Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta

The Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta provides documentation on Middle Dutch manuscripts kept world wide. Started by the Flemish philologist and codicologist Willem De Vreese (1869-1938) the BNM was placed in Leiden University Library after his death. It collects and makes available information about Middle Dutch texts and their authors, about the persons involved in the production of the manuscripts containing those texts, and about the owners from the Middle Ages up to the present.

The manuscript descriptions – kept in folders and boxes that are placed in two bookcases (approximately 8 metres) – are arranged by location and shelf mark. The textual, codicological and book-historical data of these descriptions have been noted down on cards and arranged in several card indexes. There are three important files: authors and textual headwords; scribes and owners; scriptoriums and libraries.

Since the 1990s the BNM can also be consulted via the internet. All manuscript descriptions have been digitized; the inventory in the collection guide Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta contains links to the scans in Leiden University Library's repository.

Two-thirds of the card files, checked and supplemented with information from recent publications, have been converted into electronic data and incorporated in an OCLC database. A user instruction is available via the Help button of the database.

In 2016 the information from this database has been converted to a new infrastructure with new functionality: Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa (BNM-I). Thanks to a CLARIN grant, the BNM-I was developed in 2013-2015 by Huygens ING in collaboration with Leiden University and Utrecht University. The datatabase contains four categories of records which can be found using faceted search: text carriers (both manuscripts and printed editions), texts, literature and lexicon (names of texts, persons and institutions).

The BNM-I aims at enhancing the study of Middle Dutch textual culture. To this end, it can include new metadata about Middle Dutch texts in print up to 1540 (inventorying both editions and individual copies), can link easily to new data available on internet (like digital facsimiles), and enables peer-to-peer participation: individual scholars may contribute to the database by providing corrections, additions and persistent links, and by adding short articles on medieval authors and texts (lexicon functionality).

The BNM-I aims at relating to other databases in the near future. We are very willing to cooperate with institutes and individual colleagues outside the Low Countries, because we believe that database collaboration facilitates interdisciplinary research.

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