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**THE NETHERLANDS – VICISSITUDES OF A COLLECTION.
HOW THE MONEY MUSEUM BECAME THE DUTCH
'NATIONAL NUMISMATIC COLLECTION'**

The National Numismatic Collection now managed by *De Nederlandsche Bank* (DNB) in Amsterdam is the largest and most comprehensive numismatic collection in the Netherlands. It contains some 350,000 coins, banknotes, medals and other numismatic objects from across the world and dating from the seventh century BC to today, as well as an extensive numismatic library comprising some 50,000 books, periodicals and auction catalogues.

Other important Dutch numismatic collections can be found at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Teylers Museum in Haarlem and various provincial museums and archives. These collections, which often have a regional focus, are all considerably smaller and comprise only part of the total Dutch numismatic heritage. A list from 2002 showed there to be some 120 museums of varying sizes with public numismatic collections in the Netherlands.

In 1994 the Dutch parliament decided that the three most important numismatic collections in the country should merge. These were the collections of the Royal Coin Cabinet in Leiden, the Dutch Mint Museum in Utrecht and DNB's numismatic department in Amsterdam. Ten long years later, in 2004, these organisations finally merged to create the Money Museum. Work then started on building a national numismatic and monetary history institute in Utrecht, which officially opened in 2007.

From then onwards, the Money Museum was assigned a role and tasks that were very different from those of its predecessors. Whereas the latter had focused primarily on numismatic knowledge and research, the Money Museum's main focus was on monetary history and the role played by money in society, with academic research into the collection being shaped around these topics. The museum was also actively involved in financial education, mainly for school pupils. It was not until 2009 that this policy was changed and the museum's own collection given a more prominent place in the temporary and permanent exhibitions.

However, even before the Money Museum had opened its doors, it had been plagued by a lack of funding, and that problem was never properly resolved. These structural deficits resulted in two restructurings; much of the Registration department was closed down in 2008, while the Collections & Research department was largely disbanded in 2011, with only two

curators and one collection manager being retained. Ultimately, this structural lack of funding led to the Money Museum having to close in late 2013.

The urgent question that then had to be answered was: What to do with the very sizeable collections? The collections managed by the Money Museum are owned by various parties: the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science (in the case of the former Royal Coin Cabinet in Leiden), the Ministry of Finance (in the case of the former Dutch Mint Museum in Utrecht) and DNB in Amsterdam, while there were also sub-collections of varying sizes belonging to other parties (including private individuals, museums and the Dutch Royal Family) and that were held by the Money Museum under long-term loan agreements.

Ultimately it was decided that DNB would take on responsibility for the collections that had been managed by the Money Museum, with the result that the total collection was able to remain intact and moved to Amsterdam at the end of 2013. The entire numismatic part of the collection, including the library, was transferred to DNB in Amsterdam, while it was decided that the non-numismatic part of the collection (*viz.* the engraved gem stones) should be kept at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. As the collection is largely owned by the Dutch State and is the most important of its sort in the country, it was decided to rename it the Dutch National Numismatic Collection (NNC). The collection is currently managed by two full-time curators and two part-time collection managers, with two part-time librarians available for the numismatic library.

As DNB does not have any exhibition space of its own and attaches great importance to the visibility of the collection, it is generous in its lending of items, with the result that many numismatic items have been or are on display at various institutions across the country. Considerable time and effort are also being devoted to digitising the collection so as to further increase its visibility. The collection is being digitised in phases; over the coming years, therefore, basic information on the items, along with digital images, will gradually be made available online and can then be viewed on the website. An important step in this process was taken in late 2015 with the launch of the online collection database. At the time, close to 20,000 records, including some with images, could be consulted online. The numbers are expected to increase rapidly in 2016, once the digitisation plans start being implemented. Other means of communication, including Facebook, are also being used to increase awareness of the collection.

As a budget is now available, we can once again start acquiring items to enrich the collection when suitable opportunities arise. The first coins and banknotes have since been purchased, including a hoard, found in the Netherlands, of 180 Roman *denarii* and *antoniniani* from the mid-3rd c. These have been on display at the National Museum of Antiquities in

Leiden, where they attracted a great deal of attention from the national press, all of which has helped to substantially increase awareness of the collection.

As well as managing the collection, DNB has also been assigned another important statutory task: managing and maintaining NUMIS, the Dutch coin finds database that contains information on some 275,000 coins and other numismatic objects, along with details of where they were found. Almost all the backlog in registering items that was caused by the expenditure cuts imposed on the Money Museum has now been dealt with and staff are working hard to identify and register new finds. As well as the online collection database, NUMIS, too, can now be consulted online. Although not all records are displayed, almost 55,000 of them have been online since late 2015. Their number will increase in 2016 as a result of new finds and because existing records that still need to be checked, tidied up and streamlined, will become available.

The information about the NNC that is currently available on the DNB website is limited. However, we are planning to increase this and provide new online pages containing more information on the collection, NUMIS and the various services available.

In order to keep numismatics alive and to generate interest among a new generation of students, the author of this article lectures on numismatics and the history of money at Leiden University, as well as giving occasional guest lectures at other universities. These activities are proving successful, as evidenced by the numbers of students choosing to do an internship at the NNC during their degree and the graduation theses on topics of numismatic interest. It is these students who will be responsible for the collection and for passing on knowledge about it in the future. The most important thing now, however, is to make sure that the collection continues to exist. And in that respect we firmly believe we are moving in the right direction.

Contact

- Website, online collection database and NUMIS:
<http://www.dnb.nl/over-dnb/nationale-numismatische-collectie/over-de-nnc/index.jsp>
- For questions about the collection: info.nnc@dnb.nl
- For questions about the numismatic library:
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Fig. 1 – The numismatic collection in boxes in Utrecht, ready to be moved to Amsterdam



Fig. 2 – The premises of De Nederlandsche Bank in Amsterdam now also accommodating the Dutch National Numismatic Collection and accompanying staff