A treasure of sources, 1607-1655

DANIEL HEINSIUS

Daniel Heinsius, librarian from 1607 to 1655, guarded over the library for almost half a century. During that time, scholarly viewpoints and educational principles changed significantly. This had an inevitable effect on the university's book collection. Heinsius steered the library into modernity. He enjoyed international fame as a poet, letter-writer, publisher of classical texts, literary theorist, historian and book collector. To be able to do his academic work he needed good sources. He took pains to obtain them and

23 (opposite page)-24

Scaliger took part of his private library to Holland. These books were later donated to the university. Many of Scaliger’s books had been printed in the South of Europe. This copy of a Hebrew Bible was printed in Brescia in 1495.
expected the curators to offer him the means to do this, which they did originally, but later became more reticent. Continuous tensions between Heinsius and the curators over his extravagant book purchases during his tenure as librarian can be explained to some degree: as they saw it, Heinsius bought books out of his own interests as a philologist rather than out of his position as librarian. In a heated speech during the acceptance of his new position, Heinsius expressed his views on the ideal library: a place where the reader can enjoy reading, surrounded by the best authors on theology, law, medicine, philosophy and classical humanities. For Heinsius, the spiritual son of Scaliger, a library was a place of open dialogue with classical as well as modern authors. To keep the dialogue going, it was necessary to bring together as many voices as possible. With such a flamboyant plea Heinsius announced his future policy – to create a treasure of sources. He stuck to his principles and acquired a large number of manuscripts and books for the university, largely without informing the curators in advance. Despite all the warnings and measures – the curators themselves informed book purchasers that they would not pay the library’s bills anymore – Heinsius kept buying books which he believed the library simply had to have. Only in 1649 did Heinsius admit defeat: in the last years of his librarianship no books were bought, thus created the library’s first large chronological gap. This made the curators realise the importance of regular acquisitions.

In 1609 Scaliger left his renowned collection of manuscripts and books to the university. This was a unique legacy. In the 16 years of his stay in Leiden, Scaliger’s private library was expanded through gifts and purchases. He died on 21 January 1654, and in his will bequeathed all his books on Eastern languages to the library. The Scaliger legacy is among the most precious possessions of the library, and was given a special place: the 268 books and manuscripts were kept in a special, locked bookcase. The Scaliger legacy was reason to publish a second catalogue seven years after the Nomenclator, the first Leiden print catalogue. The Catalogus librorum quos bibliothecae Josephus Scaliger legavit takes up more than four pages of the 1612 catalogue. The description is classified by language – Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Ethiopian, Russian and Latin – but the titles remain in Latin. The two other catalogues published by Heinsius in 1623 and 1640 were cumulative supplements to the 1612 catalogue. Newly acquired books were mentioned, indicating the location of the copies. Compared to the Bertius catalogue of 1595, whose function was to give status to the library, and with the Merula catalogues of donations and valuable works (1603 and 1607), which were intended to entice generous donors, the catalogues of Heinsius who was so precise in his philological work were full of errors and messy. This is not as surprising as we might first think: Heinsius’ catalogues were intended to enable annual control of the book collection – they were not showpieces or baits, just inventory lists.

From 1595 to 1640 the library grew from 442 to 3117 titles. This was largely the work of Heinsius. Except for the Hebrew manuscripts and printed books of the theological place, up until 1609 the library only had a few Eastern works. The Scaliger legacy changed this. Medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and Talmud, Arabic linguistic works and Ethiopian and Syrian manuscripts formed the basis of the Eastern collections of the library. The second series of Eastern manuscripts of the Leiden collection came from the Orientalist Jacobus Golius. Commissioned by the university, he travelled many times to Asia and bought numerous Arabic manuscripts. In 1629 he came back with a copious collection that was deposited in the library.

The well-known Arabist Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624) collected a large number of oriental books during his life. In his will he indicated that these books were to be donated to Leiden University library, where they were to be placed next to the Scaliger bequest. Eventually, however, the manuscripts were purchased by the Duke of Buckinghan, who donated them to Cambridge University Library.
Heinsius considered it self-evident that part of the responsibility of a Leiden professor was to make available library sources for publication. The treasure of sources that the library was for many, like philologists, fulfilled the same task as the Anatomy Theatre for doctors and the Hortus Botanicus for botanists. Those were the places where students and scholars had the opportunity to gather knowledge and add to it. The period during which Heinsius ran the library was very turbulent. The conflict between Remonstrants and Counter-remonstrants shook the foundations of the Republic. After the Dortrecht Synod of 1619 that sealed the victory of Counter-

remonstrants, the university was purged. Whether this conflict had repercussions for the library is hard to tell, but the institution did become involved. Although Heinsius repeatedly pronounced himself against the Remonstrants, one wonders whether his position influenced his purchasing policy. For Heinsius the library was a humanist treasure of sources. He saw a direct link between a beautifully published, accurate volume and its value. The only purpose of his philological work was to make texts available in print. For this reason, people first submitted manuscripts and books that served this purpose; polemic works were not considered.
3

