



**Changing Editing Policies
Resolutions of the States General, 1576-1796**

Rik Hoekstra
Huygens ING – KNAW, Amsterdam

4 October, 2016



Resolutions States General

- Supreme governing council of the Republic of the United Dutch Provinces (1576-1795)
- Unique source:
 - More than 2 centuries of decisions
 - Unbroken register of political decisionmaking: key source

My Name is Rik Hoekstra. I work at the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands, an Institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

This presentation is about the changes in the editing policies of Resolutions of the States General. The resolutions are an important and perhaps even unique collection of documents.

Why unique: The States General was the supreme ruling council of the United Dutch provinces from 1576-1796. That is just about as long as the United States have now existed as a nation. It would be hard to think of another government that was in place for such a long time in essentially an unaltered institutional form and that left a such a consistent trail of its decisions, because it was ruled by a council and not by a head of state.



Resolutions in the archive

- 1733 volumes*
- Expanding from 1 -12 vols/year from 16th-18th c.
- 200.000 pages
- Handwritten and from 18th century also printed
- 500.000 resolutions

*source: tabellarische inventaris generaliteitsresoluties
http://www.gahetna.nl/sites/default/files/afbeeldingen/toegangen/NLHaNA_1.01.02_Tabellari-sche-inventaris.pdf

The resolutions of the States General are its recorded decisions. They are collected in hundreds of chronological volumes with hundreds of thousands of pages full of decisions. For historians, the resolutions are a key resource for the early modern history of the Netherlands and Europe in general. They contain information about the practice of government and governance that touched upon most other aspects of life:

War and peace, economics and trade, and social and cultural life in the Republic and many, many other subjects.

Seen as a whole, it also enables scholars to track historical changes in styles of government, but also of attitude over shorter and also much longer periods of time. The importance of the resource is nothing new. Already in the nineteenth century Dutch historians were calling attention to the Resolutions as a vital source for the history of the Netherlands. At the time it was not well accessible.



Existing editions

- Editions:
 - 1576 – 1625 printed
 - *Old Series*
 - 14 volumes
 - 1576 – 1610
 - *New Series*
 - 7 volumes
 - 1610 - 1624
 - 1626 – 1630 born digital
 - xml-files + relational database

The Institute has been the resolutions in the century of its existence, starting with the early years. In this century there have been important changes in the editorial decisions. And we are facing perhaps the most important change now that we want to make a digital edition of the remaining resolutions, covering the period from 1631 to 1796. All the choices in editions can ultimately be reduced to an issue of selection.



Printed RGP volumes of the Resolutions



Disclaimer: these are not necessarily the actual resolution volumes

But first, let me give an overview of all existing editions:

There is an edition from 1576 to 1625 in 21 printed volumes. It consists of what we call

the *Old Series*. 14 volumes, published from about 1910 to the 1970's. It covers the period from 1575 - 1609

the *New Series* of 7 volumes published from the 1970-1990's covering the period 1610-1625.



Printed editions

statengeneraal

Deel 1 (1576-1577, GS 26) OR

Inhoud | Thumbnails | Zoek

Deel 1 (1576-1577, GS 26) OR	
Proleptica	IX
I. Voorgeschiedenis en Plan dezer Uitgave	IX
II. Het Afschrijven van het Materiaal	XXII
III. Belgische Plannen - De bijeenroeping der Staten-Generaal in 1576	XLVII
Toon alle 64 resultaten	
Deel 2 (1578-1579, GS 33) OR	
Proleptica	VII
1578	1
Lijst der Voorzitters	1
Lijst der Gedeputeerden	2
Toon alle 63 resultaten	
Deel 3 (1580-1582, GS41) OR	
Proleptica	VII
1580	1
Lijst der Voorzitters	1
Lijst der Gedeputeerden	1
Toon alle 78 resultaten	
Deel 4 (1583-1584, GS43) OR	
Proleptica	VII
1583	1
Lijst der Voorzitters	1
Lijst der Gedeputeerden	1
Toon alle 56 resultaten	
Deel 5 (1585-1587, GS47) OR	
Proleptica	VII
1585	1
Lijst der Voorzitters	1
Lijst der Gedeputeerden	2
Toon alle 73 resultaten	
Deel 6 (1588-1589, GS51) OR	

home | image | pdf | OCR

26.

JAPIKSE,
RESOLUTIËN
DER
STATEN-GENERAAL
VAN 1576 TOT 1600,
EERSTE DEEL.

S-GRAVENHAGE,
MARTINUS NIJHOFF
1915.

