
The Decimal Office: Administration as a Science in the Netherlands in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century

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ABSTRACT

In 1983 Boyd Rayward described the early diffusion abroad of the Dewey Decimal Classification (and indirectly of the Universal Decimal Classification) in Australia, Great Britain, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Russia. Here, I discuss the enormous interest in the decimal system in the Netherlands that went far beyond its original role for the classification of bibliographic knowledge. I will present Johan Zaalberg (1858–1934) and Ernst Hijmans (1890–1987) as two advocates for the use of the decimal system in the administration of public organizations and private companies and its role in the development of scientific management in the Netherlands.

INTRODUCTION: A MEETING IN A CAFÉ

On Saturday December 11, 1920, a motley assembly of business administrators, scholars, and entrepreneurs gathered in De Kroon, a local café and restaurant in The Hague (Netherlands). The aim of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of establishing a new society, The Netherlands Society for Documentation and Filing. Among the people present, so we read in the evening edition of the Dutch national paper *Vaderland* on December 13, were

- Jan Alingh Prins (member of the Board of Directors of the Patent Office);
- Charles Willem Adriaan van Bergen (Head Internal Affairs of the oil company Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij);
- C. A. A. Voogd (Librarian of the Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij);
- Frits Donker Duyvis (Information officer of the Governmental Industrial Service, Rijksnijverheidsdienst);
- Ernst Hijmans Jr. (Director of the first private management advisory company in the Netherlands, Organisatie Adviesbureau);

- Hendrik Jan Romeijn (Director of the Dutch Council for Habitation, Rijks Woningraad);
- Willem P. Jorissen (Lector Anorganic Chemistry of Leiden University and editor of the periodical *Chemisch Weekblad*); and
- Johan A. Zaalberg (Director of the Netherlands Filing Office, Nederlands Registratuur Bureau).

The chair, Alingh Prins, opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. and expressed his satisfaction in that such a large group of representatives of public bodies and societies, twice as large as at the previous gathering of September 4 organized by Donker Duyvis, was present. Alingh Prins continued with an explanation of the background of the initiative to establish a society for documentation and filing in the Netherlands. His historical overview started with references to the Dewey Decimal Classification and the International Institute of Bibliography (IIB) in Brussels that had been established twenty-five years before. Alingh Prins went on to describe the first application of the decimal system in public administration in the Netherlands and praised Johan Zaalberg for his role in the development and implementation of the decimal system in municipal filing based on the work of the IIB. The chair of the meeting finished his historical excursion with an overview of organizations that had ordered (part of) their collections and documents according to the decimal system, such as the collection of periodicals of the Dutch National Library, the library of the Royal Institute of Engineers, and the records of various bodies and institutes of the Netherlands Indies Government. After this historical introduction, and the lively debate that followed, the participants came to four decisions:

- To found a society that makes documents of the Netherlands and her overseas colonies accessible
- That this accessibility requires a better internationally negotiated and accepted system
- That “the Brussels system for the applied sciences if not the best at least is the most likely candidate” for such a system
- That in the future, in respect of other sciences, the society had to establish the most suitable system

Finally, it was decided that the eight above-mentioned members would work out the bylaws and statutes of the society.

This long description of the meeting in Café De Kroon, in spite of its informal setting, reveals how serious and widespread the interest in the decimal system in the Netherlands was. This interest went far beyond its original role for the classification of bibliographic knowledge. The decimal system was seen as a useful instrument to restructure the administration of public organizations and private companies. The decimal system

had already a long history in the Netherlands that went back to the first years of the twentieth century.

