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The range of techniques described in Current Protocols is broad and many of them will already be familiar to most cloning laboratories. For this reason I think that this book will find its widest audience amongst those just starting in this field and it fills this role well. Having said that, the real test of this manual is yet to come for the experienced

cloner; will the updates provide protocols which have not already reached most laboratories via the plethora of technical bulletins arriving every month? If they can this book could have a very wide market indeed.

R.K. Dudley

Molecular Biology of DNA Methylation

By R.L.P. Adams and R.H. Burdon

Springer-Verlag; New York, 1985

xiv + 247 pages. DM 198.00

This book attempts to tell the story of DNA methylation from the discovery, as a minor contaminant, of 5-methylcytosine to its present position close to the heart of the problem of differential gene expression. The topic is well covered with chapters on the biochemistry of methylation and accounts of the occurrence of DNA methylation throughout the living world. But the central concern is to review the evidence for and against a role for DNA methylation in the control of gene transcription. In this the authors

are remarkably even-handed, concluding that the situation is seldom as clear-cut as it is made out to be. I doubt if, three years later, we should be inclined to disagree with that conclusion.

Despite the inevitable failures of proof-reading, which include a chapter curiously titled 'Has DNA a role in the control of transcription?', this is a well-produced book. It should provide a valuable introduction to any scientist becoming interested in the field.

C.J. Skidmore

Mechanisms of Control of Gene Expression

Edited by B. Cullen, P.L. Gage, M.A.Q. Siddiqui, A.M. Skalka and H. Weissbach

Alan R. Liss; New York, 1987

xix + 376 pages. £75.00, \$85.00

To date, I have had the task of both reviewing and editing symposium volumes. When I wear my reviewer's 'hat', I sigh with disbelief as yet another overpriced tome comes onto the market. As editor, I have been faced with the unenviable duty of selecting and compiling representative papers from an international meeting. At a time when book prices are increasing markedly, when VAT on books is potentially imminent, and when monies for essentials are sparse, one must ask of a sym-

posium volume: Are the papers novel? Is the delay between presentation and publication acceptable? Is the price realistic? *Mechanisms of Control of Gene Expression* passes on the first point but fails, I am afraid, on the other two.

Mechanisms of Control of Gene Expression reports a Roche-UCLA Symposium held at Steamboat Springs, Colorado, March 29–April 4, 1987. The book was published in March 1988, edited by a panel of eminent scientists who herald from the

Roche Institute of Molecular Biology. Camera-ready copies were employed but care has been taken to ensure a higher quality of paper for particular figures.

The book is divided into five main sections entitled (i) Gene regulation in prokaryotes, (ii) gene regulation in eukaryotes, (iii) mRNA splicing and regulation of translation, (iv) control of stable RNA synthesis, and (v) role of oncogene proteins in normal and abnormal cellular responses. The latter four sections pertain to eukaryotes. In toto, there are twenty-nine research papers and two discussion summaries which report other talks presented at the meeting. I note that all but nine of the contributors listed were from the States.

The general flavour is transcriptional control

and transcript splicing, with particular emphasis on eukaryotic systems. In general, the papers fit well into the individual sections (except for one paper in section iv and two in section v), leading to an excellently cohesive volume.

I should like to conclude with a suggestion for future symposium volumes: ring-bind double-sided photocopies of participants' manuscripts. This would alleviate the delay in publishing. Moreover, the resultant low cost would permit acquisition by both libraries and interested parties, thereby permitting wider access to the material reported – surely the ultimate reasons for publication.

Robert E. Glass

Symposium in Nucleic Acids Technology

Nucleic Acids Symposium Series No. 19

Edited by H. Hayatsu

IRL Press; Oxford, Washington, 1988

207 pages. £30.00, \$60.00

For the price, the presentation of this Symposium leaves a bit to be desired. The technology of nucleic acids is undoubtedly a major area of present scientific progress, however at first glance the volume is reminiscent of an early issue of *Nucleic Acids Research* also published by IRL Press. Even in current issues of that journal, trouble is taken to subdivide the contents pages as well as the individual contributions according to specific subject areas. No such effort is made with this volume making it irritatingly difficult to locate items of particular interest. Another point of concern relates to the considerable variability in individual presentations. For example, some are little more than abstract, which is really not very helpful. One paper, grandiosely entitled 'The Molecular Biology of the Immune Response', runs to less than two pages! More thoughtful editorial control is required. The present result gives the appearance of papers collected together in the order they were

received by the organizers of the Symposium. It might have been helpful to see how the actual day-by-day programme was constructed.

Despite these rather carping criticisms a key question of course is whether this volume would be a worthwhile purchase. Despite a lack of international flavour – only two of the fifty four contributions are not from Japanese laboratories – there are some very useful papers. Moreover the volume has appeared within four months of the meeting. Whilst it is not possible in this space to list all the various contributions some idea of the scope of the volume can nevertheless be given.

There are papers on novel oligonucleotide synthetic methods; the use of novel nucleotides and other strategies for in vitro mutagenesis; new chromatographic techniques for separation of nucleic acids and their constituents; messenger RNA isolation and separation by two-dimensional techniques; immunological characterisation of