The Dutch Republic, Centre of the European Book Trade in the 17th Century
by Paul G. Hoftijzer

In the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic witnessed its Golden Age. The reasons for this phenomenon are diverse, but it impacted all branches of Dutch society, including the production, distribution and consumption of printed media. The book trade benefitted from a lack of control, the result of the country’s remarkable political structure and absence of a state religion. Waves of religious and economic immigrants provided the necessary manpower, skills and creativity. Following the workings of a stable market economy, printers and publishers turned imported raw materials, including news and information, into finished products – books, newspapers, magazines – which they sold wherever there was a demand for them, at home as well as abroad. High rates of literacy and education encouraged a thriving book culture. The ascendency, however, was shortlived, as it also depended on the temporarily weak position of neighbouring countries. By the middle of the eighteenth century, with Britain, France and the German states on the rise, the 'Dutch miracle' was over, in the world of books as well as in any other.

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Introduction: The Dutch Republic and Its Golden Age

One of the most striking outcomes of the religious and political conflicts in 16th-century Europe was the creation of the Republic of the Seven United Dutch Provinces. This new state, officially founded in 1588, had its origin in the revolt of the increasingly Protestant Low Countries against their autocratic Catholic overlord Philip II (1527–1598), king of Spain. For a long time the future of the young nation hung in the balance, as the Spanish Habsburg empire continued to wage war against its rebellious subjects. Only in 1648, at the Peace of Westphalia, was the Dutch Republic finally recognized as an independent state.

Compared to its neighbours, the Dutch Republic was an extraordinary political entity. Not only did it lack a crowned head – the Princes of Orange who acted as hereditary stadholders (governors) were in essence servants of the state –, it also was a federal state, a union of seven independent provinces, which were willing to hand over their authority only on matters of foreign relations and warfare. The position of central government, the States General, which met irregularly in The Hague, thus was weak. Moreover, within each province power was shared by various political bodies. In the largest and richest province, Holland, the cities were the predominant political power. The largest and wealthiest of them was Amsterdam, which at times acted like an independent city state.
In spite, or perhaps because of its exceptional political system, the Dutch Republic witnessed an unparalleled flourishing in almost every aspect of society in the 17th century. A driving force in this development was the influx of large numbers of immigrants, many of them religious and economic refugees, coming first and foremost from the Southern Netherlands (modern Belgium), which remained under Spanish control, but also from other regions such as France, Germany and Eastern Europe, the Iberian peninsula and the British Isles. These newcomers brought with them knowledge and experience in trade and industry and, equally important, a zeal to rebuild their lives. The economy was further stimulated by Dutch maritime superiority and commercial expansion across the globe, which made the republic a trading place for goods from all over the world. At the same time, a financial market was developed, which provided cheap investment capital and insurance. In addition, the authorities on the whole were reluctant to interfere with the economy.

Other factors contributed to the flourishing of the young state as well. Literacy was on the rise, particularly among the expanding middle classes in the cities, thanks to the availability of various forms of primary education. Around 1650 about half of the young adult population, male and female, in the cities was able to read and write. Many families were also able to send their children to secondary education, at the Latin and French schools which proliferated all over the country. In addition, five of the seven provinces could boast institutions for higher education, of which Leiden University, founded in 1575, was the oldest and most important. As these universities were young, they were able to offer a modern teaching programme and good facilities, which attracted many foreign students as well. Leiden even had a school of engineering, where classes were given in Dutch instead of Latin.

Education stimulated cultural and intellectual life. The 17th century saw a blossoming of various genres of Dutch literature, in the traditional chambers of rhetoric (rederijkerskamers), in the municipal playhouses and theatres, in more or less formalized literary societies such as Nil Volentibus Arduum, founded in Amsterdam in 1669, and in religious circles. In the visual arts there was an unprecedented explosion of talent, particularly in painting, drawing and printmaking, the most famous exponent of which was Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669), who excelled in all three art forms. Intellectual exchange was stimulated by a remarkable tolerance in Dutch society, partly the result of idealistic notions concerning freedom of thought and religion, partly the pragmatic outcome of so many people with diverse backgrounds having to live in close proximity of each other. Although Dutch 17th-century society shows signs of an early "pillarization" of the religious segments among the population, these groups were never cut off from each other. Even the Portuguese and German Jews enjoyed relatively large freedoms. Amsterdam had its Jewish quarter, but it was not a ghetto. Research was primarily conducted at the universities, but there were quite a few amateurs, collectors and private scholars, who were particularly active in the fields of history and the natural sciences. One of the most famous Dutch scientists, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723), the inventor of the microscope, in daily life was a linen draper in Delft without any academic background.

