

Self-assessment 2012-2017

Meertens Institute - KNAW Humanities Cluster

Preamble

The Meertens Institute studies and documents language and culture in the Netherlands. We focus on the phenomena and changes that shape everyday life in Dutch society.

This self-assessment report of the research department of the Meertens Institute is structured according to the guidelines of the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) for Dutch universities and research institutes. The assessment is based partly on background materials which are hyperlinked from this document and gathered on a [secure webpage](#). The assessment looks back on a six-year period, assesses the current situation, and looks forward to trends and developments, as well as summarizes the institute's plans for the next five years for its research department.

In the past six years the institute has renewed itself in several aspects. Looking back, the institute prides itself with the results and the accomplishments, including the role the institute has played in national and international developments in digital humanities and digital infrastructure, and the appreciation of the institute's collections and expertise by the media and the public at large.

Through an intensive collaboration with the International Institute for Social History and the Huygens ING in the form of the KNAW Humanities Cluster, our organizational basis has strengthened. With an open attitude towards collaborations and joint initiatives, and with what we believe to be a realistic assessment of the challenges ahead, we have a confident outlook to the future.

1. Organization, composition and financing

The Meertens Institute, established in 1926 and incorporated as a research institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in 1952, is one of the sixteen institutes of the KNAW and one of the three institutes of the KNAW Humanities Cluster.

The institute director has an accountability meeting with the KNAW board twice a year. The institute has a Scientific Advisory Board, also meeting biannually, which advises both the director of the institute and the KNAW. Each year the institute submits its budget to the KNAW,

to be approved by the KNAW board. The budget revolves around a yearly lump-sum funding; the director has a relatively large discretionary power to spend and plan the budget.

The Meertens Institute's daily management is performed by the director (Antal van den Bosch), supported by a management team (Irene Stengs, Marc van Oostendorp, Theo Meder, Daan Broeder) and the KNAW Humanities Cluster director of general services/CFO (Yildiz van den Akker). The management team holds biweekly meetings. Once per month the research department of the institute gathers in a research council meeting, presided by Irene Stengs.

For the period 2012-2017, the Meertens Institute has been staffed by over 50 to about 35 persons on December 31, 2017, of which about 50% are researchers and 50% are support staff. In this period, between 60% and 70% of the researchers were permanently employed at the institute or had a tenure track contract. The institute has had 3 to 5 post-doc researchers throughout this time, and has seen a wave of PhD students, peaking at six in 2014-2015, but decreasing to two students at the end of 2017. Due to retirements in 2016 and 2017 (Roodenburg, Bennis, Hermans), the departure of Barbiers in 2016, and the untimely passing of Louis Grijp in January 2016, the permanently-appointed staff has been reduced by about 5 ftes in the past two years.

The relatively large support staff ratio reflects the fact that the institute has its own technical development team (10 persons in 2017) and a collections and library team (6 persons in 2017). The other support staff has been reduced virtually in 2017, as 5 ftes have been moved to the support office of the KNAW Humanities Cluster, but a proportional number of ftes remains available for support (see more below).

The institute receives a yearly lump sum financing through the KNAW of € 3.2 million. In the past period an additional 25% to 30% of its total budget was financed through external funding, mostly from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), and in part from EU funding. The larger part of the NWO funding pertains to the contribution and coordination roles of the Meertens Institute in infrastructural projects such as the NWO *Groot* projects [Taalportaal](#) and [Nederlab](#) (coordinated by the institute), and the [CLARIAH](#) infrastructure roadmap programme.

The Meertens Institute joined forces with the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (Huygens ING) and the International Institute for Social History (IISH) as the KNAW Humanities Cluster (KNAW HuC). To facilitate this process, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences allocated a total amount of € 15 million. Partially this budget is spent on accommodation and the necessary reorganizations, but also on innovation of research practices and collection management. The purpose of the collaboration is to form a strong organization for humanities research, in which researchers, technicians, data and collection specialists work closely together to achieve results that were previously out of reach. The research is about history, culture and language, but also about new methods and techniques for the humanities.

To reduce the vulnerability of small support offices, and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the support services, in October 2016 the three HuC institutes combined their expertise and capacity in the areas of finance & control, human resources, facilities & support and communication, forming a joint business office of more than 36 fte. This explains the 5 fte drop between 2015 and 2016 in the support staff of the Meertens Institute in Table a (Appendix A): the institute contributes financially to the business office proportionally, retaining the number of employees and the usage of (working) space. The total cost of the business office contributed by the three cluster institutes is about € 4.3 million (about 20% of the total income of the cluster). In its first full year of existence, the business office has introduced new digital acquisition and remuneration processes, monthly progress reports, and implementations of process management and risk management. The business office supports the institutes in creating a physically and socially safe working environment in which the talents and ambitions of employees can develop optimally.

In another effort to reduce risks and gain efficiency and quality, in 2017 we started a reorganization of the ICT departments of the three institutes, which in 2018 will lead to a joint department with more than 30 software engineers and system developers. To further promote methodological and technical advancements, we established the HuC Digital Humanities Lab, newly hiring three young researchers with expertise on text mining and network analysis, as a core team.

Huygens ING, originally based in The Hague, and the Meertens Institute moved to a joint location in the center of Amsterdam in September 2016. With its extensive collections, the IISH has stayed at its location in the east of Amsterdam. A significant part of the collection of the Meertens Institute is also accommodated there.

The KNAW Humanities Cluster has approximately 230 ftes (fixed-term and open ended) and a total income balance of around € 21 million. The KNAW Humanities Cluster is led by a management team of the three institute directors and the director of operations, with a rotating chairperson.

2. Strategy

In the current political climate, language and culture are both considered to be key contributors to collective identity. The Meertens Institute studies the “Dutch case” from a comparative and international perspective. The institute also contributes to the societal debates on “Dutch identity” in a globalizing world by clarifying and demarcating issues more finely with respect to the role of language and culture in social and societal processes.

No other research institute or division of a knowledge institution in the Netherlands researches the “Dutch case” in this way nor does any other institute possess a comparable digitized collection of everyday Dutch language and culture, both current and historical. There is no

comparable institute in the Netherlands for ethnology or variational linguistics. The research institute occupies a crucial position between policy institutions (such as the [Nederlandse Taalunie](#)), government services and organizations with a heritage function (such as the [Nationaal Archief](#), the [Koninklijke Bibliotheek](#), the [Rijksdienst Cultureel Erfgoed](#), [Stichting Digitaal Erfgoed Nederland](#), and the [Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland](#)), with which it shares long-term objectives in the field of documenting linguistic and cultural heritage, and various academic groups in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at Dutch universities.

