2.15 Netherlands

Libraries in the Netherlands

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The Netherlands is part of Europe and has been a member of the European Union since the beginning in 1958. It has an area of 41,543km^2, and a population of 6,847,007. Many ethnic groups have migrated to the country and they form about 20% of the diverse population of the country. In the densely populated western part, a large number of nationalities and cultures can be found.

As an international trade and immigrant country this diversity in the population has a long history. The Netherlands, being a place where promotion of freedom of expression has gone hand in hand with entrepreneurship, has developed a large variety of book- and media related industries and library- and information services, ranging from school and public libraries to specialised libraries and the National Library. The main actors in the Dutch library landscape are presented here in a developmental context. As the Dutch cherish their freedom and independence, one may be astonished about the number of organisations, institutions and groupings working in the information and library field, causing an abundance of abbreviations, about which I can only warn the international reader.

Academic Libraries, UKB

Dutch universities have a long academic tradition. The first Dutch university was founded in Leiden in 1575 by William of Orange. Today the Netherlands has 14 research universities, all of which offer high-standard education and research. There are three universities of technology, in Delft, Eindhoven and Twente, and one university which focuses on agriculture and life sciences: Wageningen. The remaining ten research universities are broad-based. There are also eight university medical centres. The universities serve both education and research for around 230,000 students enrolled for an academic bachelor course (430) or master study (890). The number of students has doubled since 1980. Every year around 50,000 new students enter the universities. In contrast to many other European countries, there is still population growth in the Netherlands, giving rise to an estimated increase in the student population by 2020–2021 of 36%. The13 universities plus the Open University fear the coming decade regarding financial support: government investment and annual subsidy