Title Page Exhibit at the Library of the Health Sciences Chicago

by Kevin O’Brien

The Special Collections Department of the Library of the Health Sciences-Chicago (LHS-C) has over the years accumulated a large collection of rare medical books through donations from faculty book collectors and other acquisitions. Visitors to the Library now have the opportunity to view a selection of reproductions of title pages in the exhibit, “Embellished title pages: medical texts from the 16th and 17th centuries.”

The modern title page slowly evolved from the colophon, a simple listing of a book’s author and printer which originally appeared at the conclusion of the text. As the information included in the colophon was gradually moved to the front of the book to give the reader more immediate access to its title and author, printers took the opportunity to illustrate the page with designs, portraits and other graphic elements.

The books selected for the exhibit provide examples of many of the notable features of title page design from this period, including intricate woodcuts, detailed engravings and color typography.

Among the images on display are the title pages of Hieronymus Brunschwig’s Medicinarius of 1505, one of the earliest books in the Library’s collection, and of the 1555 edition of the De Humani Corporis of Andreas Vesalius (pictured on the next page).

The exhibit is housed in the display cases outside the administration office on the second floor of LHS-C and was made possible by the generosity of Sidney J. Blair, M.D., FACS in partnership with the University Library.
The images may also be viewed online as one of UIC’s contributions to the CARLI Digital Collections repository.

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