

their next move. "We are collaborating to solve the problem we all face, as there is no authority in Japan to deal with such a matter," says Miyazaki's Tetsuo Munekata. In New Mexico, the fossil is on temporary display while museum officials await promised paperwork from the dealer. If documents showing legal export are not produced, director Richard Smartt says that the museum will either relinquish its prize or seek to obtain permission from the Chinese government to display the fossil. The Senckenburg received assurances from its dealer that the fossils had gone through proper channels, says former assistant director Stefan Peters, who adds that "it would bother me a little if they really were illegally imported." Still, Peters says, "it is better that museums acquire these specimens rather than some private collection."

Hou says he hopes the controversy will highlight the importance of proper stewardship of valuable fossils. "Exhibits must come from legal sources," says Hou, who at a 1996 international conference in Washington collected 75 signatures on a letter condemning the smuggling of bird fossils and asking authorities at the Chinese Academy of Sciences to exercise greater control over fossil excavations. "I think SACR should immediately collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to approach the Japanese government for the return of these fossils. At the same time, our government should crack down on fossil dealers."

Those not directly involved in the controversy say they hope the outcome will not restrict the ability of museums to serve the public. "I understand the need to ban the export of very rare fossils or fossils under research," says Keiji Matsuoka, a curator of Toyohashi Museum of Natural History in Aichi. "But if there are already a lot of fossils [of *Confuciusornis*] for researchers, I hope that the Chinese government clarifies the law and agrees to provide some fossils by a legal route."

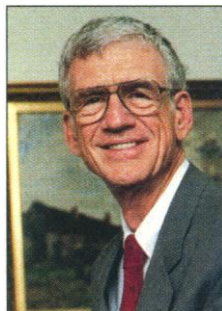
—MUTSUMI STONE AND JENNIFER COUZIN
IN WASHINGTON AND LI HUI IN BEIJING

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Plant Biologists Score Two New Major Facilities

The city of St. Louis, home to agricultural biotech giant Monsanto, will soon host a powerhouse in basic plant research as well. Later this month, a public-private consortium plans to announce the creation of a \$146 million center in St. Louis devoted to basic plant science and sustainable agriculture. With a \$15 million annual budget and a staff that will include more than 80 scientists, the new not-for-profit center, to open in 2000, would be rivaled in size nationwide

only by the Boyce Thompson Plant Research Institute in Ithaca, New York. And it won't be the only new kid on the block. Later this summer Novartis AG is expected to announce a \$250 million plant genomics institute to be built outside San Diego. The blockbuster developments, says Charles Arntzen, president of Boyce Thompson, are "an indication of the emerging importance of plant science in the United States."



Spirited in St. Louis.
William Danforth says center will be unique.

says William Danforth, chair of the center's board as well as the board of Washington University in St. Louis. The Danforth Foundation, a St. Louis philanthropy, is chipping in \$60 million to the center's endowment; until now it has funded mostly education projects at a national level. The other major contributors are the Monsanto Fund—the philanthropic arm of Monsanto company—and the company itself, which together will provide \$81.4 million in funding and other support. The other founders are Washington University, Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG), and the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Independence for the St. Louis center means that it—not Monsanto or its other sponsors—will receive its own patents and any income from licensing deals that it would award without any special preference to its founders. The payoff for Monsanto, says Sam Fiorello, assistant to the company's president, is the "pool of talented people" that the center will attract to plant science. "Ultimately, it will help us," he says. According to Chris Somerville, chief of the Carnegie Institution of Washington's plant lab at Stanford University, Monsanto "recognizes the advantages of being nestled up beside a first-class research institute where people and ideas may spill both ways." A rumored candidate to head the center is Roger Beachy, a plant pathologist at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California. The center's research plan has been left "deliberately vague" for now, says MBG director Peter Raven, because it will depend largely on the incoming center chief.

Novartis, a Switzerland-based drug company, is keeping plans for its center close to the vest. But a company spokesperson con-

Although the two centers will fund a wealth of new plant science projects, their patrons each have differing expectations. The St. Louis center will operate independently of its backers, an unusual coalition of public and private organizations. "There's nothing exactly like it that I know of,"

ScienceScope

USER FEE FOR PROTEIN DATABASE

Plagued by a funding crunch and inundated with new data, SWISS-PROT, a widely used amino acid database, will soon start charging a fee to industrial users.

