

Connecting threads

Peter Davies

Cerebral Cortex. Editors P. S. Goldman-Rakic and P. Rakic. *Oxford University Press*. 6/yr. US \$190, elsewhere \$220 (institutional); US \$95, elsewhere \$125 (personal).

Hippocampus. Editors David G. Amaral and Menno P. Witter. *Churchill Livingstone*. 4/yr. US \$130, elsewhere \$154 (institutional); US \$75, elsewhere \$99 (personal).

Dementia. Editor-in-chief V. Chan-Palay. Karger. 6/yr. UK £277, US \$425, elsewhere SwFr. 637 (institutional); UK £62, US \$94, elsewhere SwFr. 141 (personal).

THESE three new journals cover areas of interest to many neuroscientists; *Nature* provided my first chance to see them, as none has yet arrived in my department's library. *Cerebral Cortex* is clearly a superior product, and, with its reasonable personal subscription rate, is one of a short list of journals to which I shall subscribe. All of the papers in the first issue are substantial and thoughtful, and neuroanatomical, neurophysiological and computational studies are all represented. The quality of the illustrations, including colour plates, is splendid. If the editors can maintain the high standard of both the manuscripts and production, then this journal will become an important forum for publication of research papers.

I was less convinced of the need for *Hippocampus*, because this brain region is intimately associated with the cerebral cortex. Almost everyone working on the brain looks at this pretty region from time to time, and I suspect that if the journal was in the library, I would browse through it when time allowed. Because neuroscience journals do in general tend to serve particular subdivisions (for example, *Journal of Neurochemistry*, *Journal of Neurophysiology*), perhaps there is a need for a journal that considers structure from several different viewpoints. The quality of the papers in the first two issues is generally high, and again, the quality of the figure reproduction is good.

Because research of dementia is a particular interest of mine, I was especially interested to see the first issues of *Dementia*. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the journal lived up to the aims of its editor: to provide a forum for a broad range of papers devoted to this increasingly popular area of research. Contributions to the first four issues range from neurochemistry to case re-

ports, of higher quality than I had expected. Most of the papers are from European groups, and the journal will help US researchers keep up on what is going on across the Atlantic. (The editor notes that research findings on dementia are scattered among many other, less specialized journals. This is certainly true: for example, the first issues of *Cerebral Cortex* and *Hippocampus* contain articles on the related subject of Alzheimer's disease.) The price of subscribing to *Dementia* is relatively high, but probably worthwhile for any institution claiming to have a serious interest in the field. □

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Nervous beginnings

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Molecular and Cellular Neurosciences. Editor-in-chief Michael Cann. *Academic*. 6/yr. £143.50, \$208 (institutional); £74.50, \$108 (personal).

YET another new journal in molecular neurobiology? That may be the initial reaction of many neuroscientists. But when I reviewed the new *Journal of Molecular Neuroscience* in *Nature* last



Dendrites of rat pyramidal cells. (From the *The Enchanted Loom* edited by P. Corsi, Oxford University Press.)

year I noted that this is now probably the most rapidly growing field in biological science and that the market for publishing in it is not saturated. Those working in molecular neurobiology, and in some areas of cellular neurobiology, can still find difficulty in getting their papers published quickly in a journal

that carries consistently good quality papers and does not appear arbitrary in its selection for the benefit of a coterie. *Molecular and Cellular Neurosciences* will be, in my opinion, a welcome new entrant if it can help to overcome such obstacles. It aims to cover all areas of neurosciences at the molecular, cellular and tissue levels. Hence it should cater for a wide readership and authorship.

The new title is extremely similar to *Cellular and Molecular Neurobiology*, which is now in its eleventh year and has essentially the same prospectus. The mix of topics covered in the two is, so far, very similar. It will be interesting to see if the new offering can differentiate itself from the established one.

The journal started in 1990 with three issues (between August and December) and has now moved on to publishing six per year. It will need to become monthly before it can overcome the difficulties outlined above. Many of the papers are typical of such an early phase, not being substantial contributions, but several are of high quality and important in their field. The advantages that this journal has over its competitors include a striking, bright and interesting illustration on the cover of each issue (making it stand out on the library current-periodicals shelf), a large format, excellent printing and pictorial production, and a rapid publication schedule. In the most recent issues this averages 2 months or less from the received date to publication. If the journal can manage consistently to appear in libraries on its publication date, then it should attract good papers, because this is not a journal merely for brief communications or for 'camera-ready' exhibitionism.

The journal has taken a wide field as its target. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this – a few general journals are of value in every field, and their circulation certainly ought to increase. But each new addition will find it increasingly more difficult to establish a flow of quality contributions than will a specialist journal, where immediate recognition and interest go in its favour. The new journal has therefore taken

on a difficult task, but deserves to be given the chance to show whether it can excel in it. □

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