

Book Reviews

Emmett Wright
Department Editor

CAREERS

ON BECOMING A BIOLOGIST

by John Janovy, Jr. 1985. Harper & Row (10 E. 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022) 160 p. \$15.95, hardback.

A biologist's world view is different from that of most of humanity. Concerned with the totality of the natural world, a biologist looks at the human species as only one of millions that have occupied the biosphere over the last three and a half billion years. So writes John Janovy, Jr., a professor of biological sciences at the University of Nebraska. The book is one in a series on professions. It is part memoir, part philosophy and part a practical guide to employment in the field.

"When a group of engineers, all working on the same hydroelectric plant, get together socially, you can bet your subscription to *Audubon* that they don't talk about the river in terms of aquatic invertebrate communities," he writes.

"Attorneys, physicians, businessmen—all are consumed by human activities, conflicts, desires . . . A biologist studies 'nature,' however, and in doing so inevitably comes to regard humanity as the most effective competitor for the world's resources."

The biologist's foremost task, Janovy writes, should be that of altering, if necessary, mind-sets and thought processes so that the students: want to consider the long-term consequences of their actions; are able to interpret new material into a context which includes the nonhuman living world; have some sense of the processes that operate in living systems at many levels; look for evidence of the true character of things by studying their ontogeny; and are able to place *H. sapiens* into a proper time/space/species diversity framework—that is, to understand that the world did not begin in 1965, that it may not even be unique, and that we are certainly not alone in it.

Reading the book is akin to eavesdropping on a Janovy chat with students or other biologists. Janovy does not believe in sending students to humanities departments to teach them why people do things. He begins the book with the set of values held by biologists: "To truly believe in a common bond with the Peruvian beetle is to hold the insect in high esteem."

He notes with admiration and sorrow that "No other species' accomplishments approach humanity's accelerating cultural evolution, which in essence represents an escape from the restrictions of organic change [and] no other species seems to possess the power to destroy overnight what cannot ever, anywhere in the universe, to our knowledge, be replaced." In this book, biologists will recognize themselves, nonbiologists will recognize people they know, and students contemplating a career in biology will perhaps be stimulated to think about the field in some new way.

Jillyn Smith
Information Services
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322

COMPUTERS

THE COMPUTER IN EDUCATION: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

ed. by Douglas Sloan, 1985. Teachers College Press (1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027). 129 pages, softback price unknown.

With almost a dozen authors, *The Computer in Education* is indeed a critical perspective. Every aspect of computers in education is reviewed and challenged. If one read this book having no experience using computers in schools it would be easy to conclude that computers have no place in the educational setting. However, the authors' main contention is not that computers do not belong in schools, but that careful consideration must be given to how, when and why they are being used.

The authors proposed at least six general areas to be considered thoughtfully before jumping into "computer education" (as many schools have already done). These areas include a discussion of Papert's ideas, the concept of computer literacy, the pros and cons of computer education, blind faith in technology,

changes in traditional education due to computers and the effects of computer education on children.

By attempting a critical review of the use and current status of the computer in education, the authors manage to paint a dismal picture of schools being taken over by robots and cognitive concerns while the teachers and affective concerns are pushed aside. Despite this melodramatic flavor there is one important, consistent message throughout the essays: Our current questions about computers in education all concern *how* classrooms should be computerized when perhaps more attention should be paid to the question of *should* classrooms be computerized at all? In other words, educators should not jump on the technology bandwagon without serious thought. Consider what one's educational philosophy is, what one hopes to accomplish in the classroom, and how computers can support those two ideas, if at all.

This collection of essays will help any computer user or technological educator make a better decision about the place of the computer in our schools. It is not only a valuable resource but an easy reading collection

Emmett L. Wright is a professor of biology education and science education coordinator for Kansas State University. Previously, he served 10 years at the University of Maryland as professor and director of the Science Teaching Center. He also directed the Chesapeake Bay Education Project. He was named the 1982 Scholar/Teacher of the Year by the University of Maryland. Wright has taught elementary through college science. A Kansas University graduate, he holds an M.A. in Biology and Science Education from Wichita State University and a Ph.D. in Science Education and Ecology from Pennsylvania State University.

Readers interested in becoming book reviewers should contact Wright's office at Kansas State University. Direct inquires to:

Emmett L. Wright
NABT Book Reviews
Kansas State University
Department of Curriculum and
Instruction
Bluemont Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506