



General remarks

Mission

In recent years the study of the Dutch language and the culture, history and society of the Low Countries in the UK has come under increased pressure. Since the foundation of the ALCS in 1996 three strongholds of Dutch Studies have either disappeared or significantly reduced their activities: Hull, Cambridge and Nottingham. Recently, the protest from the ALCS, the Taalunie, the diplomatic representation in London, and other interests groups and many individual members could not prevent the decision by Nottingham University to stop recruitment for degree programmes with Dutch from Summer 2016. This means a serious loss in terms of Dutch major students: Nottingham provided more than 1/3 of Dutch graduates in the UK. This, in combination with the recent outcome of the EU referendum, which is likely to impact on international academic collaborations, means that the mission of the ALCS is more vital than ever.

As ALCS Committee we believe that the health and future of the subject depends on both the number of young people we recruit to the academic study of the Dutch and on maintaining a research presence for Dutch Studies in the UK and Ireland. Those two activities are inseparable: Dutch *language* study can only survive when Dutch Studies as an academic subject manages to retain its presence and prestige.

Plans for 2016-18

The ALCS will continue its work to keep the subject healthy by organising events such as the Biennial Conferences and the Student Days; publishing our scholarly 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.

In July 2015, together with UCL, Swansea and KCL, the ALCS added another vital activity to our portfolio: the organisation of an international postgraduate Colloquium for Low Countries Studies. We consider this a highly positive development and we will try to build on the success of this founding colloquium. Other plans for the coming two years are exploring collaboration with the American Association of Netherlandic Studies (AANS) to further strengthen the Anglophone research in all areas of Dutch Studies; mapping and engaging with University Language Centres that offer Dutch as part of their language portfolio; and investigating Charity Status for our society.

Finances

In 2014 we reported extensively on the financial strain the ALCS was under. The executive committee developed a package of measures and we are pleased to report that the current financial picture looks more positive, thanks to:

- Increase in membership numbers. We currently have 71 paying members
- Increase in membership fees
- Negotiated reduction of the publication costs of *Dutch Crossing*
- Additional *Taalunie* support of €1500 for a period of 5 years in recognition of the unique status of *Dutch Crossing*
- A temporary reduction of the Research Grants budget

There is still work to be done but the situation is much more positive than in 2014. We will have to keep working on our membership and we call on all our members to keep talking to colleagues, students and interested parties about the work of the ALCS and to encourage membership.

Executive Committee

The ALCS committee meets twice a year and consists of:

Carol Fehringer (Secretary)
Marja Kingma (Member)
John Loughman (Member)
Henriette Louwerse (Chair)
Alan Scott (Member)
Ulrich Tiedau (Dutch Crossing Editor)
Eddy Verbaan (Treasurer)
Besty Wieseman (Member)

Anna Geurts is the ALCS administrator.

Eddy Verbaan has taken up a new position as Director of Research Data at Sheffield Hallam University and will step down. Alan Scott has also moved into a new direction and will not return as a member of the Executive Committee. All other committee members are prepared to continue their activities; Jenny Watson is willing to take on the role of Treasurer for the next two years. We invite nominations for executive membership: one ordinary member and one new postgraduate member.

Summary of activities September 2014 - June 2016

ALCS Research Events

Biennial Conference

Our Biennial conference celebrates its 11th edition in Dublin. I would like to take the opportunity to thank UCD for hosting this event and to recognise the sterling work of the Dr John Loughman, who, in splendid isolation, put together an exciting programme. I would also like to thank the *Taalunie* for their generous support and Ingrid Degraeve for

her presence. The ALCS relies on the continuous support of the *Taalunie* and we appreciate and cherish our excellent collaboration.

The papers from the 2014 ALCS conference *Discord and Consensus in the Low Countries* have been published as an edited volume with UCL Press in Open Access format. The Volume appeared this spring and can be downloaded from the UCL Press website. We welcome your submission from a similar Open Access publication. Information on how to submit your paper for a peer review volume will be circulated in the coming weeks.

