## Cover to cover: the contribution of the book to the reproduction of linear, hierarchical models of natural history

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Isolated on a meranti library table, at rest on Perspex supports, is a book of 35 by 23 centimetres. Its full-calfskin binding is giving way to age and, peeling from the spine, the ruptured, pockmarked skin exposes fragile leaves of paper. Five raised headbands gesture at an attempt to stitch and contain 20 years of study within more than 1,150 printed pages, which are now seeping from their fleshy receptacle. The gold tooling has been abraded and the marbling on the foredge has faded with time. The open book reveals an emblematic frontispiece: two lions, rampant and coward, support a crown and shield emblazoned with eagles, surrounded by further heraldry.[1] Opposite this, on the endpaper, is pasted an Ex libris bookplate of a classical male bust, which marks this as the property of Michael Scott. Below this is pasted an auction entry for the book, 'Lot 144. GESNER, [Conrad], *Historiae animalium Lib. I, de Quadrupedibus viviparis*. £12.'

This is the property of the University of Stellenbosch. Housed in the J.S. Gericke Library, it is a 1551 copy of Conrad Gesner's widely read Renaissance text on natural history, which was printed in Zurich, Switzerland, by the press of Christoph Froschauer. The two motifs of the bookplate and frontispiece introduce a Renaissance relationship between humans and animals. The classical male bust gazes at the heraldic lions, their codification signalling the value of symbolic meaning above the observational: species made visible by their proximity to culture. Gesner's book, published in four volumes – mammals, egg-laying animals, birds and marine animals – was the first encyclopedic attempt to list and chronicle all known animals while at the same time including mythological
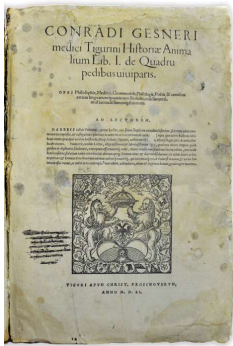
1. Rampant and coward lions are heraldry conventions: the former depicts the animal standing on two legs with paws raised and the latter depicts the tail between the legs.

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