Bernoulli: Official Journal of the Bernoulli Society for Mathematical Statistics and Probability
Editor-in-chief O. E. Barndorff-Nielsen
Chapman and Hall. 4/yr. Europe £110, USA and Canada $185, elsewhere £125 (institutional)

IT is a bold step to claim the name *Bernoulli* for a journal limited to mathematical statistics and probability, for the members of this famous Basle family made many other important contributions to mathematics, including inventing the calculus of variations (in deriving the catenary), polar coordinates, the Bernoulli numbers of analysis (actually due to Johann Faulhaber in 1631, but then forgotten) and the Bernoulli equation of hydrodynamics. Yet there is some justification, for James (Jacob; 1654–1705) gave the first limit theorem in probability in his posthumous *Ars conjectandi*, Nicholas (Nikolaus; 1687–1759) substantially improved the limits of his uncle's theorem, and Daniel (1700–82) was one of several people who made early proposals of what is now known as the method of maximum likelihood. The new journal, moreover, is the official journal of the Bernoulli Society, founded in 1973 as a section of the International Statistical Institute.

The many existing journals devoted to probability and statistics will soon feel the effects of the newcomer, for *Bernoulli* has started strongly under its distinguished editors, and is exceptionally well printed on high-quality paper (oddly, the name of the printer is nowhere given). The early issues carry a promising mix of papers on stochastic processes and the mathematics of statistics, both areas that are developing strongly and which have important implications in many branches of science. There are no book reviews or (as yet) letters, but one or two papers are followed by discussions.

In an introductory note, D. G. Kendall, the first president of the Bernoulli Society, writes: "This is a Society that one confidently feels will live for ever". The same can be said of its journal.

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Local attitudes

Euan G. Nisbet

Environment and History. Editor Richard H. Grove. *White Horse. 3/yr. £60, DM150, $100 (institutional); £30, DM75, $50 (personal).*

AT Runnymede, west of London, is a small elegant memorial set up by American lawyers. Here King John, among other promises, pledged to relax his campaign to grow forests. The document he signed, Magna Carta, is not only the basis of human rights in anglophone nations: it also has much to say on environmental issues.

Environment and History is a potent if indigestible mix. Those who forget the errors of history are condemned to repeat them; those who forget the environment risk becoming that history. As modern urban northerners justifiably campaign to save the tropical rainforests, we do well to remember past errors and successes.

Much of the emphasis in the first few issues is on forestry, especially in former British colonies in India, Africa and North America. This is appropriate, as much of our modern environmental concern about global vegetation grew out of early forestry. Then, as now, population was growing rapidly, in the imperial peace. The forest was under pressure. Conservation-minded foresters came into conflict with local entrepreneurs and aggressive peasants, often immigrants; older sustainable land-use practices were abandoned; governments vacillated.

The scientists made many mistakes and had much to learn, as *Environment and History* documents. Forestry as a science developed in Nancy, France, and in Germany. Indian forestry was dominated by three pioneer Germans: Brandis, Schlich and Ribbentrop. The problems they faced — fire management, for example — are discussed carefully and with some sympathy by the Indian contributors. The pioneers were extraordinary people. In Kipling's tale *In the Rukh* — the first of the Mowgli stories, later continued in the *Jungle Books* — appears a huge German, Müller, the Lord and Master of all the forests and woodlots of India. The terror of the government, he may be drawn from Brandis. The Mowgli stories epitomize the conservationist attitudes of the foresters.

African forestry had similar roots, drawn from Germany and Nancy, but with close ties to India. Older local people and foresters in former Zimbabwe (the subject of a special issue) tended towards conservationist attitudes while governments, peasant farmers and industry favoured exploitation. The debate continued until the Zimbabwe civil war and after.

The journal reflects this diversity of views. Many of the papers by local authors are impressively detailed, balanced and careful. Unfortunately, in some Western-authored papers there is also a large helping of sociobabble. And some papers are simply unusual. Is it really true that in the eastern mountains of Zimbabwe "contestations by Europeans and Africans become apparent in sexualisation of the landscape"? Perhaps, but I went to school there, and I did not see it. This is writers' country — for more profound insight it might be better to turn to Zimbabwe's authors, Doris Lessing, Dambudzo Marechera, Chenjerai Hove, who tread the same ground as the journal.

We need this journal, and we need it to be solid. Global change needs global policy, but living with environmental change needs local understanding. The lessons of the past century have much to teach us about managing biodiversity. Perhaps Kipling's German forester had it right: "I tell you der big brass-hat pizness does not make der trees grow". □

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Airless life

John Postgate

Anaerobe. Editor-in-chief Larry Barton. *Academic. 6/yr. £180, $320 (institutional); £90, $160 (personal).*

ANAEROBES are microbes that flourish in the absence of oxygen. They are not a defined group because in fact microbes show a spectrum of oxygen sensitivities ranging from aerobes, which (like ourselves) have an absolute requirement for oxygen, to creatures killed by oxygen.

Judging from the spread of papers in the sample issues, bacteria are the dominant research subjects. Anaerobic micro-fungi appear a few times but anaerobic protozoa do not appear at all; facultative anaerobes — microbes capable of either aerobic or anaerobic growth — feature rarely, presumably depending on how far the research findings bear on anaerobiosis. The papers deal with clinical, taxonomic, eco-environment, biochemical, physiological, molecular genetical or even historical aspects of anaerobes. An off-beat item in the third issue is a letter giving a brief account of the anaerobic laboratory of the US National Institutes of Health, where a suitably garbed scientist can work anaerobically. Each issue includes a review article and there are occasional letters to the editor or summaries of scientific meetings.

One is always ambivalent about a new journal which, by tapping off papers from mainstream publications, increases the fragmentation of a discipline. But the fact that handling anaerobes is a tricky and specialized technology provides a certain justification for the present venture. The presentation is attractive; issues are slim but reasonable value for money; print, figures and layout are good; plates, on this showing, unimpressive. Despite some distinguished contributors, the quality of the papers is variable, most of them good but some rather pedestrian. But improvement can be foreseen: special learned societies for the study of anaerobes have been formed during the past decade in both the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as an International Society for Anaerobic Bacteria (*sic*), so there is every reason to expect that this journal, like its subjects, will fill an esoteric niche and flourish. □

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