

A Source Open to All Chess Players

The chess collection of the University Library has been on loan from the Alexander Rueb Foundation since 1961. This foundation is named after the jurist, author and chess player Alexander Rueb (1882-1959). He belongs to the founders of the F.I.D.E. (Fédération Internationale des Echecs) and he was the president of this federation from 1924 to 1949, followed by Bror Rogard who in 1970 gave up his place in turn for a Dutchman, Prof. Dr. Max Euwe. Many chess events have passed into the hands of the World Chess Federation by Alexander Rueb's commitment. By the way, the connections of the UB with chess have already been existing for many years. Different games of the famous world championship match 1935 between Euwe and Alekhine, in the end won by Euwe, were played in the beautiful historic Militia Hall of the UB.

Computer Chess as well

At the moment the chess library collected by the Rueb Foundation contains about 2200 publications and roughly 1000 magazines. Starting point was the original library of Rueb, later on stocked up with numerous items due to donations of Euwe. Incidentally all the chess material present in the UB has been included in the catalogue. A provisional catalogue (reproduced file cards) was published 1972, and the systematically ordered 'Catalogus van de schaakcollectie' (Amsterdam, University Library. XIV, 320 p.) under the auspices of the Alexander Rueb Foundation 1988. The catalogue is subdivided into 25 categories like history and old literature, chessmen, opening, middle game, endgame and studies, olympiads, tournaments, World Chess Federation – and even a complete section on computer chess.

Open to Everyone

It is a modest collection compared with the two largest known chess collections of a good twenty thousand titles each: the Cleveland Library in the United States, the Van der Linde-Niemeijer Collection of the Royal Library at The Hague. It is even still modest in comparison with individual existing private collections of collectors like that of the well-known German grandmaster Lothar Schmid, chief arbiter of the famous world championship duel between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spasski held in Reykjavik 1972. But certainly it meets Euwe's objective, to establish an interesting chess library which can be consulted by everyone and where anyone at home and abroad can borrow books. There are still further efforts to build up the collection.

Hans Ree

Though the chess book collection at the UB is therefore not the largest in the Netherlands, Hans Ree as well praised its availability during the Amsterdam chess tournament. "This collection is an important source of knowledge for all chess players", he said. On the basis of eight chess books he established a connection between chess players and the chess collection of the UB. Ree quotes for example the book of the famous UvA professor Adrianus de Groot (known as A.D. de Groot) 'Het denken van den schaker' [published 1965 in English under the title 'Thought and Choice in Chess']. De Groot presented positions to a large number of chess players, let them 'think aloud' about them and decided at the same time (not anonymously ...) the patterns of thought. While reading this book Ree was sometimes surprised about "the

nonsense" many a chess player uttered. "How these people are able to play chess?" In the meantime the book is a classic, even international.

Hans Ree is impressed by Paul R. von Bilguer's book as well ('Handbuch des Schachspiels', Leipzig 1916) and particularly by the dramatic life of the German chess player who died of TB at the age of 25 in 1840. This book – also called 'The Bilguer' – has been completed by a friend and for a century considered as the bible of the serious chess player. Another example is the book 'Kerkvaders der schaakgemeente' ['Church Fathers of the Chess Community'] by Antonius van der Linde, Utrecht 1875. The peculiar Van der Linde has written numerous important chess books. Ree calls him "the strangest Dutchman of all time". Van der Linde was a quarrelsome man which didn't make his life and work easier. So he disputed that Laurens Janszoon Coster was the inventor of letterpress printing. Only for one year (till he got into an argument again) Van der Linde was the editor of the Netherlands chess magazine 'De Schaakwerld'. In that year the editor lost a chess match against Multatuli. The match report in De Schaakwerld may let you suspect something completely different though ...

Monique Kooijmans, UB with thanks to Bram Schuytplot and Ko van Harn
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Translation: Ralf J. Binnewirtz