JOHAN ZAALBERG: THE BEGINNING OF ADMINISTRATION AS A SCIENCE

When Johan Zaalberg, in 1890, accepted his position of secretary of the municipality of Zaandam, he found its pre-1850 administrative archive in disorder and decided that it needed to be reorganized (Zaalberg, 1905; Ketelaar, 2000; Heuvel, 2012; forthcoming). Looking for examples he found the German texts *Katechismus der Registratur- und Archivkunde* (1883) by G. Holtzinger and *Leitfaden für das Registraturwesen und den allgemeinen Geschäftsgang der deutschen Stadtverwaltungen* (1904) by F. Michalski. The filing system of the municipality of Zaandam was reorganized on the basis of these books. When Zaalberg proposed publishing an article about his system in a periodical on municipal matters, *Gemeentebelangen*, one of its editors, H. J. Romeijn, then registrar of the Senate of the Dutch parliament and later secretary and director of the Dutch Council for Habitation (Rijks Woningraad), brought to his attention the *Manuel du Répertoire Bibliographique Universel* (1905–1907), the first complete edition of the main and auxiliary tables of the UDC (Ketelaar, 2000).¹ It would result in a close collaboration between Paul Otlet and Zaalberg. Ten years after the death of Zaalberg, Otlet listed him among La Fontaine, Melvil Dewey, Herbert Field, and others on a representation of an epitaph to honor the memory of friends who had contributed extraordinarily to universal documentation (fig. 1).

In his historical account of the implementation of this administrative system Zaalberg explains how he immediately sought contact with Paul Otlet.² An extensive correspondence between the two (now deposited in the Mundaneum, Mons) that started with a letter from Zaalberg to Otlet from March 28, 1905, reveals that he already had some detailed knowledge of the decimal system and of the plans of the IBB for the *Manuel* before the latter publication came out.³ In this letter Zaalberg explains that he noted the tables of the Universal Bibliographic Repertory in course of publication and states that although they were intended to bring unification in the classification of libraries, they might also serve the documentation of administrative documents, in particular of municipal administrations. Since Zaalberg was preparing an index of municipal affairs of various municipalities in France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, he preferred to let the IBB know of his initiative in time to avoid overlap with the UDC table of class 352. For that reason, Zaalberg asked Otlet permission to publish his table in “the general tables” of the UDC. Otlet replied on April 7, 1905, that the aim is indeed not just to bring unification in the classification of libraries, but that the method is applicable for “a better organization of the documentation of all orders of ideas,” and accepted

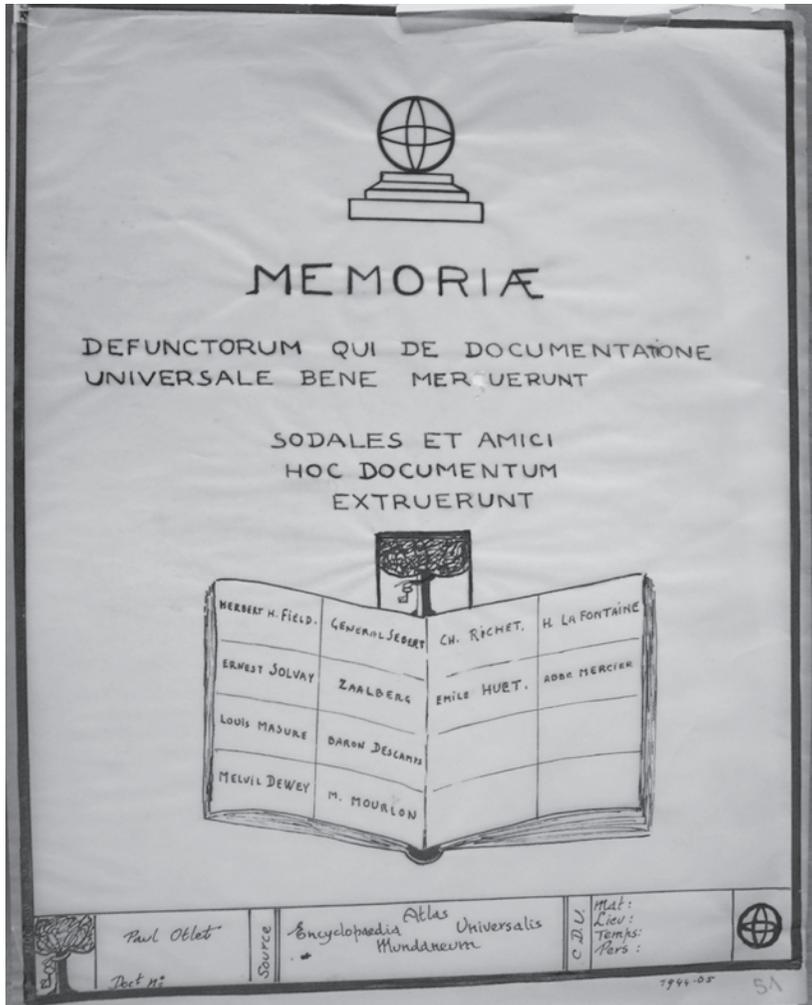


Figure 1. Otlet Memorial for friends who contributed extraordinarily to universal documentation, May 1944. Reproduced with the permission of the Mundaneum, Mons, Belgium.