The Meertens Institute is a leader in the digitization of collections and the construction of digital infrastructure for providing access to textual (historical and contemporary) materials. The institute's analog and digital collections, which have been carefully compiled since the 1930s, continue to form the basis of much of the institute's research and are exceptionally popular with the general public. On average, each year in the past five years more than two million unique visitors accounted for more than 30 million pageviews of Meertens Institute webpages.¹ The Meertens Institute enjoys broad recognition due to the appearances of its researchers on the national media, and is a source of information for journalists. Researchers at the Meertens Institute provide judicious, well-informed advice for topical social issues such as alternative healing methods, the position of regional languages and regional identities, the results of language contact of Dutch with other languages, and the 'Zwarte Piet' (Black Pete) debate.

3. Targets: Research, societal relevance, strategic

In 2013, the institute saw four developments that triggered it to reconsider the institute's research priorities and its internal organisation. All four developments have remained crucially relevant during the past five years: (1) contextual changes driven by intensifying societal questions and unease on issues such as national, regional and local identities, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, multiculturalism, multilingualism, language variation and change; (2) the rise of the use of technology in the humanities, both in pre-scientific infrastructure and in research (digital humanities); (3) the government's changing view on the relation between economic and scientific innovation; and (4) the wish of the board of the KNAW to create a Humanities Cluster for a subset of its humanities institutes, and for the involved institutes to engage in closer cooperation in research, collections, technology and back-office activities.

The institute opted for a flexible and dynamic research organization with which it aimed to meet all four developments mentioned above, choosing to change the following in the organisation of its research (as described in [Crossing Boundaries](#), the Meertens Institute research plan 2013-2018, p. 8):

¹ See Appendix B for more detailed statistics.

- Changing from structural research groups to temporary research projects;
- The discontinuation of the distinction between ethnology and language variation as separate departments;
- A focus on technology and digital humanities within the research projects;
- A focus on valorisation within the research projects;
- The collaboration of technologists, documentalists and researchers in the selected research projects;
- A stricter monitoring of the research results.

Organizationally, the institute opted for an increase in temporary research staff, and to strive towards rejuvenating the structural research staff.

In the past five years the following goals have been realized:

- The institute has an undivided research department, in the sense that it is not structurally divided in departmental groups with department heads. Informally there are still various research groups. Broadly, the institute houses a *variationist linguistics* group and an *ethnology* group, with an overlap between the two;
- Both through leading positions in the development of technological infrastructure and in digital humanities research the institute has gained a strong national and international position. Considerable external funding streams were found for large infrastructural projects such as [CLARIN-NL](#), [Taalportaal](#), [Nederlab](#) and [CLARIAH](#), typically in consortia where the institute contributes and/or coordinates significantly. Researchers within the ethnology group successfully started digital humanities research threads in cooperation with other universities (projects funded by NWO CATCH and KNAW's Computational Humanities programme, and by the EU HERA programme);
- A wide variety of outreach and valorization activities emerged. See Appendix B.
- While the research themes described in the [Crossing Boundaries](#) research plan 2013-2018 did not function entirely as foreseen, many collaborations have emerged within the institute, specifically between developers and researchers in Digital Humanities projects and infrastructural projects, and in the area of *language culture*, a field where ethnological and sociolinguistic expertise is combined to study local identity formation, by focusing on both language and culture in traditions such as carnival in the South of the Netherlands.

Organizationally, the state of the institute evolved in 2013-2018 as follows (also, see Section 1 for more details).

- Since October 2016, the Meertens Institute is part of the KNAW Humanities Cluster, together with the Huygens ING and the International Institute for Social History;
- The Meertens Institute was successful in the past period in acquiring funding for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, partly through funds that the KNAW awarded to the Humanities Cluster for innovative joint research (the *Impact of Circulation* program) and partly through external funding (e.g. the [HERILIGION](#) project, through the EU HERA program). For three young researchers the institute created tenure track positions.

During 2017 the institute started drafting a follow-up to the *Crossing Boundaries* research program of 2013-2018. The new plan, *The Netherlands in the World*, The Meertens Institute formulates its mission for 2018-2023 in the following four targets:

1. **Core mission:** We study culture and language in the Netherlands, in a globalizing world. We operate in the forefront of international research in our domains of expertise, ethnology and variationist linguistics;
2. **Societal impact:** We study how language and culture change, how collective identities are constructed, and how these processes are shaped through embodiment and cognition. Both in the societal and the academic debates on these topics the Meertens Institute aims to play a leading role;
3. **Documentation:** The Meertens Institute has a rich tradition of empirical and historical research into processes of change in culture and language. This long-term research is connected to the creation of extensive collections: documenting the gathered materials remains a key task of the institute;
4. **Innovation:** We are open to innovations: we employ our existing expertise but are open to new paradigmatic approaches, methods and techniques. We explore innovations, such as new digital humanities methods, and shape some of these innovations ourselves;
5. **Longevity:** The institute is uniquely placed to take on long-term commitments and projects, such as digital infrastructure development, and take care of the active afterlife and long-term exploitation of such projects.

To attain these aims we believe the following contextual conditions will need to be created or strengthened:

1. The age imbalance that remains to date needs to be addressed. There is a demographic gap in the age range 35-50 among the institute's research staff;
2. Maximally profiting from the organizational and geographical proximity with the other institutes of the KNAW Humanities Cluster, NIAS, NIOD, and KITLV, as well as with the Faculty of Arts of the University of Amsterdam, by forging alliances and creating thematic research plans that are mutually beneficial and contributing to the institute's mission. The *Impact of Circulation* program was funded by the KNAW precisely for this reason, and the KNAW is open to requests to fund precisely these types of innovative joint programs;
3. The KNAW aims to obtain a strong academic profile for its institutes and strives to anchor them in the university landscape through professorships (by special appointment). These professorships are preconditions for having PhD student positions in our organization, as the Dutch law limits the [*ius promovendi*](#) to professors and adjunct professors at Dutch universities. The Meertens Institute sees this as an important third role, besides being a research organization and a collections institute: as a network organization between Dutch faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities with our nine (specially appointed) professors at five universities (cf. Section 9). The preconditions for this strategy are in place.

4. Importance of performance indicators

Publications in peer-reviewed international journals as well as monographs are considered vital, as they contribute most directly to the institute's core mission. We strive for publishing in the

most prestigious journals for all of our areas, and prefer Open Access publications where possible. We aim to exploit new possibilities for online (e.g. enhanced) publications. In the institute different publication cultures meet; chapters in edited volumes and peer-reviewed papers in conference and workshop proceedings contribute to a diverse mix of peer-reviewed publications.

As a tool to attain larger societal impact, the institute assigns specific importance to articles and books aimed at a general public.

Since 2014, the institute also publishes scholarly text editions as a special category, based on the steady output of a large-scale citizen science project co-ordinated by Nicoline van der Sijs.

Additionally, the institute considers its databases and associated webpages and research portals a crucial means to make the institute's research and collections accessible to the widest possible audience, from academic peers to the general public. It also produces open source software (e.g. [MTAS](#), a multi-tier search engine, and [TLA-FLAT](#), a data archiving environment, co-developed with the MPI for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen).

