

Editorial

The arguments against new journals are many, and some are convincing. New journals often signal the arrival of a new specialty; their rate of origin roughly measures the rate of fragmentation of science. New journals are expensive, and budgets, particularly library budgets, are limited. Adding a new journal to a subscription list often means dropping an old one. Because the literature is already too large and too fragmented for any one person to be able to keep up to date, adding a new journal just makes an already bad situation worse – it would be better to upgrade an existing journal than to create a new one. And so forth.

Nevertheless, with this issue a new journal is born, and the reasons for bringing it into existence had better be good. They are. The Journal of Evolutionary Biology comes into being not to create a new specialty, but to integrate a field. The opportunity to establish a new editorial policy has been used to bring together a set of specialties that have not previously shared a common arena for discussion. The subscription price is being held as low as economic pressures will allow. The Journal is the official publication of a new Society, the European Society for Evolutionary Biology. As such it expresses the interests of a large and diverse group of scientists who had not previously shared a forum. While the Society is European, the Journal is thoroughly international, as the membership of the Editorial Board demonstrates.

The Journal has the following aims: (1) To provide an international forum for the integration of evolutionary research. (2) To bring together in one journal the perspectives of ecology, genetics, development, paleontology, behavioral ecology, systematics, morphology, and molecular evolution. (3) To support the growth of evolutionary biology in Europe through its association with the European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB).

The scope of the Journal is deliberately broad. It will publish work on both microevolution and macroevolution, on both prokaryotes and eukaryotes, on plants, animals, and other organisms. Because the excitement of science arises when ideas confront evidence in such a way that the ideas might have to change, the Journal will seek a balance, even a tension, between theory and data. Theories with no hope of application are not for this journal, nor are data uninformed by or without relevance for general ideas. To fulfill its integrative role, the Journal will give preference to papers that bring together two or more fields, showing the relevance, for example, of molecular evolution for development, of developmental mechanisms for macroevolutionary change, of quantitative genetics for ecology, or of phylogenetic systematics for the interpretation of adaptive hypotheses.

Most articles will be original research papers, but the Journal will also publish shorter notes, comments on previous articles, and book reviews. Thoughtful, integrative essays and critical reviews will be considered if they are not too long. The editorial policy is inclusive rather than exclusive – any interesting contribution to evolutionary biology will be a candidate for publication.

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