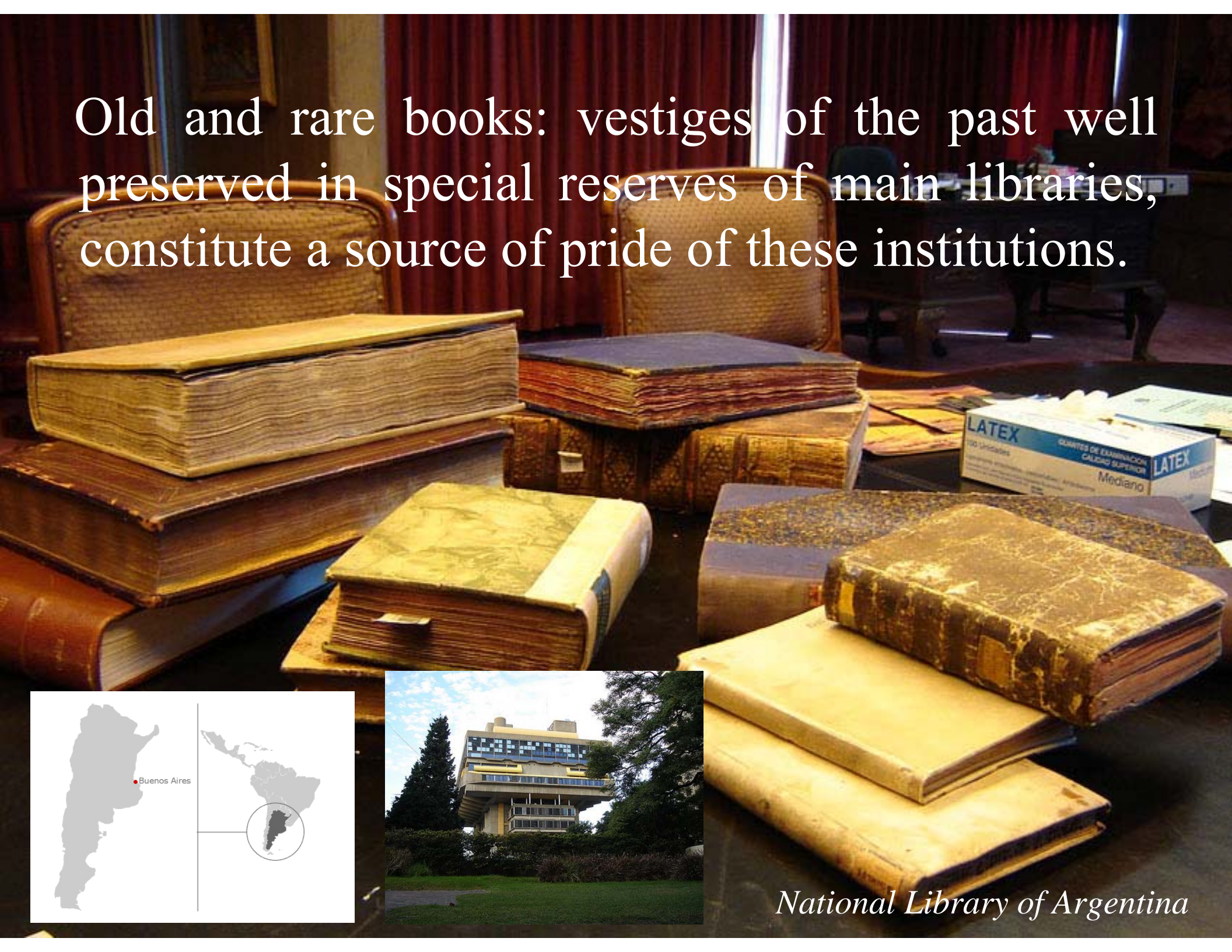


The National Library of
Argentina: exhibiting astronomy-
related rare books during 2009

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Old and rare books: vestiges of the past well preserved in special reserves of main libraries, constitute a source of pride of these institutions.



National Library of Argentina

Among the many *incunabula* owned by Argentina's National Library, a couple of volumes stand out.



It includes not only a description of Pliny's marvelous hominids: headless Libyans endowed with eyes and mouth in their chests...

