



**Universiteit
Leiden**

The Netherlands

Celebrating five years of TXT

Weel, Adriaan van der

Citation

Weel, A. van der. (2018). Celebrating five years of TXT, 4, 8-10. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/123125>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/123125>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

INTRODUCTION

CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF TXT

The MA-programme Book and Digital Media Studies (BDMS) is proud to present you this new issue of *TXT*, and much obliged to Amsterdam University Press for its generous financial, logistical and moral support. This is *TXT*'s fifth issue. That we are thus celebrating its first lustrum does not mean, however, that *TXT*'s history started five years ago. That history began almost thirty years ago. In 1990 Peter Davidson, Paul Hoftijzer and I started a programme called Book and Publishing Studies, under the wings of the Leiden English Department. This was a specialisation aimed at students of English with an interest in texts and how they are produced, distributed and consumed, chiefly in book form. Besides a smattering of what we affectionately called 'bib and pal' (bibliography and palaeography), the programme offered courses in book history and the opportunity to gain some hands-on bookmaking experience, ranging from the hand press to the then still revolutionary Aldus PageMaker desk top publishing software running on Apple Classics

with a 9-inch monochrome display.

The programme built on a tradition of departmental research in book history. Following his interest in the history of books and printing, as far back as 1961 the Leiden professor of English Jan van Dorsten wrote his dissertation on Thomas Basson (1555-1613), an English printer working in Leiden. It was published by the Sir Thomas Browne Institute for the Study of Anglo-Dutch Cultural Relations founded by his illustrious predecessor and mentor, professor Fred Bachrach. The publication in 1979 of Elizabeth Eisenstein's groundbreaking study *The printing press as an agent of change* inspired Van Dorsten to stimulate further research on Anglo-Dutch book trade relations. This resulted in two more dissertations: *Engelse boekverkopers bij de beurs. De geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning en Swart, 1637-1724* by our own Paul Hoftijzer in 1987 and *Govert Basson: Printer, bookseller, publisher (Leiden, 1612-1630)* by Theo Bögels in 1992.

The popularity of the Book and Publishing Studies programme testified to unplumbed depths of student desire for pursuing careers in the book industry. Attracting students from all over the faculty, before we knew it we had what was then known as an *afstudeervariant* on our hands. Doing an *afstudeervariant* meant devoting all of one's optional subjects to book studies, and writing a thesis straddling Book and Publishing Studies and one's primary subject.

Those were adventurous days. Forays into the rapidly vanishing world of letterpress printing led to the acquisition of a Vandercook printing press with type and other necessities for setting up a print shop. The faculty furnished a real APL 'Press Room' in the basement of the Lipsius building. The *stichting* Academic Press Leiden (APL) was founded to support student and staff projects, publishing some 25 book titles under the APL imprint between 1992 and 2004. Students were offered placement opportunities in the academic publishing and library world, and came back reporting about such cutting-edge digital developments as SGML (later to become XML) and PDF.

By December 1992 the Book and Publishing Studies community was large enough to warrant a newsletter, and students and staff jointly produced the first trial issue of *The Galley*: the first forerunner of *TXT*. The last issue appeared eight years later, in 2000, by which time Book and Publishing Studies had morphed from a programme under the auspices of the Department of English into the independent *afstudeervariant*

Boekwetenschap (Book Studies). This was run by the Werkgroep Boekwetenschap, with representatives from the university library, the university's central IT department (these being the heady early days of digitisation) and the Faculty of Arts. Membership of the *Werkgroep* ran to more than fifty staff, and the need was felt for a newsletter aimed primarily at them. The first issue of *Ezelsoor* (dog's ear) duly appeared in November 1998 – and the last in Spring 2006: another clear run of eight years. (All issues of *Ezelsoor* may be found at <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/apl/index.php3-c=12.htm>.)

In the meantime, in September 2004, the BDMS MA programme had been launched in roughly its present-day form. The last two issues of *Ezelsoor* were both produced by students of the MA in the academic year 2005-2006 – a clearly exhaustive exertion because for five years there was no sequel to *Ezelsoor*. It wasn't until 2011 that – student-initiated – *EDIT* appeared. Though it announced itself proudly as a 'quarterly magazine', in fact only one issue saw the light. The format, of a student-led annual, did however establish a new tradition. The second such was entitled *RE* (2012), followed by *YAPP* (2013). Given such ample and consistent student enthusiasm it made sense to give the initiative a more solid basis and a greater sense of continuity. In 2014 it was decided to fix the journal's concept, title and logo and to give it an annual theme, all with a view to harnessing its potential not only as a showcase for the student's energy and commitment but as a departmental visiting card. It is in that still relatively young tradition that the current issue

of *TXT* appears.

For a programme with a publishing studies specialisation and probably the first university course in the Netherlands to teach about SGML, Leiden book studies have been remarkably cavalier in the use of bibliographical metadata for their own publications. But then, can we even call them our 'own' publications? Over the last seven years we have received welcome assistance from a variety of industry sponsors (Brill, Elsevier, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Van Duren Media, Boom Uitgevers Den Haag and now AUP), many of whom have acted as (co-)publishers, and many issues carry company ISBNs in addition to our APL ISSN. It sounds like the makings of a bibliographical nightmare. But that may be just what will one day exert a fatal attraction on an ambitious young bibliographer who will hopefully finally disentangle the bibliographical knots and neatly

twist together the many strands that make up our departmental publication history. Such a history would also reflect many other histories: that of the department that produced it as well as, inevitably, those of the people who have made up that department over time. It will also offer a fascinating case history exemplifying the fast and vast changes in print origination over the last 30 years: from producing camera-ready copy (CRC) through cutting and pasting with real scissors and glue to digitally aided electronic pre-press (EPP) to a fully hybrid digital-first workflow, with the PDF serving both the online and paper publication. But until such time as that history is written, let's live in the present and celebrate the *TXT* team's magnificent achievement.

Adriaan van der Weel