

Mankind in the making

Ian Tattersall

Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews. Editor J. G. Fleagle. Wiley. 6/yr. USA \$145, Canada and Mexico \$205, elsewhere \$227.50 (institutional); USA, Canada and Mexico \$36, elsewhere \$54 (personal).

PALAEOANTHROPOLOGY is one of those messy sciences that uncomfortably blends many areas of specialization. At its heart a systematic science, it also draws extensively on geochronology, molecular biology, archaeology, functional anatomy, ecology, evolutionary biology, primatology, taphonomy, stratigraphy and a host of other fields. Rarely will one tackle any general problem in human evolution without sooner or later having to delve beyond one's central expertise, an exercise designed to make one frustratingly aware of how difficult it is to keep up with developments in several rapidly moving — and diverging — sciences.

Evolutionary Anthropology aims to help with this problem by providing regu-

but all palaeoanthropologists will benefit from having an easily accessible source of discussion of at least several of these topics, and of others in later numbers.

The journal also contains reports on symposia, book reviews and a correspondence section intended as a forum for debate. The meat of the journal, however, lies in the review articles. These are long

enough to contain a lot of valuable detail, yet they are written at a level that will make them useful not just to professionals but also to graduate students and perhaps to some undergraduates. The articles are copiously referenced and illustrated, and Fleagle has rounded up an impressive roster of authors for the first few issues. If this publication continues as it has begun, and succeeds as it should, future historians will find it an extremely handy record of the evolution of a subject whose varied dimensions are increasingly hard to keep track of. □

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Archaeological meat and veg

Paul Bahn

International Journal of Osteoarchaeology. Editors Ann Stirling and Tony Waldron. Wiley. 4/yr. \$195 (institutional); \$145 (personal).

Vegetation History and Archaeobotany. Editors Karl-Ernst Behre and G. L. Jacobson Jr. Springer. 4/yr. DM248, \$155.

THE field of archaeology is so wide-ranging and all-encompassing — any and every aspect of the human past being fair game — that its every specialized facet can, and no doubt eventually will, spawn its own journal. One can confidently predict the appearance before long of the *Journal of Ethnoarchaeological Taphonomic Studies and Shellmidden Quarterly*. But most journals don't come cheap, and impoverished archaeologists and financially stretched libraries need powerful incentives to take out new subscriptions.

These two new journals have a certain amount in common: high quality production with good photographs and line drawings (with occasional colour diagrams in *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*), a readable typeface, double-column text and a high price for a total of 367 pages and only 260 pages respectively. Both contain research papers, review articles and short reports. Both have their contributions peer-reviewed and seem to have a remarkably rapid process of acceptance: only a week or two in some cases (though much longer in others), followed by almost immediate publication in the case of *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*. One wonders whether this reflects extreme efficiency, or rather desperation and a dearth of incoming manuscripts.

IJO, which began in 1991, also contains one or two book reviews and an occasional leading article and obituary. Its striking

logo, a human skull and a carnivore skull, is no doubt intended to underline the journal's aspiration to be a forum for the publication of papers dealing with all aspects of the study of human and animal bones from archaeological contexts. But the human skull is above the animal, and similarly the journal's contents so far have been very heavily dominated by human palaeopathology.

Indeed, were it not for very occasional contributions on animal remains, a bit of taphonomy and some aspects of ageing and sexing, a scan of these bones would lead one to see the journal as devoted entirely to past human ailments. In theory, this should not make it any less interesting to the average archaeologist, but in practice it does: it is an odd fact that, in most courses on archaeology, a subject that purports to study all aspects of the lives of our forebears, the human skeleton is greatly neglected. As a student I was taught animal bones in some detail, but never given a bit of dead human to look at. A textbook of archaeology that I wrote with Colin Renfrew a few years ago (*Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*, Thames and Hudson, 1991), was greeted with surprise and even alarm in some quarters, especially the United States, because it devoted a whole chapter to human remains. Although humans were the principal actors in the play we seek to revive, it has traditionally been left to nonarchaeologists to study the human remains we dig up.

Seen from that perspective, *IJO* is a welcome arrival if it makes archaeologists more interested in studying human remains, but the journal has so far failed in its aim of covering animal-bone studies in equal depth. The editors are fully aware that these are underrepresented, and plead in a recent issue for more to be



Hominid skulls from East Turkana, Kenya. From left, *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus* and *Australopithecus robustus*.

lar critical reviews of developments in all the subdisciplines that bear on our understanding of our own evolution. Only a year (six slim issues) down the line, it's still a bit early to say whether the journal will have any great influence on the fragmentation of palaeoanthropology that subspecialization inevitably entails and that the editor, John Fleagle, deplors; but it's already clear that the journal fills a niche that has stayed vacant too long. Its first three issues alone contain reviews on subjects as diverse as human behavioural ecology, the assessment of body size in early hominids, the archaeology of modern human origins, uranium-series dating, variable tandem repeats, the vexed question of *Homo erectus* (Asian and African? just Asian?), new views on primate origins, prehistoric cannibalism, and deception among primates. Some of these reviews are inevitably blander than others,