All printed volumes have now been digitized.

huygens ing Digital edition 1626 -1630

Resources

Menu
 Home
 Inleiding
 hulp bij het zoeken
 bladeren
 snel zoeken
 uitgebreid zoeken
 bronnen en literatuur
 collaten
 Geweld, gewin en geweten

Engels | Nederlands

21/08/1626

<< vorige
 21 - 08 - 1626
 volgende >>

Presentielijst:

Gelderland: Culemborg _____
 Rantwyck _____
 Keiffen _____
 [Hendrick van] Eick _____
 [Diderick van] Eick _____

Holland: Noortwyck _____
 Antwerpen _____
 Cluif _____
 Schagen _____
 Duick _____

Zeeland: Vostbergen _____

Utrecht: Rode _____

Friesland: Walta _____

Overijssel: president: Almelo _____
 Vlarver _____
 Alberts _____
 Ter Cullen _____

Groningen: Broersema _____

Resoluties:

1 De verpachting van het kwart der konvoeien en licenten komt opnieuw ter sprake. Men vraagt zich met name af of de 1.000 gld. naar Block moet gaan, ook als hij niet blijft bij zijn bod van galeren.
 Aangezien er ten stadhuse ook nog verpachtingen van imosten gaande zijn, wordt de beslasing over de 1.000 gld. gelaten aan de schepenen van 's Gravenhage. De gecommitteerden van HfM zullen zich daarin schikken en dit publiek maken. Als Block de 1.000 gld. krijgt toegewezen zonder aan zijn bod gebonden te worden, zullen de gecommitteerden de pacht nogmaals ophangen en opnieuw 1.000 gld. op het hoogste bod stellen, met een ondergrens van 400.000 gld.

2 Inzake de betaling van 's lands soldaten op de vloot van L'Eremitte is besloten dat de officieren hun afrekeningen voor onderzoek aan Van der Haer geven. Vervolgens zal de RvS ordonnansies verstrekken op de commies. Er worden twee à drie maanden ingehouden totdat de boeken en alle papieren zijn aangekomen.

3 De gedeputeerden te velde Essen, Brouchoven, Beaumont, Hersevelt en Haersolte schrijven d.d. Isselburg 18 aug. met de aansporing geld ter beschikking te stellen.
 De brief gaat naar de RvS voor een beslasing.

But the paper editing was too time consuming and too slow. In this pace the last resolutions would only be printed more than a century and a half from now. And this would make the editing process at least as long as it took to produce the resolutions. So after much discussion the Huygens ING started digital editing twenty years ago. The resolutions from 1626 to 1630 were published using a combination of xml documents with resolution summaries and a database for entities. This was still too slow.



States general resolutions

- No digital images
- No full-tekst editions
- Printed editions have same indexes
- No consistent way of subject indexing
- Subject indexes have little overlap (< 20 %)

In the last few years we have explored the possibilities to publish the rest of the resolutions and make them available to researchers more quickly. An edition would have to be digital and manual transcription and indexing of the text is no longer feasible if we do not want to end up for another century and a half.

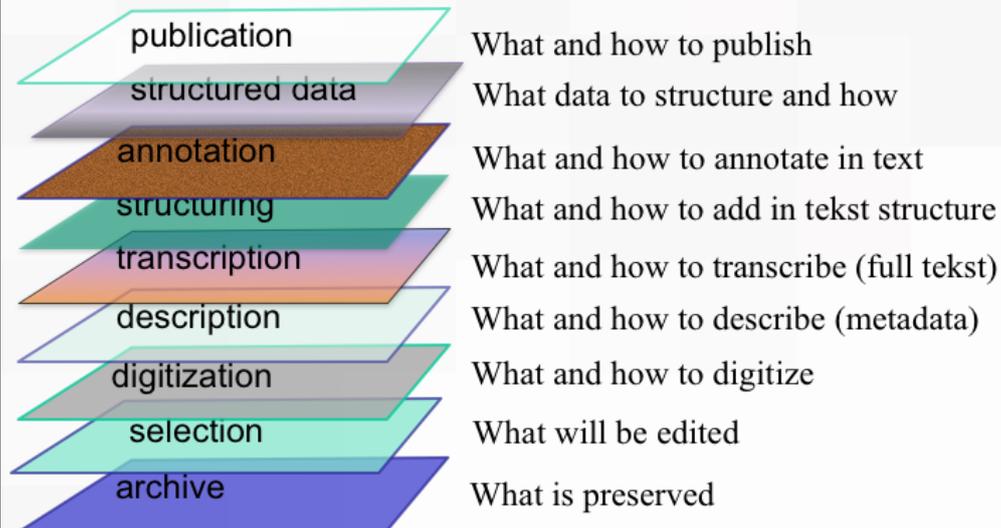
What are the challenges:

The source material has two forms. In the 16th and 17th centuries there are just handwritten originals, with a register per volume.