5. Results

5.1 Research

The scientific output of the institute, in terms of peer-reviewed publications, is of high quality. An important part of the research finds its way into monographs and book series, while another, larger part is published in highly regarded peer-reviewed venues: journals, edited books, and conference proceedings, reflecting the different publication cultures present in the institute. Overall, researchers at the institute published 2.8 peer-reviewed publications per fte each year. Both in 2012 and 2017 production peaked at 3.9, with lower figures in the in-between years.

Articles co-authored by Meertens Institute researchers have appeared in key journals in the institute's core areas such as *Folklore*, *Lingua*, *Social Anthropology*, *Journal of American Folklore*, and *Material Religion*, but also in high-impact generic Open Access journals such as *Royal Society Open Science*² and *PLOS ONE*.³

The average number of publications aimed at the wider public and at professional audiences is 3.4 per fte throughout the years 2012-2017; it was 4.5 per fte in 2017. These numbers underline the fact that the staff of the institute actively disseminates the outcomes of their research. Compared to university-based institutes in the same areas of research, scientific output can be

² [Karsdorp and Van den Bosch \(2017\)](#)

³ Two interdisciplinary articles both relating to neuroscience were published in PLOS ONE: [Harris, Kranenburg, and De Jong \(2016\)](#); [Lopopolo, Frank, Van den Bosch, and Willems \(2017\)](#)

argued to be comparable, while the institute's dissemination of research to professionals and laypersons comes in a markedly larger stream.

5.2 Society

See Appendix B.

6. Self-assessment

6.1 Research quality

The researchers of the Meertens Institute are independent experts in their respective fields, and are recognized as such nationally and internationally. Their studies are published in peer-reviewed media: international peer-reviewed journals and, depending on the publication culture in the specific field, in books, book chapters, or conference proceedings. The impact of these publications is hard to correlate to numbers of citations, especially for publications from recent years,⁴ but can be seen indirectly in the recognition and the role of the institute's researchers in organizational structures in their respective fields.

Researchers of the ethnology group have been actively involved in the international academic infrastructure of the field. The institute has contributed board members to [SIEF](#) (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore), its conference and the programme committees of the SIEF International Summer School, to the boards of the [International Society for Contemporary Legend Research](#), the [Kommission für Volksdichtung](#), the [Arbeitskreis Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung](#), and the [International Society for Music Information Retrieval](#); to special interest groups of the [European Association of Social Anthropology](#) and the [International Society for Folk Narrative Research](#), and to conferences and expert meetings of the [Intangible Heritage & Museums](#) Project. The Meertens Institute is involved in international networks and debates related to museums and heritage collections on decolonialization (with Humboldt University, UCT South-Africa, University of Bayreuth). Meertens researchers are also members of the editorial boards or editors of a large number of international journals such as *Ethnologia Europaea*, *Cultural Analysis*, *Ritual and Liturgical studies*, *Anthropological yearbook of European Cultures*, *Cultural and Social History*, *Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic*, *Gesture, Society and the Senses*, *Etnofoor*, *Volkskunde*, *Journal of Religion and Transformation in Society*, *Fabula*, and *Béaloideas: the Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society*.

Meertens Institute linguists have been board members of three of the most prestigious conferences in European linguistics: [GLOW](#) (Generative Linguistics in the Old World), [ICLaVE](#) (International Conference on Language Variation in Europe) and OCP (Old-world Conference on Phonology). The latter two conferences have been co-founded by members of the Meertens staff; the former two conferences have both been co-organized by Meertens Institute

⁴ Occasionally, a publication is cited frequently; the 2013 ICWSM proceedings paper by Nguyen, Gravel, Trieschnigg, and Meder, "[How Old Do You Think I Am?": A Study of Language and Age in Twitter](#)" has been cited 169 times.

researchers (OCP in 2014, GLOW in 2017). As board members, researchers have advised among others the [Virtuele Instituut vir Afrikaans](#) (VlVA) and the [Center for Advanced Studies in Theoretical Linguistics](#) (Norway). Meertens linguists are also members of the editorial boards of a large number of international journals such as *Diachronica*, *Glossa*, *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, and *Language Problems and Language Planning*. Van Koppen is an editor of *Linguistic Variation*, Hinskens of the John Benjamins book series *Studies in Language Variation* and Broekhuis of *Comprehensive Grammar Resources*.

6.2 Relevance to society

The Meertens Institute is the country's most esteemed expert knowledge institute on matters and debates that concern traditions (both historical as contemporary), cults, rituals, religion, identity, (in)tangible heritage, popular culture, language, folktales, and folk songs. Many people in the Netherlands, including journalists and students, consult the institute's experts, collections and databases on a daily basis. See Appendix B for more details.

6.3 Viability: SWOT analysis

Overall, the institute considers as its **strengths**:

- The breadth and diversity of its research projects around its common focus, language and culture in (ever changing and complex) everyday life;
- Its capacity to set up and sustain long-term research and infrastructure lines;
- The respected role of the Meertens Institute in national and international contexts: consortia (e.g. [CLARIAH](#)) as well as associations (e.g. [SIEF](#), the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore);
- Its unique role as the only institute in the Netherlands studying ethnology;
- The strong profile of the Meertens Institute in national media and in other valorisation activities;
- The technical development team, contributing to advanced digital methods for the humanities, and the strong commitment to digital humanities research.

As **weaknesses**, the institute notes

- Its baseline success in external grant application (despite large numbers of applications; the baseline of national funding at NWO is generally assessed as 10-15%);
- An imbalance in terms of ethnicity, age, and gender of its staff (cf. Section 11). The institute lacks junior researchers and mid-career researchers;
- Housing the institute's collections and archives in a single location outside of the institute's (attractive new) location in the centre of Amsterdam, a step taken during the clustering, has led to a lowered accessibility of the collections to researchers.

The immediate academic and societal context of the institute present both **opportunities** and **threats**:

- The clustering of the institute with the Huygens ING and the International Institute for Social History into the KNAW Humanities Cluster, since October 2016, offers strong **opportunities** for collaborations, e.g. in existing research lines and through common data types such as historical texts, in new digital humanities research, and in digital infrastructures (in 2018 the technical development groups of the three institutes will unify into a single 30-person Digital Infrastructure group);
- In present-day Netherlands, national identity, of which language and culture are seen as hallmark bearers, is a focal point of societal interest and conflicts. This implies an substantial and immediate relevance of the institute's expertise; a clear **opportunity** of the institute to gain center-stage attention. At the same time, this development is related to a frame in which academic expertise is not necessarily perceived as neutral. The combined politicization of science and polarization of society are considered a potential **threat** to the Meertens Institute if it goes center-stage.