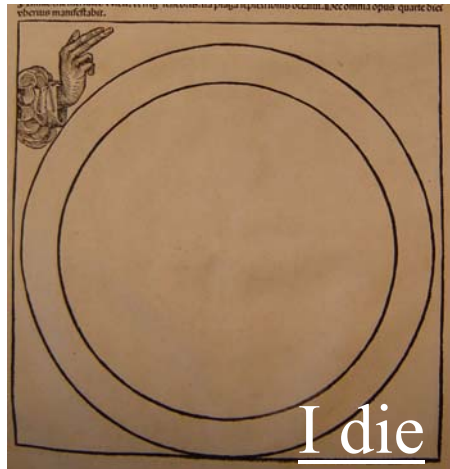
The **Liber Chronicarum cum figuris et ymaginibus**, compiled by the humanist **Hartmann Schedel** and printed by Anton Koberger in **1493** (the famous Nürnberg chronicle) is one of the "must see" of the Library.



Cyclopes from India and other *mirabilia*...



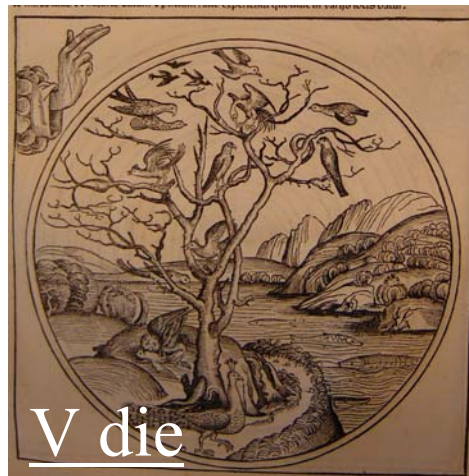
but also many images with clear cosmological flavor.



(sic)

