

Preface

The literature surveyed for this Volume updates the coverage of the World's peptide/protein literature to the end of 1997 and will be published 30 years to the date of publication of the first Volume. In the last ten of those years the annual number of total syntheses of peptides has doubled to approximately 2000 (statistics from the Institute of Protein Research Foundation, Osaka, Japan). Dietrich Brandenburg at the 1st International Peptide Symposium, at Kyoto Japan (*'Peptide Science-Present and Future'* ed. Y. Shimonishi, publ. Kluwer Academic) reported that searching Medline for 1997 gave him 20,000 entries. This enormous field of activity has therefore provided my colleagues reporting in this Volume with the unenviable task of compiling what they believe to be the significant developments in their particular topics. Thirty years on, in this series of Specialist Reports it is still difficult to assess whether the Chapter headings and their sub-divisions have kept abreast with the current vogues in the peptide literature. However, in a survey of the submissions to the 25th European Peptide Symposium (*'Peptides 1998'*, eds. S. Bajusz and F. Hudecz, publ. Akademia Kiado, Budapest), it was shown that the papers distributed themselves amongst the topics: Structure - Activity Studies, Bioactive Peptides (38%); Synthesis and Combinatorial Chemistry (28%); Structure Elucidation and Analysis of Peptides (23%); Peptide- and Protein-Drugs, Present Status and Perspectives (11%).

I hope readers will see that all four of these latter topics have been adequately covered by our four Reporters (G. C. Barrett, D. T. Elmore, A. Dutta and J.S. Davies) in the early Chapters of this Volume. Incidentally, Barrett and Elmore have also found time to write a student text on *Amino Acids and Peptides* (Cambridge University Press) during the harvesting of material for the current Chapters. The annual review of Current Trends in Protein Research is not included this year but will appear as coverage of 1997/98 literature next year. However, the biennial treatment of β -Lactam Chemistry has seen Christopher Schofield and a colleague return to the Reporters' rostrum. The continuing interest in trying to overcome antibiotic resistance keeps the latter subject area very buoyant in spite of the annual prognosis of its imminent demise by the 'super bugs'. While computer searches have eased the burden of gathering the material for Chapters, its collation and formatting to readable Reports is still intellectually demanding and time-consuming. I can only offer my most sincere thanks to the current Reporters for their continuing willingness to subject themselves to such a thankless task.

Again, the bringing together of the variety of manuscripts, and their conversion to a readable printer's format between these yellow covers, has been the patient

task of Janet Freshwater and her crew at RSC publications. Sincere thanks to everyone.

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