



**BOLOGNABOOKPLUS**  
 TRADING FOR GENERAL PUBLISHERS  
 EXHIBIT | TRAINING | CONTENT



## BOLOGNABOOKPLUS

The sixth edition of the general trade Bologna initiative – new for 2026: Designer Studio, expanded AI Summit and WritersLab.

For the first time outside the United States, the prestigious Illustrators Annual Competition, organised by the Society of Illustrators, makes its debut in Europe. As a global first, a selection of the Gold and Silver Medal winners from 2022 to 2026 will be showcased at the new Designer Studio.

BolognaBookPlus is the initiative launched in 2021 in collaboration with the Italian Publishers Association (AIE) to expand the scope of Bologna Children’s Book Fair by reaching out to a wider audience in the field of general publishing. Now in its **sixth year**, it encompasses an exhibition space, including the **Italian Publishers Pavilion** – in partnership with AIE – in addition to training events, seminars, summits, forums and exhibits.

Among the exhibition opportunities is also the **New Title Showcase**, an official display at the heart of BolognaBookPlus managed by Combined Book Exhibit, created as an attractive, a way for authors to showcase their titles – both print and digital – at a major international book fair.

One of the most popular events, **How to Sell Rights and Understand Licensing in Children’s Publishing**, is taking place on the day before the Fair opens, Sunday 12 April 2026. More than just the definitive training event for all those wishing to get into rights, or in their first role in the area, it is an excellent grounding for authors, editors and all those in publishing. The **Audio Forum**, a half-day conference taking place on Wednesday 15 April 2026 at the BBPlus Theatre, is aimed at spotlighting the booming audio and podcasting industries with top global experts. Sponsored by ElevenLabs, Bookwire and Zebralution, this year’s Audio Forum’s programme will examine how technology, creativity and commercial realities are reshaping how stories are produced, distributed and consumed. Among the speakers: Duncan Bruce, Director of Partnerships & Licensing for audiobooks, **Spotify**; Mathilde Davignon, Head of Audio, **Gallimard**; Barbara Knabe, Head of Content Acquisition, UE e America Latina, **Audible**; Richard Addis, Music, Podcast and Audiobook Partnerships, **Dolby UE**; Robin Lai, SVP – Custom Shop, **John Marshall Media**; Becca Souster, Head of Audio Sales and Strategy, **Pan Macmillan**.

Also returning is the expanded **AI Summit**, featuring an international line-up of publishing and AI leaders from across Europe, UK, US and India. Curated in partnership with Shimmr AI, the second edition, April 14, looks ahead to the next chapter, from agentic systems across the publishing workflow and data-driven decision-making, to rights, licensing and the growing role of intelligent creativity.





Creative Ambassadors for 2026 are **Author Ambassador, Rafał Kosik**, from Poland and **Illustration Ambassador**, from Guest of Honour Country, Norway, **Mari Kanstad Johnsen**. Additional Guest of Honour Country activity at BBPlus is **Talking Pictures**, examining the cultural impact of visual books through a curated showcase, a jury review and a seminar.

The **Indie Authors Book Jacket Award** returns, designed to highlight fresh talent from diverse cover designs, and new for 2026, the launch of the **Italian Bestseller Awards with NielsenIQ BookData**.

New initiative launched: the **WritersLab**, a space entirely dedicated to writers, both in children's and general publishing, curated by Argentovivo, in partnership with FUIS - Federazione Unitaria Italiana Scrittori. A special area to meet, exchange ideas and invest in one's professional growth by engaging with fellow writers, it starts from a clear vision: recognizing writing as a profession, in all its forms, and offering authors concrete opportunities to navigate the contemporary publishing ecosystem.

The **Designer Studio** is a new programme dedicated to art direction, editorial design and non-children's illustration, created to foster dialogue between visual design and the general trade publishing market. A project developed by BBPlus and curated by **Mimaster Illustrazione**, following the success of The Illustrators Survival Corner (the space dedicated to illustrators and designers for children's and young adults), it further expands the cultural and professional offerings for the Fair's audience, with a schedule of masterclasses, workshops and portfolio reviews led by a line-up of internationally renowned art directors, designers, and illustrators. In this first edition, the programme focuses on the role of the book cover as both a visual design product and a marketing tool, through masterclasses that explore its identity from both a historical and contemporary perspective. In addition, a series of workshops will involve designers and illustrators attending the fair in the process of creating and developing a book cover for publishing.

Among the guests are illustrators **Pablo Amargo** (Spain), **Jon Gray** (UK), **Lorenzo Mattotti** (Italy) and **Riccardo Vecchio** (Italy/USA); numerous art directors and graphic designers will also take part, including **DJ Stout** (Pentagram, USA) and **Cecilia Flegenheimer** (Mondadori, Italy). An ideal space to also welcome this year's BBPlus Illustration Ambassador, **Mari Kanstad Johnsen** (Norway), who will host a series of talks and workshops throughout the fair.

The programme is further enriched by a series of exhibitions, including **Jackets Off!**, which since 2021 has compared book covers from different countries and this year is dedicated to the queen of crime fiction **Agatha Christie**, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the iconic author's death, with a special focus on illustrator **Ferenc Pintér: 50 PINTÉR X 50 CHRISTIE** is realized by Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori and curated by Mimaster Illustrazione in collaboration with Laboratorio di Fondazione Mondadori. The exhibition traces more than thirty years of Pintér's work for Mondadori, during which the artist created some of the publisher's most iconic covers. Alongside the artworks, the display will include books and archival materials such as original documents and correspondence between Mondadori and Agatha Christie's agents, letters from the writer and reader feedback dating back to the 1930s, sourced from the Fondazione Mondadori Archive, as well as critical texts. A visual and documentary journey that offers the public not only Pintér's art, but also the editorial and cultural context in which his images came to life.

Also arriving **exclusively** at the Designer Studio, and **for the first time outside the United States**, is the exhibition dedicated to the gold and silver medal winners of the Society of Illustrators **Annual Illustration Competition** in the book category from the 2022–2026 five-year period, one of the most prestigious awards organized by the Society of Illustrators of New York, accompanied by related activities including talks and guided tours.





Also launching is a preview of the solo exhibition, set to debut in New York and curated by the Society of Illustrators, in collaboration with Pentagram, **Balbusso Twins Illustrating with Two Souls**, featuring a selection of illustration, art and design works that tell the story of 25 years of the professional journey of the Italian artistic duo Anna and Elena Balbusso, also known as the Balbusso Twins.

