

deserves. The journal contains reviews, research papers and technical tips on PCR-based methods and comes from a publishing house of unquestionable credentials. Readers will therefore have certain expectations, which, I believe, have been met with a robotic consistency of high-quality papers. The list of associate editors and the editorial board contains names that would be the envy of many publications. With assistance from such stars, it is relatively easy for Judy Cuddihy, the editor, to bring "focus and quality control" to the wide-range of PCR developments. Indeed, the relatively low publication frequency of the journal may also be helping to achieve this quality control. It seems that if PCR is considered a religion, *PCR: Methods and Applications* is its bible.

But we have come to expect more. Although the journal does a good job by providing a short list of selected articles on the cover, it is difficult to form a link between the cover and the contents because all the issues look alike. And it might be a good idea to include a list of all the previous articles in every issue (or a modification of this theme). This might transfer the journal from the office to the workbench, which is where a methods journal is supposed to be. Finally, the journal would benefit from a correspondence section to provide a vehicle through which sellers and consumers can communicate. The personal subscription rate is reasonable, but could have been a little less considering the worldwide hunger for PCR. Perhaps there should also be a reduced rate for developing countries as well as for — unprecedented though it may be — the new European countries.

I have a feeling that there is a limit to the number of new PCR-based methods that can be developed, although new applications are going to continue to arise for a long time. Assured, in the meantime, that our beauty is in able hands, we can now go back to the bench and devour the bible. □

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Journal prices

Details of editors and frequency of publication, and the subscription rates appearing at the top of each review, are given in most instances for 1993. This information may not be complete in all cases. Readers interested in a particular journal are therefore advised to check prices with the publisher before subscribing.

Breasting the flood

David Blow

Current Opinion in Structural Biology.

General editors Wayne Hendrickson and Aaron Klug. *Current Biology*. 6/yr. £264, \$445 (institutional); £69.95, \$129.95 (personal); £29.95, \$49.95 (student).

THE continued acceleration of scientific discovery, most of all in the biological sciences, brings problems for us all. We can cover the original literature only within an ever-narrowing field. The *Current Opinion* series of journals, of which there are now six in biological sciences and sixteen in clinical medicine, provide a carefully designed scheme for current awareness within broader specialities, which have now become far too large for one to read, or even scan, all the publications.

For structural biology, for example, coverage is divided under 13 separate sections, of which about half are descriptive (proteins, nucleic acids) and half analytical (catalysis and regulation, protein engineering and design). The two general editors choose one or two people to edit each of these sections. The section editors invite eight or ten review articles or half-a-dozen pages on specific topics, and add a brief editorial overview. Each section is reviewed annually.

To ensure coverage of the current literature, *Current Opinion in Structural Biology* organizes the scanning of some 60 journals, and each issue lists all the publications in the past year that are considered relevant to the sections under review, whether or not these are cited in the reviews.

The success of such a scheme depends partly on a robust organization, but above all on the quality of the individual reviews and their authors. The editors of *Current Opinion in Structural Biology* have recruited scientists of outstanding international reputation as section editors, who in turn have chosen excellent reviewers. There must be difficulties of coverage, in preventing both gaps and overlaps from becoming too serious, but these are not obvious.

Most articles are interesting and informative, with a definite theme and often a point of view to present. They are not limited to citing the current literature and do not slavishly cite every paper in the field, nor do they avoid citing the same paper in different articles.

My praise should not be fulsome. These reviews are written by busy people with deadlines to meet. If you have

specialist knowledge, you will find the usual irritating imperfections of reviews: misinterpretation, omission, ignorance of precedence, acceptance of unfounded claims, hitching to the bandwagon. But the publication is a stimulating and, above all, a useful one. □

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Structure and function

J. A. Littlechild

Protein Science: A Publication of the Protein Society.

Editor-in-chief Hans Neurath. Cambridge University Press. 12/yr. US and Canada \$550, elsewhere £310 (institutional); US and Canada \$130 (personal).

ANOTHER journal appearing on protein structure and function will produce some dismay among many researchers. Why do we need yet another journal to add to the ever increasing list that we expect our libraries to subscribe to with their ever decreasing funding? There are already other relatively new journals, such as *Proteins: Structure, Function and Genetics*, that cover the general field of protein research.

A multidisciplinary approach is necessary to understand the diverse aspects of protein structure and function. *Protein Science* clearly addresses this need. It seeks to report all aspects of protein research, covering structural determination and other biophysical, chemical and recombinant methods. The overall presentation is excellent and the coloured figures are of good quality. Because the journal is funded in part by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and by the Innovative Technology Fund supported by the Biophysical Society, the subscription rates are good value, there are no page charges and there are reduced rates for colour prints (so necessary to show and display protein structure). Also, the journal has adopted the new approach of presenting extra data and pictures of protein molecules on a computer disk included with each issue. Hopefully, libraries will have the facilities to make full use of this information, which also now includes tutorials that should prove invaluable for teaching purposes. This new approach is funded by the Innovative Technology Fund, and is expected to develop as the journal becomes established.