

Following the fashion

Michael Akam

Seminars in Developmental Biology. Guest editors. Saunders. 6/yr. US \$130, elsewhere, \$155 (institutional); US \$81, elsewhere \$102 (industrial); US \$63, elsewhere \$84 (personal).

SINGLE-topic guest-edited volumes are the flavour of the month among publishers of new review journals. This format suits developmental biology well, for many areas of the subject are not sufficiently coherent to be encapsulated in single pre-digested mini-reviews. This is well illustrated by the volume of *Seminars in Developmental Biology* that examines cell behaviour during morphogenesis. Edited by Raymond Keller and Diane Fristrom, the seven reviews it contains could not sensibly be condensed into a single gobbit, but together provide a rich taste of the field for any student or researcher with a little time spare to chew the cud.

The editorial board of the series has only nine members — small enough to suggest that each takes some individual responsibility for its content. So far they have done a good job, picking for the first year a mix of topics, some fashionably predictable (cell interactions in development), others less so (heterochronic changes in development). There is room in these volumes for a satisfying diversity of approach to each topic, ensuring that most issues will bring something new, even to those familiar with the field.

These volumes are at their best when they provide a coherent view of a well-defined subject area. An example is the issue edited by Claudio Stern on the evolution of segmental patterns. This volume explains why interest in segmentation has revived and outlines the outstanding questions. Some articles are anatomical, others molecular. One is explicitly historical. I thought the inclusion of the latter an excellent idea, and a precedent that might be repeated for other topics.

The appearance of the journal does little to grab or hold the attention of the casual browser. The stark black and orange design on the cover dominates a small inset panel that illustrates the subject of each volume. What a shame, when new techniques in developmental biology are producing such striking visual images. Inside, the quality of reproduction is just sufficient to do justice to most micrographs, although not all of the half-tones fare well. The exclusive use of black-and-white illustration may soon appear dated in comparison with

the increasing exploitation of colour in other review series.

But besides these niggles on presentation, the journal has made an impressive start and could help to integrate the various branches of developmental biology, including those that extend beyond the current concerns of cell and molecular biologists. □

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An inspiration?

P. T. Peachell

American Journal of Physiology: Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology. Editor-in-chief D. J. Massaro. *The American Physiological Society.* 12/yr. US \$120, Canada \$140, elsewhere \$151 (institutional); US \$95, Canada \$113, elsewhere \$125 (personal).

It is with increasing frequency that established journals identify either new or expanding areas that merit special attention, sometimes leading to the spawning of a new journal such as this one. Since August 1989 the journal has been available both as a subsection of its parent journal, the *American Journal of Physiology*, and on its own. The title is somewhat unwieldy and confusing, because the journal could be misinterpreted as subserving two discrete topics. Be that as it may, the aim of the journal is to encompass, more or less, all aspects of lung physiology.

Each issue contains invited reviews, commentaries, papers on original work and, occasionally, a historical perspective. The reviews are usually related to some aspect of lung physiology, whether at the molecular or cellular level, although on occasion the reviews are far more generalized and would be amenable to a much wider audience. Moreover, a considerable proportion of the articles that appear in the journal would sit comfortably in a journal with a pharmacological slant. As one would expect from the offspring of a journal of some standing, the material is well written and the articles are mostly informative without necessarily being spell-binding. The editors have laudably devoted a large proportion of the articles to molecular topics, but the coverage of cellular aspects seems to suffer an imbalance towards certain cell types. Of course, this may simply reflect the bias of those who submit material to the journal, but on this account the journal's appeal might suffer. This also means that individuals who might benefit hugely from



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False-colour arteriograph of a normal lung.

reading the journal (such as readers of the *American Review of Respiratory Disease*), may be discouraged from doing so. These caveats apart, the journal is informative and is a welcome addition for an area of research that has a growing following. □

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Stimulating start

William Cushley

Cytokine. Editors Scott Durum and Gordon Duff. Saunders. 6/yr. US \$275, elsewhere \$300 (institutional); US \$125, elsewhere \$150 (industrial); US \$90, elsewhere \$116 (personal).

RESEARCH into the biological activities of cytokines continues to expand at an apparently exponential rate. The appearance of a periodical devoted to this area of endeavour was, therefore, entirely predictable. Is there a need for a specialist journal in the area? I think that there is, given that many good cytokine papers currently find themselves in subsections of journals devoted to more general areas.

The title of the journal is broad, suggesting that contributions dealing with a variety of cytokine-related processes will be welcomed. For the most part, the journal lives up to its name, presenting reports on a wide selection of topics. These range from routine papers detailing *in vitro* effects of individual cytokines, to reports in the currently fashionable areas of cytokine receptors and