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President of the Italian Library Association

Authorities, dear colleagues,

first of all I would like to thank sincerely Professor Giuseppe D'Ascenzo, Magnifico Rettore of the University of Rome "La Sapienza" and Professor Francesco Sicilia, Director of Direzione generale per i beni librari e gli istituti culturali, for having decided to organize an international conference of this importance together with the Italian Library Association.

I also wish to thank M.me Christine Deschamps, President of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations), for the prestigious auspices conferred to this event. As representing all the people who contributed to the organization of the conference, my thanks go to Professor Mauro Guerrini, whom we all know to be an indefatigable and enthusiastic eminent scholar, for his remarkable efforts in creating that vital circuit between the world of research and that of profession.

IFLA rarely attributes international significance to an initiative, well, AIB has deserved it twice this year: in fact, even BIBLIOCOM, the most important Italian exposition of professions, products and services for libraries and information management, as every year, has been held under the auspices of IFLA, at Rome, Palazzo dei Congressi, October 2001.

By the way, the Conference starting today certainly establishes a point of no return. It is some time now, that more frequent signals allow us to affirm that library profession has grown adult in Italy. It has passed from claiming formal recognition to assuming more responsibilities concerning the quality of services, their diffusion, the share of knowledge and techniques being their very essence and prove of seriousness.

We already noticed these positive signs during the FRBR Seminar held at Florence in January 2000.

Besides, to be professionally mature means to be capable of dialoguing easily with the most qualified specialists of the area working in other countries, being aware that we have much to learn but surely something to exchange too.

Library tradition has always proved to be favourable to global thinking, something politics is discovering lately not without some discomfort. The best moments of our professional history have been those marked by the most intense international exchanges: in fact they avoided us the mortal dangers we always run into whenever we want to look for national answers to solve technical problems. This is even more vital for such crucial themes like those which will be discussed in the next three days. By the way, the subjects we are going to face lead us to share the greatest part of our professional platform and technologies with other protagonists of the information society such as administrators of database and portals or net-managers.

The professional quality of our job becomes possession and resource of the production system, base for offering new services for the world of research and for the general public; then, quality is important for progress as much as financial resources and management abilities.

The extraordinary interest generated by this conference forces our Association to intensify the efforts in order to create further occasions of this type. These future meetings should be effective possibilities to develop and should allow to promote the presence of Italian librarians and scholars of this branch to likely important international events.

In order to realize this aim, we participate more frequently to IFLA study and search activities; we have recently founded an Italian committee for IFLA and we have strengthened our role in other European and extra-European associations.

The result we would like to obtain is IFLA annual conference to be held in Italy between year 2007 and 2010.

For the importance of this objective we count on the support of various Ministries, like the Ministry for Cultural Assets, of other bodies and cultural institutions.

I would like to conclude saying that the very element that will allow the IFLA conference to become a real good occasion for our profession and country, will be the value and the dimension of Italian librarians in Italy and in the rest of the world.

These three-days Conference aims also to this end.

Good work and thanks to all.

Traduzione di Laura Toti

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