HANIE VAN GOINGA

In memoriam Bert van Selm, 1945-91

On 17 April 1991, just having reached the age of 46, Prof. Dr Bert van Selm died, at a moment when his merits for book-historical research were recognized everywhere, both nationally and internationally. To his family, friends, colleagues and students, his passing means a great and deeply felt loss. All will miss his warm personality and his unflagging enthusiasm.

CAREER

Van Selm spent a large part of his youth abroad and this made him specially sensitive to the particular features of Dutch culture. Having taken his final examinations at the European school in Luxemburg he moved to Amsterdam to study Dutch language and literature (University of Amsterdam, 1964-70). Inspired by professors Wytze Hellinga and Herman de la Fontaine Verwey, he decided to specialize in philology and book history (doctoral examination [equivalent to an honours degree] 1970). In June 1971 he was appointed junior lecturer in the department of Dutch Language and Literature at the University of Leiden where later on, in 1988, he became senior lecturer in 'Early Dutch literature' (16th-18th century).

One of the most important days of his life was 12 February 1976, when in the Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel he came across a large collection of book trade catalogues of the seventeenth century, among them many of Dutch collectors and booksellers. This was the moment that he was struck by the implications these sources have for the knowledge of Dutch culture and he began searching for methods to exploit this source material to the best advantage. Ten years later his research into Dutch book trade catalogues resulted in a first-rate study entitled 'Een menighe treffelijke boeken' [A multitude of excellent books], in which he convincingly expounded the importance of book trade catalogues for research in book and cultural history. In this book he developed the necessary methodology for drawing the maximum of information from these sources and on 3 November 1987 he received his Ph.D. cum laude on the strength of it. His supervisor was Prof. Dr Hendrik D. L. Vervliet of Amsterdam and Antwerp. Prof. Dr Paul Raabe, director of the Herzog August Bibliothek at