The Herbarium

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The foundation of this collection of dried plant specimens goes back to the year 1879 when the then Director of the Botanical Museum, Anton Kerner von Marilaun (1831 - 1898), had begun to acquire herbarium material for the installation of an institute's new herbarium. This had become necessary as the existing specimens had all been transferred to the newly built Natural History Museum. To accelerate this installation, Kerner had created the well known exsiccata series "Flora exsiccata Austro-Hungarica" with very instructive labels which had been issued also in book form (Schedae ad floram exsiccatam Austro-Hungaricam). The new herbarium grew rapidly and in 1889 it contained already 80.000 specimens. Due to gifts and bequests (e.g., herbaria of A. Kerner, K. Keck) as well as by the activities of collecting expeditions it soon approached considerable size and importance. Kerner was followed as the institute's director by Richard von Wettstein who also has left his herbarium to the institute. Today the herbarium of the Institute of Botany is estimated to contain about 1,300.000 specimens covering all plant groups worldwide. Further details can be found in the Index Herbariorum ed. 8 (Holmgren & al., 1990).

Each scientific botanical collection has its own strengths. The Botanical Institute's herbarium (acronym WU) does not make an exception. During the times of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy outstanding collections from the Balkan peninsula were gathered (e.g., by I. Dörfler, A. Ginzberger, A. von Hayek, F. Vierhapper) which today are frequently studied by specialists. The civil war in former Yugoslavia with its enormous destructions of cultural values has intensified the use of our holdings of this region. The two herbaria of Eugen von Halácsy, the "European" and the "Greek", form an important part of our collections, the latter currently being permanently used for the Flora Hellenica project.

Heinrich von Handel-Mazzetti not only collected extensively in the Austrian Alps but also in former Mesopotamia, today divided between Iraq and Iran. During World War I he spent four years in China and brought together one of the most important collections of Chinese plants, the first set being kept in WU. Researchers of the international Flora of China project make intensive use of it.

The above mentioned herbaria are containing mainly flowering plants. However, WU is keeping also several cryptogamic plant collections of importance. The lichen collections of Anzi, Arnold, Eggerth, Hepp, Körber, Krempelhuber, Lojka, Massalongo, and Rabenhorst and the bryophyte herbaria of Lorentz and Fehlner must be mentioned. Due to the richness in type specimens, especially of taxa described by J. Steiner, the cryptogamic collections of WU are rather frequently used by international researchers.

Modern activities in plant systematics at our institute have led to the accumulation of most valuable materials in certain groups more than in others (e.g., Achillea, Bromeliaceae, Cactaceae,

Gesneriaceae, Rubiaceae, Scrophulariaceae). The purchase of H. Metlesics's herbarium of plants from the Canary Islands and the bequest of the more than 500 specimes of *Pinus* by the late W. Klaus, professor for paleobotany, have essentially enriched our collections.

The institute's herbarium is involved in many research projects, both national and international. Aside from the above mentioned Flora of China and Flora Hellenica projects, it is the main basis for the ongoing "Flora von Österreich" project. It further serves as a reference tool for the project of "Mapping of the Flora of Central Europe" not only for depositing recently collected specimens but also for the evaluation of vegetation changes during the past 100 years.

WU is frequently visited by foreign researchers to study our materials. More than 200 loan shipments from our collections are sent every year to all parts of the world and many are received from outside, all being managed by the Curator and one assistant only. The restoration of damaged specimens, the mounting of newly acquired plants, and administrative evaluations (especially the recognition and curation of type specimens) of our holdings can be accomplished only to a limited extent and often with long delay due to lack of staff.

Nevertheless, this brief representation of the herbarium of the Institute of Botany is demonstrating its vivid use by the international scientific community and its topicality in modern research.

Selected References

Holmgren PK, Holmgren NH, Barnett LC (eds)(1990) *Index Herbariorum. Part I: The Herbaria of the World.* New York Botanical Garden, New York

Schönbeck-Temesy E (1992) Zur Geschichte des Herbars der Wiener Universität. In Morawetz W (ed) Die Botanik am Rennweg. Abh Zool-Bot Ges Österreich 26: 69-95

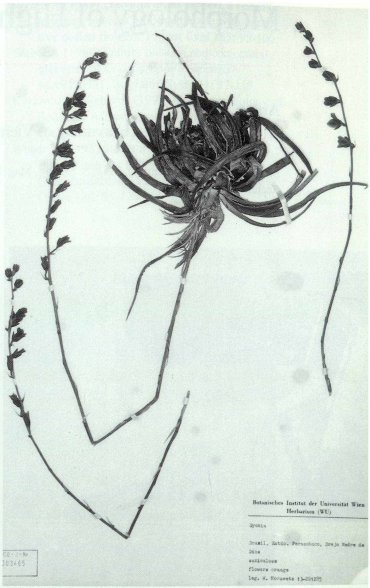

Fig. *Dyckia rupestris* W. Till & Morawetz, a species from Brazil recently described as new to science and kept in WU