

## Matisse, the cat in the Busto library, is a Facebook star

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You can find **Matisse, the library's cat**, lying in the basket of books that have to be re-shelved, or around the feet of some of the library's employees as they work in the closed-shelf area. Matisse is now also a star on social media, also because his name was chosen by the users of the Facebook page.

### Matisse, the cat in the Busto Arsizio library

We do not find the traditional “bookworms” in **Busto Arsizio**. But there is a kitty. It arrived by chance, like all beautiful and unexpected things in life; this little bundle of fur was found one morning last summer, in the courtyard of the “G.B. Roggia” Municipal Library; he was small and scared, with one eye completely shut because of an infection.

Some of the employees decided to take care of him, and, within a few hours, the cat became the object of a **competition of solidarity**: some offered to take him to a vet, some wanted to buy him food, some wanted to give him a cat carrier and a cat litter. There was even support from the library's management, and from the council, who agreed that the cat could stay in the municipal spaces.

“In Busto, we understood a long time ago that animals in public spaces can contribute to the wellbeing of the staff,” said **Manuela Maffioli**, the councillor for Culture, “so, after checking the ‘compatibility’ of the choice with the people, the environment and the work, we didn't hesitate to agree to the employees' request. This is part of the big general investment that the administration is making, to relaunch and renew the library services.”

In a poll on the library's Facebook page, the users chose a name for the cat, Matisse, and he soon became the library's mascot; he has been photographed among books during his quiet naps, and intent on looking around the storage shelves, quickly becoming everyone's favourite.

Among the staff, the advantages of sharing in the care of an animal were soon felt: a new complicity was created among the colleagues, a desire to collaborate in the cat's care, which has extended to the working environment. They joke around more, because it is easy to find a topic to talk about; they exchange ideas and, in so doing, they discover new things about the people they work with.

Matisse does not live in the part of the library that is open to the public, so as to protect his tranquillity and wellbeing; his realm is part of the “closed-shelf” areas, a maze of stimuli, where he can play, rest, and be in the company of the people who work there. However, he has made a few public appearances, and is always loudly celebrated by the users during inaugurations and specific events.

The librarians take it in turns to take care of him: depending on the working hours, they feed him and pet him ... Dropping by to say hello to Matisse is something that makes people smile, reduces stress, and gives them a boost. And he really knows how to win everyone's love; with his cheerful character, he lays an ambush from behind a bookshelf, purrs if you pet him, and observes you with curiosity while you work.

On Sunday, when the library is closed, Matisse goes home with one of the employees; in his cat carrier, he spends the weekend “out-of-town”, loved and stroked, and then returns on Monday between the

walls of his usual dwelling.

Now that he has been at the library for a few months, he has completely recovered: thanks to the loving care of the librarians, his eye is healthy again, and Matisse has been vaccinated and sterilised. In short, he is a well-nourished and tranquil cat; and his presence always manages to make everyone smile.

His photos on the library's page always get a lot of comments and likes, because even the users have grown fond of the "beautiful fairy tale" about the rescue animal that has been able to win a place in the librarians' hearts.

di Translated by Martina Innocenti (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)