

Preface to the Fifth Edition

This is the book I nearly didn't write. Quite a lot has changed for me since the fourth edition was published, and when discussions began as to whether to produce a new edition, I had my doubts. From my perspective, one of the main things that has changed is MicrobiologyBytes.com—there, and in related spaces such as the MicrobiologyBytes page on Facebook, in the words of Elvis Costello, “Every day I write the book.” So why are you reading this? Although the Internet is far better than printed books for many things, there is clearly still a strong demand for this book because sometimes it's good to have a core of knowledge in one place (e.g., when it comes to revision for exams). Add to that the translations into other languages (including Chinese) that the last edition received, plus the Amazon Kindle version, and I can reach a wide and appreciative audience in this format.

Once I had agreed to write a new edition, I wanted to do two things. I wanted to update the technical knowledge throughout, but I also needed to completely rewrite the whole book to make it far more accessible, based on the experience I have gained writing online over the past few years. Hopefully I have achieved that.

I would like to thank all the staff of Elsevier, without whose hard work and persuasion this edition would never have appeared. Although we have never met face to face, they reside in my inbox, constantly reminding me that chapters are overdue.

Alan J. Cann

University of Leicester, UK

alan.cann@leicester.ac.uk

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