

## HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AT FLEMISH UNIVERSITIES, 2000-2009

*An Analysis on the Basis of the Flemish Academic  
Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and  
Humanities*

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For over a decade, 'bibliometrics' has been a term frequently used in the academic policy context. Following international trends, the counting and weighting of publications by the government and universities has become a part of academic activity in Flanders as well. The data-instruments that were developed for policy purposes do not only lend themselves to policymaking, but can also be used for research on the publication patterns of researchers active in the various academic disciplinary fields. Utilizing the Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities (the VABB-SHW), this article analyses the publication culture of historians associated with Flemish universities. The analysis at the same time aims to be a case study that performs an empirical verification of social-academic discourse on the position and added value of bibliometrics within the social sciences and humanities. This article also hopes to contribute to a better insight into the publication practices of historians, using a comparative point of view wherever possible. In the following, the genesis and context of the VABB-SHW as a policy tool will first be described. Next, we will focus on different aspects of the publication culture of Flemish historians.

## I. Framework : the road to the VABB-SHW

Today, Belgian scientific research policy is to a large extent the responsibility of the respective regional governments of the Dutch (i.e. Flemish) and of the French-speaking communities of Belgium. In Brussels, both communities play a role in research policy and the funding of public higher education institutions. From the 1990s onwards, regional authorities have distributed the majority of university funding, based on a varying proportion of both input and output parameters. This mix of parameters was an inheritance of the former federally coordinated science policy. During the 1970s, most weight was attributed to input parameters, especially the number of students registered at each university. In 1985, however, the federal government gradually started basing a part of university research funding on output parameters as well, foremost the share of second cycle (masters) degrees by each institution<sup>1</sup>. In 1988, both higher education policy and science policy were devolved to the regions.

Since then, the French-speaking community of Belgium has opted for a continuation of the former federal research policy of distributing funding mainly on the basis of input parameters, taking into account foremost the number of students. One output factor that

has additionally been taken into account, however, is the number of PhDs completed at the different universities. Recently, there has been a growing interest in basing part of the universities' future allowances for academic research on a more extended set of output parameters, among which are included publications and citations<sup>2</sup>.

In Flanders, the northern Dutch-speaking region, the allocation of research funding to the universities has gradually become more dependent on output parameters. From the 1990s onwards, Flemish university funding has been based on four pillars : (1) the block grant for academic education, research, scientific and social services, (2) parallel government financing for fundamental research (amongst which are included the University Research Funds, known as BOF or 'Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds'), (3) other financing sources for research (e.g. the European Union), and (4) third party financing of university contract research.

For the last two decades, especially the BOF-means, which accounted for 116 million euro in 2012, have proved instrumental in allowing Flemish universities to develop their own policies regarding basic research. Since 2003, the BOF-funds are increasingly distributed based on an assessment of universities' research output<sup>3</sup>. This fits in with the intention of the Flemish government to

1. HENK MOED, MARC LUWEL, J.A. HOUBEN, ERIC SPRUYT & H. VAN DEN BERGHE, "The effects of changes in the funding structure of the Flemish universities on their research capacity, productivity and impact during the 1980's and early 1990's", in *Scientometrics*, 1998, p. 231-255. 2. ACADÉMIE ROYALE DE BELGIQUE, *Groupe de travail sur le financement de l'enseignement supérieur en Communauté française*, Bruxelles, 2011. 3. KOEN DEBACKERE & WOLFGANG GLÄNZEL, "Using a bibliometric approach to support research policy making: The case of the Flemish BOF-key", in *Scientometrics*, 2004, p. 253-276.

give the interuniversity allocation of research funding a more competitive character. Hence, the distribution of means was increasingly allocated, not solely on the basis of the number of granted doctoral degrees, but also according to the number of publications and citations. Gradually, the BOF distribution formula was also partially used to allocate the university block grant and other funds used to support research<sup>4</sup>. This competitive distribution model was intended to award the quality of the research achieved, thereby following the example of similar incentive-based policies in the UK, Australia and the Scandinavian countries<sup>5</sup>.

An essential prerequisite of the yearly distribution of the BOF-funds by the Flemish government, is the counting of publications and citations. In part due to a deficiency of other data, between 2003 and 2010 this was carried out on the basis of Web of Science<sup>6</sup>(WoS)-indexed journal articles, of which the output was used as a *pars pro toto*

for the entire university publication output<sup>7</sup>. A number of researchers in the social sciences and humanities (SHW), including historians, reacted to this approach with mixed and for the most part negative feelings<sup>8</sup>. In sum, many researchers feared that the unilateral endorsement of WoS-indexed publications as the most important in terms of scholarly achievement would lead to the decline of the unique publication culture in the social sciences and humanities, which differs markedly from the one considered to be the norm within the Natural and Biomedical Sciences<sup>9</sup>. The predicted parallel Anglicization of the publication landscape was feared to lead in turn to an intrinsic and formal unification, namely with a unilateral emphasis on international 'hot topics' published as articles in largely English language journals. The scholarly monograph, on the other hand, especially the Dutch and/or vulgarizing, would suffer the most. All of this would increasingly lock up researchers in an academic ivory tower<sup>10</sup>. Transposed to the

4. ERIC SPRUYT & NADINE RONS, "Belonend onderzoek financieren : De BOF-sleutel, een staaltje sleutelkunde", in *Delta*, 2008, p. 25-32. 5. DIANA HICKS, "Performance-based university research funding systems", in *Research Policy*, 2012, no. 4, p. 251-261. 6. The Web of Science is a citation-index that is owned and maintained by the Canadian-American company Thomson Reuters. 7. TIM C.E. ENGELS, ERIC H.J. SPRUYT, WOLFGANG GLÄNZEL & KOEN DEBACKERE, "Het Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand voor de Sociale en Humane Wetenschappen : instrument ten dienste van een optimaal wetenschapsbeleid?", in *Tijdschrift voor Onderwijsrecht en onderwijsbeleid*, 2008-2009, p. 395-403. 8. BRUNO DEWEVER, "Van A1, van A2, van A3... Concurrentievervalsing in academia", in PATRICK LOOBUYCK, GUIDO VANHEESWIJCK, WALTER VAN HERCK, ELS GRIETEN & KATHLEEN VERCAUTEREN (eds.), *Welke Universiteit willen wij (niet)?*, Gent, 2007, p. 199-203; YVES GINGRAS, "Du mauvais usage de faux indicateurs", in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 2008, no. 4bis, p. 67-79; IDESBALD GODDEERIS (ed.), *Revolutes onder historici. Gesprekken over internationalisering, democratisering en andere veranderingen in de academische wereld*, Tiel, 2011. 9. DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures of Social Science", in HENK F. MOED & AL. (eds.), *Handbook of Quantitative Science and Technology Research*, Dordrecht, 2004, p. 473-496. 10. JACQUES BILLIET & AL., *Bibliometrie in de humane wetenschappen*. – Koninklijke Vlaamse academie van België voor wetenschappen en kunsten. Standpunten, 2004, no. 3; N. SCHUERMANS, B. MEEUS, & F. DE MAESSCHALK, "Is there a world beyond the Web of Science? Publication practices outside the heartland of academic geography", in *Area*, 2010, no. 4, p. 417-424; WIM WEYMANS, "Cultuurwetenschappen onder druk", in *De Witte Raaf*, 5-6.2011, p. 17-18.

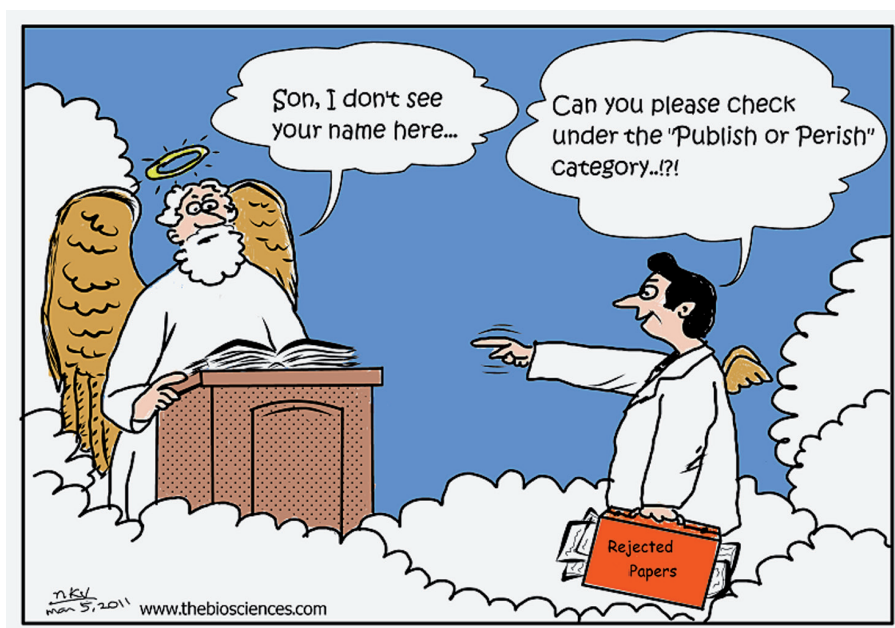
intra-university allocation of research means, the applied model would lead to structural under-financing of the Social Sciences and Humanities. In the case of internal evaluations of research groups and individual researchers, the narrow focus on the so-called A1-publications could pave the way for a form of 'competition distortion', as fields with fewer peer reviewed channels would become severely disadvantaged in acquiring research funding<sup>11</sup>.

In the meanwhile, scientometric research on an international level demonstrated that performance-based research funding systems (PRFS) could indeed have a distorting effect upon researchers' behaviour<sup>12</sup>. In several countries this led to funding formulas being adapted to correct for such unwanted effects<sup>13</sup>.

