

Virtual Museum of the History of Mineralogy

Newsletter 2008/3 (December 2008)

www.mineralogy.be

Since the previous newsletter of June 2008 we continued to add rare and important mineralogy books to the collection of the virtual museum. At the time of this writing 75 titles, most of them early publications on minerals, are available. Among the newly added books are some incunabula including a 1st edition of Albertus Magnus' "[De Mineralibus Libri](#)" of 1476, (one of the first printed texts on minerals) and a rare colored copy of the "[Hortus Sanitatis](#)" of 1497. We also had the opportunity to add one of the rare colored copies of Hebenstreit's "[Museum Richterianum](#)" of 1743 as well as a [Gautier d'Agoty](#) of 1781, the first color printed book on minerals.

We are preparing the addition of more books, mainly from the 18th and 19th century, to the collection. In the near future the virtual museum will offer an overview with detailed descriptions and pictures of the most important and representative books in the fields of mineralogy and crystallography.

At the end of September 2008 as a spin-off activity of the virtual museum we initialized a discussion group "oryctics" devoted to the history of mineralogy and crystallography. Oryctics is an old English word for the study of minerals and fossils and is derived from the Greek ὀρυκτός meaning "dug from the ground". Terms like oryctology and oryctognosy were briefly used during the 18th century and first appeared in 1755 in a French book anonymously published by [Dezallier d'Argenville](#) "*L'Histoire Naturelle éclaircie dans une de ses parties principales, l'Oryctologie, qui traite des terres, des pierres, des métaux, des minéraux, et autres fossiles,...*"

The exhumation of this word for naming a group concerned with the history of these sciences seemed appropriate and constitutes a wink to all lovers of mineralogical antiques.

From the first days onward, we were pleasantly surprised by the amount of subscribers (presently over one hundred) to this new discussion group. The mixed audience of collectors, science historians, mineralogists, scientific instrument dealers, antiquarian booksellers, etc. already led to interesting and enlightening discussions. Topics for discussion include antiquarian books, publications and manuscripts, crystallographic goniometers and other antique crystallographic and mineralogical instruments, crystal models, old mineral labels and anything else related to the history of these sciences.

To subscribe (only members can participate in discussions) please go to the [oryctics page](#) on our website.

As in the earlier issues of this newsletter, we recall to all our lecturers that their contribution (pictures and information) to the Virtual Museum of the History of Mineralogy is always highly appreciated and that we also welcome advertisements (this service is entirely free) for the "[museum shop](#)".

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