# To Promote and Facilitate

*The NEHA 1914–2014*

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**Abstract**

In celebration of the centennial of the Netherlands Economic History Archives (Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief, or NEHA), the oldest and most distinguished organisation in the field of economic history in the Netherlands, this chapter presents an overview of the main objectives and activities of the NEHA. Awareness of the need to preserve the sources of economic history, to catalogue them and to make them available for research, led to the foundation of the NEHA in 1914. Through the scale and unique variety of its collection of books, periodicals and manuscripts acquired over a hundred years, the NEHA has attained its status as one of the most important economic history libraries in the world. In addition to collecting and preserving source material, the NEHA promotes the publishing of scholarly studies and participates in several research projects.

**Keywords:** economic history, business history, business archives

## Introduction

On the eve of the First World War, on 2 April 1914, a society that came to be known as the Netherlands Economic History Archive (NEHA) launched in The Hague with an ambitious objective: to provide a firm basis for the study of a new scholarly discipline – economic history. Article 2 of the association's statutes describes its general objective as being 'the collecting, preservation, ordering and processing of source material which may be deemed to be of importance for the economic history of the Netherlands and its colonies in the broadest sense'. A wide-ranging position was taken, through the collection of essentially all types of paper documents – from company archives to price lists – and by the publication of sources and scholarly studies. What has the NEHA managed to accomplish in the past hundred years with regard to collecting and publishing, and to facilitating and participating in economic-historical research? This brief analysis of the history of what might be called the NEHA 'institution' focuses on the last 25 years, because 1989 had already witnessed the publication of a form of mid-term review entitled *The Netherlands Economic-Historical Archive 1914-1989*, on the occasion of the NEHA's 75th anniversary.[1]

## An ambitious start and an international orientation (1914-1945)

The establishment of the NEHA in 1914 was a joint initiative by prominent figures from scholastic, archival and business circles. The most visionary founder, with the most far-reaching outlook, was the first professor of economic history in the Netherlands, Professor N.W. Posthumus (1880-1960).[2] The co-founders were the Amsterdam accountant H.G.A. Elink Schuurman and the municipal archivist of Middelburg, W.S. Unger. From its foundation onwards, the NEHA has made every effort to safeguard archives (both of companies and of organisations) from destruction and to make sure that the source material is accessible and properly managed. Other important objectives from the beginning have been the acquisition of economic-historical source material in general and the publication of source editions and scholarly studies in the field of economic history. The establishment of the NEHA fitted within international developments to provide economic history – being a young discipline within the larger scholarly field of history – with solid foundations. The economic-historical archives (*Wirtschaftsarchive*) in Cologne (founded in 1906) and Basel (founded in 1910) served as examples of this process.[3]

1 E.J. Fischer et al. (eds.), *De Vereeniging het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief 1914-1989* (Amsterdam 1989).

2 In 1913, Posthumus was appointed as the first full Professor of Economic History in the Netherlands at the Netherlands School of Commerce in Rotterdam (the present day Erasmus University), which had been founded in the same year. In 1922, he was appointed to the University of Amsterdam.

3 Klara van Eyll, *Voraussetzungen und Entwicklungslinien von Wirtschaftsarchiven bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Cologne 1969); Fischer et al. (eds.), *De Vereeniging het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief 1914-1989* (Amsterdam 1989). Jaap Kloosterman and Jan Lucassen, *Rebels with a Cause: Five Centuries of Social History Collected by the IISH* (Amsterdam 2010).

*Portrait N.W. Posthumus (1880-1960).*
*Photo: Collection IISH Amsterdam.*

Although the NEHA began its activities in The Hague, the society has always had a special bond with the city of Amsterdam, from the very moment of its foundation on 2 April 1914. An illustrative example of this fact is that the inaugural meeting did not take place in The Hague, but at the *Muntgebouw* (Mint Building) in Amsterdam. The choice of The Hague seems to have been based on a demand by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, to which the founders had applied for a grant. The first lists of names of the board, of the advisory council and of the members contain some of the most prominent names from the world of business, education, politics and archives. It is striking to see the large number of renowned entrepreneurs who supported the initiative by becoming members of the board, the advisory council or just ordinary members.[4] Many an entrepreneur played an

4 Just to mention some examples: Chr. P. van Eeghen (member of the firm Van Eeghen & Co., a merchant's [and later banker's] company), J. Muysken (Director of the Netherlands Machinery and Railway Equipment Factory, later to be known as Werkspoor), C.A.P. Van Stolk (member of the firm Van Stolk's Stockbrokers), F. Driessen (Director of the Leiden Cotton Company), P. Hofstede de Groot (Director of the Amsterdam Bank, precursor of today's ABN-AMRO Bank), A. Labouchere (Director of the Delft earthenware factory 'De Porceleyne Fles', now called Royal Delft), D.F. Scheurleer (banker) and J. van Schevichaven (Director of the General Life Insurance and Annuity Company, better known as 'De Algemeene').

active role in the acquisition of archives. The best-known archives acquired by the NEHA include the archives of Wilton-Feijenoord (shipbuilding), Nijverdal-Ten Cate (textile industry), Werkspoor (metal industry), Loopuyt (banking), Crommelin & Sons (stockbrokers) and the archive of the Society for Industry and Trade (founded in 1777).[5]

In addition to the archives of companies and economic organisations, the NEHA also collected archives of trade unions, which Posthumus considered an indispensable element in the analysis of the Dutch business world. Prominent union leaders and social democrats such as H. Polak (Chair of the General Diamond Workers' Union of the Netherlands [ANDB]), E. Fimmen (Chair of the International Confederation of Trade Unions) and F. Wibaut (Alderman of the city of Amsterdam on behalf of the Social Democratic Workers' Party [SDAP]) played a mediating role in the acquisition of union archives. The city of The Hague willingly provided several spaces for the storage of the acquired company archives and publications. During the first twenty years, spaces in the municipal records office and at several other locations in The Hague served as depots. It was not until 1936 that the NEHA had acquired sufficient means to purchase premises of its own: the building located at Laan Copes van Cattenburch 83, also in The Hague.

