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one can be excused for being a trifle concerned. This concern is intensified by further editorial comments and by the contents of subsequent issues.

The editor claims to offer rapid publication (which is strange for a quarterly publication) particularly of research from within the pharmaceutical industry. But there is no difficulty in publishing good research, whatever its origin, and rapidly if necessary. The contents of the journal vary from chemical analysis to (primarily) the results of clinical investigations. The articles are often short and are generally of a mediocre quality. The better ones are often reviews.

The journal has two interesting features

— each issue includes a free-ranging guest editorial, and referees are invited to append comments to the respective article. The quality of presentation is excellent and the annual subscription rates are average, but the page charges seem rather excessive given the small pages and relatively large type-size. One wonders who the target contributor can be when quotations are given for up to 50,000 offprints. Overall, there is little to commend *Journal of Drug Development* over the numerous and better journals that currently exist. □

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Flying the flag

P. F. R. Little

Genomics: International Journal of Gene Mapping and Nucleotide Sequencing Emphasizing Analyses of the Human and Other Complex Genomes. Editors-in-chief Victor A. McKusick and Frank H. Ruddle. *Academic. 8/yr. UK £206, North America \$282, elsewhere \$309 (institutional); UK £78, North America \$100, elsewhere \$117 (personal).*

GENE mapping was once the pursuit of a small group of enthusiasts, powered by a strong vision of what might be possible. Then recombinant-DNA technology blasted the field into a forefront of biology, the human genome initiative perhaps being its most visible feature. *Genomics* was set up in 1987 in response to this surge of activity, to provide a specialist vehicle for publication of gene mapping and nucleotide sequences.

On looking at any issue of the journal, it is immediately apparent that standards in gene mapping are very different from those in virtually all other areas of molecular genetics — not worse (or better), just different. For example, it is inconceivable to me that a report showing that a gene was *not* located on a specific chromosome or region would constitute a publishable finding in mouse or *Drosophila* research. Nevertheless such reports, as well as the normal gene/sequence localization papers, appear in *Genomics*. The reasons are not hard to appreciate — map location is definable in a positive and negative way. In consequence the journal is a very mixed read. You will frequently learn nothing from an entire issue, simply because 'your' chromosome or region or gene is not discussed.

Ultimately, a human or mouse gene map is too complex to exist on anything other than a computer database, and

much of the information in *Genomics* could be submitted directly to the database curators. Unfortunately publication in a computer database is not considered legitimate, and convention dictates that publications must follow from grant funding, or precede promotion applications. Eventually this may change and one of the main roles of *Genomics* would disappear.

Until then, the journal remains safe. It is without doubt the flagship of gene mappers. There are competitors: for example, *Nucleic Acids Research* publishes large numbers of one-page RFLP reports, but the exact usefulness of these, which often contain bald statements with no verifiable data, is rather ambiguous and the articles in *Genomics* are clearly of greater weight. Several cytogenetic and genetic journals also publish important papers. But they tend to be embedded in classical studies which, although critical to future development, are at a level less basic than gene mapping.

Probably the journal's only fault, if fault it is, is that it has not performed particularly well as a vehicle for the presentation of new technologies. Given that the whole field is technology driven, this could turn out to be a serious weakness, though recent issues show signs that the balance might be changing.

Anyone interested in gene mapping has to read *Genomics*, which is no mean achievement given that the journal was launched only two years ago. That many of its papers contain very little information, gained at the expense of much labour, is not the point; it is the construction of the whole that is important. One day *Genomics* will stop publishing mapping papers and become a collection agency for a computer database. Until that becomes an acceptable means of communication, the journal will occupy the premier publication slot in a hugely expanding area of molecular genetics. □

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