Zaalberg's offer to complete the classification of division 352.⁴ After a couple of attempts by Zaalberg to get in touch with Otlet, they met in person on June 13, 1905.⁵ Ten days later Zaalberg wrote to Otlet and Masure to thank them for the meeting he had had with them. His letter gives an idea of their agenda.⁶ Apparently they discussed a wide array of organizational, scientific, and financial/commercial aspects of the use of the UDC for the administration of municipalities. Zaalberg described how he had already contacted some secretaries of large cities and hoped to bring all secretar-

ies of municipalities larger than twenty thousand habitants together in Amsterdam by July 1 (i.e., a week later). Moreover, he referred to a scientist and friend (probably Willem P. Gorissen) who was teaching at Leiden University; and finally he mentioned a certain Mister Salomons “who will be our merchant.”⁷ Zaalberg did not succeed in bringing all the secretaries together by July 1, but he was able to contact Hendrik Jan Romeijn, who supported the initiative to create an agency of the IIB in the Netherlands. Romeijn contacted Mr. Albert de Vulder van Noorden, referendary of the board of the Dutch state company Post and Telegraph, who had suggested involving the Dutch Society for Municipal Interests (Vereeniging voor Gemeentebelangen), of which he was himself a member.⁸

On the August 25, 1905, Zaalberg sent a letter from the Dutch Society for Municipal Interests to Otlet affirming that a Dutch commission had been formed.⁹ Zaalberg hoped that this committee would soon get in contact with its Belgian counterpart and that Otlet would accept an invitation to explain the great advantages of the decimal system for administrations. Otlet was busy, and almost two years later the Dutch commission under the guidance of Carel A. Elias (Burgermaster of Zaandam) and Coenraad W. A. M. Groskamp (Burgermaster of Sloten) repeated on March 13, 1907, their conditions for an agreement with the IIB. The conditions were that

- the Dutch Society for Municipal Interests would establish a sister society of the IBB, which consisted of two independent bodies: a commission of “scientific” men in the domains of public administration, archiving, and bibliography; and a public limited-liability company responsible for its exploitation;
- the Society would appoint the members of these bodies; and
- the Society would charge a commission to draw up in agreement with “the Institute” (i.e., the IIB) an index for the municipalities.¹⁰

More than six months later, on December 5, 1907, Zaalberg wrote again to Otlet that the Dutch Society for Municipal Interest was waiting for his reply, since everything had been arranged according to his wishes. The sister institute was established and was in contact with Willem G. C. Bijvanck (Director of the Dutch National Library) to bring “a foundation for documentation and bibliography according to the decimal system under the same flag.” The contract with Salomons was signed, and “now I am asked once again with discretion,” Zaalberg writes, “to approve of the measurements that you had required.”¹¹ Within two weeks the decision was reached that there would be one institute for documentation and bibliography, and that the filing committee (“registratuur–commissie”) had to change its name.¹² The board of the Dutch Society of Municipal Interests provided a list of ten members for the Netherlands Filing Office (Nederlands Registratuur Bureau).