Acknowledging the room for improvement of the BOF-key, the Flemish government in its own right listened to the increasing protests of SSH researchers. This resulted in a new funding decree, the amended *Regulation on the Financing of the University Research Funds for the Universities of the Flemish*

*Community*. These decisions formed the foundation for the construction of the Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities (VABB-SHW, hereafter VABB), a retrospective bibliographic database. The VABB has the explicit goal to make bibliometric monitoring compatible with the publication patterns of the social sciences and humanities, by the inclusion of additional publication types (book publications and proceedings in addition to articles in journals, cf. infra) and a considerable number of non-English and non-WoS journal titles<sup>14</sup>. As opposed to the earlier model, which was solely based on WoS counting, the VABB realizes a more balanced output weighting for the social sciences and humanities. For the first version of the VABB, covering the period 2000-2009, 29.921 publications were added (of which 18.946 non-WoS publications were indexed) that determined the distribution of the BOF-means between the universities for 2,6% in 2011. The actual weight of these publications is more considerable, given that the BOF-key also plays a role in the distribution of some of the university block grant and other research funding<sup>15</sup>.

11. BRUNO DEWEVER, "Van A1, van A2, van A3...". 12. LINDA BUTLER, "Modifying publication practices in response to funding formulas", in *Research Evaluation*, 2003, p. 39-46; Id., "What happens when funding is linked to publication counts?", in HENK F. MOED, WOLFGANG GLÄNZEL & ULRICH SCHMOCH (eds.), *Handbook of quantitative science and technology research*, Dordrecht, 2004, p. 389-405; HENK F. MOED, "UK Research Assessment Exercises. Informed judgments on research quality or quantity?", in 9th *International Conference on Science & Technology Indicators*, Louvain, 2006, p. 101-102. 13. LINDA BUTLER, "Impact of performance-based research funding systems. A review of the concerns and the evidence", in OECD (ed.), *Performance-based funding for public research in tertiary education institutions. Workshop proceedings*, Paris, 2010, p. 127-165. 14. PAUL GHESQUIÈRE, JEAN-PAUL VAN BENDEGEM, STEVEN GILLIS, DOMINIQUE WILLEMS & KIRSTEN CORNELISSEN, "Het VABB-SHW : eerste versie klaar, nu verfijnen", in KOEN DEBACKERE & REINHILDE VEUGELERS (eds.), *Vlaams Indicatorenboek 2011*, Expertisecentrum O&O Monitoring, Brussel, 2011. 15. TIM C.E. ENGELS, ERIC H.J. SPRUYT, WOLFGANG GLÄNZEL, & KOEN DEBACKERE, "Het Vlaams Academisch Bibliografisch Bestand...".



In practice, since 2010 a new version of the VABB has been installed at the end of each year through the delivery by the universities of data sets of bibliographic references of their publications in the social sciences and humanities to the interuniversity Centre for Research and Development Monitoring (ECOOM). ECOOM distills from this data the list of journal titles, publishers, published books and proceedings, and presents this to the multidisciplinary Authoritative Panel (GP) of academic experts. In turn, the GP, aided by disciplinary sub-panels, decides on a selection of journals and publishers that comply with the criteria stipulated in the BOF-Regulation<sup>16</sup>. According to the regulation, publications are taken into account for inclusion in the VABB when they are (1) publicly available, (2) unambiguously identifiable through an ISSN or ISBN, (3) offer a contribution to the development of new insights or the application thereof, and (4) are judged before publication in a demonstrable process of peer review performed by established researchers. Peer review must, according to the BOF-Regulation, be performed by “an editorial board, a permanent reading committee, external referees or a combination thereof”. The Authoritative Panel has added an extra criterion to the aforementioned : publications eligible for inclusion must be at least four pages long. The selection of publishers and journals, reviewed according to the BOF-criteria, is then used by ECOOM to filter the complete list of references, in order to present

a new version of the VABB-SHW to the government before the end of December. The lists of journals and publishers and the public version of the database are at the same time published on [www.ecoom.be/vabb](http://www.ecoom.be/vabb).

Although the VABB was installed as a policy tool for the interuniversity distribution of research funding, it can also be used quite easily to perform research on the publication patterns and culture within the social sciences and humanities. A quantitative analysis of the references included in the VABB makes it possible to analyze characteristics and evolutions of publication patterns. Moreover, the ‘superfluous’ bibliographic data collected during the development of the VABB for the timeframe 2000-2009 offers a broad set of research possibilities. Given that the universities yearly and (retrospectively) deliver exhaustive overviews of their publication output in the social sciences and humanities, all references of articles, book contributions and proceedings that were published are available, but in view of the aforementioned criteria have not been added to the VABB. This rich dataset makes it possible to map the diverse publication cultures of the different disciplinary fields within the social sciences and humanities<sup>17</sup> and practiced at Flemish universities, independent from the original policy context of the VABB.

Historians form an interesting group for an initial analysis on the level of one individual

16. <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/edulex/database/document/document.asp?docid=13054>, chapter. 1ter and 2, §8. 17. TONY BECHER & PAUL R. TROWLER, *Academic tribes and territories. Intellectual enquiry and the culture of disciplines*, Buckingham, 2001; ANTON J. NEDERHOF, “Bibliometric monitoring...”.

VABB-disciplinary field<sup>18</sup>. The bibliometric literature sketches<sup>19</sup> a mixed image of history as an academic field. On the one hand, history presents itself as a 'typical' SSH-discipline, situated on a porous inner border between the Social Sciences and the Humanities; on the other hand, the field has its own unique characteristics with regard to information needs and publication and citation patterns<sup>20</sup>.

In the following, aspects of the historical publication culture in Flanders on the basis of the entire dataset (all the references delivered for history) are first mapped, then the focus will shift to the characteristics of historical publications included in the VABB, and finally, the publications of Flemish historians that have currently not been added to the VABB will be discussed. Regarding the publication patterns of Flemish historians, a number of relevant questions can be formulated : what is the distribution between the different publication types? In which languages do historians publish the most? What is the total share of WoS-indexed publications? Which publication media (journals and publishers) are used most frequently? How do these

patterns change over time, and are there indications of the influence of performance-based research funding systems (PRFS)?

## II. Aspects of the historical publication culture in Flanders

Previous bibliometric research on the publication practices and the use of information by historians gives an impression of the way in which they distribute research results among themselves and to the general public. The cliché would have it that historians perform their work in solitude, use a great number of scientific sources and communication channels – with the monograph taking central stage – and that they frequently read and write in other languages and attach great importance to contributions intended for a non-academic readership<sup>21</sup>. The extent to which history shares these characteristics with other disciplinary fields in the social sciences and humanities forms a challenging research domain<sup>22</sup>, in which the VABB presents itself as the go-to research tool for studies of the Flemish academic environment.

**18.** The VABB attributes publications to an intrinsic disciplinary field on the basis of author affiliation, i.e. the author's affiliation with a specific department or research group. **19.** BJÖRN HAMMARSELT, "Referencing in the Humanities and its Implications for Citation Analysis", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 2010, no. 2, p. 310-318; ANTON J. NEDERHOF, "Bibliometric monitoring..."; W. SPOHN, "History and the Social Sciences", in NEIL J. SMELSER & PAUL B. BALTES (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, s.l., 2001, p. 6829-6835. **20.** CLYVE JONES, MICHAEL CHAPMAN, PAMELA CARR WOODS, "The Characteristics of the Literature Used by Historians", in *Journal of Librarianship*, 1972, no. 3, p. 137-156; MARGARET STIEG DALTON, "The publishing experiences of historians", in *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 2008, no. 3, p. 197-240; ID. & LAURIE CHARNIGO, "Historians and their information sources", in *College & Research Libraries*, 9.2004, p. 400-425; *infra*. **21.** DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures of Social Science..."; RICHARD WHITLEY, *The intellectual and social organization of the sciences*, Oxford, 1984. **22.** ANTON J. NEDERHOF, "Bibliometric monitoring..."; S. STONE, "Humanities scholars. Information needs and uses", in *Journal of Documentation*, 1982, no. 4, p. 292-313.

The material for this article consists of almost four thousand bibliographic references of historical publications covering the period 2000-2009. This collection encompasses records of publications approved for VABB and those not approved for VABB, and will from now on be referred to as the 'complete dataset-History' for the purposes of this paper<sup>23</sup>. On the basis of this collection, a number of aspects of the historical publication culture in Flanders can be mapped. Moreover, the analysis of the 'complete dataset-History' shall be used further on in this article to interpret and situate characteristics of its subset, the VABB-approved references to historical publications, 'VABB-History'.

### Publication types

A first, significant characteristic of the previously examined historical publication and information culture is the importance given to the monograph by historians. A survey of senior researchers proved that the publication of books by historians has been adopted as a test of competency and of prestige, and in the United States is even perceived as an essential criterion for acquiring tenure<sup>24</sup>. Research on the citation patterns of historians has moreover proven

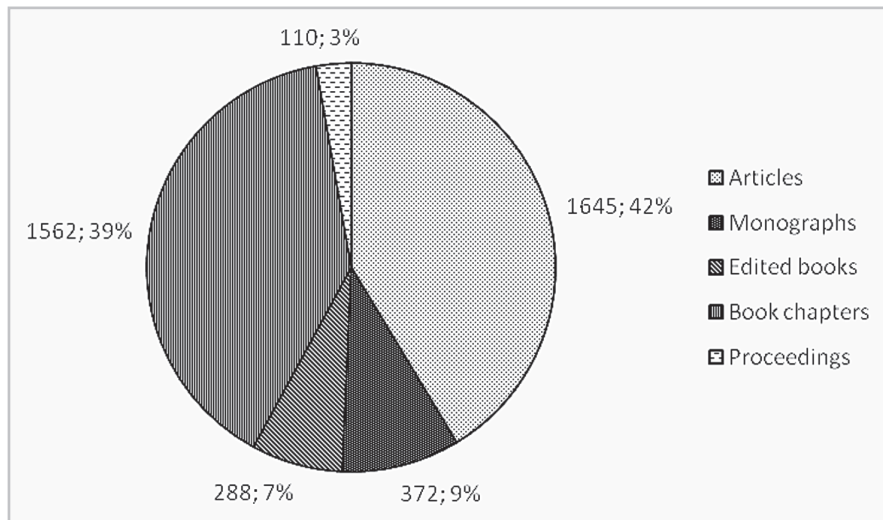
that the impact of books within historical scholarship is relatively large and persistent. This becomes clear from the greater number of citations of books than of any other publication types<sup>25</sup> and a slower citation increase, which is connected to the continued relevance of older publications<sup>26</sup>. This leads to the conclusion that the publication of recently cited monographs gives an indication of the extent to which historians can influence their field of interest during their academic career<sup>27</sup>.

