



photo report

80 Years Collection IAV Conference

15 December 2015

3 December (Beurs van Berlage) & 4 December (Atria).

Day Chair 3 December: Linda Duits

Credits photography: Monique Kooijmans (day 1) and Marieke Lucas (day 2).



On 3 and 4 december 2015 Atria celebrates the 80 year anniversary of the Collection IAV with an international conference on archiving in the 21st century. Here we present some impressions.

Positioning Atria

Atria's director **Renée Römken** welcomes all the conference participants and attendees. She emphasises the importance of women's archives in the context of ongoing debate on the position of women in society. "We need woman's archives to safeguard and develop women's' and gender history, now and in the future and in all its diversity."



Hans Schutte, Director-general of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in the Netherlands, comments on his discovery of the archive of Lizzy van Dorp in the Atria collection. The documents of this jurist, economist, politician and feminist (1872-1945) give an inspiring account of feminist struggles. "This is why archives like Atria are so important."



National Archivist of the Netherlands **Marens Engelhard** stresses that “it is necessary that special archives work together to develop online services and secure simultaneous accessibility of different collections. Globalization and cooperation form the horizon of archives today.”

Last speaker in this block, **Donna Scheeder**, IFLA President and Deputy CIO at Congressional Service of the Library of Congress, (USA) emphasizes the educational and inspirational value of women’s archives. She points out that gender equality is goal no. 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Women’s archives can secure the access to information that is of key importance to achieve this goal.



Pitch



In the first pitch **Urmila MacNack**, founder of Powerlady, shows how her organization made use of material from the IAV Collection at Atria. Documents are important, she claims, because they show how women have fought for their rights in the past. “Atria’s image archivist Evelien Rijsbosch has helped me to discover the roots of our current attempts to empower women.”

Key note lectures



On December 3, 1935, Johanna W.A. Naber, Rosa Manus and Willemijn Posthumus-van der Goot officially established the International Archives for the Women's Movement. The first key note speaker **Francisca de Haan** (Professor of Gender Studies and History at the Central European University in Budapest) sheds more light on the initiative and its context. "The political situation was a key factor, the women not only wanted to safely keep documents, but the assault on women's rights at the time screamed for political action and a feminist response."

Second key note speaker is **Joyce Follet**, co-director of the Steinem Initiative at Smith College in Northampton (USA), which weaves the insights and experiences of women's history into today's activism and social movements. "Voices of minorities often remain unheard because they are not present in places where the discussion is held or where decisions are being made." Follet illustrates this with examples on the rhetoric and practices surrounding issues like abortion. Fortunately, activist movements push back and bring the conversation to women and their right to make their own decisions about abortion and establish reproductive justice.



Final key note speaker is **Kate Eichhorn**, Assistant Professor of Culture and Media Studies at the Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts (USA). "Feminist archives are located in time differently", she argues. Archives like the IAV and the WCWA actively sought to collect the materials of past women's movements, while simultaneously supporting women's activism in the present. "As such, feminist and queer archives are oriented to the present and future as much or more so than they are to the past."

Pitch



In the second pitch of the day, artist **Patricia Kaersenhout** tells us how she used the Collection IAV for her art project 'Proud Rebels', in which she reunites the pioneers of the black feminist wave in the 80's and tells their stories.

Intermezzo

Before the lunch break, it is time for a short intermezzo. Singer-songwriter **Renske Taminiu** performs a song about the founders of the IAV. A tribute to Rosa Manus, Willemijn Posthumus-van der Goot and Johanna Naber.



Panel 1: Visions for the Future



The first discussant of the panel 'Visions for the Future' is **Jennifer Tomás**, Assistant Professor of History Piedmont Virginia Community College, Charlottesville, (USA). She claims that the overwhelming and growing nature of the field of archival digitization makes it all the more important for collections focusing on women to maintain a distinct profile in order to keep them accessible and user friendly.