7. Trends and developments

Societal

- **Migration and diversity.** In politics and society, as well as in international scholarship, migration and diversity have been major issues for several years now, and they will continue to be so in the near future. Therefore these issues will remain a focal point in the Meertens research as well;
- **Regionalism and ruralism, nationalism and globalization.** Across the world, different understandings of locality will continue to shape and alter people's identification with the local, the regional and/or the national. The institute will continue to focus on the role of language and culture in these processes;
- **The anti-scientific attitude.** A negative development in current society is a growing anti-scientific attitude. To help counterbalance this development, the Meertens Institute situates itself as a mediator, aiming to provide society with solid and well thought-through feedback. The anti-scientific attitude phenomenon itself is at the same time also an object of study.

Academic

- **Digital Humanities.** Following in the footsteps of mass digitization of heritage and academic collections, applications of computational methods have appeared under the moniker digital (or computational) humanities. A development that the Meertens Instituut anticipated accurately in the past six years is the growing importance and further

development of sophisticated computational techniques to explore data in the field of the humanities; more specifically, in stylometrics, computational musicology, text analytics of social media data, as well as modeling change and canonization in the oral transmission of texts and melodies. Moreover, the KNAW Humanities Cluster jointly founded a Digital Humanities Lab (DHLab) in 2017, with core members Marieke van Erp, Melvin Wevers, and Adina Nerghes.

- **Identities.** The growing focus on identities in politics and society makes research and analysis of contemporary constructions of identities and the processes of inclusion and exclusion that come with it all the more important. For the institute this will imply more specifically that we wish to contribute to a critical understanding of:
 - how diversity is understood and negotiated in Dutch society;
 - the increasing importance of (in)tangible heritage in politics of identity on the local, national as well as international level;
 - the growing presence of religion in a society that is generally considered to be secular.
- **Multidimensional studies.** Language and culture are both objects of study that can be approached from a large variety of angles: cognition, social interaction, embodiment, identity, neuroscience, biology, etc. One of the strong points of the Meertens Institute is that it has scholars working within most of these perspectives who have actively built bridges between areas.
- **The Dutch national research agenda** ('Nederlandse Wetenschapsagenda'). The Dutch [National Research Agenda](#) presents 140 overarching scientific questions and is the result of a bottom-up initiative, driven by the general Dutch public and a large number of organisations in the Netherlands. The questions reveal the complexity of the issues challenging Dutch society today, and suggest priorities in the areas where Dutch research should focus on in the coming years. The Meertens Institute is coordinating one of the 25 'routes', conceptual threads that were identified among the 140 questions, namely [Levend Verleden](#) (living past).
- **Open access, open research, open data.** It is imperative that all new research and data must become online accessible for free to the general public, and may not disappear behind a paywall. The institute subscribes deeply to this principle, but has to, and continues to work along the boundaries set by privacy and copyright laws and guidelines (e.g. GDPR) as well.

8. Benchmarking

We choose to compare ourselves to the [Institut för språk och folkminnen](#), the Institute for Language and Folklore in Sweden. In many respects the *Institut för språk och folkminnen* is comparable to the Meertens Institute, as we established also in a visit of staff members of the Swedish institute to the Meertens Institute in early 2017. The Swedish institute consists of several units located in different university towns. The central unit of the institute is located in Uppsala, with other departments located in Lund, Gothenburg, Umeå, and Stockholm. In their [own words](#), the *Institut för språk och folkminnen* is

“... a Swedish government agency with a focus on dialects, language policy, language planning, names and folklore. In these different areas, we conduct research, give lectures, answer questions and provide advice, and produce a range of publications.”

The institute’s research topics folklore and language varieties are isomorphic to the Meertens Institute’s focal points ethnology and oral culture, and variational linguistics. Names, or onomastics, used to be one of the three pillars of the Meertens Institute up to the end of the 20th century, when it was discontinued. Language policy and language planning are not part of the mission of the Meertens Institute; rather, they are part of the mission of the transnational organization [Nederlandse Taalunie](#) (NTU, the Dutch Language Union). The situation of the Dutch language being spoken in The Netherlands, Flanders, and Surinam calls for an organization that is not encapsulated in one of the countries’ academic structures.

Despite their overlap, the Institut för språk och folkminnen differs from the Meertens Institute in several aspects; we discuss them topically, based on information in the yearly reports of the institute from 2012 to 2016 (see [secure website](#)).

1. **Scientific quality.** The goal set by the institute is that at least 80 percent of the Institute's scholarly articles and reports published during the year shall be externally reviewed prior to publication. In 2015 and 2017, 95 and 97 percent of the scholarly articles, reports and books published during the year were in fact quality-assured through external review. The statistics of the Meertens are comparable but slightly lower; overall, 92% of all publications are peer-reviewed, and in recent years this percentage has been steady. Of all peer-reviewed publications of the Meertens Institute (2012-2017), 80% is in the English language; 16% is written in Dutch.
2. **Overall research goals.** As an overall qualitative goal, the Swedish institute formulates the following, which could apply to the Meertens Institute directly:

“The Institute conducts high-quality research within its subject areas and strengthens its research through both long-term and short-term projects. Research, in accordance with the Institute's research strategy, will serve long-term knowledge-building.”

The institute stresses short-term projects, which in the Meertens Institute are mostly found within the technical development group and not in the research group.

3. **Division of work between** research, documentation, and knowledge utilization. The Institut för språk och folkminnen reports that in 2016, 26% of all employee ftes was spent on collection curation and documentation, 25% on research and development, and 49% on knowledge utilization. Over time, the Swedish institute reports a mild increase in time invested in documentation, at the expense of mildly less knowledge utilization. In the Meertens Institute’s research plan 2013-2018, a clear choice was made to focus on research and abandon the goal of having a significant documentation workforce. The

Meertens Institute currently has four information specialists, accounting for 2.5 fte or 8% of the current workforce. As for the knowledge utilization part, which in the Swedish case can be partly attributed to the language policy, planning, and education departments, it should be noted that the Meertens Institute counts these hours as an integral and non-distinguishable part of the time spent by researchers and developers.

4. **Division of work within** the research and development part of the Swedish institute is distributed, in terms of workforce, in 2016, between 48% dialect (language variation) research, 10% folklore (ethnology), 18% names (onomastics), and 26% language policy and planning. In contrast, the Meertens Institute, which has the first two topics as research groups, has a roughly equal balance between ftes in language variation and ethnology.
5. **Societal impact.** The Swedish institute reports that 6% of the time spent on knowledge utilization is devoted to institute-general outreach; 12% is related to the work on dialects; 16% on folklore; 18% on names; and 48% on language policy, planning and education, again stressing a key difference in societal role between the institutes. The Dutch Language Union would be the Dutch equivalent of the branch that utilizes academic knowledge (from other partners) for policy, planning and (partly) education outreach.
6. **Digital infrastructure.** The institute plays a key role in Swe-Clarín, the Swedish-funded branch of the European CLARIN (Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure) family of infrastructure projects for language resources. Here, again, the two institutes are similarly positioned. The institute has been appointed as a CLARIN knowledge center (the Meertens Institute has a more encompassing [CLARIN B Centre status](#)) and cooperates with KTH, Linköping University, Lund University, Gothenburg University, National Archives, Stockholm University and Uppsala University, similarly to how the Meertens Institute collaborates with university partners in CLARIAH - as well as with sister institutes, notably the Huygens ING.

