



THE 63RD BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

From 13 to 16 April, Bologna Children's Book Fair, BolognaBookPlus, Bologna Licensing Trade Fair/Kids: an integrated system of fair events for the international trade in rights for all sectors of publishing and beyond

Highlights of the 2026 edition include: **60 years of the Illustrators Exhibition**, debuts for **Designer Studio** and **WritersLab** and a focus on gender representation with **UN Women**

Also anticipated, the celebrations for 200 years of Collodi with the exhibition **Italian Excellence: Pinocchio's New Clothes** and a lectio by **Alessandro Barbero**

Big names are expected, including: **Beatrice Alemagna, Gianrico Carofiglio, Matthew Forsythe, Anna Llenas, Lorenzo Mattotti, Roger Mello, Bianca Pitzorno, Michael Rosen, Sydney Smith, Øyvind Torseter, Hervé Tullet, Jacqueline Woodson**

The announcement of the **2026 winners of the BolognaRagazzi Awards**, with the special category Fables and Fairy Tales, and the CrossMedia Awards

The 63rd edition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) is set to take place at the Bologna Exhibition Centre from **13 to 16 April 2026**: a sixty-three-year commitment to scouting for new talent and promoting the best publishing content for children and young people, with a progressively broader outlook to include more and more sectors of the publishing world and beyond, in order to ensure new business opportunities. For the past six editions, the fair has also featured **BolognaBookPlus** (BBPlus), the event specifically for generalist publishing and organised in collaboration with the Italian Publishers Association (AIE), and for the past nineteen editions, **Bologna Licensing Trade Fair/Kids** (BLTF/Kids), focused on brands for children and young people.

Three dimensions, three aspects of the same publishing business that reflect the changes underway in an increasingly interconnected world. This year once again, the fair's line-up is expanding with new spaces designed to intercept and encourage the development of evolving market segments, opening up new and broader possibilities for the many visitors and exhibitors expected in Bologna. For 2026, there will be around **1500 exhibitors from 90 countries and regions** around the world (new arrivals include Barbados, Cameroon, Nepal, Rwanda, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Zambia).

This participation has been made possible thanks to the support of **ITA – the Italian Trade Agency** and the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation - MAECI**, aimed at promoting business opportunities between national and global publishers. One of the most significant initiatives is a large-scale invitation programme that supports the participation at the fair of over 150 professionals from around the world.

GUEST OF HONOUR COUNTRY

The **Guest of Honour Country** for 2026 is **Norway**. Publishers from around the world will have the opportunity to explore the rich and varied publishing landscape of this Scandinavian country, presented at the fair through the





What if? programme. This motto lies at the very heart of Norwegian literature and illustration for children and young adults: two simple words that open up a whole world of possibilities, inviting us to ask questions. The country's creative tradition is, in fact, shaped by freedom, imagination and audacity, and is based on the belief that children are autonomous individuals deserving of artistic expression that takes them seriously. As Guest of Honour Country, Norway is presenting the works of 49 selected illustrators at the fair. The exhibition **What if?** will showcase the high quality of Norwegian figurative production, accompanied by a rich programme of conferences and meetings with authors and artists, both at the fair and around the city.

GUESTS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Once again this year, over four days Bologna will become the world capital of illustration and publishing for children and young people. The numerous guests due to take part include: **Albertine, Beatrice Alemagna, Pablo Amargo, Isabelle Arsenault, Anna and Elena Balbusso, Alessandro Barbero, Sophie Blackall, Gianrico Carofiglio, Catia Chien, Kitty Crowther, DJ Stout, Timothée de Fombelle, Armando Fonseca, Matthew Forsythe, Cai Gao, Jon Gray, Stian Hole, Anna Llenas, Mari Kanstad Johnsen, Lorenzo Mattotti, Leonard Marcus, Roger Mello, Bianca Pitzorno, Michael Rosen, Kristin Roskifte, Sergio Ruzzier, Felicita Sala, Sydney Smith, Øyvind Torseter, Hervé Tullet and Jacqueline Woodson.**

There are also anniversaries to celebrate: the **Illustrators Exhibition**, one of BCBF's most historic initiatives, marks its **60th anniversary**. Created to provide visibility, recognition and career opportunities to the world's best illustrators, both emerging and established, the selection for the Exhibition is documented each year in the *Illustrators Annual*, which, on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary, will feature an original insert by Paola Vassalli and an interview to great Australian illustrator Shaun Tan.

