

NICHE MARKET INNOVATIONS IN THE ITALIAN FASHION INDUSTRY



Mandy Penton & Rosanna Giacomini

ISS Institute/TAFE Fellowship

Fellowship funded by
Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE)
Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional
Development



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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Fellowship was to undertake an overseas study program in Italy, to:

- gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Italian Fashion Industry and Fashion educators are dealing with emerging trends of volume manufacturing in developing countries;
- to develop a number of technical skills

Globalisation of markets, changing consumer spending patterns and new technologies continue to transform the Australian Fashion sector, driving significant structural and organisational change. As phased tariff reductions continue towards targets of either five per cent or zero, further business restructuring is inevitable, and will continue to amplify the impact of globalisation of markets, changing consumer spending patterns and new technologies.

The fashion industry is globally registering a rebellion against mass-consumerism in favour of uniquely created items, integrating the ideals of Artisanship and Integrity of the product with the use of quality materials and construction methods. The aim is for the products to have an inherent feature of sustainability as opposed to being items characterised by a disposable nature. It is refinement and good design that distinguishes these products from those produced for 'generic mass consumption' with 'volume' driving design. In addition, there is a need for greater opportunities for smaller niche Australian businesses and brands that take pride in producing quality product and getting that product right, to develop and achieve and maintain a sustainable market. The response from enterprises has been to reform work organisation, develop niche markets, invest in new technology, and to place greater emphasis on training for new and emerging skills. As a result, this resilient and creative industry continues to employ more than 145,000 employees, with an estimated contribution to Gross National Product of an estimated \$12,000 million.

An obvious benefit to Australia in passing on skills of Italian fashion design and development, is the potential to improve the quality of training in fashion and subsequently giving people the skills required to maintain a viable fashion industry in Australia. Within Australia there is the potential to develop a business based on individuality of design, quality materials and construction, and good business practices. The skills and knowledge brought back to Australia will make it possible to adapt and extend training to include true artisan skills in a program developed for modern times countering the effects of mass production, plagiarism and cheap imports.

Training and education is central to building this knowledge, skill and business acumen along with expertise in fashion, style and design. It is essential to train new designers with an integrated training program and to provide them with the tools to succeed, and to enable them to be flexible and adaptable.

To ensure that the diminishing artisan skills included below are not lost but are developed and enhanced, skills that need to be enhanced include:

- Draping/Moulage (not included as a Unit of Competency in the current training package)
- Fabric Enhancement (also not included as a Unit of Competency in the current training package)
- Working with Wool Fabrics – using methods to complement the properties of wools as well as the new technologies used for wool fibres and; the blending/combination of Australian Wool with cotton, silk and linen

Executive Summary

Addressing the Gap:

The time spent travelling in Italy was approximately three weeks. The aim was to research niche market innovations and study training programs designed to assist in creating these niche markets. The ultimate aim was to return and develop the niche for unique Australian Fashion and to use the Italian design and style doctrine as a base to develop skills and knowledge that can be used to create fashion garments for the Australian lifestyle and climate using a wide range of materials and technologies currently available in Australia.

To achieve this aim, research was carried out into the current practices of Fashion Design Houses and Fashion Educational Organisations. Penton & Giacomini had booked back to back appointments visiting businesses, from the fabrication of materials, development of designers concepts, to the manufacture and production of garments, to embellishers of fabrics, and finally to the consumers in the boutiques. All these aspects had to be investigated to gain a comprehensive understanding of how a design comes to be realised. Several educational institutions were also visited that had strong links and contributed to Italy's established industry.

The following report provides an overview of the Fellowship experience and this is followed by a series of recommendations for Government, Industry, and the Business Sector, Professional Associations, Education and Training Providers, our Community and the ISS Institute. These recommendations also include suggestions for engaging in knowledge transfer activities.

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We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide us throughout the Fellowship program.

Awarding Body - International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

We know that Australia's economic future is reliant upon high level skills and knowledge, underpinned by design and innovation.

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc (ISS Institute) is an independent, national organisation, which has a record of nearly twenty years of working with Australian industry and commerce to gain best-in-the-world skills and experience in traditional and leading-edge technology, design, innovation and management. The Institute has worked extensively with Government and non-Government organisations, firms, industry bodies, professional associations and education and training institutions.

The Patron in Chief is Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO. The ISS Institute Board of Management is Chaired by Noel Waite AO. The Board comprises Franco Fiorentini, John Iacovangelo, Lady Primrose Potter AC and David Wittner.

Through its CEO, Carolynne Bourne AM, the ISS Institute identifies and researches skill deficiencies and then meets the deficiency needs through its *Overseas Skill Acquisition Plan (Fellowship Program)*, its education and training activities, professional development events and consultancy services.

Under the Overseas Skill Acquisition Plan (Fellowship Program) Australians travel overseas or international experts travel to Australia. Participants then pass on what they have learnt through reports, education and training activities such as workshops, conferences, lectures, forums, seminars and events, therein ensuring that for each Fellowship undertaken many benefit.

As an outcome of its work, ISS Institute has gained a deep understanding of the nature and scope of a number of issues. Four clearly defined economic forces have emerged out of our nearly twenty years of research. The drivers have arisen out of research that has been induced rather than deduced and innovative, practical solutions created - it is about thinking and working differently.

A Global Perspective. 'Skills Deficiencies' + 'Skills Shortages'

Skill deficiencies address future needs. Skill shortages replicate the past and are focused on immediate needs.

Skill deficiency is where a demand for labour has not been recognised and where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions. This demand is met where skills and knowledge are acquired on-the-job, gleaned from published material, or from working and/or study overseas. This is the focus of the work of ISS Institute.

There may be individuals or firms that have these capabilities. However, individuals in the main do not share their capabilities, but rather keep the IP to themselves; and over time they retire and pass way. Firms likewise come and go. If Australia is to create, build and sustain Industries, knowledge/skills/understandings must be accessible trans-generationally through nationally accredited courses and not be reliant on individuals.

Our international competitors have these capabilities as well as the education and training infrastructure to underpin them.

Addressing skill shortages, however, is merely delivering more of what we already know and can do to meet current market demands. Australia needs to address the **dual** challenge – skill deficiencies and skill shortages.

Identifying and closing skills deficiencies is vital to long-term economic prospects in order to sustain sectors that are at risk of disappearing, not being developed or leaving our shores to be taken up by our competitors. The only prudent option is to achieve a high skill, high value-added economy in order to build a significant future in the local and international marketplace.

The Trades

The ISS Institute views the trades as the backbone of our economy. Yet, they are often unseen and, in the main, have no direct voice as to issues which are in their domain of expertise. The trades are equal, but different to professions.

The ISS Institute has the way forward through its 'Master Artisan Framework for Excellence. A New Model for Skilling the Trades', December 2004. The Federal Government, DEEWR commissioned ISS Institute to write an Australian Master Artisan School, Feasibility Plan.

In 2006, ISS Institute Inc. set up a new ISS advisory body, the **Trades Advisory Council**. Members are Ivan Deveson AO; Martin Ferguson AM, MP, Federal Labor Member for Batman; Geoff Masters, CEO, Australian Council of Educational Research; Simon McKeon, Executive Chairman, Macquarie Bank, Melbourne Office; Richard Pratt, Chairman, Visy Industries and Julius Roe, National President Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

Think and Work in an Holistic Approach along the Supply Chain - Collaboration and Communication

Our experience has shown that most perceive that lack of skills is the principal factor related to quality and productivity. We believe that attitudes are often the constraint to turning ideas into product and a successful business; the ability to think laterally, to work and communicate across disciplines and industry sectors, to be able to take risks and think outside the familiar, to share – to turn competitors into partners.

Australia needs to change to thinking and working holistically along the entire Supply Chain; to collaborate and communicate across industries and occupations - designers with master artisans, trades men and women, Government agencies, manufacturers, engineers, farmers, retailers, suppliers to name a few in the Chain.

'Design' has to be seen as more than 'Art' discipline – it is a fundamental economic and business tool for the 21st Century

Design is crucial to the economic future of our nation. Australia needs to understand and learn the value of design, the benefits of good design and for it to become part of everyday language, decision making and choice.

Design is as important to the child exploring the possibilities of the world, as it is to the architect developing new concepts, and as it is to the electrician placing power points or the furniture designer working with a cabinet-maker and manufacturer. As such, design is vested in every member of our community and touches every aspect of our lives.

Our holistic approach takes us to working across occupations and industry sectors and building bridges along the way. The result has been highly effective in the creation of new business, the development of existing business and the return of lost skills and knowledge to our workforce, thus creating jobs - whereby individuals gain; industry and business gain; the Australian community gains economically, educationally and culturally.

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Victorian Government, Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE)

The Victorian Government, Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) is responsible for the administration and coordination of programs for the provision of training and further education, adult community education and employment services in Victoria and is a valued sponsor of the ISS Institute. We would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

Kangan Batman TAFE

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the support of Kangan Batman TAFE for providing the time and the additional funding required to undertake the Fellowship and associated activities.

Ray Griffiths (Director, Kangan Batman TAFE)

Greg Waddell (General Manager, Business Services Group, Kangan Batman TAFE)

Jude Hollings (Manager, Fashion and Retail Department, Kangan Batman TAFE)

Fellowship Supporters

In Australia

Liz Foster – The Australian Wool Fashion Awards

Jo-Ann Kellock – President, Fashion Technicians Association Australia

Cheryl Harty – Australian Editor Apparel Magazine Retail Media Pty Ltd

Rob Stewart - Hamilton Pastoral & Agricultural Society and Sheepvention

Jason Grech – Designer - Jason Grech Designs

In Italy

Renato Balestra, International Designer, Rome

Sabrina Baldi, Personal Assistant to Renato Balestra

Anna Menniti, Mendel Ricami, Aprilia

Valeria Dini, Textura S.p.A, Arezzo

Luisa Fazio, Accessories Designer, Florence

Dr Philip Taylor, Polimoda, Florence

Francesca Maccatrozzo, External Relations Manager, VEGA Park - Textiles & Science Technology, Venice

Mauro Aruta, Museo De Merletto - (Lace Museum), Burano, Venice

Dott. Matteo Secoli, Istituto Carlo Secoli, Milan

Mr. Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis, Professor of Industrial Design in Fashion and Furniture, Politecnico di Milano, Milan

Dario Villa, Public Relations Officer, ETRO S.p.A, Milan

Valentina Piacenza, Womenswear Designer, Fratelli Piacenza S.p.A, Pollone, Biella

Matteo Lorto, Operations Manager, Zenga ermenegildo, Teviro, Biella



Mandy Penton (left) and Rosanna Giacomini receiving their certificates at the *ISS Institute Fellowship Awards*

Mandy Penton

Mandy Penton completed her teaching and fashion training in 1983, with the aim of teaching fashion at TAFE New South Wales. Since this time she has worked continuously in the fashion industry in a wide range of positions, while teaching part-time in the evenings at TAFE institutes in Sydney.

When Penton secured a full-time teaching position, her fashion industry experience proved invaluable, her passion has been to ensure the training being offered meets the changing needs of the Australian fashion industry.

Penton has continuously been involved in developing new curriculum and training programs, as well as developing resources for external organisations. Penton also acts as a Victorian 'Registered Training Organisation' (RTO) representative for Fashion, Clothing and Millinery areas for the National Training Package review for the textile, clothing and footwear sector.

Following the ISS Institutes' Masterclass with Renato Balestra, Penton successfully applied for an overseas Fellowship.

Rosanna Giacomini

Rosanna Giacomini began her career after completing studies at Melbourne College of Textiles in 1983. She acquired a position working for a Melbourne fashion designer label and after six years started her own fashion label Moda in 1989. Giacomini specialised in high quality, made to measure evening and bridal wear.

After 15 years of experience in the clothing industry she began on a new journey of imparting her knowledge to the future of the fashion industry. Whilst teaching part-time at two institutions, Kangan Batman TAFE and RMIT textiles, Giacomini completed an Associate Degree in Vocational Education and Training and a Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training. By 2000 Giacomini was working full time at Kangan Batman TAFE and has mostly taught all areas of the industry with particular focus in Made to Measure, Patternmaking and Quality Garment Construction, and computer systems. In 2006 Giacomini completed a Masters in Education (Work & Learning Studies)

The clothing industry has gone through some very big changes; the most obvious is the loss of our Australian industry to off shore manufacturing. Giacomini sought to address these changes and ways to ensure the survival of the industry in Australia. She feels that in order to deal with these changes, Australia needs to focus on training and in adapting better methods to equip our youth.