Printing and Bookselling in the Dutch Republic

All these factors – political, social, demographic, economic, religious, cultural and intellectual – equally provide the key to an understanding of the remarkable success the Dutch Republic had in the sphere of publishing, printing and bookselling. It has been said, perhaps not without exaggeration, that in the 17th century more books were printed in the Netherlands than in all other European countries put together. Still, the output and diversity of book production in this period are impressive. According to the Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands (STCN; the Dutch national bibliography), between 1601 and 1700 hundreds of printer-publishers were active, producing well over 67,000 titles. The majority of these titles – nearly 33 percent (22,000 titles) – were produced in Amsterdam, the country’s main book trade centre. But books were printed all over the Netherlands, in The Hague, the centre of national government, as well as in the provincial capitals such as Middelburg, Zwolle and Leeuwarden; in industrial towns like Delft, Haarlem and Alkmaar and in sea ports such as Vlissingen (Flushing), Rotterdam, Maassluis, Enkhuizen and Harlingen; and of course in the university cities Leiden, Franeker, Groningen, Utrecht and Harderwijk. Even in some of the larger villages, like De Rijp in North Holland, a bookshop or printing establishment could be found, while hawkers and other itinerant salesmen (and women) roamed the countryside with a variety of cheap printed matter, pamphlets, almanacs, songbooks, prints and the like.

Immigrants
How then did printing and bookselling profit from these favourable circumstances? One of the most important social factors benefitting the Dutch book trade was the constant arrival of newcomers. Many of them came to the country as religious exiles, others were lured by the promising economic prospects. In the decades around 1600 a veritable exodus of human capital occurred from the Southern Netherlands to the North as a result of the Spanish persecution of Protestants. Among them were numerous printers and booksellers, who brought with them professional skills and expertise in typefounding, printing and publishing as the Southern Netherlands had been an important region for book production. Later in the 17th century another substantial wave of refugees arrived, consisting of large numbers of Huguenots who had been expelled from France following the revocation by Louis XIV (1638–1715) of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Among them were, again, many printers and booksellers, most of whom set up business in Amsterdam and The Hague. Their publications, including innovative genres such as scholarly journals and newspapers, are mainly in French and written and edited by prominent Huguenot intellectuals. The great success of the French book in the Dutch Republic, which to a very large extent was the result of the efforts of these immigrant entrepreneurs, reinforced the position of the Dutch book trade on the European market at a time when Latin was beginning to lose ground as the international language of scholarly communication.

Politics

The federal and particularist political system of the Dutch Republic meant that the government was not able to exercise the same degree of control over the book trade as existed in centralized monarchies like France or England. Although the States General, and in its wake the provincial States, regularly issued decrees and proclamations against the publication of texts that were deemed seditious, blasphemous or otherwise harmful to the state and the public interest, such works could still appear without much difficulty. Sometimes they sympathized with the contents of the work, as was the case with certain factional publications or the writings of political or religious exiles. Sometimes they were unwilling to act because they were all too aware of the economic benefits such publications brought. The Amsterdam publisher Willem Jansz Blaeu (1571–1638), who is renowned for his production of a great variety of high quality publications – from books on navigation, maps and multi–volume atlases to classical editions and literary and scholarly works –, was also active in the mass production of Catholic church books intended both for the use of Dutch Catholics and for export abroad. Although the church council of the Dutch Reformed Church in Amsterdam repeatedly complained about this activity to the city magistrates, Blaeu was left unhindered, as the production of these books was profitable not only to the printer, but also to the city’s economy.

More often the authorities simply lacked the instruments to control this sort of activity. In the Dutch cities so many printers were at work, that it was virtually impossible to check if they complied with the rules and regulations. Moreover, it was easy to hide behind a facade of false imprints – the most famous one being “A Cologne, Chez Pierre Du Marteau” – and antedated years of publication, or to use worn-out type, making identification of the printer very difficult. Foreign diplomats were astonished by the pragmatic approach of the Dutch government; in response to their complaints about offensive pamphlets or newspaper articles published against their government, they were told not to make too much of a fuss, as it would only draw more attention to the
publication. Only in periods of acute political crisis, as occurred in the years 1618–1619, 1650 and 1672, were serious attempts made by the authorities to curb the printing press. It is telling, however, that it was precisely in these periods that the production of pamphlets, which gave a voice to public opinion, exploded.\(^\text{13}\)

**Economics**

In economic terms the book trade profited greatly from the flourishing industrial and mercantile climate. A good infrastructure of roads and waterways, which included newly-dug canals between the major cities, made transport quick, safe and reliable, while the Rhine and Meuse rivers and the North Sea gave easy access to other European markets, particularly in France, the British Isles, the German states, Scandinavia and the Baltic region. Thanks to low interest rates (on average around 5 percent) and a well-developed financial market, capital was cheaply available, an important asset for an industry in which money was often locked up in stocks of books (\(\rightarrow\) Media Link #bo). Nor was there a shortage of skilled labour in the various branches of book making, some of which developed into separate enterprises. Independent type foundries could be found in Leiden and Amsterdam,\(^\text{14}\) while jobbing printers, who did not publish books themselves anymore but only worked to order, were well established in most cities by the middle of the century.

