Title
Extending Europe: The Dutch Periodical Publications of the Caribbean and Latin America

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80c6061r

Journal
European Studies Section (WESS-ACRL-ALA) Newsletter, 42(1)

Author
Pendse, Liladhar Ramchandra

Publication Date
2018-10-01

Peer reviewed
Extending Europe: The Dutch Periodical Publications of the Caribbean and Latin America

From Wess

Contents
- 1 Abstract
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Research Questions
- 4 Literature Review
- 5 Scope and Limitations
- 6 Open Access and the Dutch Periodicals of the Caribbean and Suriname
- 7 Conclusion

Abstract

The Dutch language periodicals press and its development in the Caribbean and Latin America have remained understudied in the North American context due to the lack of robust access to these periodicals in North American libraries. In the context of Iberian and Latin American Studies, one finds a wealth of information on both Spanish- and Portuguese-language periodicals. In the present article, I try to provide a cursory survey of some of the Dutch periodicals in the Caribbean and Latin America (primarily in Suriname) since the early days of Dutch colonization through the early 20th century. This article also provides a description of open access resources that allow researchers to view these periodicals online.

Introduction

The arrival of early presses and the development of periodicals publishing in the context of Mexico, Peru and other parts of Spanish Latin America remain well-documented in the historical as well as information-studies-related literature.[1] On the other hand, in North America, research literature devoted to the development of the periodical press in the context of Dutch colonial possessions in Latin America remains relatively scarce. The focus of this article is primarily on digitally available open access resources on these periodicals. This article also provides a brief historical survey of the periodization of Dutch periodicals of the region, along with a limited review of historical developments in the colonies.

Research Questions

What were the Dutch colonial possessions in the Caribbean and Latin America and what were some of the colonial periodicals that the Dutch colonists published in the region? Were there any specific periods in the evolution of the Dutch press in Suriname and elsewhere? Moreover, how can a scholar of Dutch and Latin American histories access these titles? What are some of the open access databases that are accessible to North American scholars of these periodicals?

Literature Review

There are several in-depth studies in Dutch academic literature on the Colonial periodical press in Latin America. These studies allude to the fact that it would be erroneous to evaluate the Dutch colonial press solely as a subset of Dutch publishing in the Netherlands. Instead, in these colonies, the evolution of the press followed its trajectory due to relative isolation from the
Metropole, and due to the diverse nature of colonial society.[2] Sens and Sumter provide a complete bibliographic picture with in-depth discussion of the Surinamese periodicals press.[3] The contributors to this edited volume provide a survey of published periodicals from 1774 through 2008. One must note that Suriname became independent in 1975 and the book chronologically narrates the history of periodicals publishing in Suriname. Angelie Sens, Director of the Press Museum in Amsterdam, sketches the early Surinamese press between 1774 and 1816 and in subsequent chapters, we see several others in the same book contributing to the development of the press in Suriname after the abolition of Slavery in 1863. Other scholars, like Lila Gobardhan, have written on the Dutch language and its changing status, and admixture with other languages in the context of Suriname. This change in word usage in turn has given the local press the linguistic specificities that are different from the word and language usage in the Dutch press of the Netherlands at that time.[4]

The British occupation of Suriname in 1799 and the subsequent return of Dutch rule in 1816, after the defeat of Napoleon, meant that there was an interruption in the line of communications with the Netherlands. This occupation also could have led to the development of the press locally. Another significant event in Suriname’s history was the abolition of slavery in 1863. However, the abolition of slavery did not mean that the emancipated slaves were able to leave the plantations immediately. Instead, the plantation owners forced these slaves to work an additional ten years through a contract system on the plantations. The British abolished Slavery in British Guiana earlier than in the neighboring region, and that led to discontent in Suriname. The plantation-based economy of Suriname, its transformation and slavery have been studied in detail by several authors.[5][6] Klooster and Oostindie provide an overview of the processes that led to the colonization of the Caribbean and Suriname by the Dutch.[7] The sources in the literature review allude to the fact that from the arrival of the Dutch in the Caribbean and South America until the independence of Suriname in 1975, the local press continued to be an essential source of information on the daily happenings in the colonies. In the 19th century, along with the telegraph, the press continued to represent the “highway” along which information flowed from plantation to plantation and from one settlement to another settlement. Also, along with the trade routes and the inability of the central authorities to the Netherlands to maintain the strict monopoly of trade meant the British; the French also could trade with the Dutch colonial possessions. One must also note that the British and French colonies were much closer to trade than the Dutch mainland. Various early travelers to the region describe life and society in Dutch Guiana.[8]

**Scope and Limitations**

This work focuses on the periodicals press in Suriname, as it was the most successful Dutch plantation colony.[9] The article does not include a detailed analysis of the periodicals from the following Dutch colonial Caribbean possessions that are collectively known as the Netherlands Antilles: Curacao, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius, Saba, and Saint Maarten. The article excludes the Dutch presence in the Northern part of Brazil from 1630 to 1654. Rather, the focus of this article is on Dutch periodicals until the end of the 19th century, and only on the Dutch language press of the region. One must note that there was an influx of Indian indentured laborers in Suriname beginning in 1879.[10] While this arrival did not immediately change the ethnic composition of Suriname, the subsequent arrivals of Chinese and Javanese laborers led to changes in the society that in turn could have influenced the publishing patterns in society at large.

