

Editorial

THE FIRST 150 YEARS OF "ARTIS" AND THE ARTIS LIBRARY

This year, 1988, the Royal Zoological Society "Natura Artis Magistra" (usually abbreviated to "Artis") is celebrating its 150th anniversary. During all the festivities, hardly any attention has been paid to the fact that its library was also founded in 1838. In order to rectify this, this editorial briefly reviews the history of the Artis Library and its superb collection.

It is known that from the very beginning books were donated to the Society; for instance a complete Buffon edition was acquired in the first year of the Society's existence. Very little has been published on the early history of the Society's library, although much relevant information can be found in the "Artis" archives (now deposited in the Amsterdam municipal archives).

From a lithograph in the Society's 1860 year-book (fig. 1) it is evident that an extensive collection, containing many great folio volumes, had been assembled at a fast rate. This rapid initial growth of the collection was mainly due to the incorporation, in 1856, of the private library of Gerard Frederik Westerman (1807-1890), who was one of the founders of the Society and became its second director in 1843. Westerman had been a bookseller and publisher and hence he was particularly interested in the library. Without Westerman's contribution, the Artis Library would never have grown to become such a valuable collection of general, zoological and related works, the oldest of which (a Dutch edition of "De Proprietatibus Rerum" by Bartholomaeus Anglicus) dates from 1485. For instance, Westerman had subscribed to the ornithological folio works of John Gould, that were published in instalments at the time. These subscriptions were later continued by the Society. In 1848 Westerman founded the periodical "Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde" and, by exchanging this with other scientific societies and academies, the number

of scientific periodicals grew steadily. Of course, Westerman also encouraged members to donate books to the Society. His success is evident from the long lists of donations to the library recorded in the Society's yearbooks published by M. Westerman & Son (i.e., his father and himself) between 1852 and 1875. The above-mentioned incunabulum by Bartholomaeus Anglicus is listed in the 1868 year-book, together with 76 other famous works, as a substantial gift of the Ladies G. and J. M. Radink from Amsterdam.

Furthermore, at auctions of libraries and collections of private collectors, apart from zoological material, also many books, periodicals, and even collections of animal portraits were bought. A large collection of drawings and engravings was acquired in 1866 at the auction of books of Professor Th. G. van Lidt de Jeude. Through the Society's curator, R. T. Maitland, the library acquired his "Atlas Zoologique", which was inserted in the so-called "Iconographia Zoologica", in which illustrations of every animal species known at the time were gathered systematically. This collection was considerably augmented by Maitland himself by inserting his own collection in the "Iconographia Zoologica" (Maitland, 1888: 22). Especially in the 19th, but still in the 20th century, the "Iconographia Zoologica" has been supplemented and consulted regularly. The collection is kept in wooden boxes and is still extant in the Artis Library, but the drawings, watercolours, etc. have been removed to guarantee the best possible preservation. The latter part of the collection contains several treasures of art, such as original drawings of Joseph Wolf, Maria Sibylla Merian, Aart Schouman, and many others. Some of these drawings are very important for zoological studies, since they either represent type-specimens or extinct species

