

## New York Botanical Garden's Mertz Library Appoints New Director



### A Message from Rhonda Evans, Mertz Library's New Director

Dear CBHL members,

I am incredibly excited to join the New York Botanical Garden as the Director of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. I joined NYBG a little over a month ago and have been learning about the Garden and the wonderful collections and services available at the Library. I hope that I will have the opportunity to meet and get to know many of you, in the meantime I would like to share with you a little about myself.

I began working in libraries over 15 years ago at the law library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where I was a law student. I returned to New York and spent a few years working as a practicing attorney, but I had already fallen in love with the profession of librarianship. I worked in law libraries while earning my MLIS at Pratt Institute. After receiving my degree I spent close to eight years at the New York Public Library. There I served in various roles, such as an Adult Services Librarian at the Columbus

Branch in Hell's Kitchen, where I worked closely with the local community creating programs, performing outreach, and providing reference services. The Electronic Resources Librarian, where I oversaw the management and use of NYPL's over five hundred databases, and finally in 2019 I became the Assistant Chief Librarian at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture where I stayed for the remainder of my time at NYPL. During that time, I also taught in the Library and Information Science Program at Pratt Institute.

I was drawn to NYBG for many reasons, including my personal love of plants (feel free to ask about my collection of succulents!), as well as my love of the Bronx, where I have been a resident for over a decade. However, I am most impressed by the fact that The Mertz Library serves such a diverse group of patrons,

globally and locally, with collections unparalleled anywhere else in the world. As I continue to get to know the wonderful staff and all that the Library has to offer, I will work with the Library team to understand how we can best serve you. I am looking forward to what the future holds for the Mertz Library and I hope you are too!

Sincerely,  
Rhonda Evans  
Director, LuEsther T. Mertz Library

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Edited by Rita M. Hassert  
Library Collections Manager  
Sterling Morton Library  
The Morton Arboretum

January 19-22, 2024  
American Library Association  
The Library Learning Experience  
Baltimore, Maryland  
<https://alaliblearnx.org>

March 12-14, 2024  
Computers in Libraries 2024  
Arlington, Virginia  
<https://computersinlibraries.infotoday.com/>

April 7-13, 2024  
American Library Association  
National Library Week  
<https://www.ala.org/>

May 2-4, 2024  
LOEX 2024 Conference  
Naperville, Illinois  
<https://www.loexconference.org/>

May 6-9, 2024  
Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries  
56th Annual Meeting  
and joint conference with  
USAIN, the United States Agricultural Information  
Network  
East Lansing, Michigan  
<http://www.cbhl.net>

May 16-19, 2024  
American Alliance of Museums  
2024 Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo  
Baltimore, Maryland  
<https://annualmeeting.aam-us.org/>

June 24-27, 2024  
American Public Gardens Association  
2024 Conference  
Boston, Massachusetts  
<http://www.publicgardens.org>

June 27-July 2, 2024  
American Library Association  
Annual Meeting  
San Diego, California  
<https://2024.alaannual.org/>



# CBHL Members' East News

Edited by Shelly Kilroy  
Librarian, Peter M. Wege Library  
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

## New Director and International Intern at Longwood Gardens

Gillian Hayward  
Library Manager  
Library and Information Services  
Longwood Gardens

### **Hannah Rutledge, New Library Director**

Originally from Arkansas, Hannah holds a PhD in Information Science and an MLIS, both from the University of North Texas, and a BA in Anthropology from Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. Additionally, she is the volunteer Director of the research library at the Kaxil Kiuic Biocultural Reserve and Millsaps Puuc Archaeological Research Center in the Yucatan of Mexico, as well as a Consulting Scholar at Penn Museum's Cultural Heritage Center. Prior to joining Longwood Gardens in September 2023, Hannah was the Director of the Holman Biotech Commons at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. She began her career as a medical librarian at Children's Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, and then held library leadership positions at Omnicom Group and Emory University. Though this is her first time working in the world of botanical and horticultural libraries, she welcomes the challenge and is excited to meet and work with new friends and colleagues in CBHL. When not at work, Hannah knits, reads, and stays outdoors as much as possible with her two young children.

Feel free to reach out to her at [hrutledge@longwoodgardens.org](mailto:hrutledge@longwoodgardens.org) and/or on LinkedIn.