In the early years, there was an obvious additional task for the library sector with regard to the archive collection. The name 'Economic History Library' first appeared in the annual report of 1923. The occasion for this was the division of the NEHA administration into more or less independent departments. Apart from the Departments of Archives and Publications, the report mentions the Economic History Library, the Documentation Department, the Financial Archive and the Social-Historical Department as separate units.[6] It took until 1928 before the establishment of a library in the field of economic history was added to the articles of association as a separate objective, as a result of successful acquisition activities. From the end of the 1920s, the NEHA had shown itself to be an active buyer of specialised collections at auctions in Antwerp, Paris and London, which gave the collection both more profile and a more international character.[7]

5 Fischer (eds.), *De Vereeniging het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief 1914-1989*, 219-226.

6 Ibidem, 68.

7 Among other things, this included the collection of J.A.L. Velle (including a large number of publications and documents on the history of accountancy, commercial arithmetic, business practice and entrepreneurship as well as a large collection of international price lists) and the Bruyard Collection, an archive about the French trade balance in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Some of the more impressive acquisitions – such as a tulip book[8] (early seventeenth century), Japanese prints (early nineteenth century), coins and medals and price lists – were made possible partly by members making extra payments into the Book Fund, which had been established in 1927.[9] This Book Fund could be regarded as the result of a type of crowd funding (before the term existed).

*Economic History Library, Amsterdam. View of reading room on the first floor, ca. January 21, 1933.*
*Photo: Collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam.*

The expansion of the collection of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, price lists and a large variety of other historical documents prompted the need for more spacious accommodation to house the NEHA collections. Unfortunately, the city council of The Hague could not comply with this wish. This led the management and the board to appeal to the city council of Amsterdam, which they had been in close contact with for several years. In 1933, the support of the city of Amsterdam enabled the Economic History Library (EHB) to open its doors at Herengracht 218-220. There were two women who played an important part during the first years of the EHB's existence: J. de Iongh, the first EHB librarian, and A. Adama van Scheltema-Kleefstra. Possessing both extensive expert knowledge and good contacts

8 http://www.neha.nl/specialcollections/0254tulp.php
9 http://www.neha.nl/collections/#digitaal

– for instance through being the archivist of the SDAP – Adama primarily concentrated on the expansion of the Social-Historical Department. Two years later, in 1935, the archives and publications of a more social-historical nature – such as union archives, including the archive of the ANDB – were given a new location at another one of N.W. Posthumus' establishments, the International Institute of Social History (IISH), which had been founded in the same year. Posthumus would combine his position as director of both the NEHA and the IISH until 1949, except for the last years of the Second World War.

In 1915, the NEHA started publishing the *Economic History Yearbook*, which served as a platform for both scholarly articles and publications on society affairs (including articles of association, lists of names of board members, ordinary members and advisory council members, and inventories of archives deposited at the NEHA). The yearbook, with its distinctive green cover with gold print, appeared annually until 1931, and then less regularly. This was due to limited financial means, but also director-secretary Posthumus' priorities. From 1919, the issue of the yearbook was joined by extensive source publications and monographs based on extensive archival research in a series titled *Studies of the Netherlands Economic-Historical Archive* (or, in short, *Studies of the Association*). Posthumus himself made a considerable contribution to this series, for instance through his *Documents Concerning the Foreign Trade Policy of the Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century*, a six-volume issue that appeared between 1919 and 1931.[10]

Through these and other publications, Posthumus made clear the value he attached to a historiography based on source materials that had been made properly accessible and on conscientious source criticism. This placed him in the tradition of the critical-philological and empirical method of the nineteenth century, which revolved around 'the facts, and nothing but the facts'.[11] At the same time, he seemed aware that this particular historiographical approach had its limitations. Through his studies about prices – which were partly based on his own purchases of price lists and stock market lists – he showed that historiography should not only take an interest in the non-recurrent, the unique or the singular, but also in histori-

10 From the mid-1920s, Posthumus was also editor of the series *Economic and Social-Historical Studies*, released by Martinus Nijhoff, publisher of the NEHA Yearbook.

11 L. Noordegraaf, 'Nicolaas Wilhelmus Posthumus (1880-1960). Van gloeiend marxist tot entrepreneur', in: J.C.H. Blom et al. (eds.), *Een brandpunt van geleerdheid in de hoofdstad. De Universiteit van Amsterdam rond 1900 in vijftien portretten* (Hilversum/Amsterdam 1992) 287-313, 310.

cal processes, regularities and patterns.[12] This type of research brought him into contact with the International Scientific Committee on Price History, led by Sir William Beveridge and Edwin F. Gay. Posthumus joined this committee as a member in 1931.

*Meeting of the International Scientific Committee on Price History, Carlton Hotel, Amsterdam in July 1931. From left to right: M. Poppelshouwer (stenographer), A. Hauser, A.H. Cole, miss Wilson (secretary), W. Beveridge (chair), N.W. Posthumus, M.J. Elsas, A.F. Pribram.*
*Photo: Collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam.*

One of the NEHA's original ambitions was the intention to set up an economic-historical museum to exhibit objects that were of importance for the knowledge of technological developments and of economic history, although this never happened. There was a large, high-profile exhibition in 1929, however, in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which was termed the International Economic-Historical Exhibition. The occasion for this event was a major congress of the International Chamber of Commerce. From a financial point of view, this exhibition was not successful. However,

12 *Ibidem*, 310.

it did contribute to the national and international reputation of the NEHA. In the report of the exhibition, Posthumus noted:

> 'Over the last years, it has become increasingly apparent that the task of the Society does not lie solely in the Netherlands, but also abroad. Recent times saw the establishment of direct contacts throughout the whole of Europe with a great many individuals and institutions, which could be of use to the Society for the performance of its tasks'.[13]

The aforementioned reputation was one of the things that led to a sharp increase in membership numbers, which reached an all-time high of 850.

