

CIRCUS RESEARCH GUIDE



Manual for researchers

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BIJZONDERE COLLECTIES

TN theater in
nederland

The Special Collections (Bijzondere Collecties) of the University of Amsterdam contain the cultural heritage of this academic educational and research institute. The collection covers a wide variety of subjects. There is a trove of research material on circuses. With this guide, we will familiarise you with the different catalogues, collections and archives to help you find, discover and do research.

In this guide, you will find information about:

1. The Theatercollectie catalogue
2. The Linssen circus database
3. The University of Amsterdam catalogue
4. The Bijzondere Collecties (special Collections) database *Collecties en archieven* (Collections and archives)
5. Consulting and information
6. Other online resources
7. Some publications about the circus

1. The Theatercollectie catalogue

In 2013, the circus collection of the Theater Instituut Nederland (TIN) was moved to the Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam. The catalogue of the former TIN also gives access to these collections:

- * The Baudert collection (see below)
- * The Linssen collection (see below)
- * The Valesca Wilke collection (see below)
- * The Jaap Best collection (see below)

All objects with the reference *circus* can be found with this entry:

<http://theatercollectie.uva.nl/search/advanced>

Within this entry, you can look for type of material, maker, title, name, and discipline. In this collection, the following entries are used: *acrobatics, circus tents and buildings, clowns, dance, animal dressage, folklore, freaks, magicians, jugglers, funfair, music, theatre, and ethnological expositions.*

If the material has been digitalised, the image will be shown (if no copyright is infringed).

The search engine only searches the description, *not* the digitalised items or the texts themselves.

Next to some of the entry boxes there is a List (*Lijst*) button (with a binoculars icon). Here you can see which words have been used in the database, in that specific box. This is useful when you are not sure about the spelling or when you want to search alphabetically. People and institutions have been entered

into the database invertedly, i.e. the other way around. You search for *surname, first name (Friedländer, Adolph)* or for instance for *Politicians, Circus*. Names of artists and aliases have also been included, like *Grock* or *Bassie en Adriaan*. You can also choose to pull out the complete list of used terms with the >= List symbol next to the search box.

With this entry, hundreds of books and articles can be found in the Theatercollectie's library catalogue: <http://uba.uva.nl/en/home>

2. The Linssen circus database

Herman Linssen's circus database contains information about circus productions and their tours. In the database, information can be found about more than 4,000 circuses. The following information is available:

- * name of the circus management
- * years and seasons when the circus can be found in the resources
- * years and countries the circus toured, if available
- * programmes, photographs, slides, flyers, newspaper cuttings and other documentations about the circus
- * digital pictures of posters

In the future, play lists and more images of digitalised material will be added.

You can search the Linssen circus database by checking the box *Circus (International)* in the catalogue of the Theatercollectie (see above).

Names of the circuses

You can search directly for the name of a circus or look up the circus in a list. The circuses have been organised by surnames, so *Boltini, Circus* or *Abdy, Variety*. The database always used the Dutch term *circus* and no foreign terms like *cirque* or *zyrk*.

To distinguish between circuses carrying the same name but with different management, the management's name may have been added in brackets. This distinguishes *Circus Amar (Rebel)* from *Circus Amar (Falck)*.

Summer tours and winter circuses

Circus seasons are different from those of regular theatres. Tours run roughly from Easter to November. From November to Easter there can be winter circuses at a fixed location, or a circus may take a winter break and store the tents. This broken season has been indicated in the circus database as follows:

- * Summer tour has a whole year as a reference (1970)
- * Winter circus has a double year as a reference (1970/1971)

Linssen's card system

Linssen's circus database is a translation of Herman Linssen's card index: the entry to the sources in which he found the circuses, and to his collection.

Linssen has a card index organised by names of the circuses, and an index organised by year. Both indices refer to the other material in his collection, e.g. posters, programmes, and photographs. Posters and programmes have been well documented in the Linssen collection.

