Facendo Il Libro: The Making of the Book (and a digital collection and exhibit)

By Anne Garner, Curator, Rare Books and Manuscripts, and Robin Naughton, Head of Digital

The New York Academy of Medicine is thrilled to announce "Facendo Il Libro: The Making of Fasciculus Medicinae, an Early Printed Anatomy." This online exhibit, focused on an astonishing and influential medical book first published in Italy in 1491, was made possible through the generous support of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation.

Originally collected in manuscript form, the Fasciculus Medicinae (the “little bundle of medicine”) is a richly illustrated collection of medical treatises on uroscopy, phlebotomy, anatomy, surgery, and gynecology. The Fasciculus Medicinae was first published in 1491, but demand for it made it a favorite text for printers. By 1522, it had been issued more than twenty times. Variations in the text and the illustrations through time show the early modern tension between medieval medical ideas and advances in medical understanding forged at the beginning of the 16th century. The exhibit allows visitors to browse full-text scans of all five editions (1495–1522) in The New York Academy of Medicine’s collections; to investigate each edition’s exquisitely illustrated woodcuts and to explore their cultural and medical meanings; and to compare the books’ illustrations in different editions over time. The site includes contributed essays from Dr. Taylor McCall, art historian of material culture and medieval medicine at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and from Dr. Natalie Lussey Seale of the University of Edinburgh, whose work focuses on early modern Venetian print culture. Dr. McCall’s essay looks at the creation of the text and its accompanying illustrations, while Dr. Seale’s essay offers a window into Venetian printing processes in the 16th century and describes the making of a book in early modern Italy.
The illustrations of the *Fasciculus Medicinae* offer an intriguing glimpse of medical practice in the 16th century. The book’s woodcuts include narrative scenes depicting the earliest Western depiction of dissection in print, an early illustration of a diagnostic consultation showing a professor analyzing a urine flask, and a physician, holding an aromatic sponge to his nose to avoid infection, attending a sick plague patient confined to his bed. Other woodcuts help us to understand early modern conceptions of health and illness. The *Fasciculus Medicinae*’s female anatomical figure captures late medieval ideas about women’s bodies, reproduction, and pregnancy. A “Wound Figure” graphically depicts the various threats to the body, from blows to the head down to the prick of a thorn on the feet. Perhaps most surprising of all, the *Fasciculus Medicinae*’s “Zodiac Figure,” who balances all twelve zodiac signs on his body, conveys the powerful role the stars and planets played in health in the medieval imagination. This figure, who dates to earlier manuscripts from the medieval period, survives well into the twentieth century, appearing alongside horoscopes in a modified form in print in American almanacs produced by pharmaceutical companies.
The Facendo Il Libro website has a simple design, but a complex structure. It is both a standalone digital collection and an online exhibit built using Islandora, an open-source digital repository framework. Representing the first full-text internal digitization project for the Academy Library, the five editions of the Fasciculus Medicinae were digitized in the Library’s Digital Lab. The online exhibit was built using an Islandora multi-site to leverage the digital collection repository (Fedora), Drupal Book module, and the current Library branding theme.

The ability to draw from the common repository made it possible to store content once and use it in multiple ways. Thus, the five digitized editions are available in two different places using a single source. The built-in navigational structure for the exhibit makes it easy for users to explore the collection in a linear fashion or by sections.

Replicating the physical experience of touching the text is still a challenge for digital projects. Thus, it was important to create a digital experience that provides the user with some sense of the materiality of the object. For example, the 1500 edition was bound with another text (Savonarola’s Practica medicinae), which is evident from the first digital image of the book. The image shows the thickness of the text and the fact that the 1500 edition begins in middle of the physical object. It shows the user exactly what will be encountered when using the physical item. It also highlights a significant piece of information that could
Another important aspect of the online exhibit is the illustrations page, where users can see all the illustrations from all editions in one place. When a user clicks on an illustration, the user is immediately taken to a page with descriptions of each illustration as it appears in each edition. To explore the images, users can click on an image and zoom in to see the intricate details.

“Facendo Il Libro: The Making of Fasciculus Medicinae, an Early Printed Anatomy” offers a great opportunity for users to learn and explore the Library’s five editions of Fasciculus Medicinae in context.

Explore Facendo Il Libro Online Exhibit.

