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Collections as networks

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**Collections as networks,
The deconstruction of information networks in the collections of the Meertens Instituut
(KNAW)**

Douwe A. Zeldenrust

This paper is about uncovering information exchanges and information networks in humanities research collections. Most humanities researchers focus on obtaining data from research collections, without realizing that those collections also can be seen as the results of epistemological experiments. That is: every collection is the outcome of the process of gathering information and therefore interconnected with the presuppositions, foundations and the activities that have led to the knowledge it contains. Charles Jeurgens (2012) states about this connection that: '(...) understanding that bond has to precede understanding the records' (p. 51). The 'bond' Jeurgens writes about, is not only dictated by the goal(s) forming the collection, but is also determined by (among other things) the cultural, administrative, scientific and social climate. Moreover, it is dependent on the individuals who were collecting, their scientific experience, their interests and personalities.

The paper will reflect on the issues of extracting, visualising and processing this context information, using the concept of 'deep networks'. Charles van de Heuvel introduced this concept (2015). It allows the decentralisation and contextualisation of networks and the visualisation of uncertainty while creating layers of historical sources in multiple perspectives. The vast collections of the Meertens Instituut will be used as a use case in order to make the first steps in realizing these networks (Meertens, 2019). The collections concentrate on the diversity in language and culture in the Netherlands. They have been accumulated in a period of over 80 years and are located at the Meertens Instituut (Jongenburger et al., 2013).

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