

# **Silent books: from the world to Lampedusa and back**

## **Informal report**

(August 2012 - August 2013)



**IBBY ITALIA**

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## Introduction

The project “**Silent Books: from the world to Lampedusa and back**” was officially launched at the **33<sup>rd</sup> IBBY Congress** held in London in August 2012.

The project aims at sustaining the opening of a children’s library in the Italian island of Lampedusa starting from an international collection of the best-illustrated wordless picture books that have been published around the world. In the context of growing global migration, wordless books were chosen because, with the narrative power of images, they can make stories overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, giving every child the chance to enjoy wonderful books and the stories that they tell.

The project encompasses the following activities, which have been developed during the last 12 months:

1. the initial stages of the **start-up of a children’s library on Lampedusa**, a remote island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, that accepts thousands of immigrants every year, including many children. There is no library on the island and the children need their books.
2. the creation of a **documentation and research archive dedicated to wordless books** in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni art library in Rome. The Palazzo delle Esposizioni is a member of IBBY Italy and is home to the largest interdisciplinary exhibition space run by the City of Rome. The Palazzo also houses Scaffale d’Arte – a library specializing in international art publishing for children. The project goes hand-in-hand with a **biennial travelling exhibition** that promotes the selected books.

## 1. The silent books’ collection and exhibition

Thanks to the precious help of IBBY National Sections and IBBY International Secretariat, **111 wordless books** from **23 countries** were collected. Everyone was very collaborative and efficient during the collecting process that was launched in November 2012.

The project was also presented at the **3<sup>rd</sup> European Encounter on Children’s Literature**, in Paris, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012.



Presentation of the project at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Encounter on Children’s Literature, Paris, 30.11.2012



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The collecting process ended in February 2013: the first outcomes were then presented at the **Bologna Children's Book Fair**. On this occasion, an international jury selected ten titles for their originality, complexity, historical value and subject matter, among the submitted works: they create an outstanding list representing the entire collection. The international jury was formed by Etienne Delessert, Sophie Van der Linden, Cristina Paterlini (Biblioteca Europea, Roma), Deborah Soria (IBBY Italia), Paola Vassalli (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Roma). The **honour list of wordless books** includes the following titles:

- > Daniel Defoe & Ajubel, *Robinson Crusoe*, Media Vaca, 2008
- > Ara Jo, *The Rocket Boy*, Hansol soo book, 2011
- > Raymond Briggs, *The Snowman*, Puffin, 2011 (1a ed. 1978)
- > Suzy Lee, *Wave*, BIR Publishing Co., 2009 (1a ed. Chronicle Books, San Francisco 2008)
- > Antonin Louchard & Katy Couprie, *Tout un monde*, Thierry Magnier, 1999
- > Madalena Matoso, *Todos Fazemos Tudo*, Planeta Tangerina, 2011 (1a ed. by Éditions Notari, Genève 2011)
- > Gonzalo Moure Trenor & Alicia Varela, *El arenque rojo*, SM, 2012
- > Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*, Lothian Children's Books, 2006
- > Marije & Ronald Tolman, *De boomhut*, Uitgeverij Lemniscaat, 2009
- > David Wiesner, *Flotsam*, Clarion Books, 2006

Furthermore, **three special awards** were also to:

- > Amnesty International Honorary Mention: Nicole De Cock, *Aan de overkant*, Gottmer Publishing Group, 2006
- > IBBY Italia Honorary Mention: Iela & Enzo Mari, *La mela e la farfalla*, Babalibri, 2004
- > Palazzo delle Esposizioni Honorary Mention: Bente Olesen Nyström, *Hr. Alting*, Gyldendal, 2006



Silent Books - honour list presentation at the 50<sup>th</sup> Bologna Children's Book Fair, Bologna, 27.03.2013

The **exhibition** including the entire collection of **111 wordless books** opened on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013, in Rome, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni at the presence of Giusy Nicolini, mayor of Lampedusa, and Vincenzo Spadafora, President of the Italian Authority for Infancy and Adolescence.

The complete list of the **111 selected works** is included in the catalogue of the exhibition, by Chiara Carrer and Sara Verdone. Thanks to the help of the IBBY Secretariat, the English version of the catalogue has been recently sent in “pdf” format to all NS. The file is attached.



Opening of the exhibition “Silent Books: Final Destination Lampedusa”, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 07.05.2013

The exhibition in Rome lasted till 21<sup>st</sup> July 2013: during this period, many children could visit the collection and the museum organized many workshops and training events for teachers too.

The **touring exhibition** will now travel throughout Italy till August 2014 and then it will be launched for its international tour in September 2014.

One copy of the books sent by the national sections of IBBY form the **documentation and research archive dedicated to wordless books** which is hosted by the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, in particular at the Scaffale d’Arte – a library specializing in international art publishing for children.

## 2. Children's Library in Lampedusa – the first steps

From 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2013, IBBY Italia organized an “IBBY Camp” on the island to support the first steps of the start-up of the library: **14 volunteers** from all over Italy attended, coordinated by Deborah Soria.