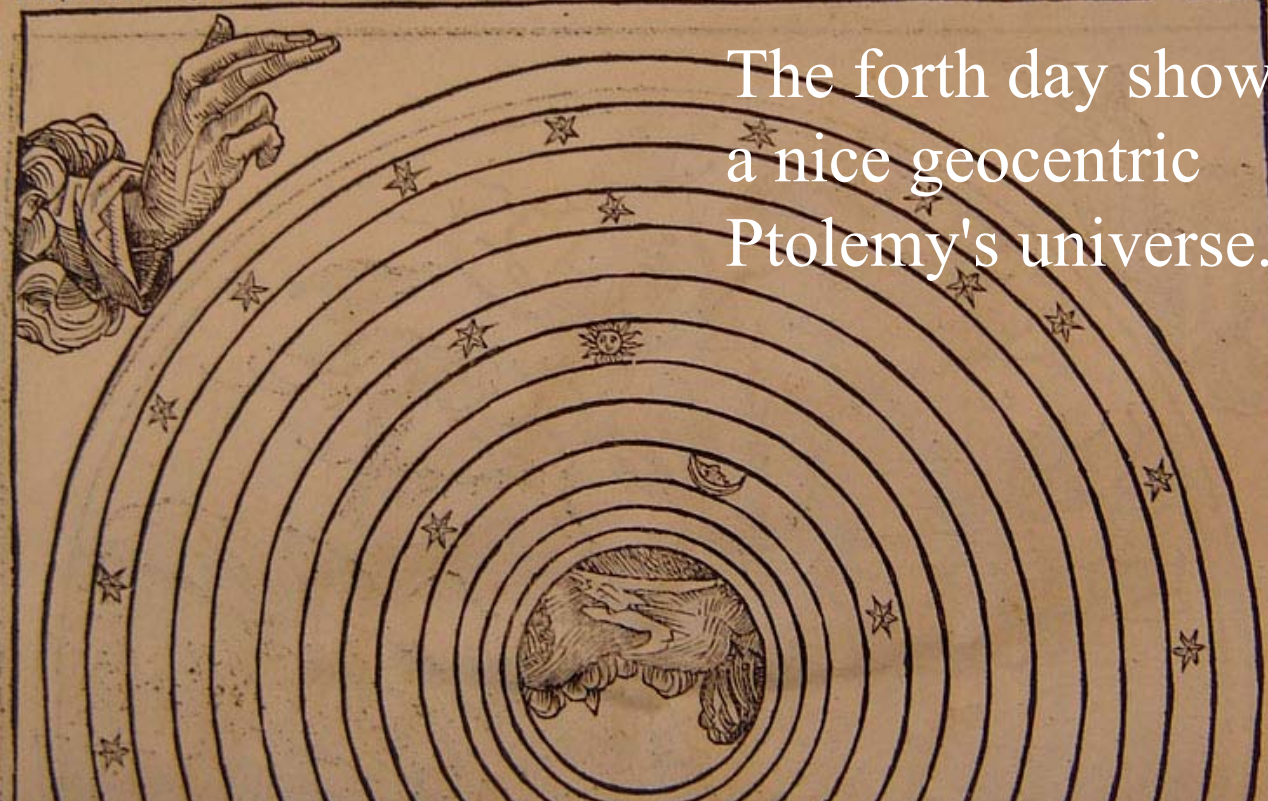


This original Latin edition includes, among its nearly 1800 engravings, and of most interest to us, a thorough description of the seven ages of the world after Creation, beginning with a biblical heptameron.



... sunt pulchra & digna cogniti. ...

Secunda etas mundi ...



The forth day shows a nice geocentric Ptolemy's universe.



and more..



Comete magnus p̄ mensem
 ca festu sancte aguetis visu
 grisq; quos in occidentalē fereb

Johannes de more regio aleman² no minor anaximadro. milesio aut syracusa-
 no archimede. vtraz lingua greca ac latina eruditissim² germanoz; dec². hac
 quide tēpestate ob astronomiā ceterasq; mathematicas disciplinas a mathia pā-
 nonie rege nurnbergēsisq; ppetuo donat² stipendio. & in germania. pānonia
 ac rome multo in p̄cio habit² ē. Qui cū in hūgaria kalendariū ppulchrū ac q̄das
 alta in astronomia magno cū labore suo celebri ingenio composuisset. Epheme-
 ridēsq; a nostris diario dicta maxima cura ingenioq; edita inductis noue astro-
 nomie tabulis. reprobatisq; gerardi cremonēsis theoricis romā ad emendandas
 passibilem diuissj computi a fixo ...
Deolans estensis q̄ de impio ciuitatē cū hercule dissidebat. ferrariā dē ...



Regiomontanus



These and dozens of other equally interesting books build up an important part of both literary and pre-scientific culture.

Divina Commedia (facsimile),
illustrated by Sandro Botticelli

*But tell me what the dusky spots may be
Upon this body, which below on earth
Make people tell that fabulous tale of Cain?*

The project: exhibit old books. We are currently planning an exhibition of rare books with astronomical flavor during 2009.

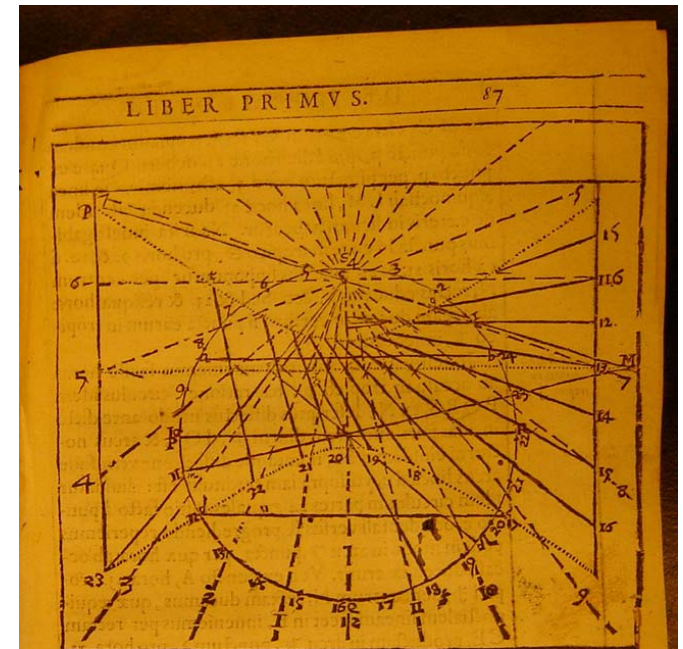
Many other old or rare books are also included in our list:



Jacobus Valderus' Sphaera (1536)