Giacomini was motivated to attend the Renato Balestra workshops and also to apply for the ISS Institute and TAFE Fellowship. Giacomini believes travelling overseas and seeing how Italy is dealing with these changes will provide direction for implementing changes to our current courses. Giacomini would ultimately like to keep 'design and innovation' here in Australia, as she has worked mostly in the higher quality end of the fashion industry and believes that Australia can compete in these areas if we can implement and develop these strengths. Giacomini, having a strong Italian heritage, is able to speak the language well, and was able to grasp as much information as possible to impart to the future of the fashion clothing industry.

The purpose of the Fellowship was to undertake an overseas study program in Italy, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Italian Fashion Industry and Fashion educators are dealing with emerging trends of volume manufacturing in developing countries. Of primary interest is an investigation of how Italy is actively maintaining its reputation as the international leader of fashion. This Fellowship provides an opportunity to explore the innovative steps being taken to ensure a strong, competitive and viable fashion industry in the future.

Aim of the Fellowship

The aim was to research niche market innovations, to study and eventually develop training programs, to assist in creating these niche markets. There is a need for greater opportunities for small businesses and brands to take pride in producing quality product and getting that product right in a competitive global market.

To achieve this aim research was carried out into the current practices of fashion design houses and fashion educational organisations. The aim was to give learners an integrated training program with the tools to succeed, to be flexible and adaptable and to also develop a strong business acumen without devaluing the 'Dream to Design'. Appropriate training and education is a means of achieving this. The overall aim is to benefit and build the fashion industry in Australia.

A means of achieving this is to incorporate into training programs the innovative methods of training and industry requirements that will benefit fashion and the Australian fashion Industry, and to tailor this training to suit the needs of fashion education staff, full-time fashion students, and people already working in the fashion industry.

The ultimate aim is to develop the niche for unique Australian Fashion and to use the Italian design and style doctrine as a base to develop skills and knowledge that can be used to create fashion garments for the Australian lifestyle and climate using a wide range of materials and technologies currently available in Australia.

100% Australian Wool

There is also an opportunity to provide a special focus on the innovative wool products being produced by 100% Australian Wool. With this product there is a need to explore garment construction, embellishment and patternmaking/draping techniques in new training programs as integral skills required in producing quality garments. Italian textile mills and manufacturers of wool and cashmere garments provide an opportunity to investigate how designers and mills work together to produce their products and what skills are required to work together in producing the quality garments. The question also needs to be pursued as to how we can best incorporate these identified skills in product development of Australian wool garments in Australia.

The Australian Context

Globalisation of markets, changing consumer spending patterns and new technologies continue to transform the Australian Fashion Sector, driving significant structural and organisational change. As phased tariff reductions continue towards targets of either five per cent or zero, further business restructuring is inevitable, and will continue to amplify the impact of globalisation of markets, changing consumer spending patterns and new technologies.

The response from enterprises has been to reform work organisation, develop niche markets, invest in new technology, and to place greater emphasis on training for new and emerging skills. As a result, this resilient and creative industry continues to employ more than 145,000 employees, with an estimated contribution to Gross National Product of an estimated \$12,000 million.

In all these areas use of new technology in the design, production and quality processes of enterprises, and the adoption of relevant skills development and training activities are critical to the survival and success of the TCF sector. Specialised skills in advanced patternmaking and couture or bespoke garment manufacture are two specific skill areas where gaps due to an ageing workforce and changes in training have seen a significant decline in recent times. Training has been, in the majority aimed at mass production and predominantly women's wear.

Rosanna Giacomini and Mandy Penton have both had extensive training and experience in the Australian fashion Industry in patternmaking and Rosanna more specifically in Couture garment construction. Mandy's further experience in production management and quality control will assist in identifying the main differences and comparisons between the Australian and Italian Fashion Industries; especially in the identified skill gap areas. The aim is to analyse all information and skills gained from the Fellowship in order to influence how training in these areas is conducted in Australia.

An obvious benefit to Australia in passing on skills of Italian fashion design and development, is the potential to improve the quality of training in fashion and subsequently giving people the skills required to maintain a viable fashion industry in Australia. Within Australia there is the potential to develop a business based on individuality of design, quality materials and construction, and good business practices. The skills and knowledge brought back to Australia will make it possible to adapt and extend training to include true artisan skills in a program developed for modern times countering the effects of mass production, plagiarism and cheap imports.

It is not only the ability of the Italian fashion industry to specialise in producing high quality, superbly produced garments, using only top quality fabrics, it is their inherent ability to develop garments with all of the above plus design and style details that are readily recognised as 'Italian' Design.

It is the opportunity to further establish these links and learn from people who have proven to be successful in Fashion despite the ongoing threat of mass production and cheap copies and to combine this with Australia's unique raw materials and spontaneity, which will lead to a beneficial sharing of ideas and resources.

Peak Organisations (Fashion Education)

The aim is to develop an information-sharing network on return, including:

- Fashion Providers of Victorian TAFE Colleges,
- Members of the Fashion Technicians Association Australia (FTAA),
- Curriculum Maintenance Manager for Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Leather in Victoria, The KBT and other Victorian TAFE's Alumni.

The Australian Context

As information flows, it is expected that an extended network will be developed that provides opportunities for all Australian Fashion Providers, and interested people from the Australian Fashion Industry. The Fellows are intending to develop workshops and/or seminars for all interested parties. Outcomes and feedback from this network and workshops will be shared with Manufacturing Skills Australia. This body manages reviews and develops the Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Leather Training Package in Australia.

The Skills/Knowledge Gaps

Italian style is recognised globally as being innovative and original across all disciplines. Italian fashion is integral to the economic success of Italy and provides an 'economic powerhouse'; providing substantial business and employment opportunities within the community. Within the context of fashion, Italian style is characterised by an emphasis on quality and attention to appearance as captured by the term the term 'La Bella Figura' which denotes the importance of 'cutting a dash'.

The fashion industry globally is registering a rebellion against mass-consumerism in favour of uniquely created items, integrating the ideals of Artisanship and Integrity of the product with the use of quality materials and construction methods.

The aim is for the products to have an inherent feature of sustainability as opposed to being items characterised by a disposable nature. It is refinement and good design that distinguishes these products from those produced for 'generic mass consumption' with 'volume' driving design. In addition, there is a need for greater opportunities for smaller niche Australian businesses and brands that take pride in producing quality product and getting that product right, to develop and achieve and maintain a sustainable market.

Training and education is central to building knowledge, skill and business acumen along with expertise in fashion, style and design. It is essential to train new designers with an integrated training program and to provide them with the tools to succeed, and to enable them to be flexible and adaptable. At present the skill of integrating into training the value to 'Dream of Design' whilst still developing strong training in business acumen has been lost. Mr. Renato Balestra noted in his Australian speech at a workshop that the student must have 'dream of design' – as opposed to simply copying (alias product development).

To ensure that the diminishing artisan skills included below are not lost but are developed and enhanced, skills that need to be enhanced include:

- Draping/Moulage (not included as a Unit of Competency in the current training package)
- Fabric Enhancement (also not included as a Unit of Competency in the current training package)
- Working with Wool Fabrics – using methods to complement the properties of wools as well as the new technologies used for wool fibres and; the blending/combination of Australian Wool with cotton, silk and linen

The new stream of the Training Package Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma of 'Applied Fashion Design and Technology' has now been endorsed and training will begin in the specific units at the start of 2008. Units of competency that will now be able to be incorporated into the training required are as listed:

For Draping/Moulage:

- LMTFD4021A Drape Fabrics to Make Patterns (Certificate IV)
- LMTFD5012A Perform Contour Draping (Diploma)
- LMTFD6005A Drape Structured Over Garment (Advanced Diploma)

For Fabric Enhancement:

- LMTFD5005A Manipulate Fabrics to Create New Finishes

The Skills/Knowledge Gaps

This Fellowship provides an exciting opportunity to address these neglected areas of the fashion and clothing industry, to enhance the heavily weighted 'mass production' training packages into true product development; for example, where students can develop designs influenced by the characteristics of fabric to drape garments.

The areas of knowledge that were once passed down between a master and apprentice; skills that were always so preciously guarded, are at risk of becoming lost, where the knowledge is the experience of creating design for the contoured body, and not the theory of 'one size fits all'. Additionally, production garments that are developed with an appeal of excellent design, superior fabric and high-quality construction will remain superior, well after the fashion has passed on.

The driving force behind the overseas Fellowship was to identify skills and knowledge gaps between Italy and Australia, with the view to incorporate new knowledge into the context of education of the clothing industry. Italy is arguably the most stylish and fashionable country in the world; so the idea of travelling to the heart of 'Alta Moda' was an overwhelming and motivating mission. The main focus was to gain an overview of the differences between Italy and Australia with regard to education and the clothing industry and then determine how this knowledge can be applied to the Australian industry.

Program Content

The time spent travelling in Italy was approximately three weeks. During this time Penton & Giacomini had booked back to back appointments visiting businesses, from the fabrication of materials, development of designers concepts, to the manufacture and production of garments, to embellishers of fabrics, and finally to the consumers in the boutiques. All these aspects had to be investigated to gain a comprehensive understanding of how a design comes to be realised. Several educational institutions were also visited that had strong links and contributed to Italy's established industry.

The Retail Experience

Italy is very aware of China and its ability to produce cheaper products. Italy therefore takes pride in "made in Italy" and using better quality fabrics to stand alone. They place a heavy focus on the better quality product. Retailers try to compete against China by emphasising the essence of design and the presentation of the product. There is a strong emphasis on the merchandising of the products; for example the stock in the Zara stores is rotated every night to create a 'new look' in the windows. The windows are dressed exquisitely to create a lifestyle with every detail co-ordinated. With regard to the 'client', an 'elegant' retail and transactional experience occurs with great attention being paid to the smallest details. Once a purchase has been made, items are carefully wrapped in tissue paper, boxed, placed into a carry bag and sealed with a labelled sticker, all packaging printed with the store logo.



The above picture shows a case in point; of a lady wearing a Pucci dress design as she dresses the mannequin and the shop front window with the fashion designers' products. The Italian retailers understand the impact of living and believing in the fashion as a lifestyle.

The following site visits and meetings proved to be the most significant in providing information and inspiration.

Site Visit 1 - Renato Balestra

Contact: Sabrina Baldi

Via Ludovisi, 35 00187, Roma - Italia

Tel: 06-482-17-23 **Fax:** 06-481-53-67 **Email:** balestra.stampa@renatobalestra.it



Above, the Italian fashion designer, Mr. Renato Balestra (left to right) Tina Guglielmino, Mandy Penton and Rosanna Giacomini at his design studio.

The first commitment was a week at Renato Balestra design studio in Rome, this was a very specific outcome of the Fellowship. Here the processes from the design, through to the making of exquisite evening dresses and unique gowns were observed.



Mr. Balestra has his rough sketches interpreted into hand painted designs by his artist Anna for the new collection.

The Artisans that worked in the studio have a long history with Mr. Balestra; many of the employees have been with Mr. Balestra for many years and some as long as 35 years.

They used bespoke methods of garment construction, fitting and alterations including regeneration of styles, and virtuoso techniques of draping and pattern development. These methods have been used for many years. For example, they only use one type of sewing machine (a plain & zigzag machine) every other stitch is by hand!



Left - the black ruffled sleeves are hand tacked and prepared for a fitting; there are two coloured threads, yellow and white, each representing the different stages of the construction, they will not be removed until the garment is completed.

Right - a snapshot of the internal construction of an evening gown: this particular garment has two zippers, one in the underlining section and one on the outside layer on the garment. The outer garment is constructed over the under fully-shaped garment.

These garments are created in the studio and are shown on the catwalk to the clients. Once the clients have selected the styles they are fitted to suit their body shape. Regularly the skilled artisans are flown around the world to have the garments fitted and measured; a mannequin is formed in order to accurately simulate the client's body shape. The time and effort placed into every garment is extravagant and as to be expected, these garments are unaffordable to the average individual. Most of these garments are made of shimmering silk satins, supple wools or delicate laces; embellished with ornate designs of dripping beads and glamorous jewels. Each article of clothing is indeed a work of art.