Did you know that required trademarks go back to 1266? In England, bakers were required by parliament to use a distinctive mark on the bread they sold [i] Fun design/history/bibliographic fact, the Drs. Barry and Bobbi Collier Rare Book Reading Room here at the Library features trademarks in its décor. More specifically, the room’s chandeliers have printers’ marks. As an homage to book history and the art of the book, the chandeliers of our reading room are decorated with printers’ marks.
I got to know these marks beyond "those pretty design bits on the lights" when we created special bookplates (another age old way to 'mark' your stuff) for Adopt-a-Book donors. The virtual bookplates that donors receive features four of these marks keeping them connected with the legacy and art of the book.

As the name suggests, printers' marks are a device or emblem, like a logo, that early printers used to make clear the source of the item. According to *Printer's Marks*, the first of these is Johann Fust and Peter Schöffer’s *Mainz Psalter* of 1457. Among the best well-known of these old printers’ marks is one that you will find on our library’s custom designed chandeliers and on our adoption bookplates (upper righthand corner) the device of Aldus Manutius: the dolphin and anchor.

Next to Aldus in the upper left corner of the bookplate, the ethereal hand manipulating the compass with the Latin motto *Labore et Constantia* (Work and Constancy) belongs to Dutch publisher Christophe Plantin (1520-1589). During his life, he used a large number of devices and they could vary in appearance. There are three primary types; the first features a tree and the second a scroll with a Latin motto twined around a grape vine; the third is the hand and compass and first appeared in 1557.[ii] The compass is symbolic of the motto: the leg of the compass turning around is work while the stationary point is constancy.
Below Plantin’s mark on the lower left, is the printer’s mark of Paris printer and bookseller Poncet Le Preux (1508 – 1551). His initials P L P are ‘tethered’ together by a tasseled cord.

Lastly, the monogram in the lower right corner of the bookplate that also adorns our chandeliers belongs to Badius Ascensius or Jodocus Badius (1462 – 1535). Originally from Flemish town of Asche, he set up a print shop in Paris, Prelum Ascensianum, in 1503. The initials in the monogram are I V A B, the A and V intersecting to form the diamond shape at the center, which stand for his Latinate name Iodocus Van Asche Badius.

We invite you to come look at these gorgeous marks on the chandeliers and in the books themselves at our First Monday tours. The first Monday of every month at 12 pm we do a free tour of the Rare Book Room. Or adopt a book in our collection and receive a copy of these marks in the custom designed donor bookplate.

Bonus mark! This is the mark used by Badius’ printing house, Prelum Ascensianum (his monogram featuring at the bottom center, the shop’s name visible on the center crossbeam of the press itself) and my personal favorite because it is a printer in action.

— The dolphin twined around an anchor predates Manutius. Going back to Roman times, this pair symbolizes the adage, “Make haste slowly.” (The dolphin is haste, and the anchor is slow.)
By Emily Miranker, Events & Projects Manager

One of the initiatives I oversee here is our wonderful online Library Shop. It features public domain images from our collection on various products. It’s a way for you to take a piece of the library home. Are these two hundred, four hundred, six hundred-year-old images edited? No.

 Mostly no.

We keep our images unedited to preserve their historic integrity. The little warps in the vellum, the darkening on the edges of pages from centuries of fingers turning them, little spots of ink or stains from years of use are all part of the life story of each book.

That said, here’s the “mostly” part.

Many of the images used on the shop come from very old books. Books of any age usually don’t lie flat, and certainly not really old ones with big, beautiful bindings. To scan images, our books lie in a cradle; each side propped up by a wedge. This means an image in the initial scan is often at a slight angle. You don’t see it square on.
Cockeyed images aren’t the most visually pleasing, moreover the images sit true on the book pages themselves. Therefore some of our images are rotated after scanning to correct for the angle introduced by that cradle in the scan bed, as in the example below.

A real treat came for me when I got to work with this glorious image from the Italian naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605). This is a phoenix from Monstrorum Historia, a volume in a set of encyclopedic works on animals. In Monstrorum, Aldrovandi documented and illustrated anomalous creatures both observed and imagined. The phoenix is a mythological bird that cyclically regenerates or is reborn from the flames and ashes of its previous self.

For the special occasion of the Academy’s 2017 Gala, I was going to edit the background from this image to show just the bird itself. Far more elaborate image editing than I typically get to do. (Part of this was actually done with an editing tool called the “Magic Wand” which struck me as very fitting.) I edited out most of the background and zoomed in to tidy up the image. I started to notice these strips of “fuzz” all over. Zooming in even closer—around 200% magnification—I realized, “These aren’t fuzzy strips; I’m seeing the impression of the text from the page behind this!”