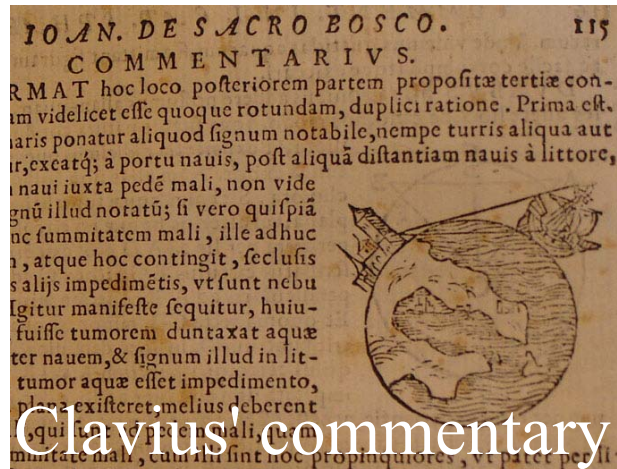
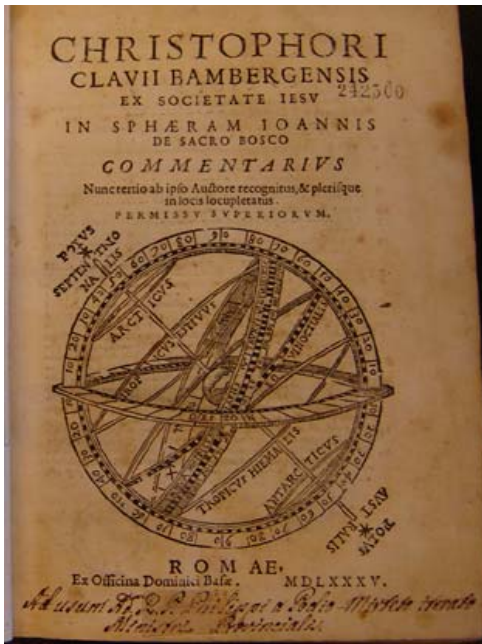


Egnatio Danti's (1569) Trattato dell'astrolabio



Joanne Voello's De horologiis (1608)





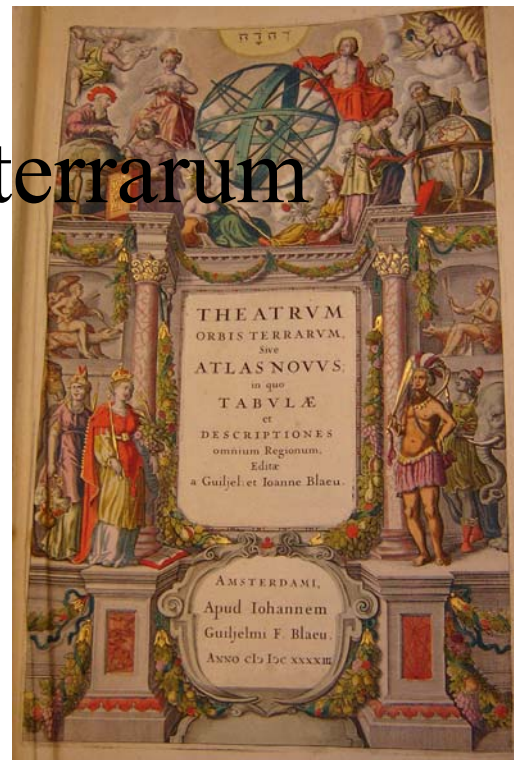
Clavius' commentary of Sacro Bosco's Sphaera (1585),



