Project reading

Neal G. Copeland

Mammalian Genome: Official Journal of the International Mammalian Genome Society. Editors Lee M. Silver, Joe Nadeau and Jan Klein. Springer. 12/yr. \$269 (institutional), \$129 (personal).

NOT only has the Human Genome Project led to a revolution in the pace of genome research, it has also spawned several new dedicated journals. In its original conception, *Mammalian Genome* was to provide a voice for the International Mammalian Genome Society and an archive of information related to the mouse genome project. In its final conception, the goals of the journal are much broader and include the publication of new findings in all areas of mammalian genome research, including those pertaining to humans. In scope, therefore, the journal overlaps considerably with other highly successful genome journals such as *Genomics* and *Nature Genetics*. The long-term success of *Mammalian Genome* will no doubt therefore be determined by how well it competes with other genome-related journals for publication of the most exciting research findings in the field.

The first volume was published in 1991 and consisted of four issues. In 1992, 12 issues are to be published, attesting to the early success of the journal. Each issue contains a number of original papers published as full-length articles, brief communications or brief reports of data, in addition to an occasional review. The reviews are generally good, dealing with such diverse topics as obesity, mapping with mononucleotide repeats, dispersed repetitive elements in mouse genome analysis, positional cloning and mouse pigment mutations.

The editorial board is excellent and is composed of 42 leading scientists actively engaged in all facets of mammalian genome research (although heavily skewed towards mouse research). Most papers published so far have involved the mouse, although a smattering of papers dealing with the genetics of humans and other model organisms (rat, mink, fox and cow) have also appeared. Much of what has been published is straightforward linkage analysis. The scope of the papers is often somewhat narrow; but nonetheless they are important contributions to the field. I expect that as the journal matures and is even more widely read, the scope and quality of the papers will improve accordingly.

A subscription to *Mammalian Genome* includes membership of the International Mammalian Genome Society and receipt of a special supplementary issue,

compiled yearly, containing committee reports for each of the mouse chromosomes. The reports provide the most complete and up-to-date linkage information available for the mouse and are a must for anyone engaged in or contemplating work on the mouse. The special issue alone is worth the cost of a yearly personal subscription. My only complaint against the reports is that they do not follow a single format. Each chromosome committee is left to its own devices to decide which data to include, which to leave out and in which format the final report should be written. This often makes it difficult for all but the most ardent mouse aficionado to extract information.

As an official voice for the International Mammalian Genome Society, *Mammalian Genome* has been somewhat mute. Society news so far has consisted

of a few meeting announcements and a report on the Fourth International Mouse Mapping Workshop. Perhaps such news will increase as membership of the society grows and the society begins to play a more active role in coordinating and orchestrating mammalian genome work.

In summary, *Mammalian Genome* is a good addition to the list of new journals spawned by the Human Genome Project. It will certainly be required reading for anyone working on the project and in particular those working in the field of model organisms. □

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Limits of the growth business?

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Current Opinion in Genetics and Development. General editors Ron Laskey and Matthew P. Scott. *Current Biology*. 6/yr. £209.95, \$390 (institutional); £69.95, \$129.95 (personal); £29.95, \$49.95 (student).

REVIEWS are the publishing growth area in biological sciences and *Current Opinions in Genetics and Development* is one of the more interesting new arrivals in a crowded area. Genetics and development could encompass virtually the whole field of biology but there is massive competition. Realizing this, the publishers have used two unusual tools to make all *Current Opinion* journals different from their competitors, such as *Annual Reviews of Genetics*, or from review articles in journals such as *Cell* or *Development*. Each issue contains 15–20 articles constructed around a subject area such as gene organization and evolution, genetics of disease, gene expression and differentiation or pattern formation and development. The subject areas are always topical and the contributions, of between five and six pages, are almost uniformly excellent, well focused and concise.

What is, I think, unique is that authors are asked to annotate their reference lists, giving a brief précis and also indicating the papers in their field that they see as being of “interest” or “outstanding interest”. This is a clever idea: it allows the (relative) outsider to assess not only the main facts of a field, as does any review format, but also its intellectual and social structure. The reviews detail the important observations and models, and the annotations place them

in context. By design this scheme explicitly gives a personal opinion as to who is doing important work, which is otherwise only discernible by careful filtering of more extensive reference lists from conventional reviews. I am not sure that this procedure will appeal to everyone: the papers are perhaps too selective for the specialist. But for scientists who wish to explore the peripheries of their field, they are ideal.

The second unique feature of all the *Current Opinion* series is that they include a large bibliography of current literature relevant to the field under review. This is extensive, covering more than 40 pages divided into three columns. The full authorship and title of each paper are listed but there are no abstracts. I am not convinced that this bibliography is useful, because it is essentially a paper listing of the computerized literature searches that I routinely use, but with none of the specific filters included to make the list manageable. I have never felt the need to use these lists, but perhaps that is a personal failing.

I have found *Current Opinion in Genetics and Development* particularly useful in approaching new areas of my own research, which for me is a certain measure of a review's success. This is a continually interesting journal and moderately priced; it should be part of any well equipped personal or institutional library. □

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