With regard to the historical research practiced at Flemish universities, the complete set of bibliographic data, collected during the development of the VABB, seems to affirm the image of a monograph-centered publication pattern. The numbers in figure 1 for the different publication types, following the typology used for the VABB-data model, show that Flemish historians have collectively published 2.222 book contributions (55%), as opposed to 1645 articles (42%), out of a grand total of 3.977 publications. Chapters in books carry a weight comparable to that of articles in journals. The 110 proceedings, covering only 3% of the total, constitute, by contrast, a publication type of lesser importance.

23. For the analysis of the complete data set, publications that consisted of less than four pages were not taken into account. These were mostly editorials and newspaper articles, which in a strict sense cannot be considered as scholarly publications. 24. MARGARET STIEG DALTON, "The publishing experiences of historians..."; ROBERT TOWNSEND, "History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing. Field Does Better Than Most at Getting Books Published, But Problems Loom", in *Perspectives*, 10.2003, p. 32-37. 25. WOLFGANG GLÄNZEL & URS SCHOEPFLIN, "A bibliometric study of reference literature in the sciences and the social sciences", in *Information Processing and Management*, 1999, p. 31-44. 26. DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures..."; CLYVE JONES, MICHAEL CHAPMAN, PAMELA CARR WOODS, "The Characteristics of the Literature..."; ANTON J. NEDERHOF, "Bibliometric monitoring...". 27. MARGARET STIEG DALTON & LAURIE CHARNIGO, "Historians and their information sources...", p. 404-406.



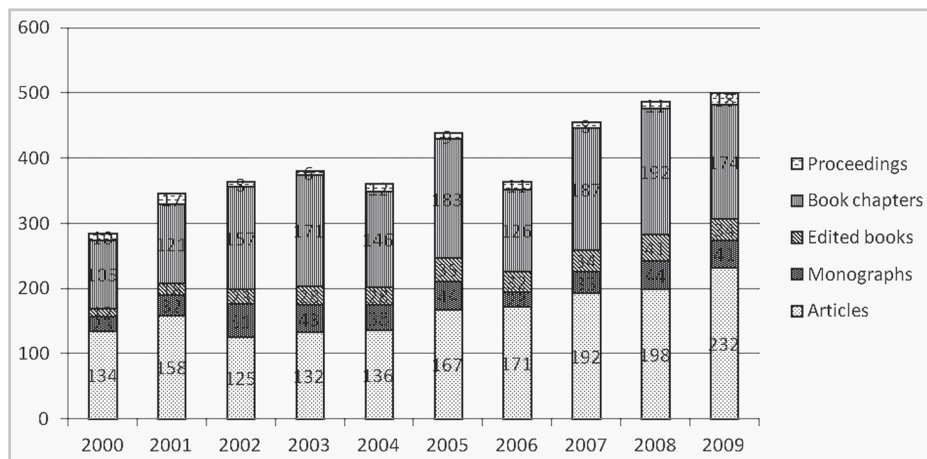
Figure 1 : distribution according to publication type (complete dataset-History)



A classification according to year of publication of the data on the publication types enriches the image. Within the examined timeframe, historians associated with

Flemish universities have published more and more. Between 2000 and 2009, the total amount of publications increased by 75%.

Figure 2 : number of historical publications per year and per type, 2000-2009 (complete dataset-History)



This increase is considerable, especially given the fact that during the decade 2000-2010, the total research staff for history departments at Flemish universities increased by 40,1 %, from 207 to 290 researchers with a degree in history<sup>28</sup>. Figure 2 also shows that for the period 2000-2009 no significant shift has presented itself between the publication types. The largest increase of the total output is not restricted to the increase of articles in journals, but can also be seen with regard to book publications, which clearly remain a central publication type for historical scholarship. The expected 'decline of the monograph', caused by a linear shift to the journal article<sup>29</sup> has not presented itself in Flanders thus far. What does draw attention, however, is the continued and consistent increase of articles since 2002, as opposed to the book publications, which clearly show bigger fluctuations. Despite the continued importance of the historical monograph, there might possibly be a less noticeable, gradual shift in publication patterns.

### Publication languages

Another characteristic often cited in relation to the publication culture of historians is the relatively great importance attached to publications in their own national language. This is connected to the socio-cultural and geographical anchoring of historians, including the broader social value of their work<sup>30</sup>. This societal embedding implies that the *lingua franca* of a specific historical field often differs from English<sup>31</sup>. For local, regional and national historical subjects, the national publication context and language is nearly always the most relevant<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, the most nuanced theorizing and conceptual thinking in several SSH-disciplines is performed in the mother tongue<sup>33</sup>. Though the ever-enhancing globalization of academia accommodates the rise of English in the Flemish historic-academic environment as well (cf. *infra*), Dutch remains an import language for publication for Flemish historians. For the total dataset, the distribution per language and publications type looks as follows :

28. VLAAMSE INTERUNIVERSITAIRE RAAD, *Statistische gegevens betreffende het personeel aan de Vlaamse Universiteiten. Telling 1-2-00*, VLIR, Brussel, 2000; Id., *Statistische gegevens betreffende het personeel aan de Vlaamse Universiteiten. Telling 1 februari 2010*, VLIR, Brussel, 2010. 29. DENISE K. MAGNER, "Seeking a radical change in the role of publishing", in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A16-A17, 16.6.2000; JENNIFER WOLFE THOMPSON, "The death of the scholarly monograph in the humanities? Citation patterns in literary scholarship", in *Libri*, 2002, p. 121-122. 30. DANIELLE C. LIU, *A Portfolio of indicators: broadening the scope of bibliometric research evaluation of the humanities – a mixed methods exploration*, unpublished master thesis, Royal School of Library and Information Science, Copenhagen, 2011, p. 86; IAN MORTIMER, "What isn't history? The nature and enjoyment of history in the twenty-first century", in *History*, 93, 2008, 312, p. 454-474. 31. JACQUES BILLIET e.a., *Bibliometrie in de humane wetenschappen...*, p. 9. 32. DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures..."; ANTON J. NEDERHOF, "Bibliometric monitoring...". 33. BERND-ALEXANDER STIEGLER, "Diskursstile in den Geisteswissenschaften", in ELISABETH LACK & CHRISTOPH MARKSCHIES (eds), *What the hell is quality? Qualitätsstandards in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Frankfurt/New York, 2008, p. 215-229.

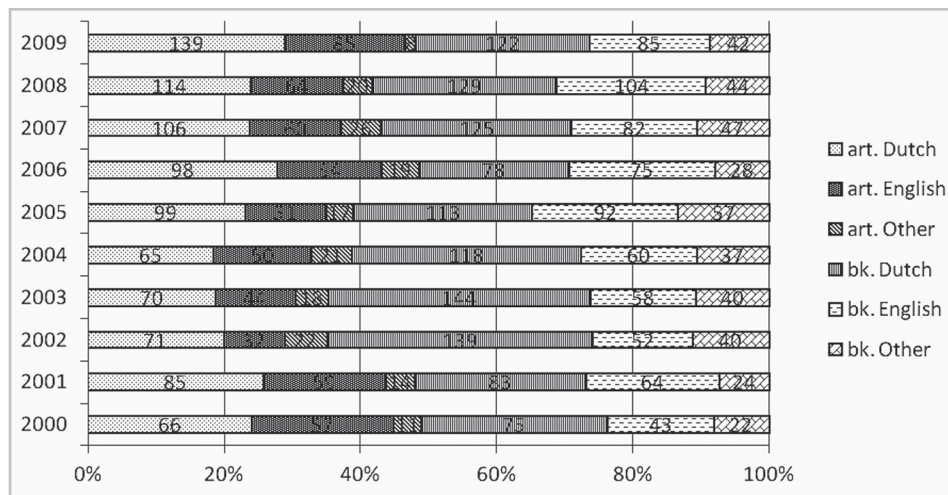
**Table 1 : division according to publication language and type, 2000-2009  
complete dataset-History)**

Publication type	Dutch		English		French		Other		Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Articles in journals	913	55,5	556	33,8	132	8,0	44	2,7	<b>1645</b>
Monographs	243	65,3	79	21,2	29	7,8	21	5,6	<b>372</b>
Edited books	124	43,0	118	40,1	27	9,4	19	6,6	<b>288</b>
Book chapters	759	48,6	518	33,2	195	12,5	90	5,8	<b>1562</b>
Proceedings	15	13,6	53	48,2	31	28,2	11	10,0	<b>110</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2054</b>	<b>51,6</b>	<b>1324</b>	<b>33,3</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>10,4</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>4,6</b>	<b>3977</b>

It becomes clear from table 1 that, for Flemish historians, Dutch is still the most important publication language for four out of five publication types. The preponderance of Dutch is particularly evident in the category of monographs, in which Dutch is represented three times more than English. With journal articles as well, Dutch has a firm ascendancy. The exception, with regard to language, can be found in the category of proceedings. Here, Dutch is not even the second language after English, which comes as no surprise given the common international character of academic conferences. Other languages as well, especially French, are important for Flemish historians. For all publication types together, half are in Dutch, a third in English and one tenth in French.