The absence of strict external (by the government) and internal (by the industry) economic regulation prevented market protection and excessive monopolies in the most lucrative publications. The national and provincial authorities did issue privileges, but their only function was the temporary (on average fifteen years) protection of the copyright of publishers and – sometimes – authors. When in 1635 Machteld Jacobs, the widow of the official printer of the States General, Hillebrant Jacobsz van Wouw (ca. –1622) (\(\rightarrow\) Media Link #b1) in The Hague, obtained the official privilege for the production of the new "authorized version" of the Bible in the Dutch language sponsored by the States General, there was an outcry from other publishers, who equally demanded a piece of the cake. Supported by their municipal governments, they violated the privilege by openly pirating the official edition (first published in 1637), thus providing ample proof that the power of the States General was limited. Later it was decided that no publisher would be able to obtain a privilege on commercially lucrative (parts of) bibles, schoolbooks and editions of the classics.\(^\text{15}\)

In spite of the economic weight of the book trade, separate trade guilds of printers and booksellers were a relatively late phenomenon in the Dutch Republic. Printers, bookbinders and booksellers originally were incorporated in the guilds of St. Luke, which represented first and foremost the interests of painters, sculptors and other artisans. The first book trade guild was established in Middelburg in 1590, but in important cities like Amsterdam, Leiden, Rotterdam and The Hague, such organisations did not come into existence until the second half of the 17th century or even later. Moreover, their powers were limited to the training of apprentices, the supervision of copyright privileges and the regulation of public book sales. In Amsterdam, Catholics and Jews were allowed to become members, while women could succeed to the businesses of their deceased husbands or fathers. Not a few of them turned out to be excellent book trade entrepreneurs.\(^\text{16}\)

The workings of the Dutch staple market, importing raw materials and exporting finished products, can be observed in the book trade as well. Two essential raw materials for book production, type metal (a mixture of lead, tin and antimony) and paper (made from rags), had to be obtained from other countries. Base metal came from mining areas in Germany and Britain. Paper was produced in the Low Countries, but the great majority was bought in vast quantities from the Basel-Mulhouse region and the South-West of France, where Dutch merchants had invested heavily in paper mills. Enormous quantities of imported paper were consumed in the Dutch Republic, but some was re-exported to other countries, particularly England. Only by the end of the century, when paper imports from France came to a standstill following the persecution of the Huguenots and the protectionist policies of the French government, a serious threat of paper shortages loomed. Newly established and technologically advanced paper mills in the Zaan, Veluwe and Achterhoek districts were soon able, however, to satisfy national demand and even produce for export.\(^\text{17}\)

Another, less tangible raw material for book production was news and information. Because of the extensive Dutch foreign trade network (\(\rightarrow\) Media Link #b2), news from all over the globe travelled easily to the Dutch Republic, where it was converted into print. As early as 1618 one of the first European newspapers was printed in Amsterdam, appropriately entitled Courante uyt Italien, Duystslandt, &c. (News from Italy, Germany etc.), an example that was soon followed by other Dutch publishers. By the second half of the century,
several cities would have their own newspapers, and sometimes more than one, not only in Dutch, but also in French and other languages, which were sent to subscribers both at home and abroad. One of the most famous was the Opregte Haerlemsche Courant, the first issue of which came out in Haarlem in 1656 and was considered the best newspaper of its time (Media Link #b3).\footnote{18}

In the 1680s the first scholarly journals began to appear, most of them written in French and edited by Huguenot journalists (Media Link #b4) and scholars. Examples are the Amsterdam Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, edited in succession by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) (Media Link #b5), Jean Leclerc (1657–1736) (Media Link #b6) and Jacques Bernard (1658–1718) (Media Link #b7) from 1684 to 1718, and the Rotterdam Histoire des ouvrages des savans, edited by Henri Basnage de Beauval (1656–1710) (Media Link #b8) and Jacques Basnage de Beauval (1653–1723) (Media Link #b9) from 1687 to 1709. Containing reviews and scholarly news these journals provided an essential service to readers all over Europe who needed expert guidance in finding their way in the fast growing number of learned books produced by the European printing presses.\footnote{19} This pivotal function of the Dutch publisher-bookseller as an intermediary in the international exchange of news and information is aptly illustrated by the 17th-century printer’s mark of the Amsterdam bookseller Johannes van den Bergh (active 1660–1709). He is depicted in his bookshop, holding in his hands a newsheet with the text “Altijt wat nieus” (Always something new) (Media Link #ba).\footnote{20}

