

Rediscovering the former city through digital archives. A case study of Bucharest in Dutch language newspapers

**Lecturer Diana Mariana POPA, PhD.
University Politehnica of Bucharest**

➤ What can we learn about Bucharest through a search in the Dutch language digital archives?

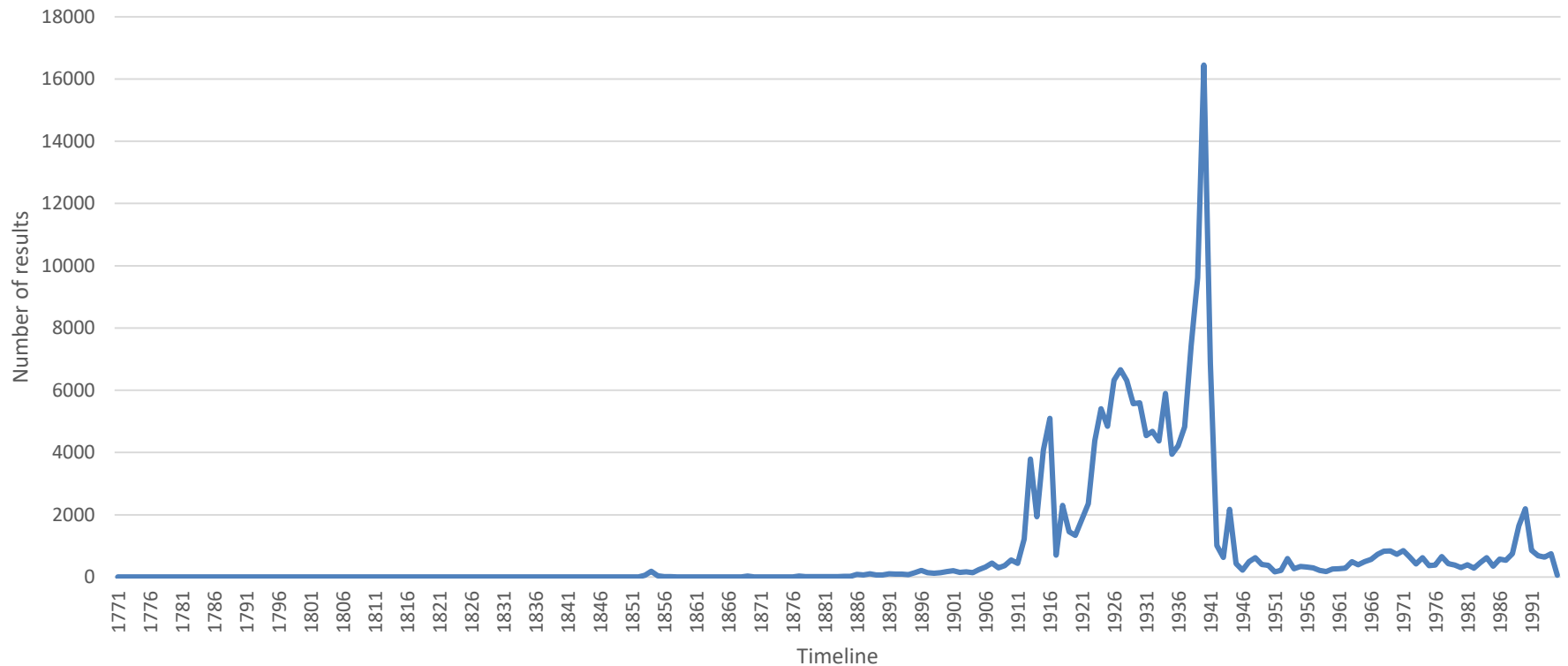


<http://www.delpher.nl/>

Table 1. Search results for the keywords *Boekarest* and *Bukarest* divided in 4 time periods