This blue gown is incrustated with beads and embroidery threads to create a unique fabric design on the garment.



This ivory gown has 40 shaped panels in alternating satin and plain silk fabric which contour the body; 20 at the front and another 20 at the back with a scalloped edge and heavily beaded lace and tulle.



The ladies in the workroom explain the processes used to create the designs. Here one half of the back dress is completed and the other side has dark tacking lines which will be guide lines between the lace and chiffon, these fabrics are mounted to a sheer layer of a constructed bodice in silk organza fabric. Note the paper under the fabric which helps prevent the pins going through the fabric.



The draped dress is pinned and sewn into place to create fullness at the back skirt of the gown; the garment is draped onto the under dress.



The original garment was viewed by the client and it is now being made to measure for them.



Here we see some stages of the ruffled blouse in progress. Pleats are stitched between the rows of hand made ruffles. The armhole of the blouse has a bias cut interfacing of the same fabric.

Twice a year the fashion house is in full production preparing for the seasonal Alta Moda Fashion show. Three months prior to the parade the eight full-time seamstresses plus another six to eight people are employed to produce up to 100 garments, ranging from high fashion pants, shirts, jackets through to lavish fully beaded and/or embroidered gowns. The finale of the fashion show is always a wedding gown.



The finale gown from Renato Balestra's fashion parade is photographed on the catwalk. It is also shown in the showroom for special clients where it can be ordered and 'made to measure'.

One day of the visit was spent at Renato Balestra's workroom, visiting the sales and showroom in Via Sistina at the top of the Spanish steps. Here was a rare opportunity to view all of the current season's styles that are usually only available to view by appointment. There is an in-house model to show all garments to their full potential. All the accessories for the garments, including shoes, hats, gloves and bags are also on show to allow the client to view the complete look. Clients come in for personal viewings of the range after first watching the gala fashion parade launching the range. Clients choose styles to order that are then produced to their own individual fitting.

On-site there is also a qualified seamstress to carry out the fittings. She also undertakes significant alterations as required for garments that no longer fit the customer or who want to have a particular style remodelled.



Boutique personal adjustments can also be made for clients.

Downstairs at the showroom is a retail outlet (below) selling a range of Renato Balestra Pret-a-porter garments produced under license by different companies throughout Italy. Ranges include ladies day and evening wear, sports/swimwear, formal and casual menswear, as well as a range of accessories and colognes to complement the garment styles.



Sabrina Baldi, Mr Balestra's personal assistant also organised for us to travel and see some of the companies that carry out work on behalf of Renato Balestra, either directly or under a license agreement.

Site Visit 2 - Mendel Ricami

Contact: Anna Menniti

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A visit to the Embroiderer, Mendel Ricami, in a small town outside of Rome called Aprilia, is where the fabrics are designed and developed to have magnificent unique embellishments. Anna Menniti is the principal fabric designer and at one stage had a staff of 40 people, now she runs the business with only 4 full time staff. Menniti noted that well established designers will use Italian products and avoid cheaper imports wherever possible. In many cases the computer software has replaced the hand embroidery processes, however the cost of cheaper overseas labour has also caused the decline in handmade fabrics from her company. Mendel Ricami is extremely advanced in computer technology. They have the latest embroidery software and machinery that can create any design possible. On the other hand, they also retain skilled staff that can produce the most intricate embroidery required by the Alta Moda Italian designers, such as Renato Balestra, Rocco Barocco, Roberto Cavalli, etc.

A particular skill developed by the embroiderers is the ability to design fabrics that have layers of detail, for example a fabric can have satin embroidery, then appliquéd, then cut out, followed by beading. These fabrics can be created by the metre or worked on pre-shaped pattern pieces. CAD (Computer Aided Design) embroidery must be done in sequential order so that it can work and is only as good as the planning and steps to making the design a reality. Anna Menniti's view on CAD in embroidery is that the system is only useful if you understand embroidery and identifies it as a tool to assist in the production of the designs she creates.





Here is the design on the computer and the specification sheets with the sample fabrics and colour swatches for a pair of trousers for the designer Laura Biagiotti.

Alternatively, the embroiderer can be given a brief from the designers and Anna Menniti will create specific samples and place ideas together to meet the designer's needs. Menniti can produce fabric by the metre or embellish single garment pieces; the following images demonstrate the process of hand beading a front panel piece that would later be stitched into the garment.



These photos show the process of both hand cut and computer embroidery to achieve a detailed design on the garment.



Anna Menniti, Director of Mendal Ricami, Rosanna Giacomini, Tina Guglielmino and Mandy Penton.

Site Visit 3 - Textura S.p.A

Contact: Valeria Dini

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A view of the Textura menswear suit factory and a small medieval town called Castiglion Fibocchi.

Balestra has also sold licenses to particular manufacturers to produce a ready to wear collection in order to keep up with the demands of his clientele. Outside Arezzo (Tuscany) is a small medieval town called Castiglion Fibocchi. Juxtaposed is Textura, a menswear suit manufacturer. Many of the towns' residents work in this huge factory. The company receives only design specifications approved by Balestra. Textura produces a range of accessories that can be sold as a collection; from ties, belts, cuff links, cravats, etc. From these designs, fabrics are selected and patterns are developed to meet their own particular sizing and production. They use the best Australian wool available in Italy, cashmere from Piacenza, silks from Como and they source the internal linings and accessories from all parts of Europe. All designs must receive Balestra's seal of approval before they begin to produce the garments.





Construction of a men's suit. The available accessories and trimmings that are sold with the suit and the completed suit and accessories. The suit and tie fabric are matching.

Specifications sheets were generated using the Excel programs. The design specifications were generated in the Corel program and the graphic and advertising was done in Photoshop and Illustrator. The patterns are made on-site as is the grading and cutting; these are prepared using the aid of the Lectra software and equipment. Once the garment pieces are cut out they are then labelled carefully and boxed up. They are then sent to other countries such as Turkey and Romania to be stitched up; at the time of the site visit Turkey was making the jackets and Romanian manufacturers were making the trousers. Upon their return to Textura, the garments are carefully scrutinised and the suits are linked back together using their excellent label coding system. After undergoing the strict quality control, they are ready to be dispatched. This factory ran like clockwork, every area was efficient and was incredibly organised. They cut approximately 700 suits per day on three large cutting machines. Should there be a fault in the fabric lay; the piece is cut by hand.



The cutting tables and machines at Textura.



The large volume of completed suits in dispatch.

Site Visit 4 - Luisa Fazio

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Luisa Fazio, Rosanna Giacomini and Mandy Penton

In Florence, Penton and Giacomini met with Luisa, a young Australian woman who had completed a design degree at RMIT in Melbourne and had then won a scholarship to attend a one-year Masters in Design at Domus in Milan, Italy.

Her observations of the training differences between Australia and Italian institutions were interesting. Luisa felt that they were similar in many aspects but she believes that Italy has an edge especially in the six-eight week industry seminars that were particularly exceptional. This is where several industry personnel would come in and teach an area of expertise, followed by the introduction of guest speakers within that specific field, and visits to factories, overseen and organised by the lecturers. For example she recalls initially learning about handbags and accessories and this contributed to her current career path. Another very constructive aspect of her study in Italy was the internship organised by the institute where the student went to work in industry as part of the course. After completing her study, Luisa worked in three companies in Milan: a design house, an architectural company and then an accessories company. She had made many contacts and is currently working freelance with Gucci as a Trend Analyst, researching and developing the Australian crocodile skin for handbags and accessories. She is living in Florence and was about to launch her own handbag range. Luisa had some concerns about tariffs in Italy, the impact China is having on the world and education. Luisa observes that some courses in both Italy & Milan try to curb the creativity to ensure commercialisation:

"I could have stayed comfortably where I was in the corporate world, but who cares about being comfortable? I wanted to create new challenges for myself and un-create what I had created until then. The market is flooded with counterfeit goods, fast production, cheap labour at the highest profit margin with the aim of selling a brand name and not an individual style. What drove me to launch this collection was the need to create something unique and fun to fashion that often takes itself too seriously".

Site Visit 5 - Polimoda

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In the Polimoda fashion institute grounds.

Fashion is continuously drawing upon emerging talent and renewing its creative energies. The Polimoda International Institute of Design and Marketing offers anyone interested in entering the world of fashion the possibility to do so by offering high-quality professional training in tune with the needs of industry.

Polimoda is a highly specialised fashion and design school located in Florence, Italy. They maintain close ties and continuously collaborate with the fashion industry to continue to provide current students with high-quality professional training in tune with the needs of the current international fashion scene and industry.

This Italian fashion school offers undergraduate and graduate design master courses in the production, sales, marketing and merchandising sectors of the fashion industry, both in English and Italian. Polimoda is particularly well-known for its specialised courses in fashion marketing and its fashion merchandising program. The fashion design school also prepares students who wish to specialise in the footwear and accessories markets or in fashion textiles.

The Course/subjects offered include:

- Fashion Design
- Women's Patternmaking (2 years)
- Design Footwear and Accessories
- Fashion Design Techniques
- Foundation in Fashion Design (English)

Masters level courses on Advanced Fashion Design and marketing programs:

- Fashion Design - Advanced

- Fashion Design - Specialised
- Fashion Marketing and Merchandising
- Master in Marketing for Fashion Buying
- Fashion Marketing Communication and Organisation of Events
- Masters in Fashion Merchandising and Management (only in English)
- Marketing Management for Fashion - Beauty and Cosmetics
- Masters in Luxury Management
- Masters in Creative Management
- Masters in Fashion Product Management

The programs are offered during the regular semester school year and all include an internship period with a local firm. They also offer Fashion Summer Courses to integrate the students' studies.

These include:

- Fashion Design - in English and Italian
- Fashion Trends - in English and Italian
- Fashion Product Management - only in English
- Draping Course - only in Italian
- Fashion Design Techniques - only in Italian

Polimoda is a private institute and deliberately focuses on developing strong connections to the Fashion Industry. They select students from all over the world and are a very prestigious organisation. They place an importance on working with the industry and organising internships that create credibility with the industry. Polimoda's mission statement is *'design and provision of a high level of training and courses under the 'Polimoda' brand name; in fashion design and patternmaking aiming management at finding support services for fashion companies. Design and provision of cultural events in fashion areas in cooperation with public authorities and industrial companies.'*

Polimoda differentiates itself from other similar educational organisations through the careful development of a commercial arm. They have established a company that offers services to the fashion industry in a wide range of areas from design consultancy, to production planning and scheduling through to patternmaking and garment sample development. This company is predominantly staffed by graduating students of Polimoda, which allows them to obtain current and very relevant industry experience, while giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their skills to potential employees. Many of the people on the Board of this company are high profile members of fashion companies in Italy who not only ensure relevant industry input but also have a vested interest in using the services as they are given preferential treatment as 'members' of the organisation. There is also a Human Resources and recruitment department attached to this company to assist graduates securing employment positions on an on-going basis and not just when they graduate.

Penton and Giacomini were fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the local training program of Polimoda which is separate to the high profile Centre where the international programs are run.

It was a fascinating tour comparing their program to the programs that are on offer in Australia. There were a lot of similarities in how the training was undertaken. One of the main differences was the amount of funding made available to staff to develop resources. The leading patternmaking teacher had produced and had published two volumes of a patternmaking text. This was being made available commercially through a publisher with the aim of recovering costs. However, the initial outlay to produce the book was funded by Polimoda itself. Another significant difference noticed was the amount of materials and information donated from local fashion companies.



Left - the technician at Polimoda is cutting calico for the students to use for their work. Right - fashion studies teacher at Polimoda who has written several text books for patternmaking.



Fabric bolts for students to use.



A typical day in a patternmaking classroom at Polimoda



A sewing workroom for students at Polimoda.



The paper and equipment store room.

Site Visit 6 - Museo De Merletto (Lace Museum)

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The original Lace Making School in Burano, Italy, was founded in 1872.