Books in Bulk

That the Dutch book industry was internationally oriented can also be seen in other sectors of publishing, particularly in the mass production of those books for which an almost insatiable demand existed. The most-read book in Europe was of course the Bible, but in many countries Bibles were difficult to obtain because of their high price resulting from trade monopolies and problems of production and distribution. Well aware of the gaps in the market, Dutch printers produced editions of Bibles in almost every European language, not only, or necessarily, out of a religious commitment to spreading the word of God, but to make money. A Spanish folio Bible was printed in Amsterdam as early as 1602, while editions of the much praised Italian translation (Media Link #bb) of the Psalms and New Testament by the Swiss-born Protestant theologian Giovanni Diodati (1576–1649) (Media Link #bc) appeared in Haarlem in 1664–1665. French Bibles, New Testaments and Psalm books came out from 1620s onwards in numerous editions, intended partly for use in the many Walloon churches in the country, partly for export. In the 1630s the Leiden printer Jacob Marcus (ca. 1605–ca. 1654) (Media Link #bd) – a native of Hamburg – produced a series of well printed blackletter editions in small format of the Lutheran Bible in German and in Swedish, all intended for export. The last edition of Marcus’ Swedish Bible, published in 1637, is famous, as all copies were lost when the ship that carried them to Sweden was shipwrecked.\footnote{21} Bibles were even printed in Amsterdam in Hungarian and Armenian, mainly because facilities for the production of these labour- and capital-intensive and typographically complex books were lacking in the regions for which they were intended.\footnote{22}

The greatest commercial success, however, were English Bibles, both the puritan "Geneva" translation and the Anglican King James Bible. They were produced in truly enormous numbers almost exclusively for the British market. Some of the first entrepreneurs in this field were exiled English nonconformists working in Amsterdam and Leiden in the first half of the 17th century, but soon Dutch printers entered this highly profitable business. In the last decades of the century an extraordinary partnership for the production of English Bibles existed in Amsterdam between the Catholic widow Susanna Schippers and the Jewish printer Joseph Athias (ca. 1635–1700) (Media Link #be), who appear to have used a new printing technique in order to cope with massive demand from Britain. Athias once boasted that he had supplied every milkmaid and cowboy in England with his Bibles, which were printed with the official imprint of the king’s printers Thomas Barker and John Bill (died 1630) (Media Link #bf) in London, even though these had been dead for many years.\footnote{23}

The same can be said for the production of Jewish religious books in Spanish and Hebrew, used by the Jewish congregations in the diaspora. Following the demise of Hebrew printing in Northern Italy, Basel and Prague, Amsterdam in particular, thanks to its growing Sephardic and Ashkenazi (Media Link #bg) population, developed an extensive Jewish printing industry. One of the pioneers was the learned rabbi of the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, Menasseh Ben Israel (1604–1657) (Media Link #bh), who between 1627 and 1655 printed well over seventy books in Hebrew and Spanish, both religious texts and scholarly works. Interestingly, from the beginning Jewish printing attracted a good amount of financial investment from non-Jewish Dutch publishers and financiers, but direct
orders for ritual books in Hebrew and Yiddish also came from Jewish congregations in Poland and the Baltic states. The domination of Amsterdam Jewish printing was so strong, that printers in other countries simply could not compete, which led them to use false Amsterdam imprints or declarations claiming that their books were printed with the much admired Dutch type fonts.\footnote{19}

Book Piracy

Another group of books that were produced in large quantities in the Dutch Republic for export, were pirated editions of foreign bestsellers. Dutch printers were constantly on the lookout for interesting publications that they could copy. These included, besides bibles, literary texts, scholarly books, and even musical compositions.\footnote{20} Because they were able to produce high quality books at competitive prices, their piracies often pushed the original editions out of the market. The French book historian Henri-Jean Martin, in his study of the Parisian book trade in the 17th century, describes the period around 1650 as "le temps des Elzevier", because the Leiden-Amsterdam firm flooded the Parisian market with cheap, but at the same time well printed reprints of French authors such as François Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553) (\texttt{Media Link #bi}), Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) (\texttt{Media Link #bi}), Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695) (\texttt{Media Link #bk}) and Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac (ca. 1594–1654) (\texttt{Media Link #bi}).\footnote{21} The Elzeviers were even said to have spies in Parisian printing houses, who secretly sent the proofs of books being printed there to Holland, so that they could be copied and published well in advance of the original work. Naturally, this practice gave rise to numerous complaints. Of the large piracy factory established in Amsterdam at the end of the 17th century by the brothers Jean Henry Huguetan (1664–1749) (\texttt{Media Link #bm}), Marc Huguetan (1655–1702) (\texttt{Media Link #bn}) and Pierre Huguetan (1674–1740) (\texttt{Media Link #bo}), members of an old and highly respected bookselling family in Lyon who had been forced to leave the city after 1685, it was said that they did not care who they damaged or where.\footnote{22} However, book piracy should not only be seen in a purely negative way. The practice also served as a necessary corrective to the ills of monopolism and mercantilism, which resulted in artificially high prices and problems of distribution. The fact, for example, that Dutch publishers were able to sell their cheap reprints of French literary works or Italian musical compositions in Scandinavia or Russia, did not necessarily damage the interests of the original publishers, as they had no market there.\footnote{23}