Between humanism and enlightenment, 1655-1701

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the successive university librarians formed a coherent dynasty. The two Dousas, father and son, Merula and Heinsius were humanists fed on classical sources. Their successors all studied at the University of Leiden and held chairs there. Their fields were classical languages, theology and history. Most of these professor-librarians also filled the post of chronicler of the Estates of Holland and Zeeland, as if it were a matter of course that the wardens of the library of the first and oldest university of the Republic were the best equipped to set down its history.

The Leiden librarians also often gave academic lectures. *Eloqueniscia* and *Rhetorica* were the channels through which wisdom made itself heard. In giving lectures, the learned librarians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries let the library speak and demonstrated the insights that came from daily contact with books.

Three learned librarians held the position in the second half of the seventeenth century: Anthony Thysius, Johannes Fredericus Gronovius and Fredericus Spanheim. Thysius, Professor of Eloquence, was asked to turn the tide of the library by setting up a new, 'pertinent' catalogue. To fulfil this assignment properly, the whole library had to be rearranged. The *plura*, the *arcæ* and the office in which special editions were kept were overflowing. A new catalogue was not enough to bring an end to this chaos. Moreover,
the interior design of the library no longer responded to the image of scholarly work that had slowly but surely found its inroads in Europe. The humanistic library of Jan van Hout and Janus Dousa was already outdated in 1595. Between 1550 and 1650, new libraries were designed and old ones thoroughly rebuilt in Italy, Spain and England. Leiden and Louvain followed in 1653 and 1690. The new library construction came about for various reasons. First of all, out of practical necessity: the explosion of knowledge that characterised the seventeenth century resulted in a tempestuous growth in book production. The number of books that had to be stored presented librarians with irresolvable problems. The space in the plate was limited and this called for radical changes. Almost equally important was the shift in attitude of scholars about their subject, of readers about books. The humanist scholar went to the heart of the matter by reconstructing classical sources as carefully as possible, to which he added useful commentary. When he took his place at a plate of the library and plunged into a text, he was addressing universal knowledge and determining his own place in it. Access to the universe was achieved through the privileged domain of classical heritage, the eye fixed on an imaginary central point. This train of thought fit in with the view of the world of the time in which the earth was the centre of the universe. When first Copernicus and then Galileo shattered this worldview by saying that the earth moved around the sun and not the other way around, they started off a revolution that led to great changes in all sorts of areas, also in the construction of libraries, albeit with something of a delay. From then on, to be able to understand the universe, a scholar had to turn around, literally, leave the centre of the library and turn his eyes to the outside world. The bookshelves on the wall are the symbol of the pressure towards the outside. They act as open windows. As soon as a book is grasped, the reader gains a view of the outside world. In 1653 Thysius was given the opportunity to rearrange the library in keeping with the new ideas. The plate were removed and bookcases were placed
The Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts of the Legatio Warneriana were described in the catalogue of 1674. The manuscript descriptions are highly detailed and meticulous, and printed very clearly.

against the walls. The organisation according to disciplines was maintained; the books were numbered consecutively. This new scrupulous approach in the use of the library had a positive effect. When Thyssius died on 25 January 1665, the library bore no resemblance to the chaos that it was at the start of his tenure.

Thyssius’ successor, Johannes Fredericus Gronovius was head of the library for only six years (1665-1671). But the change that occurred under his direction – the arrival in 1668 of hundreds of Eastern manuscripts from the Warner legacy – was of great importance for the Leiden collection. Oriental studies had been developing at prominent western universities since the end of the sixteenth century. Chairs in Eastern languages had been established throughout Europe, with the emphasis on Hebrew and Arabic, followed by other Eastern languages. The motives behind this interest in the East varied, but were nonetheless related. They ranged from religious concern to scholarly curiosity and from diplomatic necessity to linguistic interest. The arrival of the Warner legacy in 1655 continued the Eastern tradition of Scaliger, a tradition that would be carried on even in lean times.