Here there are over 200 rare pieces of lace made by needlepoint. The Fellows were told of the methods of the construction of lace, which is the basis of lace making today. This building was the original school of lace and was founded in 1872. The school no longer operates however there was the opportunity to view a demonstration. The highlight of the visit to Burano was meeting two ladies that had attended the school when they were young; one lady was now 90 years old and did not wear glasses to see her tiny lace stitches. Burano is short ferry trip from Venice, the ladies say the reason it was established in Burano was to keep the lace making skills secluded to the people and their daughters on the island. Beautiful wedding veils and under garments were on display. These laces are painstakingly slow to produce.

Needle laces were expensive and treasured and in society, lace was an emblem of prestige. Venetian laces were greatly in demand and most countries in Europe were importing them. This caused some countries to experience economic problems, in particular France. Because France heavily relied on importation of luxury goods, lace was an important product. The

government decided to support its own lace making industry and invited Venetian and Flemish lace makers to help and advise. The production of 'Point France' was soon under way and an established lacemaking centre emerged. The lace was an instant success and by 1700, Point de France was the most sought after lace in Europe.

Source: Collier, A. *The Art of Lacemaking*, 2nd edn, Bracken Books, London, 1986.



A photograph of past students making lace in class



On display, an intricate lace design on a gown

Visiting Burano reinforced the notion of how important it is to maintain the many skills of these artisans. Many of the enterprises visited raised their concerns about the skills being lost, because of the age of most of the people carrying out these tasks and the need for ongoing training of younger people. They can see a strong link with incorporating the tourist potential of this unique island and the importance of developing training programs to ensure the skills are maintained. This was reinforced when the Fellows met a lady from Ireland whose village also specialised in a similar type of handicraft and they were trying to maintain their skills and tourist potential.



A 90 year lady is showing the skills she was taught when she attended the Burano Lace Making School; her minute stitching is threaded on the foundations of single threads that are caught into the papers with the design. These areas are then filled in with tiny stitches in rows. The stitching is only millimetres wide. The stitches vary in size and type to accommodate the design being created. Once the lace is complete it is cut away from the supporting threads through the several layers of papers.



In this photo the lace is made as an edging and once cut away from the papers, a layer of white linen will be appliquéd inside the lace edge.



Liz Quain - 11 Belgard Downs, Rochestown Rd, Cork, Ireland. (lizquain@hotmail.com)

Liz Quain (far right) was also in Burano, she is a member of a lace making group in Ireland. The Fellows and Liz exchanged details and hope to have an Australian member come to do demonstrations and workshops.

This meeting led to discussions about the availability of further developing these unique skills in Australia, and the Fellows were able to obtain contact details of a woman now based in central New South Wales which will be pursued. It was made evident by the amount of business taking place in and around the island that Niche markets of this sort are highly viable and sustainable, providing that succession training and the necessary infrastructure is put into place.

Site Visit 7 - VEGA Park: Textiles & Science Technology

Contact: Enzo Moi & Francesca Maccatrozzo, External Relations Manager

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On the grounds of Vega Park, the research and innovation main buildings (right), and the nano-technology department (left).

This company's main aim is to foster research and innovation. The company's shareholders are: the Veneto Region, Veneto's main entrepreneurial and craft associations, Chambers of Commerce, the Veneto region's four universities and specific to studies and research and the CNR (National Research Council).

Veneto Innovazione encourages collaboration and development as well as playing an important role in supporting regional policy development and management. Collaboration that occurs amongst all participants from universities to businesses, to associations and to Institutions is the ultimate outcome sought by Veneto Innovazione. Veneto Innovazione makes available to small and medium size enterprises, the opportunities offered by the European Research and Information Panorama, from technology transfers to cutting edge projects, creation of companies and joint ventures involving businesses and research centres. In addition, expertise is offered to organisations creating successful projects and seeking to profile them globally.

Funding is made available for companies with 220 employees or less who can clearly demonstrate they have a worthy project that requires innovative research and development for it to reach its full potential. Veneto Innovazione is also trying to assist these companies and organisations cope with, and make adjustments, as required to meet the changes brought about globally for the human rights of workers. This will be especially so for Europe and the European Union.

Francesca Maccatrozzo, External Relations Manager, summarised Veneto Innovazione aim and what they do at Vega Park as:

Connect • Help • New Ideas • Produce Better Ideas • Promote

On Francesca Maccatrozzo's recommendation and assistance a visit was organised to see a company called Marly in a regional area outside Venice. Marly have worked closely with Vega Park developing innovative supply chain management strategies to assist their business.



Francesca Maccatrozzo and Rosanna Giacomini at a tour of Vega Park.

Site Visit 8 - Gruppo Marly's S.p.A

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The showrooms at Marly's (left). The design range with specifications and fabric swatches in the product development room (right).

Marly's specialise in small runs of a given style making them more selective and unique than many high volume manufacturers. They usually produce up to 150 garments per style across a range of sizes. They produce up to one thousand different styles per year, approximately 150,000 units per season. The styles produced are predominantly woven, approximately 80% with only 20% of range being knitwear.

The majority of the fabrics used at Marly's are produced in Italy with a small amount of specialty fabrics imported from India. Marly's staff undertake training to update their skills in areas of production management, scheduling and patternmaking. They also have training for the LECTRA Cad-Cam system they operate. The company organises this training with the Instituto Carlo Secoli. On the company's recommendation the Fellows visited the Institute when they arrived in Milan.

Marly's Group has been active for forty years in the Prêt-à-porter sector. Its consolidated experience and perfect company organisation offer a complete proposal satisfying the requests of the woman of today. It can be a 'best practice' example for manufacturing. Precious fabrics, modern cuts, high quality finishing and care for details are the characteristics of the collections, which put together tailoring skills with a contemporary spirit always with an eye on fashion. Marly's interpret the desires of each woman from the elegant cocktail or special occasion dresses to the casual look for leisure, and the informal look for everyday life. In addition it offers an extraordinary size range, from 40 to 58+.



Rolls of fabric are checked for possible faults.



Computer aided patterns are made, graded into the large range of sizes and markers are made to secure the best estimates for fabric usage.

In order to satisfy customers' needs with an ever-greater selection aimed at the different user targets, Marly's Group is renewing the collection portfolio relying on the credibility and appeal of the Marly's brand.

Two new collections have been recently developed, Joy and Spazio as well as the original labels of Marly's and Marly's 1981:

- Marly's: This label is for up-market special occasion wear. Sizes from 40 to 52.
- Marly's 1981: This range is the metropolitan sporty taste for a contemporary and casual look. Sizes 40 to 54.
- Spazio: Fashion with strong personality, this collection is a mix and match of knit and jersey with skirts and pants. Comfortable and easy styles for mature woman. Sizes 40 to 50.
- Joy: For everyday and for special occasions this collection cares for the fuller figures. Sizes from 42 to 58+.

Marly's sell their range to a range of retailers throughout Europe, Asia, USA and Japan. They also have their own retail outlets. The shop visited below was located near their Head Office.



Site Visit 9 - Politecnico di Milano



Contact: Mr. Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis

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Secretary: anna.ancora@ceda.polimi.it

Mr. Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis is the Professor of Industrial Design in Fashion and Furniture at the College of Design of the Politecnico. A broad discussion took place regarding current educational practices. Of key interest were the following observations:

Employability of students – aim for them all to develop an understanding of:

- The science of materials, including new technologies that contribute to better performance of garments.
- The need to be productive and obtain the tools required to be flexible and adaptable in the workforce. To focus not only on fashion garments but all products, including sportswear, uniforms, shoes, and accessories.
- The importance of developing business competencies including management and the importance of ethics.

Innovations the College of Design of the Politecnico have introduced include:

- Teaming fashion students with economics students to develop a fashion range as the final project, meeting the design criteria as well as a cost analysis. Opportunity for all students to develop a deeper understanding of working in the different areas as well as developing problem solving, teamwork and communication skills.
- A compulsory six months work experience for students as part of their 5th year.

Site Visit 10 - Istituto Carlo Secoli

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Originally the Institute was established in 1934 in Treviso as a school that taught basic tailoring. It moved to Milan in 1945 and has successfully established itself as a major reference point and teaching organisation for the garment industry. The business grew on recommendations from companies that visited the Institute. It has a strong reputation for delivering up-to-date training. They do this by anticipating the future needs and requests of the fashion industry by continually working with companies when they are in the process of planning the further development and training needs of their organisations. The Institute has established a strong network of companies and individuals from the Milan and surrounding areas of the fashion industry and work very hard at maintaining these strong professional links.

The programs that are targeted towards those already working in the fashion industry, are structured to ensure that relevant training is provided to assist participants to specialise in

the specific product (of which there are many), relevant to their company's requirements. They also train staff in production processes, scheduling and management. The Institute's strengths and originality can be attributed to its credibility in the fashion industry, enabling its instructors to be constantly updated in new technology, real needs and awareness of problems in the industry.

The Institute is best known in the industry for its consultancy and 'training in company' programs. However, it also offers introductory through to degree courses in fashion. While design is important part of the training offered, there is a definite emphasis on the technical skills required in the fashion industry, which is significantly different to any other educational organisation visited while in Italy. Istituto Carlo Secoli is recognised for the technical aspects of the industry, they pride themselves on the ability to have knowledge of the skills needed to realise the designers' creations. They specialise in patternmaking and garment construction and product development. As the sign says '*The Centre of Information for Professionals of the Fashion and Clothing.*'



Mandy Penton with the director, Matteo Secoli



Sewing and patternmaking rooms at Carlo Secoli Institute



Site Visit 11 - Marangoni

Contact: International Relations - Mr. Riccardo Agostini

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Marangoni have a range of courses available, from basics for beginners through to Masters Programs for experienced fashion people. These specialised Master Programs are dedicated to students who already have strong fundamental skills or experience in the design or fashion field specific to the type of program they wish to study.

Marangoni cater for 15,000 students per year with students coming from over seventy countries. Marangoni's philosophy is *'We not only teach about fashion and design but also offer the opportunity to learn about different cultures. This is crucial because today's classmates are often tomorrow's colleagues.'*

Marangoni offer the following services and opportunities to their students:

- Internships
- Placement services after graduation (a quote was made that they have 95% employment placement for graduates). Scholarships offered for Masters programs.

Marangoni fashion shows are attended by talent agencies, design companies, the media and other professionals in the fashion field. The show is sponsored by numerous textile companies. Students often enjoy free access to trade fairs, exhibitions and fashion shows.

The entry level courses offered by Marangoni are:

- Fashion Business
- Fashion Stylist
- Interior Design
- Product Design

- Graphic Design
- Fashion Design
- Patternmaking and Production

Masters programs in a range of specialty areas:

- Fashion Promotion
- Fashion Styling
- Fashion Accessories
- Fashion Design

Short courses:

Marangoni encourage students from all the around the world to attend their courses, in fact they offer all tuition experiences paid to Milan for a three-week summer school to Australian students who win prizes in fashion competitions, such as the Hamilton Wool awards in East Victoria.

Site Visit 12 - ETRO S.p.A

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The house of Etro in Milan. Dario Villa and Rosanna Giacomini at the main showrooms of Etro.

Penton and Giacomini arrived at Etro the Monday morning after Milan Fashion Week. Etro had held their summer 2007 parade the previous Friday evening.

The aim of the fashion parade is to create a company image, this is extremely important for the designer labels as it creates a type of lifestyle. They include selling books that are made of the best glossy paper and backed in a silver cover. A video of the collection shown at the Milan fashion week parade is playing at the showroom to assist the buyers in selecting the range. There is finesse in the merchandising of their collection.



The garments are produced in Como and the quality of each piece is of the highest construction. For example, the jackets have bound buttonholes and they use keyhole buttonholes on dresses. French seams are used wherever possible and should the overlocking stitch be needed; they have used the finest thread, (a monofilament) and the narrowest bite on the machine. The presentation and finishing for their garments is exquisite. A unique concept that was particularly outstanding in the collection was a beautifully constructed jacket that had been used as a canvas; the colours of the fabric had been painted onto the jacket after the garment was constructed.



The showrooms at Etro the day after the Milan fashion week

Etro do not have an Alta Moda range but specialise in Prêt-a-porter and produce up-market products. They aim for the 'total look' with ladies, men's, children's, accessories, homewares, and perfumes. They only use high quality fabrics and produce them to a high standard all within Italy. They have their own retail outlets to ensure their products are merchandised correctly and their brand integrity is maintained.