The card index spans the history of circuses worldwide from 1883 up to 2010. The card index has two parts: one part up to and including 1944, and a second part from 1945 onwards. In total, there are 12,000 cards, alphabetically organised by the name of the circuses. The cards refer to 'worksheets', sheets containing annual information about circus tours, copied by Linssen from trade journals.

Moreover, there are card index boxes with 'historic information', organised by Linssen in *Circuses*, *Artists* and *Cities*, with handwritten information. These card index boxes carry great value for researchers and are used a lot. In the near future, the cards will be linked to the database. The cards will be scanned and thus all resources will be available using a legend.

3. The University of Amsterdam catalogue

In the online public catalogue people can search for books, (electronic) magazines, digital files, maps, letters, and images like prints and photographs from the collections at the University of Amsterdam.

There are hundreds of books with the entry *circus*, and the majority of the prints from the collections is described in this catalogue.

You can search for e.g. *acrobatics*, *circus*, *clowning*, *dressage*, *folklore*, *freaks*, *magic tricks*, *funfair*, *theatre*, *variety*, or *ethnological expositions*.

This catalogue also gives access to:

- * The Hartmans collection (see below)
- * The A.J.E. Diemont collection (see below)
- * The Stapert collection (see below)

Many (children's) books from the Hartmans collection have been digitalised and can be viewed. To select these, use *Advanced search*>by subject *circus*>filter digital sources.

With Catalogus Plus you can also search through (international) magazines, scientific subject databases, e-journals outside of the collections. Those who are not connected to the UvA unfortunately cannot consult many of these

digital resources because of a licence agreement between UvA and the publishers.

4. The Bijzondere Collecties (Special Collections) database *Collecties en archieven* (Collections and archives)

In the last fifty years, several institutes and private individuals have been concentrating on building up collections concerning the circus. Below is a concise overview of the different collections and archives that have been organised by name of the collector. All parts have been separately inventoried, and almost all materials have been digitalised and are available online.

Inventories and digital files can, unless stated otherwise, be found via the database *Collecties en archieven* (Collections and archives) of the UvA's Bijzondere Collecties (Special Collections).

<http://www.bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl/zoeken--raadplegen/zoeken/collecties-en-archieven/collecties-en-archieven.html>

There, you can use the search term *circus* for an overview and extensive descriptions of all collections and archives concerning the circus.

The Baudert collection

During his career as a photographer Heinz Baudert (1915-2003) became a prominent chronicler of (international) circus life. In the 1950's he sold his shop in ladies' fashion in order to devote himself entirely to photography. His 6x6 camera produced a series of recognisable and iconic images from the circus world. Several exhibitions, one of which in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, brought his photographic art under the attention of the public. The collection consists of photographs and negatives showing the circus life. The material has been collected in the catalogue of the Theatercollectie (see above) and has largely been digitalised.

Dates: 1940-1980 (mainly: 1950-1980), size: 1,750 items.

The Best collection

Jaap Best (1912-2002) got bitten by the circus bug when he was only seven years old and the circuses Wilhelm Hagenbeck and Corthy-Althoff visited Alkmaar, where he lived. From that time onwards, he fell under the spell of the circus and tried to visit as many shows as possible. He started to collect their means of advertising. In 1947, he even worked at the circus. First in the office, later as a secretary to the manager of circus Karel Strassburger. In the 1960's he was an office worker at Circus Carola Williams-Althoff, the Wiener Eisrevue, Circus Harry Belli, and the Berliner Eisrevue. Thanks to these jobs, he was able to build an extensive circus collection, unequalled in the Netherlands. His collection received international respect when in 1964 he took over the vast archives of the German acrobat and circus collector Erdwin

Schirmer, which mainly consisted of the fantastic posters of Adolph Friendländer. This collection with almost 3,500 coloured lithographs of the Hamburg printer, is the largest collection in the world.

After Jaap Best passed away, his widow handed over the collection to Teylers Museum in Haarlem. The committee of the Jaap Best Foundation then passed the collection over to Bijzondere Collecties in 2016.