Second discussant **Beba Stankovic**, Director of the Public Library Pozarevac (Serbia) argues that librarians can be agents of change, and libraries can facilitate the empowerment of women and girls by actively advocating for women as well as providing tools for education and access to information.



The next discussant, **Adele Patrick**, Lifelong Learning and Creative Development Manager at Glasgow Women's Library (UK) gives an inspiring account on how the GWL started by volunteers in 1991 has grown from the grass roots into an accredited library, museum and archive with 22 staff members. "Women bike couriers help to distribute information and girl scouts help to map memorials of women. Services as apps and heritage walks are developed as well. All driven by our motto: Sisterhood is powerful."

Last speaker of the panel, **Maria Grönroos**, deputy manager of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research and director of NIKK (Gothenburg, Sweden), wholeheartedly assures us that “shared feminist knowledge makes a difference.” She stresses the importance of active dissemination of information by social media & e-networking, and asks us to allow for the vulnerability that goes hand in hand with increased visibility and transparency.



Panel Chair **Tilly Vriend** closes the Panel ‘Visions for the Future’ by emphasizing that the work of specialist archivists and librarians is important. “Not so much for providing information but rather providing the *right* information.”

Pitch



Karlijn Olijslagers’ pitch focuses on the historical and visual cultures of feminism and the women’s movement in the Netherlands in the 20th century. She notes that the archives of the exhibition on women’s suffrage in the Netherlands ‘The Woman 1813-1913’ are not in the Collection IAV. Nevertheless, the fact that since 1919 the archive of this exhibition is in the City Archive of Amsterdam, can be regarded as a positive thing, since this means that the exhibition is recognized as part of the heritage of the city of Amsterdam.

Panel 2: Global Perspectives

Chair **Agnes Jongerius** (Member of the European Parliament and chair of the Supervisory Board of Atria) opens the second panel 'Global Perspectives' by reflecting on Atria's slogan: *'Sharing the past, debating the present, creating the future.'* As a historian, she reminded us: "We all have different views on the past, depending on where we come from. But we have gathered here today, because we stand for a common future."



The first discussant, **Sruti Bala** (Assistant Professor Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam) speaks in collaboration with and on behalf of dr. C.S. Lakshmi, Director of the Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW) in Mumbai, India. The idea of setting up SPARROW to collect women's stories through oral history recordings, documents and photos took root in 1988 in response to well-meant Western aid aimed at women that, however, did not meet the needs of Indian women and did not help their emancipation. Bala: "Please, no more sowing machines."

The next speaker, **Buhle Mbambo-Thata** (Executive Director Library Services of the University of South Africa in Pretoria) takes on the ambitious task to provide an overview of women's archives in the entire continent of Africa. African women's archives face many challenges, mostly related to insufficient funds and staff retention. Nevertheless, Mbambo-Thata also emphasizes their success as "centres of last resistance".





Subsequently, **Frederike Kaltheuner** (fellow at the Centre for Internet and Human Rights in Berlin and PhD Researcher in the Data Activism Project at the University of Amsterdam) sheds some more light on archiving in the digital age, taking web archiving in the context of the Egyptian Revolution as a case study.

Pitch

In her pitch presentation **Gerda Jansen Hendriks** (Director of the History Department of NTR, Dutch Public Service Broadcaster) shows several scenes of 'De IJzeren Eeuw' (The Iron Age), a documentary series on the political, economic and social innovations of the 19th century that shaped the Netherlands of today. For the episode on the women's movement, she conducted intensive research on IAV-kept material, i.a. on the life of founding mother and writer Betsy Perk.



Special Event

One of the highlights of the day is the presentation and handing over of 7 long lost and now recovered books by Rosa Manus from the Collection IAV. A very special event indeed!

Myriam Everard clarifies the context and course of events. In May 1940 the IAV was closed by the Germans. For Rosa Manus and the other women this was a very sad day, it felt like 32 years of work was lost. In 2003 the last archives had found their way back to Amsterdam. But not all the books were returned.



