

National Background: The Netherlands 2018

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Introduction

The oldest still existing libraries in the Netherlands are city libraries and university libraries formed in the second half of the sixteenth century. They incorporated many books and manuscripts from the medieval libraries in churches and monasteries, which were dismantled during the Dutch Revolt. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek and the Nationaal Archief were established c. 1800. The largest manuscript collections are now held by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and the university libraries of Amsterdam and Leiden.

- [Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections](#) (MMDC) — This database (established 2007) contains English descriptions of more than 6,000 medieval manuscripts in Latin script kept in Dutch libraries, links to digital images and PDF versions of the *Manuscripts datés conservés dans les Pays Bas*, vol. 1 (1964) and 2 (1988). Since 2009 also part of the [CERL Portal](#).
- Catalogus Epistularum Neerlandicarum (CEN) is the national letters catalogue (established c. 1985). Unfortunately, this database is still inaccessible outside the context of the participating institutions. Letters may be searched in the online catalogues of those institutions.
- [Bibliopolis](#) (website on the history of the printed book in the Netherlands) lists Dutch libraries holding special collections, including manuscripts and private archives, and allows searching for [manuscript and archival collections](#) (use search term “handschriften” or “archieven” or “brieven”). Please note that information about addresses, opening times, etc. in this tool may be outdated.

Koninklijke Bibliotheek — National Library of the Netherlands, Den Haag (KB)

<https://www.kb.nl/en>

Established in 1798, incorporating the former library of the stadholders of the House of Orange-Nassau and of several governmental institutions. An important part of the collection is constituted by the loan from the Royal Academy of Sciences (1937). After 1945, KB developed into the National Library of the Netherlands and collaborates with research libraries and public libraries. Major collections:

- [Medieval manuscripts](#) (1,500), including 450 illuminated manuscripts, also substantial numbers of liturgical manuscripts and manuscripts in Middle Dutch;
- [Post-medieval manuscripts](#) (5,000), including over 500 alba amicorum, 130,000 letters, personal collections and many items significant for Dutch history (national, regional or local), literature and law.

Digital access: [Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts](#)

Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam (UBA)

<http://bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl/en>

Established in 1578 (as city library), 1632 (as library of the Athenaeum Illustre), 1877 (as university library). Its [Special Collections](#) are housed in a separate location.

Major [collections](#):

- Manuscripts, letters and archives: 200+ medieval manuscripts; literary manuscripts and papers (P.C. Hooft, Multatuli, Frederik van Eeden, Albert Verwey) and papers from Amsterdam scholars, including 500,000 letters
- Church history collections (including manuscripts), related to theology and church history in general, and to the history of Dutch protestantism and the Radical Reformation in particular
- Over 1,000 Hebrew manuscripts in the [Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana](#)
- Book history collections; includes numerous archives of Dutch publishing houses and the booktrade.

Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden (UBL)

<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/>

Established in 1587. Acquired a large part of its manuscripts through private collectors, mostly scholars, whose libraries were bought or received as a gift. The Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (founded 1766) deposited its library in UBL in 1876, which includes an important collection of Dutch manuscripts and papers. Major collections:

- [Western manuscripts](#), comprising: [medieval codices](#) (1,800, of which over 100 dating from the 9th century and 500 in Middle Dutch; also documentation on 11,000+ Middle Dutch manuscript kept world wide: Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta); [post-medieval manuscripts and private archives](#), extensive [letter collections](#);
- [University archives](#) (16th-20th century);
- [Middle-Eastern manuscripts](#) (mostly of the Islamic world; also Hebrew, Semitic and Armenian manuscripts);
- [Asian manuscripts](#), comprising the largest collection of Indonesian manuscripts worldwide, manuscripts from other parts of South-East Asia, South-Asia and Tibet, and from China, Japan and Korea.