**Open Access and the Dutch Periodicals of the Caribbean and Suriname**

The historical Dutch newspapers and periodicals of Suriname are readily accessible in OA format and this, in turn, has unequivocally enhanced the abilities of scholars to conduct research. The newspapers in the Dutch colonies can be seen through the lens of discrete periods that map the trajectory of historical development in Suriname. There are three distinct periods in the history of Suriname and the other Dutch colonies of the Caribbean. The first period is that of early colonization in the 17th century until Suriname became a Dutch colony in 1814. The second historical period is that of the development of a plantation-based economy in the early 19th century until the abolition of slavery in Suriname. The third period in the evolution of the local press stretches from the abolition of slavery until the end of World War I.

Each period in the history of Suriname impacted the growth of the local press and what was reported. These periods are not discrete periods; rather, one period gradually transitioned into the next, and it is this periodization that allows us to track the evolution of the Dutch press.[11] The reporting of local importance also shifts as one period changes into the next. To this end, I would like to provide some cursory information on the open access databases of these periodicals that researchers can access.
There are several open access databases that provide access to the full text, digitized historical newspapers of the region. The first newspaper in Suriname appeared in 1774, and it was entitled, *De Weekelyksche Woensdaagsche Surinaamsche Courant (WWSC)*, and the printer was Jacob Beeldsnijder Matroos.[12]

![Image of De Weekelyksche Woensdaagsche Surinaamsche Courant (WWSC).](image)

In 2010, the National Archive of Suriname and the Royal Library (KB—the National Library of Netherlands) agreed to digitize the available Surinamese newspapers.[13] Along with the other Dutch historic newspapers, the National Library of Netherlands has now more than 12 million pages freely accessible for searching in “Delpher (https://www.delpher.nl/)”. It is a union catalog of the Netherlands. As shown in the image below, the library boasts a streamlined interface.

![Image of Delpher landing page.](image)

The search interface allows its users to not only search for digitized newspapers but also for other formats like books. The keyword search for the term, “Paramaribo,” for the years between 1618 through 1923 in the newspaper database (*kranten*) results in 473,123 hits as shown below.
The keyword search for the term, “Paramaribo,” for the years between 1618 through 1923 in the newspaper database (kranten).

The facetted search feature of this database allows its users to narrow the search results by the years when the term appears, or by geographic location. For example, when one chooses Suriname as a geographic area, then one gets 237,306 articles in which the term, “Paramaribo,” appears. As the image shows below, the term first appears in the Inlands Nieuws section of the De Surinamse nieuwsverteller (https://www.delphe.nl/nl/kranten/results?cql%5B5D%5D=%28ppm+exact+%22%5B2045%5D1280%22%29&coll=ddd) in August of 1788.

The term, "Paramaribo," as it appears in the Surinamese newspapers.

Below is the first page of the first digitally available issue of the newspaper for August 1788. This database allows its users to download the item in three separate formats: .jpg, .txt and .pdf.
The first page of the first available issue of *De Surinnamsche nieuwsvertelder*

As shown below, one can see the download of information contained in the August issue of *De Surinaamsche Nieuwsvertelder*. The OCR, however, is a dirty OCR. This means that the researcher will have to bear the responsibility for correcting the OCR mistakes as well as conducting the page-by-page validation of the same.

The plain text OCR download of *De Surinnamsche nieuwsvertelder* from Image 5.

Downloading in PDF format is also problematic due to the nature of the images that the pdf can potentially contain. Please see the image below.

The PDF download of the *De Surinnamsche nieuwsvertelder*
While this database provides access to the digitized versions of newspapers and periodicals of the Dutch Caribbean and Suriname, the lack of an English search interface and the limitations of the OCR mean additional knowledge of language and cleaning up of the files will be required for the sizable textual analysis needed for any topic modeling or sentiments analysis. Despite these limitations, this specific database serves as a one-stop shopping repository for the periodicals of the Dutch Caribbean and Suriname.

One of the early and important newspapers that was published in Suriname was Surinaamsche Almanak (http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b16314957~S1). The same title was used by a later periodical that began publication in 1888 in Suriname. This title and other historical periodicals of the region can be accessed in another database, i.e., through the Digital Library of Dutch Literature [De Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren (https://www.dbnl.org/overdbnl/index.php) (DBNL)]. The site’s self-description is as follows, “The Digital Library for Dutch Literature (DBNL) is a digital collection of texts that belong to Dutch literature, linguistics and cultural history from the earliest times to the present. The collection represents the entire Dutch language area and is the result of a collaboration between the Taalunie, the Flemish Heritage Library and the Royal Library in The Hague.” This digital library is an Open Access repository that provides access to the Dutch colonial periodicals including Surinaamsche Almanak (https://www.dbnl.org/titels/tijdschriften/tijdschrift.php?id=_sur001suri01). The library allows its users to download scans. The image below shows the user interface of the DBNL.

