

Dashing down the bold track – “Monasterium Italy”

In-situ University courses let you experience history in the here and now. Short breaks and heaps of fun are part of it.

Eight years ago, a small and courageous research group came together at the Department of Humanities of the University of Naples Federico II (Università degli studi di Napoli Federico II). Their project “Monasterium Italy” is a showcase for the free and inspiring dissemination of knowledge through democratic access to European historical documents.

Antonella Ambrosio, Rosalba Di Meglio, Maria Rosaria Falcone, Vera Schwarz-Ricci and Giovanni Vitolo are the names behind “Monasterium Italy”. This title reflects the Department’s history: Ever since the second half of the 20th century, the Department’s historical research approach has focused on monasteries as a crucial aspect to understanding medieval Italian society. “Monasterium Italy” has developed a special research interest in the history of Italian monasteries and documents kept in monastery archives. As the goals of their project were closely linked to those of the online portal “Monasterium Italy” started in 2008, the obvious thing to do was to join forces.

Europe’s virtual charters archive
“Monasterium Italy” offers a wide range of research functionalities, such as the indexing of charters or using the provided information in educational environments. The group of researchers continually adds to the portal’s content by providing digitized archival documents from monasteries. The originals are often difficult to access, in danger of decomposition or scattered across multiple preservation sites. “Monasterium Italy” has also been engaged in international interdisciplinary research teams, will soon publish the very first digital edition of medieval documents with the software behind the Monasterium

portal (MOM-CA), and has developed innovative new educational activities.

A leap into the international community

“Monasterium Italy” has ventured from research activities that were originally centered on Italy to making their visions and study results known across Europe. In conjunction with EU-funded projects such as “co:op – community as opportunity”, the group members have been organizing lectures, seminars and workshops throughout many European countries. On their way, they have met with extraordinary experts, students, researchers and archivists. It has been equally impressive to meet with exceptional individuals from local communities who have set an example for a true European spirit that is aware of the importance of a shared common history and the preservation of historical documents. With the support of the service tools of a topotheque, Italian communities can now easily share and preserve their history.

Inspiring enthusiasm beyond the ivory tower

The members of “Monasterium Italy” have grown from being primarily institutional researchers into becoming promoters of real-life traces of history, of discovering monastic archaeological sites fallen into oblivion and the history of dialects, customs and col-

lective identities visible in today’s communities. Within the ICARUS network, “Monasterium Italy” will continue to enhance academic research conventions: furthering the knowledge exchange between the general public and academic experts will continue to inspire enthusiasm and progress! ■

For more information on the topotheques, see the article from the Finnish National Archives on page 12.

To learn more about the activities of “Monasterium Italy”, we recommend:

Links:

coop-unina.org

recruitdigitaldoc.org

monasterium.net



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Antonella Ambrosio teaches Paleography and Diplomatics at the University of Naples Federico II and is co:op project manager for the Department of Humanities. She is also vice-president of ICARUS coordinating didactic activities.



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