

KEER OM VOOR NEDERLANDSE EDITIE

observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY / VOLUME 46 / JUNE 18, 2026 / Nr 30



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editorial

Holle Bolle Gijs

There it goes – yet another bit of rubbish disappeared into the gaping mouth of Holle Bolle Gijs. Again and again, the two little girls ran from their picnic spot to the familiar bin in Efteling. Their laughter so loud, it was contagious. The newest Holle Bolle Gijs – there are a few dotted around the park – is Brother Gijs, a deceased monk who doesn't just say 'Paper please' and 'Thank you', but also recites little rhymes in a deep voice. I doubt the girls understood everything he said: 'A sheet of paper or piece of writing is a great gift to me' and 'paper is patient, but my patience is no longer infinite'. Incidentally, in addition to paper, Gijs also readily accepts chewing gum, cold chips and banana peels.

I had my work bag with me in Efteling. The girls asked if I had anything I wanted to get rid of – fodder for Gijs. In my bag, I saw a crumpled old copy of *Observant*. I hesitated for a moment, but ended up giving them a sweet wrapper.

A little further along, a young man sat scrolling on his phone, clearly on the Efteling app, as he shouted that the queue for the Baron was "only 20 minutes". He was gone in a flash. You used to have to carry around a map. Now, Efteling is completely digital. You can even join a virtual queue for the newest ride, Danse Macabre. Just one click of a button (in the app) to reserve a spot, and then you get a notification when it's your turn.

Once I got back home, I emptied my rucksack. I put the crumpled old *Observant* on the table. If I had been in Efteling a year ago, I'm sure I would have just fed it to Gijs. But since the news that we're stopping the paper version after the summer, I've started to love it more, like it's a collector's item I don't want to lose. There really is something incredibly charming about paper. In the words of Holle Bolle Gijs, I would like to say, 'Thank you', reader, for devouring our paper for 46 years. After the summer, you will never again find a crumpled old *Observant* in your bag, in the train, on a desk or on an empty chair in a lecture room. You'll find *Observant* in your inbox, as a newsletter – might take some getting used to – but just as indispensable and present as the newspaper.