During the Camp, Deborah and the volunteers took physically **possession of the building** assigned to the library-to-be by the City Council of Lampedusa; they **cleaned** the rooms and organized **readings and workshops** for children and teachers. The **111 wordless books** collected with the help of the IBBY NS and more than **400 Italian titles** donated by the Italian project “Le Biblioteche di Antonio”, were delivered to form the first fund of the island's library.



IBBY's valiant volunteers wrote a brief report with their impressions about the experience that is attached to the present report, along with a selection of photos.

## 3. Goals

IBBY Italia would like to help opening a new space on the island that has never had a library for children. It may seem strange but children living in Lampedusa (about 600 kids) have never had access to literature and books, except for school ones; having never experienced what a library could offer, adults themselves do not feel the need for giving books' access to children.

The next steps of the project will then be focused both on the **refurbishment** of the library and on **training and working with teachers, parents and adults** in general.

Because of their past experiences, citizens of Lampedusa do not generally have a **positive approach towards public property**. By means of creating together a public library, we would also try to slowly move towards a more positive, constructive and sensitive attitude to public goods.

Children, on the other hand, are already “ready”: during the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the IBBY Camp, they have shown to be very open and “hungry for” books.



### 3.1 Future activities

In the next two years, the main activities for completing the start-up of the library can be summed up as follows:

1. Building's refurbishment and outfitting - completion
2. Broadening of library's collection
3. Purchasing of library's equipment
4. Staff training and support to the library's ordinary management costs
5. Library's promotion and communication; library's inclusion in the network of the Italian Libraries System.
6. Development of reading promotion activities: readings for children and training for teachers, parents and care-givers; creation of a emergency welcome kit for migrant children; organization of a mobile library's section travelling periodically to the little neighboring island of Linosa.

We would also like that an international assessment and dissemination meeting, involving the IBBY international community, could be organized at the end of the start-up period.

### 3.2 Fundraising

A hard work has been carried out on fundraising and networking to support activities.

A sum of €2.600 has been collected so far thanks to private donors: it helped to cover expenses of traveling, staying and minor needs in Lampedusa (colors, paper, the billboard, etc.) for the IBBY Camp held last June.

The Italian Authority for Children and Adolescent has promised to support the library's refurbishment with a fund of €12.500 while a request has been submitted to the Regional Authority of Sicily ( €20.000 approx.) for refurbishing the library's bathroom into a bathroom suitable for disabled people. In case they were allotted, these funds could cover approx 40% of the sum needed to fully refurbish and outfit the building.

We have also submitted a project to the Regional Authority of Sicily of about €23.000 to support a second edition of the IBBY Camp to be held on the island in November (15-22 November 2013). During this initiative we would like to organize training sessions for teachers, parents and educational operators and organize reading promotion activities for children, while keep on working on the refurbishment of the library.

### 3.3 Difficulties and Opportunities

Besides the lack of funds and bureaucracy's slowness, which are common problems throughout Italy, the suspicion and distrust of the islanders are one of the main obstacles we should try to overcome: Lampedusa's people are so used to be abandoned (by politics, national authorities, etc.) that they do not trust anyone. Moreover, they can hardly count on public services on the island (there is no hospital, no library...) so they think they have no rights at all. A sense of state and public property lacks too. Finally, promoting initiatives on the island requires a continuous presence on-site, otherwise everything stops and the project's development slows down.



So, in these first stages of the project, it is fundamental to be physically present in Lampedusa as often as possible to keep things going on; as project manager, Deborah Soria is working with patient determination to gain people's trust and stimulate their involvement in the project.

Parents could surely be invaluable and fundamental allies, if we succeed in convincing them of the importance of books for their children: actually some of them, whom Deborah and IBBY volunteers met on the island last June, are already enthusiasts of the project and willing to help.

### 3.4 Timetable

The timetable presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> IBBY Congress at London has been respected and we are now working on the next steps of the project (see 3.1 and 3.2).

Activity	Period
Project presentation at the 33 <sup>rd</sup> IBBY Congress in London	August 2012
Project presentation at the 3 <sup>rd</sup> European Encounter on Children's Literature	30.11. 2012
Collection of wordless books from IBBY NS	November 2012 - February 2013
Presentation of the project and honor list of wordless books at the Bologna Children's Book Fair	27.03.2013
Silent Books Exhibition in Rome	07.05.2013-21.07.2013
IBBY Camp Lampedusa - 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition	22-29.06.2013
Silent Books Travelling Exhibition on the go	August 2013
Library: refurbishment, outfit, furniture	July - November 2013
IBBY Camp in Lampedusa - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition: training teachers, putting books in position, workshops and readings with children	15-22 November 2013

*Green: done / Yellow: in progress / Orange: to do*

Though refurbishment's activities have been temporarily stopped, waiting for public funds to arrive and formal bureaucratic processes to go on, we are organizing new reading promotion and training initiatives on the island. Another IBBY Camp is scheduled around the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013, to celebrate the International Children's Right Day with the opening of the library: workshops and activities with children, schools, teachers will be organized.

We would also like to organize later on an "IBBY in Action" Camp in Lampedusa, involving all IBBY international community.

A timetable for the activities to be implemented in the period 2014-2015 is in progress.

### 4. Press

A number of articles and interviews on the library appeared on Italian newspapers, magazines and blogs since December 2012: a press selection is available on request.

