

Dictionary of Biology

English — German — French — Spanish

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xii + 483 pages. Dfl. 160.00, \$ 61.50

This is a translating not a defining dictionary. It lists 9795 words in English, these are arranged alphabetically and numbered serially. Beside these, on the same openings, the German, French, and Spanish equivalents are shown, together with their genders (an attribute that does not intrude in English). Alphabetical indexes (wrongly 'indices' in the Introduction) in German, French, and Spanish give the serial number of each word, so it can be found easily in the main part of the work.

The Preface says that completeness could not be the aim but that care was taken by the compilers 'to obtain as proportionate a selection of terms as possible from all areas of biology. The limited choice of words in certain subjects such as anatomy and systematics was quite intentional.' To test completeness the reviewer chose the first word on every sixth page of *Dictionary of Biology*, 6th edition, by M. Abercrombie, C. J. Hickman and M. L. Johnson, Penguin Books, London, 1973 and looked them up in the book under review. Of 57 terms, 12 (21%) were not to be found — abaxial, amphioxus, coccidiosis, cycadofilicales, epizoite, homochlamydeous, immunogenic meconium, mycoplasma (surprisingly), plectop-

tera, receptaculum seminis and Wallerian degeneration. Not bad.

As this journal is devoted to Biochemistry, 60 'more biochemical' terms were checked. Of these only 36 (60%) were found. The absentees were: aldose (though 'ketose' is in), Bence-Jones protein, calcitonin, EDTA (nor under several other names), facilitated diffusion, ground state, hyperglycaemia, idiom, ketonuria, labelled compound, ligand, misreading, nearest neighbour, nonsense codon, oligomer, paratope (though 'paratype' occurs), quenching, registration peptide, schlieren, specific activity, template, ureotelic, virion (though 'virus' is there) and xenobiotic. Thus 'molecular' Biology has been selected against.

Despite these limitations — which dictionary has not got them? — this will be a most useful work, particularly now that such a large proportion of scientific literature is in English, or what passes for English. The printing is clear and the alignment across the openings good, even for the astigmatic (a word that does not appear!). The price, however, is rather steep at 12.42 US \$ per page.

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BOOK LIST No. 6 February 1977

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