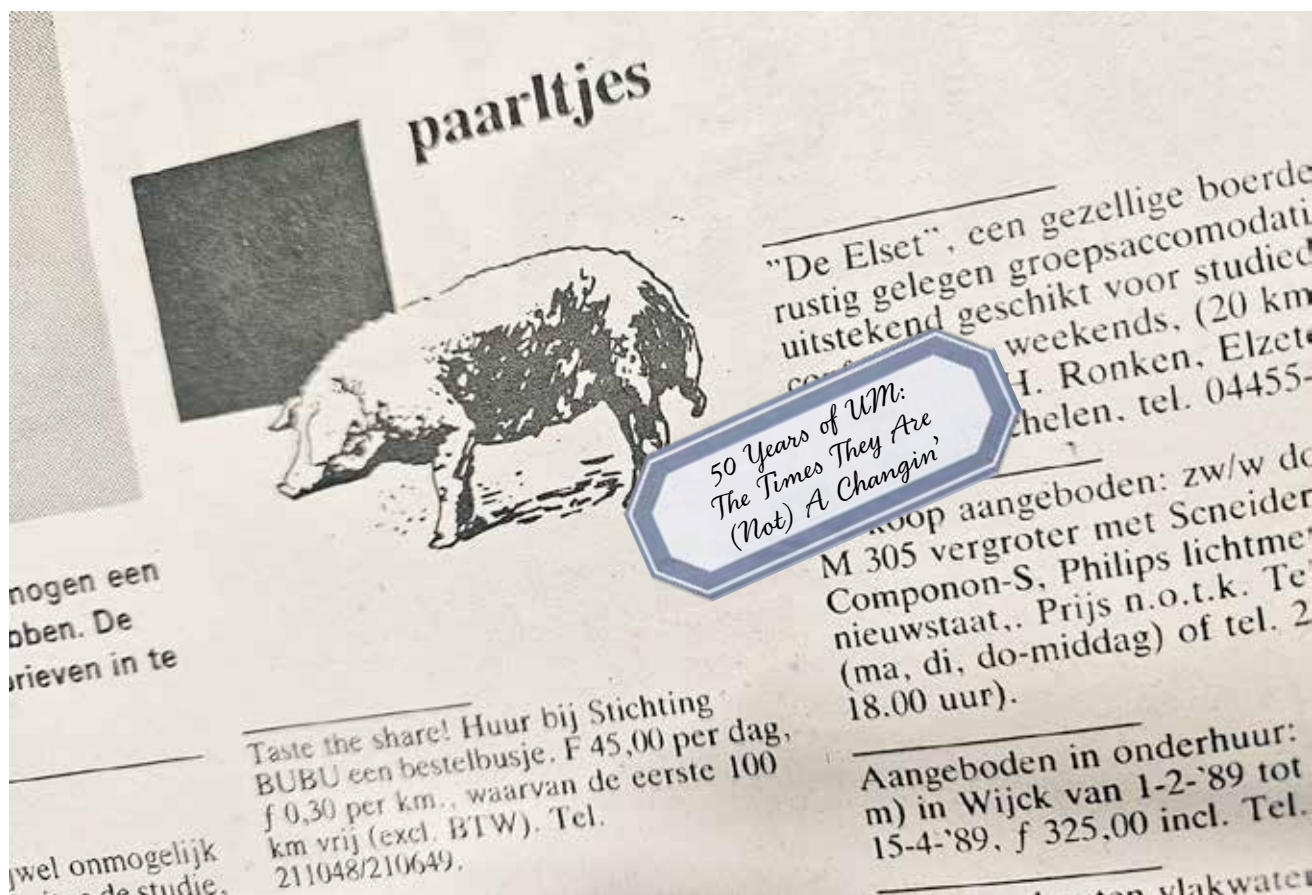
Wendy Degens

The editor-in-chief gives a look behind the scenes at the editorial office



series the times they are (not) a changin'

Selling a bike? Looking for a room? Got a message for an ex? Place a Paarltje!



You have something to offer, but no one wants to buy it. 'Pearls before swine'. With that in mind, the Paarltjes section was created

1981-2025

Call charge meter f75 call:252006. This small advert appeared among roughly forty others in the 18 December 1992 print edition of *Observant*, where they were known as *Paarltjes*. Back then, call charge meters were essential in student houses. This was the second half of the twentieth century, when mobile phones didn't yet exist or were still prohibitively expensive. Entire households shared a single landline, and everyone was expected to use the call charge meter to keep track of their own calls. When the phone bill arrived, you simply did the maths and divided the costs – in theory, at least. In practice, much like with shared crates of beer (with a running tally of how many bottles each person had taken), people often forgot to keep track of what they were owed.

Until quite recently, *Paarltjes* were an inseparable part of the print edition of *Observant*.

For years, they filled page 2. Long before social media existed, staff, students and local residents used them to sell things, look for accommodation, recruit members for student societies, or send cryptic messages, all in no more than three hundred characters. In the 1980s, placing these mini adverts was free. Later, a small fee was charged – up to f12.50 in 1992 and up to €8 in 2017. A few examples: For sale: 2nd-hand bikes, no dodgy history, from f20. Call 043 – 3618352. Or: Free sex!?! No, but f100 if you help me find a room in Maastricht. 09 3289722644.

Some were clearly meant for one person: Pieter Puntmuts, where are you? The windowsill feels so empty without you. Or: Marianne, I love you. Chris. And: HENKIE, de MATENAVOND has got your back. Most, though, were aimed at a general audience: Looking for self-cont accom for 1-2 people. Call: Marike 631159. And: For sale, Talbot Horizon Ultra. Oct '83, 40,000 km. Call 043-474736.

Advertisements had to be submitted to the assistant to the editors by Tuesday 4 p.m., using a specially designed template with three hundred little boxes that could be cut out of the newspaper. It wasn't unusual for a student to turn up at the office with a blank form and no pen, often at the very last minute (or worse, ten minutes after the deadline), ready to haggle over punctuation and spacing to keep costs down. Strict rules were soon introduced: "Each letter, punctuation mark or space gets its own box."