Progress remained slow, but Zaalberg continued informing Otlet in the years that followed about his activities to promote the work of the IIB and the introduction of the decimal system in the Netherlands (sometimes writing two letters in one day). Despite the continuous requests for approval of the measurements taken in the Netherlands, Otlet hardly seemed to move. In the meantime the cocreator of the UDC, Henri La Fontaine, became involved in a discussion with Zaalberg on his work for the UDC. La Fontaine differed from Zaalberg on the question of whether certain topics of administration could be better classed under 352 or 351-2. Zaalberg had sent his classification but later suggested certain modifications. Some seemed futile, but others would challenge the universal character of the UDC. "Art," Zaalberg wrote, "is in the Netherlands no matter of the government and therefore from an administrative legal perspective Arts and Sciences cannot be classed under 351.85-2. Therefore 'Instruction Publique' (apart from Education) should be moved to 352."¹³ La Fontaine did not agree and replied harshly: "You state that art does not constitute an administrative matter in the Netherlands, but in many other countries it does, and, since our classification as you say yourself should become international, it would be good if we reserved a place of the documentation coming from administrations other than from your country."¹⁴ We do not know whether the differences over the classification of administration within the UDC stood in the way of a quick agreement on the Dutch plans for a sister institute, but it would take another full year before the plans of the Netherlands Filing Office were accepted. On March 6, 1909, the statutes of the Society: The Netherlands Filing Office (Vereeniging Het Nederlandsche Registratueurbureau) were officially approved by Royal Decree. The goal of the society was "the implementation and improvement of the filing of institutions and enterprises both according to corporate law and to civil law." The society aimed to achieve that goal by (1) providing advice; (2) developing filing systems (either itself or under its auspices); (3) publishing; and (4) cooperation with foreign institutions with a similar goal. The board consisted of people (previously) in high administrative positions: Johannes Christiaan de Marez Oyens (former Minister of Public Works), chair; Dr. Willem G. C. Bijvanck (Director of the National Library), deputy chair; Albert de Vulder van Noorden (Referendary of the board of Dutch Post and Telegraph), secretary; Carel A. Elias (Burgermaster of Zaandam); Dr. Eppe Wiersum (municipal archivist of Rotterdam); and Johannes Cornelis Boot (chemical engineer and professor at the Technical University Delft).¹⁵

It was not the company of the above-mentioned Salomons anymore but another supplier of office hardware, Blikman & Satorius, which was to act as the private company that would market products developed by the Netherlands Filing Office (Ketelaar, 2000). This company, which in 1907 put the first Dutch card and vertical filing system on the market,

his filing system was arranged, and duly filled the rest of the publication with texts by himself as well as other promoters of the decimal system. For this catalogue Zaalberg translated extracts from Otlet's publication on the classification of documents of industrial enterprises, and proudly included his text that referred to their prize at the 1st International Congress of Administrative Sciences in 1910. Furthermore, he included photographs of the contribution of the IIB to this exhibition (Otlet, 1901; Zaalberg, 1912) (fig. 3).

However, for more background information, Zaalberg referred to his earlier publication of 1908. Despite being a showcase, the catalogue of 1912 was certainly also an attempt to reveal the current status and shape of administration as a science. Zaalberg referred to the work of J. Leo Murphy, who wrote an article about his design of the filing system for The New York Water Drinkwater Company; and to the work of William Gavin Taylor, who designed a similar system as city engineer of Medford (Massachusetts) and who adapted it, according to Zaalberg, to Dewey's decimal system for filing as employed in the office of the city engineer in Waterbury, Connecticut. He continues with examples of the elevated railway in Boston and the administration of the Salt Lake City city engineer's office. Furthermore, Zaalberg, having contacted the "Library Bureau" in New York, reproduced a reply to one of his letters by William Cushing Bamburgh, in which the latter recommended the decimal system on the basis of his experiences with the filing system of the New England Telephone Company in Boston and also described the success of the decimal system in America generally, where more than 80 percent of libraries used the Dewey system to catalogue books on shelves, and where forty large railway companies used Williams's decimal classification (Zaalberg, 1912, p. 45).¹⁶ All these references of Zaalberg to initiatives to develop and describe filing systems abroad testify to his aim of demonstrating that filing was a science—an applied science, but a science nevertheless. As he explained: "The science of registering and documenting data is different from all other sciences in the sense that it does not have a merit in itself; its merit depends on its role to serve any other important art, science or matter. It is always an instrument. . . . This is often forgotten by those who, with a limited horizon, are given the task of designing or adapting a filing system; they are often inclined to follow theoretical niceties, but lose sight of the most important aim of their task, namely to compose a time-saving machine" (Zaalberg, 1912, p. 38). Zaalberg was right when he remarked that "it takes some time to get used to new filing systems but they gradually come to be seen as indispensable parts of all large organizations" (Zaalberg, 1912, p. 39).

