

*Molecular Microbiology*. A new journal. Edited by CHRIS HIGGINS and GARY SCHOOLNIK. Published bimonthly by Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd, Oxford. Vol. 1: three issues in 1987, subsequent volumes six issues. Price 1987 £40.00 in UK, £48.00 Overseas; 1988 £88.00 and £105.00. ISSN 0950-382X.

This is a handsome new journal, in the now popular large format ( $10\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  inches), which will catch the eye of the reader scanning the library display shelves, by its colourful front cover. The paper inside is of good enough quality to give clear half-tone prints and the choice of size of print and type face makes for easy reading. Tables of DNA and amino-acid sequences vary from large and easily read (e.g. vol. 1, page 205) to very small print (page 175 in the same issue) which would give a selective advantage to the short-sighted and those young enough to be able to see *Drosophila* easily, but the rest of us can easily buy a magnifying glass. In general, however, the figures are given plenty of space for easy interpretation. The editors and/or publishers must also be congratulated on finding a name for their journal which is both short and informative – quite an achievement in view of the multitude of journal titles which play variations on the small number of appropriate words that one can choose from.

The editors ask for original research papers addressing any microbiological question at a molecular level. The molecular biology, genetics and biochemistry of any microorganism, prokaryotic or eukaryotic, and articles on molecular pathogenicity are acceptable, but biotechnology papers have a limited appeal for the editors. These terms of reference appear to exclude evolutionary studies of microorganisms, which are beginning to get much more attention as DNA sequences are accumulated, and the same applies to ecological studies. It is worth noting that the evolutionary relationships and the ecology of microbes are the two aspects of their biology about which we know least, but the editors may draw their net more loosely if these aspects become of obviously greater interest and importance. Further points are that the editors like papers of 2–10 printed pages (1400–7000 words); and that they consider and invite short reviews. In fact, the first issue starts with a 'MicroReview' (clearly not so-named because of its length, since it takes up 4 pages) entitled 'Bending the rules: the 2 $\mu$  plasmid of yeast'.

It would be difficult to give an adequate summary of the 31 research papers in the first two numbers of *Molecular Microbiology*, so I will simply whet the potential reader's appetite by listing the variety of organisms which are the subject of the 47 papers included in the three issues of 1987. These include 15 papers on *E. coli* and its plasmids, 5 on *Klebsiella*, 2 each on pathogenic neisserias, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Bordetella* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and 1 each on *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, *Mycobacterium avium*,

*Erwinia carotovora carotovora*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Acinetobacter calcoaceticus*, *Streptococcus mutans*, *S. pneumoniae*, *Bacillus circulans*, *B. sphaericus*, *B. thuringiensis*, *Histoplasma capsulatum*, a halophilic *Archaeobacterium*, *Aspergillus nidulans*, *Dictyostelium discoideum* and a cyanobacterium (*Calothrix*). There are a number of papers from major research groups, and it is obvious that the new journal has got off to a very good start. All those interested in this wide range of microbiological topics will have to keep a close eye on its current and future numbers.

It is a remarkable fact that we now have the main editorial offices of three journals publishing essentially genetic research located in Scotland – *Genetical Research* from Edinburgh, *Genes and Development* from the AFRC Institute at Roslin, near Edinburgh, and now *Molecular Microbiology* edited from the University of Dundee, only 57 miles from Edinburgh. All three journals also have an American editorial office, and two of them are published from, respectively Cambridge and Oxford. I hope the ties of the three journals with Scotland, and the health of the Departments/Institutes from which they are edited, will long survive!

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*The Production of New Potato Varieties: Technological Advances*. Edited by G. J. JELLIS and D. E. RICHARDSON. Cambridge University Press, 1987. 358 pages. £27.50 (\$49.50). ISBN 0 521 324580.

This book emerged from a meeting held in Cambridge in 1985. The meeting was a joint gathering of the European Association for Research in Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA) and the European Association for Potato Research (EAPR). Of the 63 chapters (by a total of 79 authors), 59 were presented at the meeting and four were additional. Most of the contents are loosely organized under such headings as: genetic resources, breeding strategies, selection and screening methods, variety assessment, semi-conventional breeding methods, true potato seed, unconventional breeding methods. The chapters vary greatly in length and quality, from longish reviews to two-page trivia with contents barely sufficient to justify posters. Many chapters would not, in my opinion, have got past a thoughtful referee but that, I suppose, is in the nature of symposium volumes, with their deplorable tendencies both to republish what has been said before and to publish that which should not be published at all.

Nevertheless, the knowledgeable reader, the person who already has a good knowledge of the crop, will get many points of interest and a fair general picture of current trends in potato breeding research. That person would recall that breeding everywhere proceeds quite successfully, as it has long done, by selection