The assistant to the editors occasionally rejected adverts, usually those containing sexist remarks from student associations, or adverts from brothels and escort services hoping to recruit young female students. And there was a grey area – take this advert from March

Pieter Puntmuts, where are you? The windowsill feels so empty without you

1993, which apparently made it through the informal vetting process: Wanted: attractive female students looking to make some good money on the side. Call Richard 256706.

With the rise of social media, fewer and fewer *Paarltjes* were submitted. They first moved to page 14 and then went online before disappearing altogether on 1 January 2025, when our last assistant to the editors retired. Call charge meters had already disappeared much earlier, on 1 January 2002. They lost their relevance as mobile phones became commonplace, even when they were still just simple devices used only for calling.

Riki Janssen

Maastricht University was founded fifty years ago. In this anniversary series, we delve into our own archives to rediscover memorable, funny, relevant and curious news stories from the past

End of an era 46 years in print

The first issue of *Observant* was published on **6 October 1980**. The main headline read “Students to pay their share of budget cuts”

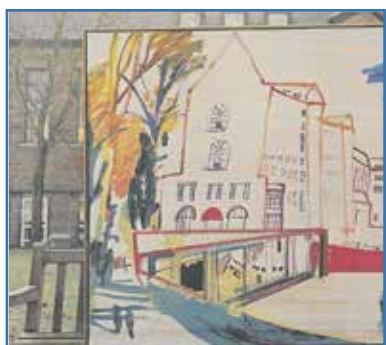


Over **46 years**, *Observant* published **1,486 issues**. In total, around **10 million copies** rolled off the presses.

Observant began life as a **monthly publication**. Its first year comprised nine issues. That soon increased to twenty, and by the early 1990s it had become a weekly newspaper, appearing **37 times per year**. Come rain or shine, copies were always delivered to one of the **28 newspaper racks** across all university buildings. The only exception came during the **Covid pandemic**, when lockdowns forced *Observant* entirely online for a year and a half. After that, we went back to publishing 30 issues per year.

Our **logo** changed five times.

The **first colour photograph** appeared on the front page on **18 January 1996**. It showed a painting to mark Maastricht University's 20th anniversary.



This proved to be an exception: *Observant* largely remained a black-and-white publication for years, as colour printing was too expensive. It wasn't until **13 November 2008** that the newspaper was first printed **entirely in colour**.

The **first English-language section** appeared in the **19 December 1996** issue. At first, space was set aside every four weeks for a handful of translated articles; this later became a weekly feature. The headline of the very

first English-language article shows why:



It wasn't until **September 2021** that the newspaper became a **fully bilingual** publication. The original translators, Paul and Brenda Nekeman, remained involved with *Observant* for nearly 28 years, until they retired in 2024.

From **1 January 1998**, the print edition faced digital competition: that was when the first *Observant* website was launched. On **27 August 2015**, the first **digital newsletter** was sent out to subscribers' inboxes.

Following the introduction of a **guest column** in its 2nd year, **columns** quickly became an indispensable part of *Observant*. Former Rector Magnificus **Hans Philipsen** can rightly be called the most prolific columnist: after his retirement in 2002, he wrote more than six hundred columns under the pen name “Oracle Emeritus” until he decided to hang up his pen in 2019, at the age of nearly 84. Coming a close second is Professor **Evelyne de Leeuw**, whose weekly columns appeared on the back page between 1985 and 1997 under various pseudonyms (most notably *Eva*). The most enigmatic columnist was undoubtedly **Albert Bergbroeder**, the pseudonym of former senior editor Wammes Bos, whose satirical gossip column ran (with some interruptions) from 2009 to 2018 and sparked much speculation about the author's true identity.

Among *Observant's* many series and recurring features, **Message from Maastricht** – reports from around the city – enjoyed the longest run, appearing continuously on the back page between 1986 and 1998. The personal profiles of students and staff in **Sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire** have also proved popular. Since its launch in 2010, the series has appeared (with a few interruptions) over ten publishing years.

The **final printed issue** will appear on 18 June 2026.

