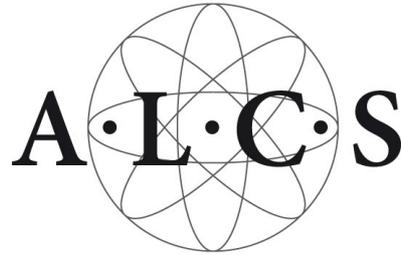


General Meeting
12 September 2014
Chair's Report 2012-14



General remarks

Since its foundation in 1996, the mission of the ALCS has broadened. In addition to promoting the scholarly study of Dutch, supporting research activities, raising awareness and representing the interests of the subject in higher education councils, the need to actively support undergraduate recruitment has crept up the agenda. The health and future of the subject depend on the number of young people we manage to encourage to take up the academic study of the Dutch language and its associated cultures, as well as on maintaining our academic credibility. Those two objectives cannot be separated: without the academic standing and research activities of our members, universities will not support the teaching of Dutch at an advanced level. In short, Dutch *language* study can only survive when Dutch Studies as an academic subject manages to retain its prestige. The ALCS seeks to make a vital contribution to keeping the subject in all its facets healthy and thriving by organising events such as the Biennial Conferences and the Student Days; publishing our international journal *Dutch Crossing*; facilitating communication between scholars and students of Dutch and other stakeholders; organising an annual essay prize for undergraduate and postgraduate students; allocating small grants to support research activities; and representing the interests of Dutch studies within larger bodies of higher education such as the University Council of Modern Languages. What follows is a brief summary of our activities during April -August 2014.

ALCS Conference and Student Days

Our two ALCS events reflect our main areas of activity: academic research and student recruitment. We are here at the 10th biennial Conference on Dutch studies and I would like to take the opportunity to recognise the sterling work of the UCL conference committee (Jane Fenoulhet, Gerdi Quist, Ulrich Tiedau and Josephine Salverda). We would also like to thank our sponsors: first and foremost the *Nederlandse Taalunie*. The ALCS relies on the continuous support of the *Taalunie* and we appreciate and cherish our excellent collaboration. The Netherlands Embassy and Flanders House are also loyal and reliable in their support for our activities and we are grateful for their wisdom in investing in Dutch Studies locally. Finally, we would like to thank UCL for facilitating this conference. UCL has been and always will be a pivotal player in the ALCS' activities. The opening of the new Centre for Low Countries Studies is a testimony to that and we would like to express a heartfelt desire that our collaboration will be mutually fruitful and strengthen the position of Dutch language and cultural studies within London and far beyond.

The 7th edition of our ALCS Student Days took place in March 2013 in Nottingham. About one hundred students of Dutch came together for a two-day programme of cultural workshops, lectures and career talks. Many people contributed to this successful event and we extend our sincere thanks to Bram Mertens as the main organiser and to everyone involved. The next ALCS Student Days are due to take place in Spring 2015 either at UCL or in Sheffield.

Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies

Dutch Crossing is the printed bedrock of our operation. *Dutch Crossing* remains the only truly international interdisciplinary research journal on Dutch Studies. The success of our Journal is thanks to the strategic choices and unmatched commitment of our editor-in-chief, Ulrich Tiedau. We all recognise his indispensable input and offer him our sincerest gratitude. In order to relieve the pressure on Tiedau, the committee decided in July 2012 to free up some modest funds to buy in additional copy-editing support. We are currently investigating ways of assuring that *Dutch Crossing* can continue its upward journey (see below).

Research Grants

Supporting individual researchers and (research) projects remains an important activity; it is our opportunity to support young researches and exciting initiatives. In 2012-14 we awarded just under £1750 to support research trips, to contribute towards printing costs and to subsidise the development of a cultural product. All research grants are paid for from the ALCS capital reserve. In view of our current financial situation, (see below) we have, temporarily, reduced the funding available for grants to £750 per annum.

