Michigan State University has served citizens around the world in the research and teaching of the agricultural sciences since its founding in 1855. As a result of this historical commitment to agricultural and animal science, the MSU Libraries have been collecting and building research collections in these fields for over 150 years. The Veterinary Medicine Historical Collection, housed in MSU’s Special Collections, includes over 1400 veterinary manuscripts and printed books dating back to the fifteenth century. Historians, veterinarians and others interested in veterinary medicine are now able to examine an electronic version of this catalog of material.

The collection began around 1857 at what was then known as Michigan Agricultural College. Although there are no detailed book acquisition records from this time period, donations from college alumni and friends numbered well over 200 pieces by 1957. Dr. J. Fred Smithcoors, veterinary anatomist and historian, helped obtain the valuable collection of his mentor and teacher from Rutgers University, Professor Fred R. Beaudette, for the Libraries. This collection contained over 150 rare books, incunabula, and manuscripts, nearly doubling the size of Michigan State University Libraries’ rare veterinary holdings.

Other notable contributions followed. The Libraries acquired rare editions from an auction catalog from the library of J.H. Anderham in Munich, Germany. In the late 1960s Marc Crum, director of the Kalamazoo Public Library, directed a gift of over 200 volumes to the MSU Libraries that he received as a donation from equestrians Gurdon and Virginia Dimoc. In addition to private acquisitions and donations, several deans of the College of Veterinary Medicine at MSU gave financial support to help create displays and short catalogs highlighting the rare collection. Over the last 25 years the collection has steadily grown in size, scope, and importance. While the bulk of the holdings focus on pre-nineteenth century works on the health and care of the domestic horse, there are many other pieces that add interest and value to the collection.

Some of the finest pieces in the collection are 25 unique manuscripts, including a fifteenth century copy of a veterinary treatise by Giordano Ruffo, stable master at the court of Frederick II, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

Ruffo, Giordano, Liber marischalce equorum [ca. 1400]. Courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries.
First written in 1250, it is considered the starting point for the revival of western veterinary practice. Printed materials include the only known copy of the first edition of the veterinary manual *Libro De Albyetería (1547)* by Francisco de la Reyna, who postulated the circulation of blood eighty years prior to Harvey’s famous discovery.


More recently obtained is a sixteenth-century Latin translation of the Greek manuscript *Kynosophion*, the first work on the care of dogs. Over the years, collection decisions have emphasized the acquisition of multiple editions of works. For example, there are several editions of Federico Grisone’s *Ordine di Cavalcare*, including a 1560 manuscript translation in German. There are at least three editions of Conrad Heresbach’s *Four Books of Husbandry*. Multiple editions by Henry Bracken, Francis Clater, Thomas deGrey, Richard Lawrence and William Youatt, among others, are housed within this collection.


In addition to an active acquisitions program, attention has been given to the promotion and access of the collection. An electronic catalog of the collection has been created to provide scholars and interested patrons access to the holdings. The late Henry Koch, head bibliographer of the MSU Libraries until 1987, drove this project with his keen interest and determination. After his retirement from the Libraries, Koch began producing a catalog similar in construction and caliber to John Podeschi’s catalog of the Paul Mellon collection and Ellen Well’s bibliography of horsemanship. Norman Comben provided a catalog model for the collection he had already donated to the Imperial Science Library in London. Though Dr. Koch made a valiant effort, his dream of seeing the catalog’s completion was not to be realized during his lifetime. A debilitating illness forced him to step away from the project and invite others within the MSU community to continue this
project. Dr. Peter Berg, assistant director for MSU Libraries and head of Special Collections has, with the help of other MSU Libraries personnel, continued the work on “Henry’s Catalog” towards completion and electronic format.

The on-line catalog is arranged in alphabetical and chronological order of publication for exact titles under the same author. A listing of the manuscripts begins the catalog, followed by all of the printed works. Cataloging is based on the Anglo American cataloging rules, second edition, 1988 revision (AACR2), except for a number of typographical conventions. Descriptions of the works follow the practices as outlined in Pauline Dingley’s Historic Books on Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry. Because of their uniqueness, manuscripts were described more fully. Pictures are provided for many of the title pages, as well as some of the finer woodcuts and anatomical drawings. Works acquired since 2000 will be added to the catalog.

Veterinarians continue to use and expand upon their early predecessors’ knowledge and practices in addressing today’s animal and human health concerns. The world has witnessed many dramatic shifts in the research and practice of health care because of the discovery of new diseases and disease mechanisms and the ways in which medical information is obtained and stored. Material once available to only a select few is now readily accessible to many. The acquisition of rare titles continues to be costly given the scarcity and competition for these highly sought-after materials. Readers are invited to peruse the MSU Libraries’ on-line version of the historical veterinary catalog at http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/vetmed/. In the land grant tradition established at MSU over 150 years ago, the Veterinary Medicine Historical Collection catalog seeks to provide practical uses for knowledge and to speed the diffusion of information to the state, the nation, and the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Molly A. Dean, MA, is a Library Assistant in the Veterinary Medical Center Library at MSU Libraries. Peter Berg, PhD, is Assistant Director for Special Collections, MSU Libraries.

ERRATA


1. Table of Contents: Dr. Tacal’s middle initial and last name were misspelled.

2. In the text of the article:

   a) On page 57, last paragraph, column 2: The Maclin-Caldwell Auction Company was actually located in the city of Ontario (not Chino, as stated).

   b) On page 58, 2nd paragraph, column 1 (line 10): The sentence should read, “We also had very close working relations with the Veterinary Public Health Section of the California Department of Health Services in Berkeley and later on, in Sacramento where they relocated in the Spring of 1989, and...”