

Sights set on expansion

R.A. Weale

Retina: The Journal of Retinal and Vitreous Diseases.

Editor Alexander J. Brucker.
Lipincott. 4/yr. \$63.

Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics.

Editor W.N. Charman.
Pergamon. 4/yr. \$65, £32.50.

Current Eye Research.

Executive editors Christopher A.

Paterson and Nicholas A. Delamere.
IRL. 12/yr. £85, \$210.

ALTHOUGH there are four non-clinical journals, fully devoted to publications on the eye and vision, and many others are involved at least in part, there are three neophytes before us. Between them, the older journals adequately covered the needs of the research community, and the new scattering of information that is now taking place is likely to interfere with its dissemination.

Take *Retina*, for example. It contains papers on retinal and vitreous diseases, normally covered in old-established ophthalmological journals. It is used as a vehicle by very competent and world-famous authors, who write incomparably more on the retina than on the vitreous. The editorial board is clearly well qualified to maintain high standards. Relatively short publication times must form a major attraction with this as with other newcomers. One finds the occasional editorial and the odd book review, and it is not always clear why a work on glaucoma should receive attention here, any more than should one on systemic aspects of ophthalmology.

As every child knows, when different colours start getting mixed in excess, the result is a muddy brown, a fate that journals such as *Retina* have to guard against with vigilance. On the technical side, *Retina* scores over its older rivals with a liberal splash of colour prints, and the two-column format is not used as a significant constraint on the size of the illustrations.

Nevertheless, the half-tone illustrations are mis-named: the contrast is poor, and in many instances, 'deci-tone' would be an apter epithet.

This is a charge less readily leveled at *Ophthalmic & Physiological Optics* (OPO), published on less glossy paper than is true of *Retina*, a feature permitted by the absence of photomicrographs. Parlously in competition with Pergamon's *Vision Research*, the papers in OPO include those on pure ocular and spectacle optics, but also numerous ones on vision, visual pathology, brain function and even ocular biochemistry. Book reviews, comments, editorials, letters to the editor, etc. form a significant portion of the various numbers,

giving an overall impression of less formality: the publication eschews professional politics even though it is the journal of the British College of Ophthalmic Opticians.

In one-column format, a surprisingly large proportion of papers appears with two dates, namely first 'received' and 'in revised form'. Why is this? Does the journal receive papers not suitable for others? Does it specialize in young or premature authors? Are the instructions to authors inadequate? The answer to these three questions is generally No, but if I were the Editor I should probably ask myself whether the non-existence of an editorial board might not provide an explanation. It is a bold man who, in charge of an interdisciplinary journal, would claim to know all the relevant referees, and the present excellent Editor of OPO may be too modest to seek help. But boards are necessary these days, and authors have to learn to write. Moreover, it saves the referee's time if they get things right on the first rather than the second occasion. How many papers are turned down 'in revised form'?



Current Eye Research is omnivorous. Produced by photo-offset printing, it aims to publish with maximum speed, and such delay as may occur appears to be due to the referees. Like those of *Retina*, the illustrations are in 'deci-tone', with cell membranes being barely identifiable. However, the unadjusted, two-column pages are well legible and the black-and-white illustrations excellent without exception. The distinguished Editors and their equally competent Board invite letters but not many seem to be published. The impression made by the journal on at least one reader is one of dyspnoea, but we should not be led astray by the word 'Current' in the designation of the journal. All published research is, of course, current: who goes in for stale work?

Although these journals present some advantages to some research workers, such advantages would be available in older publications in any case, if research were not a rat race. The newcomers put pressure on sorely decimated library budgets. They diffuse information that ought to be concentrated. They render *Current Contents* more voluminous from week to week. It will be surprising if these new journals maintain sufficient enough impact for their continued existence. □

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Behaviour bases

Michael Petrides

Brain and Cognition.

Editor Harry A. Whitaker.
Academic. 4/yr. £35.10, \$45.

Human Neurobiology.

Chairman editorial board David H. Ingvar.

Springer-Verlag. 4/yr. DM128, \$50.80.

DURING the last 20 years, there has been a steady increase of interest in the field of human neuropsychology, the field that deals with the neural bases of mental activity and behaviour. Before the 1960s when this field was the concern of a small number of investigators, research articles were scattered in the various neurological and, less frequently, psychiatric journals. Since then, a number of journals that are devoted entirely to this area of research have appeared. The two journals discussed here constitute the latest additions to this growing list.

Brain and Cognition publishes research articles, case histories, and reviews on any aspect of human neuropsychology other than language. It has a format that is very similar to that of its sister publication *Brain and Language*. So far, it has published a mixture of articles typical of neuropsychology journals: reports of investigations on patient populations as well as investigations that utilize tachistoscopic or dichotic presentations of stimuli to explore issues of neuropsychological interest on normal populations. The general scientific quality of the articles appearing in it has been satisfactory. In addition, a few rather interesting review papers have been published. Unfortunately, the delay in publishing an article in this journal cannot be estimated as the dates when articles were either received or accepted are not given. This is also true of the other journal discussed here, *Human Neurobiology*.

Human Neurobiology attempts to cover an even wider range of topics, judging from the editorial in the first issue. It aims to publish articles on any aspect of the neurobiological bases of human mental activity and behaviour as well as work carried out on non-human primates but with clear relevance to human neurobiology. During its first year or so of publication, this journal has concentrated on publishing issues devoted to particular topics (neuronal mechanisms in visual restitution, oculomotor functions, sleep regulation, electrical stimulation of the human brain, and cognitive functions and cerebral metabolism). Each issue includes an introductory article and a series of articles pertinent to the topic at hand. These issues have been very interesting and are an exciting aspect of this new journal. However, the type of freely submitted papers that it will even-