

“CIVIS Libraries: From Silent Stacks to Headline Acts”

CIVIS Days 2026 Dissemination Outputs

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The proposed session for the Bucharest CIVIS days aimed at highlighting a radical change of paradigm: academic libraries of the CIVIS universities have evolved from a traditional, silent partner into an active headline-maker in open science, digital transformation, and civic engagement. Over the past seven consecutive years (2019–2026), our cross-institutional cooperation has matured from informal groundwork into a structured community of practice through three major interconnected dimensions: Strategic Development, Mobility & Networking, and Community Learning.

Part 1: Reimagining "CIVIS is News" & our seven-year journey

- **2019-2022: the foundational years: laying the groundwork**

Our collaboration began in 2019 in the first phase of CIVIS, with the creation of the *Open Science Taskforce* (WP1): this working group (chaired by two amU librarians) was mostly composed of academic librarians. Between 2020 and 2021, despite global challenges, we consolidated our cooperation through the formal launch of *RIS4CIVIS*: module 5 “mainstreaming open science” was composed of academic librarians as well.

In parallel, Aix Marseille Université (amU) organized tailored trips to CIVIS partners so as to exchange best practices, starting with the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) academic library in 2019.

This framework allowed partner universities to build deep operational trust and initiate joint planning for long-term library initiatives.

In **2022**, the local impact became visible as the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) executed a major restructuring of its educational seminars. This foundational era closed with heavy networking mobility, featuring strategic visits from amU to Stockholm University (SU) and Sapienza (SUR), alongside dedicated Staff Weeks at AMU and SUR to solidify our joint goals.

- **2023–2025: consolidation: scaling innovation**

The year **2023** was a turning point for community learning and social impact: our network launched monthly “CIVIS libraries Zoom” sessions to maintain continuous collaborative

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Member universities :



Associate member universities :



momentum. NKUA upgraded its educational modules, and SUR pioneered the implementation of the *Human Libraries* methodology as a core case study for civic engagement and inclusivity. This milestone was backed by extensive mobility, including amU visiting the University of Tübingen (UT) and NKUA, while SUR hosted the broader network during its dedicated Staff Week. In **2024**, we focused on high-level educational design by developing the formal proposal for our Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) for library staff. This year showcased our network's visibility during the **CIVIS Days in Salzburg**. Strategic library mobility continued with amU visiting the Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg (PLUS) and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), while amU also proudly served as a Staff Week host. In **2025**, the *BIP Agreement* was officially validated. We showcased our shared progress during the **CIVIS Days in Rome (SUR)**, where NKUA successfully launched its own local *Human Libraries* initiative, directly inspired by Sapienza's model. Crucially, this cross-border inspiration led to a powerful local legacy: the formation of a dedicated, four-member *Artificial Intelligence Taskforce* at NKUA with the core objective of integrating AI literacy directly into student curricula. Networking during this year included an amU visit to the University of Glasgow (UoG).

- **2026 The BIP Launch & The Bucharest Strategic Session:**

All seven years of trust, shared impact, and cross-border mobility culminated in **2026** with the official launch of our inter-library BIP, "*Transformative Libraries and Participatory Culture*," which stands on four innovative institutional pillars: UX Design (amU), Libraries & Culture (SUR), Information Literacy & AI (NKUA), and Open Science (PLUS). Furthermore, this international cooperation continues to drive local transformation: by September 2026, NKUA is strategically scaling up its local legacy by launching comprehensive, internal AI training for its entire library staff.

Part 2: Innovative practice – The human library case study

Libraries cannot be reduced to book repositories, they have a much wider role as shown by the human library concept. "Human libraries" are a way of challenging the prejudices, discrimination and unconscious stereotypes we may harbour towards people from different backgrounds and with different identities. The narrators in a human library are people who choose to speak openly about their experiences (to the public) and to answer the questions put to them. Borrowing a human book means living their experience, sharing a life.

The Sapienza Università di Roma academic library proposed this ambitious project in 2023. It was set up like a traditional library, where people could look through a list of the books available, choose which ones they wanted to read, and then "borrow" them. The books told stories of violence against women and activists from different backgrounds who fight gender-based violence. The storytellers were people who have chosen to speak openly about their experiences and answer any questions. The event gave a voice to those who have suffered violence and

discrimination because of their gender, identity or social status, and offered our "books" the opportunity to tell their own stories.

The audience to the Bucharest session was given the opportunity to flick through the covers of the "books" and watch a video of the Roman event entitled "fREAD Yourself" which beautifully mirrors the civic mission of our modern library networks.



Part 3: Co-designing the future – Capturing users' needs

We invited our audience – students, researchers, and staff – to move from passive library users to active co-designers, asking for our users' urgent needs and structural desires.

1. Library elements to preserve ("To keep")

- **Silence & focused space:** users explicitly stressed the continued necessity of deep, uninterrupted quiet areas.
- **A "slow-paced place":** in an increasingly accelerated digital world, maintaining the library as a deliberate, slow-paced sanctuary remains a core demand.

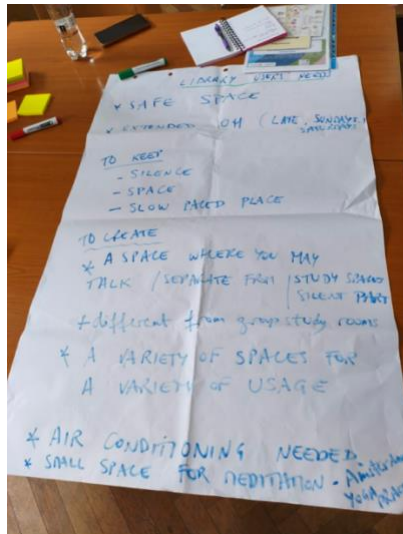
2. Emerging demands ("To create")

- **Safe spaces:** a baseline requirement for inclusive, welcoming environments across all campuses.
- **Extended opening hours:** direct requests for broader access, specifically late-night hours, as well as Saturday and Sunday openings.
- **Diverse spaces for diverse usages:** users requested separate talking or collaborative zones that are strictly isolated from silent study areas, moving beyond the traditional model of standard group study rooms.
- **Infrastructure upgrades:** pragmatic environmental adjustments, notably the universal need for proper air conditioning.

- **Mindfulness & reflection hubs:** small, dedicated spaces allocated for meditation, quiet reflection, or yoga practice—drawing inspiration from progressive models implemented in institutions like Amsterdam.

The material that was gathered in this session is to be shared with the community of practice in a future CIVIS libraries Zoom session so as to lead to the creation of a manifesto for the libraries of the future.

Co-designed chart detailing library users' concrete spatial and operational needs.



University of Bucharest, June 12th 2026.
From left to right: Raffaella Gianferri, Kyriaki Papadopoulou, Anne-Céline Lambotte, Elisabetta Tamburini, Maria Katsea.

