Notes From the Editors

We hope you have recovered from all of that holiday partying. Now it’s back to the real world.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you to please patronize the businesses that advertise in this publication. This month we have a new advertiser: Bisque-Itz, “Tampa Bay’s most unique contemporary ceramic studio.” It is a lot of fun. You pick the ceramic piece you want to paint, and they supply you with the paints, brushes, and kiln. Please show your support for these businesses that support you!

Finally, we would like to offer a warm welcome to the new students: Angela Couliette (Dr. Rose), Andrew Farmer (Dr. Carder), Keith Garman (Dr. Paul), Jennifer Jacukiewicz (Dr. Hallock Muller), Scott Milroy (Dr. Walsh), David Palandro (Dr. Muller-Karger), Margaret Palmsten (Dr. Howd), Kathryn Privett (Dr. Vargo), Emilio Sosa (Dr. Blake), and Candice Way (Dr. Blake). We look forward to seeing you at the many events sponsored by MSAC (more about this later in this issue).

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Eric Siegel for defending earlier this month. Also, congratulations to him and Angela Strub for their recent engagement. Unfortunately, they will be moving to Washington later this month, so stop by and wish them good luck. You will both be missed.

Science Demystified

The ocean – where life began...

The ocean covers over 70% of the earth and is constantly flowing. Ocean currents move masses of water long distances: the warm Gulf Stream alone carries 50 times more water than all the world’s rivers combined. Since water holds heat, ocean currents distribute solar energy, while its sheer bulk stabilizes climatic change. The ocean also serves as a reservoir of dissolved gases that regulates the composition of the atmosphere.
January 1999

Upcoming Events

Jan 6
Due to the start of classes, there will be no Wacky Wednesday Wunchtime this week.

Jan 9
William Pitt the Younger introduced income tax on this date in 1799 (what a guy!).

Jan 13
No Wacky Wednesday Wunchtime, due to Campus Showcase held Harborside from 11-2 and 4-6. Go learn about the different clubs and services on campus, have some free refreshments, and listen to live music.

Jan 17
Gangster Al Capone (1899-1947) born on this date in Brooklyn, NY. Heavyweight champion Muhammed Ali also born on this date in 1942.

Jan 18
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Also the birthday of A.A. Milne, author of Winnie the Pooh.

Jan 20, noon, MSL conf. room
Wacky Wednesday Wunchtime
Rescheduled from last month, Lizz Singh, our resident travel guide will be flying us to Iceland, land of beautiful women and unusual museums. Bring your lunch.

Jan 25
The first Winter Olympics was held on this date in 1924.

Jan 27, noon, MSL conf. room
Wacky Wednesday Wunchtime
Currently open, contact Jyotika to present something.

Sadly, this is Angela’s last EcoCorner column. We are looking for someone to try to fill her shoes. If you would be interested in writing a column about environmental issues, let us know.

Organic food sales have been increasing steadily over the last decade. Since 1990, sales have increased from $630 million to $4 billion in 1997. Organic food is currently the fastest growing segment of the food business. However, while more and more Americans attempt to eat more healthfully, there is a battle being fought by organic farmers. Proposals by the USDA are now under construction to officially define what “organic” actually implies... and the USDA doesn’t always define things as nicely as the organic farmers or consumers would like.

In 1990, leaders of the organic movement convinced congress to pass Title XVI of the 1990 Farm Bill. On November 28, 1990, Title XVI, better known as the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), was signed into law. This law states that anyone selling more than $5,000 worth of produce per year can call their produce “organic” only if it meets the USDA’s specifications. However, this law has not yet gone into effect. The USDA is still arguing with farmers and consumers about what does and does not qualify as “organic.”

The OFPA, while riddled with points of contention, did not completely miss the boat. It mandated that for food to be considered as “organically produced” it would have had to have been produced without synthetic chemicals on land to which no synthetic chemicals had been applied for at least three years. Products used for maintaining soil fertility would have to be approved by a 15-member National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), comprised of eight people from organic industry along with environmental experts and consumer advocates. No synthetic substances could be approved without first going past the NOSB.

On December 16, 1997, the USDA finally issued its proposed regulations for the organic industry. The organic movement was not pleased, to say the least. The definition of “organic” had shifted away from the original one proposed. The regulations outlined contained many gray areas that left room for very non-organic "organic" foods. Some of the shortcomings of the proposal included the following:
- substances were added to the approved national list that the NOSB had not agreed to;
- organic foods might be preserved with irradiation;
- organic foods might include organisms whose genes had been modified by recumbent DNA technologies;
- compost materials were not explicitly limited;
- organic meat animals need only be fed an 80% organic diet.

Following this proposal, there was a period for public comment, and the response was not favorable. More than 275,600 comments were received. The period for public comment ended on April 30, 1998. On May 8, the USDA withdrew its proposed regulations. The standards have gone back to the drawing board. They will be rewritten to exclude the use of biotechnology, irradiation, and municipal sludge.

Fascinating Fact #1:
The nine-banded armadillo is very precise about its babies. The mother always gives birth to four young, either four male or four female, but they are never mixed.
Not Just for New Students…

In our continual effort to keep you informed, here is a brief overview of some of the more regular happenings around the department.

*The Squid’s Ink: This is the departmental newsletter put out the first week of each month. Submissions are always welcome, and are definitely needed. Feel free to write about absolutely anything at all. See Lizz Singh or Jyotika Virmani for more details.

