

Preface

The *Encyclopedia of Molecular Cell Biology and Molecular Medicine*, which is the successor and second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Molecular Biology and Molecular Medicine* (VCH Publishers, Weinheim), covers the molecular and cellular basis of life at a university and professional researcher level. The first edition, published in 1996–97, was very successful and is being used in libraries around the world. This second edition will almost double the first edition in length and will comprise the most detailed treatment of both molecular cell biology and molecular medicine available today. The Board Members and I believe that there is a serious need for this publication, even in view of the vast amount of information available on the World Wide Web and in text books and monographs. We feel that there is no substitute for our tightly organized and integrated approach to selection of articles and authors and implementation of peer review standards for providing an authoritative single-source reference for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, librarians, and researchers in industry and government.

Our purpose is to provide a comprehensive foundation for the expanding number of molecular biologists, cell biologists, pharmacologists, biophysicists, biotechnologists, biochemists, and physicians, as well as for those entering molecular cell biology and molecular medicine from majors or careers in physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, and engineering. For example, there is an unprecedented demand for physicists, chemists, and computer scientists who will work with biologists to define the genome, proteome, and interactome through experimental and computational biology.

The Board Members and I first divided the entire study of molecular cell biology and molecular medicine into primary topical categories and further defined each of these into subtopics. The following is a summary of the topics and subtopics:

- *Nucleic Acids*: amplification, disease genetics overview, DNA structure, evolution, general genetics, nucleic acid processes, oligonucleotides, RNA structure, RNA replication and transcription.
- *Structure Determination Technologies Applicable to Biomolecules*: chromatography, labeling, large structures, mapping, mass spectrometry, microscopy, magnetic resonance, sequencing, spectroscopy, X-ray diffraction.
- *Biochemistry*: carbohydrates, chirality, energetics, enzymes, biochemical genetics, inorganics, lipids, mechanisms, metabolism, neurology, vitamins.

- *Proteins, Peptides, and Amino Acids*: analysis, enzymes, folding, mechanisms, modeling, peptides, structural genomics (proteomics), structure, types.
- *Biomolecular Interactions*: cell properties, charge transfer, immunology, recognition, senses.
- *Cell Biology*: developmental cell biology, diseases, dynamics, fertilization, immunology, organelles and structures, senses, structural biology, techniques.
- *Molecular Cell Biology of Specific Organisms*: algae, amoeba, birds, fish, insects, mammals, microbes, nematodes, parasites, plants, viruses, yeasts.
- *Molecular Cell Biology of Specific Organs or Systems*: excretory, lymphatic, muscular, nervous, reproductive, skin.
- *Molecular Cell Biology of Specific Diseases*: cancer, circulatory, endocrinal, environmental stress, immune, infectious, neurological, radiational.
- *Pharmacology*: chemistry, disease therapy, gene therapy, general molecular medicine, synthesis, toxicology.
- *Biotechnology*: applications, diagnostics, gene-altered animals, bacteria and fungi, laboratory techniques, legal, materials, process engineering, nanotechnology, production of classes or specific molecules, sensors, vaccine production.

We then selected some 400 article titles and author or author teams to cover the above topics. Each article is designed as a self-contained treatment which begins with a keyword section including definitions, to assist the scientist or student who is unfamiliar with the specific subject area. The Encyclopedia includes more than 3000 key words, each defined within the context of the particular scientific field covered by the article. In addition to these definitions, the glossary of basic terms found at the back of each volume, defines the most commonly used terms in molecular cell biology. These definitions, along with the reference materials (the genetic code, the common amino acids, and the structures of the deoxyribonucleotides) printed at the back of each volume, should allow most readers to understand articles in the Encyclopedia without referring to a dictionary, textbook, or other reference work. There is, of course, a detailed subject index in Volume 16 as well as a cumulative table of contents and list of authors, as well as a list of scientists who assisted in the development of this Encyclopedia.

Each article begins with a concise definition of the subject and its importance, followed by the body of the article and extensive references for further reading. The references are divided into secondary references (books and review articles) and primary research papers. Each subject is presented on a first-principle basis, including detailed figures, tables and drawings. Because of the self-contained nature of each article, some articles on related topics overlap. Extensive cross-referencing is provided to help the reader expand his or her range of inquiry.

The articles contained in the Encyclopedia include core articles, which summarize broad areas, directing the reader to satellite articles that present additional detail and depth for each subject. The core article Brain Development is a typical example. This 45-page article spans neural induction, early patterning, differentiation, and wiring at a molecular through to cellular and tissue level. It is directly supported, and cross-referenced, by a number of molecular neurobiology satellite articles, for example, Behavior Genes, and further supported by other core presentations, for example,

Developmental Cell Biology; Genetics, Molecular Basis of, and their satellite articles. Another example is the core article on Genetic Variation and Molecular Evolution by Werner Arber. It is supported by a number of satellite articles supporting the evolutionary relatedness of genetic information, for example, Genetic Analysis of Populations.

Approximately 250 article titles from the first edition are retained, but rewritten, half by new authors and half by returning authors. Approximately 80 articles on cell biology and 70 molecular biology articles have been added covering areas that have become prominent since preparation of the first edition. Thus, we have compiled a totally updated single source treatment of the molecular and cellular basis of life.

Finally, I wish to thank the following Wiley-VCH staff for their outstanding support of this project: Andreas Sendtko, who provided project and personnel supervision from the earliest phases, and Prisca-Maryla Henheik, who served as the managing editor.

November 2003

Robert A. Meyers
Editor-in-Chief