

DIGITAL NARRATIVES OBSERVATORY

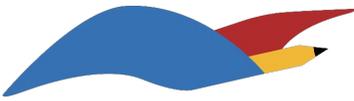
A project promoted by
Literacy Italia and the
Bologna Children's
Book Fair

PROGRAMME

15-16 APRIL 2026



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ASSOCIAZIONE LITERACY ITALIA

DIGITAL NARRATIVES OBSERVATORY

Digital narratives are transforming how young readers engage with stories. Interactive picture books, transmedia storytelling, immersive experiences, and AI-mediated collaborative creation are reshaping the ways stories are read, experienced, and shared. This goes beyond a simple proliferation of technological formats; it represents a cultural shift that is reconfiguring both narrative forms and the reader's role within the reading experience.

As Marshall McLuhan observed, new media never simply supplement older ones, nor do they leave them unchanged—they continuously reshape their forms and positions. Today, digital and multimedia are not replacing the traditional book but redefining its role, distributing the reading experience across new languages and practices. In this landscape, the question is not whether the digital has entered the terrain of children's and young people's storytelling—its presence is already established—but how its development is

taking shape, and under which logics it is being guided.

What does it mean to read a story in digital environments? What forms do digital narratives take? How do they engage the reader, through participation, exploration, and co-creation? And what criteria allow us to recognise quality beyond technical innovation or the mere appeal of interactivity?

The Digital Narratives Observatory was created to address these questions. It is a project promoted by Literacy Italia and Bologna Children's Book Fair with different aims: to observe and map the characteristics of emerging digital narrative forms; to foster dialogue between research, publishing, and educational practice; and to provide orientation tools and evaluative frameworks for those who create, publish, promote, and teach stories in an increasingly digital context.

The event will take place at Bologna Children's Book Fair 2026 (15–16 April). Two days of sessions with researchers, authors, publishers, educators, and reading professionals, and representatives of the European Commission, will explore digital narrative ecosystems and reading practices in the age of artificial intelligence. The first Digital Narratives Observatory Report will be presented, offering guidance for navigating a rapidly evolving field.



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15 APRIL 2026

Digital Narratives: between literary experience and digital literacies

The Next Chapter Cafè, Hall 29
11.30 - 12.00

CHAIRS:

Pier Cesare Rivoltella

University of Bologna

Tiziana Mascia

Associazione Literacy Italia

OPENING AND WELCOME

11.30 - 11.35 ⌚ 5 minutes

The chairs introduce the aims of the session and the work of the Digital Narratives Observatory, setting the context for the report and the discussion that follows.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION, CREATIVE EUROPE (DG EAC)

11.35 - 11.45 ⌚ 10 minutes

Dag Asbjørnsen

This presentation offers a European cultural and policy perspective on reading and the book sector within a transforming narrative ecosystem. Drawing

on the priorities of the European Commission, it examines why reading and literature remain central to European cultural agendas, and how contemporary cultural and educational policies are engaging with emerging digital and hybrid narrative forms alongside traditional books.

REPORT PRESENTATION DIGITAL NARRATIVES OBSERVATORY REPORT – MAPPING THE NEW NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM

11.45 - 12.00 ⌚ 15 minutes

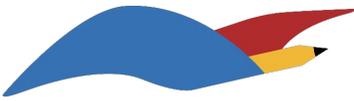
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University of Bologna

Tiziana Mascia

Associazione Literacy Italia

This session introduces the Digital Narratives Observatory Report, which presents findings from a survey conducted among Bologna Children's Book Fair exhibitors and offers an initial mapping of emerging trends in digital narratives for children and young people. The presentation provides an overview of emerging formats and highlights key trends in digital stories for children and young people, offering guidance for those working in publishing, libraries, schools, and reading promotion. The Report is in dialogue with the special issue of *Scholé* 1/2026, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by Morcelliana, dedicated to digital narratives between literary experience and digital literacies.



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ROUND TABLE SESSION

We're not digitizing books, we're inventing new narrative languages

The Next Chapter Cafè, Hall 29
12.00 - 12.50

CHAIR:

Jennifer Rowsell

University of Sheffield (UK)

Rowsell chairs the roundtable and opens the discussion by outlining how young readers' practices, expectations and forms of engagement with stories are changing today, providing a shared framework for the discussion. She will introduce ways to think about reading as a multimodal, participatory, and immersive practice and what this means for text design and varied ways of telling stories.

