
BOOK REVIEW

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Gene Cloning and Manipulation. Christopher Howe. (Pp 210; £14.95, \$19.95 pb.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995. ISBN 0-521-40700-1.

Gene Cloning: An Introduction. 3rd ed. T A Brown. (Pp 334; £17.99.) London: Chapman & Hall. 1995. ISBN 0-412-62240-8.

I remember as a postgraduate reading the second edition of Terry Brown's book *Gene Cloning: An Introduction* shortly after its publication. In a book clearly orientated towards the undergraduate reader it was quite humbling to realise how much I had to learn. It was inevitable that such a work would become a standard text for a wide range of molecular biology courses.

This third edition has been updated without any major changes to the majority of text and consequently remains just as easy to read and digest as the earlier editions. In such a rapidly changing area of work it is still remarkably up to date. I suppose that while the applications of this technology continue to mushroom, the underlying principles have remained the same.

Christopher Howe's book sets out to cover much of the same ground and does so equally successfully. His coverage tends to give more detail, making the reading slightly harder going, but well worth the effort.

Both books open with the basic principles of gene cloning and how they apply in particular to prokaryotes. To this end they clearly explain DNA manipulation, gel electrophoresis, cloning vectors, and library con-

struction. Once these basic principles are laid out, the two books start to diverge.

Brown dedicates the second third of his book to "The applications of cloning in gene analysis". In this he details the use of libraries and the many ways that a desired clone can be identified. He discusses probe labelling, oligonucleotide synthesis, DNA sequencing, PCR, and studies of gene expression. The final third of the book, "Gene cloning in research and biotechnology" aims at putting this technology in context. Brown discusses how recombinant DNA technology can be used to generate desired proteins, and its wider ranging implications for medicine and agriculture. This is, by necessity, a brief overview aimed at highlighting key examples. "Identification of genes responsible for human diseases", for example, is covered in less than eight pages by quoting largely a single example, BRCA1. That said, however, it is an excellent insight into the multidisciplinary approach needed for the cloning of human genes and I for one would like to see these eight pages expanded to a complete volume if anybody has the time.

Christopher Howe's book covers much the same ground as far as library construction and methods of screening goes, perhaps going into slightly more detail with regard to the many and varied types of library available to the modern worker aiming to isolate specific genes. Where this book diverges most, as the title might suggest, is a discussion on modification and mutagenesis. This is touched upon in an informative overview of PCR, and subsequently given an entire chapter including techniques taken from the early days of chemical mutagenesis through to the use of ribozymes and antisense technology. Howe concludes his book with a wider ranging chapter entitled "Using other organisms", where he covers the use of gram negative and gram positive bacteria, fungi, *Chlamydomonas*, vascular plants, organelle transformation, insects, and mammals.

Both books are well illustrated with diagrams although neither can boast a single photograph. Perhaps a visualisation of results is of less interest to the undergraduate than someone with experience of the techniques. Finally, both authors leave us with a bewildering array of further reading, both in the form of original research articles and reviews. Enough to keep your more attentive undergraduate locked away for some time.

SIMON RAMSDEN

NOTICES

First International Conference on DNA Sampling. Human Genetic Research: Ethical, Legal and Policy Aspects

This conference will be held on 6-8 September 1996 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It will provide a forum for interdisciplinary discussion on: DNA sampling and banking, patenting and commercialisation, legal status of human genetic material and information, models of consent and confidentiality, policy and ethical concerns, genetic epidemiology and diversity. Chair of the organising committee: Professor Bartha Maria Knoppers. Organised by Research Center in Public Law (CRDP), Faculty of Law, Université de Montréal, in collaboration with Health Law Institute, University of Alberta, Quebec Network of Applied Genetic Medicine, Quebec Health Research Fund. For information contact: Ms Samaa Elibyari, tel: (514) 343-2142, fax: (514) 343-7508, e-mail: genet@crdp.droit.umontreal.ca.

5th European Meeting on Psychosocial Aspects of Genetics

This meeting will be held on 26-28 September 1996 in Rome, Italy. International Scientific Committee: Prof Dr Gerry Evers-Kiebooms, PhD, Psychologist (Belgium), Dr Marina Frontali, MD, Geneticist (Italy), Ms Penny Guilbert, Clinical Nurse (UK), Dr Gioia Jacopini, PhD, Psychologist (Italy), Dr Theresa Marteau, PhD, Psychologist (UK), Mr Ewold Sikkens, Social Worker (The Netherlands), Dr Aad Tibben, PhD, Psychologist (The Netherlands), Ms Caren Walter, Social Worker (Germany). Local Organising Committee: Gioia Jacopini, Marina Frontali. Secretary: Gisella Pellegrini. For information contact: Dr Gioia Jacopini, Istituto di Psicologia, CNR, Viale Marx 15, 00137 - Roma (Italy). Tel: 0039 6 86090278. Fax: 0039 6 824737.