The dawn of a new nationalism, 1798-1896

In the period 1798-1820, care of the library was in the hands of the Swiss philologist Daniel Wytenbach. He succeeded in bringing it through the delicate period of the French occupation. He had been librarian for a year when the national authorities asked the university to make a detailed report on the state of the library. In comparison to manuscripts in other European libraries, Wytenbach wrote, the once famous Leiden manuscripts were insignificant. Moreover, most of them had already been edited and were in a terrible state, just like the whole collection. In short, there was very little to recommend the Leiden library, to the contrary, it required high expenditures. The ruse worked and the French control of the library went no further than the grudging loan of an Eastern manuscript to the French astronomer Lalande. None the less, the library’s situation remained difficult until the restoration of independence in 1815. The lack of space was at its most critical. Still and all, the signs of an approaching recovery were to be seen.

In 1801, the curators decided finally to take up the matter of cataloguing again. The establishment of a catalogue raisonné was entrusted to Meinard Tydeman. He catalogued the whole collection as he found it in the bookcases, organised according to discipline and within the disciplines according to size. His catalogue was finished in 1809. He assumed an old-fashioned manner in setting about his work: a walk along the scholarly topics in which the reader made larger and larger circles around his topic. But in the beginning of the nineteenth century this encyclopaedic notion of knowledge began to make room for a more...
focussed, more personal approach: people sought specific authors, specific texts. The need to offer readers an alphabetic catalogue became apparent. The library adjusted to this new approach to the transfer of knowledge.

Despite the general lack of money, Wytenbach was able to acquire a great deal. In addition to the library of Ruhnkenius and a series of books from the auctions of the late Curator van Santen and Professors Bondam and Van Royen, he purchased Eastern manuscripts and books of Albert, Johannes and Hendrik Albert Schultens for a considerable sum in 1806. In the area of Eastern collections, this was the largest addition since the Legatum Warnerianum. Wytenbach was the last foreign librarian in Leiden. The cosmopolitan period had drawn to a close. The renewed nationalism could not have been more symbolically expressed.

Although crucial developments occurred during his period as head of the library, Johannes van Voorst is a ‘forgotten’ librarian. He represented the typical Dutch hominess of the nineteenth century. Up until then it had been possible to run the library with a very small number of people: the Interpres Legati Warneriani for the Eastern collections and two custodes. However, with the passing of the French annexation and the building up of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the steering of the library required more manpower. The library began to outgrow its building. More dramatic measures had to be taken if the costly works were not to become fodder for the worms. It was decided to remove the small buildings between the chapel and the canal, rebuild the Faliede Bagijinkerk as a closed book repository and construct a new building on the square on Rapenburg. The distinctive aspect of the new building was that it was intended from the very beginning as a library. The building was as elegant as it was practical.
In 1819, the ‘Fakelaar Bagijnkerk, which housed the library, was extended westward to accommodate the growing library collection. The new wing was designed by Jan Dobbe. The tower of the church was demolished. In 1822 the new library was completed. This view of the new library is taken from a map of Leiden by Dosterbeck.

This very real change did not fail to achieve its effect: the library became popular. Members of the Leiden university community and foreign visitors were frequently seen in the library. Those who could not make the journey to Leiden easily received books and manuscripts sent to their homes. This new spirit which began under Van Voorst achieved its culmination under his successor Jacobus Geel whose tenure was of decisive importance for Leiden. Under his enthusiastic guidance, the former grim protectionism disappeared; the library literally opened to the outside world. Geel succeeded in not only promoting cataloguing but also acquisition and use of the library. He published two excellent catalogues: the one on printed works acquired between 1814 and 1847 and the other on Western manuscripts procured since 1741. The cataloguing of Eastern manuscripts was started up repeatedly. Two sample catalogues appeared, but remained unfinished. Only in 1851 did the first volume of the catalogue of Eastern manuscripts appear, prepared by R.P.A. Dozy; this was followed seven years later by the catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts of M. Steinschneider. Starting in this period, partial catalogues of the Eastern and Western manuscript collections were regularly made. Since 1813 the financial situation of the library had been considerably improved and the budget for the purchase of books greatly increased, primarily through the establishment of the academic fund in 1836 with which the gaps in the collection could be filled. Professors and departments demanded and gradually received more influence in acquisitions. The call for a more balanced purchasing policy among the various specialties became more and more pressing. Geel was able to fill gaps in the collection primarily by buying books at auctions and through contacts abroad. But Geel’s true claim to fame was as the librarian who opened the library to the outside world and generously

Jacques Geel, librarian from 1833 to 1858.

William Nicolaas de Ruijter was librarian from 1880 to 1897.
made available its collections to the scholarly world through cataloguing, the guidance of readers, and the publishing of editions of classical texts on the basis of Leiden manuscripts. Geel's liberal policy did not stop at the national borders. He was just as generous in lending out unique manuscripts to foreign scholars or even to their students.