The text from page underneath the phoenix page wasn’t removed with the layer of background (that tan parchment color), so it was now more starkly visible. The quality of the 17th century printing was so high and the scan was so powerful that not only had the page with the phoenix itself been captured, but the words from the page beneath as well. Not an official palimpsest (a piece of writing material with traces of previous or even removed writing still visible); but a delightful discovery in my scanned image.
World Breastfeeding Week – August 1-7, 2016 – seeks to promote, protect, and support breastfeeding. How was breastfeeding regarded in the past? To answer this question, I consulted books on child rearing from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century.

The earliest book I looked at, Dr. William Buchan’s 1804 *Advice to Mothers, on the Subject of Their Own Health; and on the Means of Promoting the Health, Strength, and Beauty, of Their Offspring*, is extremely critical of women who do not breastfeed:

> Unless the milk...finds the proper vent, it will not only distend and inflame the breasts, but excite a great degree of fever in the whole system... It may be said, that there are instances without number, of mothers who enjoy perfect health, though they never suckled their children. I positively deny the assertion; and maintain, on the contrary, that a mother, who is not prevented by any particular weakness or disease from discharging that duty, cannot neglect it without material injury to her constitution.

At the end of the 19th century, Dr. Genevieve Tucker’s *Mother, Baby, and Nursery: A Manual for Mothers* (1896) also strongly advocates breastfeeding:
Every mother who has health sufficient to mature a living child ought, if possible, to nurse it from her own breast. Her own health requires it, as the efforts of the child to draw the milk causes the uterus to contract, and nothing else will take its place to her infant.

Much of her other advice seems outdated now, including her claim that "nursing babies suffer from too frequent nursing" and her suggestion to nurse "as seldom as possible at night." Perhaps strangest to modern ears is her analysis of a woman's ability to nurse based on her physical and emotional state:

Different temperaments and constitutions in women have great influence in the quantity and quality of milk. The richest milk is secreted by brunettes with well developed muscles, fresh complexions, and moderate plumpness. Nervous, lymphatic, and fair-complexioned women, with light or auburn hair, flabby muscles, and sluggish movements, as a rule, secrete poor milk. Rheumatic women secrete acid milk, which causes colic, diarrhea, and marasmus in the child.

Tucker also suggests that a nursing mother should be producing a whopping forty-four ounces of breast milk every twenty-four hours.
Dr. Charles Gilmore Kerley in his *Short Talks with Young Mothers: On the Management of Infants and Young Children* wrote in the early 19th century that contemporary pressures on women hinder their breastfeeding abilities:

>A mother, to nurse her child successfully, must be a happy, contented woman... The American women of our large cities assume the cares and responsibilities of life equally with men. Among the so-called higher classes, — those who have all that wealth and position can give, — there is a constant struggle for social pre-eminence. Among the majority of the so-called middle classes the contest for wealth and place never ceases from the moment the school days begin until death or infirmity closes the scene. Among the poor there are the ceaseless toil, the struggle for food and shelter, the care of the sick, and the frequent deaths of little ones in the family whom they are unable properly to care for. In all classes, therefore, the conditions of life are such as seriously to interfere with the normal function of nursing, no matter how excellent may be the mother’s physical condition.¹

This emphasis on a woman’s mind being at rest is repeated in much of the early 20th-century literature on breastfeeding.
Most of the books from the first few decades of the 20th century contain a passage about keeping the breasts and nipples clean. Kerley and others recommend washing the nipples (and even the child’s mouth!) with a solution of boracic (boric) acid. Myrtle M. Eldred and Helen Cowles Le Cron write in *For the Young Mother* (1921) that “the breasts are tender and easily infected at first, so that the boric acid acts as a cleanser to protect the baby from possible germs and as a preventive of abscessed breasts.” Boric acid, though it is sometimes used as an antiseptic, is toxic to humans if taken internally or inhaled in large quantities. Other books recommend rinsing the breasts with hot water prior to nursing.

