
"The Inveterate Invertebrate Reporter"

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Can science be fun? Why not! Often, as depicted by the media, science is a serious business and scientists serious persons. Who among you thinks of Spock as a fun-loving, carefree soul? Not I. He may have a dry sense of humor and those pointy little ears to offset somewhat the seriousness of his visage, but let's face it, he is all work and very little play. I don't think science should be seen in that light and to partially change that view, in the fall of 1988 I had my invertebrate zoology class, a lower division majors course, publish an in-house newsletter.

With me as the chief editor and publisher and the students as cub reporters, the class published *The Inveterate Invertebrate Reporter*, a weekly newsletter devoted to the life and times of the invertebrates. Issue one began with a welcome editorial and a brief biography of the professor, both of which I wrote to inform the students of their future duties and what notable events characterized my life. In that issue I described the three functions of the newsletter: 1. to describe the anatomy, physiology, ecology, and behavior of the different groups of invertebrates; 2. to describe the lives of biologists who chose to study invertebrates; and 3. to provide the members of the class with a chance to develop their talents as writers.

Subsequent issues of the newsletter had three sections, an article on an invertebrate group in the phylum we were studying that week, a brief biography of a famous invertebrate zoologist, and a review of a book dealing with the phylum we were studying. In addition each issue usually included biographies of the students who had written the articles

that week, and bibliographic citations for sources the students used in writing their articles. If time and space permitted, I also included either scanned or hand-drawn pictures of invertebrates. To liven things up, I wrote the headlines for the articles:

Forams: Our testy protozoan friends (this group secretes a calcareous test)

The Molluscs: First-class foot shufflers (molluscs are classified according to the type of foot they have)

Those silver threads amongst the gold may have been Nematomorphans (these creatures are called thread worms)

On the inside looking out: N.A. Croll takes a new view on the Ecology of Parasites. Harvard Press has a hit on its hands.

Water fleas: Even a lake has its problems.

The Publication Process

Figure 1 shows a student-edited copy of the issue that was published on the 21st of October. I will now describe the process used to get to that stage. Each week three students were assigned to write articles. I told two of the students which group and person to write about, but the third student was free to choose any book, as long as it related to the group being studied. The articles were due in my hands on Tuesday and were then given to three other students who were supposed to proofread and comment on the article. The annotations on Figure 1 are the student editorial comments. They were to return the copy with their comments and corrections by Wednesday. The authors were then asked to give me their corrected copy on Thursday. Thursday night I put the newsletter together and xeroxed copies Friday morning before class. Students submitted copy to me as an ASCII text file on a 5 1/4" diskette. I used First Publisher, a low cost desktop publishing program for the IBM computers. The program can use style sheets for newsletters or other common publications, but since each issue had varying amounts of text, I pretty much had to paste-up each as though it were the very first of a new series. The drawings were either scanned and then pasted into the appropriate spot, or space was left empty and I later penciled them in on the final copy.