International vs National Book Trade

The Dutch publishers often sold their pirated editions via all sorts of smuggling routes, but for their regular international book trade the made use of an old and established trade networks. Throughout the 17th century they frequented the semi-annual book fairs at Frankfurt, and later Leipzig, in order to exchange their latest publications.\footnote{24} At the time, books as a rule were traded on the basis of an exchange of printed sheets or quires. As books from the Netherlands were much in demand abroad, Dutch booksellers were able to demand more favourable exchange rates, such as two sheets for one, which led to the creation of large stocks of imported books. One year after the death of the last of the Amsterdam Elzeviers, Daniel Elzevier (1626–1680) (\texttt{Media Link #bp}), a book auction was held to empty his warehouse. The catalogue numbers well over 700 pages containing some 20.000 books from all over Europe.

In Frankfurt the Dutch booksellers also worked as middlemen for colleagues in other countries who could not come to the fairs themselves. During the last decades of the century, for instance, booksellers in Amsterdam, Leiden and Rotterdam acted on behalf of booksellers in London specialized in the so-called "Latin trade", the import of scholarly and scientific books.\footnote{25} Some of the bigger firms had sales representatives or even branch stores in strategically located cities such as Paris, Geneva, Florence, Vienna, Danzig, Copenhagen and Stockholm. When in 1722 the renowned Amsterdam firm of Janssonius van Waesberge was partly liquidated, they ran four bookstores; the largest one was in Amsterdam, two smaller shops were located in Frankfurt and Leipzig, and then there was a "considerable bookshop" in Danzig, said to be the largest of the city.\footnote{26}

However, the home market was no less important, thanks to the growing population, high literacy and the flourishing cultural and intellectual climate.\footnote{27} The foundation of new universities in Leiden (1575), Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614), Utrecht (1636) and Harderwijk (1648), created excellent opportunities for specialized scholarly publishers. The most famous Dutch academic publishers,
the Elzeviers, were active in Leiden for more than a century, from the end of the 16th century until the beginning of the 18th,\[^{33}\] while separate branches operated for shorter periods in Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. In Leiden, the Elzeviers served as university printers from 1620 to 1712, thanks to the excellent quality of their printwork and large assortment of typefaces, including commercially unattractive fonts such as Arabic and Ethiopian, which were used to print the oriental studies and text editions of Leiden professors.

But whereas the Elzeviers had many national and international contacts, through which they could supply their home clientele with books in Latin, French, German, Spanish, Italian and English, many of the smaller bookshops only sold Dutch books. Some were active as general booksellers with a varied assortment of books. Others operated in well-developed niches, such as religious texts, books on navigation, travel journals, almanacs, schoolbooks, music, literary works, and illustrated books and prints.\[^{34}\] Often these entrepreneurs participated in Dutch distribution networks, particularly with regard to books intended for the many religious convictions.\[^{35}\]

Another very important outlet of books within the Dutch Republic were the book auctions.\[^{36}\] The first book sale with a printed catalogue was held in 1599, when part the library of the recently deceased statesman and theologian Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde (1538–1598) (\[Media Link #bq\]) was auctioned by Louis Elzevier (1540–1617) (\[Media Link #bs\]) in Leiden. Book auctions soon became very popular; by the middle of the 17th century in Leiden alone some 20 to 25 book sales were held each year, while the total number of book auctions in the entire Republic for the 17th century runs into several thousand.\[^{37}\] As many of the Dutch private book collections were sold by auction after the death of their owner, an ever growing quantity of second-hand books was constantly being re-cycled, to the great benefit of book buyers.

