

**Seminar SAW:  
History of Science, History of text**

**Abstract**

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*Carl Linnaeus's Paper Slips*

In this paper I want to present results from a Wellcome Trust funded research project studying the ways in which the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) assembled, filed, and cross-referenced information about plants and their medicinal virtues. It is a well-known fact that Linnaeus was one of the first to write about a "natural system" of plants and to suggest that plants of the same "natural order" share similar pharmaceutical properties. His manuscripts, held at the Linnean Society (London) and various institutions in Sweden, provide an excellent opportunity to understand how information processing practices determine such ideas. They document how Linnaeus experimented with a variety of paper-based information technologies throughout his career -- including commonplace- and notebooks, maps, schematic diagrams and drawings, collections of loose paper sheets, sometimes folded up to form slim files, annotations in interleaved copies of Linnaeus's own publications, and paper-slips resembling index cards. I will focus more specifically on these paper slips, investigating how Linnaeus and his student Daniel Solander first experimented with paper slips in the 1750s when cataloguing the Queen of Sweden's cabinet of curiosities, before both of them eventually used them in their personal work, in very different and idiosyncratic ways. Solander's paper slips became one of the main catalogues for specimens held at the British Museum.