materials will certainly help to enrich and improve the collections, proving a great asset as well for the final artistic performance to show what sort of rich culture foreign users express together with high quality of their contribution to the library. That will be the right occasion to show the results of the experience and the cultural changes it has brought about.

**More info:**

c.bibliotibaldi@comune.milano.it

### 4 Babel's Feast



This year is very rich in professional activities for the two libraries located in the two districts (Venezia and Chiesa

Rossa) involved in the initiative called “Babel's feast” aiming to promote, through public libraries, the dialogue, the interchange as well as cultural integration. The menu of the feast consists of three rich courses.

“**Tastes and tales**” a program of several meetings between Italian and foreign women who intend to get to know other cultures, exchange ideas, traditions, recipes, habits in connection with different kind of food and their preparation. In the welcoming atmosphere of the library, through an open and friendly exchange about their daily life, women from all over the world reveal their habits, recollections of their childhood, their experiences about what happened in their “adventure in the kitchen”. The way of cooking and preparing dishes, the way of laying the table will lay bare feelings, ideas, thoughts and moods, which cancel geographic distances and offer a woman the right occasion for her to give herself up to telling stories. While female voices are echoing from one country to the other, recipes and culinary tips flood the whole place: “How do you make this?” “What do you put in it?” “How do you serve this one?”. Obviously, among recipes and recollections, there are included suggestions for reading and visits to the library which put a very wide selection of attractive or – shall we say – appetizing books, films, CDs and magazines at the disposal of all the participants: all the tastes – literally – can be met! The most curious thoughts and recollections will be collected into a “book”, in the appendix of which a glossary will be inserted relating all the names of the participants to Babel's feast, with the origin, the history and the meaning of such names, to help familiarize with people's names worldwide.

**More info:**

<[www.raccontiesapori.blogspot.com](http://www.raccontiesapori.blogspot.com)>

“**Tales become music**”

In workshops, specially devised for them, children make up stories, write the text and build their sound track inspired to the music of their countries of origin, to get to know more closely the atmosphere and the sound of different countries and languages. This is an experience unique of its kind as the children involved describe it in their school-newspaper. «We had a beautiful workshop in the library. We could listen to some music with Patrick and, after that, we started inventing a story ... In the end the result of our work was a long tale entitled “The adventure of Non Lo So (I do not Know)”. Just imagine! We have even recorded a CD: It is a tale we could write ourselves with a soundtrack made up with the music we could also choose ourselves!».

**More info:**

<[www.lafiabadiventamusica.blogspot.com](http://www.lafiabadiventamusica.blogspot.com)>

“The adventures of No Lo So” as well “The Maharaja Babbeo” (that is “Phoney”), set in China and in Ancient India are just two examples of a selection of gripping, passionate stories through which the vast imagination of children, duly raised by the magic of sounds and words has literally astonished us all.

**“Towns become tales”**

This activity is specially devised for children as well and consists of a selection of “shared readings”, projects and workshops in which participants will compete in telling stories about the town. Children, with their imagination, are charged to build the plot of a story about the town. How do the eyes and the fantasy of children watch and experience the people, the sounds, the colours, the places and the architecture of their town? What will be the outcome of it? Fun is granted! At the end of the project a special party is scheduled in a theatre. That will be the best opportunity to hear straight from the voice of the protagonists, the impressions and the results of “Babel’s feast”, to present the “book” of “tales and tastes”, the musical CD “Tales become music” and to watch the performance “Towns become Tales”.

**More info:**

c.bibliovenezia@comune.milano.it  
c.bibliochiesarossa@comune.milano.it

**Budget**

Total amount: Euro 351,730  
Cariplo/Vodafone contribution: Euro 225,000  
Municipality of Milan: Euro 82,970  
Partners: Euro 43,760  
Length: May 2010 – September 2011  
Chief corporation: Municipality of Milan – Library Division