### **Sabelo Sibiyi, New International Intern**

My name is Sabelo Sibiyi, I'm from South Africa. I am a graduate student at the University of Cape Town, pursuing a Master's degree in digital curation. I have almost six years of experience working in different kinds of libraries in South Africa. I wanted to broaden my knowledge in special libraries, as a result I applied for an internship program at Longwood Gardens where I am currently interning. In the past three weeks I have been immersed and exposed to different kinds of library systems, namely: the Digital Gallery (Asset Bank), Archives (Archivera), Library system (EOS.Web) and plant records system. I am really learning a lot at Longwood Gardens; the experience I am having has exceeded my expectations. The people are very friendly and the environment is very refreshing.



# Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Updates

Janet Evans  
Associate Director  
McLean Library  
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

We celebrated [Archives Month Philly](#) in October by participating in the annual Lantern Slide Salon, hosted by Wagner Free Institute of Science, held in their vintage 19th century auditorium using their turn-of-the-20th-century lantern slide projector. Participating institutions included [Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University](#), [American Philosophical Society](#), [The Historical Society of Frankford](#), [Penn Museum](#), [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#), and [Wagner Free Institute of Science](#).

In the spirit of lantern exhibition culture, this salon brought together unique and rarely-seen images presented in the context for which they were originally created. Shown were scientific illustrations and photographs from Academy of Natural Sciences collecting expeditions; Tahiti explorations in the 1920s organized by an anthropologist from Penn Museum; images documenting the arrival of the elevated train in Philadelphia's Frankford neighborhood; images depicting the 300th anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's arrival in Philadelphia; images from a 1912 lecture "Ancient Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria" from the Wagner Free Institute of Science; and views of Switzerland from PHS's McLean Library.



*Swiss Goats, Jay V. Hare Lantern Slide Collection,  
PHS McLean Library & Archives*

## Latest Virtual Exhibit

[Groundwork: Three Early Honorary Members of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#). William Coxe, Mary Griffith, and J. C. Loudon were among the first Honorary Members of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. William Coxe (1762-1831), first PHS honorary member (1828), was a celebrated American orchardist and author *A View of Cultivation of Fruit Trees, and the Management of Orchards and Cider* (1817) -- the first book on pomology written by an American or about American fruit trees. Mary Griffith (1772-1846) was elected as the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's first woman honorary member in 1830. Griffith's Charlieshope Bee Hive introduced a design that would protect the bees from predators and create conditions that would increase the health of bees. J. C. Loudon (1783-1843), noted Scottish botanist, landscape architect, and author, was elected an honorary member of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1830. This virtual exhibit was created by archivist Penny Baker.

## New ILS -- Koha

We've now migrated from our old library system to a new platform, [Equinox Koha](#). Now our library users can search the online catalog and log in to place holds, renew books, make lists of favorite books, or view their borrowing history. PHS McLean Library is part of a consortium of libraries that jointly purchased the system (with separate instances). The members include the German Society of Pennsylvania, the Rosenbach Museum & Library, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Wagner Free Institute of Science.

## JSTOR Open Community Collections

We are uploading image collections to JSTOR's [Open Community Collections](#). Community Collections enables institutions to host their special collections on the JSTOR platform, making unique primary source collections discoverable to a large network of researchers, faculty, and library users worldwide. Institutions don't have to be JSTOR participants to access or contribute to Community Collections, and use is free and open to all. We like its functionality and easy-to-use statistics dashboard.