Site Visit 13 - Silk Museum

Contact: Dr.essa Ester Geraci, Tel: + 39 39 031 031 30

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The Silk Museum opened in 1990 when there was still the opportunity to preserve a true account of the history of silk in Como. It is a tangible sign of the continuity, from the past to the present, of an industry that operates a worldwide monopoly.

It shares premises with a wide range of training organisations and associations, many who offer specific training programs in textiles, and in particular silk processes and development. Training organisations include Polo Tecnologico Tessile and Politecnico Di Milano.

The Museum covers an area of 900 square meters and is in the same building as the textile school, the Setificio. Reference is made to the art of silkworm breeding; the influence the mulberry leaves make on the colour and the quality of the silk thread. On display are the stages preceding the weaving, a machine used from 1870's with 288 bobbins that twist



the threads and the different types of looms used to produce the fabrics; for example, a jacquard pattern, that operated with the use of punch hole cards which created the pattern. The other type of loom read the design though the use of wooden pegs. There was also a selvage maker and an 18th century rope that made the piped edges. The last stages are the dyeing vat rooms and copper kettles of the yarns, with original metal printing blocks and screens, transparent foils and engraving tools. Roller printing is represented by machines for making samples and engraving rollers in chromed copper. The finishing machines can also be seen and particularly interesting is the moiré machine that had rollers that crushed and twisted the moiré effect design onto the silk.

Italy produces 91% of all the silk produced in Europe. The city of Como produces 78.8% of this amount. Its annual production totals 3,200 tons of silk, (broken down into material for clothing, upholstery, decorator fabrics, scarves, ties and shawls). In economic terms; the region is exporting around 1,000 million Euro per year. It's a huge business and there are two huge presences which stand out in any study of the silk industry in the 20th century: Antonio Ratti and the Mantero family. These two bodies remain the most prominent influences in the market, produce their own textiles as well as custom fabrics for the big names in fashion design. Among the famous fashion houses who commission silk materials from Ratti are Versace, Valentino, Dolce & Gabbana, Gianfranco Ferré, Christian Dior, Karl Lagerfeld, Romeo Gigli, Loewe, Bulgari, Gucci and Paloma Picasso. Mantero's clientele includes Kenzo, Yves Saint Laurent, Ungaro, Nina Ricci, Trussardi and Lonchamp.



This building was the original factory for the production silk fabrics; it has been refurbished for the promotion silk fibres and fabrics of Como. It is called a concept store, and has ideas such as recycled silk remnants bonded into strong fabrics and made into large lounge pillows.



A small tailoring studio where 'made in Como' silk fabrics are selected and garments are made to order to fit the client.

The Museo Didattico della Seta (Silk Museum) was opened in 1990 to document an accurate account of the history of the silk industry in Como. It provides physical evidence, from past to present, of an industry that still operates a veritable worldwide monopoly. In the museum's main hall, reference is made to the art of silkworm breeding. Also on display are machines that were used during the various stages that precede weaving. Two-hand looms are on exhibition in the weaving room, one specialised for producing Jacquard prints. In addition there is a reconstruction of a chemical laboratory, the hub of dye-printing activity, with original furnishings. The dying room comprises a dye vat for fabrics, a copper kettle for yarns and a number of tools, including a precious dowel. The visit concludes in the printing room which includes the colour kitchen used to blend and cook the wide assortment dyestuffs.

Site Visit 14 - Fratelli Piacenza S.p.A

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A view of the site of the Piacenza empire.

This company was established in 1733 and is still run by the Piacenza family. It was fascinating to see how a company so rich in history and heritage has maintained such a vibrant business over such a long period and how it has evolved into the organisation it is today. It has been passed down from generation to generation and is now up to the eighth. Their focus is on building a strong loyalty with their clients; so that they will prefer to work and develop fabrics with them. Fratelli Piacenza produce the highest quality of cashmere fabrics. They purchase the best quality fibre from around the world, import the raw materials, then all the other processes are on the premises. In fact, they own their own running mountain water to wash the cashmere - this water is low in minerals that make the fabric extremely soft.



The fabric which is woven for the production of cashmere scarf (above); the scarf samples use to sell the season's colour ways (below).



Fratelli Piacenza produce fabric by both weaving and knitting. Other processes carried out on the premises include carding, brushing, dyeing and washing equipment



The offices of Fratelli Piacenza



The fabric manufacturing factory - meters of cashmere fabric at every stage of the process; from yarn, fabric, to brushing the fabric for the softest finish.

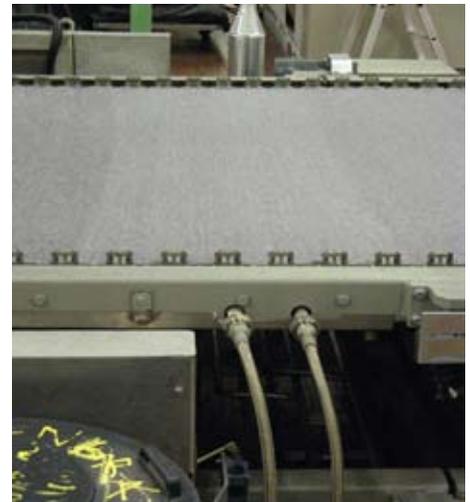
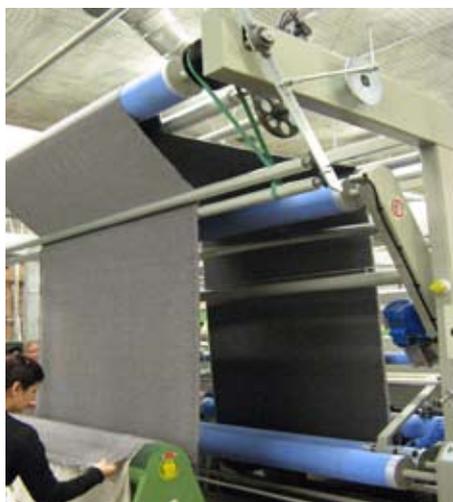




Bundles of plain coloured fabric (left); the dyeing chemical rooms (right)



The latest dyeing and washing machines for the cashmere fabrics



Heat and steam beds that press the fabric into the perfect shape



The quality controlling light table

Fratelli Piacenza have some particular policies that they work to, for example they have a policy of delivering any re-orders of all stock. They believe this is the major advantage over the off-shore fabric manufacturing competition. Another policy is not having on-going items on sale, they have a sale for a short time and then sell remainder of the stock to job-lotter. This is common practice in Italy.

Valentine Piacenza is the daughter of one of the brothers of the business and is currently employed at the company; she is always researching and developing her own views for the business directions. She has lived in Australia for over 12 months whilst studying in Perth. She observed that Australians prefer to spend money on sportswear rather than the Alta Moda. She found that there was more research and development in this area of the market and particularly noticed fibre development at places such as Billabong, Ripcurl and Quicksilver. She felt this was very innovative and revolutionary.

Fratelli Piacenza are always researching and developing new fibre combinations and finishing techniques. Currently they are developing a new fabric called Amuna which is a mix of cashmere and wool and wood paste, (similar to viscose). They have full testing facilities for new developments and they test the fabrics being produced. They are always buying and updating the machinery to improve the speed of production. For example they have spent one million Euros on a large bed pressing machine. However they maintain traditional methods of production, notably the use of the thistle brushing machine. They use Cardo thistle, which is manually inserted into the rollers of the machine to brush the fabric to create a soft texture.



Rows and rows of the Cardo thistle hand placed into the frames for brushing the cashmere fibres to make the fabric the softest.

All the woven fabrics including scarves (5 x 2.5 metres that are separated after weaving) are produced at the premises, including the yarn developments. However they have yarns that are sent to contracted companies for the knitting of the fabrics. Plus they have two factories that produce knit garments for them under their label for men's and women's wear and accessories. They have a Japanese menswear designer that has worked at the company for 20 years. They develop and sell these products to Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Japan and USA using their agents. They also produce fabrics and garments for major design companies in Italy, France and USA. They make special visits to important clients and have clients come to the mills.



Fabric sample room - colour cards are made and sent off all around the world to sell the many metres of fabrics to designers.

Site Visit 15 - Zenga Ermenegildo

Contact: Matteo Lorto

Via Zenga, Teviro, Biella

Tel: + 39 015 75 92 439 **Mob:** 349 123 05 04



The colossal building of Zenga at Teviro, Biella

The textile mill at Teviro in Biella is owned and operated by the Zegna Group. It produces 2.3 million metres of fabric per year. The mill produces 50% of the capacity for Zegna and the rest is produced for other customers. The Mill has found it is becoming more difficult to produce small amounts of unique exclusive designs for important clients but know that this is their point of difference. Milan textile fairs are the only place they sell their fabrics. These fairs are held twice a year with two main seasons. They produce 3,000 variations of fabric styles per year. They mainly use Australian wool, cashmere and mohair imported from South Africa using kids no older than 10 months old. They also use silk and linen. Zegna is now starting to introduce different fibres into their fabrics such as 80% cotton and 20% cashmere. However they will not use any synthetic fibres apart from elastane.

Zegna has decided not to compete on cost against China and India. Instead they decided to concentrate on developing more expensive, individually designed unique and fashionable fabrics, developing high technological fabrics and colours. They have patented a new waterproof finish for wool fabrics without using nano-fibre technology. In addition they have developed a partnership with a Swiss company producing a fabric called Mircosphere. They have also developed a new range of flannel fabric in wool and cashmere using unique colourisation techniques that has resulted in a new innovative fabric.

During the 1960's they employed some 1,200 workers, but with advances in new technology now (2006) they employ some 500 workers but produce four times more fabric.



Enormous weaving area inside the Zegna manufacturing factory.

Zegna have been buying the same quality of fibres for over 25 years, Australian wool is predominantly from the New England area of NSW. They also buy a small selection of wool from New Zealand. Selecting the right fibres is very important; it must be of a specific quality to maintain consistency long/fine fibres - 15, 16 and sometimes up to 19 mirco.



Superior quality wool fabric with the selvedge paying homage to Australia.

Fabric produced undergoes rigorous quality inspection processes. 52% of rolls sent out are fault free - 88% of the rolls have no more than 3 fault points.



Painstaking hand repairs are made to the fabrics to ensure the highest quality is implemented as every metre of fabric is checked.

To produce a fabric that gives a very faint colour variation a 3D effect, they dye the fibres or tops and then blend different batches onto the yarn. In natural state, a brown sheep's wool consists of different shades throughout the fleece. To imitate this natural shading variation, fibres are dyed in large batches. These batches are then all combined and mixed prior to the yarn spinning process. The advantage of going through this process is it not only creates a quality fabric with a natural 3D colour perspective but it also allows for much larger quantities of fabric to be produced in the same colour shade. This reduces the problem of limited size dye batches which occur when dyeing in the more conventional ways of dyeing yarns or at greige fabric stage.



Mandy Penton with Matteo Lorto as he explains the development of mixing natural shades of colour to the fabrics

Zegna are always updating their machinery - currently the weaving machines average out at three years old. All machinery is made in Italy and Italy exports machinery to China. Another unique advantage the mill believes it has over manufacturers in other areas and countries who are trying to produce a similar quality of fabric is the water in Trivero. The water used comes directly from the local springs which are naturally of low salt content which makes the water soft which assists the washing process: the fibres and yarns remaining subtle.



Carding machines and dyeing machines

Zegna has comprehensive 'in-house' fabric research, design and testing facilities which ensure quality remains consistent at all times. Such a structure ensures the integrity of the product and fosters the positioning of the organisation as recognised leaders in new and innovative fabrics, fibre combinations and finishes for their fabrics. Zegna produces their garments in Novara and Padova, the company is called Inco. They also have a manufacturing plant in Spain that opened in the 1980's. In addition, they have a plant in Switzerland where they dispatch the garments. Zegna also produce shoes, optical and fragrance.

History and Development of the Ermenegildo Zegna Group



In the foyer of the Zegna building (left). Marble plaques that pay homage to the founder (right).

