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**Bringing the Library 2.0 closer to the people: theatre storytelling, scientific lectures and nice food - Per portare la Library 2.0 più vicino alla gente: Storytelling a Teatro, letture scientifiche e buon cibo.**

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**Abstract.** The paper introduces and discusses the efficacy of the library 2.0 for the dissemination of scientific information about traditional food through readings performed at the theatre. Aims: This approach makes actually possible to convey scientific literature and storytelling, from direct producers of traditional food together with science and writing professionals, to a wide audience. Unconventional settings and performances organized in small theatres, represent additional elements that help broadcast information and bring consumers to the essence of the foods they eat. Methods: A collaborative writing group, which includes herdmen and butchers as well as librarians, writers and science communicators, prepared the script. The text was read and acted by the same professionals in the stage. The audience was allowed to use mobile devices, such as smartphones, to send SMS/WhatsApp messages to the storytellers at the stage, in order to ask questions or expound their opinions. Finally, the public had the opportunity to participate to a "collective sensory test" on the food prepared and narrated during the performance. Conclusions: The simple language, the force of passionate professionals, the continuous involvement of the public have proven effective tools to engage the public and transmit the deep material culture behind each traditional food. Among the further positive effects, we may also report that library readings may help to economically sustain local typical food products

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## **Introduction**

A basic commitment of the "Zooprofilattico Sperimentale" Institute of Umbria and Marche - IZS UM (Italy) library, is to disseminate peer reviewed information from scientific literature on animal health and on the quality and safety of the food of animal origin (Ciappelloni et al., 2012, a, b, c, d).

The choice of this subject and particularly the accent on "food" was determined by the mission of the research Institute of which the library is part, and the availability of experiences, data, contacts with people already set up in previous initiatives based on readings, storytelling and similar activities. In the last five years, library activities normally focused on users, such as researchers, teachers and students, have been addressed also to practitioners working in the Health System, consumers and civil society as a whole. We have done this to represent a "point of reference" for all people needing scientific information and to increase confidence on scientific literature within the world of production, processing and distribution of food. Organizing an Open Access Repository of scientific publications and improving the document delivery service was a way to organize an user-centered scientific library.

## **Back to the library**

In order to achieve this goal and play a sustainable cultural role in the territory, it is necessary to set up a stable relationship with the users. This is linked with a wide range of activities requiring the physical presence of people in the library, as in the case of the "Library readings". So, interdisciplinary events are particularly desirables in the library, calling people and giving them a motivation to sustain and enhance the structure. The difficulties that afflict the whole scientific library system make nowadays more important than yesterday to be in touch with users.

Whereas it is easy to understand the importance to preserve historical libraries, with their archives,

precious historical documents and valuable bookcases, it is not so for the scientific ones, when most of information now may be accessed through the Web. They seem to be scarcely attractive for users, specially for no researcher ones, unable to appreciate their role. Also Chief Executive Officers, only interested on the best utilization of the space, may underestimate the role of libraries. Often they know very little about the librarian work and libraries (3) and, by the way, how can a structure be so important if nobody goes there?

Such an attitude of the institutional decision-makers has greatly affected this functional area, notwithstanding the library service is commonly reputed as "crucial" for research and the professional advanced activities. The weakening of the bibliographic and documental services, along with known contingencies, such as the shortage of funds resulting from the economic crisis, have greatly contributed to a worsening of such structures, resulting in scarcity of personnel, finance, facilities and spaces. This trend seems also detectable in other Countries (Freiburger, 2010; Haynes, 2010; Thibodeau, 2010).

For these reasons, many libraries are progressively losing the capacity to sustain an advanced level of services. Basically, this is affecting the information resources available (purchase of scientific journals and databases) and the efficiency of document delivery.

### **Spectacular readings aloud as windows on the food world**

Given this scenario, we have proposed a scientific interdisciplinary communication event, so as to transfer in the theater stages a true "Library reading" show, following the experiences gathered in the last years. The main topic of those readings was "The Food".