Levinus Warner died in Istanbul in June 1665. The Eastern sources he had collected with great passion during twenty years in the Levant he left to the University of Leiden. At that time it was the greatest acquisition the library had ever gained. When the fifth catalogue of the library came off the press in 1674 it included a complete description of the Warner legacy. The new catalogue indicated unequivocally the importance of Eastern collections. The way in which the Warner legacy had been gathered in the East and made available to scholars in the West was typical of the growth of Eastern collections in Europe. The first Orientalists, such as Scaliger and Erpenius in Leiden, had never been in the East. They often had difficulty finding sources. The next generation, those in the middle of the seventeenth century, went after the sources themselves. The economic expansion towards the East made it possible for them to buy manuscripts and books on site. The sources they acquired there ended up in European libraries where their presence required a considerable knowledge of numerous Eastern languages. Sometimes that knowledge already existed, sometimes it did not. Thus, an interplay came into existence between the abundant acquisition in the East and a considerable use in the West. The necessity to draw up specialised catalogues was consequently greater for the Eastern collections than for other ones. The addition of the Warner legacy signified the pinnacle of Leiden oriental studies round about the middle of the seventeenth century. Almost all scholarly fields were represented by valuable and in some cases unique manuscripts: philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, natural history and needless to say, versions of the Koran...
and Koran commentaries. The importance of this acquisition was so great that all of the Eastern collection in Leiden is still called today: *Legaten Warenriem*.

When J.F. Gronovius died in 1671, the library had lost its equilibrium on four fronts: once again it was bursting at the seams; the placement of the books no longer corresponded with the existing catalogues; many books from the old collection were missing; and the collection had become so diverse that it was no longer possible for one person to keep track of it. Spanheim was charged with the considerable assignment of putting the library in order and setting up a new catalogue. The new library catalogue was published in 1674. It listed 3,725 printed books and 1,702 manuscripts, almost twice as many as in 1640.

Spanheim, the head of the library from 1672 to 1701, set for himself as task the expansion of the use of the library to all members of the university community, in particular the students. This decision involved a considerable change of course, because up until 1674 students had only been allowed in the library on a limited basis, and during some periods not at all. A more liberal policy in the past had repeatedly led to misuse. None the less, Spanheim stuck to his decision and took resolute steps to prevent the feared abuse of the collection by students. For at least ten years this approach bore fruit. However, around 1686 Spanheim's firm hand seemed to have loosened. Slowly but surely, the protection of the library collection gained in importance over its free use, at least as far as the governors of the university were concerned. Spanheim and many of his successors had different ideas about the matter.

Due to lack of funds which continued until the beginning of the eighteenth century, Spanheim did not have much money to spend on the regular purchasing of books. There were regular donations and gifts. Moreover, during Spanheim's time the largest purchase in the history of the library occurred: that of the library of Isaac Vossius. In 1689 Isaac Vossius died in Windsor; he had been the librarian of Queen Christina of Sweden and the only remaining son of
Gerardus Joannes Vossius who had held various chairs in Leiden and Amsterdam. In his will, Isaac Vossius expressed the wish that his extensive library not be split up. To achieve this he advised his heirs to offer the whole library to the universities of Oxford, Leiden, Cambridge and Amsterdam. It went to Leiden. The Bibliotheca Vossiana had a number of Greek, but primarily Latin manuscripts which would shine in a humanist library such as that in Leiden. It also included a large number of hermetic and alchemist manuscripts. In fact, the hermetic and alchemist works were of interest to almost no one; they reflected an attempt to understand the world through alchemical processes that were alien to modern scientists. For a long time people in Leiden thought they had been deceived about the value of this acquisition. One Leiden scholar had a different idea about the matter: Herman Boerhaave, who had looked at the manuscripts when they were placed in their special cabinets. He referred to them in his introductory lectures on chemistry. After him, it would not be until the end of the nineteenth century that the importance of these manuscripts for the history of science was recognised.

