From the Chronicle of the Imperial Academy of Natural Scientists [Leopoldina] (1694)

Abstract

The Academiae Caesareo-Leopoldinae Naturae Curiosorum, which can be loosely translated as the "Imperial-Leopoldina Academy of Natural Curiosities," was founded in the Free Imperial City of Schweinfurt on January 1, 1652, and is thus one of the oldest learned societies in Europe. In 1677, Emperor Leopold I. (1640–1705) granted privileges (e.g., no censorship) and official approval to the academy. Like other learned societies, the Academia Naturae Curiosorum published its own scientific journal, the *Ephemerides* or *Miscellanea Curiosa*, which focused on medicine and the natural sciences such as botany and physiology. The following passages describe the beginnings of the *Ephemerides*, the efforts to gain imperial privileges, and the establishment of a library, museum, and cabinet in Nuremberg.

Source

1670

[....]

At this time Dr. Johann Daniel Major was proclaimed an adjunct [professor] and Dr. Georg Wolfgang Wedel was admitted to the academy.

While our researchers had thus far only considered questions relating to the mineral, animal, and plant kingdoms in individual studies, they now decided, inspired by the example of the English and the French, to go in a new direction in order to make their research more productive, namely, by establishing *ephemerides* or natural history-medical miscellanea from medicine and its offspring and relatives, i.e., natural history, anatomy, pathology, surgery, chemistry, and even mathematics, to the extent that it can be useful for these matters. Whatever is worth knowing, extraordinary, and useful, whether it became known through reports from highly regarded doctors in Germany or other countries or through personal observation in practice or through careful research and experimentation, should be collected in one volume—in the order of receipt—and published annually. And there was all the more hope for the success of this project, since it would not only be of the greatest benefit to the human race—completely aside from the (literary) delight it would bring—but would also ensure in this way that the fame of brilliant men would be spread by works that would not vanish into oblivion. For to write an entire treatise for the sake of one observation or another would not make sense to such men; however, if kept to only a few pages, the works would easily go astray and could be lost to the memory of posterity.

The undertaking succeeded this year thanks to the active efforts of Dr. [Philipp Jacob] Sachs. The first volume appeared in October and was received with acclaim by the academic world. His Noble Imperial Majesty (who moreover pledged the academy his paternal protection) made his most gracious favor known. Consequently, it was only reasonable to humbly dedicate this and the following volumes to him; and all the more so, as His Highest Imperial Majesty clearly signaled his favor by sending a series of copper engravings depicting some of the treasures from the Imperial Treasury, which were printed in the aforementioned first volume.

However, to entice even more researchers to promote this shared scientific endeavor, it was decided to present a proof of the *Ephemerides* at the Frankfurt spring trade fair; the proof was to be published in octavo in 1670.

Meanwhile, further efforts were made to gain imperial approval by revising the new and earlier statutes according to the requirements of the then constitution of the collegium (the texts are found in the second volume of the first decade of the *Ephemerides*). Since a number of the members and an adjunct [professor] lived in Silesian Breslau [now Wrocław], they were given the right by the President to collect the submitted scientific papers. The society itself was given the name Sacri Romani Imperii Academia Naturae Curiosorum [The Holy Roman Empire's Academy of Natural Curiosities].

1671

In October, the second volume of *Ephemerides* finally appeared; in its frontmatter was a brief summary on the emergence and development of the academy, together with the statutes of the society and the members' names.

[....]

At the beginning of this year, namely on January 17, our esteemed colleague Dr. Gottfried Kaunig passed away in Breslau, and our well-born member Mr. [Christian] von Helwich, together with the other Breslau members, nominated Dr. Johann Gottfried Hahn, a very famous practitioner there, to fill the empty seat so that there would be the usual five members. They recommended him [Dr. Hahn] warmly to our illustrious president. The latter did not hesitate in granting this wish and admitted the man, who had already shown himself worthy of this honor with a learned study on the fever rampant in Breslau in 1729, into the bosom of our academy on May 1 with the sobriquet "Dexius."

On May 18, Dr. Georg Erhard Hamberger, Professor with Chair for Mathematics and Professor without Chair for Medicine at the University of Jena, was admitted to membership on the recommendation of the honorable Mr. [Georg Wolfgang] Wedel and given the name "Ctesibius."

On June 10, Dr Johann Ernst Hebenstreit, Public Professor with Chair for Physiology at the University of Leipzig was added to the register of the academy with the sobriquet "Cratevas II" on the recommendation of the illustrious director [Michael Ernst] Etmüller.

On June 22, Dr. Giovanni Tommaso Brini from Bergamo, a philosopher and physician in Padua, was admitted to our society with the sobriquet "Philagrius II,"

And on June 23, Dr. Johann Jakob Lerche, physician in (Moscow), with the sobriquet "Moschus" was recommended by the illustrious Mr. Friedrich Hoffmann.

On August 16, Dr. Hermann Friedrich Teichmeyer, Public Professor for Anatomy, Botany, and Surgery at the University of Jena, privy councilor and personal physician of Their Highnesses the Dukes of Sachsen-Weimar and Eisenach and member of the Royal Berlin Society of Sciences, was admitted to our academy with the sobriquet "Democritus II."

On August 23, Dr. Christian Heinrich Erndel, personal physician of His Highness and Magnificence the King of Poland and Electoral Prince of Sachsen, attained the distinction of becoming an adjunct [professor] of our academy.