The collection contains 7,300 posters, 7,900 photographs and postcards, 400 pictures and engravings, 4,000 programmes, 2,000 magazines and trade journals, 600 books, newspaper clippings, and circus paraphernalia, like puzzles and calendars. All materials have been included in the Theatercollectie (see above) catalogue and have almost all been digitalised.

Dates: 1883-2002.

The Hartmans collection

Kornelis Dirk (Kees) Hartmans (1906-1963) worked at the Rijksarchief (State's Archive) in Zwolle from 1923-1933 and after that as a librarian at the Amsterdam Gemeentearchief (Amsterdam City Archive). In his spare time, he collected books and other materials about the circus in the broadest sense of the word, with an emphasis on children's and young adult literature. From 1949 to 1961 he worked as a committee member of the Club van Circusvrienden (Society for the Friends of the Circus), and from 1950 to 1962 he was an editor of *De piste* magazine (The Ring). In this capacity, he built a close-knit network of contacts in the Dutch and international circus world. The Hartmans collection consists of 3,300 books and brochures, posters, programmes, photographs, and other circus materials. There is also a booklet with Hartmans' notes about books on the circus.

Independent publications have been recorded in the catalogue of the University of Amsterdam. The remaining materials have been combined with similar materials that were later collected by the University Library (Universiteitsbibliotheek) and have been inventoried and digitalised as one themed collection Circus in 2015-2016.

The material that has not been described in the catalogue of the University of Amsterdam has been sorted by country, circus and type of material.

The books that were published before 1940 and the remaining materials have been digitalised and can be referred to online. The books can be requested via the catalogue of the University of Amsterdam.

Dates: approx. 1800-now (mainly: approx. 1800- approx. 1960), size: 91 metres

The Linssen collection

H.J.J. (Herman) Linssen worked his entire professional life as a notary and lived in Weert. From a young age, he was very interested in the circus and he built up a collection around this theme. The importance of this collection has been recognised at home and abroad. The collection regularly supplies

illustrations for historical circus publications and for exhibitions in the country and abroad. The collection consists of 3,000 books, 12,500 circus programmes, 33,000 posters, 50,000 photographs, slides and postcards. There are also magazines about the circus and entertainment since 1945, scrapbooks with clippings, 1,300 illustrations, printed advertising, admission tickets, flyers, and stationery from several circuses. There is also a separate collection, Letellier, about predator dressage, and there is correspondence between Herman Linssen and Jaap Best, another important collector in this field, from the years 1963-2002. The material has been made accessible in the catalogue of the Theatercollectie (see above) and has been digitalised for the greater part.

Dates: 1883-2010, size: 50 metres

The Stapert collection

Bartele Stapert (1918-1980) worked as a psychotechnician and graphologist. He collected material about funfairs, funfair attractions, street organs and other mechanically produced music. He indicated his collection as 'a documentation of circus companies and street organs'. He worked as the archivist at *De Kermisgids*, the trade journal of the Nationale Bond van Kermisbedrijfhouders BOVAK (national union of funfair company owners). The collection contains photographs, postcards, working plans, correspondence and other materials concerning merry-go-rounds, funfair attractions, and funfair and street organs.

Dates: 1850-1960 (mostly: 1900-1960), size: 3 metres

The Valesca Wilke collection

Valesca Wilke (1919-1999) came from a circus family in Brabant. From a very young age, she showed a talent for high school riding. With her brother Paul (Bubi) she performed a much sought-after horse show. During her career she worked for many big European circuses: Wilke, Portier, Strassburger, Williams, and Boltini. She left the circus in 1965. In 1969 she founded a riding school and stables in Breda; she was connected to the school until she died. The archives contain Valesca Wilke's correspondence, but the main part consists of photographs and scrapbooks with newspaper clippings and promotion material that she collected during her career and with the circuses she worked for. The entire collection has been digitalised. Apart from the 'paper' collection, the Theatercollectie also manages a great number of Valesca Wilke's objects, like the clothes she wore during her performances. The material has been made accessible in the Theatercollectie catalogue (see above).