The activities of Posthumus and the NEHA did not go unnoticed internationally, as is illustrated by several visits. In 1930, Professor Henri Hauser (attached to the Sorbonne) and the American professors Arthur H. Cole (director of the Baker Library in Boston) and Edwin F. Gay (director of the National Bureau of Economic Research in the US) honoured the NEHA with a visit. They wanted to acquaint themselves with the purpose and the organisation of the NEHA and had discussions with Posthumus about the possibilities of setting up an international economic history society.[14] In addition, there were several international contacts that were the result of Posthumus' activities on behalf of the International Scientific Committee on Price History.[15]

Posthumus' international activities in these years also included his contacts with two pioneers in the field of infographics: the economist, economic historian and Vienna Circle philosopher O. Neurath and the artist G. Arntz.[16] In 1934, Posthumus offered Neurath and Arntz, who had both fled to the Netherlands, the opportunity to display their work at the EHB and some other locations. The NEHA collection still comprises several infographic panels related to the economic history of the Netherlands and more particularly to Posthumus' studies on the Leiden textile industry. It is very likely that Posthumus provided the basic material for this.

13 Exhibition Report 1929, in: *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 17 (1930) LXI.

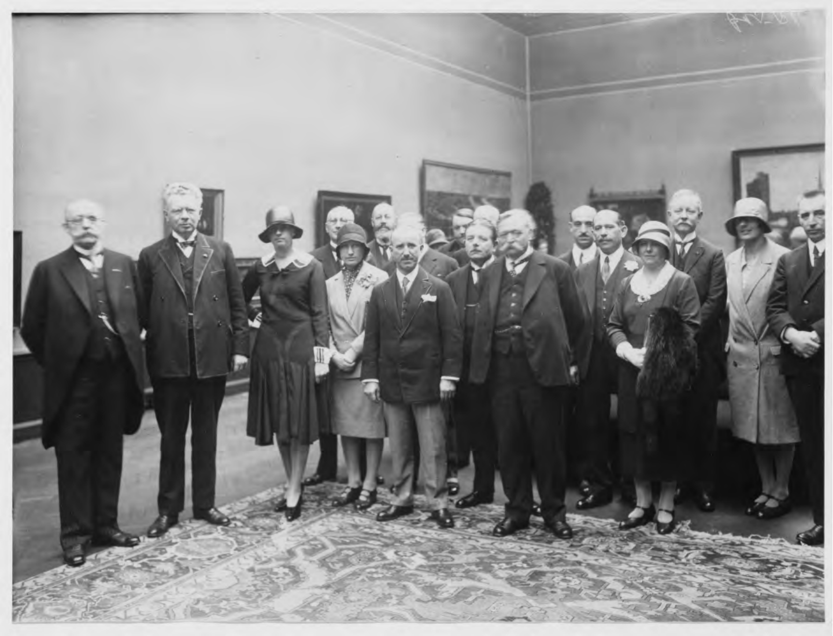
14 Annual report 1930, in: *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 17 (1931) XL.

15 It is curious to note that as of the annual report of 1928, the international 'stars' Prof. Alfons Dopsch (Vienna), Prof. Henri Hauser (Paris), Prof. Henri Pirenne (Ghent) and Prof. Werner Sombart (Berlin) were listed as honorary members of the NEHA without any further explanation or motivation.

16 Fischer et al. (eds.), *De Vereeniging het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief 1914-1989*, 129-132.

It is evident that the NEHA emphatically manifested itself internationally in the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. This international orientation was very much linked to Posthumus as a person. Posthumus went beyond the border to look for impressive additions to the NEHA collection, to find objects available for loan for the International Economic-Historical Exhibition and to make contacts for his research activities, especially those in the field of price history.

Conversely, prominent professionals from Europe and the US visited Posthumus to be informed about the purpose and the organisation of the NEHA and to discuss the possibilities for international co-operation.



*Opening of the International Exhibition of Economic History at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, July 1929. From left to right: H. Brugmans, M.A.M. Waszink (Minister of Education, Culture and Sciences) Jane de Iongh, N.W. Posthumus and other guests.*
*Photo: Collection Stadsarchief Amsterdam.*

From the mid-1930s, the NEHA took a more national orientation, but Posthumus did not. This could be explained by some pressing rescue operations for foreign archives, including the archive of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the archive of Karl Marx, which would finally end up at the IISH. These rescue operations could not be postponed. Moreover, Posthumus and the IISH had at their disposal the necessary financial means to act quickly and effectively thanks to the support of the Central Workers' Insurance and Deposit Bank.[17] The NEHA's means, on the other hand, were limited, partly because of the financial deficit following the large-scale International Economic-Historical Exhibition of 1929, and also due to a drop in membership numbers and reduced government funding as a result of the economic depression. The Second World War also played a part in the reduction and sometimes even loss of international contacts with foreign members, researchers and institutions.[18]

During the Second World War, the NEHA was able (unlike the IISH) to continue its activities virtually unimpeded, albeit under a different director. Posthumus was dismissed by the German authorities in March 1942, both as director of the NEHA and as a professor at the University of Amsterdam. Prior to this, in June 1940, he had been suspended by the German authorities as Director of the IISH. Posthumus gave up his membership of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) of his own accord, on account of the anti-Jewish measures. He was succeeded by J.C. Westermann (1942-1945).[19] In 1943, Westermann arranged for a large-scale distribution of a circular containing guidelines for the selection and preservation of company archives. The occasion for this was a campaign by the German authorities to provide wastepaper (including archives) for the production of new paper.[20]

## Many ambitions and limited means 1945-1985

In the first post-war decades, the NEHA's focus remained unremittingly on collecting company archives, records and publications. The accommodation of the steadily-growing numbers of company archives repeatedly posed great problems for the management and the board. Insufficient storage space, changing viewpoints regarding the central management of company archives, and a more active role of the public records sector in relation to

17 Jacques van Gerwen, *De Centrale centraal. Geschiedenis van De Centrale Arbeiders- Verzekerings- en Depositobank opgericht in 1904 tot aan de fusie in de Reaal Groep in 1990* (Amsterdam 1993).