9. PhD Programme

The Meertens Institute, being a KNAW institute, can and does have PhD students as institute employees, but the students will typically defend their thesis at a (Dutch) university where their supervisor or one of their supervisors is full or adjunct professor.⁵ Nine staff members of the institute have a professorship (a part-time professorship or a professorship by special appointment) at six Dutch universities:⁶

⁵ International PhD doctorate programmes are also an explicit option.

⁶ Some staff members are supervisors of PhD students who are affiliated with these universities (and who may be funded through university-internal funding or external funding). Some of these students work on topics that fall within the scope of the institute's research, and some of these students spend part of their time at the Meertens Institute. Table d in Appendix A only contains information on PhD students who had or have an affiliation with the Meertens Institute.

1. Radboud University: Van Oostendorp, Van der Sijs, Van den Bosch;
2. University of Amsterdam: Margry;
3. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: Hinskens, Stengs;
4. University of Groningen: Meder;
5. Maastricht University: Cornips;
6. Utrecht University: Van Koppen.

The quality assurance of PhD trajectories is shared between the Meertens Institute and the local graduate school of the universities where the student will defend the thesis; the linking pin is the Meertens Institute staff member who is (one of the) supervisors of the student. At the Meertens Institute the PhD student has a yearly formal assessment meeting (*functioneringsgesprek*) with their supervisor. After the first year a go/no-go assessment is organized by the institute; a go implies that the initial contract of is extended to a full four-year appointment (at any time a choice can be made between a fulltime 1.0 and a 0.8 fte appointment, where the latter appointment causes the end date to move by 20% as well). Depending on the university, the student typically has several checkpoint meetings during the full 48-month period with local graduate school coordinators who monitor progress and provide assistance and feedback to the student.

A training and supervision plan (TSP) is drawn up in the first months after the start of the project. This TSP complies with the Meertens Institute's guidelines as well as the university's guidelines: it contains an outline of the plan (typically, a more detailed plan of the first 12 months and a less detailed plan for the remainder of the project), a supervision scheme (with what frequency does the student meet which supervisors), and a training plan that specifies which graduate school courses, summer or winter schools, and additional custom training (tutorials, research master courses, MOOCs) the student plans to take.

Since 2008, twelve PhD students (ten female, two male) began a PhD project at the institute. Three currently work at the Meertens Institute as post-doc researchers with a tenure track position. Two students who started in 2013 are still at the institute as PhD students. The others have found positions in academic research and development (research fellow at the Alan Turing Institute, UK; developer at the Digital Humanities Lab of Utrecht University), a museum (Museum Speelklok, the Dutch museum for self-playing musical instruments in Utrecht), and industry (linguistic experts at Appen and Lionbridge).

10. Research integrity

At institutes of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences everyone involved in research bears responsibility for maintaining scientific integrity. At the Meertens Institute general principles of professional scientific conduct must be complied with at all times.

These general principles are laid down in [Memorandum on Scientific Integrity 2001](#) (KNAW, Association of Universities in the Netherlands [VSNU], Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research [NWO]), the [Netherlands Code of Conduct on Scientific Practice 2005](#) (VSNU), the

[Memorandum on Scientific Research: Dilemmas and Temptations 2005](#) (second edition, KNAW), the [Report Best Practices for Ensuring Scientific Integrity and Preventing Misconduct 2010](#) (OECD), The [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity 2011](#) (ESF/ALLEA) and [The Singapore Statement on Research Integrity 2012](#), (including future editions).

For the Academy, one means of safeguarding scientific integrity is to afford other parties the right to submit a complaint if an Academy employee has violated, or is suspected of having violated, the principles of scientific integrity. Therefore, the Academy has a [complaint procedure](#) for reporting suspected violations of scientific integrity within its research organisation.

For the Meertens Institute specifically, the following applies.

Working environment

We strive for a safe working environment for everyone in which working relations are also trust relations, so that issues relating to integrity and other norms in scientific conduct can be discussed truthfully. Good social interaction among colleagues is encouraged - in case of friction, conflicts or unwelcome intimacies, employees can rely on a neutral mediator. Interns, volunteers and PhD students are guided in such a way that they can perform their work optimally in a safe environment. On a yearly basis, each employee has a formal meeting with their direct supervisor (usually: the institute director, or their daily supervisor in case of PhD students) reviewing their functioning over the past year. In this meeting, agreements made in the previous yearly meeting are reviewed whether they were enacted on, or why not.

Also due to its size and limited formal organization, the institute's flat structure invites all researchers to have institute-wide interactions easily. There is at least one monthly meeting (of the research council) in which members of the research staff can discuss matters with all fellow researchers.

Data and collection management

In the past, the institute made a sharp distinction between collections and their digital representations on the one hand, and the (often highly dynamic) digital outputs that are the products of and part of the the research workflow on the other hand. Currently, (digital representations of) collections are managed by a collection manager. Creating a collection requires data curation at several levels, including a detailed description of the collection and its components. With five-year intervals the institute publishes a [collection plan](#) specifying the planned efforts. A new plan will be written in 2018.

As a step to unifying storing and publishing digital collections, a combined repository and archiving system based on the ISLANDORA technology was developed with the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, and was introduced with the intention to allow storage for and discovery over all the Meertens collection data, maintaining any access restrictions of legal and ethical nature, for instance by requiring authentication if access is

limited to a specific group or the agreement with specific licenses for use. The Meertens Institute is a [certified CLARIN B center](#) and is subject to regular re-certification.

Integrity, ethical assessment, disclaimer

Requirements connected to integrity and open science have made us rethink the sharp divide between published collections and more transient researcher-managed data, by introducing and providing the above facilities both for storing collections and research data alike. Research data is generally not a collection (yet), but should nevertheless be managed in order to be properly shared (open-science) and reliably archived (verifiable science).

Editors and reviewers of peer reviewed journals and books are an important line of defense to identify deviant research results and call the author(s) to account - peer-reviewed publications should therefore be the norm in scholarly output. If a breach of integrity is established within the institute, swift actions are invoked by the director (retraction, communication with any external partner involved, reprimanding).

The institute does not have an ethical assessment committee, and neither has the KNAW at a central level. For the ethical assessment of studies involving test subjects, researchers of the institute must resort to ethical assessment committees of collaborating universities, and/or the universities to which they are affiliated. So far this has been unproblematic. As far as matters of privacy, copyright and embargoes are concerned, the Meertens Institute always takes the greatest possible caution. Materials that could be considered offensive (e.g. the Dutch Folktale Database's jokes section also contains jokes that are racist, misogynistic, etc.) are flagged and not made available online through the institute's search interfaces; they can be accessed for research purposes by request. Data gathering from individuals is always performed on the basis of informed consent. With disclaimers, the institute acknowledges that private information may be part of content or metadata (e.g., the content of audio recordings, the metadata of folktales); at the request of involved persons or their heirs, such data or metadata will be taken offline. The institute is able to comply to the new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) legislation in 2018.