From 1703 there was also a printed edition, also with a register.



Editions: layers

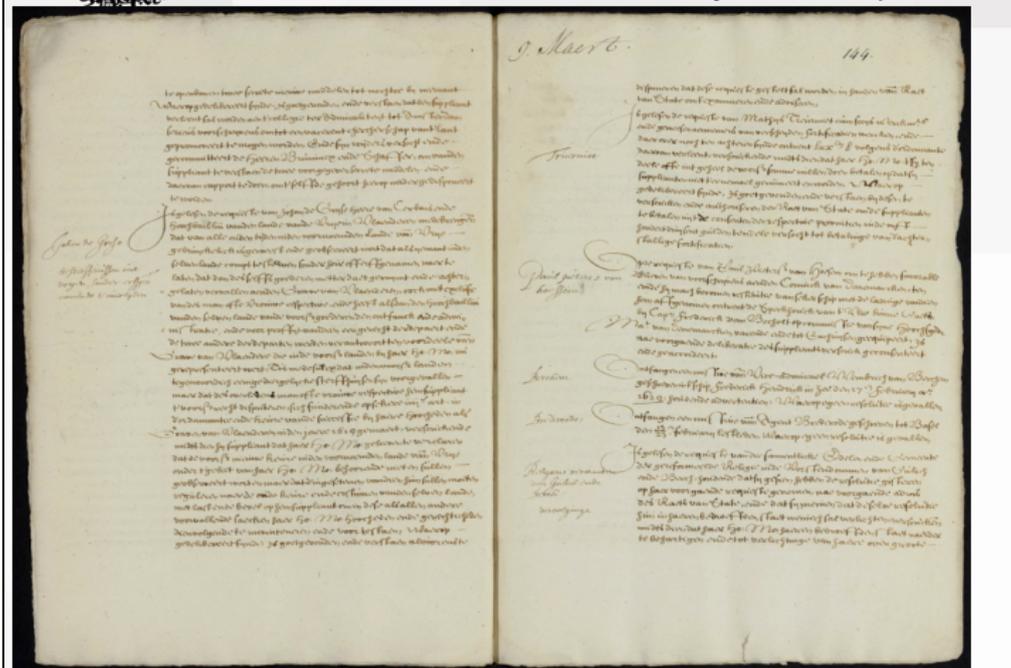


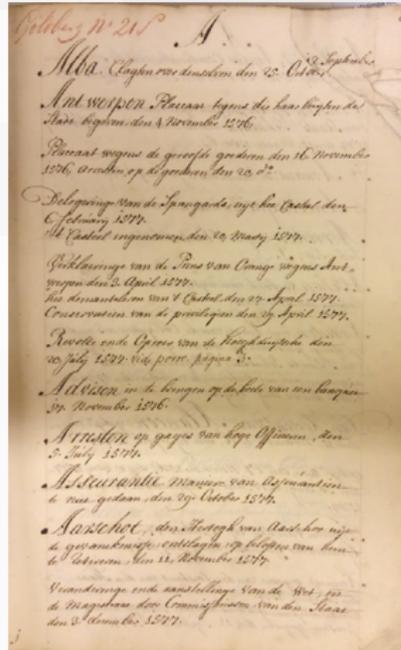
Making an edition, printed or digital has many aspects. Looking back on a century of editing the dilemmas we are facing all have to do with selection and priorities and this was nothing new.