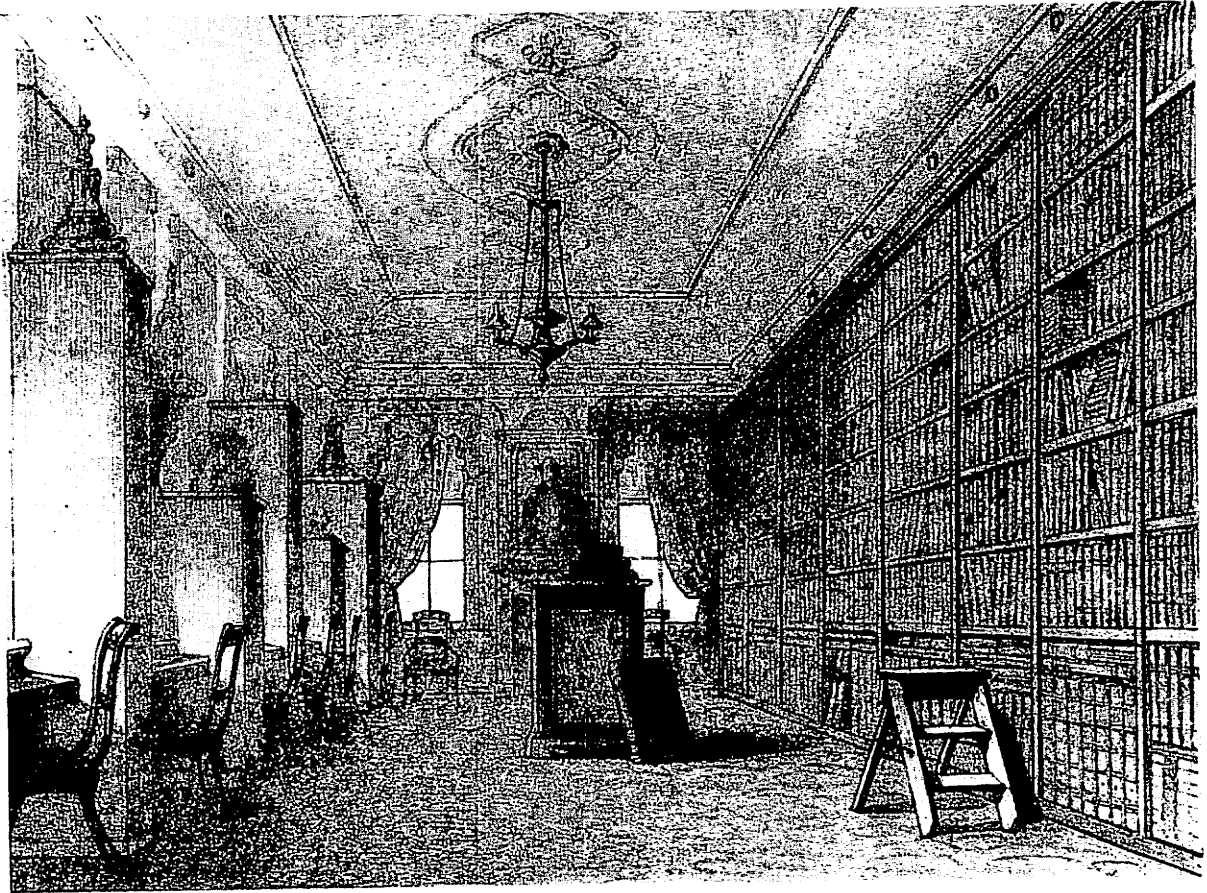


Fig. 1. The library in 1860. Lithograph by Emrik & Binger after an anonymous drawing (164 × 121 mm), reproduced from the frontispiece in: *Jaarboekje van het Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap Natura Artis Magistra*, 1860 (M. Westerman & Zoon, Amsterdam).

(see, e.g., Tuijn, 1969; Tuijn & Van der Feen, 1969; and Pieters, 1980).

In 1868 the library moved to a new building especially designed for it, in eclectic style, by the well-known Dutch architect Gerlof Bartholomeus Salm (1831-1897). Nowadays the library is still housed there, at Plantage Middenlaan 45A, next to the Zoo (fig. 2). In 1869 and in the early 1870's the library building was appreciably extended, in two phases, to house several of the Society's museum collections. This so-called "fauna building" of which the right-hand part is occupied by the library, has been placed on the monument list of the city of Amsterdam.

After 1868 the library grew steadily and in 1881 the first catalogue was published, compiled by the first officially appointed librarian whose name is known to us, Mr. G. Janse.* In this catalogue (Janse, 1881) 4381 entries are arranged in systematic sequence with an alphabetic index. In the jubilee volume of "Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde" published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Society, Maitland (1888: 23) mentions that the library collection was housed on more than 1200 metres of shelving.

* Before Janse's arrival in the library, the following persons have incidentally acted as librarian: G. F. Westerman himself, R. T. Maitland, and P. H. Witkamp.