18 Report of the Board on the year 1941, in *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 22 (1943) 325.

19 J.C. Westermann died in the autumn of 1945.

20 Report of the director on 1942, in *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 22 (1943) 357, and Appendix I, Circular containing guidelines concerning the selection and preservation of company archives, dispatched by the director in early 1943.

private archives brought the NEHA to decide to transfer to public repositories (on loan) the archives collected up to then. This comprised over three hundred archives (almost fifteen shelfkilometres). This huge operation, which took quite a few years, was completed by the end of 1974. This also meant closure of the NEHA branch in The Hague. When drawing up a final balance sheet with regard to the acquisition of archives, one can conclude that the NEHA spent sixty years – from its inception in 1914 to 1974 – providing accessible accommodation for archives that might otherwise have been at risk of destruction. The transfer on loan to public repositories proved a structural solution for the management and accessibility issues surrounding this sizeable archive collection. At the same time, NEHA's 'missionary work' before 1974 ensured that public repositories not only focused on their original statutory duty (i.e. managing government archives), but also began to recognise the importance of private archives in general, and company archives in particular. This, in turn, resulted in the active acquisition of this type of archive. The public repositories' interest in company archives undoubtedly facilitated the abandoning of the central depot principle, a concept that the NEHA had advocated for decades. Nevertheless, the acquisition of *Kleine Aanwinsten* (Small Acquisitions: for example manuscripts, documents, memorabilia and images) continued unabated. This task became one of the responsibilities of the EHB librarian. In this period, the acquisition policy of the EHB emphasised breadth rather than depth. This was partly due to limited financial means.

In 1945, J.C. Westermann, then director of the NEHA, considered the establishment of a scholarship fund to promote the scholarly study of economic history, with a leading role for the NEHA, of course: 'The study of the economic history of the Netherlands is in need of guidance, of organisation', Westermann emphasised in a memorandum. 'Whereas numerous subjects of limited size are eagerly approached by the researchers, a number of the very large subjects receive no or insufficient attention because of their very size. For this reason, there are several gaps in the series of economic-historical studies'. He very much regretted the lack of an up-to-date overview of economic history, which is summarising and profound at the same time.[21] In addition to its other main tasks, Westermann clearly saw a new key task in store for the NEHA. 'In order to make this role as important as necessary, one ought to propel and promote the study of economic history by establishing a scholarship fund and to attach this to the NEHA, which is traditionally acquainted with this scholarly discipline

21 *Paardenkracht en mensenmacht* by I.J. Brugmans did not appear until 1961.

through its archive and library, and its publications'. After 1945, the successive directors – N.W. Posthumus (1945-1949), I.J. Brugmans (1949-1969) and J.H. van Stuijvenberg (1969-1985) – also developed several plans for the promotion of research activities.[22] Again because of limited financial means, however, these plans could not be realised and research activities were confined to one single commissioned research project.[23] In 1980, though, 66 years after its foundation, the NEHA's research ambition was laid down in the articles of association: 'the performance and promotion of economic and social-historical research and the advancement of publications in this field'.

The two series of publications by the NEHA continued after 1945: the well-known green yearbook with its gold printing on the cover and the *Studies* series. This series would see the appearance of a total number of eighteen titles between 1919 and 1984. These were mostly detailed, conscientiously annotated source publications, but also included monographs based on thorough archival research and the odd conference volume. After 1945, the board and the management were unable to issue a yearbook annually. Despite all good intentions, this ambition was constantly frustrated by particular (mostly financial) circumstances. J.H. van Stuijvenberg and some other economic history professors finally managed to generate a continuous supply of copy, allowing the yearbook to do justice to its name. In 1970, the yearbook went back to ongoing annual publication.

At the same time, two other important changes took place concerning the yearbook. Prior to 1970, the yearbook was of a hybrid character. It had served as a publication facility to accommodate both scholarly articles and publications on society affairs. By including the association reports in a separate publication, the editors wanted to create more space for articles, especially those with a more international character. By setting out a new course, the editors also hoped to 'avoid the possible risk of seeing the content of the yearbook drift away from the stream of developments'. The concern expressed might have referred to the rise of what became known as the New Economic History, a development followed by Brugmans (in a critically positive way), and to the regional studies of what was termed the Wageningen School, led by the agricultural historian Slicher van Bath.[24] The findings of the Wageningen School were primarily published in *AAG Bijdragen* (*AAG*

22 J. van Gerwen, 'Tussen droom en werkelijkheid', in: *In verzekerde bewaring. Liber amicorum aangeboden aan J.B.J. Bollerman ter gelegenheid van zijn* (*uitgestelde*) *afscheid als voorzitter van het NEHA door bestuur, directie en medewerkers* (Amsterdam 1992) 14-17.

23 H. Spiekman, *De ontwikkeling van de Amsterdamse petroleumhaven* (Amsterdam 1958).

24 I.J. Brugmans, 'Clio en de computer'. Valedictory lecture delivered on 29 September 1967 at the auditorium of the University of Amsterdam.

*Contributions*), a series that first appeared in 1962.[25] The editorial board did manage to interest some foreign authors. For example, the yearbooks of the 1970s contained contributions by Joel Mokyr, R.T. Griffiths, J.C. Riley and F.C. Spooner.[26] In 1971, the *Economic History Yearbook* was renamed the *Economic and Social History Yearbook*. One of the considerations that had induced the name change had been the wish to express unequivocally the notion 'that the contents of the yearbook are more wide-ranging than its previous title seemed to suggest'. Moreover, the NEHA intended to respond to the growing popularity of social history.[27]

*Opening of the economic historical exhibition on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of NEHA June 6, 1964. From left to right: A. Stolp, librarian Economic History Library, Amsterdam, W. van de Burg, curator NEHA, The Hague and I.J. Brugmans, director NEHA.*
*Photo: Collection Haagse Beeldbank, The Hague.*

25 AAG stands for *Afdeling Agrarische Geschiedenis* (Department of Agricultural History) of the Agricultural College in Wageningen (today known as the Wageningen University and Research Centre). See also the general introduction and the contribution by Piet van Cruyningen.
26 Some other foreign researchers who published in the NEHA Yearbook were N.H. Schneeloch, David H. Kennet, Arnold S. Levine, A.C. Carter, B.S. Yamey, and L.U. Scholl.
27 This popularity eventually led to the establishment of a new journal, the *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* in 1975.