Henrico Hofmanno's De octantis (1612),

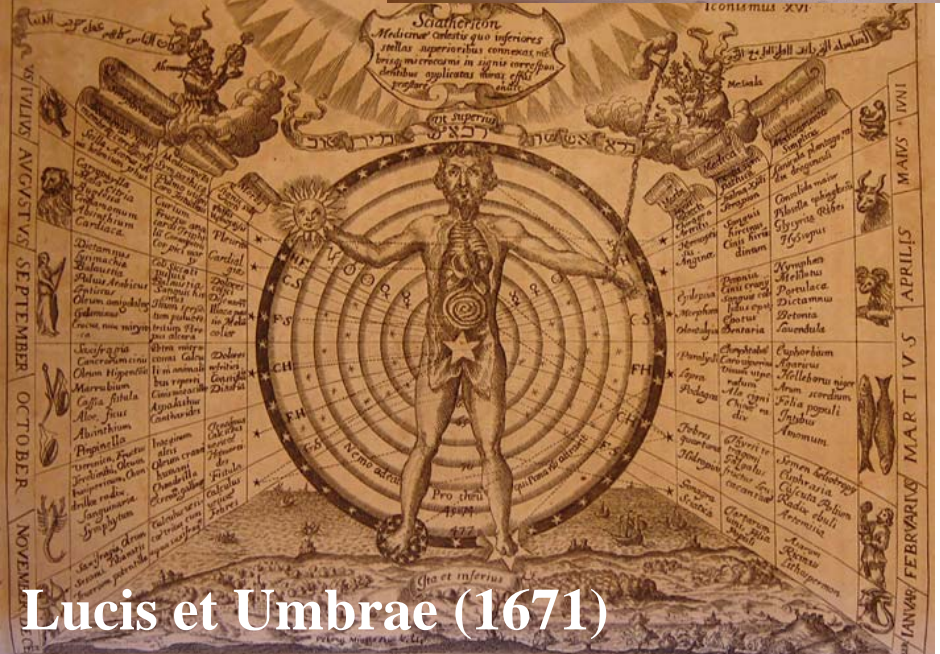
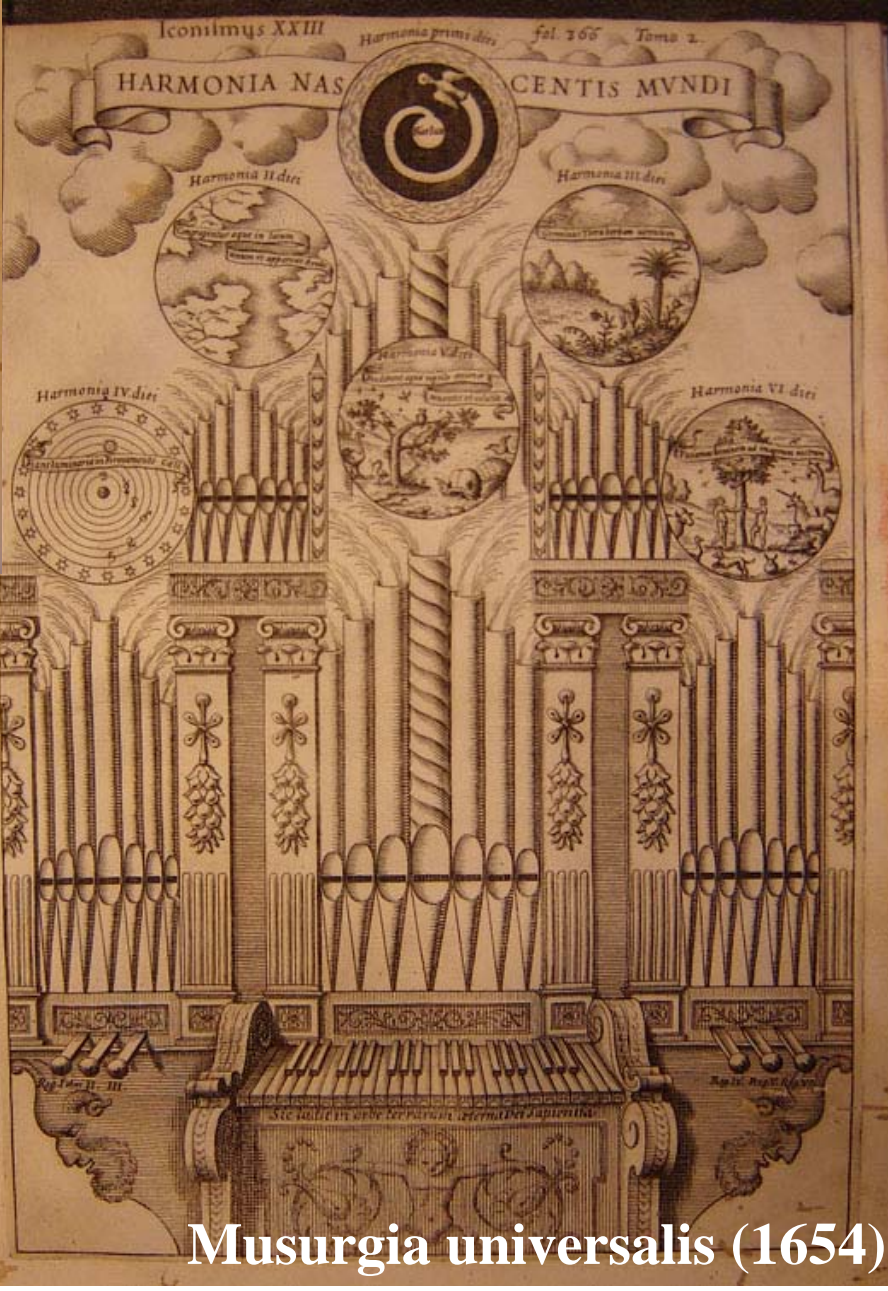
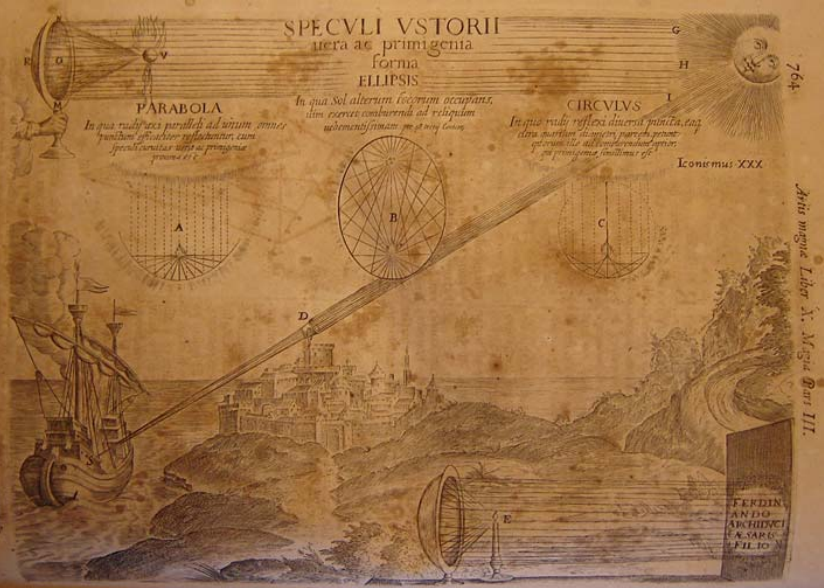