Many books also contain lists of foods the nursing mother should and should not eat. Dr. Anne Newton, in her *Mother and Baby: Helpful Suggestions Concerning Motherhood and the Care of Children* (1912), advises mothers to practice “sacrifice and self-denial” in eating meals, and to avoid rich and seasoned foods altogether. Newton specifies that mothers should eat “nothing about which there is any question of fermentation. Such vegetables as cabbage, turnips, cauliflower, and tomatoes should not be given until the baby is four months old at least, and even then certain things may cause discomfort and cannot be indulged until the child is weaned.” Dr. Thomas Gray, in *Common Sense and the Baby: A Book for Mothers*, notes that the breastfeeding mother should “eat an abundance of wholesome, nutritious food; avoid indigestible pastries and salads. Take sparingly of tea and coffee. Drink freely cocoa and milk. Eat fruits – not acid.” Some more recent books are much less rigid about the mother’s diet. Dr. Dorothy Whipple, writing in 1944, is less cautious, and argues that there’s very little a mother can eat that harms a
nursing baby, mentioning only certain foods like onions that may, in breast milk, deter babies with its "unusual taste."
None of the books I consulted recommended breastfeeding to two years or beyond, the WHO’s current recommendation on breastfeeding. Most books recommend weaning the baby between eight and fourteen months of age. The New York City Department of Health warns against weaning in summer because of the risk of spoiled cow’s milk:

If possible, do not wean your baby during the hot summer months…. If you are well, it will not harm you to nurse your child until the dangerous, hot weather is over. This precaution may mean saving your child’s life.”11
Another common thread in the literature about breastfeeding is an emphasis on the pleasure and health benefits experienced by the nursing mother. According to Tucker, "under the right conditions of lactation, ... the mother should thrive and even grow stout." Others emphasize that breastfeeding will help the mother "get her 'good figure' back much more quickly than the mother who doesn't nurse" because "nursing causes the uterus or womb to contract." Stella Applebaum provides this summary of the mother-baby nursing relationship:

Mother’s milk is the perfect baby food. From a healthy mother’s clean nipples, this pure, fresh, warm, nourishing, digestible food is delivered, germ-free, directly into the baby’s mouth. At the same time mother’s milk protects him against certain diseases. Suckling at the breast makes the baby feel close to his mother, happy, and secure.

Nursing benefits you, too. It stimulates the uterus to contract to normal size and contributes to your personal enjoyment and contentment. Propped in a comfortable chair or bed, you share a uniquely satisfying experience with your baby.

Other writers underscore the vital role nursing plays in strengthening the emotional bonds between mother and child. Buchan writes in 1804 that "the act itself is attended with sweet, thrilling, and delightful sensations of which those only who have felt them can form any idea." Dorothy Whipple has the last word:

...to sit in a comfortable chair and hold a little snuggling baby in your arms, to watch him grab that nipple with all the fury of his tiny might and suck and work away until he reaches that complete satisfaction that comes to a baby with a full stomach is one of the pleasantest sensations in life.
References

1. Buchan, William. *Advice to Mothers, on the Subject of Their Own Health; and on the Means of Promoting the Health, Strength, and Beauty, of Their Offspring*. Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1804, p. 75-76.


8. Ibid., p. 78.


12. Tucker, p. 86.


15. Buchan, p. 79.

The Drs. Barry and Bobbi Coller Rare Book Reading Room – the panoramic view

The Drs. Barry and Bobbi Coller Rare Book Reading Room has reopened. Renovations improved environmental conditions for the collections, including a new HVAC system, restored the historic windows, and a return to the cork floor’s former glory. We are once again welcoming readers and visitors to the room and were delighted to have the chance to host the wonderful Ardon Bar-Hama, who kindly captured the space in its full panoramic glory. Click through on the image to see the interactive (and highly zoom-able) panoramic view.

A Ceroplast at NYAM

In today’s guest post, the artist Sigrid Sarda tells us how historical collections inform her work. Visitors to our Festival of Medical History & the Arts may have seen her moulages in person, and be sure to visit her blog for information on exhibitions and more of her fabulous work.

Earlier this year, I began researching the collections at the Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health. I am an artist/ceroplast, which means wax modeler. The resources I discovered at the Center have been of great inspiration to my work.
First, let me tell you about myself. For over 30 years I was a painter. Due to the death of my father and the psychological aftermath I experienced, I ceased painting. In its place, the obsession of the wax figure came into being. Since I was completely self-taught and only worked in this medium for a few years, it was necessary to learn more about its technique and history. Having always had a fascination with religious icons, the body (particularly skin), diseases, and later on death, as well as incorporating human remains such as teeth, bone, and hair in my work, I realized I needed a better understanding of the aesthetics and techniques of wax used in creating these life-size figures and medical moulages.