In this period, the orientation of the NEHA was unmistakably Dutch. Director Brugmans held several visiting lectureships in the US in the years 1954 and 1955 and was a Dutch board member of the International Committee of Historical Sciences in the years from 1955 to 1960, but his research activities were focused on the Netherlands.[28] His best-known post-war work is *Paardenkracht en Mensenmacht 1795-1940* (*Horsepower and People Power 1795-1940,* 1961). In this long-cherished synthesis, Brugmans integrated the works of a great many economic and social historians.[29] The work is characterised by a tight, thematic approach, although it lacks an innovative theoretical perspective. The Dutch orientation of the NEHA was attributable in part to the large practical, financial and organisational problems Brugmans, and later Van Stuijvenberg, were faced with: concerns about the management of the acquired archives, less money to maintain the library collection, loss of members and, as noted above, an irregularly published yearbook.

For many economic, business and technology historians, the NEHA, and more particularly the EHB, were the starting and end points of their research activities. The collections were consulted frequently during the first orientation phase and when research was ongoing. The research results (in the form of theses, articles, volumes, monographs and dissertations) were given a place in the library.

## A new dynamic 1985-2014

From 1985, the NEHA managed to develop a new dynamic under its new directors, E.J. Fischer (1985-1993) and J. Kloosterman (1993-2008), together with some enthusiastic board members who mostly came from the business world. This dynamic concerned all of the NEHA's key tasks. The shedding of one important key task – the collection, management and indexing of archives – in the mid-1970s did not in the least imply the end of the NEHA's involvement with company archives. On the contrary, after the transfer, the focus of the NEHA's activities with regard to company archives, moved towards the provision of services for people creating, managing or consult-

28 Among other things, he dealt with the company histories of the Netherlands Steamship Company (1950), the Royal Interocean Lines (1952) and the foundation of the Rotterdam Bank and the Nationale Handelsbank (National Commercial Bank) in 1863 (1963).

29 An earlier attempt to create a synthesis dates back to 1927: Ernst Baasch, *Holländische Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Jena 1927).

ing archives.[30] An important activity in this context was the systematic recording of preserved company archives, both in public repositories and at the companies' own premises. In the late 1980s, a large-scale project was set up, in which 10,000 companies were approached with questionnaires. In the 1990s, these activities resulted in what has become known as the BARN series (*Bedrijfs Archieven Register Nederland*, a record of company archives in the Netherlands). This archive register contains recorded archives arranged by business sector in fourteen sections. At the same time, a method was developed that was supposed to lead to the preservation of a representative file of company archives, for the benefit of archivists and policy makers.[31]

A structural increase in the acquisition budget and heightened interest on the part of external funders gave a renewed impulse to the active acquisition of special pieces.[32] It enabled the NEHA to tie in again with a tradition that had started in 1927 with the establishment of the Book Fund, and that had come to a halt in the course of the 1930s. Once more, it became possible to expand and complement the collection of antiquarian works. This was primarily true for the NEHA's traditional collection area: the acquisition of documents related to commercial sciences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including the collection of price lists. It also became possible to pay more attention to further expansion of the collection of early statistics in the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Upon E.J. Fischer's departure in 1993, a small catalogue with acquisitions from the years 1986 to 1992 appeared.[33]

In the early part of 1987, the NEHA started on a thorough (re)arrangement of its collections, records, documents, prints and photographs. All the

30 *Bedrijfsarchieven. Beschouwingen over acquisitie en gebruik* (1989).

31 E.J. Fischer, J.L.J.M. van Gerwen and G. Reudink, *Stap voor stap: een proeve van macro-selectie inzake Nederlandse bedrijfsarchieven* (Amsterdam/Zeist 1994).

32 Subsidies were provided by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, the Fund for Banking and Stock Trade Foundation and other parties.

33 *Doen! Eric. Catalogus van bijzondere aanwinsten verworven in 1986-1992 aangeboden aan Eric Fischer bij gelegenheid van zijn afscheid als directeur van het NEHA* (Amsterdam 1993). The number of acquired items by that time had amounted to 129, including some special acquisitions, like three volumes of pamphlets about coins and assignats from the years 1790 and 1791, collected by Poncet Delpech (1743-1817) and the *Administrativ-statistischer Atlas vom Preussischen Staate* (1828). In the following years, collecting at this high level remained possible. Some of the acquisitions include *Trattato del modo di tenere il libro doppio domestico* (1636), a masterpiece by Lodovico Flori, the *Course of the Exchange* (1811-1844), an important addition to the collection of price lists, and a large number of separate and small series of price lists and a large collection of statistical descriptions from the French period (1800-1830). Since 2000, the acquisitions have been presented on the NEHA website.

*Kleine Aanwinsten* that had been acquired since 1914 were described and documented once more under the guidance of J. Lucassen and R. De Peuter, to distinguish them from the more sizeable archives. The first results were published in a guide in 1992.[34] In the late 1990s, the Special Collections of the NEHA, as they have come to be termed, were presented online on the NEHA website. This allowed for additions and changes to be constantly up-to-date and readily accessible. Additional funding even made it possible to enrich the Special Collections with purchases from auctions. One of the greatest acquisitions, which was in fact a donation, was a large collection of maps, known as the Swart Collection.