The tale of the Bibliotheca Vossiana, which resembles a detective story more than anything else, hailed in a certain sense the end of the humanistic period and the beginning of a new, modern era. With the arrival of the Bibliotheca Vossiana Spanheim was confronted with a double dilemma. The interior of the library which had been modified by his predecessor Thaisius in 1653 by removing the platei and putting in their place bookcases along the external walls of the library, had not taken into consideration a collection doubled in size. There was no other space available for the library. A considerably greater number of bookshelves had to be created in the same space. Spanheim thought up a very original solution: he proposed the construction of a double-sided bookcase down the middle of the library. In addition to the spatial problem, Spanheim was confronted with another difficulty: the placement of the Bibliotheca Vossiana. Vossius had expressly requested that his library be left as a clearly recognisable whole. Spanheim decided on a different course. Disregarding the request of Isaac Vossius he had the books of the Bibliotheca Vossiana placed between the other books, after removing the ‘doublettes’ (duplicates). Once again the whole collection had to be rearranged and catalogued. The engraving La Nouvelle bibliothèque publique gives a good picture of the
In 1694 the library was converted to create more space for the Bibliotheca Vossiana. At the center of the library a double-sided bookcase was placed, which housed the books formerly owned by Vossius. This engraving, entitled *La nouvelle bibliothèque publique*, gives an impression of the conversion.

new interior. The public had no direct access to the books but could make use of two rectangular spaces between the windows and the low balustrades. In addition there were globes. Visitors could read standing up at the window reading stands or sitting at a long table. It would not be until 1819 that the library was given a new spatial arrangement.

The second half of the seventeenth century was characterized by a radical change in thinking in Northern Europe. In 1637 the *Discours sur la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences* was published by Jean Maire in Leiden. With this book Descartes presented an

introduction to his philosophy and in so doing set the course for scholarly thinking in Europe that would dominate Europe until the Newtonian revolution and that certainly prevailed throughout the eighteenth century. It was at Dutch universities that Cartesian philosophy was first taught. Officially, the teaching of Descartes' ideas, or even the mentioning of his name was forbidden at Leiden. But this unusual regulation, which was in effect from 1647 to 1676, was more a matter of paper diplomacy than consistent policy and Cartesianism was indeed taught. Still, the library possessed only one book of Descartes until the end of the

seventeenth century and the acquisition of the *Bibliotheca Vossiana* in 1690. Was this due to the official anti-Cartesian stance of the university or of its librarian Spanheim? The latter explanation is not out of the question. Or is the surprising lacuna just another example of the institutional mechanism that so often leaves libraries a step behind the times? To answer this question would require a comparative study of the presence of Descartes' works in other European libraries.
4
Cosmopolitism
in a provincial city,
1701-1799

Wolferdus Senguerdus, who succeeded Spanheim as librarian in 1701, was the very embodiment of the interests of the dawning Age of Enlightenment. His appointment as librarian placed the library in the middle of those interests. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the orientation was towards a more encyclopaedic knowledge. This tendency was also visible in the library, particularly in the interior with its moving planetarium, and in the catalogue that was published in 1716. Globes depicting the universe had been present in the library from the very beginning, although some of them were hopelessly behind contemporary astronomical discoveries. The Sphaera Copernica placed in the library by Senguerdus brought matters up-to-date. The 1716 catalogue reflects the encyclopaedic approach as well. The first version of it was refused by the printer Pieter van der Aa. He did not want to publish just any catalogue list for internal use, rather a didactic instrument that would lead the inquisitive reader step by step through knowledge of the world, starting with a broad division according to discipline and moving to more and more precise topics. The placement of the books in the library was only included as additional information, as something for library management. The 1716 catalogue invited the reader to walk the path of general knowledge available in the Leiden library. The frontispiece is most remarkable: on the one hand it followed the normal rules of iconography of the time, on the other it is a glimpse of the actual library. The observer is placed in a dream world with realistic details. In the order, presentation and illustration of his Leiden catalogue, Van
During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, globes by Gerard Mercator, Johann Hondius, and Willem Jansz Blaeu were a common part of library collections. The Library originally had two pairs of globes in its possession; unfortunately, they have not survived.

Senguerus was succeeded by Petrus Burman, who described 'the true librarian' in his speech on public libraries and their keepers, De bibliothecis publicis earumque praefectis. In his opinion, the true librarian had to reflect on the essence of his profession and to act in accordance with his ideas. It was his responsibility to follow new book production and to fill old gaps in the collection. In addition, he should organise the collection intelligibly, to see that the works are in good condition and to publish works that were not readily available. In practical terms, the true librarian had to be one with his library. Burman was not, like his predecessor Daniel Heinsius a century earlier, a reader in the middle of the Leiden University Library; he was the Leiden University Library. He formulated a general, coherent policy with a forward-looking purchasing policy. But Burman was not just a good administrator, he was also a privileged user of the library in which he found material for his extensive editions of classical authors and scholarly letters.

