

Charles Darwin's *Beagle* library

URL: http://darwin-online.org.uk/BeagleLibrary/Beagle_Library_Introduction.htm

[Visited Oct'14] As with many great figures in history, Darwin's life and work are no strangers to research, evaluation, and scrutiny. Luckily for Darwin scholars and students, there is an ample amount of material available. *Darwin Online* <<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>> (CH, Dec'11, 49-2049) is by far the most complete, largest, and most used resource on the naturalist. This ever prodigious and expanding material now includes Charles Darwin's *Beagle Library*, a collection that was aboard the HMS *Beagle* during Darwin's tenure there from 1831 to 1836. The original catalog of books has been lost to time, but the scholars of the *Darwin Correspondence Project* <<http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/>> (CH, Sep'08, 46-0256) scoured various sources like the missives, journals, and travelogues of Darwin and others onboard to reconstruct a list totaling 404 volumes. The website notes, "This is remarkably close to FitzRoy's estimate in a 16 March 1826 letter to his sister."

Charles Darwin's Beagle Library starts off with a simple page with a mild design aesthetic. A few brief introductory paragraphs explain the history of the library aboard the *Beagle*, give a few interesting facts, and provide a history of the project itself. The page abounds with links, illustrations, photos of books, and titles that guide readers through numerous very interesting tidbits about the library and Darwin's reading habits. Where possible, the library's books, illustrations, and maps have been scanned and are available in text and PDF format. Users can browse by title alphabetically or by subject, or conduct a search. This collection represents a significant addition to the study of the history of science. The works span a wide range of topics, from travelogues of previous expeditions to South America and the seminal *Principles of Geology* by Charles Lyell (1830–33) to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), making the world of Charles Darwin a little bit clearer. **Summing Up: ★★★** Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.—G. L. Carr, *University of Nevada-Las Vegas*