

Letter from the President



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Dear EAHIL Colleagues,

In this letter, I will report on an event where I was invited as a speaker last March in Milan, Italy: the annual Workshop of the Italian Association of Information Specialists working in the Pharmaceutical Industry and in Medical Research Institutes (GIDIF-RBM). The focus of the workshop was “Communication”, a topic that, in my opinion, is worth mentioning in the context of our professional association. Communication is deeply related to many aspects of our profession, and of our role within institutions. The event took place in the framework of a more general conference, regarding all kinds of libraries “The library grows: content and services between fragmentation and integration”, Milan 14-15 March 2019¹. Libraries, as Ranganathan wrote in his famous fifth law of librarianship, are “a growing organism”. Libraries, therefore, have always to deal with the many factors of change underway. The growth of libraries, and therefore their most significant transformations, must necessarily face two partly divergent trends. On the one hand, the progressive fragmentation that characterizes not only many contents, in particular digital, but also the patterns, the practices, and the services offered; on the other hand, the search for new forms of integration: between contents, between platforms, between services, between spaces (physical and virtual), between institutions. The connection seems to be the contemporary paradigm from industry 4.0 to the semantic web. The “integrated library” is no longer just an aspiration but a new model, and a set of techniques aimed at favouring the social integration of information and services in a global world. Libraries envisage, therefore, the challenge of complexity. The ability of libraries to maintain an important role in the information society scenario relies on the idea that complexity should not be conceived as a problem, but as a resource to be exploited. To face this challenge, and try to win it, librarians need creativity and rigor, and to define innovative models to interpret and manage change.

The GIDIF RBM Workshop gathered together information specialists and medical librarians working in different Italian contexts, such as public and private agencies². From its title “The circularity of communication in healthcare: power and risks”, you can easily guess its focus: the importance of a correct communication by all the stakeholders involved in the healthcare process. In the current era of interactive web and disintermediation, the classic parameters of communication: “sender-receiver” – changed in favour of a circular relationship in which roles often switch. In the healthcare context the scenario is particularly

¹ Convegno delle Stelline. *La biblioteca che cresce*. 14-15 marzo 2019. <<http://www.convegnostelline.it/>>. It is one of the most attended events by Italian librarians. Unfortunately, the contents of the website are only in Italian: I tried to summarise some of them in my letter.

² GIDIF RBM. *Bibliostar Pharma 2019: la circolarità della comunicazione in sanità*. <https://www.convegnopharma.com/convegno>

challenging for three main reasons: a) what is at stake is people's health; b) important interests, including those of an economic nature; c) communication that plays a strategic role, since it is not easy to safeguard the reliability of the information conveyed. Hence, the idea of proposing a workshop devoted to health communication, as an opportunity of sharing and reflection. It aimed at highlighting communication strategies of institutions, associations and companies towards all health professions, patients and the public.

An event that attracted not only librarians and information specialists, but also those who deal with “giving the news” (pharmaceutical companies, publishers, communication agencies, press, etc.). We could listen to the point of views of many actors in the health sector: medical doctors and nurses, bioethicists and healthcare managers, medical interns and patients, pharma communicators and medical librarians.

Some of the topics discussed:

“Infodemiology”, when medicine meets new information technologies; Bio-politics of the swarm: the digital man; How to communicate the identity of a healthcare organization; Communicating with cancer patients in the Social Media age; Nursing profession in the web era; Jannssen Medical Cloud: an information resource for doctors; The ISSalute portal, at citizen service (<https://www.issalute.it/>). My colleague Franco Toni and myself gave the last presentation, about the portal for patients and laymen developed by our Institute, already presented at the Cardiff EAHIL Conference, last year.

I hope that from this brief report you can draw inspiration for new ideas and that you can apply them to your local realities and in your daily activities.

Looking forward to hearing from you with proposals or suggestions,

Maurella



Fig. 1. *Participants in the workshop*