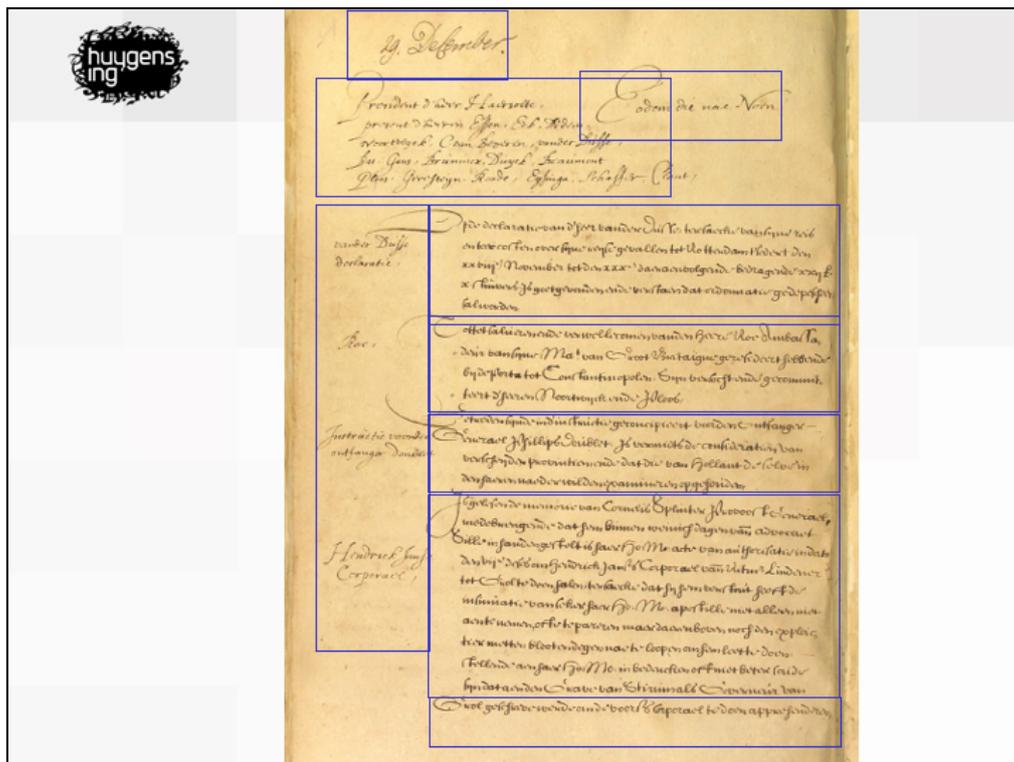
I have come up with a model with nine layers in the preparation of an edition. They all involve making choices. The first choice is what layers to include at all, followed by what to include in the layer.



