

Preface

The task set for the authors in this volume was to survey the world's peptide/protein literature to the end of 1998. The emphasis, as always, in this series has been to review as comprehensively as possible the specialist papers produced in each area, but the expansion in the volume of literature usually means that individual Reporters have to highlight the most significant work, at the expense of the routine. Regular readers of these annual volumes often have the chance of monitoring the ebb and flow of various specialities, and occasionally an area which has been the subjected of many annual progress reports experiences a quantum leap into fruition. The year under review experienced such a 'happening', in the culmination of the total syntheses for the antibiotic, vancomycin, by the groups of Evans and Nicolaou (see Chapter 4 for details). This is an important step for the design of new anti-bacterials, which will be vital for overcoming the growing resistance of the 'superbugs'.

As a discipline matures, early attempts to set out guidelines and standards of nomenclature and abbreviations, inevitably produce evolutionary modifications, and sometimes suffer slippage in standards. Editors and reporters are in a key position to observe and hopefully respond to such developments, so it is timely to refer to a recent publication by a past Editor of this series, Dr. John Jones, who has published a short guide (*J. Peptide Science*, 1999, **5**, 465) to peptide nomenclature.

Reviewing the core work for Chapters 1–4, has again been in the hands of four Reporters (Graham Barrett, Donald Elmore, Anand Dutta and John Davies), who have 'done it all before'. We also welcome back our two authors from Hungary (Etelka Farkas and Imre Sóvágó) who have contributed their biennial Chapter on 'Metal Complexes of Amino Acids and Peptides'. We missed Jennifer Littlechild's 'Current Trends in Protein Research' last year, but she is back in the fold with coverage of the literature for 1997/98. My grateful thanks are very much due to all these stalwarts of this series of Specialist Reports, as well as to the RSC publications staff who take our varied manuscripts and transform them into this final form. I hope all readers will make good use of the wealth of work between these covers.

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