11. Diversity

The institute recognizes an imbalance in the diversity among the members of staff, and as such diversity is a concern. More specifically, ethnic diversity is a strong concern; the institute also recognizes imbalances in age and gender and is motivated to address these as well.

The focus of the institute on Dutch language and culture (in an international perspective) may partially explain a lack of diversity in ethnic background - the current staff is all north-western

European - but this cannot be used as an excuse. The institute aims to be inclusive towards new staff members of any ethnicity; we would welcome researchers of different ethnicity in the institute and will ensure our hiring procedures are as open and inclusive as possible.

Currently the staff is also imbalanced with respect to age; aside from the director and half-time appointed staff member prof. M. van Koppen who both entered the institute in 2017, all staff with a permanent affiliation to the institute are 50-up, while all non-permanently affiliated or tenure-track post-doc researchers and PhD students are under 40. The institute strives to attract young researchers at the post-doc and PhD levels, as well as talented mid-career researchers in the 35-50 age range.

The gender imbalance within the institute is the third cause for concern, with about only one-third of the research staff being female. In hiring procedures, when more candidates are judged equally suitable, preference will be given to female candidates.

Appendix A: Tables

a. Composition of the Meertens Institute (fte) at 31 December of the respective year

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Meertens Institute						
Scientific staff	14.0	14.8	14.3	15.1	11.9	10.9
Post-docs	3.0	4.8	4.8	5.1	3.3	2.5
PhD students	3.0	5.0	5.8	5.8	4.8	2.0
Total research staff	20.0	24.6	24.1	26.0	20.0	15.4
Support staff	24.6	23.9	22.8	24.4	19.4	16.2
Visiting fellows						0.2 ⁷
Total staff	44.6	48.5	47.5	50.4	39.4	31.8

⁷ A system for formally registering guest researchers / visiting fellows was initiated in 2017.

b. Financing structure (x 1000 Euro)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<i>Funding:</i>						
Direct funding (1)	2864	2863	2834	2870	3213	3172
Research grants (2)	1476	783	1061	1789	1181	1382
Contract research (3)	434	552	410	171	235	124
Other (4)	113	266	210	188	124	117
Total funding	4887	4464	4504	5018	4753	4795
<i>Expenditure:</i>						
Personnel costs	4468	3839	4161	4283	3572	3442
Other costs	374	589	540	683	1078	1301
Total expenditure	4842	4428	4701	4966	4650	4743

(1) Direct funding (lump-sum budget)

(2) Research grants obtained in national scientific competition (e.g. grants from NWO and the Royal Academy)

(3) Research contracts for specific research projects obtained from external organisations, such as industry, government ministries, European organisations and charitable organisations

(4) Funds that do not fit into (1), (2) or (3)

For more information (e.g. funding per fte), consult [this spreadsheet](#) (secured webpage).

c. Output indicators

	Research quality	Relevance to society
Demonstrable products	<p>Per year, average: 27 peer-reviewed articles, 3 scholarly books, 22 chapters in books, 10 conference papers.</p> <p>6 PhD theses.</p> <p>Full overview of scientific publications: PDF, HTML</p> <p>Databases: DynaSAND, Dutch Folktale Database</p> <p>Research portals: Taalportaal, Nederlab</p> <p>Software packages: MTAS</p>	<p>27 articles / book chapters and 3 books aimed at professionals.</p> <p>Hundreds of articles in newspapers and popular websites aimed at the general public.</p> <p>Full overview of professional and popularizing publications: PDF, HTML</p>
Demonstrable use of products	<p>Top 3 pageviews of research portals and research-oriented databases in 2017:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dynamic Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects: 242K 2. Nederlab Research Portal: 105K 3. Morphological Atlas of Dutch Dialects: 32K <p>Full overview of website pageviews and unique visitors 2012-2017: Excel</p>	<p>Top 5 pageviews of websites in 2017:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Name Database: 11.7M 2. Neerlandistiek.nl, 4.5M 3. Etymology Database: 3.7M 4. Dutch Song Database: 3.5M 5. Dutch Folktale Database: 1.7M <p>Full overview of website pageviews and unique visitors 2012-2017: Excel</p>
Demonstrable marks of recognition	<p>Prizes and awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 scholarly prizes; • Honorary membership of Marc van Oostendorp of Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde; • Dutch Data Prize for humanities and social sciences 2014 awarded to Louis Grijp for Dutch Song Database. <p>8 new professorships 2012-2017.</p> <p>Memberships and invitations, yearly averages 2012-2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 invited lectures; • 18 memberships of editorial boards; • 22 memberships of committees. 	<p>Valorisation grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camerata Trajectina in the Dutch Song Database (NWO KIEM) • TINPOT / Twidentity (NWO Valorisation grant) <p>Apps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweetgenie • Sagenjager • Maasgeluide

d. Numbers of publications, categorized

Meertens Institute	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Refereed articles	37	21	26	16	29	31
Conference papers	17	11	9	9	8	8
Non-refereed articles	5	4	8	4	2	7
Books	5	2	2	2	2	5
Book chapters	24	40	14	21	14	21
PhD theses	1	1	2		1	1
Scholarly text editions			17	19	26	19
Professional publications		1	9	7	6	7
Publications aimed at the general public	65	70	75	79	65	62
Total publications	154	150	162	157	153	161

e. Length of PhD candidacies and success rate of PhD programmes

Enrolment			Success rates					
Starting year	Enrolment (male/female)	Total (M+F)	Graduated in year 4 or earlier	Graduated in year 5 or earlier	Graduated in year 6 or earlier	Graduated in year 7 or earlier	Not yet finished	Discont.d
2008	1/0	1			1			
2009	0/2	2		1		1		
2010	0/1	1			1			
2011	0/0	0						
2012	1/3	4	1	1	1		1	
2013	0/2	2		2				
Total	2/8	10	1	4	3	1	1	

f. List of the unit's five most important scholarly publications and/or other peer-reviewed outputs in the past six years.

