

Römpps Chemie-Lexicon

Band 1: A–Cl, 1979; Band 2: Cm–G, 1981; Band 3: H–L, 1983

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This most valuable work, although primarily intended for chemists, will also be of great value to biochemists. The text entries are in German but this should not put off those not very familiar with that language since the information is given in short, simple sentences that can be understood easily by those, like the present reviewer, whose German is somewhat rusty. Also many terms are so similar in German and English that there is little difficulty in locating them.

The entries on individual compounds are specific and clear, often a key reference or two to the original literature is given, and, when necessary, a structural formula. In many instances the names of European suppliers of the material in question are given and frequently the English (and sometimes the French) name when it is significantly different from the German. Also there are useful and informative descriptions of fruits, spices, and other foodstuffs, and descriptive entries under the trade names of many chemicals and drugs.

These fascinating volumes are not merely lists of chemical compounds but contain a wealth of information that will be useful to many biochemists. There are, for instance, short essays on, antigens, antibodies, DNA and DNA replication (which contains half a page of key references), electrophoresis, enzymes, the genetic code, hormones, the sodium-potassium pump, and many others.

One very useful feature is that many abbreviations are listed, thus one can find out what CNRS, DKFZ, and HPLC stand for. The volumes also contain short biographical entries on a number of scientists, for example Konrad Bloch, Christian de Duve, Paul Ehrlich, Arthur Harden, Hans Krebs, Luis Leloir, Fritz Lipmann, and Feodor Lynen.

The three volumes that have appeared up to the present are fascinating and compel one to browse. They bring together a vast amount of information that is otherwise only found in any different sources. Apart from the descriptions of chemical compounds they contain, the work serves to inform the reader about history, biography, and chemical hazards and acts as a German-English chemical and biochemical dictionary. Considerable use of the months revealed no discrepancies and the information given is remarkably accurate and up-to-date, the only annoyance was when one wanted to look up something beginning with a letter later in the alphabet than L. The present reviewer and his colleagues look forward to subsequent volumes. While the emphasis of these volumes is mainly chemical, there is no doubt that they should be on the shelves of every university and research laboratory where biochemistry is practised.

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