Resolutions: seventeenth century manuscripts



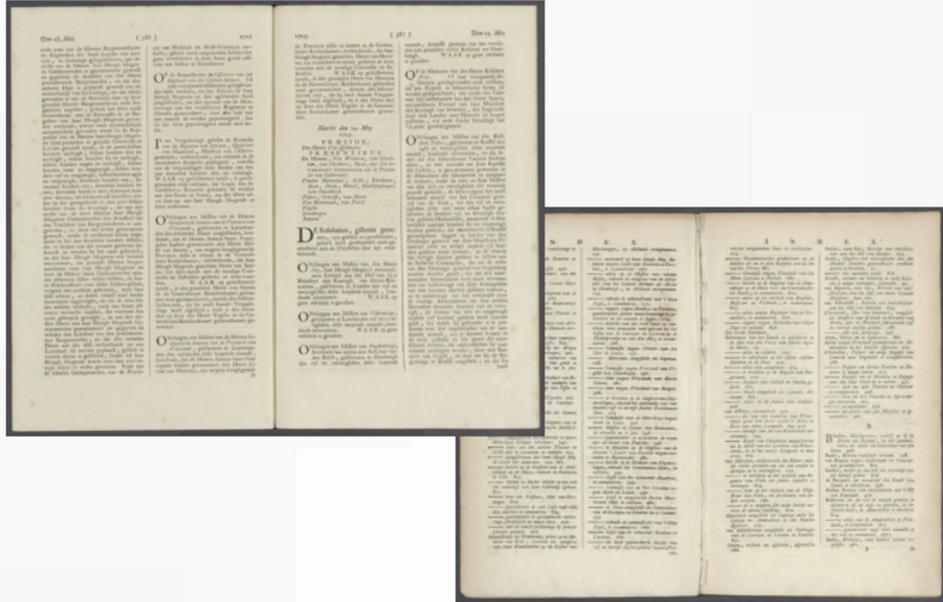




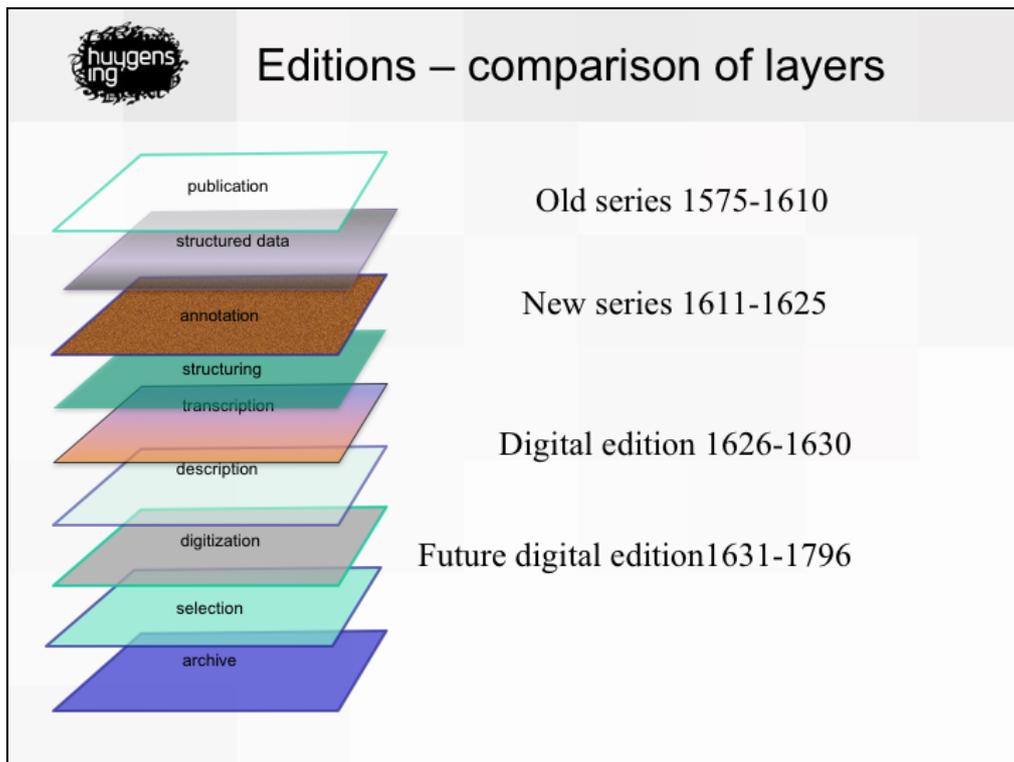
To understand the choices the editors are faced with in this particular case, it is important to get an idea of the structure of the resolutions. The structure was consistent during the whole period and it is important for many of the steps. I will show it on a sample seventeenth-century handwritten page from the resolution volumes.



Resolutions: 18th century printed edition



It also returns in the 18th century printed volumes.



All resolutions were ordered by council sessions, that took place on a daily basis. The sessions are indicated by the date. They all had a list of attendants of the representatives that made up the council. Resolutions are visually separated by spaces. All resolutions have a short indication of their subject that go into the margin, called marginalia. The resolutions were both a record of the decisions of the States General and its memory. The council indicated in whether a resolution ended in a decision or was postponed waiting for advice, further investigations or negotiations. When the same or a related topic came back before the council, the secretary looked up its history in the records. He was also responsible for the recording of the resolutions. Ida Nijenhuis has used the term ‘formal rhetoric’ for the words signaling the status of the decision making process in a resolution.

In the printed editions the first priority was the information. In the Old Series the editors made a selection of the resolutions, transcribed them and ordered them by subject. Subjects included foreign policy, war, finances, central government, etc.

They made the resolutions further accessible by back of book indexes on persons, geographical names, ship names and subjects. This was of course

necessary because searching books was not possible.

The New Series editors judged this to be old fashioned, both leaving out a number of resolutions and breaking the chronology. So they made a chronological edition of all resolutions. For reasons of space, it was decided to make summaries, not transcriptions. There are also references to the vast archive of the States General, that contain all the papers discussed in the council. The ordering by subject was at first indicated in the margin, but later left altogether. There were still the same back of book indexes.

The 1626-1630 digital edition is in retrospect a hybrid between the printed and a true digital edition. All resolutions are still included in summary. People, geographical and ship names are marked in the xml and made accessible in structured form. For people, there is a database in which names are normalized and aliases and functions are added. No subject index was added, because they were to be replaced by digital full text search possibilities

With respect to all existing editions, a few important point regarding the different layers of selection should be noted:

None of the editions contains all layers

First, none of them included digital images of the resolutions. In the printed editions this would not have been feasible, for reasons of space. In the digital edition it would have been possible.

Second, none of the editions is a full-text edition of the resolutions. Only the Old Series contains transcriptions of selected resolutions.

