



Communication with library users

How a herbarium library learns from its users

Gijs Baldee



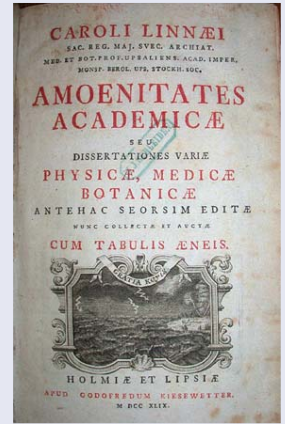
Reading room and Herbarium library

The National Herbarium of the Netherlands is the research and expertise centre for plant biodiversity in the Netherlands. Our scientific institute's library holds the Herbarium botanical reference collection. The library serves a diverse clientele that includes, apart from our staff, students, and amateur botanists, many colleagues from sister institutes from all over the world (about 400 foreign visitors each year).

Our library is special, for it is the uninterrupted historical botanical library, as a part of the Leiden University, since 1575. It consists of a unique historical book collection and a modern collection that is divided in different scientific 'specialties'. We also have a huge collection of journals on these subjects, and thousands of illustrations, with many items from the hands of famous illustrators.



Volumes I, II, and III of *Amoenitates Academicæ*, by Carl Linnaeus, 1749



Title-page of *Amoenitates Academicæ*, by Carl Linnaeus, 1749



S. Minsinger, W. Siegrist – *Hydrangea otakusa*, in: *Flora Japonica*, by Ph. Fr. Von Siebold, 1835



A. Munting – Red chalk drawing of *Malus aurantia* *Stris Distincta*, in: *Nauwkeurige Beschrijving der Aardgewassen...*, 1696.

The online resources consist of the OCLC Dutch Catalogue and the Leiden University catalogue, which can be used for searching, borrowing and extending books and article copies of our collections. The library website (www.nhn.leidenuniv.nl/index.php/library) contains links to botany and natural science related catalogues, databases, and e-journals. These services have improved the accessibility of our library collection.

Examples of non online resources are our card catalogue (discontinued since 2006) and BRAHMS, the herbarium database used in the library for referencing journal articles containing plant names, and linking to our digitized image database.



P.-J. Redouté (1759-1840) – *Geastrum varians* (March.), in: *Champignons du Luxembourg, planches inédites de Pierre-Joseph Redouté*, 1989.



Alexander Postels, Franz Ruprecht – *Agarum Gmelini*, in: *Illustrationes algarum...*, 1840.



Esmee Winkel – *Violaceae, Viola stagnina, var-stagnina*, unpublished, 2008.

NATIONAAL HERBARIUM NEDERLAND

NHN-Leiden library survey

1 How often do you visit the physical library?
Please indicate the option you prefer the most

almost every day
 every week
 every month
 occasionally
 never
 Other (specify): _____

2 For what reasons do you visit the library?
Please indicate the option you prefer the most

to use printed journals
 to use the book collection
 to see the new books and journals in the reading room
 for personal help/service with literature search
 for a place to study/work
 to use the photocopier
 Other (specify): _____

3 When you are searching for literature, is it easy to find in the library?

Detail of NHN-Leiden library survey, by Gijs Baldee, 2009

We are trying to give an excellent service to our library users. We've asked in a survey for their opinion concerning the library, the catalogue, the website and the services. In general they are happy with these aspects, but there was a wish for the extension of the opening hours and for a list of recent acquisitions on the website. We are now trying to find satisfactory solutions within the possibilities we have. This library survey will be repeated on a yearly basis.

