

IV^e SECTION.

I^{re} question.

THE DUTCH
OPENBARE
" LEESZALEN EN BIBLIOTHEKEN „
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Apart from the larger scientific libraries, supported by public means, and the rather numerous but very small and unimportant *volksbibliotheken*, erected by liberal, ecclesiastical, and other associations, Holland has recently established an as yet small number of libraries for the practice of live, the so called *Openbare Leeszalen-en-Bibliotheken*.

These libraries are general in character, and have established nearer relations with the general reader and student; in fact, they approximate very closely to the character of the Anglo-American Library, and the modern German « Bücher- und Lesehalle ». They are independent of political, ecclesiastical or social parties. Their purpose is to provide opportunities of reading for every one, by the issue of books for home reading, and by providing works of reference, periodicals and newspapers. They are open all day, and admission is entirely free.

At present these institutions are established in the following eleven towns: *Dordrecht* (1899), *Groningen* (1903), *Leeuwarden* (1905), *'s-Gravenhage* (1906), *Rotterdam* (reorganised 1907), *Zutphen* and *Alkmaar* (1908), *Utrecht* (reorganised 1909), *Hilversum*, *Leiden* and *Sneek* (1910). They have been erected by societies and are supported by contri-

butions from their members and by a modest municipal grant, differing between Fl. 150, and Fl. 2000. In only one town, *Rotterdam*, the Public Library is a municipal institution and its maintenance entirely derived from municipal funds (Fl. 18.000). Municipal libraries with a popular character are also maintained at *Haarlem* and *Arnhem*; *Amsterdam* has since 1876 rendered the old town-library in an university-library.

Generally speaking, these « Openbare Leeszalen » are all managed in the same way. The general superintendence is in the hands of a committee, representing all political and religious parties, of which there are not a few in Holland!

The municipal library in *Rotterdam* is managed by a mixed committee consisting partly of members of the town council, partly of burgesses, all of whom, however, are appointed by the council. The *Utrecht* library, although an institution erected by a particular society, is managed in the same way by a mixed committee of members of the council and officers of the association.

The selection of books is usually made by a subcommittee, who, in some libraries, receive assistance from outside experts in various fields of knowledge. It also occurs (for instance in the *Rotterdam* library) that the librarian suggests the new additions.

Some of the libraries are still following the old system of appointing as « librarian » a member of the Committee, who is responsible for the technical administration; an assistant is then appointed for the routine work. This method however, according to the little professional elaboration of librarianship in Holland, is gradually being superseded, as specially trained librarians are being placed in charge in our « Openbare Leeszalen », and funds are more liberally received. Such librarians are given an independent post and regulate the technical library work independent of the Committee.

As to the other posts, they are occupied mostly by volunteers, or by people who are willing to work for a small remuneration, or by library students. Except in the municipal library in *Rotterdam*, the salary of the librarian or the library

assistant does not exceed Fl. 1000. Generally well educated young woman who have previously pursued a course of training in librarianship and visited Public Libraries abroad (especially in England), are appointed to these posts.

It has already been intimated that the use of the library is permitted free of charge; that is to say as far as the reading and reference rooms are concerned. There are also libraries which lend out books without charging any fee, others try to cover the expenses by charging a minimum yearly subscription. Some of the libraries do not issue books as yet. These last two peculiarities must not be considered typical of Dutch principles. Lack of money and space is the only clue to its cause.

The use of the Dutch library is not confined to any particular rank of people, but although the average class is not easy to fix, the most frequent visitors seem to spring from the lower and middle classes. There are many private library-cercles for the other people; also many bookstores provided with a lending library; and the subscription on newspapers is very common in Holland. However, there are students who make use of the « Openbare Leeszalen » of the higher classes of readers, even in towns which (as in 's-Gravenhage, Leiden, Utrecht and Groningen) are also provided with scientific libraries. We could call this a result of the great liberality and variety of reading provided.

Periodicals and newspapers of all political colours can be consulted in all libraries. Only immoral and propagandist papers are excluded. Books in foreign languages are also provided for. Special care is exercised in the selection of modern scientific works; fiction however is in demand as in all public libraries, varying from 60 to 80 per cent of the entire issue.

Catalogs are being made or remodelled. Printed ones are almost universal; in many libraries card catalogs are also installed for free use. A few have only the latter form. The catalogs are classified and author catalogs. One library (*Utrecht*) has commenced a series of class lists, each class being issued separately with an author index.