Dennis Vaendel, Cleo Freriks

Waiting a whole week for the newspaper

The young editor, who has only ever known online news, simply can't imagine it. In the first few decades of *Observant's* existence, did students and staff really have to wait a full week for news from the university? Or even two whole weeks, in its first six years?

They did indeed. What's more, no one was particularly bothered by it. Admittedly, a two-week wait was rather long, but the weekly publishing schedule from August 1986 onwards was perfectly acceptable. Life moved at a slightly less hectic pace than it does today – though not in the *Observant* office itself. Deadlines were strict. The paper had to be available in university buildings by Friday (later Thursday), and the lengthy articles we tended to write in those days all had to reach a bleak industrial estate in Heerlen the day before. Not by post, but hand-delivered by the assistant to the editors or one of the editors. They would drive or take a train or bus to the printer, *Limburgs Dagblad*, which produced far more publications than just its own newspaper. The typed pages were then retyped on large typesetting machines, which cast lines of lead type used to print the paper column by column. And then there was Hub, pronounced “Huub” – the good-natured newspaper designer who would take a sharp knife to all those columns, assembling each page with the editor on duty. Line by line, paragraph by paragraph, everything was rearranged to create a presentable page, with photos and advertisements supplied separately. But Hub did not have an easy time with *Observant*. He'd spend the morning painstakingly laying out the paper, only for things to grind to a halt after lunch because of a missing article, or photo, or both. Back in Maastricht, someone would still be typing up a piece that would only arrive in Heerlen late in the afternoon. Frustration all round – for Hub, who should already have been working for another client or even on his way home, and for the editor-in-chief, who either pleaded for leniency or angrily demanded it. On

occasion, the paper wasn't distributed on Friday but only at the beginning of the following week. In the late 1980s, along came computers, page layout software and floppy disks. We started laying out the newspaper ourselves. Hub said he was “glad to be rid of us”.

But paper remained paper. The news cycle still covered a full week, and yes, that sometimes felt too long for readers. Copies flew off the racks when something interesting or important had happened – a dismissed dean explaining his side of the story in an interview a week later; faculty budget cuts threatening entire departments with closure; service centres being reorganised once again. Those editions were impatiently awaited, not just by rank-and-file employees wanting to know what was really going on, but also by university administrators hoping the coverage wouldn't reflect too badly on them.

There were occasional lows, too. Sometimes, *Observant* published a critical article about a faculty that just so happened to be holding an Open Day that Saturday. On a few occasions, faculty administrators temporarily set aside their academic principles in favour of a marketing mindset and had the copies taken from the racks, to be returned by Monday.

That, at least, is one advantage of publishing exclusively online: no one can pull that kind of stunt anymore.

Wammes Bos

Editor at *Observant* between 1986 and 2018



Illustration: Simone Golob

final print edition – special

Goodbye to newspaper designer Simone Golob



Photo: Joey Roberts

A bad cold, a fever, or whatever was going around – for nearly 27 years, nothing ever stopped graphic designer and artist Simone Golob from showing up at the *Observant* office to put together the print version of the newspaper by the Wednesday 5 p.m. print deadline.

There was just one exception, towards the end of the Covid pandemic. She phoned the office on a Monday afternoon, feeling dreadful, barely able to stand. Worse still, she had Covid and was contagious. For maybe thirty seconds, we considered looking for a replacement – and then abandoned the idea. Even if we could find someone at such short notice, putting together the newspaper would be a monumental task. Simone knew *Observant* inside and out. She knew which fonts to use, and where each section and column belonged. She understood that a news story should look different from a feature article, and could quickly create a small illustration when needed. She understood how things worked at the office – and she worked fast. She simply couldn't be replaced at the last moment. That week, there was no printed edition of *Observant*.

Melancholy

We're sitting at her kitchen table in Maastricht on a Monday afternoon. There are only two more printed editions of *Observant* to go. The farewell drinks have been planned, and now there's this interview. It makes her a little melancholy, she says. She's going to "miss it terribly". She will continue making illustrations for *Observant*, but the layout work had been "an anchor" for her. "It gave structure to my week. I'm self-employed, but Wednesday was always my day working away from home. I planned holidays around the production schedule. I feel completely at ease with the editorial team. I'm treated with respect and genuine interest. There's a real sense of humanity here, which is quite special."

