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# The History of reading is the history of each reader: a Public History of Education project

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## Introduction

The aim of the project is to investigate Public History and its relationship with the History of **READING AND LIBRARIES**. Experiences of Public History can be developed in connection with the historical-educational field through the involvement of different subjects and to support the meeting between the academy and social memory. A new partnership to enhance the past and to promote the critical understanding of the present.

## Object of Research

### Madeleine in Biblioteca

The main project is "Madeleine in biblioteca" in collaboration with libraries and book clubs. Its aims is to recover people's reading memories from childhood to adulthood.

The autobiographical memories of readers represent an important sources and some scholars have stressed the importance of diaries, letters and oral testimonies: Michèle Petit (1993), Martyn Lyons e Lucy Taksa (1992), Janice A. Radway (1984), Sarah McNicol (2007).

Focused on important informal leaning the project involves:

- 1) oral testimonies collection
- 2) The website [www.madeleineinbiblioteca.it](http://www.madeleineinbiblioteca.it) A digital space to return the collected testimonies to the community, inspired by the english database Red (Reading experience database)
- 3) Workshops realized with the oral sources collected (censorship, family education, women's reading, children's books) to reflect on the history of reading using the historical narratives of non-specialists (integrated with the testimonies found in Diary archive of Pieve Santo Stefano)

### A work in progress:

#### "Un libro insieme. La lettura condivisa in Toscana"

Its aim is to exploring the recent history of Tuscan reading groups through a geo-referenced map built thanks to readers and libraries: a project for the public and with the public, useful for the community

## Sources and methodology

### PUBLIC HISTORY

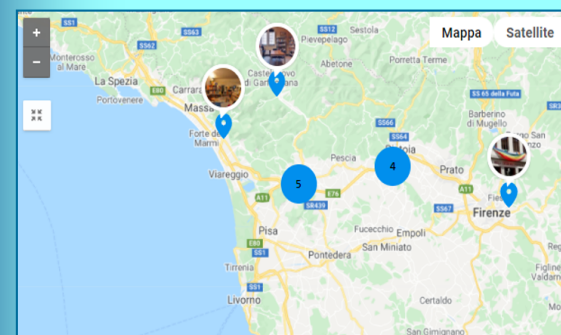
Public history is the application of historical skills and methods outside of academia to connect the scholars with the public of non-specialists. The aim of this approach is to enhance the importance of "thinking historically" and to involve the public in the construction of the historical narrative



**DIGITAL HISTORY** Digital History is an approach to examining and representing the past that works with the new communication technologies helping to collect, interpret, and share historical materials and narratives.

### ORAL HISTORY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Oral sources and autobiographies opens new ways to enrich the historical research and allow us to understand the people's ideas and behaviors who often remain silent.



## Expected Results

- 1) to apply Public History methods to less-explored fields such as the history of reading.
- 2) to investigate through oral sources and autobiography the history of libraries and reading
- 3) to promote a dialogue between the scholars and the public of non-specialists to enhance the importance of "thinking historically" for the whole community, including learning places.
- 4) to promote reading and act as a useful project for the public thanks to seminars and the geo-referenced map

## Research Developments



### PODCASTING HISTORY OF READING

A channel to increase sharing and exploit the potential of Digital Humanities

- Bandini G., Oliviero S., a cura di (2019). *Public History of Education. Riflessioni, testimonianze, esperienze*. Firenze University Press
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- Petit, M. (2010). *Elogio della lettura*. Milano: Ponte alle Grazie.
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