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Book Review

Brown TA: Genomes. 2nd Edition, 520 pp, New York, Wiley-Liss, in arrangement with Bios Scientific Publishers, Oxford, UK, 2002 (\$97.50).

Intrigued by the physical beauty of this book, I opened it to find out how much is expected from today's biology majors. Then I persuaded myself to continue, if for no other reason than to find out how much behind I am in molecular biology. Now, after a minicourse based on this didactic masterpiece prepared by professor Brown of Manchester, UK, I feel almost glum that nobody will ever ask me about transcriptomes and proteomes.

While summarizing my impressions about this text, the first question that came to my mind was: Is the present book so exciting because it deals with a discipline that is advancing so rapidly, or is it the frontiersmen spirit of the key players (captured masterfully by the author) that is so infectious? There is no doubt that molecular biology has attracted the smartest of the smartest biomedical scientists and that the discoveries that these men and women have made are stultifying. But it is also important to note that books like this one are an important vehicle for transmitting the enthusiasm to the uninitiated and for attracting new investigators. Could one ever write such an exciting textbook of pathology?

The second edition appears only 3 years after the critically acclaimed first edition. The book is divided into four parts dealing, among others, with physical and biochemical properties of the genome, methods used for studying gene expression, mapping genes and sequencing them, accessing the genome, protein synthesis and regulating gene activity, and applying these techniques to the study of gene replication and phylogenetics. In the new layout each chapter begins with a list of 'learning outcomes' (according to the author 'an innovation forced on UK universities by the quality-assessment initiatives') and ends with references for further reading, study aids (lists of key words), and questions for problem-based learning. Color diagrams and conceptual illustrations and boxed texts on technical details of true experiments (titled 'research briefings') are additional features that make this book extremely user friendly. At the end of the book there is a glossary of most important terms.

This model of a modern university textbook deserves to be read and studied by undergraduate as well as graduate biomedical students worldwide.

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