Readers and Private and Public Libraries

The availability of a large volume of books for domestic consumption points to a substantial reading public in the Dutch Republic (\[Media Link #bs\]). Still, books cannot be said to have been a common item in Dutch households. A survey of 17th-century estate inventories in Leiden shows that even among the more affluent middle and upper classes book ownership was not self-evident. In about half of the material households described in these inventories, books are absent. In the other half, the majority of book "collections" are limited to no more than a handful of books. The "top ten" of most common books as a rule is religious (and predominantly Protestant) in character; it almost always includes one or more copies of the Bible or New Testament, a Psalm book, a catechism, some devotional texts, Flavii Josephus' (ca. 37–ca. 100) (\[Media Link #bt\]) History of the Jews, a book of martyrs, and one or more local or national histories. Larger collections of up to fifty titles are rare, big libraries of a couple of hundred books even rarer.\[^{38}\] But although in terms of percentage the number of such more substantial libraries is small, the large number of surviving auction catalogues, often containing a thousand or more titles, is in itself sufficient proof of a lively book culture, particularly among the academically educated upper echelon of Dutch society. One such private collection that against all odds was not sold and dispersed after the death of the owner is the Bibliotheca Thysiana (\[Media Link #bu\]) in Leiden, founded in 1653 by the young Leiden jurist Joannes Thyssius (1622–1653) (\[Media Link #bv\]), who in his last will had stipulated that his library of about 4,000 books and many more pamphlets should be preserved "tot publycque dienst der studie" (for the public benefit of study).\[^{39}\] The library, still housed in its original, purpose-built quarters dating from 1655 on Leiden’s Rapenburg canal, is a striking example of what an ambitious bibliophile with sufficient financial resources could achieve. The collection is, however, not representative of the nature of most major libraries. Whereas Thyssius, who had almost unlimited funds, could aim for a universal library, representing classical and modern authors on every subject imaginable, most book owners built their collections for practical or professional purposes. A medical doctor would first and foremost own medical books, a Protestant minister theological ones.\[^{40}\]

The Bibliotheca Thysiana, a private collection turned into a public library is unique. But there were other institutional libraries. Most universities had their own library, often built on the remains of the book collections of Catholic churches and monasteries which had been dissolved at the end of the 16th century. The oldest is Leiden university library (\[Media Link #bw\]), founded shortly after the creation of the university. In 1595 its first catalogue was printed, the Nomenclator, listing some 450 books which were chained to the lecterns. At regular intervals new catalogues were printed, indicating the continuous growth of the collection. In 1690 the library was almost doubled in size by the acquisition of the large collection of the polymath Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) (\[Media Link #bx\]), which included important books and manuscripts that originally belonged to the library of Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689) (\[Media Link #by\]), whom Vossius had briefly served as librarian.\[^{41}\]
Quite a few cities had their own municipal libraries. Presumably the oldest one is the *librije* ([Media Link #bz](#)) of Zutphen, which is first mentioned in the 15th century and in 1564 was housed in a newly built annexe of the city's St. Walburgis church (where it still resides; it is the only surviving example of a chained library in the Netherlands) to serve as an ideological arsenal for the Counter-Reformation. In the seventeenth century this and other city libraries served the needs of a small local elite of town administrators and church ministers, who could obtain a key. An exception was the municipal library of Amsterdam, founded in 1578 and housed in a small chamber of the New Church. It prided itself for being open to everyone who could read, but did not have the means to buy books. In 1632 it was converted into the library of the Amsterdam Athenaeum Illustre ([Media Link #c0](#)), the precursor of modern Amsterdam University. Other institutional libraries could occasionally be found in the local secondary Latin Schools, where boys were educated for university, in some Dutch Reformed churches, for example the library in the New Church of Enkhuizen ([Media Link #c1](#)), and in the seminaries of religious congregations, such as the *Ets Haim* (Tree of Life) library ([Media Link #c2](#)) of the religious school of the Jewish Sephardic community in Amsterdam. Among its users was young Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) ([Media Link #c3](#)).

### Epilogue

What comes up must go down. This universal law also applies to the success of the Dutch book trade in the 17th century. The causes of the downturn were already present in some of the conditions that had made the remarkable flourishing of printing, publishing and bookselling possible. As it happens this flourishing to a considerable extent was also the result of the temporarily weak position of the Republic’s neighbouring countries. During the 17th century the Southern Netherlands suffered from economic stagnation and government control of the press, as well as from the drain of talent and capital towards the north, which smothered the élan of the previous century. Although several important publishers were still at work, such as the house of Plantin-Moretus and the Verdussen family in Antwerp and Eugène-Henri Fricx (1644–1730) ([Media Link #c4](#)) in Brussels, they largely concentrated their activities on safe publications for which there was a steady demand, particularly in the sphere of religious books. The book trade in the German territories was severely hampered by the great destruction of people, livelihoods and infrastructure during the Thirty Years War (1609–1648) ([Media Link #c5](#)), and took a long time to recover its prominence on the European book market. Spain and Italy lost their dominant position as the focus of economic activity had shifted away from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Both England and France were torn by civil war around the middle of the century, while the London book trade suffered a heavy blow in the Great Fire of London (1672), when the entire stock of the London booksellers was burnt. Dutch publishers were eager to fill the voids left by their colleagues abroad.