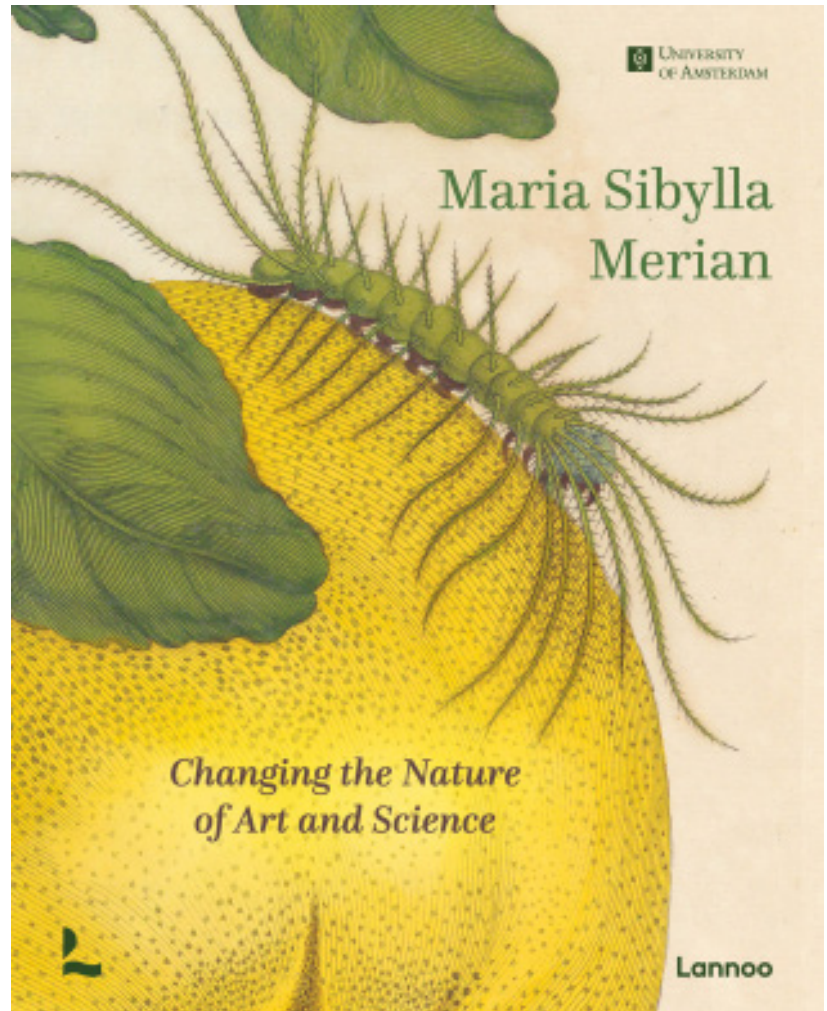
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## Book Reviews

Edited by Gillian Hayward  
Library Manager  
Library and Information Services  
Longwood Gardens

*Maria Sibylla Merian: Changing the Nature of Art and Science* by Bert van de Roemer, Florence Pieters, Hans Mulder, Kay Etheridge, Marieke van Delft. Belgium: Lannoo Publishers, 2022. 304 pages. \$70.00, ISBN: 9789401485333.

Reviewed by Kristine Paulus  
Collection Development Librarian  
LuEsther T. Mertz Library  
The New York Botanical Garden



To call Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) a botanical artist, entomologist, scientific illustrator, naturalist, or to affix any one label to her, would be a disservice to her prodigious oeuvre. *Maria Sibylla Merian: Changing the Nature of Art and Science*, published last year by Lannoo, examines the life and work of the titular German-born subject. Richly illustrated, this volume of 21 concise essays includes material presented at an international conference of the Maria Sibylla Merian Society in 2017. The interdisciplinary symposium, held on the three-hundredth anniversary of Merian's death, featured the work of the world's foremost experts on Merian, natural history, art, and related fields.

I was fortunate to attend the *Pioneers of Natural History* course at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation earlier this year, taught by two of the book's authors Kay Etheridge and Henrietta McBurney. The course was a comprehensive survey and crash course in botanical art and natural history illustration, with the work of Merian and Mark Catesby as its foundation, the latter being heavily influenced by the former. It was an incredible experience and I highly recommend it if offered again. Like Merian, Etheridge and McBurney are multi-talented, as skilled at teaching as they are at researching and writing.

December 2023

Groundbreaking and entrepreneurial, Merian followed an unusual career path for a woman in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. *Changing* offers a detailed biographical portrayal, including her upbringing, which was accompanied by privileges not accessible to all. Raised in an educated and artistic family, Merian had a strong and supportive network, which certainly contributed to her success. Her stepfather was a painter and trader of tulips during the era of Tulipmania. She married one of his pupils, who was also quite successful. She had exceptional access to gardens and plant collections. Amazingly, she sacrificed it all for a strict religious colony, which she later left and resumed her work and renewed success.

Known primarily for her work on Lepidoptera, Merian's insatiable curiosity and early interest in insects drove her to pursue studies in a male-dominated field. While she was not the first person to document ecological interactions, her direct observations from life were rendered with scientific accuracy and artful compositions that had great aesthetic appeal as well. She was also one of the first to explore the process of metamorphosis, a controversial concept then.

Though she experienced success in her lifetime, Merian's work was later undermined and dismissed as mere picture books, or worse – a dabbler in the domestic, delicate “female” art of embroidery (no matter how lifelike her flowers, “painted with needles,” may have been), greatly diminishing her reputation. This was not helped by the simplified text in the Dutch edition, nor by Carl Linnaeus' pronouncement rejecting the use of images for the determination of genera, being only useful “to the illiterate.” However, he would later name over 200 species based on her work.