Passing the ten-year mark is the Visual Identity Workshop, a project born from a collaboration with the Chialab Design studio, which each year selects a young artist from the Illustrators Exhibition, entrusting them with, and guiding them in, the task of creating the visual identity of the next edition of the fair. At BCBF, an exhibition will be exploring these first ten years of the Visual Identity Workshop, retracing the careers of the young illustrators it has supported over the years. The young Korean artist Bumi Cha has created the look for the 2026 edition of the fair, an image permeated with lines and portraits, a tribute to the diversity of faces that fill the halls of the Bologna Exhibition Centre for BCBF.

Other anniversaries include: the **200th anniversary of the birth of Carlo Collodi**; the **50th anniversary of the death of Agatha Christie**; the **100th anniversary of the birth of Mitsumasa Anno**; and the **80th anniversary of the Italian Republic**.

It is also a year of anniversaries for exhibitors: **Gribaudo** is celebrating its 50th birthday, **orecchio acerbo** and **Uppa** are turning 25, while **Collana Contemporanea Mondadori** is reaching 35 years, celebrated at the fair by some of its most successful authors, including Bianca Pitzorno and Beatrice Alemagna.

BOLOGNABOOKPLUS

BBPlus, the area specifically for generalist publishing, returns for its **sixth year** with a display area, exhibitions and book design awards as well as a rich line-up of events and training courses for professionals, ranging from the sale of rights to Artificial Intelligence. The **Audio Forum** and **Author** and **Illustration Ambassador** initiatives are also confirmed, with Polish writer **Rafał Kosik** and Norwegian illustrator **Mari Kanstad Johnsen** as guests this year. The **Talking Pictures** award is also dedicated to Norwegian illustration, which this year puts the spotlight on the Country Guest of Honour's visual books aimed at the general public, which will be on display at the fair.





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BOLOGNA LICENSING TRADE FAIR/KIDS

Bologna Licensing Trade Fair/Kids/ (BLTF/Kids) is Europe's leading licensing event, focusing in particular on brands for children, teenagers and young adults. It was created with the aim of fostering relationships between the worlds of publishing and licensing, offering opportunities ranging from publishing to gaming and TV and film. Bringing together leading international operators, BLTF/Kids presents **over 800 brands** and, in 2026, at its 19th edition, it will host two key initiatives for BCBF: the **TV/Film Rights Centre** and the **Games Business Centre**, created in collaboration with the Frankfurt Book Fair.

BLTF/Kids is also organising the 6th edition of the **International Kids Licensing Days**, three days of in-depth discussions with the leading international players in the sector; the **Bologna Licensing Awards**, dedicated to licensors and agencies, licensees and retailers; and the **Licensing Portfolio Reviews**.

THE MAIN THEMES

Among the major themes featuring at the exhibitions, meetings and content at this year's fair, Collodi's anniversary plays a prominent role: the exhibition dedicated to Pinocchio, ***Eccellenze Italiane. I Vestiti Nuovi di Pinocchio*** (Italian Excellence: Pinocchio's New Clothes), includes 50 illustrations by emerging and established illustrators and will be accompanied by a series of meetings on Wednesday 14 April, marking a real "Pinocchio Day". Bringing both the fair and this day entirely dedicated to the most famous puppet in literary history to a close will be a special event scheduled for Thursday the 16th. **Alessandro Barbero**, in conversation with Ivan Canu, will offer a 'sentimental' journey through children's literature: from Pinocchio to the book *Cuore* and the series *La Biblioteca dei Ragazzi*.

