

## Monkey Theory Proven Wrong



LONDON - Give an infinite number of monkeys an infinite number of typewriters, the theory goes, and they will eventually produce the works of Shakespeare.

Researchers at Plymouth University in England reported this week that primates left alone with a computer attacked the machine and failed to produce a single word.

A group of faculty and students in the university's media program left a computer in the monkey

enclosure at Paignton Zoo in southwest England, home to six Sulawesi crested macaques. Then, they waited.

At first, said researcher Mike Phillips, "the lead male got a stone and started bashing the hell out of it.

"Another thing they were interested in was in defecating and urinating all over the keyboard," added Phillips, who runs the university's Institute of Digital Arts and Technologies.

Eventually, monkeys Elmo, Gum, Heather, Holly, Mistletoe and Rowan produced five pages of text, composed primarily of the letter S. Later, the letters A, J, L and M crept in — not quite literature.

The notion that monkeys typing at random will eventually produce literature is often attributed to Thomas Huxley, a 19th-century scientist who supported Charles Darwin's theories of evolution. Mathematicians have also used it to illustrate concepts of chance.

The Plymouth experiment was part of the Vivaria Project, which plans to install computers in zoos across Europe to study differences between animal and artificial life.

"They were quite interested in the screen, and they saw that when they typed a letter, something happened. There was a level of intention there."