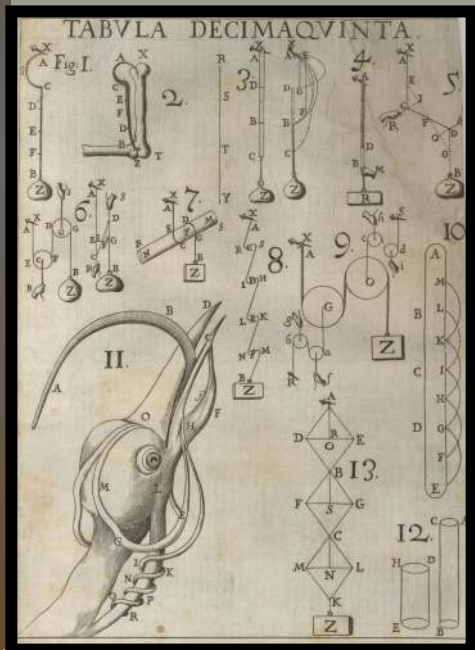
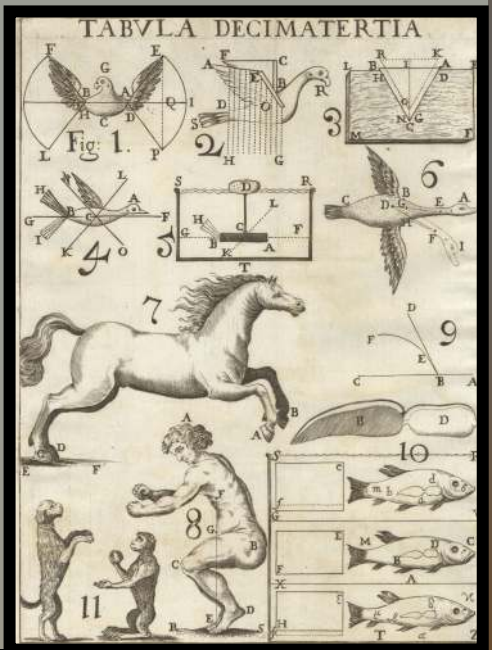
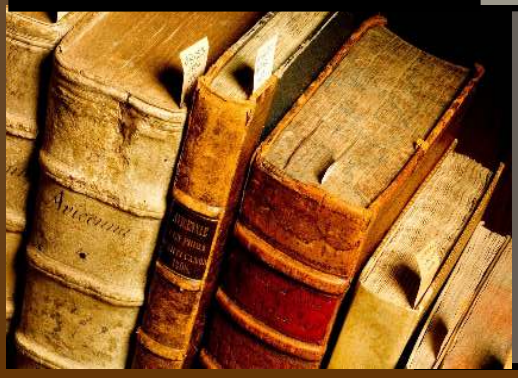
Notes from the John Martin Rare Book Room
April, 2014

GIOVANNI ALFONSO BORELLI (1608-1679). De motu animalium. 2 vols. Rome: Ex typographia Angeli Bernabò, 1680-1681.

Pupil of Galileo and teacher of Malpighi, Borelli's lasting fame is his dominating influence in the establishment of the Iatrophysical School of thought, which sought to interpret all physiological phenomena by the laws of mathematics and physics. The flourishing school of anatomy at Padua had given place to a new breed of scientists who wanted to study the functional aspects of anatomy. A Neapolitan mathematician, Borelli set up a laboratory in his home in Pisa in order to make application of mechanical laws to all physical phenomena. He regarded the human body essentially as a machine, its functions explained by the laws of physics. He made some original discoveries pertaining to the mechanics of respiration and circulation. He particularly investigated the action of muscles, and De motu animalium includes extensive calculations on the motor forces of muscles. The illustrations showing human beings and animals in various positions of muscle exertion could only have been conceived by one who was primarily a physicist and not an anatomist.







Hardin Library for the Health Sciences Room 446
University of Iowa
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