This choice was determined by the mission of the Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Institute (on which the library depends), and the availability of: data, experiences and contacts, already held by the library.

What are the desirable aspects we have foreseen in this (atypical) initiative?

First of all, it should represent a clear and resounding sign of institutional resistance to the library's difficulties.

- Attention of users and civil society as a whole should be focused on the importance of library service and the need to support and enhance it.
- Creating a sort of "pressure" on the policy decision makers, convincing them to play a positive and favorable role in this field, in order to foster the Libraries, their survival and success.

Besides. This initiative assumes a high importance as a promotional system in order to improve the image of the library, as something reactive to the people informational needs.

This is of worth to boost this kind of services, frequently perceived as essentially static. Our project should contribute to characterize the library as an advanced structure, capable of implementing experimental interdisciplinary projects, through a renewed and dynamic librarian figure (Davidoff & Florance, 2000; Medical Library Association, 2014; McGowan, 2012; Federer, 2013). With these particular readings, the type of experience offered to users, is really "complex", as indicated below.

The public has the opportunity to participate to an event at the same time spectacular, convivial and informative, considering in the latter term also a true document delivery function. Every spectator was able to hear the stories about the food, read aloud by those who had actually made it, taste this food and independently communicate with the performers, thanks to the mediation of simple electronic messaging systems (according to the Library 2.0 spirit). The Theatre space, has given a great incisiveness to the reading performance, taking advantage from numerous services and facilities related to the particular location.

Theaters are structures that allow an easy management of large numbers of participants, providing

wide foyers, suitable to host "food presentations" and "food tasting".

The Library 2.0 readings initiative was also based on a favorable characteristic of our territory. In Umbria Region, in fact, there are wonderful, small theaters, with a capacity of 100 - 200 people (appropriate number for the events of Storytelling) and easy to reach. These theaters, presently often closed, or engaged in a small number of shows, could thus strengthen their program, representing also a unconventional but "precious converging point" for local business linked to the food (livestock activities, restaurants, food production, food transformation enterprises, and the like).

### **Aims of the work**

This experience was initiated in order to achieve the goals:

- (a) Communicating sound scientific information and practical experiences related to food preparation, and providing texts and experimental features of document relivity, for the access to publications.
- (b) Achieving this through special readings, organized as dramatized events.
- (c) Giving voice to professionals working in the field of food production (mainly meat and dairy products), who participated at previous Library reading initiatives, and animated the Working Group for Biomedical Fiction (SPVet.it e-Journal, at the IZS-UM).

Previous experiences helped librarians and storytellers in the realization of storytelling events with engaging stories and original ideas. This was done in a "collaborative theatrical environment", taking advantage by the potential of library 2.0, within the institutional framework of the Scientific library, on topics related to it.

### **Methods**

For the realization of the cycle of library readings on food in a theatre context, in addition to the experience gained in the course of reading in the library at the IZS-UM, have been taken into consideration the experiences of the "Gorilla Quadrumano" (1974) (12), the experiences of the "Street Theatre"(13), the performances of the Italian "Cantieri Teatrali Koreja" (Facchinelli, 2004; Indennitate, 2007; Melilli; Mata, 2007), the "SIC - Scrittura Industriale Collettiva" scientific method, (14), the Manifesto of the "Gruppo di lavoro sulla narrativa biomedica" (Davidoff, 2000) and the operative experience of the POST - Perugia Officina della Scienza e della Tecnologia (Italy). Of particular significance for this work: "The Meal of the Tarantula", comedy from the above cited "Cantieri Teatrali Koreja", a show focused on some typical food products from an Italian territory known as "Salento" (albeit with different characters and aimed at a more limited number of people). For the collection of scientific information were used search engine, like Google Scholar®, Search Creative Commons® and databases such as PubMed® and Agricola®.