Dates: 1919-1999 (mostly 1930-1990), size: 0.5 metre

The A.J.E. Diemont collection

A.J.E. Diemont was a horse trader from Zoetermeer. For the general elections in 1933 he was a candidate for the political party Recht en Vrijheid (right and freedom). He donated his collection to the Amsterdam University Library in 1941.

The collection contains a small number of prints from before 1800, amongst which are some valuable illustrated works from William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle. Books and brochures from the nineteenth and twentieth century also discuss horses. The books are not kept together as a collection and are – still without collection indication – described in the catalogue of the University of Amsterdam.

Dates: 1659-1941, size: 124 items

The Serierse collection

Johanna Mullens and Marinus Serierse performed in the 1880's until 1890 as trapeze artists, mainly in variety shows. At the beginning of the twentieth century the family moved to France, mainly because there was not enough work for them in the Netherlands. It turned out to be a successful move, and because of their contacts with big circuses like Hagenbeck and Corti-Althoff, they performed all over Europe and made a lot of money. In 1914 the family moved to Amsterdam, where they performed in Albert Carré's circus. In the 1920's the family travelled from circus to circus with their own tent, with attractions like The Strong Woman, a ventriloquist, acrobatics and trapeze work. The collection contains postcards, photographs, newspaper clippings, and a trapeze rope and a box used for an optical illusion act. The collection has been digitalised.

Dates: 1921-1985, size: 0.5 metre

J. van Doveren's archive

Jo van Doveren (1901-1968) was born in Den Bosch as the son of a headmaster. Early in life he developed an interest in the up-and-coming film industry, about which he corresponded with, amongst others, Menno ter Braak, one of the leading figures of the Nederlandse Filmliga. In the 1930's he worked as a press officer for several circuses, such as Hagenbeck, Schneider, Sarrasani and Strassburger. As a publicist he was connected to magazines like *Elsevier*, *Libelle* and *Margriet*, for which he wrote about circus life. After the war, he started a career as an impresario, organising Dutch tours for Charles Aznavour, Jacques Brel, and Les Frères Jacques.

The collection mainly contains correspondence with the various circuses Van Doveren worked for, and pieces concerning his activities as an impresario. The collection has been digitalised.

Dates: 1929-1960, size: 1.5 metres

Cor Dommelshuizen's archive

Cor Dommelshuizen (1880-1963) worked as an actor with several theatre groups, like Haarlemsch Tooneel, with whom he toured the Dutch Indies from 1906-1908. After that, he worked with theatre companies like Hofstad Tooneel, Rotterdamsch Tooneel, and Vereenigd Rotterdamsch-Hofstad Tooneel. During the occupation, he was imprisoned in Kamp Vught. The archive consists of letters from 1907-1954 and a cashbook from 1944. Later, programmes of theatre performances in which Dommelshuizen played were added. The collection has been digitalised.

Dates: 1887-1988 (mostly: 1907-1954), size: 2 metres

Circus Kavaljos' archive

The industrialist and philanthropist Bernard van Leer (1883-1958) was a great lover of horses and the circus. In the 1920's and 1930's he made a fortune as a manufacturer of packing material, especially oil barrels. He exploited his own circus, called Circus Kavaljos, between 1936 and 1954, which performed in the Netherlands and abroad. As a Jewish entrepreneur he was forced to negotiate with the occupier about leaving the country, with his family and a choice of horses, to the United States. They gave performances there too but due to lack of finances he eventually had to give up his American circus company. After the war, he continued his Van Leer Industrial Packaging. He went back to expressing his love for the circus and horses, albeit in a more modest way than before.

The archive contains the archives of both the pre-war NV Circus Kavaljos and the post-war Stichting Kavaljos, and promotional material and scrapbooks of both circuses. The collection also contains a great number of photographs and photo albums, especially of circus horses. The collection has been digitalised.