While exhibiting a waxwork in New York City, I met up with Lisa O’Sullivan, director of the Center for the History of Medicine and Public Health at NYAM, and Arlene Shaner, reference librarian and acting curator for historical collections. After discussing the exhibited piece and my ambitions working in wax Dr. O’Sullivan invited me to explore NYAM’s collections. This was an opportunity not to be missed!

Upon arriving at NYAM, I was directed to the 3rd floor of the massive Romanesque building where Arlene welcomed me. Delightful, funny, and knowledgeable, she made me immediately comfortable in the surroundings of the library and excited to view the books housed in the collection. She checked out my waxwork, we geeked out on ceroplasts, and spoke about other artists whose work dealt with death such as Joyce Cutler-Shaw.

On my second visit, filled with anticipation, I found myself greeted by marvelous books and an actual anatomical wax moulage of a diseased infant. After the initial perusal of my work, Arlene knew what was needed for my research: anatomical images and techniques, and had the books waiting for me in the formidable reading room. As a bonus she brought out the works of M. Gautier D’Agoty, the 18th-century French artist and anatomical illustrator. I pored over both heavily illustrated and non-illustrated books for hours, amassing information for future waxworks. There is truly nothing like the feel of a beautiful book in your hands. The library has become quite the addiction, what with the wonderful staff and superb collection!

Below are images from D’Agoty and various books consulted at NYAM, and above is one of my wax moulages.
At our Festival of Medical History and the Arts on October 5, we asked attendees to submit captions for three images from items in our collection. Today, we’re happy to announce the winners of the competition, who will receive high-quality prints of the captioned image. We’ve included original captions with the images, where available, to help show how they appear in context (although the Festival attendees did not get to see them).
The first image comes from William Cheselden’s *Osteographia, or The Anatomy of the Bones*, published in London in 1733. **Linda Kleinman** wrote the winning caption.

The second image appears in Konrad Gesner’s *Historiae Animalium Liber Iii*, published in Zurich in 1558. **Samuel Luterbacher** wrote the winning caption.

The final image, produced by Egbert van Heemskerck II circa 1730, appears in the *George Osborne Mitchell Medical Scrapbook*. This picture inspired the strongest pool of captions. But **Iana Dikidjieva**’s caption stood out from the pack.

Congratulations to the winners!

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**Winsome Fetal Skeletons Bearing Scythes: Monro’s *Traité d’ostéologie* of 1759: Guest post by Morbid Anatomy**

Posted on October 4, 2013 by nyamhistofmed

A note from the Center for the History of Medicine & Public Health: This is the last post in Morbid Anatomy’s guest series leading...
up to our Festival of Medical History and the Arts. If you’ve enjoyed these posts as much as we have, don’t despair! Tomorrow’s event holds a full day of lectures and activities from Morbid Anatomy, Lawrence Weschler, and the Center. We hope you can make it! See the full schedule here.

The NYAM rare book collection holds a gorgeous copy of the first French edition of Alexander Monro’s (1697–1767) celebrated *Traité d’ostéologie* ... (or “Anatomy of Bones”). Monro was trained in London, Paris, and Leiden before going on to become the first professor of anatomy at the newly established University of Edinburgh. It was under his leadership, and that of his successors, that the school went on to become a renowned center of medical learning.

Monro originally published this book without images, thinking them unnecessary after William Cheselden’s lavishly heavily-illustrated *Osteographia, or the anatomy of the bones* of 1733 (more on that book at this recent post). The very fine copperplates you see here were added to the French edition by its translator, the anatomist Jean-Joseph Sue (1710–1792).

My favorite image in the book is a kind of *memento mori*–themed *tableau morte* of winsome, scythe-bearing fetal skeletons enigmatically arranged in a funereal landscape (images 1–3). I also love the frontispiece in which a group of plump putti proffer anatomical atlases and dissecting tools under the oversight of a skeletal bird (above).
This post was written by Joanna Ebenstein of the Morbid Anatomy blog, library and event series; click here to find out more. All images are my own, photographed at the New York Academy of Medicine.

