

The Dictionary of Cell Biology. Edited by J. M. LACKIE and J. A. T. DOW. London: Academic Press. 1989. 270 pages. £9.95 paperback. ISBN 0 12 432561 0. Also available in hardback, and in a United States edition from Academic Press Inc. San Diego CA92101.

The authors and editors of this book teach a two-year course in cell biology to undergraduates in the University of Glasgow, and their motive for writing it was the large number of terms their students could not easily find defined. So they screened the indexes of textbooks and cell biology journals, wrote definitions and consulted their colleagues on the result. This teamwork has produced an excellent little dictionary which covers a lot of ground in defining less than 4000 terms. The definitions are more comprehensive than one finds in most dictionaries, and should help both students and research workers in other branches of biology. I found many of its definitions very useful.

Distributed through the text are 27 useful tables giving details of actin binding proteins, CD antigens, common cell lines, proteins and glycoproteins of desmosomes, exotoxins, G-proteins, vertebrate integrins, etc. The boundaries of cell biology are rather generously drawn, so that many terms from other areas are included – e.g. human diseases such as Gaucher's disease, Glanzmann's thrombasthenia, gout, McArdle's disease; many viruses including Echoviruses (the 'o' of Echo stands for orphan, meaning that these viruses are not associated with any disease); some lysogenic and virulent bacteriophages, and a number of bacteria, protozoa and fungi of medical or scientific interest are also to be found, as well as the more obviously cell-biology terms.

I have looked at several other dictionaries of science, or science and technology, in the last year or so. Henderson's *Dictionary of Biological Terms* (10th edition, 1989, reviewed in *Genetical Research*, (1989) **54**, 164) contains around 18000 definitions and some very useful appendices in 637 pages; *Chambers Science and Technology Dictionary* (1988) contains 45000 entries divided between 45 major subjects in 1008 pages – the subjects including such diverse fields as Acoustics, Architecture, Automobiles, Glass and Paper. McGraw-Hill *Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms* (4th edition, 1989, reviewed in *Genetical Research* (1990) **55**, 135–6) gives 117500 definitions divided into 102 subjects in 2100 pages and includes 3000 illustrations. The amount of information, the price and the time taken to find a word all increase with size, and an important problem is that the larger the dictionary the longer must be the interval between successive editions. The editors of the *Dictionary of Cell Biology* reviewed here had the excellent idea of including a revision form at the end of the book and inviting readers to send in their comments and suggestions for new and revised entries for inclusion in revised editions. This dictionary is likely to get updated much more frequently than the others I have mentioned. My preference would be to have this book on my shelves – to be replaced at £10 or so by the next edition, while one or more of the others should be available nearby – depending on what coverage of subjects you favour – 18000, 45000 or 117000 entries to search through.

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