The transformations of digital narratives raise concrete questions for those who write, design, publish, teach, and promote stories for children and adolescents. From interactive forms to immersive experiences, from transmedia storytelling to artificial intelligence, narrative practices bring new responsibilities and new choices — concerning the quality of stories, the role of the reader, and modes of access and participation. Building on the work of the Digital Narratives Observatory, the roundtable brings together international researchers, writers, publishers, and cultural professionals to engage with examples, perspectives, and criteria that can help orient reflection within this evolving landscape,

and to open a space for dialogue on possible directions for digital narratives.

A guiding question for the discussion is: "Can you share an example of a digital narrative you consider successful as literature — and what design and storytelling choices contribute to the quality of the reading experience?"

PANEL

Scott Rettberg

University of Bergen, Center for Digital Narrative (Norway)

As Director of the Center for Digital Narrative, Scott Rettberg will present an example from his work on digital and immersive narratives. His presentation will explore how virtual and interactive environments can redefine the role of the reader and open new forms of sensory, spatial, and collaborative engagement with stories.

Kate Pullinger

Novelist (Canada - UK)

Author of "Inanimate Alice", a pioneering transmedia narrative that follows a young protagonist's growth through interactive online episodes, Kate Pullinger will show how digital narratives can maintain coherence and emotional depth while transforming the reader into an active explorer of the story world.

Davide Morosinotto

Novelist (Italy)

Drawing on a recent experiment with generative writing and artificial intelligence, Davide Morosinotto will show how AI can enter the creative process as a tool for invention and dialogue—to



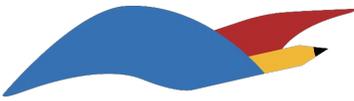
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extend, rather than replace, the author's creative role in crafting stories.

Federica de Quagliatti

Senior Journal specialist at Frontiers for Young Minds (Switzerland)

Bringing the experience of Frontiers for Young Minds—a project awarded a Special Mention at the BolognaRagazzi CrossMedia Award 2025—Federica de Quagliatti will illustrate how digital publishing can open up scientific knowledge to young readers by involving them directly in processes of inquiry, interpretation, and dialogue, positioning participation as a core editorial and narrative principle.

CLOSING REMARKS

Jennifer Rowsell

University of Sheffield (UK)

Rowsell will briefly connect the perspectives emerging from the roundtable to the educational and cultural dimensions of digital reading, highlighting how participatory, immersive and multimodal narrative forms can open spaces for learning, creativity and narrative citizenship for young readers.

16 APRIL 2026

Moving Mountains: motivating readers in the age of artificial intelligence

Sala Melodia, Centro Servizi,
Blocco B

10.00 - 11.40

OPENING

10.00 - 10.15 🕒 15 minutes

CHAIRS:

Jennifer Rowsell

University of Sheffield (UK)

Tiziana Mascia

Associazione Literacy Italia

In recent years, teachers and researchers share the same concern: the number of young readers is declining, and with it, interest, attention, and the capacity for deep reading. Many teachers describe the difficulty of motivating a generation immersed in a constant flow of images, sounds, and digital narratives. A substantial body of research has sought answers by comparing reading skills between print and screen. These studies, while valuable, adopt a predominantly cognitive perspective—yet we have long known that reading is also a social and cultural practice involving emotions, identity, and relationships.



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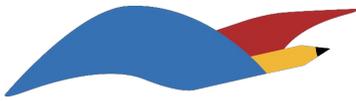


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The contributions of this day will offer teachers and librarians a sociocultural perspective to understand how young people read today and how they construct and share stories through books, videos, games, and digital platforms. A perspective that recognizes the diversity of genres, formats, and ways of engaging with texts. The reading practices of young people, if observed and valued, can become a starting point for bringing them closer to literacy. What they do spontaneously in their daily lives can become an opportunity to rediscover the pleasure of reading, interpreting, and telling stories. The day will offer educators and librarians moments for reflection, ideas, and experiences to explore, together with students, new forms of storytelling across print and digital environments.

THE COMFORT OF SCREENS - HOW WE LIVE AND LEARN IN DIGITAL CULTURE

10.15 - 10.45 🕒 30 minutes

Jennifer Rowsell

University of Sheffield (UK)

Jennifer Rowsell will draw on research from her book "The Comfort of Screens" to show how screens have become not merely another element in reading and learning, but the very environment in which culture is constructed and experienced daily. Through examples from school and family contexts, she will show how children and young people read, write and learn through screens, weaving together emotion, relationship and creativity. Teachers will gain new language and perspectives for engaging with students' digital practices and for reconceiving reading as a multimodal experience that brings together text, image and interaction, restoring value and depth to reading within digital culture.