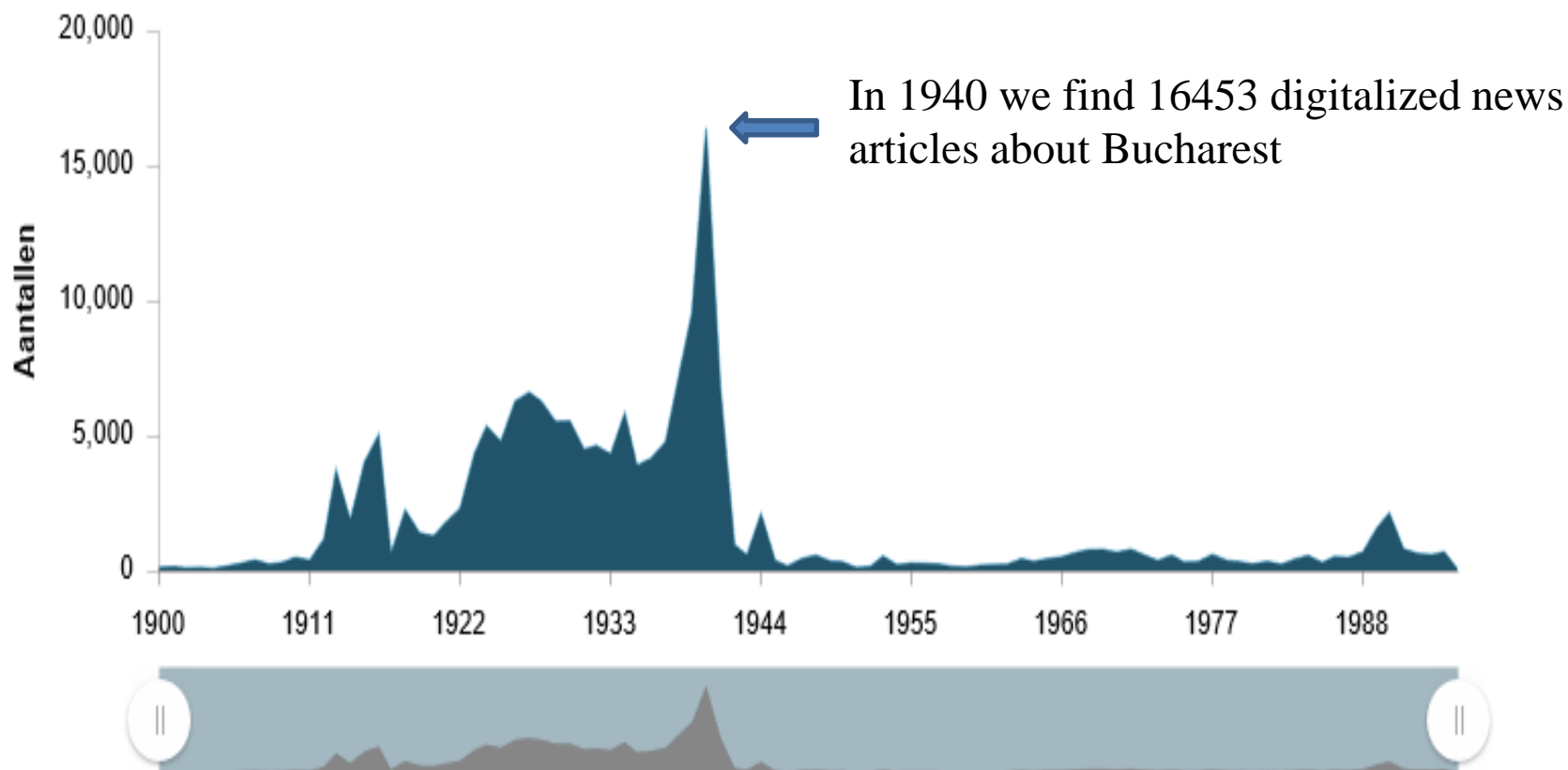
Time series /Keyword	1771-1899	1900-1945	1946-1989	1990-1995	Total
Boekarest	1220	148116	20045	3320	172701
Bukarest	835	5252	1284	1912	9283
Total	2055	153368	21329	5232	181984

Source: Data from Delpher digital archive, newspapers (kranten) category, November 2016



Trend for the combined keywords Boekarest and Bukarest in search results

Source: Data from Delpher digital archive, newspapers (kranten) category, November 2016