Zaalberg's observation that filing systems had become part of modern organizations, as well as his references to developments in filing in America, paved the way for the presentation of administration as a sci-

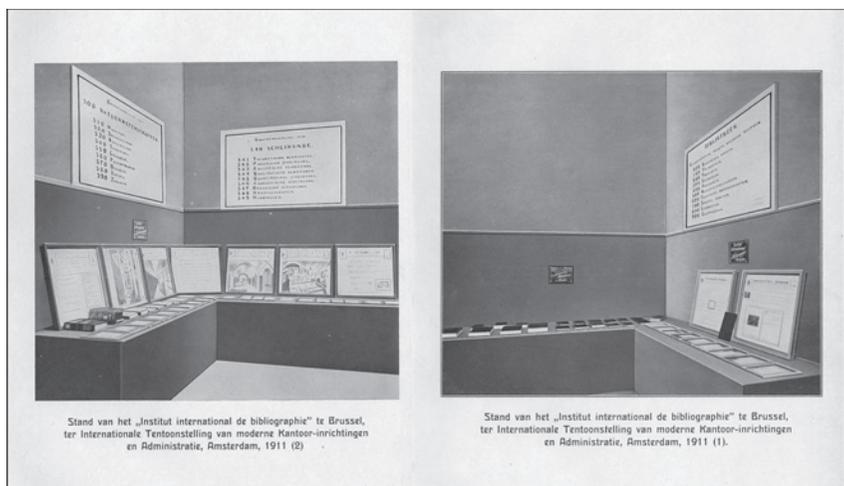


Figure 3. Stand of IIB Brussels at the International Exhibition of Modern Office Design and Administration held in Amsterdam in 1911. Source: Dutch National Archives.

ence. The decimal system played an important role therein. Apart from Zaalberg's publications, there were other Dutch studies or translations of international literature that promoted the decimal systems in the administration of public bodies and private companies. The early publications of Johannes Boot, chemical engineer and professor in sugar refinery at the Technical University of Delft, discussed the use of the decimal system in the administration of the colonial sugar refineries in the Dutch Indies (Boot, 1907, 1911a, 1911b). The above-mentioned Albert de Vulder van Noorden (1914) published a work about the application of Dewey's decimal classification to the Post, Telegraph and Telephone Services of the Netherlands Indies Governorate. C. G. van der Boom and Hendrik Icke, respectively clerk and adjunct clerk of the Board of the Dutch Post, Telegraph and Telephone (PTT), shortly after the First World War published a book in which Dewey's decimal system had been applied to the agenda, index, and archives of the departments of general government and other state institutions (Boom & Icke, 1919). However, the question of how these various decimal classification systems could be best implemented in the administrations of public and private organizations also resulted in controversy, as we will discuss in a case study of the reorganization of the Board of the Dutch Post and Telegraph. Here we discuss the role of Ernst Hijmans who, as an external advisor for its reorganization, promoted a pure application of the decimal system in the Dutch postal system. We will argue that these discussions laid the foundations of scientific management and Taylorism in the Netherlands.

ERNST HIJMANS: THE BRUSSELS CODE AND SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

We do not know exactly what Ernst Hijmans had learned from the IIB and the UDC, but he became a strong advocate of the decimal system and would bring it to attention of a future key player in the development of the UDC and its dissemination in the Netherlands, Frits Donker Duyvis.¹⁷ It might have been during his six-month observation in 1911 of laborers and their work in the Bollinckx steam machine factory (Brussels) into which its director had introduced the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915) (Bloemen, 2004). However, it could also have been in the Netherlands where after World War I Zaalberg had renewed his advocacy and more and more government bodies and companies had attempted to apply the decimal system in their administrations. Hijmans, like Donker Duyvis, had studied in Delft and had knowledge of patent development, being the works manager, between 1916 and 1918, of a machine manufacturing enterprise, Van Berkel's Patent, which was modeled once again according to the ideas of Taylor. In the same period, he was the secretary of the Dutch Engineering Standards Committee, before becoming, between 1918 until 1922, the director of the Central Office for Standardization (Centraal Normalisatie Bureau). In 1920 he founded, with Vincent Willem van Gogh (nephew of the famous painter), the first Dutch Advice Office for Organizations (Organisatie Advies Bureau), and introduced the latest administration and management methods, especially those from America (Bloemen, 2004). One of his commissions as an external advisor was for Dutch Post, Telegraph and Telephone, where Albert de Vulder van Noorden, as a registrar, and C. G. van der Boom, as a clerk, had published on the decimal system. In 1922 the Director General of the Dutch Post, Telegraph and Telephone initiated a special code committee—Committee Hoffman, named after its chair—charged with the task of advising him on the choice for a code for the implementation of a new filing system for its central administration.¹⁸ Apart from its chair and secretary, the committee had four members: Ernst Hijmans; Charles W. A. van Bergen (Head of Internal Affairs of the oil company Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij, which had already implemented the decimal system); E. P. Weber (clerk of the PTT Board); and C. G. van der Boom (also clerk of the PTT Board, and coauthor of the above-mentioned book on the decimal system in relation to the records Dutch governmental departments and organizations). The advisory committee was asked to answer the following central question: “whether it would be more preferable to implement a new filing system of the Board of Dutch Post, Telegraph and Telephone by using the Brussels code or to use a code designed by the Board itself.”¹⁹ The question was split into nine subquestions for which the advisors had to formulate answers. Question 5—“Is it theoretically correct to base the administrative code on the Brussels code?”—immediately

