As letters go, the timing of these insights always seem to span an large expanse of time, yet they are only quarterly updates. So, much seems to have passed since last December that it is hard to believe that it is only 3 months. From the last newsletter the major interest has been (and understandably so) the recent additions. So, here we go..

Scanned Text & New Collection

In the last newsletter I wrote “A multi-page scanner is booked and hopefully the initial results will be available early February.” How wrong I was! Yes a scanner was book and I’d arranged a few days to intensively scan the documents. It all came unstuck when inquiring about the model of the scanner, the connection to the computer was the new USB2 standard. Owning an increasing aging and superseeded computer without the USB2 abilities the office hire company sadly cancelled the booking and fortunately didn’t charge any cancelation fee. So it was back to square one.

Ringing around the other office equipment hire companies came to no avail, as all the latest models with the now standard USB2 connection was all that was available. One saleperson did inform me that I could infact use the old USB1 connection on my computer, but considering that it runs a 7bit stream as compared to a 400+bit stream it would be like trying to fill a bucket with sand using tweezers.

By this time January was slipping by and the scanner advice was becoming more compilated when the original company emailed informing me that infact I could use the scanner with the old connection (something that I already knew) and that I should book the scanner for about 3-4 weeks instead of the original 1. It seemed like the obvious choice when I suddenly realised that the cost of 3-4 weeks exceeded the cost of a simplier multi-function Canon printer/scanner/fax thingo that I has seen at a local office supplier.

The budget was looking grim until the decision was made to spend nearly all the money saved over the last year on this project. Initially the weekly hire was AU$180 for a scanner that could fast speed scan documents at 20 pages per minute. It was a different story with the Canon MP830 that we purchased, whilst a brilliant piece of home-office equipment with a strong heart and a automatic feeder tray limited to 30 pages it was going to take a long time to scan nearly 3000 pages.

Jump forward a month and a half and the last page finally churns through the scanner. Hurray! Stage 1 is complete. The constant whirring of the machine, the constant refeeding of the tray, the rays of light scanning the walls from the edge of the scanner, the data streaming into the harddrive and watching the worm slowly march across a bar of transmission indicators finally fell silent. Now, what to do with all this new data. How many more CDroms? Packaged with the Canon MP830 was a small suite of lite software packages, one of which was a .pdf maker for the scanner, so after experimenting with the compression setting the entire 24 titles that had been scanned where made into high quality .PDF files (I was actually very impressed by the software and the resulting files, remarking that I thought that it was a big value part of the purchase).

Another major decision was then made, after asking advice, to compress the original collection of .jpg files into the new .PDF files creating a new _original.PDF file code. The .PDF files have a reasonable ability to text search and are much more friendly to use as one file rather than the at time awkward 300+ scanned page files. I am positive that readers will appreciate the compression and file changes.

So, now the collection lives on 3 CDroms. But for how long?

Major Investments

The second week of March was a great time, life seemed to be getting back to normal, past the juggle of work, family, scanning, when a friend offered some monerary support to advance a project that I had been thinking about for sometime: Putting the entire collection on DVDrom. With 4 gig of space the entire chess game of file sizes, number of discs, disc label designs and printing would be solved. The research has been done and a new DVDburner now sits on the table next to me as I type,[purchased yesterday], containing the promise of a new direction and future for the digital collection: one disc!

So, the last quarter has been a very expensive one, with over AU$700 re-invested into the digital library to keep the R.A.M.S. digital spirit alive. Your support like never before is needed, please tell anybody you know might be interested in supporting this project to buy a disc.

The new DVDrom collection will be first offered to existing readers by way of private emails to pre-order the release of the DVDrom with all the new material, which are envisaged to be available very soon after printing and packaging are arranged. Exciting times ahead!
Thinking back to the previous quarter, what had taken a considered amount of my spare time was the podcast promotion project. Considering that 10’s of 1000’s of people use itunes to stream and listen to radio and independant podcasts it seemed like a good promotional venture to expose RAMS Digital. After all, the web works on content and having the ability to respond to someone typing ‘alchemy’ into the itunes search window seemed like a good target for future readers of the collection.

Over the past quarter 13 podcast ‘shows’ have been hosted, at the time of writing, 2068 downloads have been transacted which equates to approximately 160 per show. The individual responses has been encouraging but the transference to sales to support the library have been slow. Admittedly the content of the shows are the priority with the material read late at night during last November, which according to one humorous listener is obvious. Most feedback is appreciative of the insightful material read.

It is a slow progress, fortunately the website has an unlimited stream account so the red graph below that witnesses the sharp increase in kBytes traffic has not cost any more. The website is limited to 100meg of space which allows for only a few episodes to be hosted at once, which might be a disadvantage to newly subscribed listeners. The new picture embedding mp3 format called .m4a has been fun and increasingly popular with the enhanced version of the shows being more downloaded. Each late night Thursday/friday when I compress and upload the show making the .m4a is a pleasant novelty. Using the Podcast Maker software you can listen to the episode and drop images to match the topic straight from Google Image search.

You can subscribe to the AlchemyPOD podcast by typing in : http://www.ramsdigital.com/podcast/podcast.xml into itunes or such podcasting software, or listening to it online by clicking a link on the frontpage of the website.

The plans for the next quarter are:
- continue compiling the Table of Contents documentation on all the new titles. The project has started with the completion of "18 Short Tracts of Alchemy", "An Old Alchemical Treatise", "Potpourri Alchemia", "Potpourri Alchemia. Vol.2" "Writings of Urbigerus", "MONSR. DE LA BRIE'S PROCESS", "De Auro (on gold)", "Treatise on Metallic and Mineral Medicines" , "Three Tracts of the Great Medicine of the Philosophers" & "Liber Ratziel".

- to complete the DVDrom project and make it available as soon as possible. It is imagined to be an option of purchasing the collection on 3 CDroms or 1DVDrom.
- News on future scanned titles is not available at the time of writing this newsletter, but R.A.M.S. Digital’s benefactor, Jeff Ninztel (son of Hans Ninztel), is informed me that his work in compiling, catagorising and cataloguing his father’s collection continues. He is also in the process of selling some of his Dad’s laboratory equipment on ebay, so if you are interested check out: http://myworld.ebay.com.au/nintzel/

Otherwise, to all readers of this simple newsletter I wish you success in your endeavours and thank you for your support. If you have read this newsletter and haven’t yet purchased a copy of the collection then do so immediately!

Kind regards,
Andrew Kettle.


Solinus Salztal's "$\text{Fountain of Philosophical Salt}$" & "$\text{A Recapitulation}$" by Orthelius of Sendivigius. "A New Light on Chemistry". 1654. Translated from the Latin by Patricia Tahil. R.A.M.S., 1986. 33 pages.


"Treatise on Metallic and Mineral Medicines" by Quercetanus (Joseph Du Chesne). A Collection of the Most Precious and Rare Secrets, Taken from the Manuscripts of the late Monsieur Joseph Du Chesne, Sieur de la Violette, Officer and Physician in Ordinary to the King. Paris, 1641. R.A.M.S. 1986. 84 pages.


