

EDITORIAL

The *Art Libraries Journal* has several times evoked special attention to a specific country, such as Scotland (1979, vol.4, no.3), Canada (1983, vol.8, no.1) or the Federal Republic of Germany (1984, vol.9, nos.3-4). The stimulus for this special issue on Dutch art libraries was the *Second European Conference of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries* (Amsterdam, 13th-17th October 1986) and the corresponding offer of the *Art Libraries Journal* to focus on the Netherlands at this time. Although it is not an official organization, the *Overleg Kunsthistorische Bibliotheken* (OKB) was the only group with a sufficiently wide range of knowledge to respond to this offer.

In contrast to most other countries the libraries involved in the OKB are almost exclusively those whose collections primarily cover the fine arts and architecture. Institutions specializing in such areas as industrial archaeology or other aspects of material culture have little or no connection with it. The OKB was founded at the end of 1982 on the initiative of J. Becker (Kunsthistorisch Instituut, Utrecht) and G. Imanse (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam). Its purpose is to provide a forum for the discussion of common concerns such as collection development and preservation, cataloguing, the listing of archival material in library collection, interlibrary loans, automation, etc. In 1949-1950 a similar consortium was established by the *Netherlands Institute for Art History* (RKD). The aim of the eighteen participants at that time was to promote an efficient means of acquiring art historical books and periodicals, the RKD serving as a central information centre in this scheme. The economic upswing of the sixties reduced the necessity of cooperative acquisition, with the result that the group's activity in that area gradually ceased.

The *Nederlandse Museumgids* (The Hague 1986, 3rd rev. ed.) makes it plain that the Netherlands is a country with a high concentration of museums: the ratio is one museum to every 17,500 inhabitants. Admittedly these are not all art museums with art libraries attached to them, but many small museums and historical societies do possess collections of books and documents relating to their town or region. In addition, the one thousand or more public libraries listed in the *Nederlandse Bibliotheek- en Documentatiegids* (The Hague/Alphen aan de Rijn 1984-1985) often have their own special collections in which all sorts of marginal literature on the subject is to be found, e.g. local periodicals

such as *Brabants Heem* and *Ons Bloemen-daal*.

So how many art libraries are there in the Netherlands? The number will vary according to how the term is defined. In the *Directory of important Dutch art libraries*, which may be found at the end of this issue, thirty-five institutions have been included. Although a certain subjectivity may have been involved in this selection, we nonetheless feel that it does contain most of the institutions which should be taken into consideration. The libraries of the twelve Academies of Fine Art and the six Academies of Architecture have not been included, since they serve only the courses given there.

The first articles cover the three areas which correspond to the present configuration of Dutch libraries, namely:

1. Art libraries of educational and research institutions.
2. Libraries in art museums.
3. Information services in the fields of art and architecture.

It should be noted here that the *Royal Library* (*Koninklijke Bibliotheek*) has a special place in the first group, since it serves as the national centre for collecting scholarly literature in the humanities. (The sometimes extensive slide and reproduction collections of the six universities where art history is taught are not integrated into the libraries in this group). The subject areas of museum libraries generally conform to the scope of the collection of the parent institution, while the information services concentrate on a special area of art history or the arts.

The articles on 'Dutch Art Bibliography' deal with the bibliographies for Dutch art history (see also *Art Libraries Journal* 1986 vol. 11 no.1 p.30), as well as contemporary Dutch periodicals.

Following this are four studies of the 19th century book collections of, respectively, Van Westreenen, Ver Huell, Abram Willet and Louisa Holthuysen, and the architects Leliman and Peters.

Next appear various essays on modern aspects of librarianship. This section includes a report on the CADENS project in Nijmegen, in which it is pointed out that improving access to a library's collection involves more than automating the catalogue. The same tendency was observed at the recent conferences in Pisa (1981), Geneva (1985), Chicago (1985), and Amsterdam (1986). What awaits us in the field of automation is unknown.

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The challenge will be to develop a technology which will enable us to control the ever-increasing amount of information. Despite economic difficulties, we must meet this challenge head on.

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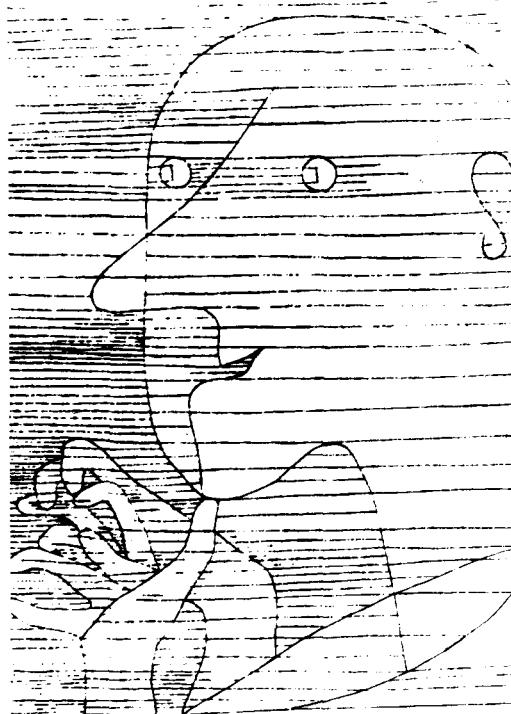
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