

# Early Modern Letters Online

## Johan de Witt workshop

University of Oxford, 11–13 January 2017

Of Dutch grand pensionary Johan de Witt (1625-1672) a huge collection of thousands of (international) letters and documents is preserved at the National Archives (Na) in The Hague in The Netherlands. The 'Johan de Witt letters' project [see: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/BriefwisselingJohandeWitt/>] aims to collect the metadata from these letters, in order to make them accessible for consultation and further research. These will then be imported in the Early Modern Letters Online (EMLO) catalogue [<http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>], which was created by the Cultures of Knowledge (CofK) Project. EMLO is a combined finding aid and editorial interface for basic descriptions of early modern correspondence. In order to understand the functioning of EMLO system and to gain knowledge about metadata standards, the twelve members of the Johan de Witt project-team (consisting of interns, volunteers and guest-researchers) departed on Wednesday 11 January 2017 to attend an applicable workshop at Oxford University.



The group during the first evening

Although our group had to change airplanes at Schiphol Airport due to an engine failure, we eventually arrived in Oxford, just in time to follow a tour, guided by Charlie, an Oxford student of Medieval English, who led us through the city center and told us a number of anecdotes on Oxford student traditions, including tortoise races and other peculiar student rites. The rest of Wednesday evening was spent at the famous Jamie Oliver's restaurant, where indeed a lot of (very good) Italian food was served.



A photo taken during the tour on the first day

On Thursday morning 12 January our group was welcomed at the History Faculty of Oxford by Miranda Lewis (project leader of the EMLO project and digital editor at CofK), Karen Hollewand, Dobrochna Futro and Charlotte Marique (digital fellows). Firstly, Ineke Huysman (project leader) and Jean-Marc van Tol (guest researcher) extensively introduced the life and correspondence of Johan de Witt, followed by a very inspiring introduction of the EMLO project by Miranda Lewis, in order to establish 'the playing field' for the day. Secondly, the EMLO system was introduced, as well as metadata standards, the webform and all sorts of other practical aspects, already sparking off many questions, comments and possibilities for the Johan de Witt project.



Miranda Lewis presenting at the EMLO workshop

During lunchtime, Professor Howard Hotson, project director at CofK, welcomed our group by expressing his congratulations on assembling such a large and enthusiastic team. He also emphasized the importance of the continuous cooperation in Anglo-Dutch projects like ours. After this, the workshop moved to the computer room, where the participants could practice with the EMLO system under the capable lead of Miranda Lewis and her staff. While working with the system, constructive discussions were exchanged about the benefits of the EMLO system for the Johan de Witt project.

Furthermore, Arno Bosse (digital project manager at CofK) presented one of the extra benefits of the EMLO system; the possibility to stage digital exhibitions on the EMLO website. The exhibition of the Stadholders' Wives, created by Ineke Huysman and Milo van de Pol, was demonstrated as an example (see: <http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/exhibition/sw/>). Afterwards, Simone Nieuwenbroek presented the results of her internship with regard to the correspondence of Anne of Hanover (1709-1759), one of the Stadholders' Wives, emphasizing the importance of metadata for the disclosure and understanding of early modern correspondence.



Simone Nieuwenbroek presenting on the Stadholders' Wives

It goes without saying that the workshop could not be brought to a successful conclusion without drinks, which were served in the Faculty Room. Afterwards, our group enjoyed an outstanding meal at Lebanese restaurant Al-Shami in the company of some of the EMLO staff. The last hours of the evening were spent at the famous Oxford pub 'The Eagle and Child,' where C.S. Lewis and Tolkien often used to meet to discuss their work.

On Friday we had a very impressive tour at the beautiful Bodleian Libraries, guided by George, who led us through the stunningly designed Divinity School and Duke Humfrey's library, that were both used as scene decorations in many Harry Potter movies. To finalize our visit, we had a quick peek in the magnificent Radcliffe Camera Library building.



Divinity School, Bodleian Libraries



A sketch of Radcliffe Camera by participant Jean-Marc van Tol

Although our initial flight was cancelled, the whole group safely returned to The Netherlands in the evening. The workshop not only proved to be extremely useful for the Johan de Witt project, but also for our general understanding of the applicability and standardization of metadata, and we would thus like to thank Miranda and her staff for organizing this inspiring and constructive event.



The Johan de Witt team at the History Faculty Room

On behalf of the Johan de Witt team, Gijs Dreijer and Marinka Joosten