

National Report for Belgium 2012

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I. ROYAL LIBRARY OF BELGIUM

General

Since January 2010 the head of the Map Room is also functional head of the Prints department. This implies an administrative merging of the Map Room with the Prints department.

The National Bibliography

Every year the Belgian cartographic production is continually catalogued into the online catalogue. The publication on CD once a year has been stopped.

Retroconversion

The Map Room is gradually continuing the description of its collections.

Digitization

Digitization has been a central activity of the Map Room, mainly in the framework of collaborations with other institutions:

Cartesius

The Cartesius project is a national project in which 4 national institutes participate: the National Geographic Institute, the State Archives, the Royal Museum for Central Africa and the Royal library of Belgium. It is funded by the National Lottery ever since it was presented to the press in March 2008. The project wants to make old maps, air photographs and other geographical materials concerning Belgium and its former colony accessible through one single portal on the Internet. In 2011 the prototype was finished. By the end of 2012 the site should be online.

Research

Cartography, motor of sciences. The Etablissement géographique de Bruxelles, a scientific company and the birth of a young nation.

The Map Room possesses the most important collection of maps and atlases produced by Philippe Vandermaelen, without a doubt Belgium's best known cartographer of the 19th c. It also bought most of his cartographic collections from his heirs in 1880. In 2009 the Map Room obtained a four-year subsidy from the federal government for research on Vandermaelen's scientific institution called the *Etablissement géographique de Bruxelles*. The project wants to show how this private enterprise was able to respond to the demands of a rising Belgium not only in the field of cartography but also, more widely, in the field of sciences. In December 2011 Marguerite Silvestre published the 5th volume of the Vandermaelen inventory :

Jacob van Deventer

For many cities and towns of the Low Countries the city plans by Jacob van Deventer (16th c.) make up the oldest cartographic representation. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that they are very accurate for the time. Most of these plans have been preserved in two versions, a so-called minute and a final version. The atlases with the definite version of the maps are now in the National Library of Madrid, whereas the atlas with the minutes (of the Belgian and French cities) is kept in the Map Room of the Royal library of Belgium. At the end of 2009 the direction of the Royal Library accepted the proposition to coordinate the publication of a new facsimile (a first edition dates from the late 19th-early 20th c.) of the Belgian cities and of those of Northern France and its colleague in Madrid accepted to collaborate in the project. The cities of the Netherlands and of Germany have been edited already by Dutch and German colleagues. The project has now been integrated in a larger research program on *City and Society in the Low Countries (ca 1200-ca 1850). The condition urbaine : between resilience and vulnerability*, financed by the federal government in the framework of the 7th PAI (Pôle d'Attraction Interuniversitaire).

FWO project UGent

In 2009 the FWO (Fund for scientific research in Flanders) honoured the research project entitled *De Kabinetskaart van Ferraris onder de loupe, nieuw onderzoek in het licht van nieuwe technieken* (The Ferraris map revisited, new research in the light of new techniques), with a four-year fellowship. The project director is Prof. Ph. De Maeyer (UGent, Geography department). W. Bracke is co-director. The project consists in a thorough study of the 3 existing manuscript copies of the map, the making of a complete legend and the creation of a GIS model. The research is conducted by Soetkin Vervust from the University of Ghent.

Facsimile of the Ferraris map

In 2009 the library published a new facsimile of the famous map of the Southern Low Countries made by Count de Ferraris (1777). The map is considered to be the first modern map covering the whole of the Belgian territory. The manuscript copy used for the facsimile once belonged to Charles of Lorraine, governor of the Southern Low Countries at the time. Due to the enormous success of this edition, a second edition on a smaller scale was published in 2011.

Exhibitions

From 25 April to 29 July 2012, the Map Room mounts a small exhibition entitled *Une source royale pour Mercator*. The exhibition, which is to be held in the Nassau chapel of the Royal Library, discusses the relationship between the manuscript atlas of the Low Countries (including parts of Germany) by Christiaan Sgrooten conserved in the library and the Mercator atlas. Contemporarily, a small exhibition within the permanent exhibition Librarium is dedicated to the Mercator atlas as a work in progress.

II. BIMCC

As of 2009 the Brussels International Map Collectors' Circle (BIMCC) is organizing its annual conferences at the Royal Library in close association with the library's Map Room. The 7th conference held on 11 December 2010 was dedicated to China. Speakers included : Hans Kok (*The intricacies on the sea-route from the Netherlands to the Far East in the 17th century and Mapping the adjacent seas of China initially fraught with errors*), Nick Pearce (*Matteo Ricci and Ferdinand Verbiest's maps of the world*), Stanislas De Peuter (*Martino Martini's Jesuit Cartography of China's Middle Kingdom*). The 8th conference held on 10 December 2011 was entitled *Brazil in early maps*. Speakers included : Iris Kantor (*From the first maps made after the arrival of the Europeans in the New World to the nineteenth century maps*), Martijn Storms (*The Marcgraf/Blaeu map of Dutch Brazil*), Raymond Buve (*A journey through Dutch Brazil from the attack by Piet Heijn on Salvador in 1624 to the siege of Mauritsstad by the Portuguese*), Ben Teensma (*Progressive general knowledge about Brazil, 1600-1650 as cumulated in the surviving Dutch WIC-rutters from 1629, 1637 and circa 1648*).

III. NGI

See the Cartesius project (Royal library of Belgium).

IV. EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES ON CARTOGRAPHY

- *Kijken naar oude kaarten in de Cultuurbibliotheek*, conference by P. van der Krogt, Bruges, Sint-Lodewijkscollege, 22 April 2010
- *Maps from the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648)*, conference by P. Despriet, Bruges, Sint-Lodewijkscollege, 22 April 2010
- *Het lezen van oude kaarten*, introductory course on the history of cartography, University of Ghent, 22 October, 19 November, 17 December 2011 and 14 January, 11 February, 17 March, 21 April and 12 May 2012
- *Mercator Revisited : Cartography in the Age of Discovery*, international conference, Sint-Niklaas, 25-28 April 2012
- *Land van Waas in de kaarten gekeken and België in kaart : de evolutie van het landschap in drie eeuwen cartografie*, exhibitions, Sint-Niklaas, Stem, 2 September-6 November 2011
- *Liber Floridus (1121) : the World in a Book*, exhibition, Ghent, Stam, 30 September 2011-8 January 2012
- *Landmeetkunde, cartografie en geomatica aan de Universiteit Gent*, exhibition, Ghent, Museum voor de Geschiedenis van de Wetenschappen, 27 October 2011-31 May 2012
- *Bibliothecae Gerardi Mercatoris*, exhibition, Sint-Niklaas, Mercatormuseum, 24 March-1 July 2012
- *Mercator digitaal*, exhibition, Sint-Niklaas, Stem, 4 March-26 August 2012
- *Une source royale pour Mercator and Mercatorspot* in Librarium, exhibitions, Brussels, Royal Library, 25 April-29 July 2012
- *Open Kaart : cartografie van Liber Floridus tot GIS*, conferences, Sint-Niklaas, 28 April 2012