She was 27 when she was invited to apply for the role. She was already creating illustrations for *Observant* and didn't expect to be called in for a formal interview. "I was completely lost for words. It felt awkward. I was just starting out, doing illustrations for several publications and painting murals for cafés, but I'd never worked as a graphic designer before. I just threw myself into it." She laughs: "Pure impulsiveness."

A wandering mind

She never stopped to think that having dyslexia might be an issue when working with letters and words. "I hadn't realised that I'd sometimes have to type captions or bits of text myself. For me, a newspaper is more about layout than text." It occasionally caused difficulties, "especially when someone

“
For me, a newspaper is more about layout than text
”

was looking over my shoulder – it makes you self-conscious. I always look at the keyboard when I type, and my mind tends to wander. Then I look back at the screen and see there's a mistake somewhere, but I can't immediately see what's wrong. I usually just type the word again, and then I spot it."

Golob went to the Academy of Arts Maastricht, spent six months on an exchange in Prague and completed a course in Brussels. She is an artist, creating what she describes as "little icons and paintings on small wooden panels", and works for a loyal client base, designing advertisements, illustrations and brochures.

Did she ever feel that newspaper design was beneath her? "Not at all. I love the variety. Making an illustration is always stressful; you start with a blank screen and go searching, never quite knowing where you'll end up. Designing a publication is different: you work within a clear framework, with fixed columns, typefaces, page layouts and recurring sections. That structure is reassuring. It's wonderful, creative work. And I've always been given a lot of freedom at *Observant* – I'm encouraged to experiment, and I haven't often been told to rein things in." The front page – the eye-catcher, the first thing readers see – tends to be a bit of a puzzle. "The quicker I have an idea, the better. Otherwise, I spend too much time fiddling with it and it starts to feel forced." She says she had more freedom in her early

years at *Observant*, especially when it came to illustrations. "It was such a valuable learning experience, very stimulating. Over the past ten years, things have become a bit more directive. I like learning the essence of a story and then developing an illustration from that. I don't like to be handed a ready-made idea – it limits me. I like to let my imagination run free."

A typical Simone Golob layout

Asked what defines a typical Simone Golob layout, she pauses. "That's a difficult question." Then: "If you covered a wall with my work, you'd see a clear pattern. Very clean, nothing unnecessary, no clutter, never boring, lots of imagery and colour. In short, simple and playful", much like her illustrations. The conversation turns to Geert Setola, who used to do news design for *Observant* many years ago: "Geert was my mentor and picture editor when I was working for APG/ABP. I rarely get pushback on my illustrations, but Geert always challenged me. It was never right the first time. He pushed me to explore further and dig deeper. The same was true of Tim Hunt, director of Ikon Images in London. I learnt so much from them. I get feedback at *Observant* too, but it's different when it comes from fellow designers."

Every Wednesday she sits in the smallest room in the office, working on an Apple computer. "Technology has changed so much over these few decades. In the early years, the computer would crash regularly. We'd lose everything and have to start again from scratch." She recalls sending the newspaper to the printer by telephone line. "Now, it takes five minutes on a computer. Back then, it took at least an hour and a half. But the paper itself has remained much the same – news, recurring sections, columns." Asked what the hardest part of those 27 years was, she falls silent again. "Nothing. We always found a solution together."

Olive oil

What's next for her? "I'll finally have more time for my own work – my little icons. And I want to take a more structured approach to learning Greek." It only makes sense, given that she and her Dutch-Greek husband are spending more and more months a year in Greece. They have a house there and have started importing olive oil and honey, sourced directly from local farmers, to the Netherlands. "I do the social media and photography and design the labels, packaging and brochures. And I handle the marketing. I've stumbled into it in that same impulsive way. We'll see where it leads."

“I’m actually anti-paper – I think it’s just clutter”



The assumption that young people only read news online, while everyone over 40 prefers paper, doesn't quite hold at Maastricht University – although there is some truth in it. *Observant* asked students and staff how they keep up with the news.

