

dedicated to the rapid publication of important reports or original advances in inorganic and organometallic chemistry: in its first year about 130 papers were published within three months of the submission date.

Inorganic Chemistry Communications is also available online through the ScienceDirect programme. This journal, though pricey, is of a comparable standard to others in the field. With its rapid publication of new manuscripts, there is no doubt that it is a useful tool for all researchers who want to keep up to date with the latest developments in an old discipline. □

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Materials with added value

Journal of Electroceramics

Editor-in-chief Harry L. Tuller
Kluwer. 4/yr. \$255, Df1510 (institutional); \$105, Df1198 (personal)

Robert W. Cahn

A number of established broad-spectrum ceramics journals already exist — such as *Journal of the American Ceramic Society* and *Journal of the European Ceramic Society* — as well as some broader-spectrum materials journals such as *Journal of Materials Science*. They all include papers concerned with such materials as ferroelectrics, magnetic ferrites, solid electrolytes, piezoelectrics and semi-conducting and superconducting oxides. According to the editor's preface in the first issue of the new journal, this group of ceramics is collectively termed 'electroceramics'; he judges that the literature related to these materials is too widely scattered, so that the various research communities involved remain unaware of much of it. This is the declared motive for inaugurating *Journal of Electroceramics*.

The journal shows every sign of covering the full range of electroceramics. Indeed, it goes a little beyond: one issue is devoted to sensors, and includes a paper on giant magnetoresistance, a property of metallic multilayers. Another special issue is most interestingly devoted to "nanostructured materials for energy applications", and includes a paper on nanostructured catalysts — again, an extension of the electroceramics concept. I point out these innovations in admiration, not criticism. 'Mainline' papers include several on processing innovations, non-stoichiometry and associated defects, impedance spectrometry, ionic conductors and ceramic superconductors.

A point of concern is the institutional subscription price. It is usual for publishers

to tempt little fishes in with gently smiling jaws, and for their crocodilian propensities to be manifested only later. *Kluwer*, it seems, is revealing itself as a crocodile from the word go. Nevertheless, the new journal warrants a place in those technical libraries that can afford it and whose readers include a posse of electroceramicists. □

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Earthquakes — the grand and the gritty

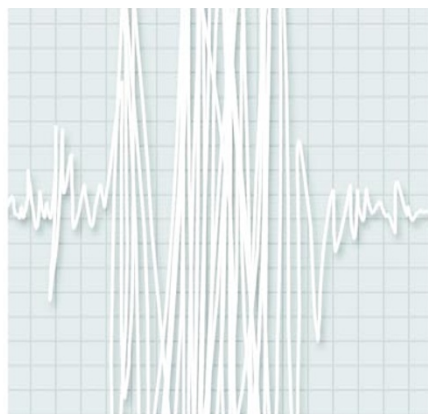
Journal of Seismology

Editor-in-chief A. Udías
Kluwer. 4/yr. \$265, Df1 530 (institutional); \$99, Df1 150 (personal)

George Helffrich

As a discipline, seismology is both grand and gritty. The gritty part is where seismology happens — the rock, soil, mud and water that moves during and between earthquakes. The grand part is the underlying theory and the reward gained by applying that theory in order to understand the behaviour of inaccessible parts of the Earth. While there are controversies, the drive uniting seismologists to increase the general understanding of the Earth comes from the communities dealing with seismic hazard and with seismic source discrimination. Seismology journals publish an intriguing blend of practice, theory and planetary observation that informs a diverse community united by a need to know.

On account of its diversity, I think the discipline is best served by placing seismology in the broader context of Earth science (or planetology/astrophysics, to include helioseismology). The two-year-old *Journal of Seismology* takes the opposite view, focusing on the subdiscipline rather than the context. The most informative elements in my present seismological reading list are broadly constituted geophysical journals, plus



Science and *Nature*, but the list also includes some specialized seismological society-sponsored journals such as *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* and *Seismological Research Letters*.

The list is crowded, and the *Journal of Seismology* competes for an increasingly pressed personal subscription budget. Its institutional subscription rate exacerbates the distressingly noxious negative-sum game involving my university's library budget too much to permit me to warmly commend it to my colleagues. □

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Bugs, glorious bugs

Current Opinion in Microbiology

Editors Julian Davies and Stanley Falkow
Current Biology. 6/yr. £500, \$822 (institutional, print only); £125, \$206 (personal, print only); £150, \$247 (personal, print plus online)

Peter H. Williams

There has rarely, if ever, been a more exciting time to be a microbiologist. Microbes do such interesting things (metabolically speaking), live in such interesting places, respond to their environments, communicate with one another — and 99% of microbes haven't even been discovered yet. Gone is the complacency of the antibiotic era. Infectious diseases continue to wreak havoc in the poorer regions of the world, while in the West tuberculosis is back and 'new' infections drive us to panic. Microbes also play crucially important roles in the manufacture of food and drink and in the pharmaceutical, agrochemical and biotechnology industries.

