



The documentation centre A library-media centre at IFAS

A newcomer in the network of French libraries outside France : within the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS) you will find occupying the 300 m² of the second floor of the Institute, the library-media centre in which a resource centre on contemporary France will be integrated, that will make documents on French data available.

Initially IFAS proposes an incomplete library-media centre where knowledge in different disciplines may be accessed, where research can be done and where there is time to read. This library-media centre owns a collection of books and press periodicals that will reflect the vocation of IFAS.

- IFAS, artistic agency : this means, as the reader will find, a variety of books and information on dance, plastic arts, music, cinema, photography...
- IFAS, centre of human science research on Southern Africa : this means, as the reader will find, a variety of books and information not only on the present state of the human sciences in France, but also on the direction of such research in this part of Africa.

Finally the library-media centre will extend its skills outside French fields, since it wants to be a French-speaking space. The collection is centred on the knowledge of French culture : fine arts, research, the French-speaking world, a collection of social sciences oriented towards the problems of society and the major idea debates, as well as the culture of South Africa.

The reader will find the reference section in the room reserved for periodicals. Here it will be possible for our members to obtain back-copies of our periodicals. A corner is reserved for a television with a magnetoscope where French videos can be watched. Another room has been adapted to house our collection of public reading with emphasis on a high standard in choosing these books. These books are directly accessible to the reader who would like to consult them and even borrow them if he is an enrolled member of the Institute.

The library-media centre would like to co-operate with university libraries and to be integrated in a specialist network. In this way we hope to add our skills, complementary to that already available, in the true fashion of cultural co-operation.

Why establish a French resource centre ? Our aim is to wait for and engage the new type of public that frequents French cultural centres : they want to have the fastest possible responses to the questions they pose. The questions on France touch all the aspects of the practical and daily reality of our country - this public is curious about France and has interest in its techniques, its political life, its fashion, its resources, its crafts, its minorities, its monuments, its urban life...

Our ambition : to give increasing place to research on surface information, as well as to in-depth practical or factual information on France, and thus putting in place an organised, effective, systematic response to all the questions posed to the Institute.

To respond to the enquiries on France that could be made by our public, we shall attempt to encompass all the facets of French reality and to define the thematic poles representing so many approaches to contemporary France : political, administrative, economical, legal and social France, the France of the provinces, the France of arts and culture, but also current data on studies and education. The whole range of information services on France will be mobilised to accomodate as diverse requests as possible, and to satisfy these requests immediately or as soon as possible. An effective resource centre must be supplied with different types of documents, available under different headings.

Diversity of the types of documents : dictionaries and general encyclopedias, specialist French language dictionaries, or terminological dictionaries, yearbooks, reports of organisations : French administration, museums, libraries and documentation centres, yearbooks of events...

Diversity of information services : the new information technologies will bring a response that we hope will be satisfying : utilisation of the data bank either through bibliographical references, or through full text. CD-ROM is connection to the Internet that will allow us to access information in the fields of economy, science and technology, human and social science, the press...

Here, in this resource centre on France, one will see diverse functions : the function of information and the relevant data equipment, the function of orientation to other available French sources in the city and the country and to specialist organisations in France. But it is also a structuring role, situated where information and documentation - that attempts to show where all the pieces of a cultural, linguistic and scientific puzzle

fit in - come together. Reciprocally to all these different structures, this centre could play the role of co-ordinator of what is on offer.

The project is ambitious. We shall be without doubt an imperfect example. We shall need time to put a complex structure in place. Our dictionaries and encyclopedias are already available to consult in the reading room to bring information, admittedly still partial, on the culture, civilisation and production of France today to you.