

# Upbeat Bologna

The spirit of do it yourself was also much in evidence at the Fair in the area of digital with companies like Playlane from Belgium and Robot Media from Barcelona. Robot Media showcased its children's book authoring tool, Storybuilder which allows publishers and individuals to build their own apps. According to CEO Hermes Pique, "one of our objectives as a company is to remove barriers of technology and distribution. One of the biggest problem right now is the discovery problem. For authors who don't have a marketing budget, that's especially important, so one of the things we're building into Storybuilder is the possibility of promoting other stories with yours, so that provides a network leading from one story to the other. We're also planning to have a community portal in which authors can share their experiences of promoting their apps and use that knowledge to support the whole ecosystem."

In other areas of the Fair, Chinni said, "This year, we had the announcement of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards with a writer from Argentina winning and also Peter Sis for illustration. The Astrid Lindgren also celebrated its tenth anniversary and brought a lot of their recipients, which we were very happy about."

Chinni added, "One of the most exciting things was our new Bologna Ragazzi Digital Award, which is of course part of our tradition with the goal to recognize excellence in books for children. We want to involve digital publishers in the Fair because that's their natural place if they want to be involved with other children's publishers. We didn't know we would get more than two hundred and fifty award submissions from 169 publishers from more than 60 countries, but we were delighted. The winner was a very small digital children's publisher in France called e-Toiles Editions, which made a fantastic application."

Carla Poesio, consultant to the Bologna Book Fair said she was seeing a lot going on in the area of preschool and with crossover books as well as in the area of digital. She doesn't view digital as the whole answer and recommends people read Jean-Claude Carrière and Umberto Eco's *This is Not the End of the Book* on that topic.

Next year will be the 50th Anniversary of the Fair, so special plans are underway. According to Chinni, "Sweden will be the country honored, and we're very happy to have it be Sweden, which is a country that attaches a lot of importance to education and to children's culture and the rights of children to read."

After a number of challenging years, the 2012 Bologna Book Fair sounded a more hopeful note. Director Roberta Chinni felt there was a lot more optimism and excitement about new projects and the future. "People were very positive in approach and attitude. It was the first good sign after many years where many had been full of anxiety."

Portugal was guest of honor for illustration and, for the first time, the Fair hosted a matching illustration exhibition in the city to show copies of artwork on display at the Fair. It was the second year of the TOC (Tools of Change) Conference. "There were 350 people attending," said Chinni, "which was 100 more than last year." This TOC also extended into the Fair with a digital

pavilion called the O'Reilly TOC Pavilion. "That was absolutely successful with people meeting all the time with other partners," said Chinni. "One fantastic meeting included famous illustrators, Paul Zelinski, Vladimir Radunsky, Piret Raud, and André Letria talking about how they've worked in the past and how they will work in the future because of digital."