



Foreword

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Published online: 25 April 2019
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One century ago, on 10 February 1917, Johanna Westerdijk delivered her inaugural speech at Utrecht University entitled “New directions in phytopathological research”. By doing so, she became the very first female professor in the Netherlands and set the stage for many female professors who followed her example. Besides her remarkable performance as a role model for women in science, Johanna Westerdijk was also a pioneer in the global science field of phytopathology, which rapidly emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and reached maturity during the course of her scientific career.

Utrecht University and the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences designated the year 2017 the ‘Westerdijk-

year’. The Westerdijk-year has been full of festivities. As Westerdijk played also an important role in promoting phytopathology as a science field at the universities of Amsterdam and Wageningen, we decided to bring together a collection of papers that are a showcase of the impact Johanna Westerdijk had on the development of phytopathology.

We are very grateful that EJPP invited us as guest editors to publish this overview in a Special Issue ‘Johanna Westerdijk 1917 -2017’. In this Special Issue you will find some characteristic photos of Westerdijk and of her ‘academic offspring’ at the centurial festivities (Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4). Then you’ll find a contribution of the historian Patrica Faasse - who earlier wrote a biography of Westerdijk (in Dutch) - focusing on the genealogy of the Westerdijk academic family and explaining the beautiful designed tree which you find on the cover of this Special Issue. Next an article by the guest editors to overview the contributions of Johanna Westerdijk to bring the emerging field of phytopathology in the nineteenth century to a full scientific discipline in the twentieth century, with still a huge impact on the present-day scientists. And finally a range of scientific articles by the ‘female academic offspring’ of Westerdijk, showing the depth and width of phytopathology as a unique and very relevant discipline as it is today.

We hope that this Special Issue not only will inform you about the historical importance of Westerdijk, but also will show some attitudes and characteristics of her, which might still stimulate us today in enthusiasm for the beautiful field of phytopathology.

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Fig. 1 First Dutch female professor Johanna Westerdijk in the Utrecht University Hall after her inaugural lecture '*New directions in phytopathological research*' on 10 February 1917



Fig. 2 Johanna Westerdijk with colleagues, Willie Commelin Scholten Phytopathology Laboratory, Amsterdam, 1912



Fig. 3 Prof. Johanna Westerdijk just after her retirement in the backyard of the Willie Commelin Scholten Phytopathology Laboratory, Baam, the Netherlands (1950s)



Fig. 4 Participants of the Johanna Westerdijk Legacy Symposium in the Botanical Garden of Utrecht University, 30 October 2017. The symposium attracted 132 former and current members of the Willie Commelin Scholten Phytopathology Laboratory (Baam)

and its consecutive research groups Molecular Plant Pathology (University of Amsterdam) and Plant-Microbe Interactions (Utrecht University)

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