ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY 17th CENTURY

From ancient times through the late Middle Ages there was little human dissection and even less pictorial representation of anatomical structures. Neither Christian nor Muslim physicians were permitted access to human bodies for study; their surviving manuscripts show a reliance upon descriptive text and a lack of diagrams.

The publication of Andreas Vesalius’s *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* in 1543 shifted anatomy to a discipline that relied upon illustrations and images supported by descriptive text. The images found in Vesalius’s work, with their depiction of the whole human body, would dominate anatomical publications for 200 years.

The period between 1543 and 1627 was considered the golden age of Italian anatomy. While the detail and specifics of the human anatomy had advanced, the original Vesalius illustrations or ones based on his were still pervasive. Typically the bodies were shown as living beings in various states of disarticulation or dissection often placed before a landscape background.

1627 TO 1778

An important aspect of human anatomies published between 1627 and 1778 is the growing interest in function as well as structure. This period of anatomical illustration set in motion trends that continue through the modern period: 1) an emphasis on specific sections or divisions of the human body, 2) greater detail, and 3) a growing interest in the purpose as well as the structure of organs. The beginnings of physiology also fall into this period.

While Vesalian drawings such as those in Gibson’s *Anatomy of the Humane Bodies Epitomized* continue to be used, one finds new, highly detailed drawings such as those in Thomas Willis’s *Practice of Physick*, seemingly a result of new thinking and new standards of art as well as the predominance of copper plate engraving over traditional wood cut reliefs.

1778 TO 1948

Anatomists of this period concentrated on individual organs or organ systems, and new color print technologies made a profound contribution to anatomical instruction in general. Some anatomists, such as Sömmerring and Camper, were able artists and did their own drawings, working as partners and teachers with the engravers. Henry Gray’s anatomy handbook, designed to be affordable to students, is the culmination of the illustrated anatomical text.

Between 1860 and 1948, new printing technologies led to even more detailed images, bringing about novelty anatomical teaching materials such as the volvelles of Ralph Segal. Veterinary medicine also made innovative use of newer graphic technologies to raise illustration in their instructional material to a higher level, as can be seen in the books of Schmaltz, Freeman, and Heneaux.

ANATOMY AT MU

Anatomical instruction for beginning medical students in the country followed a fairly uniform format in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Anatomy coursework at the University of Missouri can be traced back to 1841, with a connection to the medical department of Kemper College, in St. Louis. Instruction of anatomy on this campus began with the establishment of a medical department here, in 1873.

THE PHENOMENON OF PHRENOLOGY

Phrenology tried to explain a person’s character from the shape of the skull, particularly its peaks and valleys. It was born in the eighteenth century and reached the culmination of its popularity in the nineteenth. Despite the generally slighting attitude to it nowadays, it still has sympathizers who think that it was the first theory that acknowledged the importance of the brain and suggested that different areas of the brain regulate different functions, thus being a precursor to more accepted theories in neuroscience today.