ALCS Communication

The ALCS website has become our main channel of communication. Since our previous GM in April 2012, we have published over 55 news items. Regrettably, we are not in a position to be a hub for all Dutch related events in the UK, but all relevant ALCS activities are recorded on the site: there have been news items on our awarded research grants and essay prizes, our members' publications and activities, on our Student Days and other student activities, as well as reports by grant holders. I would like to call on ALCS members to share news with us: please send your items to Eddy Verbaan (e.verbaan@shef.ac.uk) our web editor.

A second communication channel is our JISC mail. All members of our JISC list can post relevant announcements. The ALCS e-newsletter, which we aim to publish at least three times per year, is also distributed via JISC mail. Andrew Wormald, our ALCS administrator is the newsletter editor and again, you are warmly invited to send your news items. The ALCS also has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ALCStudies), a twitter account (@ALCStudies) and during this conference we will try to live up to our intention to improve our social media presence.

ALCS Promotional material

In the past two years, the committee has produced two promotional leaflets. The second has brought our visual image in line with the new cover of *Dutch Crossing*. If one of our members organises or attends a Dutch Studies related event, please let us know and we will send you some leaflets for distribution.

In addition, the committee produced a short promotional video during the Student Days in which undergraduate students from Nottingham, Sheffield and UCL talk about their experiences of studying Dutch. It is an 'institute neutral' production with nearly 900 unique views at the last count.

Executive Committee

The ALCS committee meets twice a year to discuss running business and new initiatives and I would like to thank the ALCS committee for their hard work and long hours of travel to

attend the meetings. All committee members are prepared to continue their activities, which is an expression of our great team spirit. Constitutionally, the committee is free to co-opt new committee members. We would like to use that option to invite a postgraduate committee member to join the committee, as well as one or two members from key organisations or institutions.

New directions

As will be clear from the Treasurer's report, the ALCS is financially under severe strain. The committee has therefore taken steps to assure that our activities can continue. Firstly, we have reduced our research grant allocation from £1500 to £750 per year. We do believe that grant allocation is key to our operation and we will free up funds for research grants as soon as the financial situation will allow it. For now we will make sure that we continue to support strong applications from young and/or upcoming scholars. Secondly, our administrator is currently investigating the possibility of acquiring Charity Status for the ALCS, which could have financial benefits.

Thirdly, in September 2013 we successfully renegotiated our contract with Maney (publisher of *Dutch Crossing*) to reduce our fixed contribution towards the publication and production of *Dutch Crossing* from 120 subscriptions to 90. However, with a membership around 60 *Dutch Crossing* remains a main draw on our finances. It is therefore of paramount importance to share the financial cost of *Dutch Crossing*. We are currently in quite advanced discussions with the American Association for Netherlandic Studies (AANS) in an attempt to extend our readership of *Dutch Crossing*. It is unlikely that we will be able to carry the cost of the Journal on our own in the long run so the committee is currently exploring the possibility of sharing our Journal with the AANS. This is not only prompted by financial necessity; there is an academic and a strategic reason for this move. In order for DC to remain a leading scholarly publication on Dutch Studies in English, we feel we have to extend our interest, enthusiasm and critical mass. The ALCS and the AANS can together build on what is already a strong starting position: the opportunity to translate and communicate all aspects of Dutch studies for a global audience. We do want to stress that our closer collaboration with the AANS is clearly *in addition to* our important national and regional mission: the promotion of all aspects of Dutch Studies within the UK and Ireland with a special emphasis on language learning at undergraduate level. The committee seeks the approval of the General Meeting for this initiative

In spite of our efforts, the committee needs to inform the General Meeting that these steps alone are not sufficient to relieve the financial pressure. The Treasurer's Report will underline the seriousness of the situation. This has forced us to suggest a rise in membership fee to £38 (was £30), with a concession rate of £28 (was £20). This is the first raise in membership fees since 2006. We also propose to introduce a benefactor rate of £75. With this full package of measures we hope to bring the ALCS in steady waters financially. We want to assure the meeting that the executive committee will try every possible route to ensure the healthy continuation of all activities of our society.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to serve the ALCS as chair and I am profoundly grateful to our dynamic and committed Executive Committee for their contribution.

Henriette Louwerse