Just as it focused on transformation or metamorphosis, Merian's work evolved from earlier, highly ornamental *Blumenbücher* (Flower Books) to the more scientific *Raupenbücher* (Caterpillar Books). While book's subtitle, *Changing the Nature of Art and Science*, refers to how her work changed over time, it also refers to the profound ways her work changed natural history. The book highlights her wide-ranging and long-lasting legacy and influence and looks at contemporary artists working at the intersection of art and science, who continue to take inspiration from Merian.

Widely considered her masterpiece, *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (1705) resulted from her work in Suriname. At 52, Merian and her daughter set sail for the Dutch colony in South America, resulting in her magnum opus. She most certainly could not have achieved it without the assistance of an indigenous woman, who accompanied them on their return to Europe. While her name is not known, she is imagined in the poetry of Cynthia Snow, which punctuates *Changing the Nature of Art and Science*. The book concludes with her poem, “To Maria, the Naturalist / From Esther, the Arawak Servant.” A chapter describes the deplorable conditions for enslaved Native Americans and Africans in Suriname. Merian herself wrote of her interactions with the inhabitants, and their medicinal and other uses for plants. Though research suggests that she most likely did not own slaves, in her texts, she does refer to some people with the possessive “my slaves” and “my Indian.” Treated with sensitivity, this topic is not brushed over.

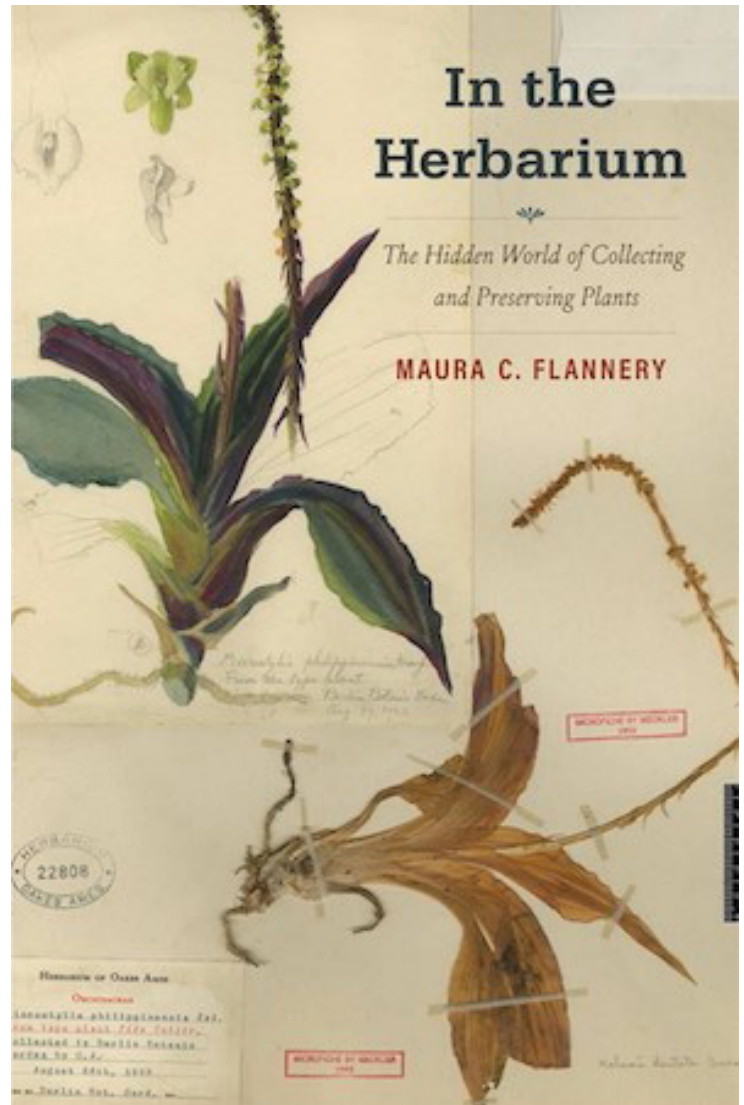
*Maria Sibylla Merian: Changing the Nature of Art and Science* is an enlightening exploration into the world of Merian and her predecessors and successors. A detailed timeline and an impressive, exhaustive bibliography are included. The book is edited by Maria Sibylla Merian Society members Bert van de Roemer, Hans Mulder, Kay Etheridge, Marieke van Delft, and CBHL member Florence F.J.M. Pieters.



*In the Herbarium: The Hidden World of Collecting and Preserving Plants* by Maura C. Flannery. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023. 336 pages. \$35.00. ISBN: 9780300247916.