There is no consistent way of making subjects accessible



Steps in making a digital edition

- Source digitization
- Text transcription
- Enriching the digital text and/or the images with entities (people, institutions, geographical names, ships and subjects)
- Use entities and existing metadata and indexes to put them into a common framework

For the new digital edition all aspects were to be reconsidered. It includes all layers. Transcribing by hand by specialists was out of the question. It should be either replaced by crowd transcriptions or digital text recognition, or a combination. The basis of a digital edition would be the digital images of the resolutions.

Even this seemingly straightforward layer is not without selection problems. I will elaborate a bit as they illustrate the intricacies of the process. The selection of the series of resolutions is a bit hairy, as there are several series of resolutions. There is a draft version and a definitive version. The definitive versions was the official one, but for some periods the only available indexes refer to the draft versions. For the eighteenth century there is also a printed version that was distributed, but it contains less annotations than the manuscript version. In addition, there are secret resolutions that were never distributed, and therefore not included in the printed volumes. But obviously, they do contain important information.

We have done quite a bit of work to investigate the many digital humanities methodologies and strategies. I can only scratch the surface of all these facets in this presentation, but I will try and answer any further questions. The

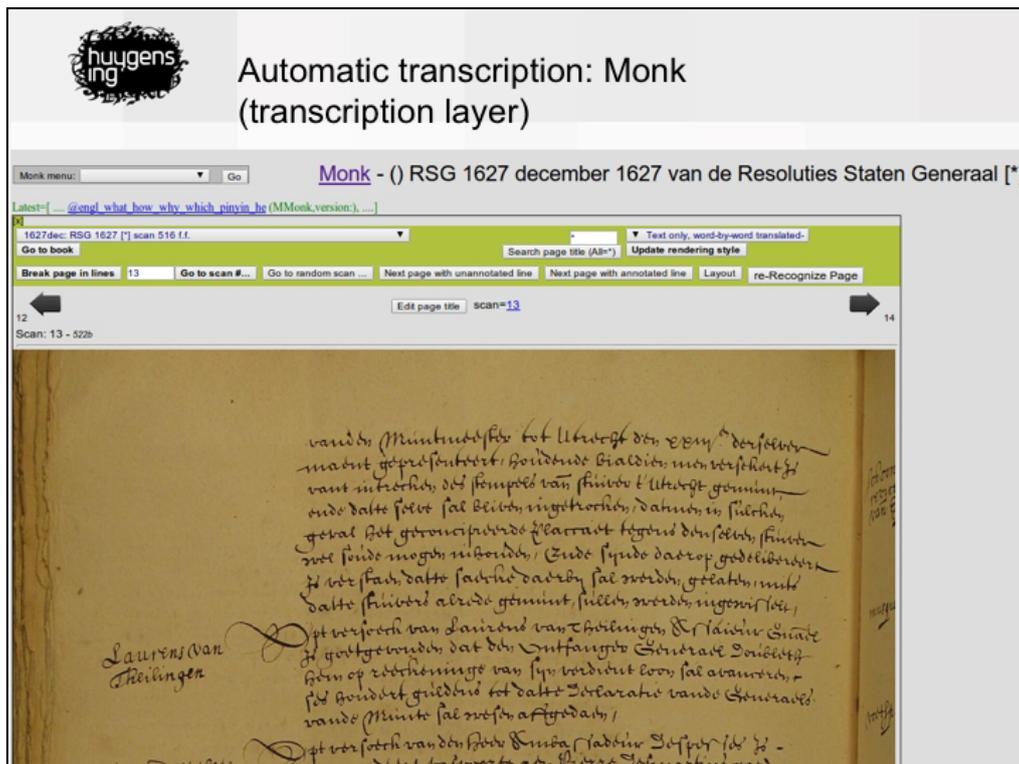
process can be subdivided into different steps:

- Digitization of sources
- Text transcription
- Enriching digital text and/or the images with entities (dates, people, institutions, geographical names, ships and subjects)
- Use the entities and existing metadata and indexes to put them into a common framework

The first step for a digital edition is of course digitizing the whole corpus. We have an agreement with the Dutch National Archives to scan all resolutions. The surviving volumes of resolutions are in a good physical condition and the writing is generally clear for the period. There are also small parts of the collection that have been damaged by water. The printed volumes are less of a problem as they were printed in many copies.

An image-only representation of the corpus is not sufficient for researchers. If possible at least a transcription of the text of the resolutions is necessary for text searching and for further elaboration. The eighteenth-century printed volumes may be converted using OCR. Experiences with earlier large-scale OCR projects for 18th century Dutch books give us hope that OCR-ing the printed texts will yield good results.

