

Analytical power

Howard Morris

Mass Spectrometry Reviews.

Editor George R. Waller.
Wiley. 4/yr. \$120.

IT IS not surprising, given that mass spectrometry has its base in physics but application in analytical chemistry, that the vast literature is spread diffusely between the specialist mass spectrometry journals and those journals serving the many areas in which mass spectrometry is utilized. A major problem for the serious student is sifting through all of literature and assessing the calibre of the specialist publications.

There is therefore a need not only for comprehensive abstract reviews as found in *Analytical Chemistry*, but for selective in-depth profiles of the many aspects of the subject which are of interest to the specialist and non-specialist alike. *Mass Spectrometry Reviews* is a quarterly journal publishing a range of review articles in areas of pure and applied mass spectrometry, and is attempting to meet the need described above.

To date, in the first five issues, the editors have been successful in attracting authoritative contributors, a most important ingredient, and should be encouraged to maintain this standard, without which the journal will not survive.

Many of us believe that good things come in small doses and in this respect will not be disappointed with the average of

just three review articles per issue. The content is the crucial factor and so far this has been encouraging, if not always stimulating, with a good mix of organic, biochemical and physico-chemical subjects. Some articles such as those on lipids, steroids or mechanisms of hydrogen migration are likely to be as relevant for future reference as they are today, but there are inevitable casualties in the faster moving fields such as ionization technology, where the albeit excellent article on Field Desorption has already been made less relevant by the dominant emergence of Fast Atom Bombardment.



It remains to be seen whether or not the standard can be maintained or indeed subjects of interest properly chosen. If so then *Mass Spectrometry Reviews* will make a valuable contribution to research in many fields of study. □

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New opinions

R.J.P. Williams

Comments on Inorganic Chemistry: A Journal of Critical Discussion of the Current Literature.

Coordinators Norman Sutin and Philipp Gütllich.

Gordon & Breach. 6/yr. £84, \$126.

A NEW review journal must have some feature which distinguishes it from other review journals because today we are swamped by 'new' reviews. The two editors in their introduction state that it will provide a medium for the exchange of ideas outside the formality of conventional journals.

As far as I can judge after reading some 35 articles I do not see, in fact, any significant departure from the contents of previous review journals where personal opinion and fact have always been allowed so long as they are documented. Most of the reviews are from authorities, most of them are very well written and the

production by the publisher meets the expected standards. The coverage is from solid-state chemistry to bio-inorganic chemistry and the major emphasis, so far, is away from organometallic chemistry.

The dangers for such a journal are obvious in that since the initial issues have contributions from the big names on big topics the next issues become more specialist and less interesting. This is already apparent. There is a second danger. Without the formal control of a wide-range of referees, personal views can become propaganda. For example I know the field of metalloproteins very well. I do not believe that the review by Gray and Malmstrom of copper protein geometry is more than a piece of self-advertisement. The editors either need referees or they should invite comments on *Comments*. Though it is pleasant to have these reviews, I could not at this stage, recommend that a library take out a subscription. □

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Revealing new robots

William Clocksin

The International Journal of Robotics Research.

Editors Michael Brady and Richard Paul.
MIT Press. 4/yr. \$100.

Robotica.

Editor J. Rose.

Cambridge University Press. 4/yr.
£45, \$110.

BEFORE the appearance of *The International Journal of Robotics Research* (IJRR), results in robotics research had nestled somewhat uncomfortably within the pages of journals on computer science, artificial intelligence, or control engineering. Disregarding the industrial robotics trade magazines and semitechnical periodicals, it had been safe to say that no journal specifically dealt with robotics research. The result had been to sequester important papers in series of internal reports privately published by computer science, artificial intelligence and engineering departments in universities such as MIT, Carnegie-Mellon, Stanford, Edinburgh, and Tokyo. Indeed, according to a survey, only 10% of cited robotics research papers had appeared in any recognized journal at all.

Judging by the five issues published so far, IJRR is first-rate. The papers are generally above average in quality, and are representative of the best current activity in the field. I hope this trend is maintained and improved. IJRR has already attained the reputation of being the journal to which the most important contributions in the field are submitted. On the negative side, suspicion of publication delay is invited by the absence of a 'received' date and 'revised' date accompanying each paper. Although short communications are welcomed, they are not in evidence. I hope that more authors in the field in general will take the opportunity to submit shorter, more concise papers. IJRR is attractively presented, gives excellent value for money and everybody with an interest in robotics is advised to read it.

A more recent journal, *Robotica*, seeks to serve a broader range of interests in industry and education as well as research. Going by the first issue, which one would have thought to be an opportunity to show its best, *Robotica* has not attained the standard set by IJRR and the papers cannot be ranked among the best in the field. *Robotica* supplements the papers with a variety of informal semitechnical sections such as editorials, news and short announcements, book reviews and conference reports. However, because *Robotica* is presented as a journal, it must be judged on the quality of its papers. To more adequately serve its intended audience, *Robotica* should be doing more