After the transfer of company archives to public repositories had been completed in 1974, an increasing amount of attention was given to the acquisition of printed sources, such as annual reports and statistical publications. In the early 1980s, the NEHA received its first large donations, including the collection of annual reports of Van der Moolen (stockbrokers) and statistical yearbooks of the Amsterdam Municipal Bureau of Statistics. In the years to follow, the collection of annual reports of Dutch companies and economic institutions kept growing. The last sizeable donation came from the Archive of Business Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam (known as the Brezet Collection). The larger special acquisitions include the collection of the Dutch Economic Information Service (EVD)[35], a donation from the NIBE,[36] and the private archive of the British economist Angus Maddison. He was the co-founder and intellectual leader of the Groningen Growth and Development Centre, a research group within the Faculty of

34 Peter Boorsma and Jan Lucassen, *Gids van de collecties van het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1992). In addition, six Working Papers were released, containing inventories of sub collections. Peter Boorsma, *Nederlandse spotprenten uit de collectie Hartkamp 1859-192.* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 1 (Amsterdam 1990); Peter Boorsma, *Collectie Hartkamp. Knipsels uit kranten en tijdschriften betreffende de Nederlandse economie en samenleving, 1800-1924.* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 2 (Amsterdam 1990); Peter Boorsma, Joost van Genabeek en Toine Schijvenaars, *Topografische en bouwkundige platen uit de collectie Hartkamp 1843-192.* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 3 (Amsterdam 1991); Peter Boorsma en Joost van Genabeek, *Commercial and Financial Serial Publications of the Netherlands Economic History Archives 1580-1870.* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 4 (Amsterdam 1992); Jan Lucassen, *Gids van de papiergeld-verzameling van het Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief. Catalogus van de collectie tot circa 1850.* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 5 (Amsterdam 1992); Sandra Bos, Jan Lucassen en Roger De Peuter, *Inventaire de la Collection Bruyard concernant le Bureau (de la Balance) du Commerce et l'Inspection des Manufactures sous l'Ancien Régime (1571-1831).* NEHA Inventarisaties Bijzondere Collecties 6 (Amsterdam 1996).

35 Comprising 21,000 books, 60 yards of grey literature, and 3,500 series titles.

36 The Netherlands Institute for Banking, Insurance and Investment. The donated material comprised 30 linear yards.

Economic Sciences, focusing on long-term economic growth.[37] The most impressive acquisition is of a more recent date. It comprises a library loan from the Life Insurance Company Utrecht: a virtually complete collection of publications in the field of insurance, particularly life insurance.[38] This collection is a unique source on the history of insurance until 1940. The most recently published printed catalogue, which appeared in 1949, consists of two volumes and over 11,000 titles.[39]


*NEHA in 1990. From left to right: J.L.J.M. van Gerwen, J. de Leeuwe, J.F.M. van Dijk, J. Klinkenberg, E.J. Fischer (director), M.J.G. Huetink, J. van Genabeek, H.J.M. Winkelman, P.J.N. Boorsma, P. van der Storm, W.L. Korthals Altes and J.J. Seegers (sitting).*
*Photo: Collection NEHA, Amsterdam.*

37 The University of Groningen maintains a database containing historical economic data on virtually all countries in the world. This data is among the most important current sources for the analysis of long-term economic growth that are used worldwide by academics, analysts and policy makers.
38 This collection came into being by the end of the nineteenth century and was set up with the intention to collect, in a professional way, as much material as possible in the field of life insurance, both nationally and internationally. This course was pursued until 1940.
39 *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de la Compagnie d'Assurances sur la vie "Utrecht"*, 8th edition (Utrecht 1949) 2 volumes.

During the period of Fischer's directorate, the NEHA displayed a hitherto unprecedented degree of publishing activity. The *Economic and Social History Yearbooks* kept appearing annually (published by the NEHA itself from the mid-1980s onwards) and several new series were established. A brochure from the late 1980s mentions no less than five different series.[40] The year 1987 saw the establishment of the *NEHA Bulletin: Organ for the Advancement of the Study of Economic History in the Netherlands*, which was to appear alongside the *Yearbook*. By means of (historiographical) contributions, book reviews, literary announcements and chronicles in a biannual bulletin, the NEHA intended to intensify contact with its members (in the pre-website era) and to inform members and non-members about prevailing developments in the field, in a faster and more extensive way than through the yearbook. In this manner, the *NEHA Bulletin* would serve a complementary purpose vis-à-vis the yearbook.

In 1989, the NEHA also started to issue a yearbook entitled *Economic and Social History in the Netherlands*. The specific intention of this English-language publication was to make Dutch economic and social-historical research results publicly accessible to an international audience. However, this initiative had only a short life. A total number of no more than seven issues appeared between 1989 and 1996. This was partly due to the fact that a growing number of Dutch researchers had managed to find their way to foreign journals. In the 1980s, there was still a great need for the possibility to publish research results separately (i.e. in addition to the green NEHA Yearbook) in the fields of business history and the history of technology. This led to the establishment of what was known as the Blue Yearbook in 1984. This *Yearbook of Business and Technology History*, which appeared between 1984 and 1993, can be regarded as a temporary 'act of rebellion'.[41] In the 1990s, the successful emancipation process of the abovementioned sub disciplines rendered a separate publication superfluous. In 1994, the green and blue yearbooks merged into the *NEHA Yearbook of Economic, Business and Technology History*.[42]

The year 2004 would prove an important turning point in the history of the NEHA and its journals. Firstly, there was a merger of several journals,

40 NEHA Series I (the yearbooks), NEHA Series II (Studies of the Society), NEHA Series III (conference volumes and dissertations), NEHA Series IV (the NEHA Bulletin), and NEHA Series V (catalogues and guides to the archives).

41 E.S.A. Bloemen, 'Ten geleide', in: *NEHA Jaarboek voor economische, bedrijfs- en techniekgeschiedenis* 57 (1994) 7.

42 The merger of the two yearbooks was the result of practical considerations. Both yearbooks had been published by the NEHA since 1990, and their subscriber bases largely overlapped.

and soon after, the NEHA would face a new institutional embedding. In 2003, discussions of the editorial boards of the *NEHA Yearbook*, the *NEHA Bulletin* and the *Journal of Social History* (founded in 1975) resulted in a merger of these journals. The most important consideration that motivated this decision was the joining of forces. The older periodicals each had their own emphasis, but as regards content, they dealt with adjoining and partially overlapping subjects and themes. The outcome of this merger was the *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* (TSEG).[43] In 2010, it was decided to make the TSEG a bilingual journal, with the joint purpose of responding to the wishes of authors to publish their research results in English and increasing the (international) readership. Since then, the TSEG has carried the subtitle *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History*.[44]