The user interface of the DBNL

The database allows for downloads in OCR'd PDFs or of scans in PDF format. The OCR is uncorrected and the PDF of the scans is as shown below.
Coverage for *Surinaamsche Almanak* (https://www.dbnl.org/titels/tijdschriften/tijdschrift.php?id=_sur001suri01) in the DBNL is from 1819 through 1955. The database has classified different titles by genres and subgenres, and provides external links where possible. In the case of *Surinaamsche Almanak*, the genre is non-fiction and the sub-genre keywords are *almanak* (almanac), *tijdschrift* (magazine), or *jaarboek* (a yearbook).

In the image below is the advanced search interface of the DBNL. The interface allows the user to search for digitized periodicals by genres and subgenres. The image also shows the interface with results for the sub-genre *tijdschrift* (magazines).

Upon searching for the term, Curaçao, one gets 739 discrete results. The keyword search allows searching across all genres, and the results that are displayed are in chronological order from the oldest to the newest. The search results also include secondary sources on publishing in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles.\[17\] This article provides the user with another source of information on the periodicals of Dutch Suriname. It is the National Archives of Suriname (Lands-archiefdienst te Paramaribo (http://www.nationaalarchief.sr/collecties/archieven-on-line)) - However, this newspaper's collection is incomplete as noted by Michiel van Kempen and Hugo Enser.\[18\]
While these databases provide access to the colonial press of the 19th century, searching through them requires some knowledge of Dutch. Below are select links to the digitized newspapers as well as some additional information on the essential regional Dutch-language newspapers. This list is by no means a comprehensive list but provides the reader with a glimpse into the world of Dutch colonial newspapers of the Caribbean and Latin America. They Europeana Collections (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200359/BibliographicResource_3000115800825.html) host most of these newspapers along Open Access principles.

Amigoe di Curaçao : weekblad voor de Curaçao-sche eiland
(https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011211541:mpeg21:p001) was a weekly that was published in Curaçao and its issues can be accessed in the Europeana Collections. It was published from the years 1883 to 1976. The Europeana page links to the page of the National Library of the Netherlands. The image or the PDF, however, can be accessed on-demand from the Europeana platform using the embedded link resolver (https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011211541:mpeg21:p001) as shown below.

The newspaper screenshot is shown in the image below as it appears when downloaded from the Europeana page in an image format.

De Curaçaoesche courant (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200359/BibliographicResource_3000100720145.html) (1840-1881) is another newspaper with similar access in both the Europeana and Delpher databases. It was a law journal that was published by William Lee under the earlier title, the Curaçao Gazette. In addition to being available along the open access model,
one can access previous issues of the *Gazette* through the World Newspaper Connection’s Caribbean Newspapers database, as shown below. The database provides access to only one Dutch Colonial newspaper, namely the *Curacao Gazette*.

The database provides limited coverage of the issues that have been digitized most likely from a microfilm. The overall distribution of the newspapers in this database shows that its coverage of Dutch periodicals of the region is weak. Currently, the database only covers one issue, as shown below.

Above are some examples of the individual newspapers that are available digitally to users along the open access route. The last database by the WNC is a proprietary database and as its alternative one can use Europeana (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200359/BibliographicResource_3000112765049.html) to access the available issues, as shown in the image below.
Not only are all of the digitized issues of the *Curaçao Gazette* available to be searched, but the database allows the user to search within the archives as well (see the image below).

### Conclusion

This article provides a cursory survey of the Dutch periodicals of the Caribbean and Latin America. As the article shows, Open Access to these periodicals allows multiple users to access these issues remotely without paying for proprietary databases. The Dutch colonization of the region was nuanced and incomplete. The press that surged in the aftermath of this colonization today serves as an archive of historical memories and allow the users to map colonial discourse and social changes.

Liladhar R. Pendse  
Librarian for East European and Latin American Collections  
University of California-Berkeley

### Works cited

5. ↑ Blom, Anthony, and J.W. Smit. *Verhandeling Van Den Landbouw, in De Colonie Suriname*. Te Amsteldam: Bij J.W. Smit, Boek en Konstverkooper, 1787. Print. This was a planter’s handbook was published in Suriname.


The original text is in Dutch that I had translated. Please note that Taalunie is the Dutch language union and it represents over 24 million Dutch speakers from all parts of the world.


18. ↑ Ibid.

WESSWeb > WESS Newsletter > Fall 2018 > *Extending Europe*


- This page was last modified on 8 October 2018, at 17:15.