MARCO POLO BETWEEN EAST AND WEST – NONFICTION DIGITAL STORYTELLING

10.45 - 11.15 🕒 30 minutes

Barbara Vanin

VEZ Rete Biblioteche Venezia

Tiziana Mascia

Associazione Literacy Italia

Daniela Cirillo

I.C. Venice Mestre

Francesco Grande

Biblioteche Sesto San Giovanni (MI),

Associazione Literacy Italia

The project stems from a teacher training program on reading for pleasure pedagogy, promoted by the VEZ library network and Literacy Italia, and develops as a participatory research intervention in the classroom. It offers a concrete example of how training can translate into practices that impact student motivation. Starting from students' interests, historical reading was reimagined as an experience of discovery and meaning-making, transforming reading into an authentic encounter with texts and knowledge.

Throughout the project, reading took shape in hybrid environments where nonfiction books, historical sources, and digital resources entered into dialogue with one another.

Students became authors and narrators, reading and interpreting diverse materials to create a collective digital narrative.

During the session, the digital story created by the students will be screened—an invitation to rethink how curricular content can become a space for reading for pleasure and active participation.



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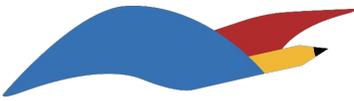
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THE GRAMMAR OF NARRATIVE PODCASTING: SPORT STORIES

11.15 - 11.35 🕒 20 minutes

Marco Pastonesi

Journalist and writer

Sports storytelling, long present in children's and young adult literature through biographies and narratives of challenge and growth, is examined in its capacity to move across digital media while preserving the power of narrative. From this perspective, the podcast emerges as a form of storytelling capable of engaging young audiences and supporting them in the construction of their own narratives. Producing stories in podcast form encourages research, source consultation, and comparison of materials, while requiring active narrative decision-making: what to tell, how to tell it, and for whom.

Focusing on examples from sports storytelling, Marco Pastonesi analyses the grammar of narrative podcasting to show what makes an audio story effective and engaging over time. Particular attention is given to narrative structure, the role of voice, rhythm, and the selection of meaningful episodes.

CLOSING

11.35 - 11.40 🕒 5 minutes

Tiziana Mascia

Associazione Literacy Italia

Jennifer Rowsell

University of Sheffield (UK)

Assunta Di Febo

Associazione Literacy Italia



TRAINING AND CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION RECOGNIZED BY THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MIM)

Literacy Italia is an association officially accredited by the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM) for the professional development of in-service teachers (Article 3 of Directive 170/2016 - Ministerial Decree no. 1169 of 14 July 2021). This training initiative is also published on the Ministry's S.O.F.I.A. website (ID code: 103281) under the title *Motivare alla lettura al tempo dell'intelligenza artificiale. Narrazioni digitali per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza tra media, esperienza e nuove pratiche*. Registration will be open from 1/03/2026 until the day before the beginning of the activities. Teachers enrolled through the S.O.F.I.A. platform will receive, at the end of the programme, an official certificate of attendance recognised by the Ministry, issued upon participation in at least 75% of the in-person sessions. Both the certificate and the training record will be available for download directly from the participant's personal profile on the Ministry's platform, with full validity for in-service professional development. To finalise registration, participants must also register on the Literacy Italia platform www.literacyitalia.it where the e-learning modules—an integral part of the course—will be available to complete the required four hours of training. Taking part in an initiative promoted by an accredited organisation provides access to reliable content, updated methodologies, and fully recognised professional development pathways. Attendance also entitles participants to service exemption, in accordance with current regulations, and counts towards the

compulsory, permanent, and structural in-service training established by Law 107/2015, Article 1, Paragraph 124.

LITERACY ITALIA - CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

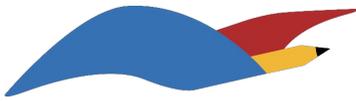
For those who do not have access to the S.O.F.I.A. platform and who have registered for the initiative through Literacy Italia, a certificate of attendance issued by the Literacy Italia Association will nevertheless be provided, upon completion of the course registration via the official website www.literacyitalia.it (email: associazione@literacyitalia.it).

Participation is free of charge.

DNO - SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

PIER CESARE RIVOLTELLA

Pier Cesare Rivoltella is Professor of Didactics and Special Education at the Department of the Arts, University of Bologna. His research interests focus on media literacy, educational technologies, and didactic research, with particular attention to the relationships between media, education, and training. He is Director of the Master's programme MED. Media, Education and Didactics for Digital Innovation and has coordinated numerous national and international research projects. He is President of SIREF (Italian Society for Educational and Training Research), serves as editor and co-editor of several academic journals and book series in the field of pedagogy, and is the author of numerous influential volumes on didactics and media education.



