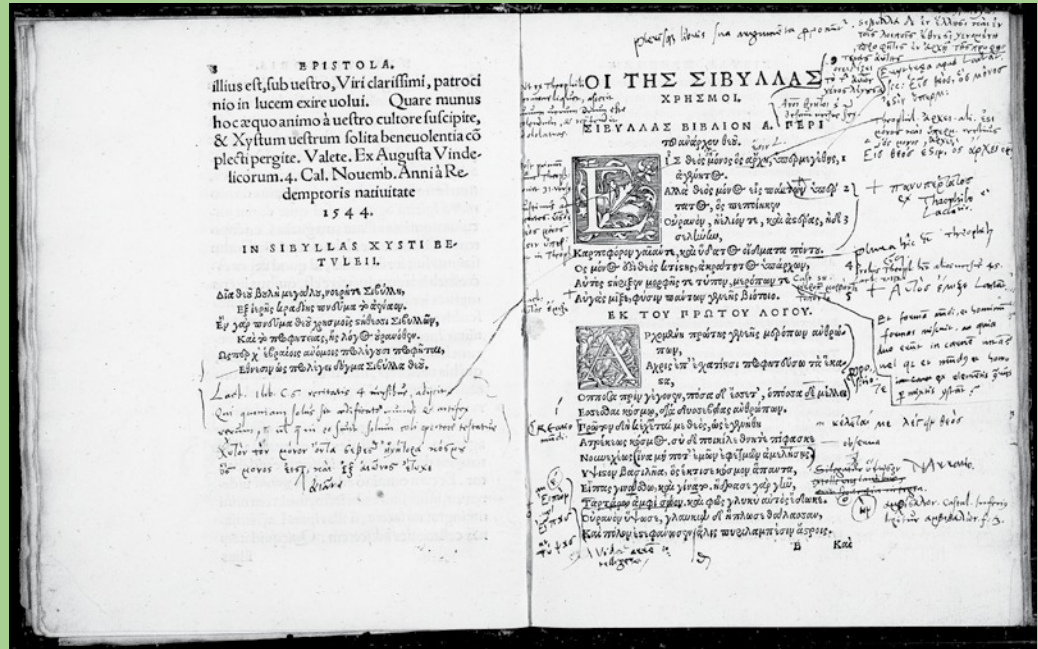


# Conrad Gessner's Private Library

## The Revealing Hand-Written Notes of an Early Modern Polymath

Advisor: Urs Leu, Zentralbibliothek Zürich



The Zurich physician, naturalist and polymath Conrad Gessner (1516–65) practised as a doctor, taught as Professor of Natural History at the *Hohe Schule* founded by Huldrych Zwingli in Zurich and wrote numerous works. Among his most famous writings is the *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545), an attempt to catalogue all printed and manuscript works ever produced in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, leading J. Christian Bay to dub him the ‘Father of Bibliography’ in 1916. His five-volume *Historia animalium* (1551–58) made Gessner the founder of modern descriptive zoology. Sadly it remained unfinished. Gessner also wrote important geological, pharmaceutical, and philological works that spread his fame far beyond Switzerland.

### Gessner's Library

As a scholar Gessner possessed a wide-ranging library, which was dispersed after his death. In recent years, nearly four hundred items have been tracked down in Zurich, Basle, Rome, Erlangen and Tartu.

### This Collection

This source edition of Gessner's private library contains those seventy-seven books that Gessner read most carefully and annotated by hand. The majority have been reproduced from the rich holdings of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, while

other important copies included in this edition are held by the Universitätsbibliothek Basel. The marginalia in these books are so numerous that they almost constitute a new set of sources, which are of interest not only to historians and philologists but also to those who study the history of early modern medicine and the natural sciences.

### Handwritten Notes

Conrad Gessner's private library provides a reflection of the personal interests and predilections of this remarkable renaissance man. It gives us a glimpse into the owner's hidden intellectual life, his conflicts and struggles, and his intellectual growth and development, as he selected each item, or was given it, and found a place for it in familiar surroundings. The fact that various copies moreover contain handwritten notes by their former owner, showing which passages were important to him – and indeed influenced his own work and writings – makes this private library even more revealing than a diary.



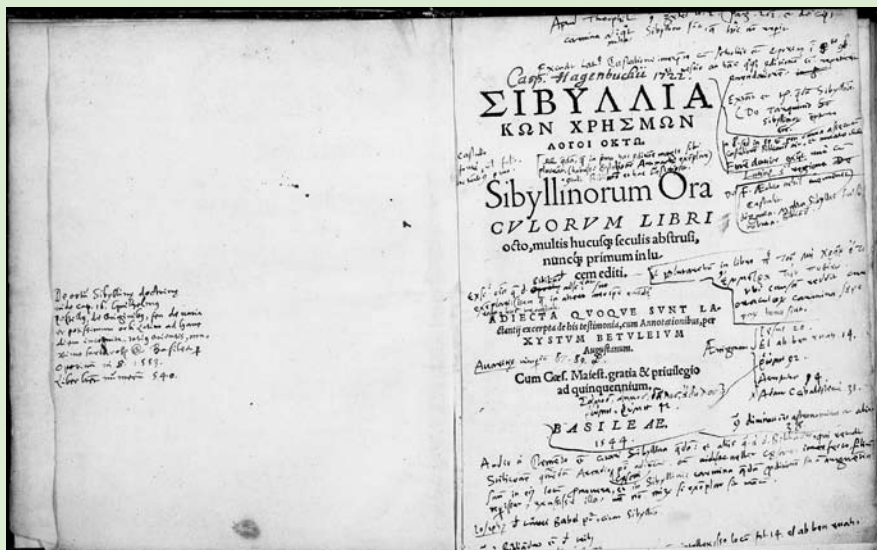
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#### *Conrad Gessner: Opera Omnia*

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#### *Conrad Gessner's Private Library*

Edited by Urs Leu, Sandra Weidmann and Raffael Keller.

A bibliography listing all items in Gessner's library. Available from BRILL in 2008.



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