Until recently, recognizing handwritten text was not really feasible. We have done two experiments using text recognition.



The first used the Groningen based Monk software and the second Transkribus, that was a result of the EU funded Transcriptorium project, with its base at the University of Innsbruck.



Automatic transcription: Monk word forms (transcription layer)

Monk menu: Go **Monk** - Zoeklijst woordbeeld (Abraham) RSG 1627 [*] scan 516 f.f. b

atext-[... @imgl_flip_pinyin_fm (MMonk_version), ...]

Terug naar overzicht getrainde woorden

Woordherkenner:	Sordex	Select from hit list:	Alle
Hit list, woord:	Abraham	Eerste item in hit list:	
Zoom:	1.0x	Vernieuw:	Onderstaand overzicht
Weergave:	Postzegels		

set recompute 'with'

RSG 1627 [*] scan 516 f.f. n=53 Abraham

Separability

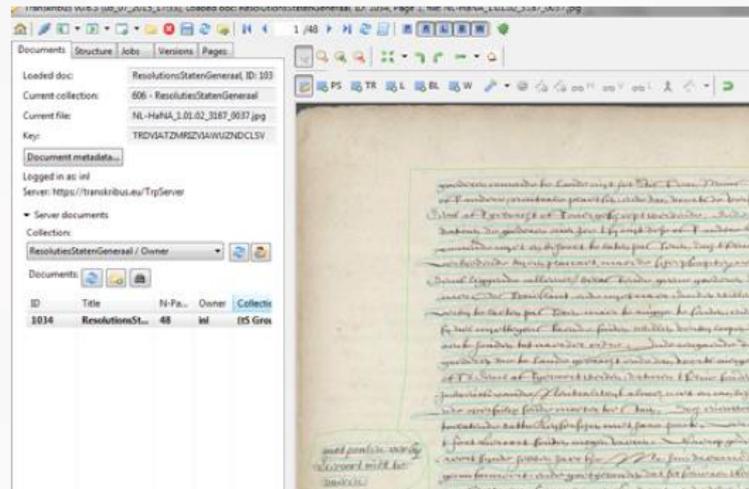
READY

tems in hit list of **Abraham** numbered: 0-105. (now showing: 0-34) [Begin](#) [Prev](#) [Reload](#) [Next](#) [End](#)

Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham



Automatic transcription: Transkribus Transcription layer



Claimed results: 60 % correct words

Transkribus yielded most promising results. In the optimal case it yielded a sixty percent correct recognition of words. This would have been unconceivably high previously.



Automatic tekst enrichment Annotation layer

Task	Result
Text elements (sessions, resolutions etc)	98,6 %
Simple dates	99.1 %
Language recognition	100 %
Identification representatives in presentation listst	100 %
Decision taken yes/no	96.8 %

Further explorations will have to show whether this rate may still be optimized and whether it is enough for the next step: text enhancements and enrichments.

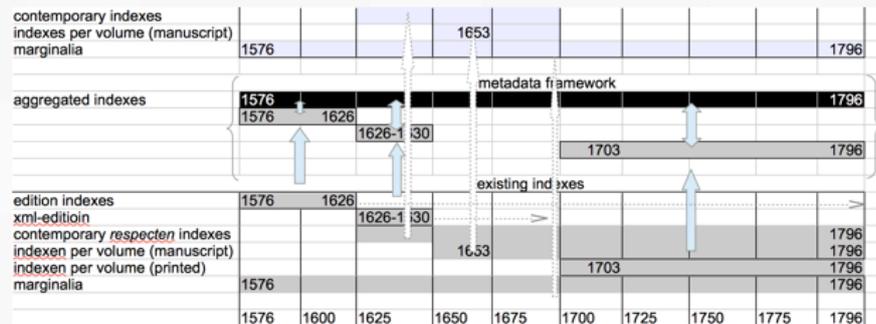
We have tried to enhance and structure the resolution texts to make them better accessible for indexing and retrieval. For this, we used a sample of hand-transcribed eighteenth century resolution materials containing 100 pages and 336 resolutions.

Success rates are almost 99% for text blocks such the resolutions and also the session announcement containing the date and the list of attendants.

Simple dates and the language could be recognized reliably and the representatives in the list of attendants could all be identified and assigned the provinces they represented.

Using the criteria of the formal rhetoric, it was furthermore possible to recognize whether a resolution ended in a decision or not. More complex cases require more work. It also remains open how well these techniques work on texts that were obtained by OCR or handwriting recognition.