SWISS-PROT contains sequences and other information on more than 70,000 proteins and is used by some 200,000 researchers in 100 countries, according to its developer, Amos Bairoch of the University of Geneva. But managers have a backlog of about 150,000 computer-generated sequences from which to winnow out protein information, and the database's \$3-million-a-year budget is only half of what it needs, he says.

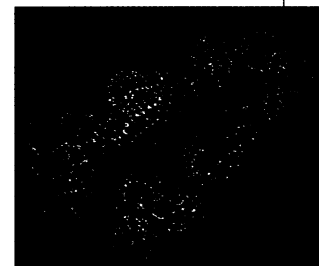
So, starting in September, SWISS-PROT—managed by the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics and the European Bioinformatics Institute—will try to make up the deficit by charging corporate users anywhere from \$2500 to \$90,000 a year. Big companies are not likely to complain: The charges are "very modest in terms of the value of the database" for analyzing and comparing protein structures, says a Glaxo Wellcome spokesperson. Bairoch says that with smaller firms, fees may be negotiable. Academic and nonprofit users will still get free access to the database.

ARMENIA BUCKS TREND

While Russia's competitive grants agencies are struggling (see p. 319), one former Soviet republic seems to be on the right track: Armenia is taking its baby steps in peer-reviewed research.

Next month, a new outfit, the National Foundation of Science and Advanced Technologies (NFSAT), will award 10 15-month grants to Armenian-U.S. projects in areas such as biosensors and cocaine antagonists. NFSAT's \$300,000 endowment, from the U.S. Agency for International Development, will see it through the end of 1999. "Crucial for the future," says NFSAT chair Harutyun Karapetyan, will be donations from the active community of Armenians living abroad.

Contributors: Nigel Williams, Richard Stone



firmed that it will be headed by Steven Briggs, a former biotech researcher at Pioneer Hi-Bred International in Johnston, Iowa, and will focus on plant genomics.

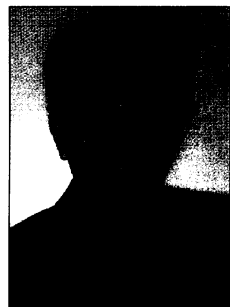
Observers are expecting a big payoff from both ventures. Somerville, who has seen the St. Louis group's business plan, notes that each of the 15 principal investigators will get 370 square meters of lab space: "That's pretty big." Indeed, he suggests the center could one day rival the John Innes Center in the United Kingdom, at 100 research groups the heavyweight among plant science institutes worldwide. Says Somerville, "I would call this stage one."

—JOCELYN KAISER

PUBLIC HEALTH

Epidemiologist Named CDC Director

Jeffrey Koplan, an epidemiologist now working with a private company, has been chosen to head the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Donna Shalala, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, announced the choice 10 July at CDC's headquarters in Atlanta. The event was "something of a homecoming celebration," says attendee James Curran, public health school dean at Emory University, because Koplan has spent most of his career at CDC.



Full circle. Koplan spent 2 decades at CDC.

The CDC directorship has been vacant since February when the previous chief, David Satcher, left to become the U.S. Surgeon General under Shalala. Koplan will take charge of both CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry on 5 October and is declining comment until then. No Senate confirmation is required.

Koplan, 53, is currently president of Prudential Insurance Co.'s center for health care research in Atlanta, which studies the costs and outcomes of health services. Before taking this private-sector job, he spent 2 decades rising through the ranks at CDC—from field researcher in the Epidemic Intelligence Service to assistant surgeon general, becoming in 1989 the first director of CDC's national center for chronic disease prevention and health promotion. According to health researchers, Koplan played a key role in devising an AIDS monitoring network in 1982 to 1984 and led an initiative to prevent breast and cervical cancer in the 1980s.

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"He's a terrific choice," says Curran, who admires Koplan's professionalism and "scientific depth." Mohammad Akhter, director of the American Public Health Association in Washington, D.C., also says he's "delighted" with the selection, calling Koplan a practical leader who knows how to advance ideas through the bureaucracy.

