

Preface

The task of compiling five of the six chapters has been carried out by authors who have been loyal to this series of Reports over many years. But this year one chapter (Chapter 3) has been written by two newcomers (Michael North and Stef Biagini) who have injected 'new blood' into our reporting of biologically active analogues and peptidomimetics. We welcome them, hoping that they can contribute further in future. This volume also sees the return of the biennial coverage on Metal Complexes of Amino Acids and Peptides (Chapter 5). For the convenience of editing, the order of the chapters has been changed so that Jennifer Littlechild's chapter on proteins appears as Chapter 6. The coverage in each of the chapters has not been drastically changed although the changing patterns in the peptide field demand annual self-assessment by our reporters. Generally reporters confirm buoyant activity in 1994, and somewhat surprisingly in this age of computer-aided information retrieval a number of specialist reviews have been reported. We thought that our team here were the only willing horses on Earth to undertake such tasks!!

There is a continuing shift of emphasis away from fundamental chemistry associated with making peptides into the more technical fine tuning of solid phase techniques. The expansion of combinatorial libraries has also made it more difficult to define the boundaries of our peptide synthesis coverage since choosing an efficient assay is as important as the synthetic methodology involved. Nevertheless, developments in HPLC and in mass spectrometry (e.g. electrospray techniques) have added greatly to the armoury available, and assessing mixtures can now be done more confidently than ever before. NMR and X-ray techniques applied to pure proteins have augmented the Brookhaven database to over a thousand structures – a remarkable achievement.

Since the early days, peptide chemists have always cast a watchful eye for 'racemisation' in their products. A short note appeared in 1994 (*Int. J. Pept. Protein Res* 1994, **44**, 399) that the use of the term itself is inappropriate! The process should be termed 'enantiomerisation'. It will be interesting to see what terminology will survive into the next millennium. The reporting period coincided with a number of international symposia which provide excellent contact environments and the rapidly published reports from the symposia provide food for thought for future ideas. However the policy taken by the Reporters in this series is that the contents of these conference proceedings become 'reportable' when the works appear in refereed journals.

Word-processing and printing technology has revolutionised the production of these Reports over the years, and printing is now made direct from floppy disks. However, the work still reflects very many hours of human toil from the Reporters, and the co-operation of the editorial team at the RSC, in particular Janet Freshwater. I am most grateful to everyone for all the hard work to get this volume into print.

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