Following on from the exhibitions and in-depth analysis dedicated to the theme of sustainability in 2025, BCBF continues its **collaboration with UN Publications**. In 2026, research will focus on **Fables and Fairy Tales**, the 2026 special category of the BolognaRagazzi Awards. Fables and Fairy Tales are, in fact, genuine tools for communicating cultural foundations. In the words of Swiss scholar Marie-Louise von Franz, an expert in the psychology of fairy tales: *"Fairy tales spread so easily because they transcend cultural and racial differences. The language of fairy tales seems to be the language of all humanity, of all eras, races and civilisations"*. This choice of this particular theme stems from a desire to promote and investigate a publishing trend that has been growing in recent years, revealing perhaps a desire to find refuge in dark times by reviving tradition. Fairy tales, fables and myths represent a type of story that appeals to the deepest aspects of humanity. They are tools for interpreting the world that, in troubled times, are able to deploy all their strength and potential.

The collaboration with the UN is expanding to include **UN Women**, which is focusing on the **representation of gender** in books for children and young adults at the fair, continuing its work to promote the 17 sustainable development goals, for which BCBF has become a true promoter worldwide. The programme includes the following meetings: **"Who Gets to Be the Hero? Gender Stereotypes in Children's Books"** and **"Stories that Change us: Gender Equality through Children's Literature"**.

This year as well, on Tuesday, April 14, the fair will host a reading of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, presented in the version rewritten by **UNICEF** in language suitable for children and young people. Authors, illustrators and publishers attending the fair will each read in their own language, creating an event as rich as the many languages and cultures that fill the halls of BCBF. Alongside it, the event **"How do you Define 'Child'?: A Multilingual Reading of International Picture Books"**, in collaboration with Topipittori, will feature Beatrice





Alemagna and leading voices in contemporary children’s literature.

Ample space is also devoted to one of the hottest topics in publishing today: in light of the discouraging data on reading at international level, BCBF and AIE, in collaboration with the French **Syndicat National de l’Édition (SNE)**, the **Federation of European Publishers (FEP)**, the **International Publishers Association (IPA)** and the **International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)**, have organised the event **“Building the Future Generation of Readers: Best Practices and Policies for Reading Promotion”** on Monday 13 April. An international conference to discuss and encourage the spread of best practices worldwide to promote reading among children and young people and to reflect on the role of European and international policies.

Alongside this event will be a focus on the **new ways of reading** that are redefining young people’s relationship with the act of reading, including illustrated books. The fair will feature two days to explore digital narrative ecosystems and reading practices in the age of artificial intelligence. The first **Report of the Observatory on Digital Narratives** will also be previewed, offering guidance on how to navigate this rapidly evolving sector.

Once again at this edition, **artificial intelligence** will be at the centre of the debate, at the **BBPlus AI Summit**, and also through the search for a different, open and more proactive perspective on the possibilities offered by this new tool. **Anna Castagnoli** will participate in an analysis that welcomes AI as a new design resource and strongly reaffirms the centrality of the author in a creative process that, despite the evolution of this technology, continues to be guided by a unique artistic vision.

The **comics** sector reconfirms its central role, having experienced a boom in recent years: several discussion panels at the fair will explore all aspects of the industry, from careers to new comic book series for children and the specifics of regional productions: from Asia to Poland, from Norway to the United States.

The fair will also focus on **indigenous languages** and publishing in **Latin America**, as a lively space for cultural innovation and the redefinition of standards. In a context marked by political and economic instability, Latin American publishing is undergoing a phase of profound renewal, thanks to the emergence of small independent publishers and a new generation of authors and illustrators capable of giving voice to indigenous, Afro-descendant and minority perspectives and placing them at the forefront of the discourse. This change has already been visible in recent years at BCBF, and in 2026 it will be explored in depth through dedicated meetings and discussion panels: from the focus on indigenous languages at the Translators Café, promoted by IBBY and UNESCO, with the participation – in addition to the promoters – of the United Nations and CEATL, to highlight a publishing landscape in transformation and the challenges it faces today, to the discussion panel **“Children’s Publishing in Latin America: Landscape and Key Challenges”**.