This also becomes clear from the proportion of different languages in figure 3. Between 2000 and 2009, no significant shifts can be detected for the journal articles and book publications (monographs, edited books or book chapters). This indicates that the predicted unstoppable rise of English as *the* publication language, at the expense of Dutch, remains yet to present itself. For 2009, there is a drop by more than fifty per cent of articles in other languages, with French as the most important one, but it remains to be seen if this decline will continue in the years to come.

Figure 3 : Language evolution for articles and book publications, 2000-2009  
(complete dataset-History)



### Publishing for a broader public

A question to be asked is to what extent Flemish historians invest in publications that so far have not been approved for inclusion in the VABB. It is not yet known for what readership such contributions outside of peer-reviewed literature are precisely intended. In this regard, bibliometric studies often emphasize that historians value communication on the collective past with an interested lay public, such as teachers and amateur historians. It is said to be a way in

which their academic research can be spread, valued and utilized in a practical manner and for a broader social purpose<sup>34</sup>. At the same time, such 'enlightenment literature' holds an unstable position in an academic culture that increasingly places an emphasis on peer-reviewed publications and international visibility<sup>35</sup>. It remains to be seen whether or not the growing interest of policymakers in valorisation of social science and humanities' research<sup>36</sup> will pave the way for a renaissance of 'enlightenment literature'.

34. JACQUES BILLIET e.a., *Bibliometrie in de humane wetenschappen...*; DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures..."; I. MORTIMER, "What isn't history?...", p. 471-473. 35. DIANA HICKS, "The Four Literatures...". 36. CAROLINE GIJSELINCKX & KATRIEN STEENSENS, *Naar waarde geschat. Valorisatie van onderzoek in de humane en sociale wetenschappen*, (Rep. No. 22), Vlaamse Raad voor Wetenschap en Innovatie, Brussel, 2011; TAKAYUKI HAYASHI, "Possibility and limitation of indicators on the social and economic impacts of university research : experience of Japanese University Evaluation", in *Proceedings of STI Montréal. 17th International Conference on Science and Technology Indicators. Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, September 5-8, 2012*, p. 381-402; Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, *Kwaliteit en relevantie in de geesteswetenschappen. Naar een adequaat systeem voor de beoordeling van wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Eindrapportage van de KNAW-Adviescommissie Kwaliteitsindicatoren Geesteswetenschappen*, KNAW, 2012.

One indication of the importance which Flemish historians attach to diffusing their research results to a broader readership is the relation between the complete available dataset and the more limited academically-oriented VABB-subset. After all, the purpose of the BOF-criteria and the work of the GP is to make a distinction between publication media according to the objectively verifiable application of peer-review. It would, however, be wrong to conclude from this that publications which were not added to the

VABB, due to a lack of peer-review, lack all scholarly value and by extension are solely aimed at a broader readership. Not only are the authors the same academic scholars whose publications are in part included in the VABB, they are moreover in all likelihood often used by researchers and cited in VABB-approved publications. Therefore, it is more correct to simply state that the scholarly nature and quality of these publications cannot be ascertained at this time on the basis of the peer-review criterion.

**Figure 4 : evolution of the historical publications added to the complete dataset-History and to VABB-History, 2000-2009**

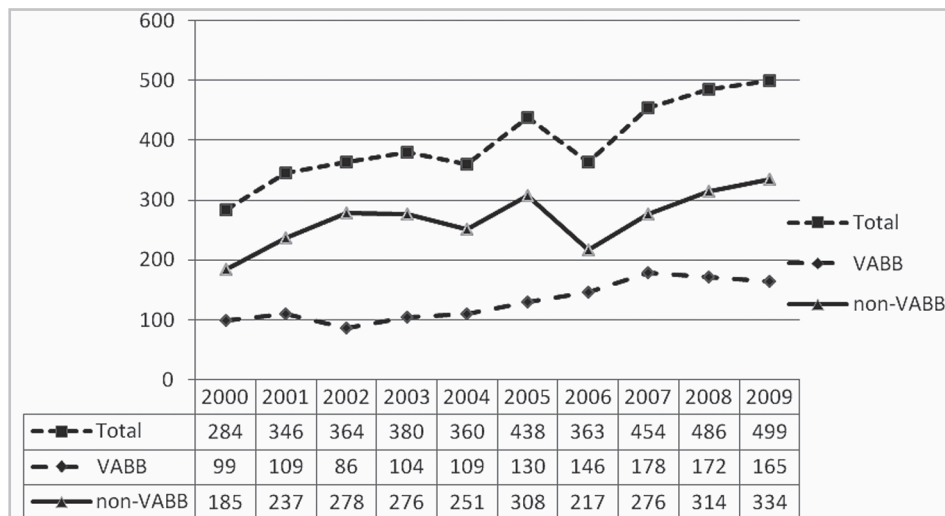


Figure 4 shows that the total historical publication output for each analyzed year adds up to more than twice the amount of publications included in the VABB<sup>37</sup>. This means that historians in Flanders continue

to invest a relatively great amount of time and energy in publications that are not peer reviewed. A possible explanation for this might be that it constitutes a hybrid category with regard to readership : part of these

<sup>37</sup>. This only bears on the number of publications, not on their volume, complexity or the time invested to complete them.

publications are probably more intended for fellow academics, whereas the other part disperses the research results amongst a broader readership. The evolution through the analyzed period shows no relapse in the share of this type of publications on behalf of those with a verifiable peer reviewed background. Despite the growing incentives for researchers since 2003 to publish more exclusively in peer reviewed journals, Flemish historians have not chosen to cold-shoulder other publication channels. With a growth percentage of about 75%, the output of non-VABB approved contributions between 2000 and 2009 has increased even more than the VABB-approved publications (66%). In part 4, more attention will be given to this subset of non-VABB approved publications.

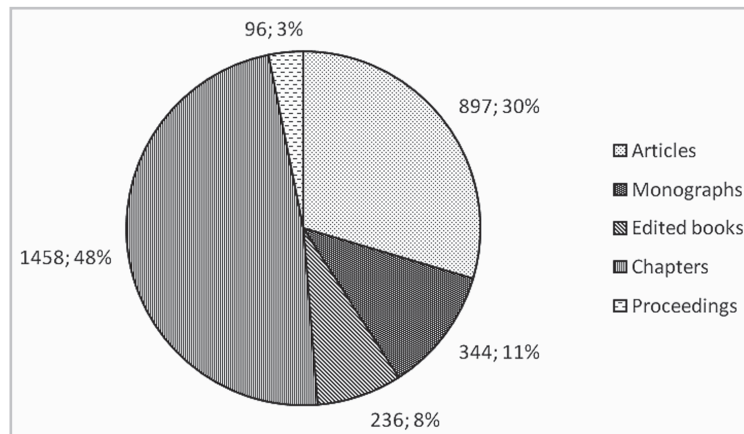
### III. Historical publications included in the VABB

The VABB adds up to a total of 1.298 publications by historians for the period 2000-2009. This amounts to about one third of all historical publications registered in the complete dataset (3.977). The implementation of the four criteria stipulated by the BOF-Regulation and the extra GP-criterion of a minimum of 4 pages have, in other words, resulted in the inclusion of about one out of three publications in the VABB. This proportion is consistent with the one established for the whole of the VABB-included SSH-disciplines<sup>38</sup>.

#### Publication types

The distribution of publication types within the VABB-History contrast significantly with that of the complete dataset-History mentioned in paragraph 2, figure 1.

Figure 5 : number of historical publications per type (VABB-History)



38. TRUYKEN OSSENBLOK, NATALIE STEVENS, ERIC SPRUYT & TIM ENGELS, "Bibliometrische analyse van het Vlaams universitair onderzoek in de sociale en humane wetenschappen. De eerste versie van het VABB-SHW", in KOEN DEBACKERE & REINHILDE VEUGELERS, *Vlaams indicatorenboek 2011*, Brussel, Expertisecentrum O&O Monitoring, 2011, p. 153-172.

A comparison of figure 5 with the aforementioned shows how the weight of the journal article (74%) within the VABB-History is much bigger than within the complete dataset-History (42%). Book publications, however, add up to only 24% of the total, compared to 55% in figure 1. Historical monographs carry only a marginal weight with 2% (28 books) of the total (1.298 publications) in VABB-History. In brief, this leads to a significant divergence between the two sets with regard to the division of books and articles. This proves that historical book publications find their

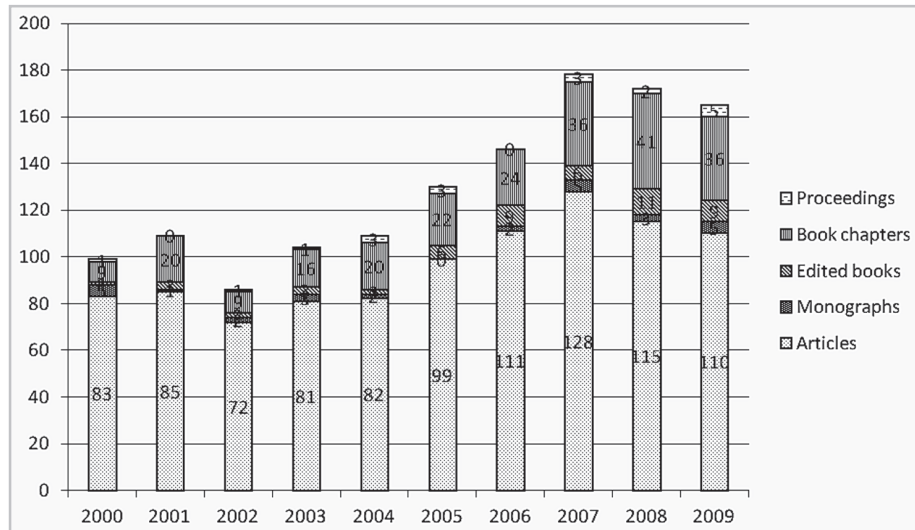
way to inclusion in the VABB less easily as opposed to journal articles. Given that the Authoritative Panel originally did not assess publications on an individual level, but on the level of the publisher or the journal (cf. supra), the issue of the historical monograph situates itself here as well. Part 4 will offer more information on this finding as well as possible explanations.

