

Cell Surface Carbohydrate Chemistry: edited by ROBERT E. HARMON, Academic Press, New York, San Francisco, and London, 1978, xv + 359 pages, \$19.50; £ 13.85.

This is a record of the Cell Surface Carbohydrate Chemistry Symposium, held in September, 1976, at the American Chemical Society Centennial Meeting in San Francisco. Although the book title contains the term "carbohydrate chemistry", the purpose of the symposium was to bring carbohydrate chemists and cell biologists together. Readers who come to the book expecting the same high type of carbohydrate chemistry found in *Advances in Carbohydrate Chemistry* or *Methods in Carbohydrate Chemistry* (both produced by the publisher of this volume) may feel somewhat uncomfortable about some of the chapters.

Of the 17 chapters contributed, only about half are directly or even indirectly related to the structural, or synthetic, carbohydrate chemistry of the cell-surface, glycoconjugate components. Others treat more-biological aspects of cell-surface components, and one of the chapters, which deals with cell growth, presents data on the effect of a carbohydrate derivative, 5-bromo-2'-deoxyuridine 5'-(methylphosphonate), as a membrane transport-inhibitor, but makes no mention of any cell-surface glycoproteins or glycolipids. It is not easy to choose representative topics from the vast and rapidly expanding areas of cell-surface biology as related to the chemistry of glycolipids and glycoproteins (if this is what is meant by "cell surface carbohydrate chemistry"), especially in a small volume such as this.

The topics covered in this volume should be considered to be a random sampling of carbohydrate-related areas in the tremendously exciting, but immensely complex, field of cell-surface biology. Some chapters were written as original publications of newly acquired data, and others are largely reviews of published results sprinkled with new results. The latter approach can be quite helpful in gaining the overall perspectives of certain areas of research, which may not be easy to distil from the original publications. Although a large number of the chapters are of high quality, some contain numerous typographical errors, imperfect Figures, and ambiguous legends to Figures. Nevertheless, the book can still provide useful, background information for those who are unfamiliar, or have not kept up, with the field. Fortunately, the book is modestly priced, so that it can be acquired for a personal library. On the other hand, had the book been published much faster, its useful life could have begun sooner.

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