



THE 63RD BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

The international awards: trends, business and opportunities for illustrators

BOLOGNA PRIZE FOR THE BEST CHILDREN'S PUBLISHERS OF THE YEAR

Organised by Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) and the Italian Publishers Association (AIE), in collaboration with IPA – International Publishers Association, the accolades are awarded to the **best publishers chosen for each of the six areas of the world** (Europe; Africa; Asia; Oceania; Central, South America and the Caribbean; North America). The Bologna Prize for the Best Children's Publishers of the Year (BOP) this year reaches its **13th edition**. Created on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of BCBF, its aim is to recognise publishers who have distinguished themselves for their creativity, quality and courage in their editorial choices over the past year. The prize, awarded by the publishers themselves on the first day of the fair, is thus a valuable scouting tool, fostering exchanges between countries and their respective publishing industries.

BOLOGNARAGAZZI AWARDS AND BOLOGNARAGAZZI CROSSMEDIA AWARDS

After celebrating their 60th anniversary in 2025, the **BolognaRagazzi Awards** (BRAW) are back and better than ever. These awards have been presented by BCBF since 1966 to acknowledge the best new publications and identify trends in publishing for children and young people. Over the years the awards have become recognised as some of the most prestigious in children's publishing, as well as a great business opportunity for the winners and those earning special mentions. The awards promote the sale of book rights on the international market and enable publishers, authors and illustrators to bring their work to the attention of the global publishing world. The evolution of the media, and the possibility to migrate, intersect or expand books onto other platforms, prompted the Bologna Children's Book Fair to broaden its perspective by establishing the **BolognaRagazzi CrossMedia Awards** (BRCMA), now in their sixth edition.

THE ILLUSTRATORS EXHIBITION AWARDS

A veritable hothouse for new talent, the Illustrators Exhibition represents an opportunity for the youngest selected artists, and others, to launch their careers as illustrators on a global stage. In order to boost participants' visibility and increase business opportunities, in collaboration with various international partners the Bologna Children's Book Fair has introduced a number of awards over the years in order to support the work of participating artists.

Established in 2009 by Bologna Children's Book Fair and Fundación SM, a Spanish publisher active in the field of education and the promotion of children's books, the **Bologna Children's Book Fair – Fundación SM International Illustration Award** aims to unearth and encourage new talent in illustration. Aimed at artists under the age of 35 selected for the Illustrators Exhibition, the award offers the winner a grant intended to give them the peace of mind to create, over the course of one year, an illustrated book that will then be published and launched on the world market by the Spanish publishing house SM. The original illustrations from the book are then presented in a solo exhibition at the next edition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair.

The **ARS IN FABULA - Grant Award**, established by ARS IN FABULA School of Illustration in collaboration with the Bologna Children's Book Fair to support new illustration talent through advanced training, is also back for its 15th edition. The award is assigned each year to a young, unpublished illustrator under the age of 30, chosen from among those selected for the Illustrators Exhibition by a jury made up of Master's teachers who meet in Bologna during the fair. The prize consists of the opportunity to attend the ARS IN FABULA – Master's Degree in Illustration for Publishing, working on a book project assigned to the winner by one of the Master's partner publishers.





The final selection for the Illustrators Exhibition is also the talent pool from which design studio Chialab chooses a young illustrator to create the visual identity of the following edition of the fair at an immersive workshop in Bologna: the **BCBF Visual Identity Workshop**.

Finally, the **Bologna Portfolio Award** is back for the second year running. During the fair, the artist with the most convincing portfolio will be selected from among the finalists of the 2026 Illustrators Exhibition and will then participate in a special personal portfolio review session. The winner will receive a trip to China to take part in the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair, co-organised by BCBF.

BCBF's focus on the portfolio as the illustrator's primary and indispensable communication tool extends beyond the fair: in collaboration with the **Japan Foundation** and **JBBY**, the **Bologna Japan Foundation/JBBY Portfolio Award** has been confirmed, offering its winner the opportunity to participate in the next edition of the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair. Furthermore, as part of the Bologna Grand Tour at the Feria Internacional del Libro in Guadalajara, the winner will be offered a trip to the Bologna Children's Book Fair 2027.