Blaev's (1640) Theatrum orbis terrarum



Some of these books were presumably brought to the River Plate by the Catholic religious order of the Jesuits during the XVIII century. Hence, these books allow us to reconstruct the science (*e.g.*, astro) imparted in our country at that time.

German Jesuit **Athanasius Kircher's** thick and numerous volumes, with their gorgeous engravings illustrating all possible areas of knowledge, naturally attract the attention.



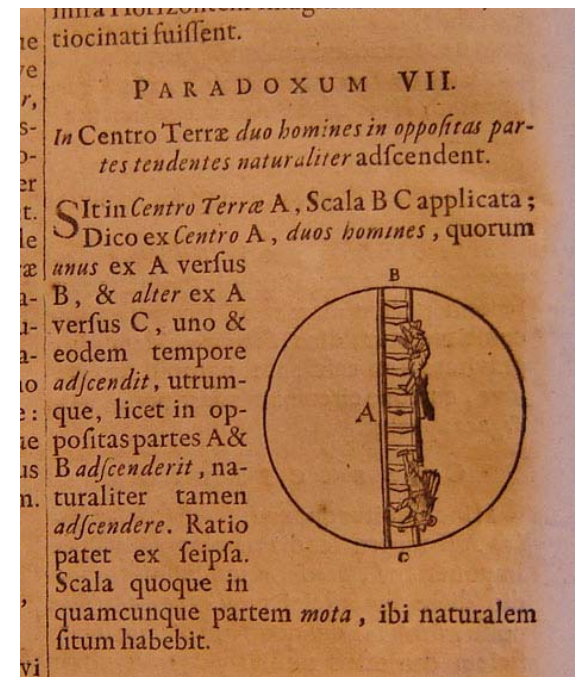
Lucis et Umbrae (1671) shows the analogy between micro and macro cosmos, with man placed both at the center of the universe and of the zodiacal signs.