From the mid-1980s onwards, the NEHA has succeeded in giving concrete substance to a hitherto frequently expressed, but never realised ambition: the performance and promotion of research. This has led to several research activities: research in connection with the indexing of NEHA collections, research on a project basis (largely based on source material from the NEHA collections), research in connection with the registration activities of company archives and research commissioned by companies and organisations. The past 25 years have shown a peak in business history research by the NEHA. This has gradually led to an important shift of emphasis in the research: from business-historical case studies related to the Netherlands, to broader and more international themes. The first category includes business-historical studies into, for example, one of the largest textile companies the Netherlands has ever known (H.P. Gelderman & Sons), studies into the large insurance companies Nationale Nederlanden, AMEV and the precursor of SNS Reaal, the Central Workers' Insurance and Deposit Bank, and studies about pension funds (Philips' Pension Scheme and the Library Staff Pension Scheme).[45] In turn, these studies into insurance

43 The TSEG, which was granted an A-status accreditation by the European Science Foundation, appears both in paper and online see http://www.tseg.nl/

44 Meanwhile, the other NEHA publications have died a quiet death.

45 Just to mention a few results: E.J. Fischer, J.L.J.M. van Gerwen en H.J.M. Winkelman, *Bestemming Semarang. Geschiedenis van de textielfabrikanten Gelderman in Oldenzaal 1817-1970* (Amsterdam 1991); J.L.J.M. van Gerwen and N.H.W. Verbeek, *Voorzorg en de vruchten. Het verzekeringsconcern AMEV: zijn wortels en vertakkingen* (Amsterdam 1995), J. Barendregt en Ton Langenhuyzen, *Ondernemend in risico. Nationale Nederlanden 1845-1995* (Amsterdam 1995), Joost van Genabeek and Georg Reudink, *Ter verlichting van het gewicht der jaren. Een geschiedenis van de pensioenregeling voor het personeel van openbare bibliotheken 1914-1996* (Amsterdam 1997), Francisca de Haan, *Een eigen patroon. Geschiedenis van een joodse familie en haar bedrijven,*

companies made up the building blocks of a large-scale research project, which had as its aim the integration of the results of IISH research into guilds and mutual funds and business-historical research of the NEHA into one single combined project entitled *Searching for Security*.[46] What made this project special was the fact that the development of risk, risk perception and risk coverage (and their mutual coherence) over the past five hundred years was described from a broad perspective (i.e. from the perspectives of both the insurers and the consumers). The researchers deliberately chose a broad scope, as this enabled them to focus on the most important security providers: poor relief and guild welfare, neighbourly and family assistance, savings schemes, mutual insurances for workers, trade union care, national health insurance schemes, and private and social insurance.

From the 1980s, the practice of economic history in the Netherlands has flourished. Examples are the large, often collective research projects in the fields of economic, business and technology research that have taken place at several Dutch universities.[47] Further, 1988 saw the founding of the graduate school named after Posthumus, which came to play an important guiding and stimulating role in both the education and the research of economic and social historians in the Netherlands and Flanders. With its collections and publication opportunities, the NEHA played an important facilitating role in this context. The NEHA also participated in several research projects, such as the BINT project (Business in the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century), initiated by colleagues from the Research Institute for History and Culture (OGC) in Utrecht.[48] The basic assumption of this project, which started in 2002, is that the Dutch business world is undergoing changes of an institutional nature as a result of processes such as globalisation, European integration and technological change, together with changing market conditions such as privatisation and increasingly fickle consumer preferences. The research intends to contribute to the reflection on these changes by making a systematic analysis of the Dutch business system.

*ca. 1800-1964* (Amsterdam 2002), Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk and Jan Peet, *Een peertje voor de dorst: geschiedenis van het Philips Pensioenfonds* (Amsterdam 2002) and Henk den Heijer, *The VOC and the Exchange. How the VOC laid the foundations for the world's first stock exchange* (Amsterdam 2002).

46 Jacques van Gerwen en Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, *Zoeken naar Zekerheid. Risico's, preventie, verzekeringen en andere zekerheidsregelingen in Nederland 1500-2000* (Den Haag Amsterdam 2000) 4 Volumes.

47 See Introduction.

48 Other participants in this project are the Centre for Business History (CBG) in Rotterdam and several other universities. See the Chapter by Keetie Sluyterman.

The analysis will have a markedly international-comparative dimension in order to do justice to the characteristics of the Dutch business system.[49]

The more internationally-oriented research projects under the flag of the NEHA have included studies into the development of human capital in India, Indonesia and Japan in the twentieth century, the significance of European integration for the economic development of the Netherlands, and the development of the service sector in the Indonesian economy of the twentieth century. These research projects were made possible financially in part due to funds provided by J.L. van Zanden out of his Spinoza Prize (2003).[50] Another example would be the North Sea Project, which investigated the response of the coastal regions of the North Sea to the economic growth of the Dutch Republic. This research had been inspired by Braudel's thesis about the allegedly strong mutual influence of coastal regions in the early modern period. [51]

Much statistical data has been and will be collected within the framework of significant research projects. Just as in Posthumus' days, sources and data are getting all the attention again, and technology has recently made it possible to make them accessible to a wide audience. The NEHA website presently contains several digitally-accessible data files, including the National Accounts 1500-1800, the National Accounts 1800-1913 and the Prices and Wages data file. Since 2004, the NEHA website has also included biographical information on more than 4,000 entrepreneurs.[52]

In order to stimulate research, the NEHA also established a special chair at the University of Amsterdam in 1994, with the theme 'Business history

49 Six themes were selected for this analysis: 1. Entrepreneurs and managers; 2. Labour relations and business culture; 3. Mergers and takeovers; 4. Internationalisation; 5. Financing; 6. Company and government.

50 Results of these projects: Bas van Leeuwen, *Human Capital and Economic Growth in India, Indonesia, and Japan: A quantitative analysis, 1890-2000* (Amsterdam 2007) www.iisg.nl/indonesianeconomy/humancapital, Daan Marks, *Accounting for services – The Economic Development of the Indonesian Service Sector, ca 1900-2000* (Amsterdam 2008). In the years 2004-2009, J.L. van Zanden, the present Chair of the NEHA, was attached to the IISH as a senior researcher.