Most of the activities foreseen in the project, due to their interdisciplinary nature, have been carried out in a collaborative way. For this reason, from the beginning, a working group, with organizational and editorials functions, was created.

In this group, librarians, archivists, journalists, scientists, science communicators, professionals of food production and distribution were included. The group, most of the time, worked remotely through a computer supported collaborative writing network, for the preparation of texts, for the

reading performance in the scene, and the organization of sensory testing and demonstration as expected by the script.

This script was a focal point. An Editor of the library has developed the narrative track of every single scene, building situations and dialogues, on the basis of interviews with the experts engaged in the initiative and, when available, on the narratives they produced (Benedetti, 2004; Benedetti & Flammini, 2010; Cardinali et al., 2008; Falocci).

The integration in the readings of the experiences and true stories from the life of dairymen, shepherds, butchers and butchers, was one of the most important aspects of the show. It has avoided the trivialization of communication on food, which otherwise could easily take a drift of "didactic teaching". Due to the complexity of the topic, the script was written operationally in several successive "approximations".

In each of them, the narrative contributions of professionals were organized; demonstrative preparation and manipulation of food (cutting of meat, dairy product) were integrated and "scientific data sheets" prepared by POST science communicators, were placed in the appropriate moments. At the time of issue of this communication, the shows performed were:

- A reading event about the cattle beef;
- A reading event on cheese making.

Both were adapted on a standard structured in the following way.



Figure 1. Dinner meeting at the begin of the Theatre reading. People meet the local food producers and eat gastronomic specialties from the territory (Chaos Theatre, Terni, 2014) - photo POST (2014)

### **Structure of the standard reading show**

The organizational standard scheme of all the readings in the theater, so far carried out, is shown in Figure 2. Each meeting starts with a convivial event: an aperitif with standing dinner (named dinner meeting, before the show). During the dinner, the public meets the local food producers, who provide the food of the evening. These are illustrated and discussed with the public. At the

end of the dinner, there is a short explanation of the particular characteristics of the theatrical event about to start.

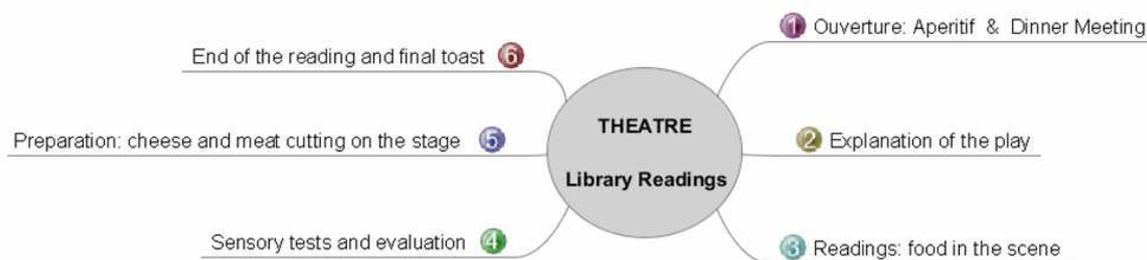


Figure 2. The Library reading on food in the theater. The 6 basic steps.

This organization has proved to be really enjoyable and adequate to the information needs of the public. Each evening of reading has been, at least, partially different from the previous.

Given the "extemporaneous" interpretation based on personal experiences, the action often has taken unexpected "directions", as common in the historic "Commedia dell'Arte".

This happens for several reasons; mainly due to the interaction between players in the scene, but also variations of preparing food on the stage, due to environmental causes (e.g. low room temperature increases the milk coagulation time) for discussions (questions or clarifications) following SMS messages, that the public sent to the readers, via smartphone.

The following section approaches more in detail the principal elements of this experience such as: Texts, Sensory tests, Document Delivery, which characterized the reading performance in the theater.