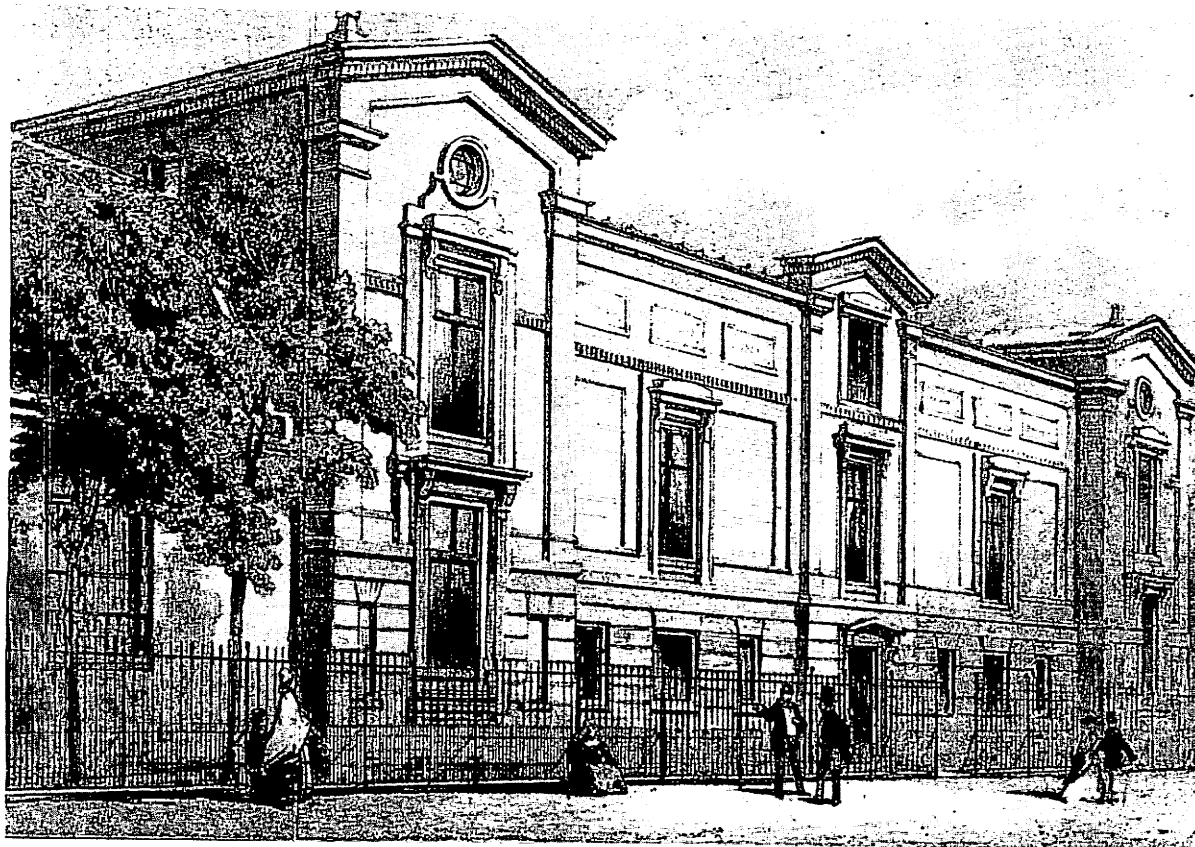


Fig. 2. The library building in 1868. Lithograph by Emrik & Binger, W. Hekking del. (161 × 114 mm), reproduced from the frontispiece in: *Jaarboekje van het Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap Natura Artis Magistra*, 1868 (M. Westerman & Zoon, Amsterdam).

Librarian Janse was succeeded by Johanna Scholten in 1912, who in turn was succeeded by Mrs. G. A. Jonges in 1920. Her successor, Johanna Scheffer, stayed from 1926 until 1954. These were hard times for the library: in the crisis years many subscriptions to journals had to be cancelled and funds for acquiring books were extremely limited. However, during that time there was one positive note, viz., the donation of the private library of the famous zoologist Professor Max Wilhelm Carl Weber in the 1930's. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Society, Johanna Scheffer organized an exhibition of the most interesting treasures of the library; its catalogue was published in vol. 27 of "*Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde*" (Scheffer, 1939). The most famous printed works and most of the unique manuscripts and drawings present in the library are

listed in this catalogue. In her foreword, Scheffer (1939: 115) pays special attention to the splendid collection of Linnaeana (works by or related to Linnaeus). The growth of this collection resulted from two exhibitions organized by the Society, the first on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Linnaeus's death in 1878 (Coster & Janse, 1878) and the other during the 6th International Botanical Congress in Amsterdam in 1935 (Mac Gillavry, 1935).**

** In 1967 the Linnaeana collection has been extended considerably by the acquisition of the Linnaeana collection of the entomologist F. C. J. Fischer (1902-1973) with financial aid from the Prins Bernhard Fund. Since then, the Linnaeana collection in the University of Amsterdam (including the Linnaeana in the University Library and in the library of the Netherlands' Entomological Society) seems to be third in the world, after those in London and in Uppsala.