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group is the world leader in fine men's clothing. It has a yearly output of 2 million metres of fabric, 500,000 sleeve units, almost 1.5 million sportswear

items, 1.7 million accessories. It employs more than 5,000 staff world-wide and has achieved a turnover of 634 million Euros in 2004, 90% of which is derived from clothing and accessories, 10% from textiles and over 86% of all sales are exported. The Group is still a 'family business' and is managed by the fourth generation of the family: Ermenegildo and Paolo, as CEO, and Anna, Benedetta, Laura and Renata Zegna.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group was founded in 1910 in Trivero, a small town in the Biella Alps by Ermenegildo Zegna. The young entrepreneur strove to create high quality fabrics for men's clothing and his strategy was focused on the selection of the best raw materials from their markets of origin, innovation in product and in the production process and promotion of the brand.

The founder's sons, Angelo Zegna, President of the Group, and Aldo Zegna, who passed away in 2000, took over the management of the company from their father in the 1960's. They lead the company into the ready-to-wear market with a line of men's clothing aimed at the top end of the market, followed gradually by knitwear, accessories and sportswear.

The growth in production led the Group to seek direct outlets in foreign markets, resulting in the opening of commercial branches in France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, Turkey, Mexico, USA, Japan and more recently also in China, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Australia and the creation of production units controlled by the Group in Spain and Switzerland.

In the 1980's the Group's process of vertical integration was completed with the opening of the first single-brand boutiques in Paris (1980) and Milan (1985). In the year 2004 the Group had 408 monobrand points of sale in the world (Ermenegildo Zegna and Zegna Sport), of which 167 are directly operated. Alongside his industrial vocation, Ermenegildo Zegna dreamt of giving a face-lift to the mountainous terrain where his wool mill was and is still situated. Henceforth throughout the 1930's he had over 500,000 conifers and rhododendrons planted on the most barren slopes and began construction work on a panoramic road, which bore his name. Following the example set by their forebear the family's latest generations created the Oasi Zegna in 1993, an area stretching along the Zegna Panoramic Road where the alpine environment is protected and tended and at the same time made more accessible to visitors enabling an environmental culture to flourish through direct experience.

In July 1999, the Zegna Group acquired Lanerie Agnona S.p.A and in July 2002 bought control of Guida, the company which owns the Longhi leather trademark. In September 2002 they set up the company ZEFER, the 50/50 joint venture with Salvatore Ferragamo Group, for world-wide development of the Ermenegildo Zegna brand in the shoe and leather sectors. In China, in March 2003, the group acquired control of 50% of SharMoon, the Wenzhou company previously owned by the Chen family, which produces high quality men's suits and jackets for the Chinese market.

In 2003 Zegna launched the new fragrance ESSENZA DI Zegna, marketed by YSL Beauté, the Gucci Group's perfume and cosmetics division, which obtained the worldwide license for development, manufacturing and distribution. In January 2005 De Rigo and the Zegna Group signed an agreement granting a world-wide license to De Rigo for the development, production and distribution of an Ermenegildo Zegna men's eyewear and sunglasses line.

Historical information source: www.zegna.com/media/press/history

Outcomes

The personal development from participating in this Fellowship was invaluable to both Penton and Giacomini as a means of validating their work. The opportunity to learn first hand from the Masters of Fashion was not only inspirational but gave them the opportunity to extend their technical and teaching skills in areas of design, acquired creativity and technical skills, patternmaking & garment construction, economical rationalism in a fashion environment.

The Fellowship gave them the opportunity to discuss topics with other trainers, members of industry and government departments regarding training for fashion and clothing that may have not necessarily taken place in the past.

Many of the comments and discussions were very positive with most participants believing that there is a strong and viable fashion industry in Australia, but they do agree that many practices need to be continually reviewed and updated especially in relation to skills and process development.

A key issue raised in several discussions was the perceived need for a Federal and State government review of the Fashion industry as it is today. Such a review needs to incorporate an investigation of the economic impact of the fashion industry, the strengths and weaknesses, niche markets and opportunities that currently exist.

Cut, Make and Trim (CMT) businesses that have been decimated due to overseas production are now being recognised as a major contributor to supply chain management and some larger companies are trying to re-establish some form of these businesses in Australia. This is an opportunity to develop organisations with strong process and management skills rather than trying to set up the 'backyard' organisation with little planning or control, as was common in the past, and though some were highly organised and skilled, little recognition was given. A review needs to look at the entire gamut of the fashion industry from high profile events such as the various 'Fashion Weeks', down to small businesses, many of which are recorded in retail statistics, and therefore not recognised for their input into the industry.

Questions already asked in a broader manufacturing theme should be asked of the textile and clothing industry:

- How does training really meet the needs of the learners?
- Does the funding available meet the current needs of the industry, training providers and learners?

The Fashion Industry has changed dramatically therefore we cannot keep harping on about how things were carried out historically, but need to focus on what can be done to improve the current situation and ensure the future wellbeing of the industry.

Most organisations visited in Italy were applying a business vision of not trying to compete with Volume Manufacturing and cheap labour rates of other areas in the world but striving to build their business on high quality, individual design, technology and innovative based solutions. At the core was a commitment to maintaining integrity, efficiency and loyalty to their established and emerging client base.

Key Issues

The manufacturing workforce in Australia is ageing and with this comes a set of problems relating to skills gaps, skills deficiency, and the need for training to ensure these skills do not disappear altogether. Many research papers and government reports acknowledge this skills crisis and are trying to address these issues as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The Textile Clothing Footwear is a general manufacturing sector of the community and while often not looked at as a high priority area it is still acknowledged as a significant employment and economic force within Australia and particularly within Victoria. Following are three extracts from different sources that affirm the Fellows' findings and identify some of the issues the industry is facing and opportunities to address these issues.

Council of Australian Government Meeting 10th February 2006 – Communique

'The Council of Australian Government (COAG) held its seventeenth meeting in Canberra. The Council, comprising the Prime Minister, Premiers, Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association, had detailed discussions on a number of issues of national importance. Of particular interest and relevance to this report is the following points pertaining to education and training:-

COAG noted that with an ageing population, there will be relatively fewer Australians of working age. To avoid putting to great burden on those already in work, more Australians need to realise their potential by entering or rejoining the workforce. At the same time, in the face of intense global competition and changes in technology any reduction in workforce participation needs to be offset by improvements in the ability of the workforce and in productivity.'

Education and Training

Skills development helps realise the potential of citizens, and of the nation. Continuous and lifelong learning gives more people the tools to participate in work and underpins more successful and rewarding careers when we do.

Adult Learning

With a declining proportion of the population being of working age, and with the premium for skilled workers increasing, Australia needs to increase the proportion of adults who have the skills and qualifications needed to enjoy active and productive working lives.

Next Stages of Reform

COAG has agreed that further work on reform is needed to continue to increase the contribution of the vocational education and training system to the productivity of Australia's workforce and has asked for a further report examining:

- the growing needs for higher level skills;
- cultural and workplace change to lift educational participation and attainment;
- possible reforms to funding and other mechanisms to make the training system more responsive to demand;
- options to increase Australia's investment in vocational education and training;
- enhancing user choice through meaningful and timely performance information;
- more appropriate regulation of education and training providers; and
- building stronger relationships between firms and training providers.

Another discussion and research paper that is relevant to the Fellows' findings is a paper by Fiona Martin – RMIT University. Though this report is not specific to textile, clothing and footwear but rather focuses on precision machining, the following points in relation to skills development, education and training are very relevant in the broader context of general manufacturing.

'Leading edge Technology in Advanced manufacturing: Supporting the needs of Industry'

"The purpose of the paper is to outline the convergence of new ways of working as they came together in a continuing training, consultancy and research project provided by RMIT in partnership with a medium sized precision machining company, the Office of Tertiary Training and Education (OTTE) and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD). Funding is from government programs managed by these departments and designed to target critical industry needs.

These partnerships are built on the basis of relationships Buchannan et al (2002) in reporting to the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) identified the three most important pre-conditions to renewing capacity for skills formation in Victorian manufacturing as:

The recruitment of Champions to develop new institutional forms;

Brokering dialogues between Businesses and educators and;

Developing a 'relationship' as opposed to a 'Programs' mindset. It appears that a key operational principle of this group is to build networks and relationships between employers before putting the 'hard word' on them to adopt a new approach or participate in a new training initiative.....It is also a quite different approach to the now fashionable 'purchaser-provider' model of program delivery. Relationships cannot be bought and sold. They need to be cultivated before changes in behaviour can be achieved." (pp.49-50)

And further on in findings:

"Technical experts/industry consultants/suppliers

A core concept underpinning the Applied Technology Framework is that there is a diversity of resources available to learners learning in the context of the workplace. These include fellow workers; suppliers; industry consultants; research centres; workers in other similar companies; the internet; manuals, both printed and electronic.

Teaching and Learning Professionals

The teaching skills of TAFE staff have been limited by their often having spent too much time teaching in classrooms rather than out in the workplace which, as the ATF shows, demands different approaches, greater flexibility and a wider range of teaching skills, over the past decade. Within this project a number of TAFE staff were quite distressed by the changing circumstances of the industry setting they were working in and the flexibility of approach and teamwork that this demanded of them.

Curriculum and Educational Design Capacity

The shift to training Packages has been a shift away from curriculum based accreditation system to a competency-based system of accreditation. Past practices of teaching departments handing a new teacher a copy of a curriculum document to teach directly from, with no demand upon the teacher to develop teaching and learning practice, have been replaced by a system that expects a teacher to develop curriculum. The advantages

of the new system are to provide the opportunity for re-engaging teachers in developing flexible, tailored approaches to suit different clients and conditions. The consequence of the old system is that the expertise and practice required have declined dramatically in TAFE.

Implications for OTTE and Institutes

Professional development is a key issue that needs to be addressed in order to meet the needs of industry. New and young talent needs to be developed to work in both industry and teaching. Strategies are required to ensure existing knowledge in near retirement experts is passed on to a new generation of teachers. Current TAFE teachers need mentoring and support as they are asked to change their teaching practice. Educational and curriculum designer skills are needed in greater numbers to support the demands of industry training needs that are emerging as a result of the impact of new and rapidly changing technologies. New institutional models, processes and structures to facilitate the acquisition and development of required expertise are needed at both state and institute level.

Specialist Centres and Victorian TAFE Institutes

The severe shortage of expertise available to the TAFE system suggests the need for share arrangements of both staff and equipment through collaboration between institutes.

Particular issues observed were the difference in understanding and expectations of enterprise and educators. Each group has a different set of drivers that orders priorities. For business the financial bottom line is the *raison d'être*. If you do not make a profit you simply won't be there to improve your business and staff next week, next month, next year. Educators focus on the ideas of quality and relevance of learning experience, tending to design these experiences oblivious of the imperatives of enterprise. Both DIIRD, 2002 and Buchannan et al, 2002 have identified this tension as critical issue for Victorian manufacturing.

Within these two broad groups there are sub groups with varying perceptions of priorities that also had to be managed. Educators fell into sub-groupings with varying attitudes and approaches and within enterprise there were also differences between the business consultants, owners, upper management, middle management, financial and administrative staff, machinists, computer-aided design/manufacturing specialists. Management of the varying needs and understandings of the types of participants required knowledge and understanding of each groups at project management level. The time demanded here was considerable and pointed toward a number of key issues to be addressed:

- Increased professional development facilities for all members of 'skill set teams'
- A new model for project management and direction

In conclusion the first trial of the Applied Technology Framework and an innovative approach to enterprise consulting confirmed and enhanced understandings that industry workforces need training support to help them adapt to technological and organisational changes which impact on their work. This is especially true in those industries whose survival depends on their ability to use technology innovatively in order to work smarter. Those in industries experiencing very rapid change need to be able to utilise and adapt technological advances as soon as they are developed so as to stay on the leading edge of work practice to ensure their viability and financial survival. The training support required typically needs to be customised to meet individual enterprise needs and work practices."

Source: Martin, F., Down, Catherine M. Leading Edge Technology in Advanced Manufacturing: Supporting the Needs of Industry Paper presented at a TAFE Specialist Centre meeting at RMIT Brunswick on November 2006.

Another key area that is proving to have significant impact on the improvement of skills knowledge is:

Communities of Practice

What holds together the VET Sector? On the surface, the VET sector is structured around government departments, industry groups, public and private providers, unions and professional associations, training packages and quality guidelines.

