

Mendeleev outstanding among its scientific figures of world status. If, as I think it does, *Mendeleev Communications* helps to restore that contribution to international chemistry, its promoters may indeed rest well satisfied. □

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Drug design

Keith James

Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters. Editor-in-chief D. L. Boger. Pergamon. 12/yr. £378 (institutional), £65 (personal).

Medicinal Chemistry Research. Editors Richard A. Glennon and Alfred Burger. Birkhäuser. 9/yr. US and Canada \$275, elsewhere \$295 (institutional); US and Canada \$80, elsewhere \$95 (personal).

MEDICINAL chemists are frontline troops in the battle to discover new therapies for many of the diseases of our day. As both architects and construction engineers at the molecular level, they constantly refute Solomon's assertion that 'there is nothing new under the Sun' by designing and synthesizing novel, biologically active agents. The appearance of two new rapid-communication journals, in which these chemists can describe and appreciate drug-design principles and synthetic achievements, is therefore welcome.

Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters is here to stay. Its title accurately reflects its content and style, which is the key to its successful impact. Out of the Pergamon stable, this monthly publication has the look and feel of *Tetrahedron Letters*, essential reading for all synthetic organic chemists, from among whose numbers almost all medicinal chemists come. It provides authors with the option of a two-, four- or six-page camera-ready format, and readers with snappy graphical abstracts with which to scan its contents. Its 'biorganic' description ensures that, in addition to catering for the pharmaceutical arena, it attracts authors and readers from the academic community, who are increasingly drawn to the conceptual challenges of understanding the relationship between structure and bioactivity. A further welcome carry-over from *Tetrahedron* are the "Symposia-in-Print", thematic editions addressing the latest developments in areas of high interest.

Although publication in *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry* is likely to remain an aspiration for most medicinal chemists, that journal's limited scope for rapid

communications and delay on full papers provides the niche that *Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters* now fills. Indeed, for target-oriented medicinal chemists, whose *raison d'être* is not primarily to publish but to discover drugs, pithy, easily read papers, readily generated with today's desktop publishing tools, are ideal.

Medicinal Chemistry Research is a parallel, rapid-publication vehicle aimed at medicinal chemists, who are not, however, as familiar with it as they are with its competitor, *Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters*. Although the stated scope of the two journals is similar, and the material within *Medicinal Chemistry Research* of interest, neither the range of topics covered in its papers nor the background of the authors is as diverse

as those in *Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters*. Also, the greater average length and more heterogeneous style of papers in *Medicinal Chemistry Research* do not help to distinguish it from the many other journals pressing for attention on library shelves. More key papers from the very best industrial and academic groups are needed to establish it as essential reading.

Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters is at the high end of the price range for chemistry publications of this frequency, and *Medicinal Chemistry Research* at the low end. In the event of a budget conflict, go for the former. □

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Transducers transformed

Richard Compton

Sensors and Actuators B: Chemical. Editor K. Cammann; editor-in-chief S. Middlehoek. Elsevier. 12/yr. SFr1,620.

IN little more than a decade, the field of analytical chemistry has metamorphosed from near obscurity and introspective dullness into a lively, vigorous field with a plethora of new and authentic real-world applications, and full of the stimulation of genuine interdisciplinary interaction. The perceived targets (but not the jargon) remain the same — the research and development of sensor elements to transform and transduce chemical signals into information about the chemical composition of the sample analysed. *Sensors and Actuators B* seeks papers concerned with fundamental aspects; sensor materials, effects, systems, devices including interface electronics; and the development of new chemical sensors and intelligent analytical probes for general applications in gaseous, liquid and solid samples in such areas as on-line monitoring in process control, environmental status sensing and life sciences. Typical examples of what this means in practice include chemically sensitive and ion-selective field-effect transistors, integrated optics and fibre-optical devices, remote sensing, chemically modified microelectrodes, thermal transducers, semiconducting gas sensors, Langmuir-Blodgett films, humidity sensors, not to mention electronic noses, raindrop sensors and much more. Exciting and fascinating stuff but certainly not what, say, *The Analyst* was (or is) made of.

Sensors and Actuators was originally born in 1981, expanded rapidly with the subject and fell apart under its own

weight in 1990 into two sibling journals, *A: Physical* and *B: Chemical*; the two parts now jointly comprise no fewer than 27 issues per year. The product is very characteristically Elsevier; it is beautifully, carefully and clearly reproduced on high-quality paper, impressively free of errors, but unhappily expensive. Papers appear to be published with tolerable speed (six to eight months seems typical) and without resort to camera-ready submissions, although considerably greater delay accompanies those (not infrequent) issues exclusively devoted to recording proceedings of rather arbitrarily selected conferences and workshops.

Expensive new journals have to meet a clear need and to attract important and authoritative contributions rapidly if they are to succeed. *Sensors and Actuators B* has done both. First, its defined area lies neatly between the fundamental science covered in regular chemistry and materials journals on the one hand and the technology-engineering applications literature on the other, so providing an outlet for papers that might otherwise have been uncomfortably accommodated elsewhere and hence a forum for a re-emergent discipline. Second, the papers are generally of impressively good quality and often of surprisingly wide interest, both of which suggest effective editorial influence. *Sensors and Actuators B* reflects accurately the activities and interests of born-again analytical chemists and will be essential reading for all in the field. □

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