

Origami anyone?

Neville Kallenbach

Folding and Design. Editors Alan R. Fersht and Fred E. Cohen. *Current Biology*. 6/yr. \$459, £227.50 (institutional); \$159, £97.50 (personal).

THE subject of this journal, protein folding and design (with a bow to RNA as well), is among the most active and challenging areas of research in biophysics and biochemistry today. Research in this field covers a variety of theoretical and experimental approaches, from spectroscopy to genetics, with biomedical potential.

The editors say that articles dealing with the subject are now spread over a diverse array of journals, that the numbers of published papers with the words 'folding' and 'design' is on the increase and that referees with the necessary interdisciplinary skills are hard to identify. Although none of these claims alone is a compelling reason for launching a new publication, *Folding and Design* is by no means unwelcome.

How does it compare with major rivals in the field such as *Journal of Molecular Biology*, *Biochemistry* and *Proteins: Structure, Function and Genetics*, as well as newcomers such as *Protein Science* and *Nature*

Structural Biology? As with other Current Biology journals, this one has a particularly attractive format, with exceptional graphics. It offers a useful literature survey and is among the first wave of journals to go online. Editorial board members make up a distinguished international group, heavily slanted towards expertise in those proteins that reflect the editors' backgrounds.

The contents of the first three issues are variable in quality. Some of the short reviews are stimulating, whereas others are repetitive or pontifical. The research articles are uneven too, with important contributions next to inconclusive work.

Is there a niche for the journal? I am not aware of a shortage of space or lack of editorial enthusiasm for papers on folding in competing journals. But *Folding and Design* does seem to offer a centrality of focus that is missing in its rivals, apart from *Protein Science* and *Nature Structural Biology*. All three contain a high proportion of interesting titles, and offer attractive formats and rapid publication.

What gives one confidence that this journal will last is the organizational skill behind it. On the basis of the publisher's track record, I would give it good odds for survival. □

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Good for vibrations

Anthony Lee

Biospectroscopy. Editor Laurence. A. Nafie. Wiley. 6/yr. USA \$175, elsewhere \$205 (institutional); USA \$65, elsewhere \$95 (personal).

THE grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. While biologists desperately claim to be interested in molecules, chemists are equally busy claiming that their studies of molecules are going to transform our understanding of 'life'. The result is many journals claiming to be interdisciplinary; some represent a true merging of approaches, others represent more a view by one side of what they think should be of significance to the other.

Biospectroscopy gives largely a chemist's view of what spectroscopy can tell us about biological molecules. An "editorial introduction" to the first issue describes the forms of spectroscopy to be included as "principally electronic absorption and fluorescence spectroscopy, optical activity, infrared and Raman vibrational spectroscopy, non-linear spectroscopy, time-resolved spectroscopy, electron spin resonance, EXAFS, and other related forms of spectroscopy". For a biochemist, the surprise in this list is the omission of nuclear magnetic resonance, but perhaps it is argued that such studies are reported in all the main biochemical journals, and journals such as *Journal of Magnetic Resonance* already cover more specialist, technical aspects of the technique. Results of other spectroscopic studies also, of course, appear in all the standard biochemical journals, and again more technical aspects are covered in several specialist journals as well as in journals such as *Analytical Biochemistry* and *Analytical Chemistry*.

The contents of the first volume of *Biospectroscopy* are heavily biased towards studies using infrared and Raman vibrational spectroscopies. Papers include studies on human breast tumours, children's teeth, calmodulin, angiotensin, exfoliated epithelial cells, and propranolol, showing the range of systems that can be studied in these ways. On the basis of the first issues, the papers are, however, much more likely to be of interest to actual practitioners of vibrational spectroscopy than to the general reader.

The journal is beautifully produced in a generous layout and on glossy paper. There is the occasional colour figure, a number of which, we are told, can be included free of charge. Subscription rates, both personal and institutional, seem very attractive. □

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Molecules for a living

Jacques R. Fresco

RNA. Editor Timothy W. Nilsen. Cambridge University Press. 12/yr. USA, Canada and Mexico \$360, elsewhere £288 (institutional); USA, Canada and Mexico \$180, elsewhere £168 (personal).

IF my research was still focused on the elucidation of the secondary and tertiary structures of ribonucleic acids, I would surely be a regular reader of *RNA*, a relatively new journal published on behalf of the RNA Society. Indeed, my continuing more general interest in the relationship between nucleic-acid structure and function and in molecular evolution requires that I peruse this well-formatted and well-illustrated journal fairly often.

As pointed out in the original statement of editorial policy, *RNA* touches on all aspects of ribonucleic-acid structure, biochemistry and molecular biology, relevant methodologies, structure-function relationships and theoretical considerations. Also as promised, the review procedure is rapid, as is subsequent publication of accepted papers, which, in general, appear to report high-quality and interesting research. Although very rapid publication and the promise not to intrude on

style may be a balm to the egos of researchers, they cannot be said to be achieved without some sacrifice of the elegance of the language of Shakespeare. Moreover, as original references appear sparse in *RNA* articles, this lack of journal intrusiveness also seems to go with the view that there is no need to make its readers aware that they "stand on the shoulders of giants".

This new journal fills a special need in allowing the presentation in one publication of subject matter that one formerly had to seek in many different sources. So that the journal might serve as a meeting of the minds of the RNA 'community', it was promised at the outset that *RNA* would publish perspectives, mini-reviews, book reviews, meeting reports and formal, more comprehensive reviews. The few efforts along these lines have so far been fairly successful, and one hopes for more of them.

If the role of a journal is to document and disseminate advances in a professional way, and to give coherence to a research area, *RNA* shows signs of succeeding. □

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