Finally, following on from the success of the 2025 edition, poetry for children and young people returns to the fair thanks to the **Poetry Corner**, curated by Junior Poetry Associazione Culturale. The space will host a rich programme of presentations, meetings and readings dedicated to the best poetry publications. This is a sector that is growing rapidly worldwide, as demonstrated by the numerous books of verse nominated for this year’s BolognaRagazzi Awards, **of which a selection of 100 titles will be on display**.

THE EXHIBITIONS





The customary and eagerly awaited exhibitions return with the aforementioned **Illustrators Exhibition** and the exhibition of the Guest of Honour Country, Norway; the solo exhibition by the author of the cover of the Illustrators Annual, **Noushin Sadeghian** (Iran), winner of the 2025 Grand Prix at the Bratislava Biennial of Illustration (BIB); the solo exhibition by the 2025 winner of the Bologna Children’s Book Fair – Fundación SM International Illustration Award, Ukrainian artist **Maria Haiduk**; the exhibition reconstructing the creation of BCBF’s 2026 visual identity, the work of Korean artist **Bumi Cha**; **Italian Excellence. Pinocchio’s New Clothes**, on the occasion of the anniversary of Carlo Collodi’s birth; space will also be given to Chinese illustration, which BCBF will explore through various initiatives: **Chinese Excellence in Children’s Illustration**, which for its third edition brings the best of contemporary Chinese illustration to BCBF, and the exhibition of the winners of **The Golden Pinwheel Young Illustration Competition**; **The BRAW Amazing Bookshelf**, a selection of the 150 best books nominated for the BolognaRagazzi Awards; the exhibition dedicated to the finalists of the **Silent Book Contest - Gianni De Conno Award**; the BBPlus area will host **Jackets Off!**, this year dedicated to the queen of crime fiction, **Agatha Christie**, with a special focus on the covers of her books illustrated by Ferenc Pintér. Featuring for the very first time outside the United States is the exhibition dedicated to the gold and silver medal winners of the **Annual Illustration Competition** in the book category for the five-year period 2022–2026, one of the most prestigious awards organised by the Society of Illustrators of New York. The Survival Corner will host the exhibition **The Original Art**, one of the most prestigious events organised by the Society of Illustrators of New York. Finally, there will be a preview of the solo exhibition – which will debut in New York a few days after BCBF, organised by the Society of Illustrators in collaboration with Pentagram – **Balbusso Twins Illustrating with Two Souls**, by the Italian artistic duo Anna and Elena Balbusso, also known as the Balbusso Twins.

THE AWARDS

BCBF, together with BBPlus and BLTF/K, continues to support and recognise talented individuals and deserving projects from around the world at each new edition of the fair. The **BolognaRagazzi Awards**, together with the **BolognaRagazzi CrossMedia Awards**, whose winners and special mentions are announced today, acknowledges the best publishing projects of recent times; the **BOP - Bologna Prize for the Best Children’s Publishers of the Year** recognises the most innovative publishing houses operating in each area of the world; the **Premio Strega Ragazze e Ragazzi**, has categories for Best Narrative in Pictures, for illustrated books, and Debut Book, for first works. There are also unmissable opportunities for illustrators selected for the Illustrators Exhibition 2026: the **Bologna Children’s Book Fair – Fundación SM International Illustration Award**, the **Ars in Fabula - Grant Award** and the **BCBF Visual Identity Workshop**. The **Premio Poesio** is awarded to the best Italian degree thesis on children’s literature. The **In Altre Parole** award for translators, is dedicated to Norwegian translations this year. The BLTF/Kids awards, the **Bologna Licensing Awards** and the BBPlus awards for general publishing, including **Talking Pictures**, in collaboration with Hamelin Associazione Culturale and Steven Guarnaccia and dedicated to Norway, Guest of Honour Country. Not to mention the **Indie Authors Book Jacket Award** and, new for 2026, the launch of the **Italian Bestseller Awards with NielsenIQ BookData**. Finally, the **Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award**, “the Nobel of children’s literature”, and the **H.C. Andersen Award** are announced live during the fair.