The industrialisation of Europe in the nineteenth century resulted in an enormous increase in book production and thus after awhile, in library holdings. The library became a business with a growing number of personnel and a vital need for an efficient production line. The successors of Geel, W.G. Pluygers and W.N. du Rieu provided the library with instruments that were required to deal with this situation.

A comparative study of European libraries led Pluygers to

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In 1862, the 'Faliode Bagijn-kerk' was equipped in a repository of books. It was modelled on the British Museum.

the conclusion that the reorganisation of the library, as he called it, must be seen as a whole: placing, cataloguing and making books available were all part of one process. Everything had to be changed at the same time. About the middle of the nineteenth century all of the libraries in the western world were struggling with considerable problems. In Europe as a whole, it was Germany that took the lead; in the Netherlands it was Groningen and Utrecht, followed by Leiden. Scholarship had become so specialised and subdivided that it was more and more difficult to find the right spot for a book, assuming there was still room on the shelf

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Between 1862 and 1866 the front of the library was modernised. Its two entrances were replaced by one large central entrance.
at that spot. Readers had not been able to access the books directly for a long time. The idea of a reader finding his way in the middle of the books had been an illusion for two centuries. Pluygers decided on a pragmatic solution intended to save space and make growth manageable. From then on books would be placed on the shelves according to size, regardless of their content; the in-folio on the lower shelves, the smaller formats on the upper shelves. As the bookcases filled up, new ones were added. Originating in Germany, this storage system was first copied in the Netherlands and later in other European countries. Pluygers' adoption of this system amounted to no less than a minor revolution. All of the books in the library – an estimated 40,000 titles – had to be recatalogued and moved, a responsibility Pluygers entrusted to P.A. Tiele. In 1864 the copy for the complete alphabetical catalogue of the library in Leiden from 1575 to 1860 was finished; it was never to appear in print. Readers were able to consult alphabetical and systematic registers of the Leiden library in the form of bound catalogue cards, known as the Leidse boekjes. Now that every catalogue card represented a book that was stored somewhere else, the idea of a central catalogue of the complete university holdings of books and journals began to take shape and was turned into fact in 1860. In addition to an alphabetical catalogue, all Dutch university libraries had been required since 1815 to establish a scholarly catalogue as well. Such a catalogue was finished in Leiden only in 1881. This remained the cataloguing system for the library until 1963.

The Museum Catharijne has a large collection of emblem books. This engraving is taken from Provera by J. Carts (1617).
In the second half of the nineteenth century, library management became more and more professional. Individuals and institutions with historical collections found it more and more difficult and costly to take care of their collections, which is how the lending out of books came into being in libraries, archives and museums. As a consequence, the library of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (Society of Dutch Literature) was turned over to the library in Leiden in 1876 and the collection of the Remonstrant Seminary with interesting early correspondence of the Remonstrants, in 1878. The library also received sizable donations that confirmed the university character of the collection. These donations came from Leiden professors who left the specialised books from their private libraries at the end of their lives to fill up the gaps in the university library. In 1894 the Orientalist Hermann Nebrunner van der Tuuk died in Bali; he had devoted his whole life to the studying of Old Javanese. As part of his study he had gathered a unique collection of manuscripts written on bark or leaves (lontar). When the legacy arrived, Du Rieu, the librarian of the time, compared the importance of this collection for the study of Polynesian languages to that of the Warner legacy for Arab languages.

Although to a limited extent, maps, atlases and globes had been part of the collection from the very first. But the true basis of the cartographic collection in Leiden was provided by J.T. Bodel Nijenhuis in 1872 with the bequest to the university of his extensive collection of maps, atlases and topographical prints. Bodel is seen as one of the pioneers of historical cartography in the Netherlands. These documents represent an exceptionally important source for the history of Indonesia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most interesting documents in the Bodel Nijenhuis Collection, a third of which concern the Netherlands, are the maps of towns and fortresses. A large number of them were done by hand. Other strong points are the polder and water maps of the Netherlands and the cartographic heritage of the Dutch East Indies and West Indies Company. The Bodel Nijenhuis Collection was the first large public map collection in the Netherlands.

As important as modernism was to the University of Leiden, modernism in the sense of the application of thought to modern life, it was not evident in the book collection. Recent books often were lacking. The establishment of the Academic Fund in 1836, however, made it possible to fill lacunae in the library and in the second half of the nineteenth century the ship was well on course.