Selected articles:

1. Balkenhol, M. (2016) Silence and the politics of compassion. Commemorating slavery in the Netherlands. *Social Anthropology*, **24**, 278–293.
2. Cornips, L. M. E. A., Swanenberg, J., Heeringa, W. J., & de Vriend, F. (2016). The relationship between first language acquisition and dialect variation: Linking resources from distinct disciplines in a CLARIN-NLproject. *Lingua*, *178*, 32-45. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2015.11.007>
3. Hinskens, F. L. M. P., Hermans, B. J. H., & van Oostendorp, M. (2014). Grammar or lexicon. Or: Grammar and lexicon? Rule-based and usage-based approaches to phonological variation. *Lingua*, *142*, 1-26. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2014.01.005>
4. Stengs, I., D. Chidester & C. Paine, (2014). Sacred waste (in conversation). *Material Religion. Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* **10:2**, 235-242.
5. Meder, T., F. Karsdorp, D. Nguyen, M. Theune, D. Trieschnigg, and I. Muiser (2016). Automatic Enrichment and Classification of Folktales in the Dutch Folktale Database. *Journal of American Folklore* *129*, 511 , pp. 78-96. http://www.theomeder.nl/06_Meder_JAF%20129_1%20text.pdf

Selected monographs, books:

1. Meder, T. (ed.): *Van Kikvors tot Droomprins: de Wording van het Sprookje*. Hilversum, Verloren, 2013.
2. Blécourt, W. de: *Tales of Magic, Tales in Print. On the Genealogy of Fairy Tales and the Brothers Grimm*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.
3. F. Hinskens & J. Taeldeman (eds), 2013, *Language and Space: Dutch*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter

g. List of the unit's five most important societal publications and/or other societal outputs in the past six years

Publications:

1. Jansen, M., Van der Sijs, N., Van der Gucht, F., and De Caluwe, J. (2017). *De atlas van de Nederlandse taal*. Lannoo.
2. The yearly *nieuwjaarsboekje* (new year's book) of the institute, written by staff members (and occasionally invited colleagues), and published by Amsterdam University Press, zooms in on an archetypical Meertens Institute topic.
 - a. 2013: Meder, T., [Avonturen en structuren. Op zoek naar de bouwstenen van volksverhalen](#).
 - b. 2014: Van der Sijs, N., *De Kaartenbank. Over taal en cultuur*.
 - c. 2015: Stengs, I., *Het fenomeen Hazes. Een venster op Nederland*.

- d. 2016: Hinskens, F., *Wijdvertakte wortels. Over etnolectisch Nederlands*.
- e. 2017: Kestemont, M., Stronks, E., De Bruin, M., and De Winkel, T., *Van wie is het Wilhelmus?*
3. Stengs, I. (2012). *Nieuw in Nederland: Feesten en rituelen in verandering*. AUP.
4. [Vertelcultuur. E-zine van het Meertens Instituut over mondelinge overlevering en verhalen vertellen](#). Ed. Theo Meder & Marianne van Zuylen. Jaargang 1 (2014) - today. Including a Facebook group [Vertelcultuur](#) with currently 524 members.
5. [Neerlandistiek](#). Daily 'journal on language and literature studies', with an editor in chief (Van Oostendorp) and many contributions of Meertens Institute researchers. The site is also hosted at the Meertens Institute.

Selected databases and other online materials released in 2012-2017:

1. [Taalportaal](#), a comprehensive and authoritative scientific grammar of Dutch, Frisian and Afrikaans, written and compiled by linguists, for linguists.
2. [Nederlab](#), a search and research portal on digitized Dutch texts from the early Middle Ages to the present.
3. [SagenJager](#) (LegendHunter): mobile website with routes for hikers and bikers from one folktale to the next; started in 2014 as an NWO valorisation project of FACT (Folktales as Classifiable Texts). Currently containing 18 routes with text, audio and GPS-navigation.
4. [Miracles of Human Languages: An Introduction to Linguistics](#), Coursera MOOC created by Marc van Oostendorp (with a.o. Marten van der Meulen, and Leiden University) with 150,000 participants to date.
5. [Uitleenwoordenbank](#) (Loanwords from Dutch Database), a database created by Nicoline van der Sijs and a team of volunteers containing 18,242 Dutch words that have been borrowed into 138 languages, creating 48.446 new loanwords across these languages.

h. Other relevant documents, for example the conclusions and recommendations of the previous external assessment and (where applicable) the most recent mid-term assessment.

- 2011: [Evaluation of Research and Collections of International Institute for Social History, NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies \(KITLV\)](#)
- 2011: [Self-evaluation Meertens Institute 2005-2011: Research](#)

Appendix B: Societal Relevance

The interest between the Meertens Institute and society, particularly Dutch society, is deep and mutual. Studying and documenting language and culture in the Netherlands, the institute focuses on the phenomena and changes that shape everyday life in society. At the same time, interested laypersons, educators, and the media frequently consult the institute to learn about the backgrounds and finer aspects of the issues that appear in the news, or that they have taken a professional or personal interest in. The institute also publishes information to the public proactively to contribute to the public debate over issues such as alternative healing, the Netherlands' postcolonial past and its relationship with the Sinterklaas celebration debate, the place of regional, national and international rituals and languages in public and private life, and the role of religion in the "secularized" Netherlands. In other words, information flows in both directions. We highlight both flows of information with some selected examples.

Information pull: nearly 100,000 pageviews per day

The Meertens Institute is a household name for the interested layperson who wants to satisfy an information need related to Dutch language and culture, who wants to browse information, click on maps, listen to audio fragments, or generally let serendipity do its work. Each year in the past six years, about 1.3 (2012) to 2.5 (2017) million unique visitors visited between about 25 and 35 million pages on one of the Meertens Institute's websites every year; this is close to 100,000 pageviews per day. The websites are developed to handle large volumes of visitors and are designed to offer intuitive options for searching and browsing. Among the choices offered, the public can delve into these sites:

- [The Etymology Database](#) (in Dutch Etymologiebank, 3.8 million pageviews in 2017) was initiated by Nicoline van der Sijs in 2010 after the last paper volume of the Dutch Etymological Dictionary was published. The database is a merger of etymological information from 25 sources, and is the result of crowd-sourced transcription and correction by a large army of volunteers;
- [The Dutch Song Database](#) (3.4 million pageviews in 2017) contains more than 170,000 songs in the Dutch language, from the Middle Ages through the twentieth century. It contains ballads, love songs, satirical songs, drinking songs, psalms and other religious songs, children's songs, St Nicholas and Christmas songs, the national anthem etc. For every song the source is indicated where the text and/or the melody can be found. In some cases one can access the complete text, music notation, or a recording;
- [The Dutch Folktale Database](#) (1.7 million pageviews in 2017) enables the visitor to search for more than 45 thousand historical and contemporary fairy tales, legends, saints' lives, jokes, riddles and urban legends;
- [The Dutch Dialect Database](#) (243 thousand pageviews in 2017) contains over one thousand hours of audio recordings as collected by researchers of the institute in the past decades. The recordings are of speakers of variants of Dutch from within Europe (the areas of the Netherlands,

Flanders, and the north of France), but also of Dutch emigrants. Among the many search options a geographical option is available: the [Speaking Map](#) (in Dutch);

- [The Database of Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Netherlands](#) (150 thousand pageviews in 2017) gives a detailed description of the pilgrimage culture in the Netherlands, from its start in the sixth century until the present. The database contains information on 662 different places of pilgrimage which were or are to be found within the borders of the present-day Netherlands.