*MSAC meetings: MSAC stands for Marine Science Advisory Committee. If you are a member of this department, you are automatically a member of MSAC. These informal meetings are held periodically to keep you updated on issues and to plan events. See Lisa Merman (current MSAC president) for more information.

*Wacky Wednesday Wunchtime (WWW): Held almost every Wednesday at noon in the MSL conference room. This is a very informal place for you to practice a talk and get some feedback, show off a skill, or talk about a great vacation and let others get to know you. See Jyotika Virmani for more details.

*TGIF: Held every Friday at 5:00 in the MSL lounge. Come and hang out, have a beer, soda, and snacks. A great way to unwind after a tough week.

*The Photoboard: A great way to learn who’s who. This hangs on the wall near the vending machines in MSL, but is currently being upgraded. See Chad Edmisten (x1516) to get your photo added.

FASCINATING FACT #2:
The army of Costa Rica was abolished in 1948 because the president said the people loved peace and an army was no longer necessary.

Philosophical Cerebration

By Bob Helber

Are there people who would believe in a religious doctrine that was created by a computer? The answer is undoubtedly YES! L. Ron Hubbard, the late leader of Scientology, was quoted as saying, “the only way to become really rich in this country is to create a religion.” If he did it, why can’t a computer? With the use of a random number generator and a simple algorithm to place phrases or laws, there is no doubt that a suitable religious doctrine could be generated. If people can believe in space aliens trailing behind a comet, why can’t people believe in the mystery of a random number generator?

Of course language is very important. You would not want to call the source of inspiration the “random number generator.” It could be called the “Quantum Chaos Portal.” Using the words “Quantum” and “Chaos” will instill mystique and the common person will be compelled to believe.

You may remember an earlier P.C. column in which I described Odak, the language of randomly generated words. To make the religious doctrine more interesting and more mysterious, a generous helping of Odak could be used. Odak would be very important because randomly generated words have no pre-defined meanings or connotations and could be interpreted any way one chooses. That way the leader of the religion could twist the Odak around to make it mean whatever he or she wants whenever he or she wants. These ideas are all you need to create an extremely scary and powerful cult.

Foreign Relations

We are taking a break from the usual column in which we tell you about foreign holidays, to tell you about a proposed language change…

The European Union commissioners have announced that an agreement has been reached to adopt English as the preferred language for European communications, rather than German, which was the other possibility. As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty’s government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and accepted a five-year phased plan for what will be known as Euro English (Euro for short).

In the first year, "s" will be used instead of the soft "c." Certainly civil servants will receive this news with joy. Also, the hard "c" will be replaced with "k." Not only will this clear up the confusion, but typewriters can have one less letter.

There will be growing public enthusiasm in the second year, when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced by "f." This will make words like "fotograf" 20 percent shorter.

In the third year, public acceptance of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more complicated changes are possible. Governments will encourage the removal of double letters, which have always been a deterrent to accurate spelling. Also, all will agree that the horrible mess of silent "e"s in the language is disgraceful, and they would go.

By the fourth year, people will be receptive to steps such as replacing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v." During the fifth year, ze unesersary "o" can be dropped from words containing "ou," and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After the fifth year, ve vil hav a reli sensibil riten styl. Zar vil be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer. Ze drem vil finali kum tru.

From reprinted in Utne Reader (Jan-Feb 1999).
Tribute to Eric

By Jyotika Virmani

When Eric first joined the Marine Science Department as a recent Eckerd College graduate, he was a long-haired hippie! Not only has he gotten his M.S. degree here, but he has successfully made the transition to a respectable, shorter-haired young man with a good job and a lovely fiancee. Now that they both have “real” jobs, we look forward to them sending us tickets to fly out to Washington for the wedding! We (the Ocean Circulation Group) will be sorry to see him go, but Jyotika is looking forward to the extra space in the filing cabinet!

Joke of the Issue

Here we are trying to revive a column that debuted in our first issue, and had a very short life. Keep this going by submitting your jokes. This one is from new student Emilio Sosa. Way to go Emilio! You’ve only been in the department for a few days, and already you’re helping us out!

What do Viagra, Disney World, and Universal Studios have in common???

It’s a 3 hour wait for a 2 minute ride!!!

Fascinating Fact #3:

The Oxford English Dictionary is the largest English dictionary in the world. When it was compiled each usage of a word was written on a slip of paper. After 22 years worth of work the editors were faced with a pile of paper weighing 1.75 tons!

Helpful Hints

By Sean “Martha Stewart” Singh

* The best time to harvest fruits and vegetables for maximum flavor is in the morning.

*Don't throw that leaking hose away. Simply add more holes and you'll have a sprinkler for your lawn.

*Pecans are easy to shell if they are first soaked in boiling water for 10 minutes or so. Or microwave 2 cups of pecans or brazil nuts in 1 cup of water for 5 to 6 minutes on HIGH.

*If you store half an apple in the container which you are storing a cake, the cake will retain its freshness.

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Assoc. Ed.: Jyotika Virmani (jyotika@marine)
Contributors: Bob Helber, Sean Singh, Emilio Sosa, Angela Strub, your name could be here
Q: I would like to change some of the text box shading to improve the print quality. Can that be done?

A: Yes. To change the shading or color of a text box, select it and double click its borders to open the Format Text Box dialog box. Click the Colors and Lines tab and then choose the new color from the Color drop-down list in the Fill section.

Q: What’s the best way to print this newsletter?

A: Print page 2 on the back of page 1. Fold in half and mail with or without an envelope. For best results, use a medium to heavyweight paper. If you’re mailing without an envelope, seal with a label.

Q: I would like to use my own clip