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JENNIFER ROWSELL

Jennifer Rowsell, PhD, is an internationally recognised scholar of literacy and multimodality, with over 25 years of academic and research experience across universities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. She has held senior leadership roles, including Tier 2 Canada Research Chair at Brock University, Deputy Head of School at the University of Bristol, and Director of Research and Innovation at the University of Sheffield. Her work has been instrumental in expanding literacy beyond print to include images, objects, spaces, and digital media, positioning multimodality as a central concept in contemporary literacy studies. She is known for her collaboration with Kate Pahl and their concept of artifactual literacies, which shows how personal objects and artifacts reveal what and how people learn, as well as for her widely cited books and handbooks on multimodality and digital literacy. Working in classrooms and communities, Rowsell has explored how identity, culture, and place inform reading, writing, and meaning-making, and she designs research-informed practices that help educators value diverse forms of expression—video, design, movement, and more. She served as Lead Editor of *Reading Research Quarterly* from 2022 to 2026 and is a founding editor of the Routledge *Expanding Literacies in Education* book series. She is also a member of the board of the European Literacy Policy Network.

TIZIANA MASCIA

Tiziana Mascia, PhD, teaches Children's Literature and literacies at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo (DISTUM Department of

Humanities). Her research develops within the field of children's literature and literacy studies and focuses on the sociocultural dimensions of reading experiences, nonfiction, and digital narratives for children and young people. Her academic publications includes monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and contributions to edited volumes, as well as participation in national and European research projects and collaboration with international research networks and institutions. She is the founder of Literacy Italia, an association dedicated to fostering dialogue between research, schools, and teacher education in the field of literacy and children's and young adult narratives, affiliated with the Federation of European Literacy Associations (FELA) and the International Literacy Association (ILA). She is a member of the board of the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET).

UGO GUIDOLIN

Ugo Guidolin teaches Cultural Anthropology of Digital Media, Information Design, and Digital Visualization and coordinates the Media and Digital Design Lab at IUSVE University (Venice and Verona). His work focuses on media education and digital literacy, areas in which he has led workshops and seminars. He is a member of the executive board of Literacy Italia and contributed to the policy document "Digital Technologies and Children: Guidelines for Responsible Use" (CSB Onlus, 2015). He has taken part in IUSVE research projects, including "Educators and New Media" (2017) and "Growing Digital" (2020). He is the author of the essay "Thinking Digitally" (McGraw-Hill, 2005) and of the cyber-narrative for young readers "Sybo, My Stratospheric Friend" (Edizioni Paoline, 2010).



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PANELISTS

DAG ASBJØRNSEN

Dag Asbjørnsen is a National Expert for the EU Commission, DG Education and Culture, working for the Creative Europe Culture Programme. His current portfolio includes the Book sector, AI and emerging technologies. He is seconded from the Norwegian Film Institute and the Norwegian Ministry of Culture. He has earlier served at the EU MEDIA Programme (2012-2016). Prior to this role, he spent six years as Senior Adviser to the Minister of Culture, instrumental in shaping Norwegian film policy at both national and international levels. His career combines deep academic grounding in Media Science (Master of Arts, University of Oslo) with extensive hands-on experience in cultural policy implementation, European programme management, and strategic advisory work.

SCOTT RETTBERG

Scott Rettberg is a Norwegian digital artist and scholar of electronic literature and digital cultures, widely recognised for his contribution to the understanding of emerging narrative forms in the digital age. He is a co-founder of the Electronic Literature Organization, the international association devoted to the promotion of electronic literature and hybrid practices of writing and reading. Rettberg has taught and conducted research at a range of international institutions and has participated in conferences and research projects on digital storytelling in Europe and the United States. He is Professor of Digital Culture at the University of Bergen, Norway, where he directs the Center for Digital Narrative, a centre of

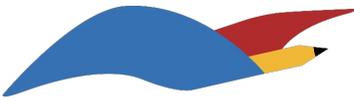
excellence dedicated to research on digital narratives and on the interactions between text, algorithm, and reader. His scholarly output includes the volume "Electronic Literature", which received the N. Katherine Hayles Award for Criticism of Electronic Literature.