Most of the research portals of the Meertens Institute, of which the target audience is primarily academic, are also open to the public. They do attract attention from the wider public, such as the [Dynamic Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects](#) (526 thousand pageviews in 2017) or the [Nederlab Research Portal](#) (104 thousand pageviews in 2017).

Many of the collections and online databases of the institute have been curated (transcribed, annotated, corrected) by an army of about 6,000 volunteers named the *Meertens Panel*. The institute receives regular requests to be added as a volunteer. The institute has developed its own interfaces for crowdsourcing and in 2017 started to work with [velehanden.nl](#), a commercial Dutch crowdsourcing platform.

The Meertens Institute also hosts websites that do not directly link to current research, yet that do contribute to knowledge dissemination and have a large appeal to the wider public, such as the [Neerlandistiek](#) website for Dutch language & culture (4.5 million pageviews in 2017) and the hugely popular [Dutch First Name Database](#) (11.1 million pageviews in 2017). The latter website is the most popular site of the institute; it was developed at the Meertens Institute in collaboration with dr. Gerrit Bloothoof (Utrecht University). Coca Cola used the database to print first names on its demi-liter bottles around 2012-2014. The commercialization of collections and research products has been occasional (as with Coca Cola) and has not been a target. Publications such as the 2014 [Verjaardagskalender](#) (Birthday Calendar, compiled by Nicoline van der Sijs) and the commercial publication of the traditional Meertens Institute new year's books and other popularizing publications through [Amsterdam University Press](#) offer guiding examples for the future.

Information push: Taking the stage

Researchers at the institute are highly visible in bringing the research to the public. They do this with several means: education, op-eds in the printed press, and through online media.

The (currently nine) staff members who are appointed as professors at (currently six) Dutch universities generally teach their topic there; they also supervise university students, who frequently join the institute temporarily as interns. Marc van Oostendorp developed a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) entitled [Miracles of Human Language: An Introduction to Linguistics](#). The course, offered by Coursera, has attracted 150,000 participants to date. As a special section of the [Neerlandistiek](#) site targeted at teachers of Dutch at the middle and high school level, the institute supports [Neerlandistiek voor de klas](#) (Dutch language and culture in the classroom), which also appears as a newsletter.

With invited op-eds in national and local newspapers, Meertens Institute researchers discuss current issues in language and culture from a scholarly basis. Nicoline van der Sijs wrote about [historical linguistics and digital humanities](#) in a series of contributions to the national newspaper NRC. Leonie Corpus wrote about [Limburgian language and culture and sociolinguistics](#) in De Limburger. Marc van Oostendorp is a frequent contributor to radio shows on language ([Taalteam](#) and [De Taalstaat](#) on national radio; Radio Noord-Holland).

The annual new year's book of the Meertens Institute, sent to all relations of the institute along with the best wishes for the next year, is also published commercially by Amsterdam University Press. The topics handled in the books highlight archetypical Meertens Institute topics:

- 2013: Meder, T., [Avonturen en structuren. Op zoek naar de bouwstenen van volksverhalen](#). On motifs in folktales.
- 2014: Van der Sijs, N., [De Kaartenbank. Over taal en cultuur](#). On the rich collection of [maps](#) in the Meertens Institute collections.
- 2015: Stengs, I., [Het fenomeen Hazes. Een venster op Nederland](#). On the celebration of André Hazes (1951-2004), singer of popular music and Dutch popular hero.
- 2016: Hinskens, F., [Wijdvertakte wortels. Over etnolectisch Nederlands](#). Introducing the concept of ethnolect and ethnolects in the Netherlands to a wider audience.
- 2017: Kestemont, M., Stronks, E., De Bruin, M., and De Winkel, T., [Van wie is het Wilhelmus?](#) On the likely author of the Dutch national anthem.

The institute aims to engage with the arts by inviting artists to exhibit at the institute, or by organizing exhibits related to ongoing research, such as the [ARTTREAT](#) exhibition in 2016, accompanying Peter Jan Margry's project *Religious and alternative healing in the modern world*, where 18 artists contributed their works inspired by the project's topic.

Taking the stage quite literally was the late Louis Grijp (January 23, 1954 - January 9, 2016) - who combined his leading role in the institute on research into Dutch song and music culture with being artistic director of, and lute player in, [Camera Trajectina](#), an ensemble specialized in Dutch music from the Middle Ages through the 17th century. Louis Grijp always made a point of combining these activities, showing that fundamental research can create art and engage an audience.

One-hit wonders

In the Meertens Institute new year's book of 2017, a cultural and stylometric study was described, performed by a team of researchers from the Meertens Institute, University of Antwerp, and University of Utrecht, that provided indications that Petrus Datheen (1531-1588) is the most likely author of the *Wilhelmus*, the Dutch national anthem, and not Filips van Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde. This finding caused a big stir in public media. As in this case, the release of

a research product is sometimes picked up more enthusiastically than expected. We highlight two other unexpected media phenomena.

The CPNB (Foundation for the collective promotion of the Dutch book) invited Folgert Karsdorp and researchers of the Computational Linguistics and Psycholinguistics Research Group (CLiPS) of the University of Antwerp to develop an assistive robot writer of science fiction. The robot, dubbed Asibot, was developed over the course of a few weeks in the summer of 2017. It was trained on about 10 thousand Dutch novels, and was ‘overtrained’ or specialized, on one particular author, Isaac Asimov, to acquire his style. In a co-creation process with Dutch acclaimed writer Ronald Giphart, Asibot wrote a tenth 8000-word chapter to the nine-chapter short story collection “I, Robot” (in its Dutch translation). About 100,000 copies of the book with the extra chapter were distributed for free to all Dutch public libraries. The tenth chapter, entitled “The robot van de machine is de mens” (the robot of the machine is man - a sentence generated by Asibot) was met with surprise and acclaim. Literary critic Erik van der Berg wrote in *De Volkskrant* that the tenth chapter was written “in stijl, met dezelfde gemankeerde zinnen als het origineel” (in style, with the same awkward sentences as the original”).

To end on a lighter note, the most popular message of the Meertens Institute on social media by far is a Facebook⁸ post from 2017 that was seen by nearly 97 thousand persons. The post is a map by Jan Stroop from the early 1970s which visualizes the regions in the Dutch language area which call french fries either “friet” (or “frieten”) versus “patat”. The social media sphere ‘exploded’, even causing the traditional media to report on the heated debate. With the Meertens Institute occasionally blamed for being the instigator, the “team friet” versus “team patat” debate still rages on.

⁸ The Meertens Institute has about 2500 followers on [Facebook](#), and about 3500 followers on [Twitter](#).

Additional materials are located at a secured webpage,

<http://www12.meertens.knaw.nl/documenten/>

If you require access information, please contact antal.van.den.bosch@meertens.knaw.nl .