#### **The text or "Canovaccio"**

The topics covered were organized in a plot defined as "Canovaccio", similar to the ones used by Commedia dell'Arte players. These texts were drawn in successive "approximations", through a series of meetings, about the professional life and working experience, with the shepherds, the butchers and the cheese makers, involved in the project.

Based on a storyboard, the action has been divided into frameworks or scenes, so as to tell a story taking into account the time needed for the reading and the timing of food preparations on stage (curdle the milk, cutting the beef forequarter, and similar).

In this way the rhythm of action on stage was synchronized to the food preparation steps in progress.

A narrative detail of "bibliographic flavor" was that to introduce topic relating to herding in mountain or cutting and preparation of meat in the laboratory, professional actors personify the "citations", taken by literature or poetry, in ancient or contemporary works. These "personified" quotes took (physically) part of the scene, featuring, in librarianship sense, the entire show. All the texts were covered by Creative Commons license (Attribution 4.0 International).

At a certain points of the story, information about basic aspects of biochemistry and microbiology of food, have been proposed. For example, in the "Seventh Canovaccio on sheep farming and cheese", version 7.7 (2014), insights on: "The composition of milk", "The coagulation of milk" and "The production of cheese and ricotta" have been proposed.

In this way, a selected range of technical information, in time of just few minutes, was proposed to a wide number of people.



Figure 3. The Library reading in the theater on cheese and cheese making (Brecht Theater, Perugia, 2014) - photo POST (2014)



Figure 4. The Library reading in the theater on meat cutting ("Cittadella Agararia" Theater, Todi, 2014) - photo POST (2014)

Demonstrations of dairy and butcher manual skill on the stage, Demonstrations of practical skill for preparation of dairy and butchery products, carried out directly on the stage, has been one of the highlights of the show.

Through a Webcam, the step by step sequence of operations was projected on a large screen. In this way, the public has been able to follow in detail the preparation, appreciating the dexterity of professionals. Also following previous experience of iconographic communication and didactic in the agricultural field (23), a detailed view of the matter, was proposed to the public. It should be noted that an alternation of "food preparation-frames and "readings-frames", have "marked the rhythm", determining the duration of the entire event.



Figure 5. Demonstrations on the stage on cheese making (Brecht Theater, Perugia, 2014) - photo POST (2014)



Figure 6. Demonstrations at the stage on meat cutting ("Cittadella Agararia" Theater, Todi, 2014) - photo POST (2014)

### Sensory tests in the theater

At the end of storytelling, to conclude the whole event by transferring the center of the action on the public itself; people were invited to take part at a real (albeit simplified) sensory test, called "test the taste" (24). In this way, the public was the protagonist of the final part of the show. Test the taste, is a mix of hedonic appreciation of food and sensory analysis which concerns the detection of two or three standard descriptors (of course, strictly concerning the food used for the demonstration on stage).