But although some of these regions never fully regained their former primacy, France, England and some of the German states were surely on the ascendancy by the end of the century. Weakened by a series of protracted wars around 1700, the Dutch economy, and with it the book trade, began to stagnate. International competition became fiercer, and the markets where the Dutch had once ruled were no exception. At the same time, fundamental changes were occurring in scholarly communication, such as the gradual decline of Latin in favour of French and other vernacular languages, with the exception, however, of Dutch. The recession of the book trade was slow but inevitable, in spite of various attempts to redress the balance, including a re-orientation on the home market. Later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Dutch book trade entrepreneurs could only look back with envy and astonishment at the achievements of their predecessors of the 17th century. That the Golden Age had faded away was also observed by foreigners. This is what the German political economist Philipp Andreas Nemnich (1764–1822) ([Media Link #c6](#)) wrote in 1809 in his *Original-Beiträge zur eigentlichen Kenntnis von Holland*:

The great era of profit for the Dutch book trade lasted for about a century, until the middle of the previous century, when as it happens together with the most diligent and highly regarded Dutch works, almost all French works of importance, as well as novels, and liberty seeking texts, were printed and published in Amsterdam, The Hague &c. ... The period came to an end about fifty years ago. France now printed its own works, books were printed and published in Switzerland, the German book trade expanded, and other causes as well.

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### Appendix
Bibliography

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idem: Johannes van Ravesteyn, "Libraire Européen" or Local Trader?, in: Christiane M.G. Berkvens-Stevelinck et al. (eds.): "Le Magasin de l'Univers", Leiden 1992, pp. 251–263.


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idem: De Papiermolens in de Provincie Zuid-Holland, alsmede in Zeeland, Utrecht, Noord-Brabant, Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe, Wormerveer 1973 (Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Papierindustrie 2).

idem: De Papiermolens in de Provincie Gelderland als mede in Overijssel en Limburg, Haarlem 1985 (Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Papierindustrie 3).


Notes


5. Short-Title Catalogue, Netherlands (STCN), available online at: www.stcn.nl/ (last accessed 31 August 2014). For a variety of reasons, the information provided by the STCN presents a distorted view when used for statistical purposes. For example, titles of small publications such as pamphlets and academic dissertations carry the same weight as books running to hundreds of pages, while much ephemeral material is not catalogued. Nor is the vast production of graphic images included, also because the catalogue is based on a limited number of libraries. On these and other issues, see the special issue of the Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis, 16 (2009), which is entirely devoted to the STCN.


15. On privileges, see Hoftijzer, Privilèges de Librairie dans les Anciens Pays-Bas, forthcoming.
18. On Dutch newspapers, see Dahl, Amsterdam 1939; Schneider / Hemels, De Nederlandse Krant 1979; Lankhorst, Newspapers in the Netherlands 2001. Practically all surviving Dutch newspapers of the early-modern period are accessible and searchable online through the website of "Delpher": http://kranten.delpher.nl (last accessed 31 August 2014).
19. Much research on early modern scholarly journals from the Dutch Republic has been done by members of the Pierre Bayle Institute of Nijmegen University. For a general survey, see Bots, Les Provinces Unies Centre 1983; see also Hofwijzer / Lankhorst, Drukkers, Boekverkopers en Lezers 2000, pp. 140–143.
22. On the printer of the most famous of these Hungarian bibles, produced in Amsterdam in 1685, see Haiman, Nicholas Kis 1983. On Armenian bibles (and other books), see Lane, The Diaspora of Armenian Printing 2012, chapter IV, Armenian Printing in Amsterdam.
33. They served as printers to the university from 1620 tot 1713. For an overview of their activity, see Davies, The World of the Elseviers 1954.
34. In Amsterdam in particular numerous print publishers were active; cf. Orenstein, Print Publishers in the Netherlands 1993; Kolfin, Gedrukt tot Amsterdam 2011.
35. For just two examples, one of a general bookseller in Enkhuizen (North Holland), the other of a mennonite bookseller in Leeuwarden (Friesland), see Hofwijzer, Een boekenvelling in Enkhuizen 2009; Visser, "In de zaadzaaijer" 1995–1969.
36. The essence of the book auction was that a printed catalogue was printed beforehand, so that prospective buyers could see what was on offer. Cf. van Selm, The Introduction of the Printed Book Auction Catalogue 1985, pp. 16–54, 115–149.
37. Only a fraction of the printed auction catalogues from the 17th century has survived; cf. van Selm, Een Menigtheu Treffelijcke Boecken 1877, passim; Lankhorst, Dutch Book Auctions 2001. Nearly 4,000 17th and 18th-century catalogues have so far been made available in microfilm and recently also digital format by the project Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599–1800, of the Leiden publisher IDC (an imprint of E.J. Brill): http://bsc.idcpublishers.info/ (last accessed 31 August 2014).
40. In a forthcoming study, Esther Mourits (Leiden University) discusses Johannes Thysius’s book collection in comparison to other 17th century book collections in the fields of medicine, law and history.
42. For a general survey of the early-modern history of Dutch institutional libraries, see Schneiders, Nederlandse bibliotheekgeschiedenis 1997, chaps. 1–2.
Indices