resulted in a heated debate on decimal systems. The advisory committee split into two camps: Boom and Weber wanted the development of an adapted decimal system designed properly for the needs of the Dutch PTT; Hijmans and Van Bergen advocated the “universal” system of the Brussels code. Boom and Weber argued that the Brussels code was specifically developed for libraries and was designed in such a way that one and the same subject could be seen from different points of view. However, one and the same term could have different meanings, and the representation of a class in numerical combination that expressed both the term and the act related to that did not seem practical to them. Different from the sciences, the order of administration was in their view something completed, and not continuously in development. Finally, they made a distinction between the actual place that was assigned to the content and the representation thereof. To clarify that distinction, they presented the example of a housewife who “classifies” material objects in the house according to a specific place: books on shelves, tea towels in the linen cupboard, and plates in the plates rack; whereas at a “home exhibition” exposition, the same objects would be classed according to provenance: books under “typography,” linen under “textile industry,” and plates under “porcelain industry.” Similar to the idea that it would be wrong to have two different orders for the same objects, it would be illogical in their view that the registrar on one occasion had to decide an order from an administrative point of view and on another occasion from a scientific perspective.²⁰

Hijmans and Van Bergen retorted that Boom and Weber completely misunderstood the concept of classification, which in their view was not the same thing as cataloguing. It would be correct to assume that every concept had a fixed place. The filing system should be a connection of relationships based on the idea that the order (of a group) of documents is related to a combination of thoughts. In reaction to the household example of Boom and Weber, they claimed that the need for classification became apparent by the larger scale of the “home exhibition” in comparison to the house. While in the household a towel is a towel, at the exhibition the household object could be linked to education or to industry. Classification should therefore be able to handle various logics from different perspectives and be an order of these logics. Hijmans and Van Bergen did see classification “as a mental road system” that could be expanded as long the same standards were kept.²¹ The Brussels code was in their view more suitable because of its various combinations that had been thought over, for its flexibility and for its stability since it could adapt to new techniques. Moreover, they considered it more economical since it could not only bring Dutch documents together but international ones as well. Weber claimed that with the foundation of the Netherlands Association for the Promotion of Administrative Documentation, he intended to develop an unified system and argued that never had there been imple-

mented a sound, reliable administration on the basis of the Brussels code. Therefore, he suggested that together with his colleague Van der Boom, he would adapt their own system and that this would be kept up to date by experienced “insiders.” The reaction of Van der Boom was even more harsh: “The answer of Hijmans and Van Bergen had made clear to all committee members that here two theoreticians had been talking, trying to sell a theory that had no fundament in practice.”²² The differences were unbridgeable, and Hoffman concluded in his report to the General Director that he could not serve him with advice, since the members of the committee had not been able to answer the central question of whether the Brussels code or a new tailor-made code was to be preferred. To understand the disappointing outcome of this debate, we have to go once again back to a meeting in our Café De Kroon, this time on Saturday January 14, 1922.