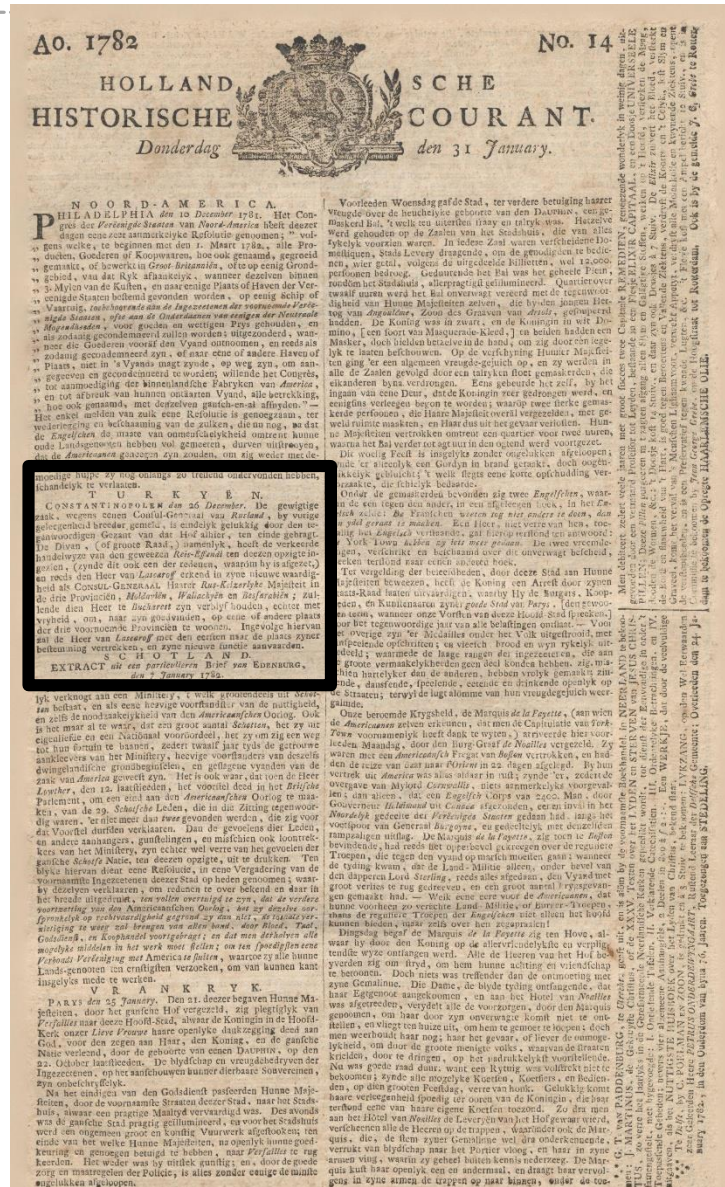
Combined search results for Boekarest and Bukarest expressed in numbers in the time period 1900-1995 obtained with the graphic function of Delpher

Source: <http://www.delpher.nl/>

First mentioning of Bucharest

The first mentioning of Boekarest comes from 31/01/1782, in the newspaper the Hollandsche historischc courant, printed in Delft. Bucharest is mentioned only one time in an article entitled “Turkey”,

Source: Hollandsche historischc courant, 31/01/1782, *TURKYËN*, in the Delpher archive.



First pictures from Bucharest

There are about 1700 illustrations with explanations (short texts under the picture) mentioning Bucharest, ranging from 1913 up to 1995. The oldest one found in Delpher is an image of the Domnița Bălașa church from Bucharest, mentioned in the context of the 1913 peace conference).



Source: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 01/08/1913, *De hoofdkerk te Boekarest*. Groningen, in the Delpher archive.

First pictures from Bucharest

Also from 1913, in the same newspaper there is a picture entitled “In the vicinity of Bucharest” (In de buurt van Boekarest) where many derricks, oil pumps and oil tanks can be seen. Beneath the picture, we find the mentioning that there is a lot of oil in Romania.



Source: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 05/08/1913, *In de buurt van Boekarest*, Groningen, in the Delpher archive.

First pictures from Bucharest

From 1925 we find an article entitled “Sights from Bucharest” containing two pictures of the Stavropoleos monastery and the C.E.C. Palace (Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 1925).