Table 2 and figure 6 illustrate the growth between 2000 and 2009 of the yearly number of publications by historians per type included in the VABB.

**Table 2 : publications by historians in the VABB-History, 2000-2009**

Year	Articles		Mono-graphs	Edited books	Chapters in books	Books total		Proceedings	Total
	#	% growth (per 2y.)				#	% growth (per 2y.)		
2000	83		5	1	9	15		1	99
2001	85		1	3	20	24		0	109
2002	72	-9,8	2	2	9	13	-10,2	1	86
2003	81		3	3	16	22		1	104
2004	82	+18,3	2	2	20	24	+48,6	3	109
2005	99		0	6	22	28		3	130
2006	111	+32,0	2	9	24	35	+57,7	0	146
2007	128		5	6	36	47		3	178
2008	115	-5,8	3	11	41	55	+28,0	2	172
2009	110		5	9	36	50		5	165
Tot.	966		28	52	233	313		19	1298



**Figure 6 : number of historical publications per year per type, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)**

According to table 2 and figure 6 the growth of the number of publications per year occurs mostly from 2005 onwards, and this both for articles and book publications, which in 2007, 2008 and 2009 amount to two to four times the amounts for 2000, 2001 and 2002. To a certain extent, these figures put into perspective the dominance of the journal article ascertained in figure 5. For 2000-2002, the ascendancy in any case is bigger than for the years 2007-2009. The weighting of the different publication types as determined for the calculations of the BOF-key puts things into even more perspective: monographs in the VABB count for 4 points, edited books for 2<sup>39</sup>,

chapters in books for 1, journal articles (WoS-indexed included)<sup>40</sup> for 1 and proceedings papers for 0,5. A counting of the weighted numbers in other words offers a more nuanced image, in which book publications account for 31,5% of the VABB-History as opposed to about 24% without weighting.

Another comparison that puts the dominance of the journal article in a broader context is the contrast between the distribution between publication types for the complete VABB, i.e. for all SSH-disciplines together, and for the humanities separately, to which history traditionally belongs.

39. For the third version of the VABB-SHW, published in December 2012, the GP decreased the weight of the edited book to 1 point. 40. This is the case if available articles in WoS-indexed journals are weighted according to the average impact factor of the journal.



**Table 3 : publication types in VABB-History, VABB-Social Sciences and Humanities and VABB-Humanities**

Publication type	VABB-History		VABB-SHW		VABB-Humanities	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Articles	966	74,4	24722	82,6	11170	74,2
Book publications	313	24,1	4465	14,9	3482	23,1
Proceedings papers	19	1,5	734	2,4	409	2,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29921</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15041</b>	<b>100</b>

Although the historical monograph as a publication type in the VABB-History weighs substantially less than in the complete dataset-History, the share of book publications for history within the VABB is still bigger than for the whole of the social sciences and humanities. Moreover, history, as practiced in Flemish universities, aligns itself more with the humanities than with the social sciences, with regard to distribution according to publication type, in which there is a greater weight placed on book publications<sup>41</sup>.

#### Publication languages

The degree to which historical publications are added to the VABB is in part connected to their publication language. Usage of English

is more often linked to a positive evaluation by the Authoritative Panel than in the case of Dutch or other foreign languages. There is, however, no direct causal link, since the GP generally does not evaluate on the level of individual publications, but on that of journal titles and publishers. The publication language is, in this case, not a set criterion. English scientific journals are more prone to applying peer review than their Dutch counterparts and function, because of the attractiveness of English, much more often as a forum for international academic debate. As a result, the weight of English as a publication language can be seen as an important indicator for the internationalization of Flemish historical research<sup>42</sup>.

41. Comp. W. SPOHN, "History and the Social Sciences".... 42. Comp. TRUYKEN OSSENBLOK, TIM C.E. ENGELS & GUNNAR SIVERTSEN, "The representation of the social sciences and humanities in the Web of Science. A comparison of publication patterns and incentive structures in Flanders and Norway (2005-2009)", in *Research Evaluation*, 2012, no. 4, p. 280-290.

**Table 4 : division according to publication language per publication type, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)**

Publication type	Dutch		English		French		Other		Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Articles in journals	465	48,1	390	40,4	82	8,5	29	3,0	966
Monographs	4	14,3	22	78,6	2	7,1	0	0,0	28
Edited Books	3	5,8	43	82,7	6	11,5	0	0,0	52
Book chapters	25	10,7	176	75,5	23	9,9	9	3,9	233
Proceedings	5	26,3	7	36,8	6	31,6	1	5,3	19
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>38,7</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>49,1</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>9,1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>3,0</b>	<b>1298</b>

Table 4 illustrates how English carries a much bigger weight within the VABB-History than in the complete dataset-History. As opposed to the data from the complete dataset, English is overall the most common publication language in the VABB-History. For articles in journals, Dutch is still the most important, although to a lesser degree : in the VABB-History the ratio for articles in Dutch and English is 1,19 : 1, while within the complete dataset the ratio was still 1,64 : 1. Dutch still stays strong as the first publication language with regard to journal articles, but it is losing ground. For the book publications the proportions have radically shifted : in total there were only 32 Dutch book publica-

tions included in the VABB as opposed to 241 or 7,54 times as many English ones. The contrast with the data in the complete dataset is huge: there the ratio was still 1,57 : 1 in favor of Dutch book contributions. Consequently, it can be concluded that the aforementioned relative difficulty for historical books to be added to the VABB is mostly an issue for the Dutch monograph.

However, history as an academic disciplinary field, with regard to the whole of its peer-reviewed publications, is still very much attached to Dutch when contrasted to the VABB-SHW as a whole.

**Table 5 : Language ratio for journal articles and book publications in VABB-History and VABB-SHW**

Language	Articles VABB-History		Articles VABB-SHW		Book publications VABB-History		Book publications VABB-SHW	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Dutch	465	48,1	7234	29,3	32	10,2	457	10, 2
English	390	40,4	16060	65,0	241	77,0	3396	76,1
French	82	8,5	951	3,8	31	9,9	373	8,3
Other	29	3,0	477	1,9	9	2,9	239	5,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>24722</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>4465</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Table 5 shows that historians more frequently publish articles in Dutch as opposed to their ‘average colleague’ in the VABB as a whole. With regard to the division according to publication language as well, history, as it is practiced at Flemish universities, aligns itself more with the humanities than with the social sciences<sup>43</sup>. Next, the relative importance of French and other foreign languages for historical articles becomes clear. Within the VABB there is thus no unilateral dominance of the English journal article, although the weight of English within the whole output of VABB-articles is bigger than that for the complete dataset-History. In the latter, 556 English articles accounted to 33,8% of the total (1645) (see : table 1). For the book publications in table 5 the image looks much different: here the percentages between history and the VABB as a whole are very similar. The difference with the various ratios within the complete dataset-History is much bigger : here 1126 Dutch publications

covered 50,7% of the total (2.222); in table 5 (cf. *supra*) this percentage has increased to 10,2%. The share of Dutch publications within the VABB-SHW accounts for the exact same percentage. This implies that the representation of the Dutch monograph for the other disciplines is rather minimal in the VABB. For book publications, in the VABB-History as well as in the VABB-SHW, English occupies a dominant position.

#### **Journal titles and book publishers**

Between 2000 and 2009, Flemish historians have published in a great number of journals and with different publishers. The data in the VABB allows us to count the ‘most popular’ publication media. Table 6 gives an overview of the journals in which Flemish historians have published the most during the analyzed timeframe. Table 7 gives an enumeration of the most important publishers of historical book publications included in the VABB.

43. Comp. TIM C.E. ENGELS e.a., “Changing publication patterns...”.

Table 6 : journals with more than 10 articles by Flemish historians, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)

Journal	Number of articles
<i>Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis (RBHC/BH)</i>	38
<i>Stadsgeschiedenis</i> <sup>44</sup>	34
<i>Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden</i>	32
<i>Brood &amp; Rozen</i>	27
<i>Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis</i>	26
<i>Trajecta</i>	26
<i>Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen op het gebied van de Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse beweging</i>	26
<i>Handelingen - Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis</i>	25
<i>Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis</i>	24
<i>Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis</i> <sup>45</sup>	22
<i>Bibliotheek- en Archiefgids (Vlaamse vereniging voor bibliotheek-, archief-, en documentatiewezenen)</i>	19
<i>Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis</i>	18
<i>Ancient society</i>	17
<i>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</i>	16
<i>Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis</i>	14
<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>	11

The titles of the most frequently mentioned VABB historical journals substantiate the findings with regard to the relative importance of Dutch as a publication language for

articles. Of the 17 journals with more than 10 articles by historians associated with Flemish universities, there are only three that publish mainly in a language other than Dutch.

44. Continuation of *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*. 45. Continuation of *NEHA-jaarboek*, *NEHA-bulletin* and *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*.

