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Letters

Leaping gizzards

"Getting the scoop from the poop of *T. rex*" (SN: 6/20/98, p. 391) suggests that the shattered bones in the coprolite indicate "tyrannosaurs repeatedly crushed mouthfuls of food before swallowing." Is it possible that dinosaur gizzards could also crush bones?

*Rich Spitzer
Springerville, Ariz.*

The fossils of some herbivorous dinosaurs have stomach stones, or gastroliths, which were presumably used for grinding up plants. But no gastroliths have ever been found in a T. rex fossil.

—R. Monastersky

Rethinking ink, again

In "Rethinking Ink" (SN: 6/20/98, p. 396), Ivars Peterson states. "The letters that comprise the words on a page of this magazine . . . are made up of tiny, closely spaced dots of ink." Most magazines, including SCIENCE NEWS, are printed by the method of offset lithogra-

phy, a mechanical process in which a solid film of ink is transferred, or "offset," to the paper by a flexible rubber blanket. To reproduce a photograph, this solid film of ink is, indeed, laid down in dots of various sizes to give the illusion of shades of gray. Text type, however, is solid.

*John C. Imel
San Diego, Calif.*

I have a question about the new electronic ink technology: Why cling to the old, many-pages book format? No one can read more than one page at a time, so why store text on pages that are not being looked at?

Also, the proposed flexible electronic pages would be rather fragile. Why not make a protected, rigid page display? The reader could press a button to change to the next selected text block or, possibly, scroll the text up the page display at a selected rate. The idea of carrying a library in one book-sized device is indeed wonderful and might be realized soon.

*James King
Oakland, Calif.*

Cover: Hidden in horizontal stripes on this Namibian cliff are clues to one of the biggest climatic crises in Earth's history. More than 700 million years ago, the planet may have become completely entombed in ice, according to a new hypothesis. The cliff displays a thick stack of carbonate rocks that record conditions just after that ice age.

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Several companies plan to offer electronic, book-size displays this fall or early next year. However, although no one reads more than one page at a time, many book readers like to take advantage of their spatial memories to keep track of items of interest on different pages and to make comparisons conveniently and quickly. That's easier to do with books in a traditional format than with those displayed one screen at a time.

—I. Peterson

What's going on?

I find it very unsettling when scientists appear as flaming advocates of their findings, for example, Louis Frank in defense of his hypothesis described in "Small comet theory melts under scrutiny" (SN: 6/6/98, p. 356). This problem also troubled Sir Francis Bacon. As Bacon saw it, unbridled advocacy meant that ego and not discovery had become the point. When Richard Feynman said, "Confusion is a terrible thing," he explained the *raison d'être* for a natural philosophy—to find out what is going on.

*Tom Morris
Fullerton, Calif.*