Text: Deborah Blekkenhorst, Peter Doorackers, Cleo Freriks and Dennis Vaendel

Illustrations: Simone Golob

Stephan Simon, who works at the University Library, is sitting in the coffee corner of the Student Services Centre, flipping through a magazine. It's the physical aspect he misses in digital media, he says. "I don't like to read articles on my phone. I lose the bigger picture. Leafing through a printed newspaper, you see so much more. 'Oh, this is about someone I know, and there's an interesting column here.' And it's easier to share things too. If someone from our department is in the newspaper, we'll often just leave it open on a table so everyone can see it." Computer Science student **Matteo Cannata**, by contrast, never reads printed newspapers. He gets all his news online, making a distinction between

stories that pop up on his Instagram feed and those he actively searches for. "For the latter, I prefer independent sources, like journalists running their own Telegram channels. They either tell the truth or lie through their teeth, which makes it easier for me to judge how reliable they are compared to traditional news outlets. Their reporting is often biased, but it's more subtle – harder to put your finger on."

Simon Vogel, head of exam administration at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), says he is "from the paper era, when you actually had to wait for the newspaper to arrive". Over the past 30 years, he's witnessed the university's digital transformation up close across different departments – from

the introduction of digital signatures and rapid document scanning to the disappearance of handwritten exams at the once writing-heavy FASoS. "And I've gone along with it completely. It's so much more efficient and sustainable – cleaner and leaner."

The shift is reflected in his reading habits. "Since *Observant* started sending out its newsletter, I rarely read the print version anymore. I only follow other media outlets online. I don't miss paper. I'm actually anti-paper – I think it's just clutter. You read a few bits of a newspaper and then toss it in the recycling. It feels wasteful. Online news is much faster, and you see more of it. I also like that algorithms now suggest articles based on what you're interested in. Newspapers can't do that."

"It feels like a disappearing craft"

QUICK

"At home I mainly follow the news online, through NOS and podcasts on YouTube. But at the university, I use both screen and paper", says **Richard Thal**, facilities manager at the School of Business and Economics (SBE). "I first check observantonline.nl to get a quick overview of the news and for a quick read. But then I move on to the paper – I still prefer having a newspaper in my hands. Especially for stories about students, which I always find interesting. And to keep up with developments that might affect my work as facilities manager, like news about the pro-Palestinian demonstrations we've also had here at SBE." **Melina Lapa**, a second-year European Law School student, only reads news online. "I get important news through social media, mostly Instagram, and from the news stories suggested on the Google homepage. If something big is happening, I also check CNN's homepage." Biomedical Sciences student **Jill Wolfs** and Economics and Business Economics student **El Vluggen** don't actively follow the news. "It just comes up on TikTok", says Wolfs. Vluggen lists the accounts that appear in her feed: *NOS Stories*, *Jeugdjournaal*, *De Marker*, *De Telegraaf*. "And local media outlets like RTV Maastricht", adds Wolfs. If they're genuinely interested in a topic, they'll look it up on Google. **UCM student Ida** (who prefers not to share her surname for privacy reasons) does the same. "And if I really want to learn more, I'll look for a podcast about it."

PARENTS

The students only ever pick up a newspaper when they're at their parents' home. "My dad is on holiday at the moment, and I'm keeping an eye on the house", says Vluggen. "I'll have a quick look through it to see if there's anything interesting." Ida sometimes takes free newspapers or magazines from the university corridors. "But print just feels more serious. And like more effort has gone into it. You tend to keep it; you don't just throw it away. Online, you just close the tab. The decline of print media is kind of a shame, actually – it feels like a disappearing craft." "Paper is nostalgia. And brings peace," **Katleen Gabriels** says immediately when asked how she prefers to get her news. "You're not dependent on a screen or a full battery. You can pop a newspaper in your bag and take it out whenever

you want." She still remembers producing a newspaper at secondary school; there was almost no censorship, and it was up to her and her fellow pupils to consistently deliver a decent paper. "And in Leuven, I worked for the university magazine *Veto*, I was also the editor-in-chief – those were the days," she recalls. With meetings on Fridays, deadlines on Sundays, and stress on Mondays when the newspaper had to be delivered. "We did that ourselves; we'd hire a van, load it up at the printers and head out to fill the stands." The magazine can still be found at the university. "Whenever I'm in Leuven, I pick up a copy."

