gether ill-suited to child-rearing: An American opossum will make no effort to pick up a suckling infant who has fallen from her pouch.

Kevles thinks scholars would be repeating Darwin's error if they appropriated "patterns that come from the study of animals as imperatives for human actions." But scientists should now recognize the variety of female behavior, and acknowledge that females have always been "co-equal players in the evolutionary game."

**THE CULT OF
INFORMATION:
The Folklore of
Computers and the
True Art of Thinking**
by Theodore Roszak
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In pre–World War II America, there was nothing extraordinary about "information." Historian Roszak, author of *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), recounts its evolution into a more esoteric concept. Thanks to the work of Bell Laboratories scientist Claude Shannon and other technical wizards, it now may mean "whatever can be coded for transmission through a channel that connects a source with a receiver, regardless of semantic content."

Whatever *that* means, information is also a burgeoning industry, aggressively promoted by computer companies, artificial intelligence specialists, and futurologists of the Alvin Toffler–John Naisbitt school. All variously promise that information technology will brighten our economic future, improve our schools, make our houses "talk," and even one day do our thinking for us.

Roszak finds the popular middlebrow faith in such overblown promises not only comic but potentially harmful. Exaggerated confidence in a high-tech service economy future, for example, feeds suburban Americans' indifference to the fate of older industries, even agriculture. Educators are convinced that students should be "computer literate," and hard-pressed American universities spent $1.3 billion in 1984 to achieve that dubious end. Such "literacy" is at best ephemeral, Roszak notes, when "user friendliness" increases with each generation of machines. Something is amiss in academe (and elsewhere) when a college president declares that "the great university of the future will be that with a great computer system."

That "something" is a radical confusion of information with ideas, of data processing with the process of thinking—and is the real target of Roszak's feisty polemic.