

Virtual Museum of the History of Mineralogy

Newsletter 2020/2 (December 2020)

<http://www.mineralogy.eu>

Since our June 2020 newsletter, the Virtual Museum has been enriched with books and instruments. We would like to draw your attention and make some brief comments about these recently introduced objects.

Books:

- Our rare hand-colored copy of [Vom Bergkwerk xii Bücher darinn alle Empter, Instrument, Gezeuge unnd alles zu disem Handel gehörig\(Basel 1557\)](#) is the first German translation of Agricola's original *De Re Metallica* (Basel, 1556) edition and was published a year later. This translation was intended to provide miners and metallurgists, who did not know Latin, with an informative working manual which could be of practical use. However, the German text turned out to be of very poor quality because it was hastily translated by a person without scientific knowledge and unfamiliar with the mining terminology Agricola used. The woodcut illustrations are the same as those of the original latin edition. Note that the virtually [unaltered edition of 1580](#), as well as the original [De Re Metallica](#) (Basel 1556) are also present in the collection of the Virtual museum.

- The book [Recherches et observations naturelles](#) (1674) was written by the botanist Paolo Boccone (later Silvio, as a Cistercian monk) in the form of letters to renowned scholars whom he met in many European cultural centers of the time. Many natural history topics are discussed, including the detailed observations on corals that finally led him to connect the skeleton of corals with the world of stones.

Goniometers:

- An unsigned but appealing early brass [contact goniometer](#) from the first half 19th century. The instrument hinged at the 90° graduation presents a finely divided scale (0.5 degree) and rests in a very elegantly decorated leather-covered case.

- A more recent simple [contact goniometer](#) made of nickel-plated brass probably dates from the first half of the 20th century.

The addition of these two instruments brings the number of contact goniometers to 35 out of a total of 90 crystallographic goniometers described and illustrated in our museum.

Spectroscopes:

- A German hand-held spectroscope signed "Schmidt & Haensch" from the first half of the 20th century. This instrument belongs to a regular contributor whose «Antic optics» site (in dutch) we refer to in our links.

We have also added some new useful links in our [Links & Search](#) section such as to Schuh's Annotated Bio-Bibliography and two collections of microscopes and antique optical instruments.

We wish you all a Happy Holiday Season

Claude Hotele
Paul Tambuyser