

Preface

Iron-sulfur (Fe-S) clusters are versatile prosthetic groups that enable their associated proteins to perform numerous functions, ranging from electron transport to substrate ligation, structural support and DNA repair. Fe-S proteins did not become a focus of research until the late 1950's, when spectroscopy techniques evolved sufficiently to identify features that were specific for Fe-S clusters. Initially identified in mammalian succinate dehydrogenase, Fe-S clusters were subsequently found in numerous bacterial proteins that performed complex functions, including nitrogenase, which transforms atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia, generating an accessible source of nitrogen for synthesis of proteins and nucleic acids. Understanding how Fe-S clusters and proteins work has occupied many scientists for decades, and important breakthroughs regarding the mechanisms of nitrogenase and hydrogenase have occurred in just the last few years.

Not only is it a challenge to understand how Fe-S proteins work, but it is also a challenge to understand how Fe-S clusters are synthesized and inserted into Fe-S proteins in living organisms. Studies originally performed in bacterial model systems have revealed basic mechanisms of biogenesis that are conserved in all the kingdoms of life. Moreover, it has become apparent that flaws in the Fe-S assembly process cause several human diseases. As a result, biomedical researchers working on the pathophysiology of rare diseases such as Friedreich's ataxia have begun attending conferences at which chemists and physicists discuss Fe-S research based on complex spectroscopic studies and computational analyses. Researchers from different ends of the spectrum have struggled to bridge the large gap between the physics and chemistry of Fe-S clusters and the important biological questions associated with their functions.

Despite a growing need for cross-disciplinary communication, there was no single book devoted to Fe-S proteins that provided a basic and broad overview of the subject as it evolved over the last several decades until the first edition of this book was published in 2014. This book represents the second edition of "Iron-sulfur clusters in chemistry and biology", which was written to make the subject of Fe-S proteins more widely accessible to students and researchers by including a short history of Fe-S research, chapters that highlight the unique chemistry of Fe-S clusters and techniques important in analysis, and reviews from leading researchers on well-known Fe-S proteins such as nitrogenase and hydrogenase. In addition, numerous chapters focus on Fe-S synthesis and regulation in model organisms, and in mammalian biogenesis, DNA metabolism and human disease. Concluding with a discussion on the potential role of Fe-S clusters in capturing reducing power and contributing to the origin of life on earth, the final chapter touches on questions about how metabolic pathways initially developed. Because of the rapid growth of the field, this book is now divided into two volumes. The first volume focuses more on fundamental chemistry

and important enzymatic mechanisms. The second focuses more on Fe-S proteins in biological systems, the mechanisms by which Fe-S clusters are synthesized and correctly targeted to recipient proteins, and important regulatory functions of Fe-S proteins. Multiple chapters were updated to reflect rapid progress, and new chapters were added to expand coverage of methodologies used for characterization of Fe-S proteins, chemical principles that render Fe-S clusters unique, including their sensitivity to nitric oxide, and roles in DNA signaling and repair. Other new chapters cover the Fe-S biogenesis process in *E. coli*, new insights into how Fe-S recipient proteins acquire their clusters, and expansion of the chapters on human diseases that result from failures of Fe-S protein biogenesis and function.

I am indebted to my many outstanding and generous colleagues, who spent considerable time and effort in writing the chapters in this book. I hope that this book will be useful to those interested in the subject of Fe-S from many different perspectives, and that researchers from related disciplines will gain a greater sense for the context of their own work.

I want to thank Stephanie Dawson, who perceived that there was an unmet intellectual need and initiated this project in 2014 while she was an editor at De Gruyter. I also gratefully thank Julia Lauterbach, Ria Fritz, Anne Hirschelmann, and Vivien Schubert of De Gruyter for their tireless support and guidance in turning this book into a reality. My family and friends have graciously supported me when I needed time to work on the project long known to them as “the book”, and I’m thankful for their help.

Tracey Rouault, July, 2017