Reviewed by Emma Hodgson  
Library Associate  
LuEsther T. Mertz Library  
The New York Botanical Garden

In a way, flipping through the pages of *In the Herbarium* feels like sifting through a real herbarium. Author and fellow CBHL member, Maura C. Flannery, layers countless people, places, and plants to provide a rich chronicle of how herbaria came to be. Her passion for the subject, springing from an experience with a Providence herbarium which left her “moonstruck,” is clear on every page. While herbaria may appear to be mere collections of dried plants, Flannery’s careful eye demonstrates how they are inextricably intertwined with the histories of colonialism, science, and even philosophy. “The plants are dead,” as she writes, “but so much lively, passionate work went into creating the sheets and studying them that they bristle with life.”



Flannery’s work begins with an overview of botanical history and how the need for herbaria developed. Up until the early modern period, illustrated depictions of plants were considered more valuable than dried plant specimens, which over time lost their color and were difficult to preserve. However, the accuracy of these illustrated depictions decreased as copies were made from copies and so forth, until medieval herbals became so stylized none of the plants they depicted were identifiable.

The interest in scientific empiricism and the advent of the printing press paved the way for Otto Brunfels’ 1530 influential herbal, illustrating European flora. Drawn from life and then carved into wood blocks, publishers could print hundreds of copies without ever sacrificing the integrity of their depictions, making accurate botanical depictions widely available for all. Flannery’s work is peppered with photographs of Brunfels’ excellent work, as well as nearly all other works she references, which provides a visual tether to her discussions of herbaria.

At the same time Brunfels’ work on European flora is being read, European powers are curious about the “new world” of the Americas and the potential usefulness of its flora. This is where we see herbaria truly take flight, with a sudden need to catalog and describe thousands of new and unfamiliar plants. Many volumes of these *herbae nudae* (the name European botanists gave unnamed plants) gave European colonial powers key insights into the material potential of their conquests and introduced plants such as pineapples, potatoes, and corn to the European continent. Flannery notes how this early movement of plants is



linked to the early slave trade. For example, a Dutch collector working in 1587 western South America preserved not just plants native to the region but also African plants such as okra, illuminating the “early pervasiveness of enslaved labor in the Americas” (p. 57) and how European explorers utilized indigenous knowledge from the Americas only to further their exploitation and oppression across the globe.

Flannery carefully notes how modern herbaria were only made possible with the knowledge and labor of both enslaved and indigenous people, whose contributions were often erased by the very botanists they helped. George Forrest, a botanist working in early 20th-century China, would destroy whatever notes were taken by his local collectors, deeming what he could not understand unimportant. Thus, Forrest erased likely precious scientific insights. Many of these collectors’ names and stories were discarded in a similar fashion, and thus their histories remain unwritten. Herbaria must reckon with the fact that many of the items in their collection are inextricable from this dark history.

Often, the history of herbaria becomes split between those who find scientific or aesthetic value within them and those who find monetary value within them. Herbaria became so indicative of the wealth and intelligence of European powers that Napoleon considered them “spoils of war” to be plundered for the benefit of France. Later in the nineteenth century, personal herbaria became such an intense fad that we have letters from a teenage Emily Dickinson to her friend, asking, “Have you made an herbarium yet? I hope you will if you have not, it would be such a treasure to you; ‘most all the girls are making one,” (p. 145). The poet herself created a bound herbarium collection of over 424 carefully laid specimens.

There is so much ground to cover in the history of herbaria that at times, I found myself wishing for more depth and detail from Flannery. While she introduces us to a myriad of individuals and instances, we receive only a brief overview of them and few glimpses into their lives. Many botanists and collectors also kept journals or published other written works about their exploits; perhaps hearing about their discoveries and inner lives in their own words would have established more of a personal connection between the readers and figures. However, some of this disconnect is attributable to the sheer number of those who contributed to herbals and herbaria. They were, by nature, a collaborative effort.

Flannery ends her chronicle by assessing the current place of herbaria in our contemporary society. A herbarium often synergizes the science of botany with the social history of individuals and empires and thus possesses a unique interdisciplinary vantage; the tactile and visual nature of specimens serve to vividly illustrate these links. However, since the peak of the natural history craze in the 19th century, herbaria have slowly lost funding, interest, and institutional support. Flannery urges the modern herbarium to make itself well known to the public as an asset to education and enrichment in order to survive.

Ultimately, everything you could ever want to know about how herbaria came to be, Flannery provides. It presents a great overview of a wide-reaching scientific practice that urges the reader at many points to embark on botanical adventures of their own.



## CBHL Newsletter, Issue 171, December 2023

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### Submissions Welcome!

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