

## Editorial

Perhaps the surprising thing is how long it has taken to have a journal devoted entirely to *Laterality* and its problems—and they are wide-ranging problems indeed. Left–right asymmetries appear at almost all levels of scientific endeavour: from the asymmetries deep inside sub-atomic structures, through the biochemistry of dextral sugars and laevo-amino-acids, to the related pharmacology of chiral molecules; via the anatomical asymmetries of the viscera which characterise the chordates and are responsible for our very hearts (mostly) being on the left; on upwards through Broca's epoch-making discovery of the intrinsic asymmetry of brain and language, and their relation to handedness; thence to the sociology and anthropology of the dual symbolic classifications that permeate so many of our cultural and political references; and finally, if we believe the claim in the inaugural issue of a journal with related interests to our own, *Chirality* (Wainer, Caldwell, & Testa, 1989), to an excess of left-handed galaxies. All these things interest us; and scholarly submissions accessible to a majority of our readers are encouraged in any of the areas mentioned.

Psychology will inevitably predominate in the journal, not least because psychologists have stimulated and led much of the current renaissance of interest in the problems of asymmetry. If a starting point is required then the seminal publications of the late Oliver Zangwill in the 1950s and 1960s probably act as key citations. Certainly bibliometry readily shows the growing and continuing interest in laterality within psychology. Figure 1 shows the rapid growth of publications indexed broadly under the heading laterality in *Psychological Abstracts* and *PsycLIT*. For many years the field grew far more quickly than psychology as a whole, and it continues to produce a huge number of publications each year. If there is a problem, it is that those publications are diffused throughout a wide literature, and most journals do not see laterality as their principal area of interest. Why then a new journal? In large part because we feel it is important to bring together laterality research from different perspectives. As well as the literature of experimental psychology and neuropsychology, there is relevant material appearing in journals devoted to animal behaviour, motor skills, anthropology, genetics, ethology, neurochemistry, and psychiatry, to name but some of the diverse areas. Important insights are often found by examining ideas from diverse disciplines, and we hope to provide a forum for interdisciplinary interactions.

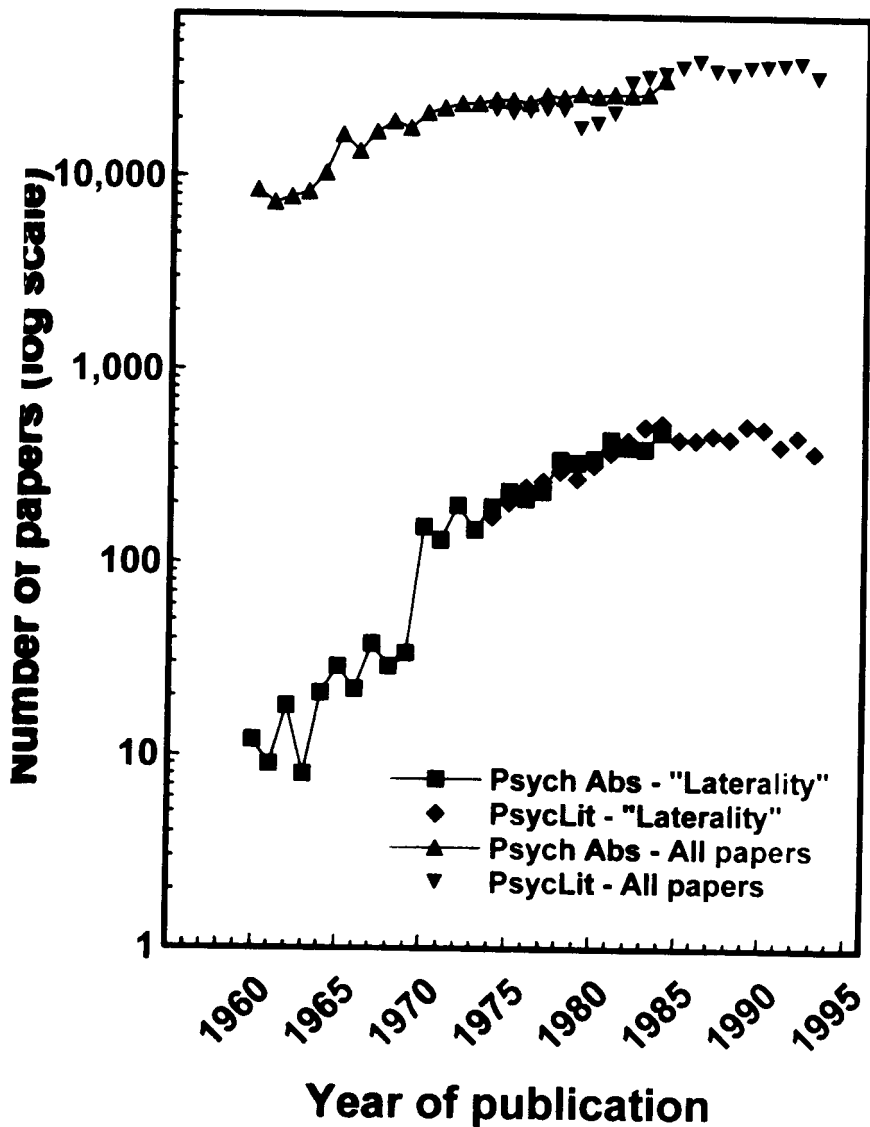


FIG. 1. The numbers of papers published in psychology overall and in the broad area of laterality.

What is laterality research about? Of course it has to do with asymmetries of hands, eyes, feet, and brain, and we expect to publish papers dealing with topics such as handedness, paw preference, the differences between left and right cerebral hemispheres studied clinically and through dichotic, tachistoscopic, and dichaptic techniques, and the integration of asymmetric mechanisms both at the level of motor control and of interhemispheric interaction and co-operation. It also concerns the neurobiological mechanisms underlying those asymmetries, and we therefore encourage studies on topics such as morphological asymmetries, the asymmetric distribution of neurotransmitters, the relevance to behaviour of different stereo-isomers, and the genetics, ontogeny, and phylogeny of asymmetries in humans and in other species.

Given these goals, what types of submissions would we like to see? All types of articles will be considered. As well as encouraging original research reports, we also certainly feel that theoretical position statements, review papers, and meta-analyses are quite appropriate. Brief book reviews and more lengthy evaluatory reviews of new books that we feel are relevant to the area will be published. In addition we should like to receive brief notes or commentaries (up to six journal pages) that need not be empirical as such but nevertheless present innovative ideas, integrate material published elsewhere, or stimulate debate by critical analysis; they will thereby call our readers' attention to material they might otherwise miss. As an example we can do no better than point to the recent commentary in *Cell* by Yost (1995), which provides a beautiful overview of the context of recent work on the genetics and early embryology of vertebrate asymmetry.

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## REFERENCES

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