As the nineteenth century progressed, there was increasing tension between the two elements that are the work of a university - education and research. Was the purpose of the university collections essentially as illustration for education or were they primarily sources for scholarly investigation? The annual reports of the time indicate that the library
wished to act as a bridge between the two. Little by little, the library began to draw education quite literally inside its doors. The classes in Greek and Latin palaeography were given in the library on the basis of manuscripts. At the same time, the librarians wished to offer support in the broadest possible way to scholarship. Also from afar it participated in important scholarly projects such as the _Analecta Bollandiaca_, the _Bibliotheca Belgica_, the _Monumenta Germaniae Historica_ and editions of the _Société de l'Orient latin_. This international participation was the result of a conscious decision to agree to loan unique manuscripts, both Eastern and Western, to foreign institutions and individuals. By far the most loans were to German cities: Emden, Bonn, Marburg, Heidelberg, Berlin, Breslau, Halle, Leipzig, and farther to the east, to Budapest and Saint Petersburg. With its 60,000 books, 30,000 dissertations, 3,000 Western and 2,600 East-
ern manuscripts and pamphlet collection, Leiden figured among the medium-sized university libraries of Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. The special importance of Leiden stemmed primarily from its Western and Eastern manuscripts and in its liberal policy in the use of those collections.

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Atlas by Arend Buggevem (Amsterdam 1675) from the Bodel Nijenhuis Collection.
From two World Wars to cyberspace, 1900-2000

On the eve of the First World War, the University of Leiden library had a collection of approximately 500,000 books. In 1939 that number was one million, and in the year 2000 more than two million. The Eastern and Western manuscript collections, the old prints and the map collection all kept pace. Everywhere in the world, libraries were forced to develop new methods to deal with the unprecedented growth in book production. And once again, technological developments provided the solution. Automation of library processes that started in the mid-seventies made it possible for libraries to continue to bring books and readers together. Scarcely a generation later, the roles were reversed: suddenly it was the new technologies that forced libraries to increase their field of activity and to reorganise. The speed with which the information revolution took hold caught many unawares. After an initial period of uncertainty,
The library of Cornelius Petrus Tiele, a historian of theology, was donated to the library by his widow in 1902. To mark this bequest, the so-called Tiele Room was created, a reading room especially for scholars and researchers in the humanities. The room remained in use until 1983.

Libraries adapted to the new situation and added electronic information to their traditional offerings. It was no longer the bearer of information that was important but the information itself, and the focus was placed on selecting and verifying the quality of that information. This was a responsibility for university libraries as well, which had long had the task of spreading scholarly information.

The unrestrained expansion of the Belleépoque which spanned from 1880 to 1914 brought with it great changes in the duties of those in charge of the cultural heritage. Librarians, archivists and museum directors witnessed the professionalisation of their positions. In universities, the professor or lecturer who also functioned as librarian was replaced by a library specialist who at the same time carried out scholarly activities.

The career of the librarian became less important for the library, the development of the institution itself more so. Up until 1947 there were three library heads in Leiden: Scato Gocko de Vries (1897-1924), F.C. Wieder (1924-1938) and T.P. Sevensma (1938-1947).

Dutch libraries went through a dynamic period up until 1914; Leiden was no exception to this general rule. Requests and donations streamed in. For the first time in its history the library had a considerable budget to buy books, even if the purchases were done in fits and starts. The annual budgets show this clearly. Between 1904 and 1914 the available funds almost doubled; during the First World War the amount remained more or less stable; at the beginning of the inter-war period there was a slight rise, but in 1923 the approaching economic crisis cast its shadow and a budget cut of twenty percent was made. With the exception of a few years in which special credits were extended, the library had no more to spend on books in 1940 than it had had in 1918.

At the beginning of the century, a first attempt at a central catalogue for Dutch university libraries was made. The expanding collections resulted in increasing lack of space,
in Leiden as well as elsewhere. The purchase of surrounding buildings, the reconstruction of existing buildings advanced in rapid tempo, but to no avail. The processing of the new works faltered; for a library this was a worrisome foreshadowing of an approaching implosion. The situation became even more hopeless in 1946 when the new wave of post-war publications flooded the library, before the previous wave had even been dealt with.

The library arranged for nineteenth century scholars slowly made way for the new ideal of a universal library. The idea was that members of the university community should be able to find what they need in the library for their studies and research. If a book was not available, the library would ask to borrow it from somewhere else. The notion of the universal library led as it were by itself to the growth of interlibrary loans. 

Aside from central university libraries, specialised libraries came into being in hospitals, laboratories and institutes. But there was also a need for departmental libraries based on the German model of Seminarbibliotheken where students could find the works they needed on the shelves and learn to use the material on the spot under the direction of their professors. In 1919 and 1920, eight departmental libraries opened officially in the library building on Rapenburg: two for law, two for theology and four for languages/literature and history. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the central figure of the library was the reader, and his needs the primary driving force. In a university library that reader was the student first of all, who needed to have available all of the tools necessary for independent study. This change in attitude had far-reaching consequences. Gaps were filled, neglected areas attended to, services were extended and opening hours increased. In 1915 for the first the library was open during the evening. 

At the end of the nineteenth century another development was seen: the library opened up as it were, by making its collections available for exhibitions both inside and outside its own doors. Up until that moment it had only been the individual reader who had come sought specific books, manuscripts or maps.

Little is known about the library during the Second World War, which is true of other scholarly libraries as well. It is almost unremarked, for example, that the library remained open after the university was closed down by the