NEW FEATURES FOR ILLUSTRATORS AND AUTHORS

Two major new features will welcome professional visitors to BolognaBookPlus this year: Designer Studio and WritersLab.

The **Designer Studio** was created this year from the fair’s determination to offer opportunities and training not only to children’s book illustrators, but also to artists specialising in general publishing. It is a **new programme dedicated**





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to art direction, editorial graphics and non-children's illustration, designed to boost the dialogue between visual design and the general trade publishing market. This project, created by BBPlus and curated by Mimaster Illustrazione, further expands the cultural and professional line-up for the fair's visiting public, with a calendar of masterclasses, workshops and portfolio reviews curated by a panel of internationally renowned art directors, graphic designers and illustrators. Guests include illustrators **Pablo Amargo**, **Jon Gray**, **Lorenzo Mattotti** and **Riccardo Vecchio**, as well as numerous art directors and graphic designers, including **DJ Stout** (Pentagram, USA) and **Cecilia Flegenheimer** (Mondadori, Italy). It is also the perfect venue to welcome BBPlus's Illustration Ambassador, Norway's **Mari Kanstad Johnsen**, who will hold a series of meetings and workshops throughout the fair.

Today, writing means dealing with new ways of publishing, a more complex market, digital tools, and issues such as visibility, rights, and the economic sustainability of creative work. **WritersLab**, curated by Argentovivo with the contribution of Bottega Finzioni, was created to give space to this complexity, offering authors a structured space within BolognaBookPlus for discussions, growth, and representation. A space dedicated to authors of fiction, non-fiction, children's books and professional books that starts from a clear vision: to recognise writing as a profession and offer authors concrete opportunities to navigate the contemporary publishing system through meetings, workshops, in-depth discussions, focus groups and opportunities for interaction.

THE ILLUSTRATORS SURVIVAL CORNER

The Illustrators Survival Corner, the space dedicated to illustrators, is back, curated by Mimaster Illustrazione and created to offer opportunities for discussion, in-depth analysis and professional growth. Publishers, agents, illustrators, art directors and big names in international illustration – including **Angie Kang**, **Beatrice Alemagna**, **Sophie Blackall**, **Catia Chien**, **Matthew Forsythe**, **Sergio Ruzzier** and **Sydney Smith** – will bring to life a rich programme of masterclasses, workshops and portfolio reviews that explore the main areas of the profession, always with an eye on new market trends and future evolutions of the profession. As always, significant space will be dedicated to portfolio reviews, with professionals such as **Marianna Balducci**, **Anna Castagnoli**, **Kate Cosgrove**, **Laurent Linn**, **Marc Majewski**, and publishers including Amanuta, Becco Giallo, Chronicle Book, Kalandraka, and Penguin Random House. A special space will also be allocated to a series of portfolios dedicated to licensing organised by **BLTF/Kids**, and returning again this year on Thursday 16 April is the **Portfolio Marathon**, a day entirely devoted to portfolio reviews for the finalists of the 2026 Illustrators Exhibition. This idea was conceived by Mimaster Illustrazione and BCBF to reward the talent and achievements of those who passed the jury's first selection round and to facilitate contact between publishers and new voices in international illustration. During the Portfolio Marathon, participants' portfolios will also be evaluated for the BCBF 26 edition of the Bologna Portfolio Award, which offers the illustrator of the winning portfolio a trip to participate in the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair in November 2026. The programme also includes a special section dedicated to portfolio reviews for Italian illustrators.