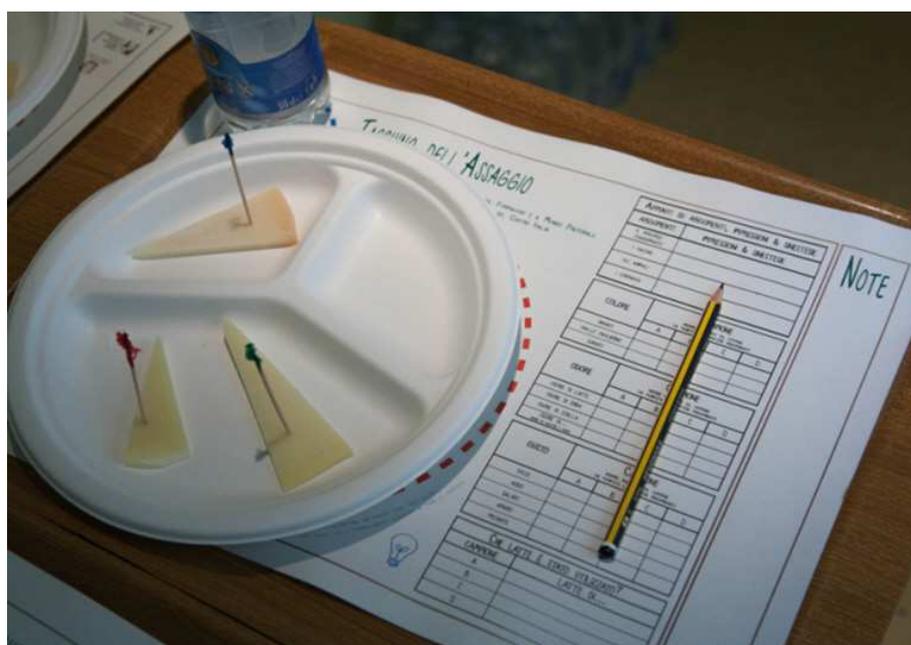


Figure 7. Sensory tests in the theater (Chaos Theater, Terni, 2014) - photo POST (2014)



Figure 8a-b. Sensory test. Participation of public in the theater (Chaos Theater, Terni, 2014) - photo POST (2014)

It is a game of a comparative nature. Two or three samples coming from cheeses, meats or their

culinary preparations, are compared, considering the importance of certain taste and flavors in a semi - quantitative way. It is a mixture of hedonic appreciation of food and regular sensory analysis, which concerns the detection of two or three standard descriptors. Of course people experienced the same kind of foods prepared in the demonstration on stage. The sensory test was carried out directly in the parterre of the theatre and handled by professionals of "EAC - National Association of Expert Meat Tasters" from the Saponi University of Perugia (Italy).

For this test, people used a record-card, organized as in the figure 9.

SMELL	Cheese Sample		
	A	B	C
characteristic smell of milk			
characteristic smell of grass			

TASTE	Cheese Sample		
	A	B	C
dominant is "sweet"			
dominant is "salty"			
dominant is "acidic"			

What kind of milk was used? (cow, sheep, goat)			
Sample	A	B	C
Milk of ...			

What kind of cheese you like better?			
Sample	A	B	C
Write some evocative words to describe the sample <u>C</u>			

Figure 9. Organization of the card for a comparative test (three cheeses).

Basically, the sensory tests in the theatre have had a pretty good appreciation, contributed to increase people participation and awareness of the complexity of the food.

### The Document Delivery via QR Code – smartphone

The information selected by librarians, retrieved from up to date, peer-reviewed scientific literature, have been available for the public at home and right in the context of the theatre.

Thank to the Wifi network of theater, people collect this documentation (eg texts, bibliography, images, record-card), using QRCode to be read with the smartphone.

For document delivery, the "bookmark type" QRCode, have been proven effective. Also useful Internet addresses simplified through URL shortening services (we used bit.ly), both, pointed to a library Open Access Repository, in the Web, containing the documentation in HTML and PDF formats.

