

Virtual Museum of the History of Mineralogy

Newsletter 2007/2

On June 22, 2007 the Virtual Museum of the History of Mineralogy opened to the public. Since the very first days of the opening of the VMHM we were pleased to receive a lot of mails and we wish to thank all of you who addressed us congratulations, encouragements, information, suggestions and positive criticisms. We took your suggestions into account in order to improve the presentation of the site and of the collections. Many visitors manifested a profound interest to our initiative and this newsletter will be sent to over a hundred inscribed readers.

The collection of books is in progress and we focus on the addition of rare and/or important works in the fields of mineralogy and crystallography. We recently added the influential books of Haüy and Romé de l'Isle, the celebrated works by Agricola, de Boodt, Ercker and the famous illustrated descriptions of minerals by Sowerby and Rashleigh. For each book, we describe the exact collation of the actual copy and give references to recent detailed bibliographies such as Schuh's "Annotated bibliography of books published 1469 through 1919" (text available on-line). We also present illustrations of binding, title page and selected plates and it is our intention to increase this pictorial aspect.

Concerning the instruments, we are proud to present a number of goniometers which undoubtedly constitutes the most extensive virtual collection on the web; a total of 56 instruments are presently described and illustrated. This collection goes from the simple contact goniometers (24 items including an 18th century silver instrument signed by Nicolas Vinçard, constructor of the first goniometer for Arnould Carangeot) and the elegantly constructed 19th century Goldschmidt- and Mitscherlich-type instruments to the more recent and complex goniometers from the first half of the 20th century.

The collection of other instruments once used in mineralogy/crystallography (most of them based on optical phenomena) also grew spectacularly. An important contribution in this field came from the Museum for the History of Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium. From this source we could obtain information on such rare instruments as a sclerometer, an axial angle apparatus (both from R. Fuess) and a number of polarizing microscopes. This museum is worth paying a visit because among other instruments it presently houses the renowned Van Heurck microscope collection.

Our museum shop also came into being and we are pleased to include ads from collectors, dealers and prestigious booksellers. Interestingly, an historical copy of the "Crystallography" dedicated by Romé de l'Isle to the Belgian physician and mineralogist Jean Démeste was proposed and sold through our shop. Please remember that our museum shop also offers you the opportunity to place free classified advertisements related to the contents of our site.

Our pages devoted to crystal models and antique labels are also in progress and we recently added some interesting items.

You have the opportunity to contribute to the development of this site; we always appreciate receiving pictures and information to include in the collections as well as advertisements for our shop. We wish to thank all our contributors.

Paul Tambuyser Claude Hootelé