Digital access: [Manuscripts, Archives & Letters UBL](#)

Other libraries with substantial manuscript holdings

- [Universiteitsbibliotheek Vrije Universiteit](#), Amsterdam;
- [Universiteitsbibliotheek Groningen](#) – 1000+ manuscripts, including 200+ medieval codices, *libri annotati* and lecture notes;
- [Universiteitsbibliotheek Radboud Universiteit](#), Nijmegen – 88 medieval manuscripts, 446 post-medieval manuscripts;
- [Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht](#) – c. 700 medieval manuscripts, including the famous [Utrecht Psalter](#) and 1000+ post-medieval manuscripts;
- [ZB | Bibliotheek van Zeeland](#), Middelburg – includes the manuscripts of the [Zeeuwsch Genootschap](#);
- [Athenaeumbibliotheek](#), Deventer – includes c. 125 medieval and c. 500 post-medieval manuscripts;
- [Bibliotheek Arnhem](#) – c. 250 manuscripts;
- [Tresoar](#), Leeuwarden – includes manuscripts and papers held by the former [Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland](#).
- Library of [Museum Meermanno](#), Den Haag – c. 200 medieval manuscripts (digital access: see [Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts](#)), c. 150 post-medieval manuscripts; archives and letters on book art and typography;
- Library of [Museum Catharijneconvent](#), Utrecht – c. 300 medieval manuscripts.

Archival institutions

Dutch administration has a national, provincial and local level; this triple structure was reflected in the institutions responsible for the keeping of public records. Recent years,

however, saw a clustering of municipal archives into regional historic centres (e.g. Archief Eemland, Waterlands Archief) and of provincial and municipal archives (e.g. Zeeuws Archief, Utrechts Archief, Noord-Hollands Archief). In 2002 the Rijksarchief in Zuid-Holland and the Algemeen Rijksarchief merged into the [Nationaal Archief](#). Most of these institutions also hold private archives and manuscripts. To access the Dutch archives one may use:

- [Archieven.nl](#) – accesses over thousands inventories of 80+ archival institutions
- [Archiefkaart Nederland](#) – Dutch archival institutions plotted on Google Maps, with links to the website
- [Archives Portal Europe](#) (APE) - Information on Dutch archival institutions in European context.

Papers of historical interest

The papers of many Dutch scholars may be found in the libraries of their universities, those of several beta scientists in the Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem. The papers pertaining to Dutch persons of national importance are held first and foremost at the Nationaal Archief. Other institutions with concentrations of private archives and specialized documentation:

- [Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis](#), Amsterdam (IISG) – International Institute of Social History: holds over 2,700 archival collections in the field of social history, in particular of the history of the labour movement)
- [Koninklijk huisarchief](#), Den Haag – Royal archives, comprising the Oranges' personal archives as well as their library, photographic archives and art collection
- [Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam](#) (NIOD) – holds archives and documentation on the history of World War II in the Netherlands and its colonies)
- [Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie](#), Den Haag (CBG) – hold genealogical and heraldic collections and documentation
- [Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie](#), Den Haag (RKD) – Netherlands Institute for Art History: holds archives and documentation pertaining to Dutch art

Ecclesiastical papers, manuscripts

- [Het Utrechts Archief](#) – archives pertaining to the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlands Hervormde kerk) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland), Old Catholic Church, Roman Catholic Church in the diocese of Utrecht;
- [Katholiek Documentatiecentrum](#), Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen – archives and documentation pertaining to Roman Catholic institutions and persons since 1800;
- [Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme](#), Bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam – archives and manuscripts of Dutch Protestantism since 1800;
- UBL holds archives and manuscripts of the [Églises Wallonnes](#) and [Remonstrants Seminarie](#).
- UBA holds manuscripts and papers of Mennonites, Remonstrants, and also houses the [Reveil Archief](#).
- Medieval religious manuscripts formerly collected by the Bisschoppelijk Museum Haarlem, Seminarie Warmond, Aartsbisschoppelijk Museum and Oud-Katholiek Museum in Utrecht are now kept in the library of Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht (see above).

Literary papers, manuscripts

- [Literatuurmuseum](#), Den Haag, holds literary archives, manuscripts (including 1,000,000+ letters) and other materials (e.g. photographs, paintings, paper cuttings, objects, audiovisual recordings) of over 6,000 authors from 1750 onwards.
- Other, mostly older, materials are held by KB, UBA, UBL (manuscripts and archives of the [Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde](#)) and other institutions. Tresoor (see above) is the Frisian Historical and Literary Centre, Leeuwarden.

