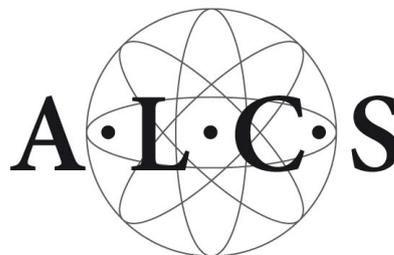


General Meeting
30 June
Chair's Report 2016-18



General Remarks

Mission under Pressure

The ALCS Committee believes that the future of the subject depends on the number of young people we recruit to take up the academic study of the Dutch Language and Dutch Studies as well as on maintaining a research presence for Low Countries Studies in the UK and Ireland. Those two strands to our mission are inseparable: Dutch *language* study can only survive when Low Countries Studies as an academic subject manages to retain its presence and prestige. In order to fulfil its mission, the ALCS organises regular events and support activities such as the Biennial Conferences, the Postgraduate Symposium, and the Student Days; publishes the scholarly journal *Dutch Crossing*; facilitates communication between scholars and students of Dutch and other stakeholders; organises an annual Essay Prize for Undergraduate Students and Early-Career Researchers; allocates small grants to support research activities; and represents the interests of Dutch Studies within larger bodies of higher education such as the University Council of Modern Languages and the UKCASA (Council for Area Studies Associations).

However, as our recent report *The State of Dutch Studies* indicates emphatically, the number of permanent staff members engaged in Dutch Studies is reaching a dangerously low point. This affects the activities of the ALCS directly: after all, the society draws on the time and effort of our tutors and researchers who are already under pressure to sustain the teaching and research demands of their institutions. Organising events such as the Conference and the Student Days, editing a scholarly journal, balancing the books, representing the ALCS and maintaining meaningful communication with its members, all draw on schedules already filled to overflowing. It is therefore not inconceivable that we will have to scale back our activities in the coming years. The job lists are simply getting too long.

In order to relieve the pressure of the Executive Committee we will ask the current Director Dr Anna Geurts to extend her supportive activities. In addition to the members' administration and the everyday running of the Association she will be asked to offer her support with the finances and with media and communication. This will mean that the ALCS working costs are likely to increase. We have also put a case to the *Taalunie* about the sustainability of *Dutch Crossing* in which we argue that a journal with a global reach and reputation deserves to be recognised as a vital presence for Dutch Studies worldwide. This cannot just come down to a 'regional platform' such as the ALCS. In order to maintain the quality of the journal, we will need to attract structural secretarial support (see appendix).

The Executive Committee will explore all avenues to maintain the important work of the ALCS and further discussion with the *Taalunie* and other parties will be required.

Summary of Activities: Events and Activities

After the successful **Dublin Conference in 2016** and the current **Conference at Sheffield** the ALCS organised two (regular) events that support our mission: the ALCS Student Days and the Postgraduate and Early-Career Symposium (Senate House, 1-2 July 2017) in London.

- **ALCS Student Days (UCL, 23-24 March 2017)**

The Student Days revolved around a subtitling workshop organised in collaboration with the UCL and xxx. The newly subtitled Dutch and Flemish films were presented to the public the same evening. The Student Days also included a talk by NOS correspondent Tim de Wit and a Careers Panel.

- **Postgraduate and Early-Career Symposium (Senate House, 1-2 July 2017)**

The Postgraduate event was organised by Dr Cyd Sturgess and Dr Jenny Watson, two home-grown young scholars, and attracted attendants from all over Europe. The symposium confirmed that the ALCS's role exceeds the UK and Ireland: as an Anglophone Learned Society we offer colleagues worldwide to share their research in English, which is vital in order to keep Dutch Studies thriving as a global academic discipline.

In 2017 the ALCS Executive Committee also commissioned a piece of research on the ***State of Dutch Studies in the UK and Ireland***. The report will be presented and discussed separately. Ahead of the publication of the report, the ALCS has already responded to one of its recommendations by organising a **Language Tutor Workshop** for which tutors on Institution-Wide Language Programmes were specifically invited. The workshop took place on 28 June 2018 and was led by Vera de Bot of the University of Amsterdam.