A newspaper or a magazine is the result of careful thought, says Gabriels, there is an idea behind it. "From A to Z – think of the cover, the order of the articles, the layout; in short: the whole idea of how you present something. That gives me peace of mind and a clear overview." She compares it a CD, that shiny disc of music that was still in high demand some twenty years ago. "Thought went into the specific structure and what order the songs should be in there, too." Yes, the love of paper is deep, but it doesn't mean that the Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy and Philosophy of Technology at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) and columnist for *Observant* completely eschews the digital world. "I do venture into online articles, and I have *De Groene Amsterdammer* app. But I do find myself in an endless stream of information there; it's very busy, and the hyperlinks and related articles just keep inviting you to click through. At the same time, it's great that you can go so far back in time. When I started working at the university in 2019, I could look up things I didn't know straight away very quickly via the *Observant* website. Try doing that with paper – who keeps years' worth of newspapers lying around?"



Readers on what the paper *Observant* means to them

“Oh, that’s interesting, they have a newspaper here”



Andrea Bonanomi surrounded by his collection

Goodbye paper, the end of the physical newspaper. Four readers tell us what it has meant to them. From a fixed point in the week to occasional meetings. “The memories remain, forever.”

Text: Deborah Blekkenhorst and Cleo Freriks

Photos: Joey Roberts



Yuan Zhu



“In ten years’ time, I’ll open the newspapers again and think of Maastricht”

About fifty centimetres, no more, says **Andrea Bonanomi**, when describing how thick his collection of *Observants* from the last few years is. As the third-year Psychology student puts it, he has “made a whole journey with the newspaper”. Since coming to Maastricht, he has read and kept every issue, without exception. “The newspapers were always something familiar and are a remembrance of my time here.” Now it is the end of an era, for both parties. “I have nearly finished my Bachelor’s, I’d like to do a Master’s, but I don’t really know yet what. Or where. I’m mostly thinking about what I want to do with my life.” How straightforward it all seemed when he first arrived here and still had everything to discover. “When I first saw *Observant*, I thought, oh, that’s interesting. They even

have a newspaper here that’s published weekly.” Reading it became part of his routine, a way to learn all the ins and outs of the university, as well as get to know the city and student life. Although stories about the latter aren’t necessarily his preferred subject. “I’d rather read about things I don’t know about yet, or that surprise me, as a way of learning new things.” He remembers an article on fossil excavations, “highly recommended. I’m interested in history, how things change over time, both in the city and at the university. You see that reflected in the newspaper too.” According to him, such stories demonstrate the value of print. “Only the best is printed, there’s limited space, so the editors have to make decisions,” says Bonanomi, who has occasionally seen the quality of other media

decline once they made the switch to online. “The digital world is unlimited, everything fits, it becomes quantity over quality.”

He doesn’t expect that to be the case immediately for *Observant* – he has signed up for the weekly newsletter, where he will still be able to follow the news, and other stories. At least keeping them will be a lot easier – and lighter. “When I go back to Italy, I’ll take my stack of *Observants* with me, to my parents’ house. In ten years’ time, I’m sure I’ll pick them up again and think back to Maastricht.”

“I’ll never bump into my good friend again”

Like a good friend waiting for you every week. It’s the best way **Yuan Zhu** can describe it. For the Computer Science student, *Observant* has always been more than a newspaper. “A fixed part of my life as a student, a weekly meeting that fuels my

curiosity and raises certain expectations. And if we’d missed each other, because I was out of town, for example, it really felt like a loss. Or very bad luck,” says Zhu, who came to Maastricht nearly two years ago.