THE INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is not only a promoter of important awards that influence and guide the children's publishing sector, but for some years now it has also been the venue for the most important international awards for the world of children's books. The **Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award** and the **Hans Christian Andersen Award** are both announced live from the stage of the Children's Book Fair. Many of this year's finalists are attending the fair in person, including Beatrice Alemagna, Michael Rosen, Timothée de Fombelle and Cai Gao.

EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR ACCESSIBLE PUBLISHING

The Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing, organized by the **Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)** of **WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization)**, will be announced at the Bologna Children's Book Fair for the first time in its 2026 edition. The award aims to recognize publishers and organizations committed to **producing accessible content** and particularly encourages the children's book sector as well as participation from entities based in developing countries. The selection criteria include digital innovation, collaboration across the publishing value chain, and tangible impact on access to reading for people with visual impairments or print disabilities.

THE STREGA RAGAZZE E RAGAZZI PRIZE

Following the celebrations for its tenth anniversary, the Strega Ragazze e Ragazzi Prize for literature for children and young people returns for its **11th edition**. The prize is promoted by the **Maria and Goffredo Bellonci Foundation and Strega Alberti Benevento** – organisers of the Strega Prize – together with the **Ministry of Culture's Centre for Books and Reading and BolognaFiere – Bologna Children's Book Fair**, in collaboration with **BPER Banca**, media partner **RAI**, technical sponsors **Librerie Feltrinelli** and **SYGLA**.

The **Best Narrative in Pictures** category also returns for its fifth edition. The award, which is assigned during the fair, acknowledges excellence in illustrated books and was created to celebrate the close relationship between the Bologna Children's Book Fair and the Strega Prize. The award for **Debut Book**, now in its sixth edition, will also be presented in Bologna for the first year.

IN ALTRE PAROLE (IN OTHER WORDS)

For 16 years, BCBF has been organising the translation competition **In Altre Parole (In Other Words)**, dedicated each year to a different language. For this edition the language is **Norwegian**, in homage to Norway, the Guest of





Honour Country. The award aims to recognise the huge contribution that translators make to the publishing industry, promoting their talent and bringing them to the attention of publishing houses.

CARLA POESIO AWARD

The Carla Poesio Award, named after the scholar who made a fundamental contribution to the creation and development of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, is now in its seventh edition. The accolade serves to acknowledge the best Italian degree thesis on children's literature.

THE BOLOGNABOOKPLUS AWARDS

One of a number of initiatives dedicated to self-publishing is the **Indie Authors Book Jacket Award**, which aims to showcase the best covers by self-published authors, highlighting a sector that is extremely vibrant yet still relatively unexplored. There are two categories for the award: the **Indie Italian Book Jacket Award** and the **Indie Authors Children and YA Book Jacket Award**. Furthermore, the **Talking Pictures** award, dedicated to the best Norwegian visual books, is organised in collaboration with Hamelin Associazione Culturale and Steven Guarnaccia and, for this year's edition, with the Norwegian arts organisations Grafill and NORLA. It aims to promote excellence in graphic publishing through the presentation of a selection of high-quality books, together with an in-depth analysis of the themes and topics that guided their selection. The winner and special mentions will be announced on the first day of the fair. Finally, a new feature for 2026 is the launch of the **Italian Bestseller Awards with NielsenIQ BookData**.

BOLOGNA LICENSING AWARDS

The **Bologna Licensing Awards** ceremony is also an eagerly awaited event at the fair. This is the only award in Italy for companies, licensors, licensees and retailers at an international level, relating to the development of intellectual property and brands during 2025.

THE PUBLISHER AWARDS

The **PublisHer Excellence Awards** – the awards created in 2019 by Bodour Al Qasimi (founder and CEO of Kalimat Publishing Group, United Arab Emirates) – were developed with a threefold mission: to celebrate women's professional achievements, promote diversity, equity and inclusion, and foster professional development. There are three categories: **Lifetime Achievement** (for a publishing veteran – with at least 20 years in the industry – who has made a significant and lasting impact on the sector), **Emerging Leader Award** (for a rising star in publishing under the age of 30 who has demonstrated exceptional leadership, vision and the power to drive positive change) and **Innovation** (for any woman who has made an innovative contribution to any aspect of the publishing industry). A jury of industry experts will select the winners, who will be announced at BCBF 2026.