Plans for 2018-2020

Despite the restraints mentioned above, the ALCS is full of life and ideas. During our previous General Meeting in Dublin we announced that we would explore collaboration with the American Association of Netherlandic Studies (AANS) to further strengthen the Anglophone research in all areas of Dutch Studies. This is why we would like to propose to move our Biennial Conference by one year forward to 2019. Not only can we embed the conference in the wider activities around the Centenary of Dutch Studies at UCL, it will also mean that we stagger our conferences with the AANS so that they no longer take place in the same year. This will make it easier for colleagues to attend each other's events.

The ALCS report on the *State of Dutch Studies in the UK and Ireland* is a clear call to action. We will in the coming months try to draw attention to the state of Dutch Studies both in the UK and in the Netherlands and Flanders. We call on our members to share the report in PDF or as a hard copy where they feel it is appropriate. We will seek collaborations with relevant parties to raise awareness about the threats facing Dutch Studies. The UCL Centre for Low Countries Studies and Sheffield's Centre for Dutch and Flemish Studies will also be play a role in the dissemination of the report.

We hope to organise the next edition of the Postgraduate Colloquium in 2019 and the Student Days in 2020 (or vice versa).

Finances

In 2016 we reported that the ALCS financial strain was lessening. That trend has continued during the past two years mainly thanks to the generosity of the *Taalunie*, our new publishing contract with Francis and Taylor and an increase in paying members. However, there is no room for complacency. In order to maintain our level of activities we will need more financial room for our Director and for *Dutch Crossing*. This may impact on the level of ALCS grants available. Our members will be asked to indicate where they think our priorities should lie. We will have to keep working on our membership numbers, which currently stands, at a healthy 80+ paying members. Please keep spreading the word about the work of the ALCS and encourage membership.

Executive Committee

The ALCS Committee meets twice a year and for the periode 2016-18 consisted of:

Carol Fehringer (Secretary)
Marja Kingma (Member)
John Loughman (Member)
Henriette Louwerse (Chair)
Christine Sas (Member)
Ulrich Tiedau (Member and Dutch Crossing Editor)
Jenny Watson (Treasurer)

Anna Geurts is the ALCS Director.

In January 2017 Dr Betsy Wieseman left the Committee to take up a new job in the USA. Dr John Loughman has indicated that he would like to pass on his position as an Executive Committee member. All other Committee members are prepared to continue their activities. Our postgraduate member Jenny Watson has finished her PhD and is now our Treasurer. Adam Sammut from York University has indicated that he is willing to serve as the postgraduate member for the coming period. In order to explore whether we can extend our activities to include IWLP tutors, we would like to co-opt an IWLP representative on the Executive Committee and an Area Studies additional member. We are still looking for a member from Ireland.

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 journal is published with Taylor and Francis. The success of our Journal is thanks to the strategic choices and unmatched commitment of our editor-in-chief, Dr Ulrich Tiedau. We all recognise his tremendous effort. The Executive Committee has concluded that it is not sustainable in the current set up (see above). Ulrich Tiedau, who attended the AANS conference in June 2018 reported that our sister society is happy with our collaboration around *Dutch Crossing* and that they will use the journal to publish selected papers from their conference of early June at Bloomington.

Research Grants and Essay Prize

Supporting individual researchers and (research) projects remains an important activity to support the research activities of our members. In 2016-18 we awarded £1582,89. All research grants are paid for from the ALCS capital reserve.

We continued to award our yearly undergraduate and postgraduate essay prizes. Our entries, particularly in the UG category, are healthy.

ALCS Communication

The ALCS everyday running and news has moved over to our Facebook page: facebook.com/ALCStudies. We currently have 180 followers. You do not need a Facebook account to see the messages. The website is the place for larger news items and more static information: membership and *Dutch Crossing*, Research Grants and Essay Prizes, and key information about our events. The website was ‘freshened up’ in autumn 2016 to match the *Dutch Crossing* colours.

For more topical announcements, Anna Geurts, our ALCS Director, manages a JISC-mailing-list. You are warmly invited to send your news items to ALCS@shef.ac.uk. All members of our JISC-list can post relevant announcements too. The ALCS also has a twitter account: [@ALCStudies](https://twitter.com/ALCStudies).

Gratitude

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 and to Anna Geurts who is much more than a conscientious Director. A special thanks is reserved for John Loughman who served six years on the Committee, and who organised our successful Dublin edition of the Conference in 2016.

As ever 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. We can also draw on the continued support of the Embassy of the Netherlands and the Flemish Representation in the UK.

On behalf of the ALCS Executive Committee,
Henriette Louwse (Chair)

Sheffield, 25 June 2018