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## Book Review

### **Limb Salvage—Major Reconstructions in Oncologic and Nontumoral Conditions**

Edited by F. Langlais and B. Tomeno.

Berlin, Springer, 1991. 826 pp. ISBN 3-540-52861-X, 0-387-52861-X.

THIS BOOK brings together the papers presented at the 5th International Symposium on Limb Salvage held in St Malo in 1989.

The symposium was divided into 11 sections; the total number of presentations was 105. The sections concern allograft; innovative materials and devices; soft tissue and bone transfer in limb salvage; prostheses: long term follow-up and effect of adjuvant treatments; innovative prostheses; composite prostheses and soft tissue reattachments; failures of prostheses; limb salvage in paediatric surgery; innovative procedures; metastases and imaging.

As an introduction to the St Malo Symposium, the latter served as a field trial for a radiological implant evaluation system, a necessary prerequisite to enable those involved in the management of these cases to comprehensively discuss their individual experiences and techniques. This evaluation system will be refined as more clinical experience is gained and cases are added, this being a necessary evolution of any clinical classification.

It will be appreciated that this symposium comprehensively reviewed the "state of the art" of limb salvage in oncological and nontumoral conditions in 1989. Gone are the days of limb amputation in conditions other than those where vascular insufficiency or overwhelming infection dictates otherwise. The technology of both allograft and inorganic prostheses were fully discussed from both a research and clinical viewpoint. The presentation, illustrations and references are of a high standard.

Nevertheless, I have for many years had a reservation about the publication of the proceedings of international meetings. Maybe such publications do have a place on the library shelf. They provide a point of reference, albeit occasionally somewhat out of date, for further reading and research. However, I feel that the presumed cost of this volume, together with the fact that the original papers were presented 3 years ago, makes it of limited value. Up-to-date papers on specific topics of interest to the individual may be obtained from current journals at considerably less cost. I would be surprised if this book finds a place on the library shelf of many individuals other than those who contributed to the symposium.

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## News

### **The Information Industry in Europe**

This item aims to provide non-information professionals with a picture of the European information network in the belief that the biomedical community should be aware of current innovations and related problems.

There are approximately 5000 information databases worldwide (excluding videotext mode) and while Europe is beginning to catch up with America—who largely dominate this field—reasons for resistance are similar to those hindering the formation of a single European market. At least 12 languages are spoken throughout Europe and each country has centuries of deeply entrenched traditions that are not easily blended into political unity.

Although Europe is one of the primary sources of scientific, technical and business information, European users are accustomed to turning to American online sources even to gain access to European-produced information.

The limitations imposed by the Common Market prevent adoption of the relatively low tariffs commonly found in the USA, where the sheer size of the market makes spreading the cost of overheads a possibility.

Supply fragmentation often curbs the use of European online sources by forcing the potential user to stipulate multiple contracts and pay in several currencies.

In addition, the number of languages required to gain access to the various databases poses an additional problem, even though intelligent networks (which 'translate' the language spoken by the user into that used by the host computer) are becoming increasingly popular.

The European Community Information Market Observatory (IMO) working papers [1] have discussed several interesting facts in this regard:

—By the end of 1989 there were 1048 databases produced in Europe vs. the 2214 produced in the USA (again, videotext excluded). 34% of these databases were produced in the UK.

—One in nine databases produced within the EC is not distributed within the Community, but exported to host computers in the USA and a further 70 countries.

—The EC essentially produces reference databases (bibliographic), whereas the American production is dominated by full-text databases that constitute the most attractive segment of the market.

—Although the EC produces a larger number of bibliographic databases (319) than the USA (285), it produces a smaller number of bibliographic records (69 vs. 187 million, respectively).

—European database producers are largely non-profit making organisations, whereas in the USA they are mostly for-profit.

—Most EC databases are professional services and do not target the general public as in the USA. The eight largest host organisations are American.