Everard interviews **Jan Aarts**, author and fervent bibliophile, who many years ago found books with bookplates of Rosa Manus while browsing through book stores at Amsterdam's famous flea market on the Waterlooplein. He found *Concerning Children* written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and opening the book saw the bookplate and a dedication to Rosa Manus by the writer.

Official handing over of the books



Other books from Rosa Manus were found at the German Zentral und Landesbibliothek in Berlin in 2012. Today, prime moment of the special event, **Sebastian Finsterwalder** has come to return the books. After giving a presentation on the challenges and practices developed in handling Nazi looted heritage, the books are handed over tot Atria's librarian, Paulien Schuurmans. With a large grin she says what everyone can see: "Before you stands a happy librarian."

Day 2

A morning at the museum



Conference participants and attendees could spend the morning at the museum, with a special tour on women in Dutch art at the national Rijksmuseum. Or rather, maybe, the absence of women. Take the Night Watch by Rembrandt, the most famous painting of the Netherlands: it's a men's world, the only woman on the painting is an angelic little girl.

Special tour at Atria

Atria's information specialist **Gé Meulmeester** guided an international group through the library and archive of Atria. We were very happy to welcome colleagues from Liverpool, Berlin, The Hague, Maastricht, Greece, Luxemburg and South Africa. Everybody became very curious about the beautiful red library, the online services and the treasure room on the first floor. Meulmeester concluded with a valuable advice when using the search catalogue on atria.nl: "Never use the word 'women': the system will crash".



Workshop Raubgut



Peter Prölb (researcher on suspected Nazi-confiscated objects in the collection of the Weimar Foundation) gives a presentation on the provenance research project to check the whole stock at the Zentral und Landesbibliothek in Berlin on possibly looted materials.

Prölb explains how he, together with his colleague **Sebastian Finsterwalder**, looked at marks of provenance like bookplates, stamps and notes, everything that could have been added by the former owners. In order to sort and publish the data and make it widely accessible, they developed a database system and published it online (lootedculturalassets.de).

Special attention is dedicated to the case of Rosa Manus' books. Prölb: "The nine books and one ex-libris from Rosa Manus that have been identified in our stocks up till now were given back to the rightful owner yesterday. To return a book home, after so many years, is a wonderful experience."

Workshop archiving and Social Media



In setting up the workshop, Roos van Unen and Alexandra Raymakers used the online feminist network (The Feminist Club) that they initiated to find inspiring speakers. So the workshop itself is an example of web 2.0 connectivity put into action.

Sanne Koevoets (Lecturer, researcher and debater on digital culture and gender), debunks some of the most persistent assumptions comprising the web 2.0 mythology. Like the idea that more online participation automatically leads to more democracy and justice, or that the digital global village is a virtual feminist utopia. In fact, Koevoets argues, our online activity comes down to massive production of data and free labour serving corporate interests.



Tashina Blom (RMA Cultural Analysis) and **Molly Bower** (MA Presentation and Preservation of the Moving Image) speak about their experiences with setting up a community archive (Maagdenhuis2015) of the student occupation of the Maagdenhuis in the beginning of 2015.

“We wanted to fill the gaps left by official statements and news coverage and give an account of the plurality of narratives of the event.” Practical and ethical considerations in archiving digital content are discussed. Should selective criteria be based on quantification? “We might lose track of bad news that doesn’t get a lot of likes, so it is very important to come up with a qualitative approach.”



Day 2 of the conference is closed with a meeting with the benefactors of the Aletta Jacobs Foundation. After a speech on the early years of the IAV by Sanne Stevens, a special moment is reserved for the handing over of another special present: the official announcement of Aletta Jacobs' wedding. **Renée Römken** receives the document from **Inge de Wilde**, the former owner: "This announcement is particularly interesting because it announces the wedding of two people who both had fundamental objections against marriage."

We thank all the conference participants and attendees for the festive and inspiring two days!