

From France and around the world

B.L. Ginsborg

Fundamental & Clinical Pharmacology. Editors-in-chief Salomon Z. Langer, Philippe Meyer and Jean-François Giudicelli. *Elsevier*. 6/yr. France Fr 885, elsewhere Fr 995.

ISI Atlas of Science: Pharmacology. Publisher and editor Alexander M. Grimwade. *ISI*. 4/yr plus annual compilation. \$125 (institutional); \$65 (personal).

EVERYTHING between the covers of *Fundamental & Clinical Pharmacology* (subtitled *The International Publication of the French Association des Pharmacologistes*), including the abstracts of papers presented at the association's meetings, is in English. Presumably French pharmacologists have decided that this was necessary to enlarge the pool of potential readers and contributors.

The four numbers sent to me for review contained 23 regular articles, varying in length between 5 and 16 pages, and two interesting reviews, one by Thesleff on recent work on large "miniature end-plate potentials" and the other by Schwartz on calcium channel drugs. About half of the contributions originated in French institutions; others came from Italy, Yugoslavia, the United States, Britain, Israel and Canada. I did not spot any paper for which I would predict an outstanding citation score, but the journal is well produced, has a strong editorial board and stands a good chance of being attractive to authors of short papers of high quality. All that the publisher and editors can now do is to hope for the appropriate response from volunteers.

That is not at all the case for the *ISI Atlas of Science: Pharmacology*, which consists entirely of commissioned articles. At first sight, this journal seems like the answer to a prayer. Each number contains about 20 short surveys of fashionable topics, selected, according to a prefatory note, by "sophisticated techniques" from "areas where research activity is most highly concentrated". The editorial advisory board is distinguished and the authors have been chosen for their expertise. In the compass of about four pages, each survey contains, amongst other components, a summary, a historical section and a set of references. It seems too good to be true; just four pages, or even fewer, for enlightenment.

The publishers assert that the *Atlas* will be "a 'must' for researchers" and "invaluable to graduate students", not to mention "educators and lecturers". Some, however, may be reminded of that series of little books that bear on their front cover

"Know your jargon and hold your own in any company — Instant Erudition". The title of the series? *The Bluffer's Guides*.

The first four issues provide cause for both enthusiasm and misgivings. On the negative side many of the articles are cramped, conclusions are stated without a hint of evidence and cartoons replace arguments. What is wrong is probably as much the fault of editorial policy as of the authors. Short of space as they are, the contributors are nevertheless expected to include frivolities such as a list of "Key players". In the words of one evidently reluctant author: "The identification of key players is very difficult and undoubtedly subjective. . . . Time, death, and obituaries will ultimately make the appropriate judgements". Space is also frequently wasted on excessively long lists of references, which furthermore often include books and symposium volumes, types of literature notoriously difficult to come by.

Another feature which seems to be inappropriate is the glossary. It is true that it allows compression, such as "In addition to FIAC, various other 2'-fluorinated arabinosylpyrimidine analogs, i.e. FMAU, FIAU, FEAU and FBVAU, have been found effective as potent and selective inhibitors of HSV and VZV replication". But is that so very desirable?

As well as what might be termed defects in editorial tactics, there are also strategic weaknesses. For example, three separate articles on voltage-operated calcium channels (which the subject is sufficiently complicated to deserve) rather than reinforcing each other, overlap irritatingly and sometimes confusingly. The individual articles are good but with a little editorial effort the ensemble could have been greatly improved.

On the positive side is the diversity of the material that is covered: the first volume includes articles on bacterial resistance, immunology, toxicity and psychopharmacology to name but a small selection of topics. And above all, there are some splendid contributions. One example, from the first issue, is "Behavioral Effects of Peripherally Administered Cholecystokinin" by J.E. Morley. This seems to me to be a model of what can be done. The author constantly keeps the reader aware of the experiments which underpin his conclusions, explains unfamiliar terms as he goes along and points to the broader implications of what might at first seem to be a rather narrow topic.

This is alpha double-plus stuff. In spite of its present faults, the pharmacological *Atlas* is a worthwhile venture, and potentially a very useful addition to the literature. □

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Periodical profusion

John B. Hall

Trees: Structure and Function. Managing editor H. Ziegler. *Springer-Verlag*. 4/yr. DM 248.

New Forests: Biology, Biotechnology, and Management of Afforestation and Reforestation. Editor-in-chief Mary L. Duryea. *Kluwer*. 4/yr. Dfl 208, \$101 (institutional); Dfl 110, \$55 (personal).

Tree Physiology. Editor Rozanne Poulson. *Heron Publishing, Box 5579, Station B, Victoria, British Columbia V8R 6S4*. 4/yr. \$132 (institutional); \$66 (personal).

Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research. Editor-in-chief Sven-Uno Skarp. *Amqvist and Wiksell, PO Box 638, S-101 28 Stockholm*. 4/yr. Skr 535, \$88 (institutional); Skr 600, \$98 (personal).

FORESTRY is a small and traditional profession. New journals dealing with the subject stand alongside publications with 50- or even 100-year pedigrees, almost all of them institutional or society organs. Forestry was largely unaffected by the proliferation of biological periodicals in the 1960s and 1970s, and has, in some respects, kept its tradition at the expense of topicality. The new journals considered here are signs that change is at least gaining momentum, and reflect the publishing fraternity's conviction that new



outlets are needed to cater for interests in trees and forestry extending well beyond professional ranks.

Trees: Structure and Function and *New Forests* emphasize the biological aspects of forestry. *Tree Physiology* expresses the same intention without recourse to the term 'forestry', except to point out that it is covered by *Forestry Abstracts*. Only the *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research* pursues a conventional path in having institutional affiliations (the Nordic Forest Research Cooperation Committee and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry) and specifically stating that its field is basic forestry sciences.

In technical coverage, *Trees*, *New Forests* and *Tree Physiology* overlap both with each other and with established journals, but there are distinctions between them. *New Forests* stands apart in its adherence to routine forestry work and its stress on research in the field, which bring it close in aim to the well-established