In addition to all these proceedings, our illustrious [Johann Jakob] Baier dedicated the majority of his activities to

ensuring that the wishes both of his predecessor in the office of president and of most of our colleagues were fulfilled and implemented. In particular, the wish had been expressed for a long time and urgently—partly by the aforementioned members of our Imperial Academy, partly by other scholars—to establish in Germany, for their greater adornment and for the general benefit of all, a library for medicine and natural history, as well as a nature and arts theater or a museum for nature specimen and artifacts, which would house curiosities of this kind (based on the example of the collection of the Royal English Society founded in London), for which a suitable and convenient location in a larger city of in this area was to be determined. To realize this laudable wish in every possible way was a matter of reasonableness; however, to accomplish such an undertaking, it seemed necessary to make considerable outlays. Our academy, almost completely lacking the necessary resources, could not meet the costs, and for that reason, was forced to postpone this undertaking time and again and to consider it an empty wish. Since then, not only has Dr. [Christian] Mentzel, together with others, long made serious attempts to get this work started, but in 1690, Dr. Jakob Wolf, Professor of Medicine at the University of Jena and adjunct [professor] of our academy, had set his hopes on the beneficence of Their Highnesses the Dukes of Saxony—alumni of the said university in the Saale city—and obtained authorization from the illustrious president at the time, the blessed [Lucas von] Schroeck, by means of a special document, to establish a library and a museum of the kind in question in Jena (Protocollum, p. 46). However, these otherwise very beneficial plans were not carried out for various reasons, until finally, in the current year, our illustrious Baier took the difficult but at the same time entirely useful work in hand, trusting in the help of God, and attempted in any way possible to move it forward and complete it. The municipal authorities of Nuremberg were kind enough to give us a suitable location in a building that had previously belonged to the Convent of St. Catherine, and as a beginning, the illustrious president generously donated various outstanding pieces from his own treasury of books and his extensive collection of natural objects and artifacts (the new collection). In addition, he appealed in a request and invitation written and printed on September 17 of this year both to the esteemed and well-intentioned colleagues and to any other honorable and generous patrons of the fine arts and sciences, urgently asking them to lend friendly support in outfitting the said library and museum—in any way possible for them. This hope did not then remain entirely unrealized; instead, he saw with great satisfaction that both collections grew at least to some extent year by year. And it is our most fervent plea that, with time and God's blessing, this might increase.

[....]

On August 25, Mr. Anders Celsius, royal professor at Uppsala University and secretary of the Swedish Royal Society of Sciences, was invited by our illustrious president to join the academy when he briefly passed through Nuremberg and Altdorf on his way to France. As he proved prepared to do so without hesitation, he was inducted and named "Marcus Manilius II."

With God's blessing and through the untiring diligence of our illustrious president, the library, which was established toward the end of 1731, began to grow gradually, and the number of books, some generously donated and some acquired with academy funds, exceeded the first hundred. However, the place that had been kindly given to us for the initial installation did not seem sufficiently suitable, mainly because of excess humidity and inadequate ventilation. It thus became necessary to seek another more appropriate and suitable place to store of our small collection of treasured books, even if a certain annual rent would have to be paid for that purpose, as long as it was appropriate and did not exceed our resources. When such a space, with the required equipment, had been found in the house of a Nuremberg citizen, it was immediately rented for ten Rhenish guilders, and after the necessary repairs, was set up as well as possible at the end of October with our said library and the scientific collection.

Necessity required that another man finally be appointed to replace the late Dr. [Michael Ernst] Ettmüller, the highly respected [former] director of the *Ephemerides*, who had died the previous year, especially since a new volume of our Acta was to be published at the end of this year. So, after prior consultation with the other adjunct [professor] members, our illustrious president Baier had the pleasure of offering this honorable yet arduous distinction to me, Dr. Andreas Elias Büchner, when I passed through Altdorf on a journey at the beginning of September and looked him up. I objected that I lacked the necessary skills and turned down this office, which I never would have dreamed of taking on, with good reason. However, through various sufficiently convincing arguments, friendly persuasion, and the promise that he would in any case provide me the necessary support when needed, he finally brought me to the point where I not only promised to take this task onto my all too weak shoulders, but also to refrain from continuing the previous publication of the medical, natural history, and mathematical miscellanea and to dedicate any time left to me (after attending to ongoing business) to expanding and organizing the Acta of our academy. Soon thereafter, (he) most kindly (transferred) to me the aforementioned office by means of the usual document, written exactly on the day of the blessed Dr, Ettmüller's death, that is, on September 23, together with the other honors very graciously conferred in the imperial privilege document. And even if I cannot flatter myself to have done justice to him according to my obligation and in keeping with the expectations of every single member of our academy, I can still hope to have managed according to the best of my abilities.

Source: *Protocollum Academiae Caesareo-Leopoldinae Naturae Curiosorum: Edition der Chronik der Kaiserlich-Leopoldinischen Akademie der Naturforscher*, revised by Uwe Müller, Danny Weber, and Wieland Berg. *Acta Historica Leopoldina*, no. 60 (2013), pp. 49–51, 219–20, 225.

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Recommended Citation: From the Chronicle of the Imperial Academy of Natural Scientists [Leopoldina] (1694), published in: German History Intersections, <https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/knowledge-and-education/ghis:document-167> [September 14, 2026].