

BOOK REVIEW

Humane Education's Expanding Niche

From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative Methods for a Progressive, Humane Education (2nd ed.) Edited by Nick Jukes and Mihnea Chiuia, Leicester, England: InterNICHE, 2003, 532 pages. \$12.00; £8.00; €12.00 softcover

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Since its formation in 1988, the International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE), formerly EuroNICHE, has grown steadily in influence. Much of its success lies with its coordinator, Nick Jukes, whose creativity and vision have built an impressive resume of achievements. Its approach always has been grassroots, with a focus on supporting students and helping teachers switch from traditional animal-consumptive methods to modern animal-friendly ones.

As the world's leading promoter of ethical education, InterNICHE is making significant inroads into geographic regions, including Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America, where humane education and alternatives largely have been overlooked. The group comprises a network of national contacts and collaborators in more than 50 countries and administers an Alternatives Loan System—an evolving library of more than 100 of the best alternatives—available to anyone anywhere willing to pay postage. Four small-scale micro-Loan Systems are being established in Brazil, Russia, India, and Japan. *Alternatives in Education*, a 33-min video produced in 1999, now is available in 20 languages. An annual Humane Education Award of €20,000 has funded over 10 projects. A physiology simulation laboratory, featuring locally made software and using reconditioned computers

has replaced the annual use of 1,000 animals in Romania. During a 7-week nationwide speaking tour of India in early 2003, Jukes distributed 1,200 copies of *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse* to teachers and students at dozens of universities.

From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse continues InterNICHE's tradition of global outreach. Currently, it is being translated into 10 languages, and the price (subsidized by InterNICHE) makes it amenable to low budgets. For those with on-line access, an Internet version (including a searchable database) is in preparation.

This volume is twice the size of the first edition (1997), and two thirds of the alternatives described are new to it. The book is comprised of four parts:

1. Alternative methods and curricular transformation.
2. Seven case studies, presented by university faculty in Europe, Australia, and the United States.
3. A database of more than 500 alternatives products spanning 10 academic disciplines.
4. A listing of further resources (databases, Web sites, printed matter, organizations, and alternatives producers).

For their part, the editors are not content with a gradual phase-out of harmful animal use in education. The question is no longer whether harmful animal use is a problem or whether alternatives are valid. Alternatives already are in use worldwide, full replacement is readily attainable, and the challenge now is "designing strategies to meet teaching objectives effectively and to maximize the broader positive impact of humane education." The book's editors call for Ethics Committees or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs) to reject applications for harmful animal use in education.

Contrary to popular opinion, alternatives are not just computers and technical sophistication. This book encourages the appropriate use of such important—and often overlooked—"low-tech" alternatives such as ethically sourced cadavers and student self-experimentation (which also can be high tech, such as the Biopac Student Lab, p. 386). A series of 10 InterNICHE policy statements at the end lays out clearly what constitutes "harm" and what constitutes ethical work with animals.

In future editions of the book, I would like to see a detailed discussion of how to incorporate living invertebrates ethically into teaching programs. I was approached recently by a thoughtful biology instructor about this question. There are many nondestructive, noninvasive, animal-friendly ways for teachers to expose students to living organisms (invertebrates, in particular); alas, teacher-training programs do little to promote this. Jukes's view, one InterNICHE and I share, is that young people—given the opportunity to develop life-affirming connections and interactions with animals and nature—will respect and protect their interests.

Admittedly, there is a dearth of hard data on the use of alternatives in education. No one knows just how many animals are being used, how many students object

conscientiously to animal-consumptive methods, or how many departments are shifting to alternatives. InterNICHE can hardly be criticized for this black hole, as documenting such trends is very difficult. However, related trends—apparent from this book—suggest that harmful animal use in education is declining. Diversity, sophistication, and availability of alternatives are rising. Since 1985, the proportion of U.S. medical schools running the notorious “dog labs” has dropped from more than 50% to below 15% (the University of Virginia Medical School joined the list in February 2004 at the urging of a group of its medical students). The College of Veterinary Medicine at Western University (Pomona, California), opened in 2003, is the first such program built on the principle of “reverence for life.” The curriculum is case-based, there are no traditional lectures, and only animals who died naturally or were euthanized due to illness or old age are used.

This book is a complete package, and I hardly can criticize it for anything. It presents clear descriptions of the best alternatives, meticulously prepared by coeditor Chiulia, who is a medical doctor. It dispels the common assumption that alternatives only can ever be as good as animal methods, never better. It explains the enlightened position that animals are important in education and that there are creative ways to integrate them ethically—from client donation programs at veterinary schools to benign field studies of living animals. It provides in detail the experiences of faculty who have gone from harming animals to using ethical alternatives—valuable reading for other faculty considering doing this. It stresses the importance of the emotional realm, ethical literacy, critical thinking, and attitude building. Every university library should have a copy.

REFERENCES

- EuroNICHE. (1999). *Alternatives in education: New approaches for a new millennium* (Video). Leicester, England: Author.