

Preface

Since the last edition of this book appeared, more than five million scientific papers have been published. There has been a parallel increase in the quantity of digital information: new data on genome sequences, protein interactions, molecular structures, and gene expression—all stored in vast databases. The challenge, for both scientists and textbook writers, is to convert this overwhelming amount of information into an accessible and up-to-date understanding of how cells work.

Help comes from a large increase in the number of review articles that attempt to make raw material easier to digest, although the vast majority of these reviews are still quite narrowly focused. Meanwhile, a rapidly growing collection of online resources tries to convince us that understanding is only a few mouse-clicks away. In some areas this change in the way we access knowledge has been highly successful—in discovering the latest information about our own medical problems, for example. But to understand something of the beauty and complexity of how living cells work, one needs more than just a wiki- this or wiki- that; it is enormously hard to identify the valuable and enduring gems from so much confusing landfill. Much more effective is a carefully wrought narrative that leads logically and progressively through the key ideas, components, and experiments in such a way that readers can build for themselves a memorable, conceptual framework for cell biology—a framework that will allow them to critically evaluate all of the new science and, more importantly, to understand it. That is what we have tried to do in *Molecular Biology of the Cell*.

In preparing this new edition, we have inevitably had to make some difficult decisions. In order to incorporate exciting new discoveries, while at the same time keeping the book portable, much has had to be excised. We have added new sections, such as those on new RNA functions, advances in stem cell biology, new methods for studying proteins and genes and for imaging cells, advances in the genetics and treatment of cancer, and timing, growth control, and morphogenesis in development.

The chemistry of cells is extremely complex, and any list of cell parts and their interactions—no matter how complete—will leave huge gaps in our understanding. We now realize that to produce convincing explanations of cell behavior will require quantitative information about cells that is coupled to sophisticated mathematical/computational approaches—some not yet invented. As a consequence, an emerging goal for cell biologists is to shift their studies more toward quantitative description and mathematical deduction. We highlight this approach and some of its methods in a new section at the end of Chapter 8.

Faced with the immensity of what we have learned about cell biology, it might be tempting for a student to imagine that there is little left to discover. In fact, the more we find out about cells, the more new questions emerge. To emphasize that our understanding of cell biology is incomplete, we have highlighted some of the major gaps in our knowledge by including *What We Don't Know* at the end of each chapter. These brief lists include only a tiny sample of the critical unanswered questions and challenges for the next generation of scientists. We derive great pleasure from the knowledge that some of our readers will provide future answers.

The more than 1500 illustrations have been designed to create a parallel narrative, closely interwoven with the text. We have increased their consistency between chapters, particularly in the use of color and of common icons; membrane pumps and channels are a good example. To avoid interruptions to the text, some material has been moved into new, readily accessible panels. Most of the important protein structures depicted have now been redrawn and consistently colored. In each

case, we now provide the corresponding Protein Data Bank (PDB) code for the protein, which can be used to access online tools that provide more information about it, such as those on the RCSB PDB website (www.rcsb.org). These connections allow readers of the book to explore more fully the proteins that lie at the core of cell biology.

John Wilson and Tim Hunt have again contributed their distinctive and imaginative problems to help students gain a more active understanding of the text. The problems emphasize quantitative approaches and encourage critical thinking about published experiments; they are now present at the end of all chapters. The answers to these problems, plus more than 1800 additional problems and solutions, all appear in the companion volume that John and Tim have written, *Molecular Biology of the Cell, Sixth Edition: The Problems Book*.

We live in a world that presents us with many complex issues related to cell biology: biodiversity, climate change, food security, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and human disease. We hope that our textbook will help the reader better understand and possibly contribute to meeting these challenges. Knowledge and understanding bring the power to intervene.

We are indebted to a large number of scientists whose generous help we mention separately in the detailed acknowledgments. Here we must mention some particularly significant contributors. For Chapter 8, Hana El-Samad provided the core of the section on Mathematical Analysis of Cell Functions, and Karen Hopkin made valuable contributions to the section on Studying Gene Expression and Function. Werner Kuhlbrandt helped to reorganize and rewrite Chapter 14 (Energy Conversion: Mitochondria and Chloroplasts). Rebecca Heald did the same for Chapter 16 (The Cytoskeleton), as did Alexander Schier for Chapter 21 (Development of Multicellular Organisms), and Matt Welch for Chapter 23 (Pathogens and Infection). Lewis Lanier aided in the writing of Chapter 24 (The Innate and Adaptive Immune Systems). Hossein Amiri generated the enormous online instructor's question bank.

Before starting out on the revision cycle for this edition, we asked a number of scientists who had used the last edition to teach cell biology students to meet with us and suggest improvements. They gave us useful feedback that has helped inform the new edition. We also benefited from the valuable input of groups of students who read most of the chapters in page proofs.

Many people and much effort are needed to convert a long manuscript and a large pile of sketches into a finished textbook. The team at Garland Science that managed this conversion was outstanding. Denise Schanck, directing operations, displayed forbearance, insight, tact, and energy throughout the journey; she guided us all unerringly, ably assisted by Allie Bochicchio and Janette Scobie. Nigel Orme oversaw our revamped illustration program, put all the artwork into its final form, and again enhanced the back cover with his graphics skills. Tiago Barros helped us refresh our presentation of protein structures. Matthew McClements designed the book and its front cover. Emma Jeffcock again laid out the final pages, managing endless rounds of proofs and last-minute changes with remarkable skill and patience; Georgina Lucas provided her with help. Michael Morales, assisted by Leah Christians, produced and assembled the complex web of videos, animations, and other materials that form the core of the online resources that accompany the book. Adam Sendroff provided us with the valuable feedback from book users around the world that informed our revision cycle. Casting expert eyes over the manuscript, Elizabeth Zayatz and Sherry Granum Lewis acted as development editors, Jo Clayton as copyeditor, and Sally Huish as proofreader. Bill Johncocks compiled the index. In London, Emily Preece fed us, while the Garland team's professional help, skills, and energy, together with their friendship, nourished us in every other way throughout the revision, making the whole process a pleasure. The authors are extremely fortunate to be supported so generously.

We thank our spouses, families, friends, and colleagues for their continuing support, which has once again made the writing of this book possible.

Just as we were completing this edition, Julian Lewis, our coauthor, friend, and colleague, finally succumbed to the cancer that he had fought so heroically for ten years. Starting in 1979, Julian made major contributions to all six editions, and, as our most elegant wordsmith, he elevated and enhanced both the style and tone of all the many chapters he touched. Noted for his careful scholarly approach, clarity and simplicity were at the core of his writing. Julian is irreplaceable, and we will all deeply miss his friendship and collaboration. We dedicate this Sixth Edition to his memory.