In 1851, Matthias de Vries presented his Plan for a Dutch dictionary. This was the beginning of a project that was to last 147 years. De Vries belonged to the first team of editors of the Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal (WNT), the first instalment of which appeared in 1864. The first volume saw the light of day in 1882. In 1998 the publication of the final volume was celebrated. Nine years later, in 2007, the largest dictionary in the world went online, on http://gtb.inl.nl/. None of this would have been possible without the efforts and perseverance of Matthias de Vries. The society of lexicographers that was established in the Dutch-speaking area in the late twentieth century could therefore only be named after this founding father of Dutch lexicography: the Matthias de Vries Genootschap (MdV, Matthias de Vries Society).

The society began to publish a journal called Trefwoord [keyword, entry word], which is now an e-magazine available at http://www.fryske-akademy.nl/trefwoord/. The e-magazine is open to new articles, but it also contains all articles previously published in the paper journal. On top of that, it re-publishes alphabetically, but thematically. In 2009, the first entries were published online and since then new entries are added regularly, providing the users access to the most recent lexicographical information. At the moment, many words concerning occupations, animals, drinks, vessels and diseases can be found in the dictionary, alongside many neologisms.

The information in the entries of the ANW takes into account the new search possibilities computers offer. With the help of definitions and so-called semagrams, it is not only possible to find meanings to words but also to find words on the basis of their characteristics. A user who is, for instance, looking for words that indicate a crossing for wildlife, does not only find the entry wildviaduct but also a lot of synonyms such as cerviduct, dierepassage, ecoduct, ecoviaduct, natuurbrug and wildvissel.

Summary

In the course of time, Dutch lexicography has developed into a mature branch of science, sometimes following then anticipating trends in other countries. Out of the earliest glosses and glossaries, vocabularies and dictionaries arose which offered more information than the meaning of a single word only. From the Renaissance onwards, etymological information was added and derivations and compounds based on the keyword were included and explained. The focus shifted from Latin to Dutch entries and information on parts of speech and inflections were added.

Kiliaan brought about a great leap forward by systematically comparing Dutch words with their equivalents in other languages. He gave the dictionary a scientific status through the critical
and deliberate use of lots of new source material. In the 17th and 18th centuries, renewals of the description of all meanings of a word, the bright and clear separation of these meanings and the addition of example sentences and quotes contributed to the evolution of the dictionary. In the course of the 19th century, the demands of a scientific historical dictionary of Dutch were formed on the basis of all these elements, which resulted in the Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal. For the Algemeen Nederlands Woordenboek, these demands have been modified and adapted to the requirements of modern times and contemporary users where good use is made of the new possibilities of the digital age.

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