
Preface

The chapters in this book came about as a result of a two-day symposium in 2006 "Unravelling the algae: the past, present and future of algal molecular systematics," which was convened in order to review the state of the subject and assess the impact of molecular tools on the taxonomy of virtually all the different algal groups and to produce a volume setting out this material. The symposium included 16 talks by invited speakers, all of whom (sometimes with assistance of coauthors) contributed papers to the book. In reviewing the symposium and putting the material together for the book, we were keen to fill a gap we identified and were pleased that the chapter on the euglenophytes was so very willingly contributed by the chapter's authors during the production of the book. The symposium also attracted 27 posters, which also covered almost all the algal groups, and topics were diverse, ranging from the general to the specific, covering macroalgae to ultra-plankton and from phylogenies to the development of identification tools using molecular techniques. The meeting also provided the opportunity for some lively discussion that allowed participants to debate issues as they arose and to speculate on the shape of the future. A common thread throughout the talks and an overwhelming outcome from the resulting discussions was that a range of traditional and molecular approaches are required coupled with other techniques including the use of transmission electron microscopy in order to support interpretation.

We were able to run this symposium because of the generous support of the Systematics Association, Linnean Society, British Phycological Society, and the Natural History Museum and the support of the publisher, CRC. These organisations play a crucial role in the advancement of science via their sponsorship and resources, and this should never be underestimated. We were able to create this timely and unique book because of the intellect and generosity of time and materials from the authors, some of whom also peer reviewed other chapters, and many of whom supplied the illustrations for the book cover and the frontispiece. It was their tremendous spirit of endeavour that enabled us to achieve the goals of this project.