Also from 1925, in several newspapers we find pictures with a religious precession on the streets of Bucharest, with the Romanian Patriarch, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Antioch of Constantinople and the Archbishop of Athens.

The burial of king Ferdinand receives large photo coverage in Dutch newspapers in 1927.

From this period up to the first years of World War II there are also many pictures with members of the royal family of Romania.

Customs

“New Year’s eve in Romania: Traders with flower bouquets in the streets of Bucharest”. “Flowers serve there as good luck wishes on New Year’s eve”, mentions the text further (Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant, 1925).

Source: Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant, 31/12/1925, *Oudejaarsavond in Roemenië. Handelaars met bloemenruikers in de straten van Boekarest. Bloemen dienen daar op Nieuwjaar als gelukwensen*, in the Delpher archive.



Street merchants



BOEKAREST IS RIJK AAN STRAATTYPEN.
Zoo ziet men er den houtverkooper aan een luk
zijn vrachtle forsse. Ieder, die wat brandhout
noodig heeft, kan bij hem terecht.

1927



IN DE STRATEN
VAN BOEKAREST
kan men zijn dorst
lesschen bij den
limonade-koopman.

Source: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 15/12/1927, *Boekarest is rijk aan straattypen*, Groningen.

Street merchants

Source: Haagsche courant, 18/04/1922, *In de straten van Boekarest worden Paaschlammetjes te koop aangeboden.*



In Roemenië.

Deze twee jonge mannen, de linker vooral, zien er nu niet bepaald zoo appetijtelijk uit, dat men er gauw toe zal komen iets eetbaars van hen te koopen. In de straten van Boekarest bieden ze hun koeken aan en toch keeren ze zelden met kransjes om één van de stokken naar huis terug.

1928

Source: Rotterdamsch nieuwsblad.
Rotterdam, 13/01/1928, *In Roemenie*, in the Delpher archive.

Other observations

- In the illustrations with explanations sub-category also, the peak results are from the period right before the start or during the Second World War, with 154 results in 1938 and 230 results in 1940.
- After the end of the Second World War, the number of illustrations with text mentioning Bucharest drops dramatically, with 150 results between 1946 and September 1989.
- From the communist period we see a peak in the number of published articles in the 1968-1971 period, with 768-794 articles.

Other observations

- Childcare in the Romanian Socialist Republic is praised in an article from 1952.
- In 1967 we come over an article with a picture, entitled “Romanian capital from above”. Underneath, in capital letters the mentioning: “Despite strict regime, Bucharest maintains a Latin atmosphere” (De Tijd De Maasbode, 1967).
- The earthquake from 1977 receives great coverage in the Dutch press of the time, as does the 1989 revolution.

Research limitations

- The data contained at the moment in these digital archives is by no means exhaustive or equal to the data found in analogue archives.
- The problems of generalizability and the replicability of findings, due to the continuously changing selection of all available data
- In August 2015, Delpher contained about eight million newspaper pages, representing about 10 per cent of all Dutch published newspaper pages (Krieken, 2015). In this archive, the newspapers that were digitalized or that will be digitalized in the future are not randomly included in the “sample”, but are selected based on their representativeness of society at that point in time (according to the website of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek/ Nationale bibliotheek van Nederland, the organization behind the project).

Research limitations

- The possibility of duplicate entries or of errors in the word recognition software still exist (Van Groesen, 2015).
- For example, the incorrectly written name Boekaret (instead of Boekarest) will turn about 69 results in the Delpher digital archive, because it was spelled incorrectly in the original printed paper and digitalized as such.

Concluding remarks and future research

- In the earliest occurrences, the city is mentioned in the context of political events in which other states were involved.
- Bucharest receives the greatest media attention in the Second World War (when compared with other time periods).
- There are interesting trends that could be further researched in detail, in separate case studies, either for specific time periods (for example the news about Bucharest from the communist period, or pictures of people in Bucharest from the period between the two world wars), or for more specific keywords.
- Another useful analysis would be a comparison of the information found in Romanian digital archives and in foreign ones.

Thank you for your attention!

Contact details:

diana.popa@upb.ro

dianapopa.upb@gmail.com