Thanks to the newspaper, the Chinese student learnt all about the city and the university. He also practiced his language skills, by comparing the English articles to the Dutch ones printed on the other side. He’s brutally honest when he calls the switch to exclusively online reporting “an impoverishment of the human experience. The physical paper invites you to slow down, and is, in fact, a reason to push aside the digital world – which already commands so much of our attention – for a while.” What’s more, says Zhu, there are limits to paper. What you see is what you get, there is no more to the newspaper than the pages of text in your hand, and that’s a good thing. “Online, you can endlessly click through and lose yourself in a jumble of information.”

However, he will still follow *Observant*, albeit with a heavy heart. “The newspaper was a part of the university and student life, and it provided rhythm and structure. Call it a ritual, that repeated itself time and again whenever a new issue hit the stands. That’s coming to an end; I’m still here, but my good friend has vanished, at least physically.”

Continued on page 8



Saurus board room

final print edition – special

A stack for the whole department

Continued from page 7

“Maybe we’ll have to print the articles and hang them up”

The stand that always held *Observant* had already disappeared, “it was taken away at the start of the academic year due to a lack of interest,” says **Mijke Kapsenberg**, chair of rowing association Saurus, pointing at an empty spot in the clubhouse. Yet the newspaper has not completely vanished, on the door of the board room, there are still cuttings from previous years. Some are still reasonably intact, others are yellowed or torn, a few have been laminated. “They’re a nice memory of everything we’ve done here. Such as results we achieved, or debates (sometimes national) we played a part in.” For example, the article at the top of the door talks about the loss of the lightest rowing class – popular among students – in global competitions and how Saurus is handling that. The articles, says Kapsenberg, are also a reminder that media is important, that sometimes you need them to tell a particular story. The fact that the paper was not always well read is a “generational thing”, she says. “Most students grew up in a digital world, they’ll skim something and then scroll to the next thing. You have to actually pick up a paper, take it with you, take the time to read it.” Something she herself enjoyed, when she had the chance. “Especially if there was a new issue, I’d pick one up. But when I’m busy, I prefer to read online. I’ll continue to do that, I like the variation of news and background and facts you might

never have heard of before. For me, the end of the physical paper is not the end of *Observant*.”

But what about the collection on the board room door? Will that wall of fame be expanded on? “I will miss that, yes, cutting them out and hanging them up. Maybe we’ll just have to print the articles and stick them on the door.”

A new morning routine

Programme assistant UM-MUMC+/azM collaboration, **Stefanie Hollanders-van Oostrum**, likes paper. It’s not that she’s never online, she even has a blog. “But being able to hold something, that is special. I’ve even featured in a paper or magazine a few times, it was all I could not to paper the walls with them.” In her attic, there are several scrapbooks full of articles on her favourite band, Take That. “There used to be the International News Stand in Maastricht station; on Sundays, I would buy all the British newspapers they were in. Now, a few times a year, I order all the newspapers and magazines I want to cut things out of from abroad. Sometimes I pay more in import duties than I do for the magazine!” She also read *Observant* on paper from the start. First as an Economics student. “I



Stefanie Hollanders-van Oostrum

used to take it home, my parents would read it too. And still do – my father has since died, but if my mother doesn’t see a copy of *Observant* at the Dominicanen bookshop, she sends me a message to ask why there wasn’t one.” When she started working for the Executive Board as a secretary in 2010, the paper helped her to get to know the organisation better. “Every Thursday morning, one colleague would bring a stack for the whole department. I would start with Bergbroeder [pseudonym used by Wammes Bos, who wrote satirical pieces about the Executive Board and particularly then President Jo Ritzen]. Later,

I was the colleague who would bring a stack of *Observants* for the rest, although I have to say that in the last few years, I was the only one who still read the actual paper.” Has she saved any articles? “Yes, of Jo’s departure, and subsequent President Martin Paul’s. And of course, my own column. In 2023, *Observant* held a writing competition about holiday woes, which I won.” After the summer, her Thursday routine will look slightly different. “I always used to get a coffee from Coffeelovers in the Student Service Centre – that’s gone too, it’s Bandito now – and then flip through the paper. It’ll take some getting used to.”

The paper is done, but the story continues

- > in a (almost) weekly newsletter all students and staff will receive by email (almost) every week from September
- > on our website observantonline.nl
- > on our social media
- > on our podcast

