

began to parse more precisely the functions carried out by the right and left cerebral hemispheres. More recently, the advent of functional neuroimaging has raised these endeavours to an even more sophisticated technical level. All this explains the rationale for a new publication devoted to lateralized neural functions; there is certainly plenty of grist for the mill.

The key problems confronting such a journal are which of the many facets of laterality to encompass and how to avoid the 'pop' psychology that has always bedevilled this field. Although the papers, commentaries and book reviews in the first several issues of *Laterality* run the gamut, the balance happily favours the phenomenology of laterality and speculations about its neurobiological underpinnings, rather than clinical investigations (which already enjoy other forums).

This inclination is reflected in the small format of the journal (which precludes the large glossy figures that are now routine for imaging studies), and in the editorial board, many of whom have worked and written about laterality from a broad biological perspective. So *Laterality* will provide lively and welcome reading for those interested in mulling over how and why the left and right halves of mammalian brains are different. □

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Green shoots

Trends in Plant Sciences

Editor Hugh Blackbourn
Elsevier. 12/yr. NFI1,113, \$687
(institutional); NFI214, \$132 (personal);
NFI107, \$66 (students)

Axel Brennicke

Launched in January 1996 as the latest addition to Elsevier's Trends series, this eagerly awaited journal not only closes a gap in the publisher's list but, more importantly, also fills a niche for timely reviews of rapidly evolving fields in plant research.

Although early issues seem somewhat crudely cobbled together, later ones look more professional, with articles well on their way to matching the standards set by the other *Trends* journals. There are reviews and short research news articles reporting interesting observations, as well as an update section on new books, software, techniques and Internet services and a perspectives section carrying opinions and essays.

The scope is ambitious, embracing all of plant science. One might come across pieces on evolutionary relationships or transgenic farming; a new system for distinguishing differences between inconspicuous small yellow flowers; a table of gene names; curves showing concentrations of various chemical reagents; or photographs of the drainage system in a tree. Most reviews cover fashionable areas of modern plant research — subjects that attract both researchers and students and which, consequently, are yielding most of the novelties and so are particularly useful in updating lectures conceived years ago.

I do think the journal fills a gap. Occasionally, special reviews and summaries on plants appear in such periodicals as *Plant Molecular Biology*, *Plant Physiology*, *Plant Science* and *Physiologia Plantarum*; and, from time to time, the most competent of these even become widely cited. The reviews in the new *Trends* journal are similarly competent and trustworthy, covering their subfield more or less objectively and comprehensively. One can take the information at face value without having to decide what may be important and what not.

A single issue of almost any other plant journal would cost more than the yearly (personal) subscription to *Trends in Plant Sciences*. Indeed, the price is so attractive that I have already become a customer. The journal has proved to be a handy reference library for information not readily gathered from original articles, saving me much time, money and photocopying. But the library price is a different matter — my university, for one, cannot afford it. □

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On the move

Global Change Biology

Editor-in-chief Steve Long
Blackwell Science. 6/yr. USA and Canada
\$530, Europe £290, elsewhere £319
(institutional); USA and Canada \$110,
Europe £60, elsewhere £66 (personal)

Peter D. Moore

The old army adage that if an object remains static you paint it and if it moves you salute it may well contain a lesson for modern environmental biologists.

For a long time the only biologists really concerned with change were palaeontologists, and their concept of pace was hardly sprightly. Most biologists were satisfied with painting static pictures of the living world. But in the past few decades all this has been turned on its head and global change has become a central issue in much biological research.

Global Change Biology has set itself up as a platform for the publication of a diverse assemblage of papers that have as a common theme the influence of human-induced climatic, chemical and biological environmental changes on the biochemistry, physiology, demography or behaviour of individual species or entire ecosystems. This is a wide brief and it is not surprising that an eclectic array of papers has appeared in the journal over the past two years.

The direct effects of raised atmospheric carbon dioxide levels on plant growth, soil microbial interactions (hence nitrogen cycling) and plant-animal interactions, together with the modelling and balancing of global carbon budgets, have been particularly prominent as topics for publication and seem to form the central focus of the journal.

Other topics, including the effects of enhanced ultraviolet-B radiation and raised levels of sulphur dioxide, are also found here.

All these topics could find their way into a range of other journals, but what is distinctive about this one is that plants and animals, terrestrial and marine studies, atmospheric and limnological topics are all located between the same covers. The very breadth of the journal may be dangerous as far as finding a niche in the marketplace is concerned, and its best hope of success may well involve the production of issues devoted to specific areas, such as one on coral reef changes which contained seven papers on different aspects.

Both environmental biological research and *Global Change Biology* are evidently on the move, so a salute is clearly in order. □

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