Creation of a framework for structured data



Layers: structured data

The last step we investigated is the construction of a framework of entities and structured data of persons, geographical entities and subjects. By this, I mean the aggregated whole of indexes and other metadata that have been assigned in the course of time. It includes the indexes of the printed volumes. The main problem is that there is no index or type of metadata that is available for the whole corpus for the whole period. To name the most important

- Marginalia were always added to the resolutions, but they are very short and only available in the handwritten copies, not in the 18th century printed copies. Of course, they would still have to be transcribed
- The indexes for previous editions contain many identified persons and geographical names
- Contemporary secretaries responsible for the resolutions and informing the council, used a system of keywords or headings called *respecten* that was in use for a long time

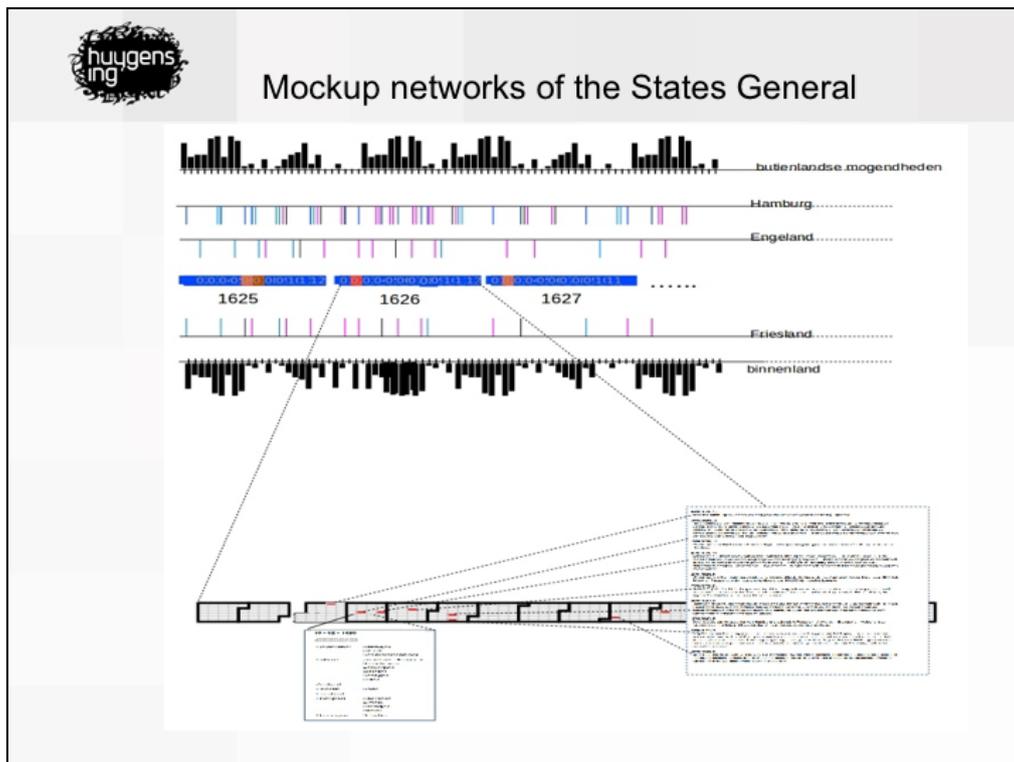
These may be used as building blocks for a framework of meaning for the

whole corpus. This is still a work in progress for which no definitive conclusions may be presented.

There is still a lot of work to be done, but the combination of both classic heuristics, the reuse of existing materials and new possibilities of the digital humanities promises a new future for an important key resource in Dutch history, that will enable researchers to start using it.

The consequences of changes in the editing process of a series as large as the resolutions of the States General may be important. The decision of the first generation of editors of editing a selection of the resolutions, is now generally seen as a mistake because it broke the structure of the original resource. Also, trying to impose their own frame of reference in the form of subjects is now frowned upon and in retrospect is old fashioned too. Full-text editions are not really feasible unless we can transcribe by computer. The possibilities for digital annotation are important, but usually also fairly low level.

It is not so easy to replace this with a new framework of subjects, because what should this be based on. The contemporary *respecten* may contribute much to such a framework, but obviously this also reflects the pre-occupations of the makers, the secretaries of the States General. However, their mindset pervades the whole corpus of decisions and should be taken into consideration anyway.



As a final conclusion, I would like to stress once again that in creating an edition there are many moments in which priorities influence the selection of possibilities. They all contribute to and influence the final result.



Questions?