However, leaders in the sector have recognised for some years that the sector is also underpinned by the goodwill that exists between the many VET stakeholders. This recognition of the importance of goodwill is demonstrated by the amount of funding made available for an innovative program for VET communities of practice. Such communities are defined by theorists as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis.

Since 2001, the VET sector has seed-funded over one hundred communities of practice through the national staff development and change management program, Reframing the Future, now overseen by DEST. Research shows that these communities of practice are effective mechanisms for VET practitioners to improve their collaboration and networking with peers, industry and the community.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

- Build trust and relationships
- Provide access to new knowledge
- Foster innovation
- Enhance professional practice
- Support the management of change
- Improve organisational productivity
- Increase social capital

In 2006, with funding applied for by The Gordon Institute in Geelong, a Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Community of Practice was established. Participants in the community of practice include representatives of public and private providers, members of training advisory bodies, curriculum specialists, research facilities and a wide range of people who currently work in different sectors of the industry in Victoria. All day workshops were held in 2006. It has proved to be a very informative and worthwhile experience for all members.

The ultimate aim is to extend the community to a national level.

Source: Mitchell, J., Ideas for Practitioners: A professional development guide to growth and change in the Australian vocational education and training sector.

<http://www.ibsa.org.au/pubdetails.jsp?publication=6137> Downloaded 4th February 2007.

Options

The most logical and strategic method for addressing the issues raised is to work in a collaborative team of industry associations, private companies, Registered Training Organisations (public and private) and government departments on a national level; ignoring personal and business agendas and divisions of states and governments. On the world market Australia holds only a very small percentage of the world's population. Despite this we have a relatively high profile that should be enhanced by this collaboration. If we are able to follow the team approach demonstrated by the fashion and textile industry in New Zealand we will be able to forge many more effective international partnerships. Some suggestions on how this may work have been highlighted in the recommendations section of this report.

The following are recommendations to Government, Industry, the Business Sector, Professional Associations, Education and Training Providers, our Community, and the ISS Institute.

The following observations encapsulate the information that was gained throughout the course of the Fellowship program -

- There is merit in the development of a Specialist Centre for Fashion and Textiles that has no alliance with any one trade or training organisation. The centre would ideally be autonomous and accessible to all RTO's (private and public), businesses, associations and services. Its main object would be to establish quality benchmarks, resources and professional development opportunities for all interested parties. Securing funding for this would reduce the need for duplicate funding for the development of resources and would assist in building a collaborative culture within the industry.
- There should be an emphasis on continuing support for and further development of the TCF Community of Practice established in 2006.
- There is a need for professional development programs for trainers in RTO's and technicians in the fashion industry in the areas of: advanced manufacturing techniques, patternmaking and fitting, draping, fabric enhancement techniques, lean manufacturing specific to the fashion industry, and innovative and technology based delivery systems.
- The collaborative development of programs to optimise use of Australian produced textiles. Design competitions especially aimed at tertiary students (organised by The Australian Wool Fashion Awards and Hamilton Sheepvention), stipulating the use of wool textiles when designing unique design ideas and outfits (they often supply fabric as well) is very positive. More focus on these types of programs is required to continually raise the awareness and appreciation of using these high quality materials. The availability of smaller commercial amounts of innovative wool products for small niche businesses at competitive prices would also be an advantage.
- Collaboration between industry and training organisations is imperative. The sharing of resources, development of skills, training or internships for pre and post graduate students in industry based settings is vital.
- Internationally Alta Moda or Haute Couture fashion has an elitist status and is very expensive and excludes the majority of people from purchasing such items. However 'up market ready-to-wear' in easily recognisable brand labels is more accessible but still with a high level of quality finish and unique design required to maintain brand viability. The methods used to construct a garment, where and how it is produced, and how this information is given to the potential customer is highly relevant when building a high profile brand/label. Australian fashion businesses wanting to successfully compete locally and internationally in the high end ready-to-wear market must continually look at these areas.
- Major retail organisations have in a very large part contributed to the 'Sale' culture of the Australian consumers and innovative marketing strategies need to be put into place to overcome this. Opportunities for delivering the ultimate 'retail experience' making consumers want to continue to buy products for the experience and enjoyment is something many Italian retailers focus on as much as the sales talk and price.

Government

In view of the findings, the Australian Federal Government and Victorian State Government is encouraged to:

- Review the current state of the fashion industry.
- Support program development that assists in the collaboration between all key stakeholders of the fashion industry.
- Explore the opportunity of establishing an autonomous Specialist Centre in Textiles and Fashion.

Industry

The fashion industry needs to share the responsibility for maintaining, and where required, the up-skilling of garment technicians within Australia. By working closely with training organisations and associations there are opportunities to develop training programs run by highly experienced and professional people in all areas of the business.

Business

Australian businesses need to develop further opportunities for collaboration and the advantages that come with it, rather than focusing on the negatives. The current culture is characterised by concerns about 'someone stealing our ideas' when discussions occur regarding networking and the sharing of ideas.

This culture needs to be addressed and there is an opportunity to share expensive machinery and technologies, as well as working in partnership with training organisations to further extend cadetship or internship type programs for graduating students.

Professional Associations

- Fashion Group International (FGI)
- Council of Textile & Fashion industries of Australia Ltd (TFIA)
- Fashion Technicians Association Australia (FTAA)
- Textile Institute

The Professional Associations listed here are predominantly not for profit organisations. TFIA does have a business services arm and is a private RTO. These associations are not controlling bodies but do work with government, training organisations, industry groups and businesses and have significant input when providing relevant information to government departments, develop a wide range of recommendations, provide information, workshops, seminars and support to its industry members.

Education and Training

Australian TAFE and tertiary institutions make a major contribution to the skills development of staff entering the fashion industry in Australia. A large proportion of the basic skills and knowledge in technical areas of the fashion industry, especially design, garment construction, patternmaking, understanding textiles, Cad-Cam, is obtained by students completing TAFE courses before entering the workplace. The quality of the training for these basic skills in the majority of cases, (as based on feedback from industry organisations either formally or informally), is adequate and becomes more relevant once a certain amount of work experience is included as well. Currently the major areas of concern are the advanced skills

required by graduates and people already working in the fashion industry. Many businesses no longer have the structure in place to provide ongoing training and the opportunity to learn on the job. There is a definite need for many trainees to update their industry knowledge and adapt training to meet the changing needs of the industry. There is a call for TAFE Colleges to become more flexible with the way training is offered in terms of hours, locations and the training methods undertaken.

2000 saw the introduction of a training package into the Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Leather sector of the industry. During the review stage of this training package it became apparent that the issues raised by both trainers and businesses were valid. There was no recognition for specific skill areas with only qualification at Diploma or Advanced Diploma levels (Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Textiles, Clothing and Footwear) regardless of what area of the sector and training you specialised in. The units of competencies in most cases, especially for clothing production in Certificate IV and higher, were too large, lacked definition, and often did not give the opportunity to deliver training at all ATQF levels. Most importantly, they were so broad that the different interpretations by RTO's across Australia meant very differing levels of training and outcomes for the same units of competency. An example of this is Patternmaking, where units of competency in this subject were only available at Certificate IV and Diploma level, therefore limiting the amount of training that could take place. There were no introductory units available so all basics, intermediate and advanced skills had to be taught across these two levels only. There were gaps especially for people requiring specific and highly advanced skills and for those already in the industry, at Advanced Diploma levels. Areas including draping and fitting techniques were often passed over or taught very briefly, as they were not identified as specific skills but included as a 'dot point' in the patternmaking units.

The new training package endorsed at the end of 2006 recognised the importance and relevance of obtaining a qualification that reflects the training undertaken. To address this issue a new stream was added to the training package which is the Certificate II to Advanced Diploma in Applied Fashion Design and Technology. In this stream is all units of competency for training in the fashion industry with the flexibility of the packaging rules to import units from other packages if required, and structure programs to meet the needs of different client groups. The units have been more closely defined and gaps in the skills training have been identified and units of competency developed to address those gaps. This is of most interest to Penton and Giacomini as it pertains to their Fellowship and the opportunity to develop skills gaps in these units at Diploma and Advanced levels. These units of study at Diploma and Advanced levels are of particular interest within the context of this Fellowship:

LMTFD4021A Drape fabrics to make patterns

LMTFD5003A Analyse fit model

LMTFD5005A Manipulate fabrics to create new finishes

LMTFD5012A Perform contour draping

LMTFD5018A Determine and specify advanced construction processes

LMTFD6004A Manage advanced patternmaking processes

LMTFD6005A Drape structured over-garments

LMTFD6007A Implement specialised patternmaking technologies

As these units of competency have just been endorsed it is an ideal opportunity to develop teaching programs that include all specific training needs with an emphasis on efficient work practices integrating quality processes.

An area of concern relates to having enough qualified trainers with the advanced skills necessary to train accordingly. While many staff are proficient in a range of skills, few have the full range of skills required to deliver all these units in a relevant and contextual manner in every institute. This is why professional development in these areas is so important. We can all learn from each other and all obtain broader skills if we share ideas. The workshops the Fellows are planning as part of this Fellowship will be the starting point for this sharing of information, where they will demonstrate what they have learnt and how to implement it. However, the workshops will only be truly successful and sustainable if all participants are willing to cooperate. The Fellows believe it will also be necessary to invite industry specific artisans to conduct training in draping. The skills demonstrated by Mr Balestra's artisans in Rome, (who in some cases spent over forty years refining their skills in draping, fabric embellishment and garment construction) are diverse, and specific techniques are enhanced by comparing and sharing ideas. There is an opportunity to seek funding from different government departments to assist in this professional development and the Fellows will be pursuing these in the near future.

Kangan Batman TAFE has worked with the Fellows' Curriculum Maintenance Manager for General Manufacturing, Trevor Lange, from Chisholm TAFE in Teaching and Learning Initiative programs for the past five years. Mandy Penton has managed a project every year which brings together trainers from all Victorian TAFE colleges to benchmark and develop delivery and assessment strategies for a range of units of competencies. This has proved to be very useful and another project around design is planned for 2007.

This format could be broadened to encompass development of resources as well, specific to the units of competency mentioned above for draping, fabric embellishment and garment construction.

As members of the Textile Clothing & Footwear Community of Practice, the Fellows hope to have the opportunity to continue sharing their findings and enhancing their knowledge.

Another key recommendation based on the Fellowship experience regards the importance of making staff and students culturally aware of the International market in which they work. The notion that all students should have experience in international travel, culture awareness and appreciation is paramount in forming employability skills for the fashion industry. Italy has the distinct advantage of location, location, location!

A quote by International Designer Renato Balestra to a group of students participating in the Renato Balestra Masterclass in Design, organised in 2005 by ISS Institute, encapsulates the importance of fashion courses offering students the opportunity to participate in international study tours:

"To be a truly original designer that draws on life experiences, when designing you need to have exposure to and appreciation of: art, culture and history on an internationally wide spectrum. Yes you can learn about these things from books, movies and internet but nothing replaces real life experience."

Community

As discussed previously, the fashion industry globally is registering a rebellion against mass consumerism in favour of uniquely created items, integrating the ideals of artisanship and the integrity of the product with the use of quality materials and construction methods. The aim is for the products to have an inherent feature of sustainability and not be of a disposable nature, distinguished by the generic mass of volume manufacturing to refinement and design. If this is to happen in Australia it is an ideal opportunity for emerging designers to establish a design label to meet these demands.

How ISS Institute can be Involved

The International Specialised Skills Institute has the potential to utilise its many contacts to attract funding and work with TAFE and Associations to assist the fashion industry. In most cases, the lack of funding is the main obstacle that needs to be overcome.

Conclusion

In conclusion, when Penton and Giacomini originally applied for the Fellowship they said that as a final analysis of what they would like to achieve from this Fellowship was –

“Every fashion professional must have universal references. Often endowed with artistic sensitivity, a professional must enrich his knowledge through curiosity and an open mind. This free spirit enables good follow up and anticipation of the perpetual fashion movement. From museums to artists exhibitions, from large capitals to fashion magazines, from street trends to international events, from designers to merchandisers, everyone must remain aware of the surrounding world.” - Author unknown

The Fellows believe at this stage they are well on the way to achieving their goals but realise that the journey is long and they look forward to the opportunity of building onto everything they do and achieve the skills and knowledge they obtained during their valuable time spent in Italy. It was a life changing experience.



