

Status report Dutch foreign policy document editing projects

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Generally, the Institute for Netherlands History has entered a period of reorientation. For the first time in its history we now near a point in time at which all current research and editing projects are in their final phase. Our Board has taken this opportunity as a starting point for a general reorientation on source editing. As a result, we will be concentrating more on 'diachrone' themes (i.e. themes that enable coverage of the whole historical period from the Middle Ages to the present day), and on projects that are grouped together around these themes. This policy change has been vetted by an international academic assessment committee that has evaluated past and current research at our institute.

In the next few years we will also more actively pursue a recommendation from the assessment committee to see our research and publications embedded in international structures. We are currently orientating ourselves towards possible international partners with whom to form such a framework.

At our last meeting, in Canberra, my colleague Marijke van Faassen and I launched (very general and as yet undefined) ideas towards developing some kind of 'watermark' for websites offering original source material on the internet, and we made a provisional plea in the direction of this gathering of experts to join us in a discussion of such a 'seal of approval' for source editing on the web. Although thinking has not progressed much beyond what we proposed in Canberra, our institute will take up these ideas in its orientation on creating an international framework of institutions active in the field of historical source editing.

Editing projects on Dutch foreign policy

In December 2004 parts 7 and 8 of the series on Dutch foreign policy in the period 1940-1945 were presented, marking the end of a project that was conceived in the early 1970s. After some 6,000 pages of edited documents in classic printed book form, we are now at peace with the outside world.

Our second editing project concerning the international relations of the Netherlands, is the series on Dutch-Indonesian relations between 1950 and 1963 (i.e. relations from the end of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia proper to the end of Dutch rule over the island of New Guinea, which was turned over to Indonesia in 1963 after a transitional year under UN rule). This second project does not entail publication in printed (book) format, but will result in a web-accessible database, which will offer both 'regular' edited (transcribed) documents, and pdf-copies of originals. As customary in 'classic' book presentations, the documents will have annotation, and cross references. A subject index and an index on personal names, both linked to the documents, will also be offered. Both types of presented documents (typed/word processed and documents in pdf) will be fully searchable, and the web presentation shall have multiple search options (in Dutch). It is our institute's policy to present our web-based editions in open access.

The project is now in its final stages and will hopefully be completed early next year.

As a third editing project, our institute has been working on a series on Dutch development cooperation policy since 1945. This series has thus far resulted the publication of two book volumes of edited documents, covering the period 1945-1967. Two further book volumes, covering the years 1967 through 1977, are currently in print, and will be published on November 4th of this year. All books have a sizable introduction, a section with illustrations, and contain a glossary of terminology, a subject index, an index on personal names, with reference to page numbers. The books also contain reference to a number of important policy white papers that were published at the time and are therefore not presented in the books. These white papers have been scanned and are presented as additional material on the institute's website.

The project was carried out under commission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with whom the institute has been able to reach agreement on a follow-up project that will take the edited volumes to November 1989, which will then also be on the limits of the Dutch 20-year rule system for declassification of documents. This new project started May 1, 2005, and will run until December 31, 2008. It encompasses two further book volumes of edited documents, plus a volume containing interviews with major players in the Dutch policy making field.