KATE PULLINGER

Kate Pullinger is a Canadian writer of fiction and digital literature, internationally recognised for works that explore the boundaries between print text and multimedia narratives. Her novel "The Mistress of Nothing" won the Governor General's Award for Fiction, one of Canada's most prestigious literary prizes. Digital projects such as "Inanimate Alice" are widely regarded as landmark examples in electronic literature and in the pedagogy of digital reading. She is Professor of Creative Writing and Digital Media at Bath Spa University in England, where she conducts research and teaching in creative writing, digital media, and contemporary publishing. In 2021 she received the Marjorie C. Luesebrink Career Achievement Award from the Electronic Literature Organization, and in 2024 she was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

DAVIDE MOROSINOTTO

Davide Morosinotto is an author of children's and young adult literature whose works have been translated into more than twenty-five languages. In Italy, he won the Super Premio Andersen in 2017 with "The Renowned Catalogue of Walker & Dawn" (Mondadori) and the Premio Strega Ragazze e Ragazzi in 2021 with "La più grande" (Rizzoli), a title included in the 2021 IBBY Honour List. His books have received numerous international awards across Europe and North America, including honours in France, Germany,



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the Netherlands, Flanders, Catalonia, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland. He has been shortlisted for the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis and nominated for the Carnegie Medal in the UK. In 2025 he won the Libraires Jeunesse du Québec Award (ages 12–17), the most prestigious Canadian prize for children’s and young adult literature.

FEDERICA DE QUAGLIATTI

Federica de Quagliatti is a Senior Journal Specialist at Frontiers for Young Minds, an open-access scientific journal for children that translates cutting-edge research into accessible language and actively involves young readers in the peer-review process. She holds a Master’s degree in Publishing Media from Oxford Brookes University and has gained extensive experience in children’s publishing and international rights. Her work focuses on innovative narrative formats that promote scientific literacy and foster critical thinking among young audiences.

BARBARA VANIN

Barbara Vanin is Head of the VEZ Service and the Venice Library Network within the Department of Culture of the Municipality of Venice, with responsibility for coordinating and developing the city’s public libraries, including the VEZ Library in Mestre, a dynamic cultural hub for access to reading and knowledge. Her professional background includes work in manuscript cataloguing and the history of libraries, and she has published essays on the preservation and enhancement of book heritage. Under her leadership, the Venice Library Network has experienced significant growth in services, activities, and cultural events for all age groups,

consolidating VEZ as an inclusive space for study, reading, and innovation.

MARCO PASTONESI

Marco Pastonesi is a journalist and writer. For many years he served as a columnist and special correspondent for La Gazzetta dello Sport, covering some of the most important international sporting events, including multiple editions of the Giro d’Italia and the Tour de France, world championships in cycling and rugby, and the London 2012 Olympic Games. Specialising in cycling and rugby, he is known for a distinctive style that combines technical expertise with close attention to the human dimension of athletes and sporting narratives. He is the author of numerous books on sport, including “Pantani era un dio”, “Spingi me sennò bestemmio”, “Coppi ultimo”, “Ovalia. Dizionario erotico del rugby”, and “L’uragano nero” su Jonah Lomu, as well as works dedicated to boxing and emblematic figures of contemporary sport.

DANIELA CIRILLO

Daniela Cirillo teaches Italian language and literature, history, and geography at I.C. Spallanzani in Venice Mestre. Her work focuses on teaching and educational project design, with attention to the promotion of reading and writing as cultural practices. She is the co-author of several works of fiction for children and young people addressing historical memory, including “Lo zaino della memoria” (2018) and “Shoah e pietre d’inciampo: Interweaving history through Venice’s streets and canals” (2020; 2nd ed. 2025). She designs and leads reading and writing projects with students and school communities, fostering dialogue between history, memory, and education.



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FRANCESCO GRANDE

Francesco Grande is Head of the Children's Library of Sesto San Giovanni (MI) and coordinator of activities for children and adolescents within local cultural services. For more than twenty years he has been committed to promoting books and reading for young audiences, designing and delivering services, events, and cultural programmes dedicated to children and young people, as well as leading workshops in animation, podcasting, and digital storytelling. He is a member of the executive board of Literacy Italia, where he collaborates on interdisciplinary projects and teacher education initiatives.

ASSUNTA DI FEBO

Assunta Di Febo worked for over forty years in the field of cultural heritage at the Central Institute for the Pathology of Archives and Books and at the National Centre for Books and Reading, where she focused on education in the conservation and restoration of book materials and collaborated in the organisation of courses, conferences, exhibitions, and meetings on books and reading, both in Italy and internationally. Throughout her career, she promoted and curated National initiatives dedicated to reading promotion, including campaigns such as Il Maggio dei Libri and school-oriented projects such as Libriamoci, Scriviamoci, and the Premio Strega Ragazze e Ragazzi. She is a member of the executive board of Literacy Italia, where she is also involved in the design of training pathways for Reading Specialists, with the aim of supporting professional competences in the promotion of reading and storytelling in all their forms.



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