He purchased unpublished letters for the library with the purpose of turning them into editions. Scholarship and libraries in his view were communicating fields that provided a constant movement of ideas.

The successor of Petrus Burmannus, Abraham Gronovius, stemmed from a philological family whose heart and soul was devoted to the library. He was the first professional librarian in Leiden. He received little financial room: a very limited fixed budget and a few special credits to be able to bid at auctions. All of the books and manuscripts, maps and...
prints that entered the library every year were personally registered by the librarian with great care. Each registered item was given the stamp ACAD.LUGD (Academia Lugdunensis) on the title page and edge and a place number. The library was open two afternoons a week, on Wednesday and Saturday from two to four o’clock, except for holidays and the month of August. Only Leiden professors and lecturers were allowed to borrow books and manuscripts, and only for their own use. Scholars from other Dutch cities or other countries had to do their research in the library in person. The generosity that characterised the early periods had changed in the middle of the eighteenth century to a meticulous protectionism.

Between 1743 and 1775 the university received considerable legacies from Gerard van Papenbroek (1743), Janus Stolp (1753), Prosper Marchand (1756), Richard Harris (1760) and Gerard Riemersma (1770). These legacies were

---

46 The colourful Pieter Buren was librarian from 1724 to 1741. Portrait from 1736 by Hieronymus van der My.

47 David van Royen was librarian for a mere four months in 1741. Portrait from 1733 by Hieronymus van der My.

48 Psalterium of Louis 12, Saint-Louis (1314-1370). According to an inscription on f. 30v: “Cet Psaltérium fait don seigneur saint Louis, roi de France, onquel il aprist en s’enfanç” – the king learned to read from this Psalterium. The psalter of Louis was donated in 1741 by J. van den Bergh, a Leiden burgomaster.
Abraham Gronovius became librarian in 1741. He was a relative of Jacobus Gronovius, who had bought the Bibliotheca Voniana and was one of the compilers of the new library catalogue. Portrait from 1685 by Carol de Moor.

In the Introductio, it was determined that books in the library collection were to be stamped with the Library mark of ownership. Initially, the text on the stamps read Acad. Lugd. This was later changed to Acad. Lugd. R. R. Bibl. (Academiae Lugdunensis Batavorum Bibliotheca).

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the University of Leiden had a flourishing period with such bright lights as Boerhaave in medicine and Musschenbroek and 's-Gravesande in physics. In Eastern and Western philology, Albert Schultens and Tiberius Hemsterhuis developed a new critical approach to texts. The Hemsterhuis method required intensive knowledge of classical literature. To fill the gaps in a text successfully, the philologist had to have read all of the works of a given author. To recognize quotations from classical authors, he had to be very well read, and to decipher hidden meanings in a text and to make the necessary associations, he had to have an encyclopaedic knowl-
One of the favourite books consulted by scholars in the eighteenth century was the ten-volume *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* by Buffon. This image shows *Le dindon* from volume two.

Ruhnkenius followed an acquisition policy that was typical for scholarly habits in the second half of the eighteenth century. Acclaimed works were immediately purchased. Learned journals were received on a regular basis, the *Mémoires* of the most important European academies, Berlin, Paris, Edinburgh and Saint Petersburg as well. These publications provided access to recent scholarly research and it was precisely these works that Leiden professors immediately and most frequently wished to borrow.

Ruhnkenius' tenure had a great influence on the use of the collections. It coincided with two determining developments in the area of philology. On the one hand, a systematic search was made to find certain texts that were still in manuscript and to establish the relationship between various texts. On the other hand, the new textual criticism demonstrated the value of collating as many variants as possible. In both cases, the availability of manuscripts was essential. Ruhnkenius decided, in his capacity as librarian, to follow the generous path he had seen in other parts of Europe and was exceptionally helpful in the collating of Leiden manuscripts for non-Leiden philologists. He even allowed the loaning of manuscripts outside of Leiden. With this totally new approach, which quickly became known, Ruhnkenius set the tone for policy in the following century. Given his very limited budget, Ruhnkenius was able to do as little as his predecessor. For this reason he requested special funds to be able to bid on important private libraries at auctions. Under Ruhnkenius the library grew steadily with the result that the lack of space, which was already a problem, became more and more acute. Books, and in particular Eastern manuscripts, were stacked on the ground. This insufficient storage space was indicative of the inability of the library world to respond adequately to the explosive growth in book production.