Musurgia universalis (1654) depicts cosmic harmony as musical sounds emanating from an organ played by God.

Kircher's **Mundus subterraneus** (1678): frontispiece shows a lady (the allegory of Astronomy) inspecting a celestial globe and taking notes with a *plume d'oiseau*, while another feminine character looks through a telescope.

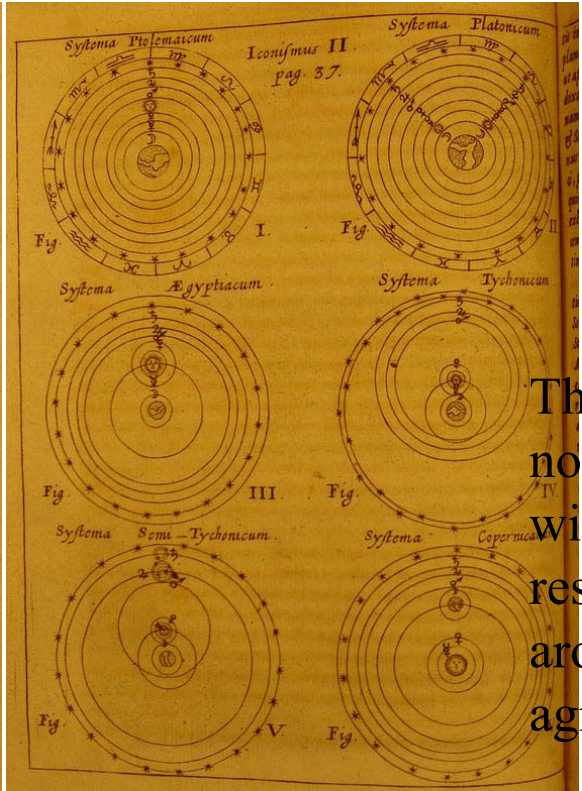
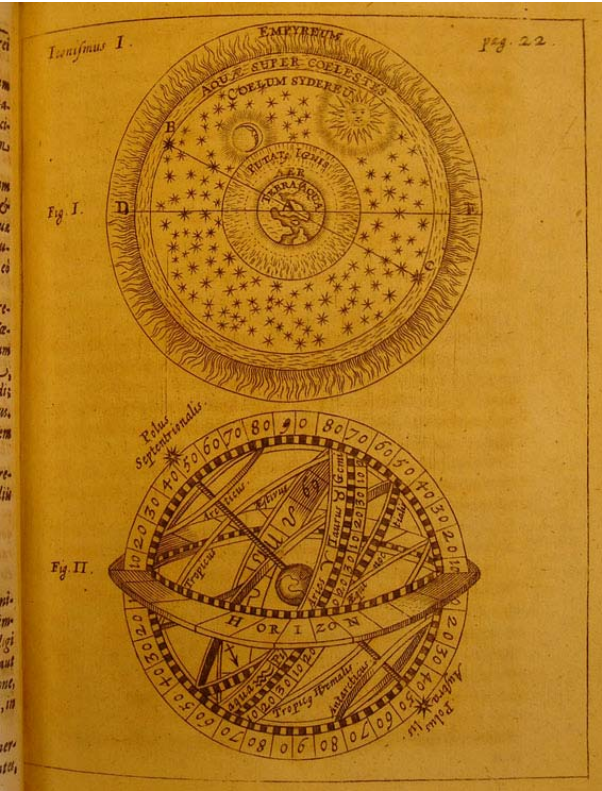
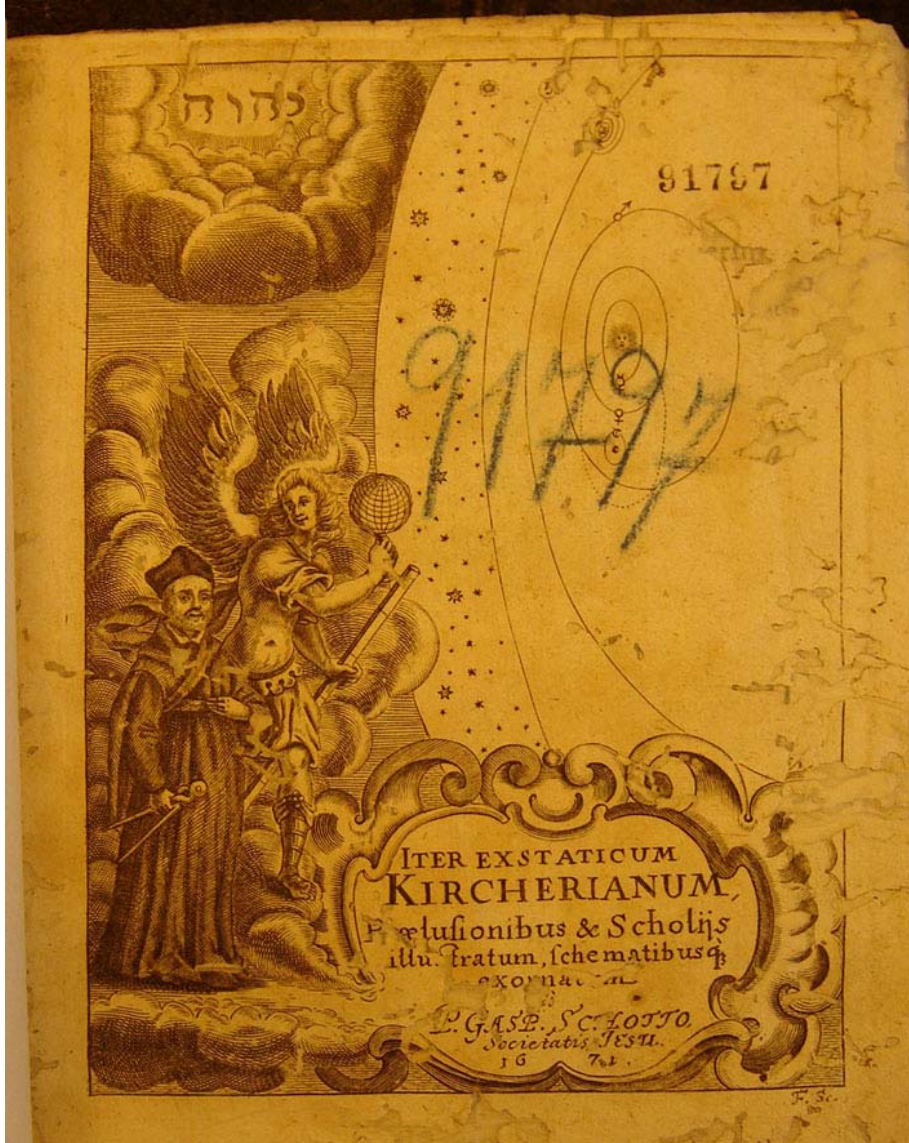