The 12th edition of the ALCS Conference will take place in Sheffield in 2018 and will coincide with the 70 years of Dutch at Sheffield.

Postgraduate Colloquium

Thanks to the initiative of, in particular, Jenny Watson, Richard McClelland and Aimee Hardy, the first Postgraduate Colloquium on Low Countries Studies took place in July 2015: *Drawing a Map*. Over twenty postgraduate and early career researchers from the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany attended and it was the breadth of the research, the quality of the contributions and the enthusiasm of the participants that made it into such an exciting inaugural occasion. We would like to develop this into a biennial event, recognizing the importance of international connections for young enthusiastic researchers in our field.

Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies

Dutch Crossing is the printed bedrock of our operation. *Dutch Crossing* is the only interdisciplinary research journal on Dutch Studies in English. 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 Spring 2015 Eddy Verbaan and me renegotiated the terms of Dutch Crossing with Maney Publishing. This led to a new agreement, which reduces our costs significantly and will allow for us to set up digital access for our members. We still need to investigate the best option for digital access. In Summer 2015 Maney was taken over by Taylor & Francis. They will honour our agreement with Maney and we have approved the new agreement earlier this week.

Research Grants and Essay Prize

Supporting individual researchers and (research) projects remains an important activity. In 2014-16 we awarded £2000 to support the research activities of our members. All research grants are paid for from the ALCS capital reserve. In 2014 we reviewed our financial situation and reduced our funding to £750 per annum. Although our financial situation is improving the committee thinks it wise to remain cautious and has decided to maintain the level of £750 per annum for the period 2016-18.

We also awarded our yearly undergraduate and postgraduate essay prizes. We notice an increase in entries, particularly in the UG category.

Student recruitment: ALCS Student Days

The 8th edition of our ALCS Student Days took place in March 2015 in Sheffield. Around a hundred students and staff from Cambridge, Nottingham, Newcastle, UCL and Sheffield

flocked to Yorkshire for a 24-hour programme of workshops, lectures, performances, an employability forum, and an after party. In addition to the student event, there was an evening programme for the general public: *Closer to Low Countries Cultures* in Sheffield's Workstation. The next ALCS Student Days are due to take place in Spring 2017 at UCL.

ALCS Communication

In 2014 we concluded that the ALCS website had become our main channel of communication replacing our printed newsletters. In the past two years this picture has changed again. Since then the communication about running business has moved over to our Facebook page: [facebook.com/ALCStudies](https://www.facebook.com/ALCStudies). You do not need to have a Facebook account to see the messages. The website is more the place for more static information: membership and *Dutch Crossing*, Research Grants and Essay Prizes, key information about our events. We are planning a 'freshening up' of the website in the coming period.

In the past period we have published the ALCS e-newsletter three times per year. Anna Geurts, our new ALCS administrator, is also the newsletter editor and you are warmly invited to send your news items to ALCS@shef.ac.uk. The newsletter is distributed via JISC mail. All members of our JISC list can post relevant announcements too.

The ALCS also has an underused twitter account: [@ALCStudies](https://twitter.com/ALCStudies).

Thank yous

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve the ALCS as chair during the past two years and I am profoundly grateful to our dynamic and committed Executive Committee for their contribution. A special thanks is reserved for Eddy Verbaan who served six years on the committee, of which four in the role of Honorary Treasurer. We would also like to thank Alan Scott, who stepped in mid term in 2013, for his commitment and his time. We wish Eddy and Alan lots of success and happiness in their new careers.

I would like to thank the Taalunie for their support, not only do we receive a working grant for the ALCS but they are also the main funders of our biggest events, the Biennial Conference and our Student Days.

And finally our deep admiration and gratitude goes to John Loughman, the brain and the sweat behind the 11th edition of the ALCS Conference.

On behalf of the ALCS Executive committee,
Henriette Louwerse

Dublin, 28 June 2016