

The Biodiversity Heritage Library

A short appreciation article

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The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) is the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Working with a global consortium of contributors, BHL makes tens of millions of pages of biodiversity knowledge freely accessible, via this website:

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

It will be well known to many readers of Field Mycology for providing unparalleled and easy access to multitudes of books, descriptions and illustrations which remain relevant today in interpreting taxonomic descriptions of fungi (Fig. 1). The BHL is also a rich resource for anyone interested in the history of mycology (Fig. 2) and aficionados of natural history illustration (Fig. 3).

For many years, BHL has been hosted by the Smithsonian Institution, but now finds itself at a crossroads, following an announcement that these hosting arrangements will end on 1 January 2026.

The BHL Consortium has therefore issued a Call for Support from interested institutions and stakeholders, to establish new hosting arrangements and ensure continuity, resilience and growth for this essential global biodiversity infrastructure.

Since releasing their Call for Support, BHL reports that “the global response has been inspiring and heartwarming”. Conversations are now underway exploring alternative technical hosting, funding and staffing models. You can read the latest updates on the BHL Blog:

<https://blog.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

The Call for Support remains open as this issue of Field Mycology goes to press and the BHL Consortium is asking users to help spread the word, through their own institutions and networks.

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Fig. 1. An illustration from Nova plantarum genera by Pier Antonio Micheli (1729), later designated as the lectotype for *Phallus impudicus*. This volume is held by the library of Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid and catalogued by BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/73327>. Not in copyright.

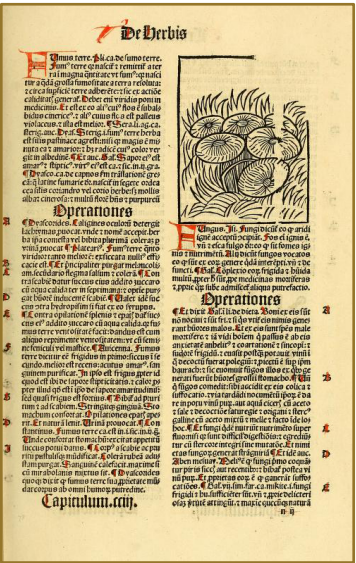


Fig. 2. A page from Ortus sanitatis by Johann Prüss (1497) showing the first printed illustration of a fungus. This volume is held by Smithsonian Libraries and Archives and available via BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/40536006>. Not in copyright.



Fig. 3. An illustration of *Amanita muscaria* from M.C. Cooke's Illustrations of British Fungi Vol. 1 (1881–1883). This volume is held by the University of Toronto - Gerstein Science Information Centre and available via BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/23281011>. Not in copyright.