

REVIEWS

BASIC BACTERIOLOGY AND GENETICS. J. R. Sokatch and J. J. Ferretti. Yearbook Publishers Inc., Chicago, 1976. Pp. xii+264.

The growth of college and university courses in microbiology has provided the publishing industry with an opportunity to increase the number of texts that cover this subject. This has resulted in two distinct categories of books. The first, and most useful, are those general texts which can be used to complement a lecture course but are also considered to be works of reference upon the subject. The other group of books are those that are written with a specific audience in mind, usually a particular student intake. Books of this last category provide an introduction to a subject for a large number of students without intending to be a treatise. It is surprising therefore that Sokatch and Ferretti's book, which falls into this latter category, should deal only briefly with two fundamental areas of importance in bacteriology, pure culture technique and the identification and classification of bacteria. Perhaps this is information that is covered in practical classes; one hopes so. There is a trend, however, towards teaching those areas of a subject that are interesting and omitting others that are less stimulating. Unfortunately these two topics fall into this latter category and as they are essential to any training in bacteriology, their scant treatment is a serious failing of this book.

One useful feature of this book is the devotion of a separate chapter to antimicrobial agents. Usually this information is hidden in the chapters that deal with the physiology and biochemistry of bacteria. The other chapters deal with the structure of bacteria, their physiology, growth, and genetics and with gene expression. As is so common nowadays, models are described to the exclusion of the data that generated them. This saves space but does not lead to a full understanding of the systems. This book therefore requires certain supplementary information before it may be recommended as a course book.

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A DISCUSSION ON THE MEIOTIC PROCESS: R. Riley, M. D. Bennett and R. B. Flavell, (Organisers). *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, B*, Vol. 277, 184-376. Royal Society, London, 1977. Price: £17.05.

This publication contains the contributions to a meeting held in December 1975. It was fitting that the meeting should be opened by Darlington with a characteristically thought-provoking and stimulating, if controversial, contribution. As Riley and Flavell said in their introduction the "meeting was organised to provide an opportunity for an assessment of the present state of our understanding and in the hope that at the same time it would provide indications of the most important directions for future research". The overall impression obtained from reading these papers is our lack of understanding on all the basic issues! Nevertheless, as H. Stern said in