Posted in Collections, Events, History of medicine | Tagged anatomy, event, guest post, historical collections, history of medicine, illustration, morbid anatomy, rare books | 1 Reply

A Renaissance Man at Work: Volcher Coiter’s “Externarum et internarum principalium humani corporis” of 1573: Guest post by Morbid Anatomy

Posted on October 3, 2013 by nyamhistofmed
One under-seen and fascinating book to be found in the NYAM rare book collection is *Externum et internum principalium humani corporis partium tabulae*... published by Dutch Renaissance man Volcher Coiter (1534–1576) in 1573. Not only was Coiter renowned as an anatomist, surgeon, and physician accomplished in the fields of physiology, ornithology, and embryology; not only did he establish the study of comparative osteology and describe cerebrospinal meningitis before any of his peers; he was also an artist, and signed many of the finely drawn copper engravings in his books, including those you see here.

All images are my own, photographed at the New York Academy of Medicine, save the painted portrait of Coiter, which was sourced here. The caption, attributed to Dorothy M. Schullian, reads: “Coiter’s portrait (1575) in oils, attributed to Nicolas Neuchatæ and representing him demonstrating the muscles of the arm, with the écorché he had constructed on his left and a shelf of medical classics behind him, is preserved in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, at Nuremberg; there are later portraits at Weimar and Amsterdam.” (source for caption here)
Johan Remmelin (1583–1632) was town physician of Ulm and Plague physician of Augsberg. He was also the man behind both the concept and the original drawings (engraved by Lucas Kilian) for the ingenious moving-parts anatomical extravaganza *Catoptrum microcosmicum*, published in 1619, with numerous editions in many languages thereafter. NYAM has both the 1619 and a 1639 edition in its rare book collection.
This astounding book—in which flaps of paper can be drawn back to virtually dissect the human body—features a heady blend of the anatomical, the theological, and the metaphysical, beautifully expressing the worldview of Natural Philosophy, that precursor to science, which oversaw investigations into the human body in the early modern era. In this worldview, God and man, metaphor and the encountered world, were indivisible; the human being was the microcosm of all creation, so to understand the secrets of the human body would be to know the mind of God. Accordingly, as explained by Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace in their book *Spectacular Bodies:*

The purpose of anatomical images during the period from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century had as much to do with what we would call aesthetic and theological understanding as with the narrower intentions of medical illustration as now understood. . . . They were not simply instructional diagrams for the doctor technician, but statements about the nature of human beings as made by God in the context of the created world as a whole [as well as] the nature of life and death. . . .

It should not be surprising, then, that the dissectible humans herein are inextricably entwined with images of Jesus Christ (image 9,17); *memento mori* mottos (16) and imagery (images 12, 17); allusions to God and the angels (image 1); and even the head of the devil, serving as a kind of fig leaf covering the female sex organs in one instance (image 2). There are also numerous biblical references, including a serpent slithering through a human skull holding a branch from the tree of knowledge in its mouth (image 13), lest we forget that original sin introduced death and disease into our world in the first place; without it, we would still be luxuriating in Eden with no need for medicine, or, by extension, books such as this one. The book also contains the occasional inadvertent (?) eroticism, as the peeling back of obscuring layers brings you, in a sort of pre-modern striptease, to the unveiled sexual organs below (image 14 and 15).

If you page through all of the images below, you will get a sense of the carnivalesque exuberance and dynamism of this book; you can also virtually dissect them yourself by clicking here, or here, compliments of The Hardin Library of The University of Iowa, which was also a source for much of the factual content of this piece.
This post was written by Joanna Ebenstein of the Morbid Anatomy blog, library and event series; click here to find out more. All images are my own, photographed at the New York Academy of Medicine.

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The rare book collection includes more than 50,000 rare and unique titles dating from 1493 to the present. Books housed in the department can be identified by searching the catalog and limiting results to the location of “Special Collections” and the format to “book.” Search Rare Books. The oldest book in the collection is The Nuremberg Chronicle, a pictorial history of the earth published in 1493 that was compiled by Dr. Hartmann Schedel, illustrated and engraved by Michael Wohlgemuth, Wilhelm Pleydenwurff and Albrecht Dürer, and printed and published by Anton Koberger. The illustrated book is named after the Polish-American Book dealer Wilfred M. Voynich who acquired it in 1912. The Manuscript was delivered to Rudolf II by an unidentified courier who sold the book for 300 ducats, the equivalent of $14000au today. A note glued to the inside of the book states it once belonged to the private library of P. Petrus Beckx S.J. After the Court collapsed in 1619 it passed on to the Court’s Botanist. Upon his death it passed on to an anonymous collector and there it remained for 20 years. A faded signature on the first page quotes the name Jacobus de Tepenec, who tur
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