DDC: 002, 070, 338, 382

Locations

Achterhoek DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4552265-0]
Alkmaar DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4243503-1]
Amsterdam DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4001783-7]
Antwerp DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4002364-3]
Baltic States DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/400479-4]
Belgium DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4005406-8]
British Isles DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4090131-2]
Cologne DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4031483-2]
Copenhagen DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4032533-7]
De Rijp DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4389264-4]
Delft DNB [http://d-nb.info/gnd/4011569-3]
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• [Image](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.38863)
  Adriaen van Ostade (1610–1685), Schoolmaster with three pupils at a table, etching, ca. 1671–1679, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-1957-656

Link #ah

• [Image](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.8101)
  Hendrick van der Burch (1627–ca. 1666), A Doctoral Degree Recipient at Leiden University around 1650, oil on canvas, 1650, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-2720

Link #ai


Link #aj


Link #ak


Link #al

• Anonymous artist, Plaque with a Portrait of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, tin-glazed earthenware, ca. 1725–1750, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, BK-NM-4444

Link #al

• [Image](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.14350)
  Jan Gillisz van Vliet (ca. 1610–1635), A hawker selling songs and pamphlets in a Dutch village, etching/engraving, ca. 1632–1634, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-33.363

Link #am

• [Image](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.191806)
  Jan Gillisz van Vliet (ca. 1610–1635), A hawker selling songs and pamphlets in a Dutch village, etching/engraving, ca. 1632–1634, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-33.363

Link #an

Link #ao
- Willem Sylvius (ca. 1521–1580) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/24507076) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/1020070978)

Link #ap
- Karel Silvius (ca. 155X–1619) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/12361522) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/1037501438)

Link #aq
- Christopher Plantin (ca. 1520–1589) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/120696841) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/11874004)
  ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11874004.html)

  (http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.380607)

  Hendrick Goltzius (1558–ca. 1617), Portrait of Christopher Plantin, etching, ca. 1581–1585, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-1884-A-7748

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- Franciscus I Raphelengius (1539–1597) VIAF (http://viaf.org/viaf/73982616) DNB (http://d-nb.info/gnd/100387608)
  ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd100387608.html)

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  ADB/NDB (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118804944.html)

Link #at

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- Johannes Phoonsen (1631–1702), The bookshops of the Huguenot booksellers François l'Honoré and Jacques Desbordes in Amsterdam, etching/engraving, 1715; source: Idem: Les loix et les coutumes du change des principales places de l'Europe ..., Amsterdam 1715; © Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag 938 F 2

Link #aw

Link #ax

Link #ay

• ![http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.108903](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.108903)
  Engraving: Jeremias Falck (ca. 1610–1677); text: Caspar van Baerle (1584–1648), Portrait of the Amsterdam publisher Willem Jansz Blaeu, engraving, ca. 1655–1677, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-50.564

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• ![http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.collect.82203](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.collect.82203)
  Pierre Marteau, Titlepage of G.B. Guarini, "Le berger fidele" with the fictitious imprint Cologne, print, 1677, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-26.673

Link #b0

• ![http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.190989](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.190989)
  Claes Jansz Visscher II (ca. 1586–1652), The Amsterdam Exchange, etching/engraving, 1612, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-1880-A-3841

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• Hillebrant Jacobsz van Wouw (ca. –1622) VIAF ![http://viaf.org/viaf/7443466](http://viaf.org/viaf/7443466) DNB ![http://d-nb.info/gnd/103750142X](http://d-nb.info/gnd/103750142X)

Link #b2


Link #b3

• ![http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.6225](http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.6225)
  Jan de Bray (ca. 1626–1697), The Haarlem publisher of the "Oprechte Haerlemsche Courant", Abraham Casteleyn and his wife Margarieta van Bancken, oil on canvas, 1663, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-3280

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Link #b9


Link #ba

Laurens van Zanten (1661–1717), Device "Always something new" of the Amsterdam printer Iohannes van den Berg, print, 1661; source: Idem: Spiegel der gedenckweerdigste wonderen en geschiedenissen onses tijds, Amsterdam 1661; © Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag; © Amsterdam Bibliotheek KVB Universiteitsbibliotheek UVA

Link #bb


Link #bc


Link #bd

Jacob Marcus (ca. 1605–ca. 1654) VIAF [7] (http://viaf.org/viaf/172820504)

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Link #bv
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Link #bx

Link #by

Link #bz
- Interior of the "librije" at Zutphen

Link #c0
- The Atheneum Illustre in Amsterdam

Link #c1
- Interior of the "librije" at Enkhuizen

Link #c2
- Ets Haim (Tree of Life) library of the religious school of the Sephardic Jewish community in Amsterdam

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