For the first time, The Illustrators Survival Corner will offer a number of activities in collaboration with sponsors who have decided to actively support creativity: Carioca and Fedrigoni.

BCBF IN THE CITY

As happens every year, the streams of creativity, ideas and content that converge at the Bologna Children's Book Fair from all over the world are set to overflow from the exhibition halls out into cultural venues, libraries, schools and buildings all across the city of Bologna in a genuine widespread celebration.

BOOM! - Growing up in books, the title of the **programme of initiatives in the city**, is promoted by the Municipality of Bologna and BolognaFiere, curated by the Libraries and Cultural Welfare Sector together with





Hamelin Cultural Association as part of the Bologna Reading Pact, and enjoys the patronage of IBBY - International Board on Books for Young People Italy. For almost two months, a rich and diverse line-up dedicated to the general public of adults and children will see the city taken over by **49 exhibitions and more than 150 events**, including workshops and meetings, guest appearances, performances, screenings, shows, book presentations, activities for schools and guided tours.

This year, BCBF is present in the city in person with an expanded and visually striking edition of an exhibition that achieved extraordinary success in Shanghai — within the framework of the China Shanghai International Children’s Book Fair. ***Il guardaroba favoloso e il filo che non ha fine*** (The Fabulous Wardrobe and the Endless Thread) is presented at eXtraBO in Piazza Re Enzo and features 150 picture books inviting visitors to wander through enchanted ateliers, artist biographies and childhood stories, blending fairy-tale elegance with educational responsibility, and offering children the chance to read and experience firsthand the great masterpieces of the most recent global picture-book production. The exhibition is curated by Marcella Terrusi, Silvana Sola and Mariaelena Schiavo.

The in-depth events commemorating significant milestones in the history of illustration and illustrated books include the work of Marie Neurath (1898-1986), presented in ***Designing knowledge: Marie Neurath's Isotype Books for Children***. A site-specific exhibition is hosted by the Padiglione de l'Esprit Nouveau and organized by Quinto Quarto Edizioni in collaboration with BCBF, curated by Sue Walker and University of Reading, with the support of Regione Emilia-Romagna. It will showcase her work in popularising science for children: rather than shy away from the multiplicity and complexity of the world, she “transformed” it into an immediate, democratic and universal visual language.

Furthermore, Japanese master Mitsumasa Anno is the focus of ***Mitsumasa Anno 100***, an exhibition at Palazzo Pepoli where visitors will be able to lose themselves in the universe of details, quotations, discoveries and games orchestrated by Anno, thanks to more than 70 works from the Sergio Silva Fund, the Emme Edizioni Fund and the Passerini Parma Collection. The exhibition is organized by Bibliomondo APS in collaboration with Bologna Children’s Book Fair, thanks to Comune di Bologna | Settore Cultura e creatività, Fondazione Carisbo and Fondazione Bologna Welcome.

Finally, following the success of its first two editions, **OFF FAIR**, curated by Accademia Drosselmeier, is back. At the end of the fair and throughout the year, the contents of BCBF are taken **outside the halls of the BolognaFiere Exhibition Centre and into the world**. Various national and international cultural venues welcome the wealth of books that inhabit the fair, which thus become part of a shared collective heritage. The project involves national and international libraries, museums and schools, which, thanks to donations of books from the fair’s archive, can boost their collections: 200 books on the theme of the sea will go to the international library in Genoa’s Porto Antico; Chinese books to Sesto Fiorentino; South American books to Rome; books on food to the historic Maggia in Stresa; and 200 titles on music to the Ciociaria, numerous comics to Treviso, fairy tales to the National Library in Paris, and books on art, architecture, design, cinema, photography and comics to Florence.

Last but not least, 100 special books about art, which have already been presented at Arte Fiera, are destined for Gibellina, the capital of contemporary art in 2026, while entire collections of non-fiction books will embark on long journeys to the East, strengthening the cultural bond between the fair and China and Japan.

Milan, 3 March 2026





www.bolognachildrenbookfair.com

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