

## **Introduction by Maurizio Fallace**

### **Presentation of General Direction for libraries, cultural institutes and copyright to 75<sup>th</sup> edition of *World Library and Information Congress*. *Milano, 23-27 August 2009***

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all here today. I would like to thank the city leaders of Milan who kindly offered the Fiera Milan congress which provides a new, interesting and ideal location for one of the most important international events in the library world.

Let me also welcome and thank those present from the Italian academic world and administration who worked constantly organising the DG's participation at IFLA 2009.

I would also like to give a special mention and thanks to all the members of the Executive Committee for their unflagging efforts since 2007 to make this meeting happen.

Mauro Guerrini, President of Associazione Italiana Biblioteche,

Claudio Gamba, Vice-President of Regione Lombardia

Aurelio Aghemo, Director of Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense

Laura Ballestra, Associazione Italiana Biblioteche

Cristina Borgonovo, Provincia di Milano

Giuliana Casartelli, Associazione Italiana Biblioteche

Maria Cristina Di Martino, Director of Biblioteca Alessandrina

Giuliana Giustino, Università degli Studi di Milano

Stefano Parise, Fondazione per Leggere

Aldo Pirola, Comune di Milano

Alberto Rapomi Colombo, Comune di Milano

Ellis Sada, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Maria Cristina Selva, Università degli Studi di Milano

Maria Laura Trapletti, Regione Lombardia

Manuela Melosi, for the coordination of the activities

My personal and particular thanks goes to Maria Cristina Di Martino, Director of Biblioteca Alessandrina, who represents the DG in the Executive Committee.

Last but not least my personal thanks to Claudia Lux, IFLA President and to Jennefer Nicholson, IFLA General Secretary.

We are extremely honoured that Milan was chosen to host the World Library and Information Congress, the organisation joining the professional national associations and the leading libraries of the world. This is an important opportunity for many from the Italian library world to participate at this international event. I should just like to mention that this congress was held here in Italy 45 years ago and the very first ‘World Congress of Bibliography’ was also held in Italy in Rome, Florence and Venice in June 1929.

The DG firmly supported Italy’s request to host this event, both financially and with assistance in organising this meeting. This is a unique opportunity to highlight Italy’s extraordinary bibliographic heritage. While this bibliographic heritage is brought to a greater public through publishing initiatives, conferences and exhibitions, recent projects have seen the digitization of many works.

Currently, digital libraries and electronic publications are now competing with traditional libraries and publications, explaining why many decisions associated with new libraries are technical. They do however include social and economic factors. Not only do libraries store cultural heritage and have the mission to preserve the collective memory, they are also at the service of the general public and play a fundamental role in the national education programme.

Thanks to new technologies the increased request for information is, to a certain point, met by the internet and through innumerable web sites considered as digital libraries. However the results are far from satisfactory. The user is often submerged by too much low quality material and the term digital library is too generic a search to satisfy the user. Indeed, to be classified as a digital library, a collection of contents must not only be made accessible but also be managed scientifically.

Our DG has supported Italian cultural heritage digitization and promoted this new approach to knowledge. The objectives being to provide faster and better access to high quality information and to conserve rare and fragile works. Digital contents provide a previously unimaginable potential to disseminate the library cultural heritage and different traditions as well as to reach out beyond our boundaries.

The title of this Congress “Libraries create future, building on cultural heritage” underlines the importance that libraries continue to put down firm roots becoming information centres and cultural meeting places satisfying the needs of the community at large and in particular the younger generation.

Italy has a unique and diverse cultural identity, renowned worldwide because of its book patrimony : a patrimony of extraordinary value from both public and private libraries and from outstanding cultural institutes.

We are honoured to host this congress as it provides an opportunity to promote our cultural and artistic patrimony to a vast audience. For this occasion we have published a book in Italian and English about the Italian library world and produced a CD containing rare documents about our musical history, in particular that of Naples.

We hope our stand at the congress provides a meeting and information point. You will find details there of our many activities, about the ministerial institutes, seminars and workshops. There is a collection of catalogues as well as publications and video projections. We look forward to seeing you there.

I am sure that this meeting will illustrate the Ministry’s many activities as well as the fundamental role of IFLA and that of the Italian libraries. It will also underline the extreme importance of this congress for Italy.

I wish you all a good day and a pleasant stay here in Milan.