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history of science

THE
ROYAL
SOCIETY
PUBLISHING

The history of the Royal Society

Founded in 1660, the Royal Society is the national academy of science in the UK, made up of a Fellowship of approximately 1,600 of the world's most eminent scientists. Throughout our history, we have played a part in some of the most life-changing discoveries, and remain dedicated to recognising, supporting, and promoting excellence in science.

The origins of the Royal Society lie in a group of people who began meeting in the mid-1640s to discuss the new philosophy of promoting knowledge of the natural world through observation and experiment, which we now call science. The very first 'learned society' meeting on 28 November 1660 followed a lecture at Gresham College by Christopher Wren. Joined by other leading polymaths including Robert

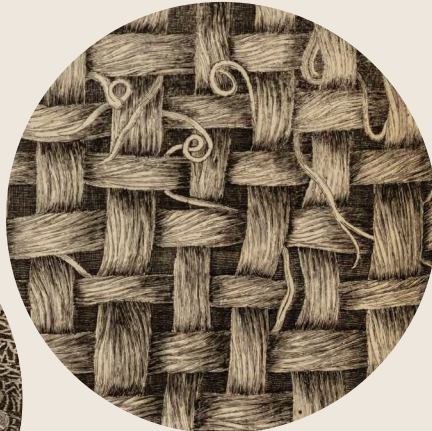
Boyle and John Wilkins, the group soon received royal approval, and from 1663 it would be known as 'The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge'.

The early years of the Society saw revolutionary advancements in the conduct and communication of science. Hooke's *Micrographia* and the first issue of *Philosophical Transactions* were published in 1665. *Philosophical Transactions*, which established the important concepts of scientific priority and peer review, is now the oldest continuously published science journal in the world.

To find out more, visit:
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Image:

Illustrations showing microscopic views of seaweed and rosemary from *Micrographia*, by Robert Hooke, 1665.





NOTES AND RECORDS

The Royal Society's journal of the history of science.

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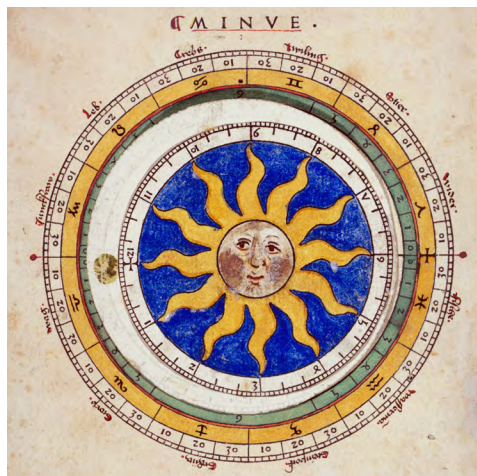
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The journals archive of the Royal Society is one of the most important collections of scientific publishing in the world. Search through over 330 years of the scientific journals of the Royal Society. The archive contains full colour digital scans of original printed journals published by the Royal Society between 1665 and 1996.

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Library collections

The Royal Society is the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. Our library holds one of the most important history of science collections in the world with thousands of rare and unique items. These include published works, handwritten drafts, correspondence, illustrations, and original data on everything from rainfall to astronomical observations. We hold records of the work of the Society since 1660. Some of our historical datasets, such as those on climate, contribute to current scientific investigation and they are all important for historical research. Our collections can be explored online.

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The *Science in the Making* project is an ambitious digitisation programme that aims to make over 35,000 items of archival material related to the publication of the Society's scientific journals available online. This website presents the complex material that lies behind the published articles, such as peer review reports, correspondence, photographs, illustrations and early drafts. The varied content includes reviews by Darwin, correspondence by Newton, and an extensive collection of photography from the British Antarctic expedition.

To find out more, visit:
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The Royal Society

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, reflected in its founding Charters of the 1660s, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

The Society's strategic priorities are:

- The Fellowship, Foreign Membership and beyond
- Influencing
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- Science and society
- Corporate and governance

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Cover

Zoological study of the Dodo, *Raphus cucullatus*, from the paper *Mémoire sur le Dodo, autrement dronte*, by Henri Marie Ducrotay de Blainville, 1835.

Notes and Records

Meadow grass (Gramen paniculatum) with its fruit, from JJ Scheuchzer's volume describing his journey through the Alps in the early 18th century.

Biographical Memoirs

Professor Stephen Hawking on his 60th birthday in 2002
© Anna N Żytkow.

Library collections

A paper disc used for calculating the motion of the moon, from *Regiomontanus – Almanack*, by Johannes Mueller, 1474.

Science in the making

Landscape showing the Royal Navy vessel *H.M.S. Beagle* in the straits of Magellan with Monte Sario in the distance, 1913.



Founded in 1660, the Royal Society is the independent scientific academy of the UK, dedicated to promoting excellence in science

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