

English translations of the journal, published under the title *Soviet Progress in Virology*.

While Russian papers have appeared in all the world's major virological journals, these form but a small proportion of the national output. The translated version is therefore very welcome in its dissemination of Russian experimental work in the field.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the papers reproduced is their brevity and this alone means that they may be studied with profit by authors elsewhere in the world. Papers on influenza viruses predominate with Zhdanov, the editor-in-chief of the journal, and Bukrinskaya being frequent authors. One paper, on the analysis of antigenic variation of the haemagglutinins of H3N2 viruses, using monoclonal antibodies, has J. Skehel as a co-author. Papers on interferon and on the biophysical properties of bacteriophages (Tikhonenko) are also well represented. A valuable feature is the inclusion in each issue of survey articles and a section "Aids to Virologists" describing new techniques.

Most virologists will find material to interest them in successive issues of this publication — even if it must be admitted that the standard is somewhat variable — and will welcome the opportunity of easy access to current Russian work on viruses. □

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Bioagrigen

Stephen Oliver

Journal of Molecular and Applied Genetics. Editor H.M. Goodman. 6/yr. (Raven.) \$80 US, \$90 elsewhere (personal); \$135 US, \$145 elsewhere (institutional).

THE *Journal of Molecular and Applied Genetics* (JMAG) is designed to find a place in the library of every self-respecting genetic engineering company. The editors aim to publish full-length papers on the use of modern genetic techniques to solve basic and applied problems in biochemistry, medicine and agriculture. The standard of papers is high and they are well presented in large format and on glossy paper. There are no restrictions on the length of contributions and it is intended that there should be full documentation of data, although to date a number of papers with rather perfunctory methods sections have appeared.

The journal has a distinguished editorial board in which plant molecular biologists are well represented. Each issue appears without a publication date but the submission and acceptance dates of the papers are recorded; the interval between them has lengthened from less than six weeks in the early issues to about three

months. This increase reflects the fact that the journal is attracting papers from a wider circle of contributors. The majority of the papers deal with the genetics of mammals (including human beings) and plants. Bacteria, particularly those of agricultural importance, are well represented but there has been little on the microbial eukaryotes. The "applied" interest of most of the papers is rather long-term and the journal contains little for the industrial geneticist.

JMAG is a worthy journal which has, however, failed to identify a distinct subject area and is thus in competition with the likes of *Cell*, *Gene*, *Plasmid* and *Molecular and General Genetics*. It is distinguished by its high proportion of papers dealing with plant molecular biology, a subject which is not well served by the scientific press; one would have thought it better for the journal to have concentrated on this particular area of activity.

So, despite the high quality of its contents, the lack of a readily identifiable constituency combined with powerful competition means that it is difficult to predict an easy future for the journal. □

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Good food guide

John Rivers

Appetite. Chief editor D. Booth. 4/yr. (Academic.) £20.80, \$54.50 (personal); £41.50, \$109 (institutional).

FIRST impressions of a new journal are like those of a new house: it's somehow incomplete, empty and echoing. The first issues of *Appetite* are certainly like that — desperately filled with editorials, expansively laid-out notices, abstracts, reviews, prolix correspondence and even an inconsequential historical note on the word appetite itself. Only 40 per cent of the first issue was made up with original scientific papers, and three out of the four of these were work presented in higher degree theses.

All this is a common situation since sending work to a new journal is a great act of faith. But just as what matters about a new house is the extent to which it can be made into a home, what measures the value of a journal is how rapidly it changes from this initial state. The speed with which *Appetite* has been transformed suggests it meets a real need and predicts a likely future importance.

Thus by the beginning of Vol.3 it is filled

with the familiar furniture of scientific journals, 80 per cent of its pages being original communications of various kinds. The speed of this sea-change may relate to the breadth of those papers. In this journal a report on cynophagy (the eating of dogs) lies cheek by jowl with studies on saccharine appetite in the rat, and reports on zinc overdosing in chickens coexist happily with studies of coffee consumption in man.

I hope *Appetite* won't therefore be labelled an interdisciplinary journal, since this necessarily calls up the spectre of cynophagiology as an academic subject. But its eclectic nature and its unique role as a common meeting ground for scholars interested in all aspects of the consumption of food, does deserve recognition. I only hope its lack of a clear, conventional subject affiliation will help rather than hinder its acceptance by the other side of the journal partnership — the library-purchasing committee. I at any rate will recommend it to our committee most highly. Because it is not only a good journal; provided its editors don't succumb to an incipient tendency to jargon it will remain a damn good read. □

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