The **Sun**, divided in different regions, including an equatorial torrid zone, quite similar to the one of the Earth at the time, and covered with drawings of smoke and fires as sources of Sun spots.



Sketch of the **Moon** as an aqueous body, with spots, mountains and sources, as well as other rough earthy textures scattered on its visible face.

Father Gaspare Schotto's **Iter exstaticum Kircherianum**, of 1671, shows in its very frontispiece a peculiar engraving of Kircher himself (as Theodidactus, the disciple of God) when, guided by angel Cosmiel, he travels across the universe, in a clear parallel to Dante's voyage following his donna-angelo.



The universe depicted is neither Ptolemaic nor Copernican, but that of **Tycho Brahe**, with the Sun orbiting the Earth, while the rest of the planets complete their movements around the Sun; a clear **eclectic cosmology** agreeing well with the author's world view.

work in progress...

The planned exhibition will collect not only these and other books, but also historical documents, maps and drawings (may be also astronomical artifacts).

It will offer a timeline of our understanding of old and renaissance astronomy and, with it, part of the *imago mundi* of the time.



This work is being done *with the support of* :

- people from the National Library of Argentina.
- collaborators: Roberto Casazza and José E. Burucúa.

...and [..] :

- members of the Astronomy Commission of CONICET (although they think this work should *not* be done by a “real” astronomer.. :()

Great opening –hopefully– in October 2009.