

www.rsternberg.net

Welcome to the home page of Dr. Richard Sternberg

Dear Visitor,

The controversy surrounding the publication of the paper "The Origin of Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories" by Dr. Stephen C. Meyer in the *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* continues. I was the managing editor of the *Proceedings* at the time of publication of the paper and I handled the review and editing process. The material on this website will clarify and resolve many of the disputes about the paper and ensuing controversy, including my post-publication treatment at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History.

The most important new information on the site is a copy of the [Office of Special Counsel's recent findings](#) in my case.

Sincerely,

[Rick Sternberg](#)

August 19th, 2005

Post-publication retaliation and discrimination at the Smithsonian and elsewhere

To summarize what occurred after the Meyer paper was published:



Efforts to remove me from the Museum.

After Smithsonian officials determined that there was no wrong-doing in the publication process for the Meyer paper and that they therefore had no grounds to remove me from my position directly, they tried to create an intolerable working environment so that I would be forced to resign. As the OSC investigation concluded, "[i]t is... clear that a hostile work environment was created with the ultimate goal of forcing you out of the SI." In addition, it was made clear to me that my current position at the Smithsonian will not be renewed despite my excellent record of research and publication.



Efforts to get NIH to fire me.

Pressure was put on the NIH to fire me.



Perceived political and religious beliefs investigated.

Smithsonian officials attempted to investigate my personal religious and political beliefs in gross violation of my privacy and my First Amendment rights.



Smeared with false allegations.

My professional reputation, private life, and ethics were repeatedly impugned and publicly smeared with false allegations by government employees working in tandem

with a non-governmental political advocacy group, the National Center for Science Education (NCSE).



Pressured to reveal peer reviewers and to engage in improper peer review. I was repeatedly pressured to reveal the names of the peer-reviewers of the Meyer article, contrary to professional ethics. I was also told repeatedly that I should have found peer reviewers who would reject the article out-of-hand, in direct violation of professional ethics which require editors to find peer reviewers who are not prejudiced or hostile to a particular author or his/her ideas.



Creation of hostile work environment.



Supervisor replaced. I was transferred from the supervision of a friendly sponsor (supervisor) at the Museum to a hostile one.



Office space. I was twice forced to move specimens from my office space on short notice for no good reason, my name plate was removed from my office door, and eventually I was deprived of all official office space and forced to use a shared work area as my work location in the Museum.



Unprecedented work requirements. I was subjected to an array of new reporting requirements not imposed on other Research Associates.







Access to specimens limited. My access to the specimens needed for my research at the Museum was restricted. (My access to the Museum was also restricted. I was forced to give up my master key.)

In sum, it is clear that I was targeted for retaliation and harassment explicitly because I failed in an unstated requirement in my role as editor of a scientific journal: I was supposed to be a gatekeeper turning away unpopular, controversial, or conceptually challenging explanations of puzzling natural phenomena. Instead, I allowed a scientific article to be published critical of neo-Darwinism, and that was considered an unpardonable heresy.

Summary of key points regarding publication of the Meyer paper

Returning to the original dispute (and the reason for which I first created this web site): Many distortions and inaccuracies have circulated in the press and on the web regarding the publication of the Meyer paper. The key facts are:

-  I hold [two PhDs](#) in the area of evolutionary biology, one in molecular (DNA) evolution and the other in systems theory and theoretical biology. I have published more than 30 articles in peer-reviewed scientific [books and publications](#). My current areas of research and writing are primarily in the areas of evolutionary theory and systematics.
-  In the case of the Meyer paper I followed all the [standard procedures](#) for publication in the *Proceedings*. As managing editor it was my prerogative to choose the editor who would work directly on the paper, and as I was best qualified among the editors I chose myself, something I had done before in other appropriate cases. In order to avoid making a unilateral decision on a potentially controversial paper, however, I discussed the paper on at least three occasions with another member of the Council of the Biological Society of Washington (BSW), a scientist at the National Museum of Natural History. Each time, this colleague encouraged me to publish the paper despite possible controversy.
-  The Meyer paper underwent a standard peer review process by three qualified scientists, all of whom are evolutionary and molecular biologists teaching at well-known institutions. The reviewers provided substantial criticism and feedback to Dr. Meyer, who then made significant changes to the paper in response. Subsequently, after the controversy arose, Dr. Roy McDiarmid, President of the Council of the BSW, reviewed the peer-review file and concluded that all was in order. As Dr. McDiarmid informed me in an email message on August 25th, 2004, "Finally, I got the [peer] reviews and agree that they are in support of your decision [to publish the article]."
-  Following my resignation in October 2003, a new managing editor for the *Proceedings* was selected in May of 2004, and the transition from my editorship to the new editor has taken place over the past few months. By the time that the controversy emerged I was finishing up my last editorial responsibilities. Thus, my stepping down had nothing to do with the publication of the Meyer paper.

A full discussion of the publication issues is available [here](#).

Other relevant documents

[Curriculum vitae of Dr. Richard M. v. Sternberg](#)
[Process structuralism](#)

[Change history](#) of site