

Editorial

Microcosm in its singular form, representing exactly one, has been introduced in antiquity, when philosophers and ancient thinkers regarded the human being as corresponding to the whole world or universe (macrocosm). In a biological context, the American ecologist S.A. FORBES considered organisms of a biocoenosis as a little world within itself and wrote about “the lake as a microcosm” in the 1880s. Macrocosm as any large system containing smaller systems is a second meaning beside universe currently expressed by the term ecosystem.

Klaus HAUSMANN (Berlin, formerly University Berlin) and Hans MACHEMER (Hallenberg, formerly University Bochum) focus on “The microcosm under the microscope” reporting the exciting story of the popular journal “Mikroskosmos” founded by Raoul H. FRANCÉ in 1907 and managed by HAUSMANN between 1994 and 2013. By the way, nearly all volumes are downloadable without costs at the homepage of ZOBODAT (Zoological-Botanical Database) of the Biology Centre of the Upper Austrian Museum in Linz.

Each organism harbours other species as clearly shown by Horst SCHÖDEL (Burgebrach, Northern Bavaria) for diverse limnetic invertebrates bearing peritrich ciliates, viz. epibionts sometimes quite site specific. This synopsis alone – potentially linking for instance the disciplines of ciliatology and entomology – requires to switch from the singular to the plural form microcosms. Considering the immense amount of microscopic slides and the archives of each contributor to the gatherings accumulated in the Biology Centre described in my article, the title “On Microcosms” of this Denisia volume is obviously confirmed.

Moreover, the four contributions are dedicated to amateur and academic approaches to microscopic organisms, collectors and collections and are particularly aimed to associate with the interested public and scientists alike. My experiences as curator in a museum that like others is increasingly oriented on the amount of visitors per exhibition and with colleagues employed in universities indicate a lack of understanding – in some way I had and have to sit between two chairs. Regionally I was placed as an “expert” for diverse invertebrates in an “ivory-tower”, but academics forced to publish or perish could and still often cannot imagine what are the responsibilities in a museum also concerned with huge, heterogenic collections.

All four contributors to this volume are aware of this cleft and have been serious about the role of a mediator between the specific scientific terminology and the widely understandable language required to communicate with the readers of unconventional biological topics, such as epibionts and nomenclaturally important type slides, and/or amateur microscopists as well as visitors of biological exhibitions.

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