EPILOGUE: A MEETING IN A CAFÉ

On January 1, 1922, E. P. Weber, C. G. van der Boom, and J. Boon (Registrar of the municipality of Zaandam, and Zaalberg’s successor) founded the Netherlands Association for the Promotion of Administrative Documentation and announced that its first meeting would be held in the Café De Kroon on January 14. On Tuesday January 17, the national newspaper *Vaderland* reported the event under the headline: “A Tumultuous Meeting.” The chair, E. P. Weber, opened the meeting with the claim that there was no society in the Netherlands that dealt with administrative documentation in a scientific way, nor a society that consisted of experts that supported its interests. Of course there was the Netherlands Filing Bureau, but that had only one expert in the person of Johan Zaalberg, and the impact of his work had been limited since he had been used by the IIB, in the words of Weber, as a guinea pig. Ernst Hijmans took the floor and declared that he found this statement very unpleasant. He praised the work of Zaalberg and claimed that the founders of the new society did not fully understand the nature of decimal documentation. Moreover, not only Zaalberg, but Romeijn and De Vulder van Noorden as well, could in his view be considered as experts. Therefore, he brought in three motions. The conference, he motioned, had to express (1) its regrets concerning the critical remarks directed at Johan Zaalberg; (2) its opinion that problems with the decimal systems could be solved only by competent people; and (3) the wish not to initiate the new society instantly, but nonetheless acknowledge the interest of the civil servants present. Hijmans suggested that a new federation should be established, half of it consisting of civil servants under the direction of a neutral chair. Finally, he openly questioned the competence of the founders of the new society. Weber replied that the society was a fact, that the three motions would not be brought to a vote, and asked those people who did not support the goals of his association to leave the meeting. At that moment, Hijmans stood up and left

the meeting with the majority of those present. Weber concluded to his own satisfaction that the attack by Hijmans and others from a competing organization had not been successful and that he was convinced that the new society had science on its side.

The controversy between Weber and Hijmans in the Café De Kroon, where the latter had left the room, did not mean the end of the success of the decimal system in administration in the Netherlands. Certainly, Hijmans had not been able to convince PTT to introduce the universal decimal system. To make matters worse, while the Committee Hoffman had given their code-advisement task back as a result of the differences between its members in 1927, a new administration code by Hijmans's opponent C. G. van der Book was finally accepted by the board of the PTT. However, Hijmans made his career as an advisor to several Dutch and international companies. He undertook projects in France, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom and wrote several books and articles on Taylorism and business management.²³

More important for the dissemination of the decimal system of the Netherlands than the personal success of Hijmans was the reorganization of the Netherlands Filing Office. In 1919 Zaalberg had started negotiations with the board of the Society of Dutch Municipalities (Vereeniging van Nederlandsche Gemeenten) to hand over the implementation of the decimal code for the administration of municipalities to this society. On September 4, 1920, during a meeting in The Hague just before the Quinzaine Internationale conference in Brussels (5–20 September), where Zaalberg, Alingh Prins, and Donker Duyvis were present, it was decided to establish a new Society for Documentation and Filing to which Alingh Prins had referred in his opening speech at the gathering in the De Kroon on December 11, 1920. Since then, Romeijn and Zaalberg had had various meetings with the Dutch Society of Municipalities in the presence of Alingh Prins and Hijmans. On November 28, 1920, Zaalberg had sent the signed contracts on behalf of the Netherlands Filing Office to the Dutch Society of Municipalities and declared that in its statutes the new name of Netherlands Institute for Documentation and Filing (NIDER) had been accepted. The activities of the Netherlands Filing Office to promote the application of the decimal system of filing systems in municipal government came under the control of the Society of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), while the international documentation role that Zaalberg had promoted for years was gradually taken over by the Netherlands Institute of Documentation and Filing. Donker Duyvis was its first president, from 1922 until 1929. After the disappointment of the Dutch delegation in the vision of Otlet and La Fontaine, as expressed at the Quinzaine Internationale, that in Brussels a world center for documentation could be created, Donker Duyvis pushed for a reorganization of the IIB into a federation of national members. The new statutes were accepted in June 1924,

sented an international administrative atlas based on the decimal system (Van Acker, 2012, p. 453).