Others are more cautious. Public health leader D. A. Henderson of Johns Hopkins University notes that, although Koplan has a great record and is "very capable," he will also need great leadership skills to reinvigorate CDC. Henderson believes CDC has become "parochial" and needs nudging to "open up" to outside ideas. Infectious diseases researcher Barry Bloom, recently named dean of Harvard University's School of Public Health, also notes that CDC has been slighted in recent federal budgets and needs a strong political champion. Koplan's ability in this area is untested. Bloom says.

—ELIOT MARSHALL

PHYSICS PUBLISHING

Russian Academy to End AIP Journals Deal?

MOSCOW—The socialist principles of the Soviet era long forgotten, the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) is rapidly learning to play hardball in its dealings with the West. Over the past few months, the RAS has threatened to end an agreement with the American Institute of Physics (AIP), which currently translates and distributes English-language versions of several RAS physics journals, and instead produce the two most profitable journals in its own publishing company. During negotiations in Moscow at the end of last month, the academy told the AIP it could continue publishing the journals for just one more year if it increases the royalties it pays to RAS by 50%. Russian journal staff claim that an agreement was reached on those terms; AIP officials, when contacted by *Science*, declined to comment.

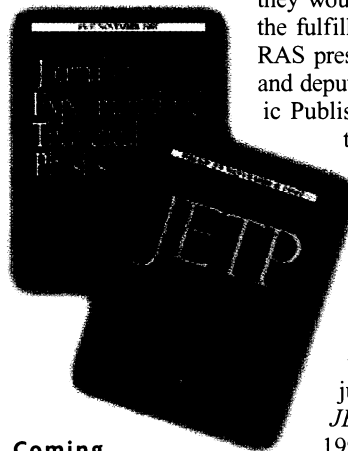
The move has dismayed some Russian researchers, who fear that without the international profile and publishing and distribution expertise of the AIP, these prestigious journals will soon wither. "As soon as AIP disappears from the Russian publishing market, competitiveness will disappear as well and the situation might grow much worse,"

says Alexei Starobinsky, an expert on gravitational theory and a corresponding member of the RAS. "Physicists will be extremely upset by this move," says Roald Sagdeev, a former head of Moscow's Institute of Space Research who is now a physics professor at the University of Maryland, College Park.

RAS officials say they are simply carrying out a resolution passed by the academy's presidium in 1992. The resolution created a new publishing company, dubbed MAIK Nauka, jointly owned by RAS and U.S.-based Pleades Publishing, and it stipulated that the translation and publication of all RAS scientific periodicals in English should be concentrated at MAIK Nauka. By this year, MAIK Nauka was publishing all but six of more than 80 RAS journals that are translated into English. Those six—the *Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Physics* (JETP), *JETP Letters*, *Physics of the Solid State*, *Semiconductors*, *Technical Physics*, and *Technical Physics Letters*—are all being published by AIP. An umbrella organization for a number of learned societies in the physical sciences and astronomy in the United States, AIP has been publishing English-language versions of Russian physics journals since 1955.

RAS officials apparently saw a chance to bring these remaining journals into the MAIK Nauka fold because the contracts for *JETP* and *JETP Letters* come up for renewal later this year, and the other four are due next year. As the renewal deadlines approached, RAS declared in a letter to AIP that they would not be renewed. "This is the fulfillment of the decision of the RAS presidium," RAS vice president and deputy head of the RAS Scientific Publishing Council, Rem Petrov, told *Science* in an interview prior to last month's negotiations.

RAS officials have also accused AIP of making excessive profits from the current arrangements. Petrov claims that the income from the sales of just one of the six journals—*JETP*—was \$1.69 million in 1996, of which \$303,000 was paid as royalties to authors and \$70,000, or 4% of sales, was transferred to RAS. If AIP insists on the contracts being renewed on the same terms, Petrov argues, AIP would continue to profit "at the expense of Russian intellectual property." AIP declined to comment on the negotiations, but AIP chief Marc Brodsky said before the Moscow talks that "we at AIP are proud of our productive and mutually beneficial relations with all our [Russian] colleagues, in-



Coming home? English versions may soon be published in Moscow.