

MINISTERO PER I BENI CULTURALI E AMBIENTALI  
SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGICA DI POMPEI  
IBM

# REDISCOVERING POMPEII

Exhibition by IBM-ITALIA  
New York City, IBM Gallery of Science and Art  
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«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

*The fascination of Pompeii cannot be explained merely by the beauty of its paintings, the variety of its buildings, the wares in its shops, or the surprising discoveries that are still being made as the excavations proceed. Pompeii, certainly, is all of this, but not only this. Pompeii is a city that returns today to live the rhythms of its daily life in all its aspects — public and private, political and religious, at work and at play. The fascination lies precisely in the complexity, in the suggestions, in the extraordinary possibility of reestablishing a dialogue, contact between modern man and the people of almost two thousand years ago.*

*Information technologies — the most powerful instrument available for analyzing and solving complex problems, whether economic or not — can make a significant contribution to restoring the real conditions of this relationship. It was to demonstrate this potential that IBM Italia “rediscovered” Pompeii four years ago, when the Italian government presented an extensive program for the evaluation and recovery of one of Italy’s richest resources — its historical, artistic and cultural patrimony. The program called for the participation of both public and private enterprises to study and carry out initiatives which, using the most advanced technologies, and creating new opportunities for challenging work for young people, could lead to a better understanding of that heritage.*

*IBM Italia, together with Fiat Engineering, participated in this program with a project called “Neapolis.” Our objective was to construct a system for the complete exploitation of the environmental and artistic resources of the area of Pompeii.*

*This project led us to create an integrated informational application which, like the city that was its object, may be considered unique in its genre for the vastness of its scope, for its technological complexity and for its interdisciplinary contents.*

*The final result has been the development of a methodology of work applicable not only in Pompeii but anywhere.*

*What was done with Neapolis was of such compelling interest as to convince us that knowledge of the project should not be limited to those who worked on it, but merited broader diffusion.*

*It is for this reason that, in close collaboration with the Ministero di Beni Culturali e Ambientali, and in particular with the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei, we have arranged this exhibition.*

*One aspect seems to me especially important. “Rediscovering Pompeii” is not only an exhibition on Pompeian “archaeology,” nor even an exhibition on “technology” applied to archaeology. It is, rather, an exhibition on the new horizons that have been opened for knowledge by information technology.*

*In this case, to know means to grasp the dense network of relations between objects and the social, political, religious and cultural context in which they were created.*

*The relationships which tie a work of art to its time are in themselves quite complex. Years of research and study are necessary to master them. If what we are trying to understand is not a single object but an entire city, the difficulties became almost insurmountable. At this point, “bene culturale” becomes material for specialists.*

*Today, however, technological developments project us into an extraordinary era in which we may demand of the machine not only that it relieve the fatigue of physical labor but also the task of reconstructing and synthesizing the myriad interactions that lie at the base of knowledge. Technology, of course, offers only models and processing power to verify hypotheses of knowledge. It is not knowledge in itself, but it opens large space to creativity, to the pleasure of knowledge; and thus it spurs us to know more.*

*And this is a great advantage alike to scholars and those who, though not specialists, nevertheless desire to understand in the most complete way, and at the same time, the easiest and most immediate way, each type of phenomenon, however complex it may be.*

*If the exhibition, beyond its scientific and cultural importance, also stimulates new interest, further studies and even a visit to Pompeii, then we will have reached our aim completely.*

ENNIO PRESUTTI  
President and Managing Director  
IBM Italia