

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Wherefore and Whither the Reprint?

Somewhat recently (Fall 2016), I received a handwritten postcard in the departmental mail at my institution. The postcard requested a signed reprint of a note I had written that was recently published in these pages. I am presently still a student and so, to some extent, this was a new concept to me. Prior to this, I had received a few e-mail requests now and then for electronic copies of authored or co-authored publications. I also had sent out several requests to authors for electronic copies of interesting papers that I could not access in my institution's library (sometimes quicker than interlibrary loan). When I received the card, which was fished out of the mail and presented to me by the Graduate Coordinator here, I was delighted, but also somewhat befuddled. When I asked the Coordinator how to proceed, he, a researcher of "several field seasons" and with much academic experience, said "Oh, you just sign and mail them one of the reprints the journal sent you... they did send you reprints, didn't they?"

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What followed was an interesting and informative conversation of how, up until relatively recently, paper reprints were provided for published works in scholarly journals and mailed to authors, and authors often signed and mailed copies to colleagues. He then helped me print out a pdf copy of my note on high quality paper, which I signed and mailed out to fulfill the request. Admittedly, that occurrence was the highlight of my week, and seemed so much more personal than requesting or being requested for a pdf via e-mail. Looking into this further, it seems that the paper reprint is now much a thing of the past. Perusing casually online, I have found that the society and/or publisher's website of nearly every herpetological-focused journal states that paper reprints are no longer supplied, and that authors will only receive an electronic copy of their published work to fulfill requests. From talking to other researchers, more "seasoned," I have heard recollections of the mostly bygone days of the paper reprint to vary from pleasant reminiscence to an archaic bother. I can certainly see the major economic and practical rationale for the replacement of the official paper reprint to electronic copies by both publishers and authors. However, these electronic forms of communication, which have replaced the handwritten letter or note, seem so impersonal. Is my generation of younger herpetologists (and those in other disciplines) missing out on something?