But perhaps most exciting is that microbiology is in the grip of a technological revolution that is fundamentally changing how we study and exploit microbes. Genomics, proteomics, DNA arrays and the associated developments in bioinformatics have ignited an information explosion that I am sure (and this is the *really* exciting bit) will raise at least a hundred times as many new questions as it answers.

How will microbiologists get their heads round all the new data, make sense of flawed hypotheses, come down off hobby-horses, release bees from their bonnets? I recommend they try *Current Opinion in Microbiology*. Eight major aspects of microbiology are covered each year in six issues: host-microbe interactions in bacteria; cell regulation; ecology and industrial microbiology; techniques; host-microbe interactions in fungi/viruses/parasites; antimicrobials; genomics; and growth and development. Each aspect

comprises an editorial overview of up to 16 reviews by recognized experts in the field, combining timely assessments of accumulating data with occasionally controversial but always interesting points of view.

The papers are generally of high quality, well written, beautifully illustrated and fully referenced (with, usefully, brief résumés of key features of a few of the more important citations). The journal is not, of course, a substitute for actually going and reading the primary data in the original papers. But it does give the overworked, overwhelmed microbiologist an invaluable, authoritative and convenient way of keeping up to date with a familiar field or of beginning to come to grips with an unfamiliar one. And by revisiting each aspect annually, the editors have ensured a regular 'state of the nation' appraisal that will help microbiologists make sense of the information explosion. □

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Computers and the human brain

CyberPsychology & Behavior

Editor Mark D. Wiederhold

Mary Ann Liebert. 6/yr. USA \$143, elsewhere \$182 (institutional); USA \$79, elsewhere \$119 (personal)

Amanda Parker

Separating the interesting issues related to the impact of the Internet, multimedia and virtual reality (VR) from their respective media hype is never going to be easy. Like these products of the global information age, scientific research into their effects on behaviour and society is likely to be both prolific and of a very variable quality. The challenge for a journal devoted to this area, then, is likely to be one of selection.

The range of articles in *CyberPsychology & Behavior* (C&B) is wide. The journal is primarily aimed at healthcare providers who are interested in the use of advanced technology to reduce the cost of healthcare. Consequently, many articles discuss advances in virtual reality that allow its application in a mental health setting. For example, patients with acquired brain injuries, neurological disorders and developmental disabilities may benefit from VR training in a range of simulated environments. VR also has exciting possibilities in psychotherapy. Phobias may be treated with more precision in a virtual environment which can be switched off when necessary: recently published C&B articles show that fear of flying is one area in which progress is being made. The benefits of VR in treatment of post-traumatic stress

disorder have also been recently discussed.

On the other hand, evidence of the Internet's value in psychotherapy is less convincing, and articles presenting research into the Internet's impact on behaviour tend to rely on opportunity sampling and number crunching to reach their conclusions. These papers take a very different approach from the patient studies discussed above, which makes for an uneasy balance in the journal. *CyberPsychology & Behavior* provides a forum for a range of topics that may turn out to be too wide for comfort. □

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Testing the market in search of a niche

Genetic Testing

Editor Fred Gilbert

Mary Ann Liebert. 4/yr. USA \$186, elsewhere \$238 (institutional). USA \$99, elsewhere \$150 (personal). USA \$50, elsewhere \$75 (student)

Peter Harper

Although I had seen the initial publicity for this new journal, it was interesting to see how the first 18 months of production has matched up to the initial stated aims. The journal has a distinguished molecular geneticist as editor-in-chief and a broad-ranging, well-respected editorial board (though it is not clear whether they are functional rather than decorative).

The editorial in the first issue makes it clear that *Genetic Testing* is intended to have a wide readership including the professional genetic testing community, those who develop

or perform such testing, and those "whose expertise and interests fall within the scope of utilization, interpretation, and delivery of genetic testing." The journal invites original papers on diagnostic genetic testing of all kinds, newborn and carrier screening, technical approaches to testing and ethical and social aspects.

The balance of papers is very much towards reviews, with several collections of papers resulting from symposia occupying most of the space. The first of these, spread over two issues, is a series of reviews on the frequency of genetic disorders and mutations in Jewish populations, concentrating on disorders of specific significance in Ashkenazi Jews. This is a good example of material that is often scattered too widely or not published at all, so it is good to see the collection appear here, though one might ask whether it would not find a wider readership in a small monograph.

The second collection occupying an entire issue relates to genetic testing and Alzheimer's disease. Again the broad conclusions had appeared earlier (in *Nature Medicine* 7, 757-759; 1998) but there is much detail in addition that deserves publication.

The third collective series is on the topic of genetic privacy. I found this less valuable, perhaps largely because many contributions, particularly those on insurance and genetic tests, were parochial and written in the specific context of the United States rather than internationally.

In terms of original articles, I do not think that any of the papers I saw rate highly, nor would I consider the technical reports particularly important. There are some disease maps of the human genome which seem rather redundant now that databases cover this information and are regularly updated.

It would be nice to think that scientists, genetic counsellors and ethicists as well as