In 1939 the Society was saved from bankruptcy by the transference of the ownership of all its possessions, except for the live animals, to the city of Amsterdam. From then onward the Society's library and its "dead" zoological collections have been incorporated in the University of Amsterdam. In fact this was a logical step, as the greater part of the zoological collections of the Society had already been curated by the staff of the Zoological Museum of the University since 1892. Professor Max Weber was the first director of the Zoological Museum. He was succeeded by Professor Lieven Ferdinand de Beaufort in 1922 and by Professor Hendrik Engel in 1950.

Since then, the catalogue of the library had to be incorporated within the catalogue of the University Library, a lengthy task that was completed in 1958. Furthermore, a new library board was established and since its transition to the University, the library has been under the supervision of the so-called "Artis Library Committee". Apart from the librarian, this committee consists of the director of the Artis Zoo, the University Librarian, and two University professors of zoology. The University Librarian excepted, this committee also functions as the editorial board of "Bijdragen tot de Dierkunde" since 1959.

After Johanna Scheffer's death (shortly after her retirement) in 1954, several library assistants of the University Library came once or twice a week to maintain the Artis Library. Thanks to the efforts of Professor Engel, the library came under the administration of the Zoological Museum in 1961. More funds then became available for the library, and its staff increased. Drs. Johan J. Frieswijk was the first librarian under the Zoological Museum directorate, and he was succeeded by Drs. Piet Tuijn in 1964 and by the undersigned in 1969. At the present time, the library collection comprises 2100 metres of shelving (about 80,000 volumes). The library is mainly consulted by zoological taxonomists and historians of science, although the number of researchers in history, and history of art, is increasing. Traditionally, the library is accessible to visitors of the Zoo and thus to the general public.

The malacological and ichthyological collections of the Zoological Museum, which occupied the other two-thirds of the "fauna building", have recently (1988) been moved to other University premises at the nearby Mauritskade and Salm's building with its large 19th century reading room with balustrade (fig. 3) has been declared a State monument. The remainder of the building will be adapted to lodge two other libraries: that of the Zoological Museum and the Library of the Foundation for Scientific Research in Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles. Thus, in 1988, Salm's intention that the whole "fauna building" would one day be destined for library purposes has been fulfilled. As a matter of fact, the building is also notable for the white marble plates set in the façade on both sides, with engraved names heightened with gold (see fig. 4). The names are:

On the street side:

ARISTOTELES
PLINIUS
C. GESNER
P. BELON
J. RAIJ
A. v. LEEUWENHOEK
J.F. GRONOVIVS
J. SWAMMERDAM
M.S. MERIAN
A. SEBA
G. EDWARDS
R.A.F. DE REAUMUR
P. ARTEDI
C. v. LINNÉ
L. DE BUFFON
L.J.M. DAUBENTON
P. CAMPER
M.J. BRISSON

On the Zoo side:

T. PENNANT
J.R. FORSTER
P.S. PALLAS
J.B. DE LAMARCK
F. DE AZARA
J.F. BLUMENBACH
F. LEVAILLANT
A. WILSON
A. VON HUMBOLDT
G. CUVIER
J.F. NAUMANN
C.J. TEMMINCK
M.H.K. LICHTENSTEIN
A.M.C. DUMERIL
J. VAN DER HOEVEN
L.C. BONAPARTE
W. VROLIK
ISID. GEOFFROIJ

These are the names of famous scientists whose works are present in the Artis Library. Many of these books are very old and, like other ones in the collection, badly need restoration. Therefore, a spacious book restoration workshop is to be established on the ground floor and another large part of the ground floor will be especially conditioned, so as to prevent the acidification of woody paper. The University of Amsterdam realizes the value of this unique library: investments have been made to safeguard the



Fig. 3. Reading room of the Artis Library in 1988. The bust on the left represents G. F. Westerman and the one in the middle Charles Darwin (photo: L. A. van der Laan).



Fig. 4. Detail of the façade of the "fauna building" showing some of the marble plates with names of famous scientists (photo: L. A. van der Laan).

survival of both the collection and its building in the future. Thus, with these promises in mind, the prospects for our unique library appear to be favourable.

Florence F. J. M. Pieters

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