informative and well written, and cover developments in pharmaceutical science and technology and clinical, regulatory, legal and health-care perspectives and issues. The general editorial policy is to commission articles, although many pieces are written by members of the advisory and contributing editorial boards, whose collective experience covers the length and breadth of know-how in the pharmaceutical sciences. Meeting reports, a witty news-and-views section and articles on case histories of drug design, discovery and awards are regular features. Each issue also boasts book reviews, new products and a meetings calendar.

The production is lavish, with a glossy format and abundant colour. An interesting initiative is that some issues carry a supplement entitled "Document Access Library", which consists of abstracts of papers to appear in forthcoming issues of Harwood Academic journals. Published bimonthly, *Pharmaceutical News* is good value for money by any measure; I for one wish it were published monthly. □

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Non-appliance of science

Robert Koebner

Molecular Breeding: New Strategies in Plant Improvement. Editor-in-chief Joseph N. M. Mol. *Kluwer. 4/yr. $239 (institutional); $60 (personal).*

PLANT molecular biology, long the poor relative of its animal and prokaryotic cousins, is enjoying a logarithmic growth phase, with no early end in sight as the main crop species have, one by one, become transformable. Commercialization of genetically engineered products has begun, and the stage is set for the exploitation of transgenesis to address many fundamental questions in plant biology.

And now we have *Molecular Breeding*, offering a publication time of 4–7 months and containing the conventional mix of full and short papers, meeting reports and mini-reviews. It expresses the high-sounding goal of seeking to "contribute to the understanding and progress of modern plant breeding, encompassing... biochemistry, genetics, physiology, pathology, plant breeding and ecology, among others". But superimposed on this is the clearly expressed over-arching focus on "plant molecular biology... leading to practical applications". I suspect that these aims are not entirely compatible, and this confusion will all too easily lead the journal away from one or other end of the spectrum

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

DNA gel analysis.

(and most probably, judging by the content so far, from the practical end). The problem with such a straying is that the journal would become a direct competitor with one of the well-established and well-patronized titles; in particular *Cell* and *Plant Molecular Biology* at the virgin pure end and *Theoretical and Applied Genetics* and *Molecular and General Genetics*, among others, at the only slightly soiled one.

A forward-looking reader might suggest that molecular techniques will increasingly find their way into plant- breeding practice, and that this journal therefore represents a conduit to facilitate the easy flow of these techniques from the academic laboratory to the plant breeder. The precedents for such a proposition are not good — *Theoretical and Applied Genetics* started life as *Der Züchter* ("The Breeder"), a change that has succeeded over the years in distancing it more and more from the 'practical' community of plant breeders. The result has been a widening gulf between what the breeders can do and do do, and what the 'biotechnologists' tell them they should be doing. I suspect that the appearance of the word 'molecular' in the journal's title betrays the reality that the editors are paying lip service to plant breeding; rather, their conscious or unconscious intention is to provide another stall in a crowded market for the airing of science that is still far from the applied. □

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Journal prices

Details of editors and frequency of publication, and the subscription rates given at the top of each review, are in most instances for 1996. Readers interested in a particular journal are therefore advised to check prices with the publisher.

Simon Fraser/SPL

Map reading

Peter Little

Genome Research. Editors A. Chakravarti, R. Gibbs, E. Green and R. Myers. *Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. 12/yr. USA $495, elsewhere $545 (institutional); USA $95, elsewhere $145 (personal); USA $71.25, elsewhere $121.25 (student).*

GENOME projects can hardly be ignored, although some biologists may well wish they could. But what do we do with all the information? The obvious reply would be to put it in a computer and hope it makes sense to someone else. Remarkably, we still do not have truly archival databases of genetic data for many organisms, including humans, and this option is not really open. So enter *Genome Research*, a journal that grew out of *PCR: Methods and Applications* (for a review, see *Nature* **359,** 447; 1991).

Research into the genome can be immensely dry — lists of clones, markers, maps and reagents — or immensely exciting — defining the basis of human disease, mapping the evolution of gene clusters against body plan, cloning genes that control body fat and so on. To many of us, genome analysis means both the dry and the exciting, because the maps, clones and markers are the tools of the exciting biology. *Genome Research* has positioned itself squarely into this view. The range of topics is quite extraordinarily diverse: biologically anonymous maps, positional cloning candidates, computational methods, genetic mapping results and strategies, reviews of post-genome-project biology, and technology of genetic analyses.

One constructive criticism: genome analysis is computer-intensive and I am slightly disappointed that there is no computerized data depository associated with the journal. It is crying out for one. Competitors? Of course: the most exciting results of genome research are published in many major journals but these do not cover the specialist or the small scale or the detail. The nearest competitor is *Genomics*, which is gradually moving towards the biological and genetic areas rather than genome-based approaches of *Genome Research*.

What this means is that the content of *Genome Research* will be essential to anyone involved practically in the field and most issues will contain information that could be used by any thoughtful molecular geneticist. To me, this is as good a definition of utility as I can produce: I wish the editors every success. □

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