The Zenga retail store in Milan - provides evidence of the significance of the consumer to clothing, textiles, fashion and the training industry is holistic.

Collier, A. *The Art of Lacemaking*, 2nd edn, Bracken Books, London, 1986.

Buchanan, J., Evesson, J., and Briggs, C. (2002) *Renewing the capacity for Skills Formation: The challenge for Victorian Manufacturing*, Melbourne, Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission, state Government of Victoria.

Down, Catherine M. (2003a) *The Applied technology Framework: expansive Learning for Innovation*, paper presented at the VISTA Annual Conference 2003 "Dreaming and Scheming in the VET Sector, Blythwood Grange, Ballarat: May 25-27."

Down, Catherine M. (2003b) *The Applied technology Framework*, Melbourne, RMIT University

Martin, F., Down, Catherine M. *Leading Edge Technology in Advanced Manufacturing: Supporting the needs of Industry*, paper presented at a TAFE Specialist Centre meeting at RMIT Brunswick on November 2006

Mitchell, J., *Ideas for Practitioners: A professional development guide to growth and change in the Australian vocational education and training sector.*

<http://www.ibsa.org.au/pubdetails.jsp?publication=6137> Downloaded 4th February 2007.

<http://www.zegna.com/media/press/history> Downloaded 4th February 2007.

About the Fellows

Curriculum Vitae

Name: **Rosanna Giacomini**

Address: 25 Park Crescent, Aberfeldie, Victoria. 3040.

Telephone: (03) 9331 2939

Mobile: 0402 466 355

D.O.B: 20 / 06 / 1964

Education & Qualification: 2003 -2006 Monash University

Completed a Masters in Education (Work & Learning Studies)

1997-1999 Charles Sturt University.

Associate Degree in Vocational Education and Training.

1999 RMIT University.

Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

Kangan Batman TAFE.

Computer Refinement, short courses.

1998 Kangan Batman TAFE.

Completed Issues for Senior Patternmakers.

Quality Training Program.

Neuro Linguistic Programming.

1982-1983

RMIT Textiles. (Formally known as Melbourne College of Textiles) Certificate of Technology in Fashion Buying and Merchandising.

1981-1982

RMIT Textiles. (Formally known as M.C.T.)
Certificate of Technology in Clothing.

1976-1980

Successfully completed Year 11.

Geoghegan College.

1977

Certificate of Completion in Dressmaking & Patternmaking.

Interests:

I have a strong appreciation for architecture & interior design.

I am passionate about hand crafts. i.e, quilting, sketching and oil/acrylic painting.

I speak Italian and relish the culture.

Community involvement.

Socialising and Networking

Fashion Industry Employment History

2007	Implementing the latest training package into the course and currently writing the ISSI report with recommendations for the development of further programs to be taught in TAFE, regarding the survival and renewal of the clothing industry in Australia.
2006	Attended 20 days in the Fashion industry updating and observing the uses of the Lectra CAD system in several companies; at Primary School Wear; Just Jeans Group; Marker Makers Pty Ltd; RMIT textiles.
2005	Designed and produced gowns for Renato Ballestra's design workshop. I had received a Fellowship by ISSI - the International Specialised Skills Institute and Kangan Batman TAFE to attend the work place of Renato Balestra in Italy & develop an information project of 3 weeks.
1989-1993	Moda Rosanna: (Self Employed) Managing an exclusive haute couture bridal boutique. Design and production of evening ladies and children's wear. Importing fabrics and accessories for exclusive designs. Including tasks as below.
1983-1989	Teena Varigos Australia: Assistant Designer and Pattern Maker Patternmaking & Cutting sampling garments for production. Design sketching for each range and variations. Preparation of storyboards and fabric swatches. Buying fabrics, trims and accessories. Garment labelling with the Fabric Dry Cleaning Association. Fitting garments and organising alterations for special orders. Fitting TV personalities and approving their alterations. Trained and supervised staff. Assisted in Interstate sales in Sydney, N.S.W for 20 clients. Fabric draping styles for production. Beading & Hand-finishing of competition garments and haute couture garments; including a garment for an American TV personality. Developed communication, interpersonal and organisational skills.
1982-1983	Myer City Stores: Sales (Part-time, work-experience) Assisting sales in haberdashery and dress fabrics. An introduction to my career, my role was to assist clients, estimate & cut fabrics for their projects.

Educational Employment History

2007	Kangan Batman TAFE. Currently I am a senior teacher and assisting in program coordination of the Textiles Clothing and Footwear course. Mentoring new staff & all tasks below.
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2000-2007
1993-1999

Kangan Batman TAFE. (Part-time & Full-time)
Certificate IV in Clothing Production and Diploma in Clothing Industry Studies.

- Preparing, lecturing and assessing classes in;
- Produce made-to-measure/custom-made/ bespoke garments
- Computer-aided patternmaking –StyleCad & Lectra -Modaris
- Computer-aided grading & marker making –StyleCad & Lectra
- Computer-aided design – DB Artist / Graphispec
- Pattern development & Grading
- Block development & Fitting
- Trade sketching & Fashion Illustration

Assisted in writing curriculum documents.
Lectured short courses and promoted further studies for students.
Assisted in the organisation of student fashion parades, competitions that involve students.
Designed and constructed gowns for social events involving students and promoting the Institute.
Microsoft Office XP (Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher) & Update new versions of Lectra and Stylecad Computer systems.
Currently learning basic Photoshop and basic Illustrator programs.

1993-1999

RMIT Textiles. (Part-time).
Advanced Certificate in Designer Dressmaker.
Preparation and presentation of materials for the course subjects.
Assisted with the writing of curriculum documents.
Planned strategies to instruct students to problem solve.
Lectured short courses to prospective full-time students.
Lectured patternmaking at all levels.
Lectured Garment construction -Forte in Bespoke garments.
Documenting progressive student assessments and assignments.
Mentored students and officiated results.

Employment History - Freelance

1999

Pelaco Australia:

My role was to research and develop a prototype shirt for the average Australian male body. To create a better fitting shirt that would be approved by the Managing Director of the firm. I was to construct the pattern and the shirt according the machine assembly of the shirt. I needed to devise better techniques and methods of producing the shirt were possible. I was required to write

	size specifications for the shirt as it was to be produced offshore. And in addition, graded the shirt on their computer system.
1998	Opera Australia: Constructed costumes for an Opera production called Manon Lescaut by Puccini. The garments were designed by Roger Kirk. My role was to create six lace-up corsets, matching skirts and petticoats. I also was to fit eleven other performers and alter their pre-existing costumes. All costumes were personally fitted on the performers and completed with very tight schedules.
1989–1997	Teco Pty.Ltd: Menswear Contracted to produce accurate patterns for production, including sketches, grading and specifications of each style.

Name	Mandy Penton	
Address	11 Colac Place CAROLINE SPRINGS VIC 3023	
Contact details	Phone: (03) 9360 4083 Mobile: 0437 680853 Email: mpenton@kangan.edu.au	
Membership and Affiliations	Committee Member -Textile Institute of Australia Southern Australia Section Fashion Technicians Assoc. of Australia (FTAA) Educational History	
	1.	Final year of completing Masters in Educational Leadership (RMIT)
	2.	Newcastle University (Diploma Teaching) 1987
	3.	NSW TAFE Certificate in Fashion 1979 - 1982
	4.	Participated in advanced training in Textiles with Strathfield College of Textiles, Sydney 1990
	5.	Workplace Assessor Certificate 1997
	6.	Certificate in Advanced pattern technology 1997
	7.	Certificate IV in workplace assessment and training 2004

Employment History

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Kangan Batman TAFE | <p>2005- 2006</p> <p>Program Co-ordinator– Fashion Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2003 - 2006 - Project Manager, Teaching and Learning Initiative – Development & Delivery of Workshops Best practice methodologies examples and models for higher level TCF (Clothing) qualifications. to Victorian Clothing Network providers • 2006 – International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship. Study tour of fashion organisations . • Study tour with fashion student body to Peoples Republic of China and Hong Kong • 2005 – International Specialised Skills Institute -Renato Ballestra Masterclass Workshops • 2005 - 2006 Representative for Victorian Fashion RTO's TCF Training Package Review |
| Kangan Batman TAFE | <p>1999-2004</p> <p>Manager – Fashion Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2004 - Representative for Victorian Fashion RTO's on National Fashion Design research project. • 2003 – Technical Expert for Development of Certificate III in Concept Development for Clothing Products Course with Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority • 2002 – Project Manager - Teaching and Learning Initiative (Funded through OTTE) Best Practice Methodologies Examples and Models for higher level TCF (Clothing) qualifications • Member ALMitab: Steering Committee – Implementation of National TCF Training Package • 2002 – Project Writer TAFE Frontiers resources for TCF Industry • LMTQAGN-03A Mange quality systems and procedures (50 hours) • LMTPRGN-03A Participate in production planning process (80 hours) • LMTPRGN-06A Contribute to production planning (50 hours) • Development and administration of programs for students in a diverse selection of learning areas: • Full-Time students studying Certificate III in Clothing production through to Advanced Diploma of Textiles Clothing & Footwear |

- Part-time students studying Certificate II to Certificate IV in Headwear/Millinery
- VET in Schools programs
- People currently working in Clothing Industry updating their skills in areas from Quality and Production Systems, Patternmaking/Grading, Frontline Management.
- Traineeships in Clothing Industry to new employees and existing employees, from all areas of worksite: from production, warehouse and pattern areas

Kangan Batman TAFE

Previous position 1995 - 1999

Teacher – Fashion Studies department

- Experience and flexible approach to training students in Certificate IV and Diploma for Clothing Industry Studies. On campus and at individual Worksites of clothing Companies. Subject areas include:
 - Production Planning
 - Quality Control
 - Management
 - Textiles
 - Computerised Patternmaking & Grading
 - Garment Specifications
- 1997 – Project Writer OTS resources for TCF Industry for the Following resources
- CD331 Sourcing and Purchasing Materials
- CD667 Production Planning/Scheduling
- CD730 Scheduling, Purchasing and Distribution Logistics
- CD731 Implementing Production Systems and Plans
- 1995 – Curriculum Writer for Certificate IV and Diploma for Clothing Industry Studies in Competency-based training
- 1995 – Curriculum Writer for Certificate I, II, III and IV in Millinery in Competency-based training
- 1995 - Return to Industry Professional Development in Garment Quality Assurance, Textiles and Specifications within Apparel Quality Assurance Department - Target Australia, Geelong.

Liverpool College of TAFE 1993

Sessional teacher – Fashion department

- Cutting and Marking

- Small Business Management
 - Human Relations and Supervision
 - Garment Construction
- Own Business 1992-93
- Freelance/Contract work
- Development of overseas specifications
 - Coordination of Production for range of Companies
 - Range Coordination
 - Patternmaking
 - Grading
 - Full Sampling Service
- Wendy Heather Pty Ltd 1990-91
- Production Manager
- Total control of production including:
 - Sourcing & Purchasing
 - Materials & Trims
 - Production Engineering – including Costing of materials and labour
 - Total responsibility for taking the sample range and supplying the finished garments – for indent orders, ready for despatch
 - Control all areas of production for machine knitted garments, swimwear, woven and knitted fabric garments, fashion accessories –shoes & hats
 - Overseeing Manufactures in Sydney and Melbourne
 - Using a 'Seams' Computer System to assist in Production Planning
 - Overseeing Distribution Facilities – including Pack & Despatch
 - Patternmaking and Grading
- The Aussie Boys Pty Ltd 1984-90
- Design/Production Manager
- Research design trends
 - Implement Product Development themes
 - Sample range coordination
 - Supervision of staff

- Patternmaking and Grading
- Ordering fabrics and accessories
- Production Management

NSW Colleges of TAFE

1984-88

Sessional teacher – Fashion department

- Granville
- Baulkham Hills
- Wetherill Park

Platts Australia Pty Ltd

1983-84

Machinist

- Trained to use all machines in the factory
- Experience in despatch and stock controls
- Cutting – including laying-up and Markers
- Progressed to Patternmaking and Grading