**Table 7 : publishers of two or more book publications, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)**

<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Number of book publications</b>
Brepols	114
Peeters	78
Ashgate	18
Brill	15
Cambridge University Press	13
Berghahn Books	11
Oxford University Press	10
Routledge	6
Palgrave Macmillan	4
Waxmann	4
Harvard University Press	3
Prentice-Hall	3
Rodopi	3
Wiley-Blackwell	3
D.S. Brewer	2
Sharpe	2

The information in table 7 on publishers connects to the aforementioned analysis with regard to the limited presence in the VABB of Dutch book publications. Table 8 illustrates that only 3 out of the publishers of more than one book publication are located in Flanders or the Low Countries. In other words, these three-Brepols, Peeters and Brill- currently account for the publication of VABB book publications in Dutch by Flemish historians added to the data set (32) (see table 4). The other publishers are British or American, with

the exception of Rodopi. This confirms the finding that it is relatively difficult for historical book publications from Flemish authors, especially the monographs, to become VABB-approved.

#### **Internationalization and Web of Science**

One element that is relevant for the broader debate on the use of bibliometrics in the social sciences and humanities, as well as the degree of internationalization of Flemish academic historical research, is the inclusion of historical

journal articles in Web of Science. Between 2003 and 2010 only WoS-indexed publications were taken into account for the BOF-key. The question presents itself : have Flemish historians during these years reacted to the stimuli from their institutions and departments and thus published as much as possible in WoS-journals? Within the VABB, WoS-indexed publications are put on a par with publications that are selected for inclusion on the basis of the GP-evaluation and the BOF-criteria. As

a result, it is possible to retrospectively calculate, on the basis of the VABB-data, what the exact share is of the WoS-journals. Moreover, it is interesting to verify the ways in which the WoS-inclusion for historical journal articles relates to the other, more general indicator for internationalization of research : the use of English as a publication language. Table 8 and figure 7 give an overview of the evolution of the WoS-inclusion and English as a publication language :

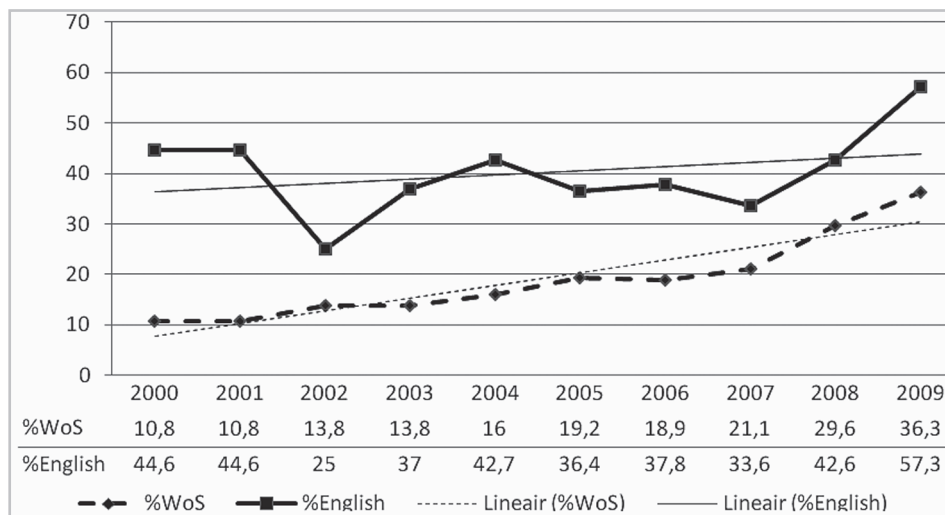
**Table 8 : inclusion of historical articles in the WoS and the use of English as a publication language, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)**

Year	# articles VABB- Hist.	# articles indexed in WoS	% WoS	# articles English	% English
2000	83	9	10,8	37	44,6
2001	85	9	10,5	37	43,5
2002	72	10	13,8	18	25,0
2003	81	13	16,0	30	37,0
2004	82	11	13,4	35	42,7
2005	99	19	19,2	36	36,4
2006	111	21	18,9	42	37,8
2007	128	27	21,1	43	33,6
2008	115	34	29,6	49	42,6
2009	110	40	36,3	63	57,3
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>20,0</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>40,4</b>

Table 8 clearly shows that the number of WoS-indexed articles in the VABB-History between 2000 and 2009, with a growth factor of 4,44, has increased more than the growth of the total number of articles, which possessed a growth factor of 1,32. Also, the number of

English articles increases (factor 1,70) more than the total number of articles, but less than the WoS-articles. In any case, this indicates an increasing importance of Web of Science for Flemish historians.

**Figure 7 : evolution in % of WoS-inclusion and increase of English in historical articles, 2000-2009 (VABB-History)**



Represented visually in figure 7, this increase in the number of WoS-indexed, English journal articles can clearly be established. Initially, the percentage of English journal articles remains fairly stable at about 30-40 %, only to increase significantly from 2008 onwards. In 2009, the share of English historical articles amounted to over 50%. With regard to WoS-inclusion, growth has occurred more gradually, with a steeper curve from 2008 onwards as well. There are two

likely explanations for this increase. On the one hand, Flemish historians have probably chosen more deliberately to publish in WoS-indexed journals; on the other hand, in 2007 WoS-coverage of social sciences and humanities journals was considerably expanded. 113 journals published in Flanders of the Low Countries, in which Flemish SSH-researchers, including historians, have published articles, were added to the WoS. Hence, on the journal level as well, a shift



toward WoS has presented itself, because editors of historical journals intended their publications to comply with the WoS criteria, such as peer review<sup>46</sup>.

It can be concluded that the growing shares of English and WoS-inclusion go hand in hand, which indicates a growing internationalization of history in Flanders. At the same time, it has become clear that publishing in English and publishing in WoS-indexed journals does not always add up. The percentage of English articles is remarkably higher for all years than the WoS-proportion, although this discrepancy becomes less noticeable from 2007 onwards. For 2008 and 2009, the percentage of English articles is, however, still higher than the percentage of WoS-indexed articles, which in turn shows that Flemish historians continue to publish in English, non-WoS indexed journals. Given the limited coverage of historical and other humanities journals in WoS until now, this comes as no surprise. At the same time, this implies that internationalization outside

of Web of Science remains possible to a certain degree<sup>47</sup>.

### Co-authorship

Collaboration with regard to publications is often seen as an indicator for the openness, dynamism, and indirectly, the productivity, of scholarly research. It is said to strengthen and accelerate academic communication and accommodate an exchange of skills and knowledge<sup>48</sup>.

Nevertheless, previous research on publication patterns has indicated that historians in general lead a rather solitary existence as a researcher. They share this trait with other researchers from the social sciences and especially the humanities<sup>49</sup> (Nederhof, 2006; Stone, 1982). From the VABB-data a more nuanced image emerges. Nearly 1 in 5, or 18% (234 out of 1298), of historical publications are written by two or more authors. This concerns 156 journal articles (16,1% of 966 in the VABB), 4 monographs (14,3% of 28), 3 edited books (5,8% of 52) and 65 book chapters (28% of 233).

**Table 9 : number of publications per number of authors (VABB-History)**

Number of authors	Number of publications	% of the total	% of publications with co-authorship
1	1064	81,9	
2	158	12,2	67,5
3	41	3,1	17,5
4	17	1,3	7,2
5	4	0,3	1,7
6	8	0,6	3,4
More than 6	6	0,5	2,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1298</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

46. TRUYKEN OSSENBLOK & TIM C.E. ENGELS & GUNNAR SIVERTSEN, "The representation of the social sciences...". 47. Comp. N. SCHUERMANS, B. MEEUS & F. DE MAESSCHALK, "Is there a world beyond the Web of Science?...". 48. G. MELIN & O. PERSSON, "Studying research collaboration using co-authorships", in *Scientometrics*, 1996, p. 363-377. 49. ANTON J. NEDERHOF, "Bibliometric monitoring..."; S. STONE, "Humanities scholars...".

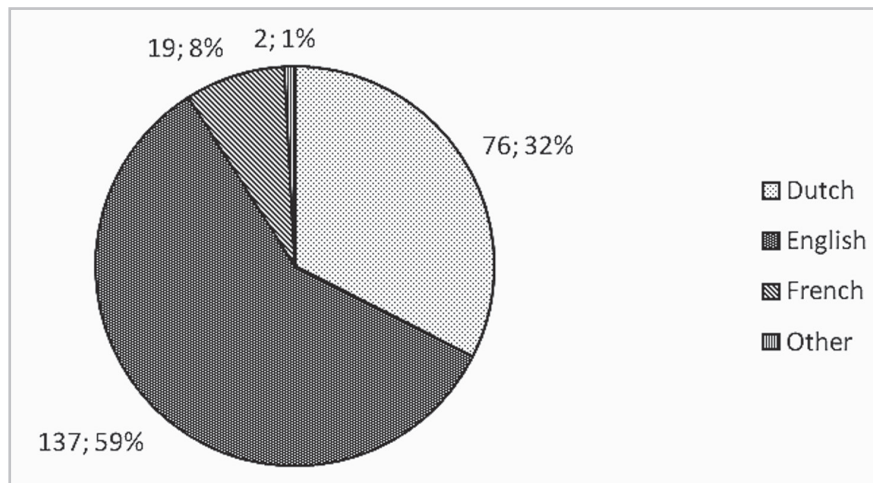


The number of researchers per publication with co-authorship varies. As can be expected in a discipline without a strong tradition with regard to collective research and multiple authorship, the publications with two authors account for the largest share with 67,5% of the total number of co-authorships. Table 9 also illustrates the

expected gradual decrease of the number of publications as the number of authors increases.

There is a clear correlation between co-authorship and publication language. More than half of the publications with multiple authors are written in English :

**Figure 8 : publication languages of co-authored publications (VABB-History)**



A comparison with the figures in table 4 shows that English is more often used as a publication language for co-authored publications (59%) than for the whole of the historical publications (49% VABB-History). For the single-author publications, the share of English is a bit smaller. With regard to the co-authorships, Dutch is also losing ground in favor of other foreign languages. Though Dutch publications for the complete VABB-History still accounted for 38,7%, their

representation for the subset 'co-authorship' is only 32%.