The Dutch Society of Municipalities, which from January 1, 1922, onward had been responsible for the implementation of the decimal code in municipal administration, was no less successful. On its 25th anniversary (January 3, 1947), the society celebrated its success with a special Decimal Filing song, written to the melody of “Jamboree.”²⁵ There was indeed reason for singing. While in 1922, 52 municipalities had adopted the new code, by 1932 some 850, and by 1956 some 1000 municipalities (all municipalities except three) in the Netherlands had implemented the decimal system.²⁶

NOTES

1. Romeijn discussed the decimal system applied to bibliography in the first issue of the periodical of Dutch Municipalities, *Gemeentegids*, of 1903–1904. Similar to Otlet, he had much interest in theories of Fayol (Van Acker, 2012, p. 449). Romeijn propagated scientific management in the Netherlands and gave lectures on Fayolism and Taylorism. Moreover he was the director of the Economic-Legal Advice Office: “Fayol” in The Hague.
2. The Hague (Netherlands), Archives of the Register Office of the Society of Dutch Municipalities [Archief van het Registratuerbureau van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten, zoals dit berust bij het Algemeen Rijksarchief te Den Haag], Inv. 2.19.140-nr 1.1, “Correspondentie inzake de overneming van de registratuerverzorging van het Nederlandsch registratuerbureau”: Zaalberg “Geschiedenis van de invoering der administratieve documentatie volgens het decimale stelsel in Nederland, door het Nederlandsch Registratuer bureau door J. A. Zaalberg 20 oktober 1930” [History of the implementation of administrative documentation in the Netherlands according to the decimal system by J. A. Zaalberg 20 October 1930, partly autobiographical]. Dates in this autobiographical are not always reliable and differ from sources in the archives of the Mundaneum and FID.
3. Mundaneum, Mons, Box PPPO 929, File 277: Letter 5524, Zaalberg to Otlet, 28 March 1905.
4. Mundaneum, Mons, Box PPPO 929, File 277: Letter 5593, Otlet to Zaalberg, 7 April 1905.
5. Idem, Letters 5832 and 5887, Zaalberg to Otlet, 1 and 15 May 1905; Letter 5941, Otlet to Zaalberg, 25 May 1905.
6. Idem, Letter 6212, Zaalberg to Otlet and Masure, 23 June 1905.
7. F. W. Salomons had the exclusive rights to sell The Stolzenberger filing system in the Netherlands that Zaalberg had used for his administration in Zaandam sent 10 days later to the IIB. See Ketelaar (2000).
8. Mundaneum, Mons, Box PPPO 929, File 277: Letter 6277, Zaalberg to Otlet and Masure, with a copy of the letter of H. J. Romeijn to Zaalberg.
9. Idem, Letter 6579, Zaalberg to IIB 6579, 25 August 1905.
10. Idem, Letter in Dutch signed by Groskamp and Elias with no number or cover letter, but apparently sent by Zaalberg since the IIB referred to this letter in its reply (letter 12336) of 22 April 1907.
11. Idem, Letter 15026, Zaalberg to IIB, 5 December 1907.
12. Idem, [no letter number], Zaalberg to Otlet, 20 December 1907.
13. Idem, Letter 19355, Zaalberg to La Fontaine, 5 October 1908.
14. Idem, Letter 19662, La Fontaine to Zaalberg, 31 October 1908.
15. The Hague (Netherlands) National Archives, Inventaris van het Registratuerbureau (ODRP) van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), 1909–1977, Inv. 2.19.140-nr 1-Statuten.
16. Bamburgh is probably referring to the publication Railroad Correspondence File of 1901 by the assistant secretary of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, William Henry Williams.

17. Mundaneum, Mons, Dossiers Numerotés-592-Donker Duyvis to Paul Otlet, 18 January 1920.
18. The Hague (Netherlands) National Archives, Commissie Hoffman (Codecommissie) [PTT], 1915–1956, Inv. 2.16.81.05.
19. Idem.
20. Idem, question 5 A, p. 2.
21. Idem, question 5 B, p. 3.
22. Idem, question 6 D, p. 1.
23. The Hague (Netherlands) National Archives, Inventaris van het archief van E. Hijmans [1890–1987], 1920–1985. Inv. 2.21.262; “Curriculum vitae van Hijmans met documentatie.” Inv. 88.
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