

Preface to the Proceedings of the 22nd Conference on Information and Research Science Connecting to Digital and Library Science (IRCDL 2026)

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Abstract

The 22nd Conference on Information and Research Science Connecting to Digital and Library Science (IRCDL 2026) continues the tradition of IRCDL as a multidisciplinary forum for Digital Library research. Held in Modena, Italy, on February 19–20, 2026, the conference featured two tracks: Computer Science Foundations for Digital Libraries and Digital Humanities. The program spans key topics such as information retrieval, metadata and interoperability, knowledge representation, generative and responsible AI, digital preservation, and cultural heritage. The proceedings include research papers, short papers, and extended abstracts, highlighting both methodological advances and application-oriented studies, and reinforcing IRCDL’s role as a meeting point between computer science, information science, and digital humanities.

Keywords

Digital Libraries, Digital Humanities, Information Retrieval, Cultural Heritage, Generative AI

Preface

Since its inception in 2005, the Conference on Information and Research Science Connecting to Digital and Library Science (formerly the Italian Research Conference on Digital Libraries, IRCDL) has been an annual meeting point for researchers working on Digital Libraries and related topics. Over the years, IRCDL has strengthened its role in the national research landscape while expanding its international reach, attracting contributions from across Europe and beyond.

IRCDL addresses Digital Libraries in a broad and multidisciplinary sense, covering emerging forms of information institutions, systems for managing and preserving digital content, innovative methods for organizing, curating, and disseminating information resources, and theoretical models of information media and scholarly communication. The conference welcomes participants from academia, government, industry, research infrastructures, and cultural institutions, and draws on a wide range of communities,

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including computer science, information science, librarianship, archival science, museum studies, technology, social sciences, cultural heritage, and the humanities.

The field of Digital Libraries is undergoing major transformations, driven by the increasing availability of large-scale digital collections, the evolution of research infrastructures, the central role of open science practices, and the rapid diffusion of Artificial Intelligence methods. In response to these developments, IRCDL continues to expand its scope and to foster dialogue among communities that contribute to the design, study, and use of digital libraries as scientific, cultural, and societal infrastructures.

IRCDL 2026 (<https://ircdl2026.unimore.it/>) was held in Modena, Italy, on February 19–20, 2026, at the Department of Engineering “Enzo Ferrari” of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Following the path established in the previous edition, the conference was organized around two complementary tracks. The first track, *Computer Science Foundations for Digital Libraries: Algorithms, Systems, and Applications*, focused on core computational aspects of digital libraries, including information retrieval, data management, knowledge extraction, system interoperability, and practical applications in research and cultural heritage contexts. The second track, *Digital Humanities: The Science and Foundation of Modern Humanities Libraries*, explored the intersection between digital technologies and humanities research, with attention to computational approaches for analyzing, preserving, and enhancing cultural artifacts, texts, archives, and scholarly resources.

The topics of the conference reflected the breadth of current research in the field, including open data and open science, information retrieval and extraction, machine learning and generative AI, responsible AI, ontologies and knowledge representation, document analysis, digital humanities services, cultural heritage, metadata management, repositories and archives, semantic web technologies, digital preservation, scientometrics, research infrastructures, human-computer interaction, multimodal information management, and applications of digital libraries.

The technical program featured 38 presentations, including 24 research papers and 14 short papers and extended abstracts. The contributions highlighted both methodological advances and application-oriented studies, with particular attention to large language models and AI-assisted approaches, semantic enrichment and interoperability, digital archival workflows, multimodal retrieval, and data-driven methods for cultural heritage and humanities. The program was further enriched by two invited talks: Debora Nozza on risks and research directions for everyday use of large language models, and Roberto Pierdicca on the role of geodata in digital humanities.

The first day opened with institutional greetings from the Rector of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Prof. Rita Cucchiara, followed by the welcome of the General Chairs, Prof. Lorenzo Baraldi and Prof. Marcella Cornia. Sessions alternated between the two tracks, covering topics such as semantic digital libraries, FAIR data ecosystems, data harmonization workflows, AI-based document analysis, knowledge graphs, and retrieval-augmented generation. The second day continued with contributions on evidence extraction, domain classification, timeline summarization, cultural heritage, AI-assisted digitization, medico-legal document analysis, art classification, semantic retrieval for Latin, and handwritten text recognition.

As in previous editions, IRCDL 2026 confirmed its position within the broader Digital Library ecosystem, in connection with major international venues such as TPD, ICADL, and JCDL, and with neighboring initiatives spanning artificial intelligence, cultural heritage, digital scholarship, and information science. The conference continues to provide a valuable space where established researchers, early-career scholars, and practitioners can discuss methods, resources, infrastructures, and applications that shape the present and future of digital libraries.

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