Dates: 1936-1986 (mostly: 1936-1959), size: 1.5 metres

A. Schelfhout's archive

Andreas (Bob) Schelfhout (1916-1999) worked as a ringmaster for a number of circuses, like Amanda Roberti, Strassburger, and Toni Boltini. He also worked as the business manager of the famous Circus Strassburger and performed with several horse acts. Since joining the circus as a young man, he kept a diary. His son Andreas (1939) wrote his biography *Zwart paard, gezien bij Circus Strassburger* (Black horse, seen at Circus Strassburger) (Maastricht, 2008). In 1978, the archive was bought by the University Library Amsterdam. It consists of personal archives, pieces concerning the accounts that Schelfhout kept for several circuses, photographs and cuttings in scrapbooks, and pieces concerning the history of the circus, including diaries and Schelfhout's memories. The archive has been digitalised.

Dates: 1925-1999 (mostly: 1932-1972), size: 2 metres

Ria Kuyken's archive

Ria Kuyken (1934-2001) started off as the singer of a dance orchestra of the Dutch air force and debuted in 1955 with the ABC Cabaret of Wim Kan. She also put together her own programme with traditional Dutch songs, that she performed at home and abroad. She worked for several television programmes and radio plays. While working as the press officer at the Toni Boltini circus, she was bitten by a brown bear in 1962, which caused a long break in her career. Until 1972 she performed in her own Holland promotion show, called the Happy Holland Show. After that, she worked as a press officer at the Bassie en Adriaan circus and circus Holiday.

The archive contains Ria Kuyken's correspondence and newspaper cuttings, photographs and reviews about her career, which she collected. The archive has been digitalised.

Dates: 1934-1985 (mostly: 1956-1985), size: 0.3 metre

W.J. Willemse's archive

W.J. Willemse (1879-1959) had a livery stable in Utrecht and provided transport for visiting circuses, to and from the station. He also housed circus animals during their visits to Utrecht. Thus, he made friends with circus entrepreneurs like Albert Carré. In 2005 the collection was donated to the then Theater Instituut Nederland, from the estate of Mrs. Willemse-Savenije. The collection contains Willemse's correspondence, and there are photographs and drawings that he collected, scrapbooks with cuttings and a photo album. The archive has been digitalised.

Dates: 1909-1962 (mostly: 1914-1931), size: 0.5 metre

Daniel van de Vijver's archive

Daniel Johannes Arnoldus van de Vijver (1880-1958) worked from 1903 as a musical clown and developed a spectacular cycling act that he performed throughout Europe from 1920-1926. After 1926 he was the impresario using company names Deen's Internationale Theater Ondernemingen and Deen's World Theater Tours.

The archive contains contracts, business correspondence and pieces concerning the management of the impresario. There are also newspaper cuttings, reviews, lyrics, and sheet music written by Daniel van de Vijver. The archive has been digitalised.

Dates: 1939-1958, size: 2 metres

5. Consulting and information

For consultation, a visitor's or library pass of the Bibliotheek UvA/HvA is required. Consultation is possible in one of the research halls. After putting your name down, you will receive an inspection or library pass that allows you

to request material. Look at www.bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl for information on how to request such a pass.

Regarding consultation, the *Reglement voor de gebruikers van de Bibliotheek van de Universiteit van Amsterdam* applies.

A large part of the material has been digitalised and described though not all of it. It is indicated in the catalogues and databases whether or not the material has been digitalised and if the material can be requested. Sometimes material cannot be digitally accessed for reasons of privacy and copyright. We continue to work on digitalising materials and making them accessible.

Material can also be digitalised after requests. Reproduction and reproduction right compensation are in accordance with de Tarieven en Diensten Universiteit van Amsterdam.

The material will only be given for inspection. If material is available digitally, permission of the person in charge of the collection is needed to consult original documents.

To find out more about lending conditions, opening times of the halls and other practical information go to:

Special Collections/Bijzondere Collecties: www.bijzonderecollecties.uva.nl

University Library/Bibliotheek UvA/HvA: <http://uba.uva.nl>

For questions concerning the circus collections you can contact the collection specialist and conservator performing arts & media Hans van Keulen, j.h.k.vankeulen@uva.nl.

