

Where Italian language and culture converge with Victoria

Elsa Paulin

The Comitato Assistenza Italiani (CO.AS.IT) or Italian Assistance Association was established to provide Italian language resources to teachers in Victorian schools teaching Italian. It was born out of the need to centrally house an ever increasing book and audio-visual collection provided by the Italian government for the teaching of Italian in Australian schools.

The activities and services which the centre now provides have grown according to both demand and foresight. This is due partly to the increase of schools teaching Italian, and partly the number of Australian-Italian people interested in the culture of their parents and grandparents.

The library operates in conjunction with two other entities of the resource centre. As well as sharing a central location with the library, the Educational Support Unit and the Italian Historical Society provide the infrastructure for

the continued support of the teaching of Italian in Victorian schools.

The CO.AS.IT library allows both teachers and students to borrow materials in a myriad of formats including audio-visual, puppets, toys, games, costumes, fiction and non-fiction books, journals, kits, CD-ROMs, flags and posters. The collection aims at providing plentiful, relevant and recent materials which help with language acquisition. Restricted borrowing privileges are automatically bestowed on any Victorian school teaching Italian. Other interested people can access the collection via an annual subscription.

Special classes offered by the library which deal with the cultural aspects of the Italian-Australian community. A 'Lygon Street walk' with accompanying activities has been designed by library staff working in liaison with the educational support unit. Part of the class is conducted inside the library, using aides specifically de-

signed for the CO.AS.IT resource centre, whilst the walk is conducted independently of the library.

So what direction will the CO.AS.IT resource centre take in the future? We are currently working on our Internet homepage, so watch out for this in the next couple of months. This site will be linked to various Australian multicultural sites, as well as Italian sites such as the one established by the University for Foreigners in Perugia. Mid-1996 will see the implementation of a 30-unit language laboratory housed upstairs from the library. This will be used in conjunction with Italian language audio-visual materials and CD-ROMs.

The CO.AS.IT resource centre is constantly evolving to meet the needs of its clients. The future years will see the expansion of current collection development policies and other new and exciting areas. If you want to know more, CO.AS.IT can be e-mailed at coasit@ozemail.com.au. ■

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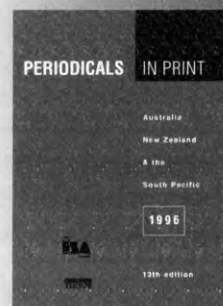
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