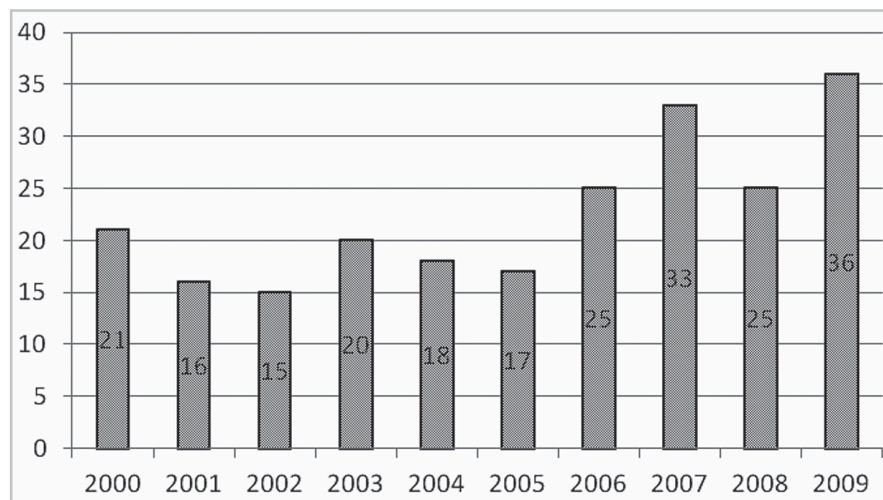
The dominance of foreign languages with regard to publications with co-authorship is in part connected to international collaborations. The 234 publications with co-authorship were written by 422 (non-unique) authors, of which 205 (or 48,6%) have no affiliation with a Flemish university. In addition to a number of Flemish co-authors who are not currently

associated with a Flemish university, this figure includes researchers from other countries or those affiliated with an institute of the French-speaking community in Belgium. The limited command of Dutch abroad explains the choice of English, French or another language as publication language. It can be concluded that cooperation on publications by Flemish

historians relatively often involve partnerships with scholars from outside of Flanders, and thus take on an international character.

The number of publications with co-authorship shows an upward trend for the period under scrutiny. This increase starts to take form from 2006 onwards :

**Figure 9 : number of historical publications with co-authorship per year (VABB-History)**



The number of collaborations for publications of Flemish historians thus increases, more or less parallel to the general increase of the yearly number of VABB-publications (see figure 6). All of this has probably been enhanced by the incentive-based policies of the government and the universities. With the VABB-SHW, the Flemish government continues the encouragement of academic

cooperation, given that, as opposed to countries such as Norway, a whole counting system of publications was chosen over a fractional one. In practice, this means that inter-university cooperation is especially rewarded, as all cooperating Flemish institutions may submit the publications with co-authorship for weighting in the VABB with a view to the inter-university distribution of research funding<sup>50</sup>.

50. TRUYKEN OSSENBLOK & TIM C.E. ENGELS & GUNNAR SIVERTSEN, "The representation of the social sciences...".

Nonetheless, for now it does not seem to be the case that inter-university collaboration between historians for publications is considered to be the norm. Of the 234 publications originating from collaborations, there are only 26 with authors affiliated with two different Flemish universities. Collaborations between more than two institutions have been non-existent up until now. Flemish academic historians, in other words, most often cooperate with colleagues from their own institution or one outside of Flanders.

#### IV. Historical non-VABB publications

##### Publication types

As indicated above, currently about two thirds of historical publications cannot be taken into account for inclusion in the VABB. Moreover, the divergence with regard to the distribution between publication types for the complete dataset-History and the VABB-History, as well as the overview of the most frequent VABB-approved publishers, gave an indication of the issue of historical monographs published in the Low Countries. The division between the publication types for the subset of non-VABB publications completes the image :

Figure 10 : distribution according to publication type (non-VABB-included publications)

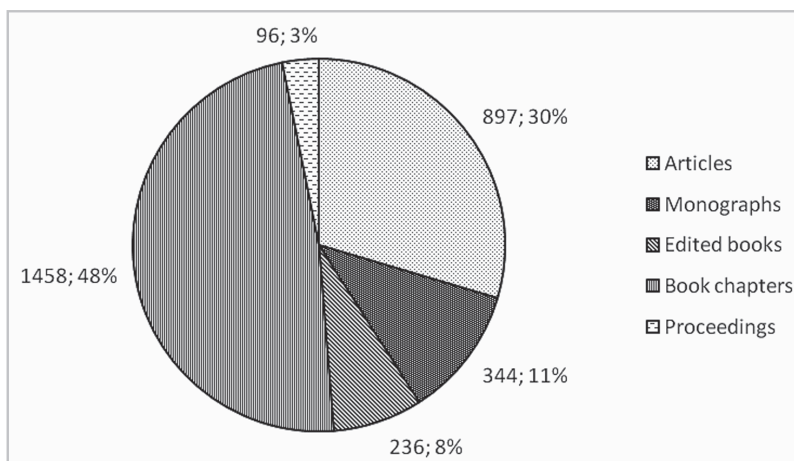


Figure 10 does indeed illustrate that 67% of the total of non-included publications are published in or as books<sup>51</sup>. Articles in journals on the other hand represent a little less

than one third of the total. As indicated above, the publication of a historical monograph brings with it a certain risk for inclusion in the VABB.

51. This total adds up to more than the gap between the complete dataset-History and the VABB-History, given that publications of less than four pages are, as mentioned before, not taken into account for the analysis of the complete dataset

### Reasons for non-inclusion in the VABB

It is interesting to examine the reasons for which historical publications were not included in the VABB. Formally speaking, non-inclusion in the VABB is simply a result of the non-hierarchical assessment of compliance with the 4 BOF-criteria and the extra GP-criterion regarding publication volume. In the VABB-data model, the checklist of BOF-criteria is translated into a number of specific technical parameters. It is possible on the basis of this detailed data to map the reasons for rejection more accurately, as well as to empirically substantiate the largely deductive reasoning of the previous paragraphs with regard to the distinctions between publication types within VABB-History.

Although a number of the rejected publications do not comply with multiple BOF-criteria/VABB-parameters, there are three main categories of reasons for rejection.

A first category is applicable to publications that do not comply with the minimal publication size of four pages or for which there is no page information available in the VABB. In total, 131 journal articles and book chapters were refused for inclusion in the VABB for this reason. They will not be taken into account for the further analysis (cf. footnote 4).

The second category is of a more technical nature and bears on the manner of counting for the calculation of the publication component of the BOF-key. It consists of a limited number of publications that are WoS-indexed, but are not regular articles, letters or reviews and hence are not taken into account for the VABB-

based calculation of the BOF-key. A second, smaller sub-group of publications within this category were not submitted by a university, but by a university college, for which reason they also cannot be counted for the current allocation of BOF funding.

The third category correlates to intrinsic reasons which lead publications to fall outside of the VABB scope: journals and book publishers which are not considered peer-reviewed, or the absence of a valid ISSN or ISBN (which would be highly unlikely in the case of a high-ranked or peer-reviewed journal or publisher).

For the 799 rejected journal articles, the division on the basis of these categories appears as follows : 497 or 62,2% were rejected for intrinsic reasons, 65 or 8,1% for technical reasons and 237 or 29,6% for a combination of both. It is obvious that intrinsic reasons, in other words the classification of publications as non-peer reviewed or the absence of a valid ISSN, is the main reason why a portion of historical articles are not eligible for inclusion in the VABB.

The distinction between the three categories is even more outspoken for the subset of rejected book publications. No less than 1770 or 88,3% of the non-included book publications were rejected for intrinsic reasons; 235 or 11,7% for a combination of reasons. The share of the 'intrinsic' category confirms the hypothesis that the rejection of historical book publications for inclusion in the VABB is for the most part due to their publishers not performing peer review, or failing to make it known that they have performed peer review.

**Journal titles, book publishers and peer review**

As was the case for the VABB-included publications, it is possible to determine on the basis of the bibliographic data which

non-VABB journals and publishers Flemish historians have published most frequently with between 2000 and 2009.

**Table 10 : journals with 10 or more articles by Flemish historians, 2000-2009  
(non-included publications-History)**

Journal	Number of articles
<i>Past2Present</i> notitie	35
<i>Ons erfdeel</i>	29
<i>Sportimonium</i>	21
<i>Kleio: tijdschrift voor oude talen en antieke cultuur</i>	21
<i>Karakter: tijdschrift van wetenschap</i>	15
<i>Ex officina: nieuwsbrief van de Vrienden van de Universiteitsbibliotheek</i>	13
<i>Nieuwsbrief universiteitsgeschiedenis. Lettre d'information sur l'histoire des universités.</i>	13
<i>Leiestam</i>	13
<i>Oost-Europa Tijdingen: bijdragen tot de studie van Centraal- en Oost-Europa</i>	12
<i>Handelingen der maatschappij voor geschiedenis en oudheidkunde te Gent</i>	12
<i>Mededelingenblad - Belgische vereniging voor nieuwste geschiedenis</i>	12
<i>Museum dynasticum</i>	11
<i>Eigen schoon en De Brabander</i>	11
<i>Oost-Brabant: Heemkundig Tijdschrift voor het Hageland en Omgeving</i>	10
<i>Chronique de l'archéologie wallonne</i>	10

This overview of the most frequent non-VABB journals (together accounting for about one third of all rejected articles) intertwines with the findings on the broad publication culture of historians. Most of the journals in table 10 are of a broadly informative, popularizing and/or regional geographic nature. Table 10 mostly covers a different type of historical literature with a partially different readership than those included in the VABB-authorized publications<sup>52</sup>. For this reason, it is doubtful if such journals will adapt themselves, in the near future, to the editorial procedures with regard to peer review that are of the upmost

importance for inclusion in the VABB. At any rate, for the near future, it is most likely that this secondary historical literature aimed at a broader and not exclusively academic public will continue to exist, separate from the publications that do find their way into the VABB. At the same, it might be expected that a more limited number of more academic, 'national' (Dutch) journals will further conform to the criteria for inclusion in the VABB.

