

Master's Project Proposal

Insectography: Insects in the World of Fiction

By Erin Bauer

My proposed Master's Project is to develop a comprehensive list of fictional works (films/TV episodes, video games, children's books, and novels) originally published or produced in the United States between 1950 and 2012 about or including insects, spiders, related arthropods (many times anthropomorphized or mutated) and/or entomologists as main characters and playing a major role in the plot. Although the list will encompass both entertaining and educational works, it will not include textbooks or other non-fictional works. It will also not include "fictionalized" accounts of real processes. For example, a book such as ***Hope for the Flowers***, where the story is told from the perspective of the main character, a caterpillar discovering its true nature through metamorphosis, or a book where an insect character learns the importance of friendship, would be included in this list. On the other hand, a book about a child character learning from her parents or teacher in a straightforward manner how a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, would not.

Each main topic area will include bibliographic information about the work, including but not limited to title, author/director, publisher/distributor, and copyright date. Following this will be a detailed description/synopsis of the work with an emphasis on how insects are involved.

Sections of the Insectography project will include:

Bibliography: Children's Books

This list will include selected books about fictional insects/spiders/related arthropods written for older children (in general between the ages of 5-12). Because of the extensive number of insect books written for children, this list will be restricted to fictional books that include an insect or insects as the main character/s (i.e. Kelly Katydid learns a life lesson), rather than realistic representations used in teaching human characters or the reader (i.e. learning to count using ladybugs or learning about the life cycle of an aquatic insect in class). The list will not include books below the kindergarten level or books that are non-fictional instructional guides to insects.

Bibliography: Novels (Adult and Young Adult)

This list will include novels (young adult and adult) that involve insects or entomologists. This might include science fiction depictions that have an insect base.

Filmography

This list will include movies and television shows/episodes featuring insect/spider or entomologist related characters or insects as a main part of the plot. Genres might include science fiction, sitcoms, animation, etc. but will not include nature programs or other non-fictional depictions.

Video Games

This section will list video games that are about or include insects...both those used strictly for entertainment purposes and those for education. Games in this list will be those that are full length, commercially available and available either free or sold as downloads or physical CDs. They may be developed by universities or other educational institutions, individuals, or companies.

Strategy

The Insectography will be listed alphabetically by type (Bibliography, Filmography, Video Games), subdivided by “Entertainment” or “Educational” where applicable, and finally by author/title, depending on the resource.

To compile the lists, I will search through various online and print resources, including movie and book databases, Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Netflix, library lists (such as bibliographies and filmographies), etc. I will also be able to include books, films, TV shows, and games I have personally seen and reviewed, and possibly interview or consult with librarians, teachers, or bibliographers.

A proposed timeline for this project is to begin summer 2012 and complete by summer 2013.

Background

As someone who has a library background (received my MLIS in 1996), I have always enjoyed bibliographical information. Also having an interest in entomology, I thought it would be fun to pull together a list of pop culture references about insects found in fiction. Being insects are the most diverse animals on this planet, it’s also fun to see how they are portrayed (realistically, as monster mutants, or anthropomorphically!) in various media.

Additionally, after creating the Pest Private Eye video game to teach youth about pests and integrated pest management, I began to wonder what all materials about insects were available for children and thought this might be worth exploring.

Although there are numerous small bibliographies of films or books about insects, there does not appear to be a full pop culture list that incorporates all of these media comprehensively within the timeframe of 1950-2012. It is my hope to fill that gap in the literature by offering such a list as a reference to others in the field (or anyone who is interested!)

Outcomes and Future Directions

My hope with this project is to offer a list of insect/entomologist fictional works in one document that will be beneficial to others in the field or the general public. The bibliographic data will provide readers with the references they need to access books, films/TV shows, and video games quickly. It will also increase awareness and publicize some works that may be more obscure or less well known and present them to the public so they can be enjoyed. For parents or teachers, this list will give a good starting point for resources to introduce insects in a fun way.

The portfolio will include the comprehensive Insectography list and perhaps a few “hard copy” examples of materials (i.e. Pest Private Eye Video game). In order to make it readily available to the public, I propose posting it on the UNL Entomology Departmental or similar website after completion. This format would allow direct links to where items can be viewed or purchased (i.e. Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Netflix, etc.), and photographs of the resources could possibly accompany each entry. These additions would greatly enhance the usability of the list.

This project has the potential for further expansion in the future. Additions might include pre 1950 and post 2012 titles, titles geared toward pre-kindergarten age groups, and foreign titles. A comprehensive list of non-fictional works about entomology would also be beneficial to both scientists and the public.