The system of classification most in use is Cutter's « Expansive », a Dutch translation of which will appear shortly. Also in use is Cutter's « Author table », adapted for Dutch needs. The other classification schemes are special inventions. The dictionary catalog is as yet without advocates in Holland. The card catalogs of the last years are made on cards of standard size (7 1/2 × 12 1/2 cent.).

With few exceptions, the books are placed on the shelves according to the classification scheme.

Bookbinding in different colours, each colour representing a different class, is being introduced in *Dordrecht*, *Utrecht*, *Hilversum*.

The material used in binding consists of linen or dermatoid. A few libraries have their books covered; other compel their readers to buy at the library a cover of rough paper, costing not more than some cents. One library possess his own disinfection apparatus; the majority have their own bindery.

The methods of charging books in lending departments vary considerably. The ledger system has nowhere been adopted. In only one library, *Rotterdam*, is an indicator in use: the form there is rather primitive, a board with holes into which wooden pegs are inserted. The prevailing method is the system of card charging, the bookcards being kept in pockets inside the books while they remain upon the shelves, and the readers cards being in the form of little pockets. Where open access has been permitted, the system has given satisfactory results.

Fifteen or sixteen years is the age limit for admittance to the library. Departments for children have not yet been established anywhere, nor library work in schools; but many schools have their own school libraries, and in *Dordrecht* a special collection of juvenile literature is located in the « Openbare Leeszaal », but it belongs to and is administrated by a separate association.

As to special collections (music, books for the blind, a. o.) they are not found in any of the libraries. But many libraries of corporations and associations, trade unions, cercles are

located in the library for free use of the visitor. Exhibitions and lectures are held at a few places, although the buildings and the lack of money does not permit to elaborate the library extension work systematically. Two new libraries however, will be provided next year with space for this important branch of library activity.

The *Rotterdam* library possesses branch libraries and a system of travelling libraries, sent to fire and police stations. The *Dordrecht* library possesses a system of travelling libraries for the country in the neighbourhood.

Generally speaking the buildings are inadequate, whether possessed by the library association (as at *Groningen*, *Leiden*, *Hilversum*), or whether provided by the municipality (as at *Dordrecht*, *'s-Gravenhage*, *Zutphen*). The reason is the natural one that no specially erected and furnished building exists at present, but *Utrecht* and *Rotterdam*, will next year both be in possession of specially built central libraries. In view of this fact little can be said for the technical achievements of Dutch libraries, as each has been fully occupied in adapting itself to difficult and very varied local circumstances.

Library organisation in Holland dates from 1908. At that time the existing libraries joined in one association to which were also admitted librarians and those taking an interest in the library movement.

The « *Vereeniging voor Openbare-Leeszalen in Nederland* » does not wear the exclusive character of a professional association, as in America, England, Germany. Managed by twenty-one members, the association must needs show a rather mixed character of professional and propagandist work. This seemed the best solution with regard to present conditions, the professional elements having until now but little to advance. In years to come this body will probably play an important part in library extension.

A *Central Bureau* is established in *'s-Gravenhage* to give advice of all kinds on library matters. It supervises the regular interchange of duplicates and the purchasing of books at public sales, and divides books or gifts from private individuals, booksellers and the government. It holds a

library and archiv and has shortly regulated the different methods of administration of statistics and book-keeping upon one model.

The Association attends to scientific and technical interests by editing technical works. In the two precedent years courses are organised in biblioteconomy, bibliography, literature, bookbinding, bookarts, and typography, for future librarians and assistants. The official bulletin of the Association is the monthly « *De Boekzaal* », which contents papers on library affairs, bookarts, typographical topics, literature and bibliographical matters. This monthly too does not have a mere professional character, as *Library Journal*, *Public Libraries*, *Library World*, *Blätter für Volksbibliotheken und Lesehallen*, the scandinavian periodicals a. s. o., but is, as the Association itself, a mixture of professional and other elements. We think better to do so, because we have to reach ranks of different people, not only the librarian and the library assistant.

To further the public interest in libraries the Association publishes pamphlets, organises lectures, illustrated by lantern slides, etc.

As a central body it is charged with representation by the government. For we are advancing rapidly towards the time when the government will awake to more definite idea of its duties in regard to library work.

We dare say, that Holland has now lived down the first difficulties, but years and years have to be caught up. Never the popular libraries have been helped by the authorities. And a difficult time it is, hindered as we are by various and sharply separated political and religious factions, by diminishing municipal finances caused by an out-of-date administration, and by the excessive waste of strength in supporting the 600 to 700 small « *volksbibliotheken* », which are of no importance to intellectual development of the people. However, we have many signs that the great expectations raised in the Dutch library world will not be disappointed.