6. Other online recourses

Theaterencyclopaedia

In the online theatre encyclopaedia you will find information about the theatre in the Netherlands, past and present. Everyone can contribute to this encyclopaedia: both enthusiasts and professionals keep the Theatre encyclopaedia up-to-date and complete. The theatre encyclopaedia is fed by information from the Theatercollectie catalogue. If you search for 'circus', you will find a lot of information about performances, circuses and circus artists. Consult in Dutch.

<http://www.theaterencyclopedie.nl/wiki/Circus>

Geheugen van Nederland

Geheugen van Nederland (Memory of the Netherlands) is a collaboration between the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and several museums in order to make material digitally available for research and other purposes. Part of the Theater Collectie has also been included. Type 'circus' in the search box to search and download. Consult in Dutch.

<http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl>

Carré

The archives of Koninklijk Theater Carré have been made accessible in the online catalogue of the Stadsarchief Amsterdam. Consult in Dutch.

<https://archief.amsterdam/inventarissen/overzicht/30864.nl.html>

Europeana

Europeana Collections offers access to over 50 million digitalised items – books, music, art and more – from over 3,500 museums, libraries and archives in Europe, with advanced search and filter functions, to facilitate searching. Search for ‘circus’ and you will get thousands of hits.

<http://www.europeana.eu>

World Digital Library

The Digitale Wereldbibliotheek, or Bibliothèque Numérique Mondiale (BNM), World Digital Library (WDL) is an international digital library that is maintained by UNESCO and the American Library of Congress. The collection contains archive material and books and can be accessed in seven languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, Portuguese). Searching for ‘circus’ will lead you to hundreds of galleries on specific circuses, artists and buildings.

<http://www.wdl.org/en/search/?q=circus&qla=en>

Gallica

Gallica is the digital library of Bibliothèque Nationale de France and other partners. Open access to digitalised materials: manuscripts, magazines, photographs, video’s, etc. Consult in French. Search ‘circus’ and you will get thousands of hits.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/accueil/?mode=desktop>

Victoria & Albert Museum

The Victoria & Albert Museum in London has a comprehensive circus collection, with a search engine, and explained with articles.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/circus>

Circus World Museum

The Circus World Museum’s catalogue of the collection and archives can be searched by subject, key words and names.

<http://www.circusworldbaraboo.org/our-treasures/library-research-center>

7. Some publications on the circus

* J.J. Best. *70 jaar circus in Nederland*. Alkmaar 1971.

* P. Blom. *Hallo hierheen! Theater voor het grote publiek 1839–1939*. Amsterdam 1997.

- * A. Hofmeester en M. Leegwater, *Circus. Een bevlogen passie*. Beilen 2014.
Jaarboek De Achttiende Eeuw. Hilversum 2018.
- * M. Keyser e.a. *Catalogus van de circus-bibliotheek nagelaten door K.D. Hartmans*, I. Amsterdam 1968.
- * *De Piste. Circusmagazine*. Amsterdam 1949-2018.
- * B.C. Sliggers en A.A. Wertheim. *De tentoongestelde mens. Reuzen, dwergen en andere wonderen der natuur*. Zutphen 1993.
- * R. Toole Stott, *Circus and Allied Arts. A World Bibliography, based mainly on circus literature in the British Museum, the Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and on his own collection*, IV: Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam. Derby 1971.
- * D. Vrieling. *Herauten van het circus. 50 jaar Nederlandse circusaffiches uit de collectie van Herman Linssen*. Amsterdam 1999.
- * D. Vrieling. *Het beste van Best. De unieke circuscollectie van Jaap Best*. Amsterdam 2017.
- * M. Wolf. *Een plek om lief te hebben. Geschiedenis van Carré*. Amsterdam 2012.
- * R. van der Zalm. *Kunstjes met Kerst*. Lelystad 2000.