Academic publishing

New brooms galore

AFTER a turbulent year, Academic Press London (APL), a leading publisher of scientific books and journals, seems temporarily at least to be in calmer waters. This year has seen the "moving" of one managing director, the abrupt dismissal of another and the resignation of several members of the board, but staff concern was reduced last month with the appointment of Peter Jovanovich as managing director.

APL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Academic Press New York, producing about a third of the joint annual output of 600–700 books and 170 journals. The two companies are in turn owned by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (HBJ), a Fortune 500 company with diverse interests in book and magazine publishing, and marine parks. President and chief executive of HBJ is William Jovanovich, father of Peter Jovanovich. So the new managing director of APL is likely to have the ear of the parent company's board.

The internal problems for APL began in April 1982 with the "removal" of Roger Farrand as managing director (he remains with the company as a consultant) and appointment by HBJ of George Fleming, previously head of HBJ's international division. According to several sources, the reason behind Fleming's appointment was not concern over APL's profitability but imposition on the London office of the systems of management, accounting and distribution used in the United States. "They just didn't like Roger's style" said

one former employee.

Academic Press in New York is itself undergoing a period of change, journals' production having already moved from the east coast to San Diego. Decentralization will be taken further when the books' arm of the company is relocated in Orlando, Florida, next year.

Fleming's methods of management — employees speak of "vindictiveness", "back-biting" and "lack of loyalty" — and reported obsession with redecoration of APL's offices resulted in the steady departure of staff. Most notable among those to leave were Anthony Watkinson, editorial director, and Barbara Wheeler, the personnel director. All departments suffered losses of staff at an unusually high rate, the department responsible for promotion being most severely affected.

Matters came to head last month with further resignations and the publication of an attack on Fleming's management and lavish personal life-style in *Private Eye*, the London-based satirical magazine. Fleming was subsequently fired.

Peter Jovanovich's brief is to concentrate on editorial and production — "the heart and lungs of publishing" — and to restore morale at the company. "I'm not a systems' man" he says. While Jovanovich's honeymoon period is not yet over, a former senior employee was cautiously optimistic about his prospects of success. "He's a nice chap. APL has had an unhappy time, but I think it's now on the mend."

Tim Lincoln

US archaeology grants

An historic victory

Washington

FACED with a storm of protest from archaeologists, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has backed down on a proposal that would have required review of archaeology grant proposals by state government officials.

At a meeting in Pittsburgh with the executive board of the Society for American Archeology (SAA), NSF officials agreed to a watered-down rule that will require archaeologists submitting grant proposals merely to show that they have made contact with the state historic preservation officer for the state in which the research is to be done.

"The first draft was an absolute disaster from the point of view of research", said John Speth, an archaeologist at the University of Michigan. Speth, whose views are typical of the outrage created by the NSF proposal, was particularly critical of allowing the state officials — political appointees, many of whom have no training at all in archaeology — to pass on decisions that should be made solely on scientific grounds. The original proposal would have required the state officials to comment specifically on the cost-effectiveness of the research, the appropriateness of the methods and techniques to be used and the importance of the research to the state's archaeology plan, and would have added another layer of bureaucracy — and more delays — to the grant approval process.

According to government officials, however, the proposal was merely an attempt to comply with the law. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, any federal action that affects historic sites must be submitted for review to a federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. According to Thomas King of the council, NSF has brought only occasional cases to the council's attention.

The archaeologists' outrage may have been fuelled by a recent fight with the council over its proposed rule establishing procedures to survey and excavate archaeological sites on lands for which the Department of the Interior issues strip-mining permits. On this issue, the archaeologists were on the other side of the fence, pushing for tougher oversight by the council, and there is considerable suspicion that the NSF rule was intended to take some heat off the strip-mining fights.

Both issues have now apparently been resolved to the archaeologists' satisfaction — although King is not so sure: "I doubt if they'll really calm down, because fundamentally they don't feel that they should be covered by the law. Well, tell it to Congress."

Stephen Budiansky

THE orbit of Comet IRAS-Araki-Alcock (1983d), computed from observations since its initial discovery on 26 April. The closest approach of the comet to the Earth (about 5 million kilometres) was at midday on 11 May. E marks the position of the Earth at that point. The individual circles mark the comet's position at 5-day inter-

vals, the open circles marking the portion of the orbit above the ecliptic plane of the Solar System. The system is portrayed as seen by a viewer at ecliptic longitude 285°, latitude +20°. The comet's closest approach to the Sun occurs on 25 May. (Picture supplied by N. Eaton, University of Leicester.) Philip Campbell