For the publishers of book publications the situation is obviously different.

**Table 11 : principal book publishers 2000-2009 (non-included publications-History)**

<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Number of book publications</b>
Leuven University Press	177
VUBPress	116
Academia Press	86
Acco	66
Lannoo	63
Davidsfonds	44
Bert Bakker	38
Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België	38
Waanders	34
Garant	25
Van In	19
Racine	19
Verloren	17
Pelckmans	16

The 14 publishers in table 11 together account for more than one third of the non-VABB-included book publications. As to be expected on the basis of the aforementioned data, it mostly concerns publishing houses located in the Low Countries. This indicates once more that Flemish and Dutch publishers currently apply peer review procedures less often than their foreign, mostly English-speaking counterparts, although they are often responsible for the publication of research results for a more academic readership as well. This last element, to a degree, contradicts the list of non-VABB journal literature in table 10, which often possess a popular audience. A number of publishers in table 11, amongst which are included the university presses and

the Royal Flemish Academy, clearly have intrinsic links with academia and often serve as a medium for the publication of excellent scholarly research. The same can be said for a number of commercial book publishers that are reliant for some of their publication content on researchers and research groups from Flemish universities. It is precisely the partial academic character of a number of Flemish and Dutch publishers which explains their current absence from the VABB. Because they also cater to students or the lay public, they could not be taken into account for inclusion in the first version of the VABB, for which the GP did not assess individual publications<sup>53</sup>. Because of this hybrid character it is difficult to think how peer review for these publishers

53. For the second and third version of the VABB-SHW, a limited number of individual publications were selected on the basis of demonstrable peer review.

would, or even if it should, be implemented in a general way. The disadvantage is, as has been said before, that the published research results of Flemish academics cannot find their way into the VABB at the moment and by extension, cannot be counted for the BOF-key.

An innovation that could offer some solace to academic book authors in the social sciences and humanities, and their publishers, is the *Book Citation Index*, launched by Thomson Reuters in October 2011<sup>54</sup>. This new index of scientific monographs should make it possible to identify a larger number of individual book publications or series as peer reviewed, which could enable their inclusion in the VABB. Future research could offer an analysis of the overlap between the VABB-SHW and the BKCI<sup>55</sup>.

Another possibility, probably for the near future, lies in identifying peer-reviewed monographs on a series-level for the VABB. This would make possible a more in-depth assessment by the GP of monographs, as opposed to the one solely based on the evaluation of publishers.

The initiative of the Flemish Association of Publishers (VUV) on the enhanced visibility of peer review will probably result in a stronger short-term impact. With the so-called GPRC-

label (*Guaranteed Peer-Reviewed Content*<sup>56</sup>), the VUV offers a quality certificate that guarantees that book publications have been submitted to peer review prior to publication. What is important here is that the label situates itself on the level of individual publications, and not on that of publishers as a whole. This allows publishers that are members of the VUV to organize peer review for a part of their publications, in order for the latter to be added to the VABB. Ideally, a label for peer-reviewed books would be introduced in other European countries as well<sup>57</sup>. In Norway, where a VABB-similar PRFS has been put into place, the need for an individual assessment of monographs is evident. Given the importance of Dutch publishers for Flemish academics, the adoption of a label for peer-reviewed books in the Netherlands would also be very positive.

For Flemish historians, their universities and publishers, such initiatives are a major step forward. At the same time, some problems linger. The exact definition of peer review is less evident than the VUV makes it out to be, particularly when the VUV refers vaguely to 'international scientific norms'. According to the BOF-Regulation, as well as within the GPRC-context, peer review can be performed by 'an editorial board, a permanent reading committee, external referees or a combination thereof'. On the other hand, in the English-

54. [http://thomsonreuters.com/content/press\\_room/science/book-citation-index-launches](http://thomsonreuters.com/content/press_room/science/book-citation-index-launches)

55. Comp. VINCENT LARIVIÈRE & B. MACALUSO, "Improving the Coverage of Social Science and Humanities Researchers' Output : The Case of the Érudit Journal Platform", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 2011, no. 12, p. 2437-2442; GUNNAR SIVERTSEN & BIRGER LARSEN, "Comprehensive bibliographic coverage of the social sciences and humanities in a citation index : an empirical analysis of the potential", in *Scientometrics*, 2012, p. 567-575. 56. <http://www.gprc.be/en/content/what-gprc>. 57. FREDERIK T. VERLEYSEN & TIM C.E. ENGELS, "A label for peer-reviewed books", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* (accepted for publication).



speaking world, where peer review originated as a practice and where it is consequently more common, a narrower definition is often applied that solely takes into account external, anonymous referees<sup>58</sup>. Overall, one can perceive a multitude of sometimes vaguely described hybrids<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, peer review is not without fault as the ultimate and only criterion to assess the quality of scientific and scholarly publications<sup>60</sup>. For example, in the relatively small Dutch-speaking academic world, the pool of potential anonymous referees for peer review is by definition limited. Furthermore, the assessment of publications for inclusion in PRFS's can in principle also make use of other parameters that measure 'quality', such as prestige within the academic community, the analysis of citations or reviews in the core literature of a disciplinary field, or the degree of national or international dissemination<sup>61</sup>.

## V. Conclusion

Analysis of the bibliographic data acquired for the VABB reveals aspects of the publication culture of historians affiliated with Flemish universities during the last decade.

This culture is characterized by a broad publication pattern. Communication on

research results with the broader lay public remains important for Flemish historians, despite the incentives created by the government since 2003 to align publications with the more exclusive academic Web of Science. Moreover, compared to the other disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities, historians often publish in Dutch and they attach a greater importance to book publications as opposed to journal articles. Flemish historians co-author only about one in five of their publications. In sum, there is no empirical evidence in terms of historical scholarship in Flanders which supports the predicted downfall of its distinct publication culture.

The implementation in 2008-2010 of the Flemish Academic Bibliographic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities within the framework of the BOF-key supports these multiform publication patterns significantly more than the previous Web of Science-based distribution model. In this way, the VABB is a manifest step forward for Flemish historians and their colleagues from other fields within the social sciences and humanities. At the same time, however, the analysis of the bibliographic data in the VABB lays bare a number of issues. There is the limited representation in the VABB of Dutch-language book publications,

58. IRENE HAMES, *Peer review and manuscript management in scientific journals. Guidelines for good practice*, s.l., 2007. 59. MICHÈLE LAMONT, *How professors think. Inside the curious world of academic judgment*, Cambridge, MA, 2009. 60. LUTZ BORNHANN, "Scientific peer review", in *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 2011, p. 199-245. 61. ELEA GIMÉNEZ-TOLEDO & A. ROMÁN-ROMÁN, "Assessment of humanities and social sciences monographs through their publishers : a review and a study towards a model of evaluation", in *Research Evaluation*, 2009, no. 2, p. 137-148; HOWARD D. WHITE & AL., "Libcitations : A measure for comparative assessment of book publications in the humanities and social sciences", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 2009, no. 6, p. 1083-1096.



published with Flemish or Dutch publishers, which implies that within the calculation of the BOF-key, a disproportionately large weight is currently being attributed to journal articles. However, 3 publishers were added to the VABB-approved publisher list in 2011, followed by 33 more in 2012. Moreover, initiatives such as the introduction of a label for peer-reviewed books supporting the scholarly monograph on the Flemish and international level could remedy the current imbalance.

At the moment, roughly one third of historical publications can be taken into account for inclusion in the VABB. A significant majority, therefore, does not yet comply with the criteria stipulated in the BOF-regulation and as a consequence is not counted for the calculation of the publication component of the BOF-key. The use by the government of the VABB as a part of a PRFS in fact creates new incentives – although in a much broader sense than in the previous period – for exclusively publishing peer-reviewed studies. If and how Flemish researchers will adapt their publication behavior to this incentive structure is an open question. For the future, it remains to be seen how the universities and their faculties will react to the new policy context and what the impact will be. In the end, the researchers decide for them-

selves which publications best serve their goals as critical and autonomous historical scholars.

Further monitoring of publication patterns in the social sciences and humanities is called for. It is still unclear how the weight of different publication types and languages in publication output will evolve, both for Flanders and internationally. Whether the scholarly book will retain its prominence as a publication type for historians and other scholars in the humanities needs to be examined on a regular basis<sup>62</sup>. At the same time, broad comparative research into national and regional PRFS programmes is of critical importance<sup>63</sup>. Comparison of the VABB-SHW with similar but differently conceived evaluation tools, such as those in use in the Scandinavian countries<sup>64</sup> or the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)<sup>65</sup>, could further enhance our understanding of publication cultures and their relationship to research performance measurement. It is remarkable that, on the one hand, the impact of performance measurement in academia is commented upon and lamented frequently, whereas on the other hand, the 'science of science' has devoted little attention to the empirical study of its behavioural effect. However, given the continuous rise of performance measurement and performance-based funding,

62. KAYVAN KOUSHA, MIKE THELWALL & SOMAYEH REZAIE, "Assessing the citation impact of books : The role of Google Books, Google Scholar and Scopus", in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 2011, no. 11, 2147-2164. 63. DIANA HICKS, "Performance-based university research funding systems...". 64. JESPER W. SCHNEIDER, "An outline of the bibliometric indicator used for performance-based funding of research institutions in Norway", in *European Political Science*, 2009, no. 3, 364-378. 65. <http://www.rae.ac.uk>

we are confident that more and more scholars  
will embrace the challenge to empirically  
study their effects.

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