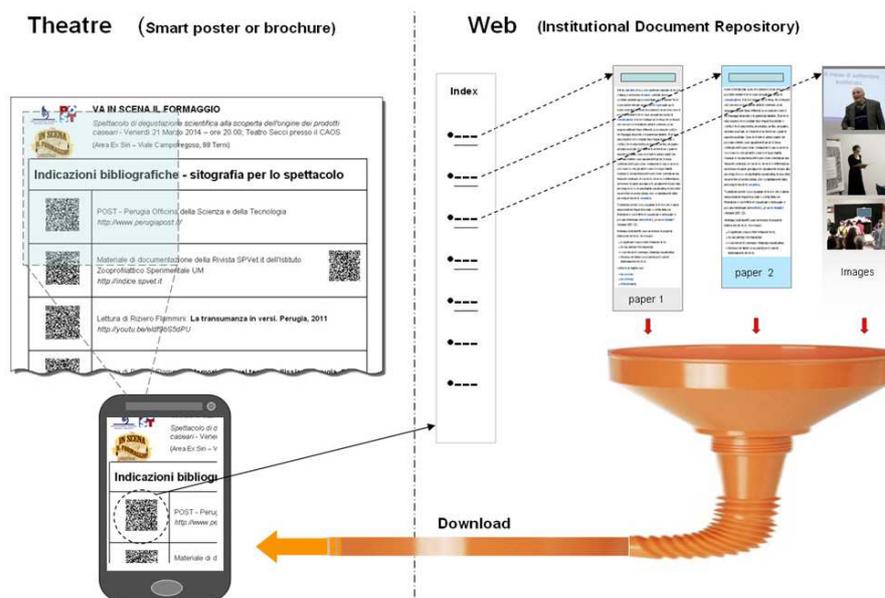


Figure 10. Informal Document delivery in the theatre via QRCode - Web repository.

Interaction between Public and Readers Should be emphasized that a very important issue of the "Library readings" in theater, was the interaction between subjects: the readers on the stage and the spectators in the hall. This interaction took place in three moments.

- In each show, at the beginning of the event, through the aperitif and dinner meeting in the foyer, people socialize but also met readers and the territory food manufacturers.
- For the entire time of the theatrical event, people had available a free communicative channel based on Short Message Service (SMS) and a social network (WhatsApp®), both accessible using a cellphone or a smartphone. As a result, it was possible to ask questions or address comments to the readers who acted on stage and it could happen every time, winning the embarrassment of speaking in a theatre.

An operator was specifically engaged to manage the flow of messages, collecting communications from a terminal located in the room and if interesting (and appropriate), sending them, to the people on stage. Questions or comments animated the performance. This artifice allowed the public to play a greater role. During the taste test in the theatre, under the guidance of the butchers and gastronomers attended to the Reading and talking with the public.

## Discussion

What has been achieved with this particular initiative is to transfer the library 2.0 users to the theater, in order to propose them a new type of library documentation service, characterized by high quality of information and strong component of "interactive game" or smart edutainment (Ciappelloni, 2011). The initiative, in the course of the first four shows, by November 2013, to March 2014, involved almost 300 people, an excellent result, considering the particularity of the event.

As can be seen in Figure 11, the six axes of the information flow, show different directions. Two (dinner meetings and sensory evaluation) are bidirectional (public - readers), one is pointed toward the players on the scene (SMS, WhatsApp®), and three indicate the audience.

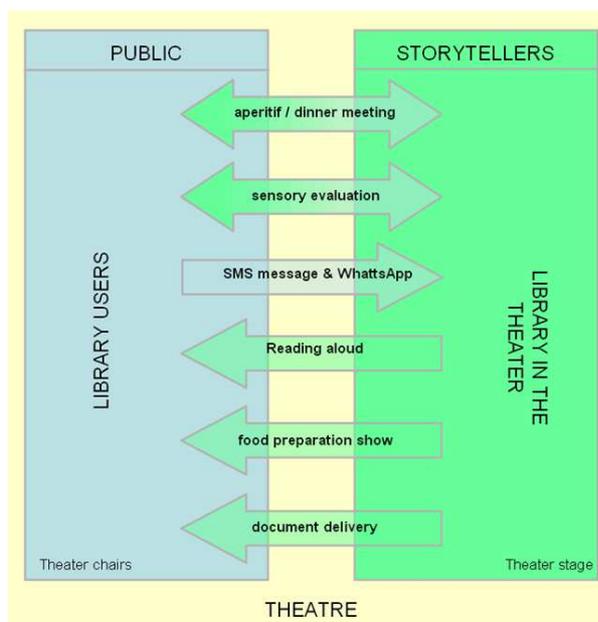


Figure 11. Informational paths in the theater environment

The reading is therefore more similar to a kind of "brainstorming" than a common theater show. The bi-directional information flow, as well as the interaction between public and Readers-Gastronomers during the dinner meeting and sensory tests, is a substantial issue, that contributed to select the public and give them a more independent role. This particular "setting" characterizes these events, based on an information exchange, making spectacular also the interaction between people in the theatre.