51 Project Close encounters with the Dutch: the North Sea as near-core region for a nascent modern world (1550-1750). Results of this project: Jelle van Lottum, *Across the North Sea: the impact of the Dutch Republic on international labour migration c.1550-1850* (Amsterdam 2007) and Christiaan van Bochove, *The economic consequences of the Dutch. Economic integration around the North Sea, 1500-1800* (Amsterdam 2008).

52 Apart from its own website (http://www.neha.nl), the NEHA maintains the sites of a number of projects: Business in the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century, a.k.a. the BINT project (www.bintproject.nl), Economy and Society in the Low Countries in the Pre-Industrial Period (www.lowcountries.nl), and the site of the Business History Foundation (www.neha.nl/stichtingbg).

and its social aspects' as the matching teaching commitment. The chair holders were, successively, E.J. Fischer and J.P.B. Jonker.

The past 25 years have witnessed quite a few large and rapid changes. In 1989, the NEHA and the IISH decided to share a building at the Cruquiusweg in Amsterdam. Co-operation between the NEHA and the IISH was facilitated by the fact that (as in Posthumus' time) both institutes had had the same directors since 1985: first E.J. Fischer, then J. Kloosterman, E.J. Zürcher (2008-2012) and H. Wals (2012 to date). The 'cohabitation' was followed by a formal co-operation in 2005, which meant that all the operational activities of the NEHA were lodged with the IISH.[53] In practice, this meant that the IISH took over the following activities from the NEHA: 1) the preservation, expansion, indexing and making available of the NEHA collections; 2) the performance of economic-historical research; 3) the provision of publication opportunities; and 4) the promotion of debate about economic and business history.[54] From this also follows that from 2005, the NEHA annual reports[55] started paying attention not only to the NEHA's own activities, but also to the economic-historical research activities of colleagues from the IISH.[56] One appropriate example in this context would be the large CLIO-Infra project, which was launched in 2010. CLIO-Infra intends to set up a number of interconnected databases containing data on social, economic and institutional indicators of a global nature from the past five centuries, giving special attention to the past two hundred years. These indicators are supposed to enable research into the long-term development of global inequality.[57] Economic and social historians from the whole world will work together in thematic collaborative partnerships in order to collect and share their knowledge on the relevant indicators of economic performance and what causes it.

53 At the same time, the NEHA underwent a legal transformation in 2004, when it changed from an association into a foundation. Some years later, in 2010, a union came about between the NEHA foundation and the Unger-Van Brero Fund.

54 Transfer agreement, loan agreement and implementation agreement, dated 8 December 2004.

55 As of 2005, the NEHA annual report is in fact a report of the IISH to the board of the NEHA Foundation.

56 *Economic History at the IISH* (Amsterdam 2006). This concerns, for example, the following projects: Reconstruction of the National Accounts of Holland from 1500 to 1800 (in cooperation with Utrecht University), Reconstruction of the National Accounts of Java and of Indonesia, and Women's Work in the Northern Netherlands in the Early Modern Period (c. 1500-1815).

57 http://socialhistory.org/en/projects/clio-infra. CLIO-Infra is an NWO-funded project with J.L. van Zanden as main applicant and the IISH as coordinator.

## Epilogue

Looking back on a century of the NEHA, we may conclude – without doing injustice to any of the others involved in the foundation – that Posthumus was a great visionary, who, in establishing the NEHA, took a pioneering and ground-breaking initiative the benefits of which we continue to receive in the present. He laid the foundations for a world-class collection, a collection which, as regards content, can measure up to the Kress Library of Business and Economics of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration and the Goldsmiths' Library of Economic Literature at the University of London.[58] Together with the IISH collection, the NEHA collection can be considered as one of the best in the world in the economic-historical field.

In its 100-year history, the NEHA has displayed a shift of priorities, or alternatively, a mixture of continuity and change. Over a period of sixty years (from 1914 to 1974), one of the important key tasks was collecting and thus preserving and making properly accessible, company archives and the archives of economic organisations and interest groups. In the 1970s, this key task was handed over to public repositories that had meanwhile come to recognise the importance of private archives. The collecting of those items generally referred to as Small Acquisitions (as opposed to the more sizeable archives) is a constant variable in the NEHA's collection policy. Over time, this collection element was (justifiably) upgraded. The designation 'Special Collections' does more justice to its content than the designation Small Acquisitions. Another of the NEHA's constant variables is its publication activities. Throughout its entire history, albeit with varying degrees of success and intensity – the 1980s and 1990s in particular showed unprecedented publishing activity – the NEHA has always provided a platform to enable the accessibility of research results to a wide audience. In 2014, this platform is called *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* (*Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* or *TSEG*). As regards research, one may conclude that until 1949, the NEHA, and Posthumus in particular, was a central player in a field that had not yet come to full fruition. In the period after 1949, the initiation and independent performance of research were still far-off phenomena, in spite of solid plans and serious intentions. It was not until 1980 that the performance of research was added to the NEHA's articles of association as one of its key tasks. This happened at a time when the flourishing practice of economic history in the Netherlands – which the contributions in this volume bear witness to – had developed its own

58 See http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/collections/kress/ and http://www.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/our-collections/historic-collections/printed-special-collections/goldsmiths/.

dynamic at several universities and research institutions, including the N.W. Posthumus Institute (founded in 1988).

In Posthumus' view, the study of source material, the collecting of data and the tracing of historical processes were inseparable entities. They are the same elements that (obviously in a more contemporary manner) play a central role in the NEHA's present-day activities, which have now been lodged with the IISH: collecting, indexing and making accessible sources and data in order to provide a basis for research into significant economic-historical processes. This also includes the performance of research and the provision of publication opportunities. In this respect, the NEHA's outlook is focused not only on the Netherlands. Just as in Posthumus' heyday (the late 1920s and the early 1930s), it takes a structurally international course. From a global perspective, the NEHA (combined with the IISH) constitutes a unique institution in the field of economic and social history.

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