

The COPUS Clarion

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The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) is a grassroots effort linking universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, advocacy groups, media, educators, government agencies, businesses, and industry in a peer network having as its goal a greater public understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.

And Just What is a “Zine?” - the Small Science Collective

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Many say science is one of the most accessible and even democratic forms of knowledge – after all, it’s based on observations of a universe we share, experiments anyone should be able to repeat, and relies on lots of cooperation. At the same time, we see that the privatizing and patenting of scientific knowledge is becoming increasingly common while the techniques of basic research are more complex and more expensive. As fast as we can read, the lexicon of scientific terminology - diseases to discoveries – grows.

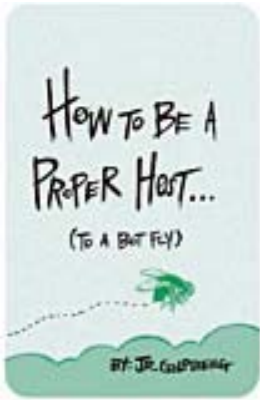
Given these trends, it’s not hard to see why many may feel detached and disempowered, as if science is simply not for them. Shrugging off the importance of science in our everyday lives and assuming we can leave it to the researchers, doctors, and engineers who “know better” might be the easy option, but that risks sacrificing our participation in a world steeped in scientific & technological innovation. The goal of Small Science Collective is to challenge the assumption that science is just for specialists, encouraging people to think about & communicate science through handy, inexpensive zines.

And, just what is a “zine?” Sometimes it’s a pamphlet, other times it might be a booklet – the key is that it is self-made, self-published, and easily distributable to others. The Collective is an informal group made up of scientists, artists, students, teachers, and anyone in between, who wants to share their curiosities, wonder, and concerns about science and technology through zines. The science enthusiast then creates the zine and shares it wherever they may go.

If science literacy lags in United States, then there is all the more reason to foster a common culture of scientific seeing and being through zines and other informal means. Extending how we learn and share science beyond the walls of schools & laboratories to everyday spaces - bus stops, coffee shop, and countertops – creates possibility for people of all ages and backgrounds to have more access as well as greater participation.

Find Small Science here, there, and on the web where you can download our zines for free, photocopy them, and share them around. Better still, make some small science yourself by creating your own zines to both communicate and nurture our common culture of science. We are always looking for contributions to distribute online and on paper, so be in touch!





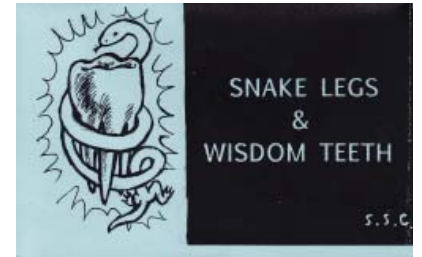
- We are fascinated by the ubiquity of spirals and their remarkable form. They seem like a fundamental pattern in nature, at times perhaps even bordering on the magical – but are all spirals the same? This zine, a collaboration between an astrophysicist and an artist, explores some of the twisty intrigue and physics of spirals.



- Our basic biological nature is never more apparent than when we unwittingly end up being someone else's food! As unpleasant as that may be there is also a lot of humor to be found in considering the role of parasites, in this case a Bot Fly, in our lives. In fact, what if we considered them as pets rather than pests? Some do it, but it is not for the faint of heart...



- No basic biological process is as fascinating and tricky to discuss as reproduction. Playing off the idea of a "Sex Ed" textbook, this zine looks at the wildly diverse and odd reproductive habits of the most numerous animals on the planet – insects.
- Examine the diversity of life on earth with this zine, which discusses the evidence that supports the theory of evolution by common descent.



- If something is "hard as a rock" that isn't saying much – unless that "rock" is in fact a diamond. These dense crystals of carbon are millions of years old and formed in the depths of the earth, have a fascinating geology as well as a significant role in our culture. These diamond-shaped and diamond-sized zines are a nice way to get a small nugget of knowledge about one strong mineral.



- Sometimes referred to ungenerously as "flying rats," pigeons are in fact a kind of dove. Despite their ubiquity in cities, they have their own charms and unique place in urban ecosystems - as well as in the history of biological thought itself (just ask Darwin!). Better still, check out this zine for details.

Coming soon! The Year of Science 2009 is collaborating with this month's *Clarion* author to host a contest making "zines." The contest will be open to all ages!

To learn more about the contest stay tuned to the YoS web site.

If you are interested in sponsorship, contact admin@copusproject.org.



Questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact admin@copusproject.org.

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