A very special role is that of the readers. These are not real actors and don't undergo the discipline of a script or the cues of a conventional art director. This is an important issue.

This format was chosen to bring people, who probably would have trouble expressing themselves in public, to talk freely about their life and work experiences.

The theater was then used to accommodate a performance that is not theatrical, although some parts of the play still remain. Shepherds, butchers and biologists with a canovaccio - text in hand, read aloud professional stories, in which they were involved and who actually helped to draft following a collective writing method (Manifesto del Gruppo di Lavoro per la Narrativa Biomedica, 2009). The readers comment the stories they are reading aloud on the stage, each time they feel comfortable to do so.

Come out a crossing of ideas associations that extemporaneously "extract and bring to the public" experiences, facts and biographical anecdotes. In this "technology jam session", the audience may, in turn, contribute to improve the informative value of the whole meeting.

### **Conclusion: lessons learned**

In addition to providing some general methodological hints, the first experiences of the library 2.0 readings at the theater, leads to optimism for the project continuation.

However, despite the encouraging results, some critical points, deserve to be discussed. In the first place the difficult to properly communicate the specific features and qualities of these readings. For this reason, each show should be preceded by one month of information and advertisement. Of fundamental importance is to disseminate posters, leaflets or brochures (not just online), to make people know the specific characteristics of the reading initiative.

It is indeed necessary to avoid false expectations in the public (e.g., assist to an ordinary theater show). Otherwise people will be baffled by the peculiarity of the show (why everyone reads? Actors are supposed to memorize their part in the play, and similar objections). In particular:

- Readings in the scene. This is not real theater. Readers act as in a "reading aloud" meeting in the library, with the help of assistants and projection of multimedia documents.
- Tasting of foods. People must know in advance, that will be involved in a sensory test; in our case regarding meats or cheeses.
- Demonstrations of food preparations on the stage. People have to be conscious that will be committed to following demonstrations of "art of beef cutting" or similar, with a minimum of unexpected and, occasionally, some waiting time.
- Vivacious information exchange. The public needs to know in advance, that will be able to interact directly with the characters on stage, view online documents and, if interested, download documentation in order to read or study it, later on.
- The readers are not actors. A problem with these performance in the theatre, is that readers have to achieve a good integration with the host of the show and other people on the stage.

Finally, there is the issue of consent. It is strictly necessary to obtain a broad consent for this unusual initiative, even within the same institute and local administration. It is a very controversial point.

Without a proper "intramural" informational activity, devoted to sensitize people working in the same corporate body about the project, the whole work may be perceived as an oddity, especially by insecure managers, worried about the judgment of institutional representatives of other Institutes. Their mantra might be: "Are we sure we know how to do this?"

Criticisms aside, thanks to this type of readings in the theater, have been approximated or achieved several important objectives:

- Pointing out the importance of Libraries as a center for dissemination of controlled and selected information, gathered from scientific literature, also in an alternative and interdisciplinary way.
- Growing the perception of the importance and consideration of the library and the librarian.
- Carrying out in practice, the training of the consumer, through Library readings, by proposing a wide range of information and experience (which will contribute to positively change the habits and lifestyles of people).
- Providing a meeting point for food manufacturers and operators of local agri-food sector. In this initiative (particularly during the dinner meeting), a special showcase for promoting an innovative marketing for the local food production was open.
- Giving a stage to food producers and food professionals, to share with a broad audience, the value of their work and experience.

Last, but not the last, brings "new life" to small theaters, scattered throughout the territory, within the historic towns and cities of art, focusing on library and cultural values, for the Country's

economic recovery.

### **Disclaimer**

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