

Overall, a solid book with some interesting chapters. The emphasis on chemical mechanisms is welcome to this reader, but will deter many life science students, as will the dull presentation of the book. There are better textbooks of enzymology available.

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Comprehensive Natural Products Chemistry, Volume 6: Prebiotic Chemistry, Molecular Fossils, Nucleosides and RNA

D. Soll, S. Nishimura and P.B. Moore (Volume Editors), Pergamon, an Elsevier Science Imprint, Oxford, 1999, 295 pp., ISBN 0-08-043158-5. Price EUR 387.50, US\$ 387.50.

This is volume 6 in the series *Comprehensive Natural Products Chemistry*. Previous volumes have dealt with polypeptides, isoprenoids, carbohydrates and amino acids. This volume covers RNA chemistry, RNA enzymes, rRNA, mRNA and ribozymes. Colour figures are interspersed throughout the volume enabling good 3D reconstructions of RNA structures.

The book includes chapters on RNA structure, chemical and enzymatic probing, chemical RNA synthesis (6 chapters). RNA editing, RNA enzymes, Ribozyme selection and enzymology constitute the next 4 chapters.

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Viroids (single-stranded circular RNA molecules, found only in plants) are described in a stand-alone chapter which is then followed by four chapters dealing with ribosomal RNA structure, turnover of mRNA, ribonucleotide analogues and ribozyme structure and function.

The title is an odd one given that in effect, the book is about anything you ever wanted to know about RNA. However, given the existence of an enormous RNA literature the volume cannot be regarded as definitive. Overall, it is a solid book with emphasis on chemical mechanisms very suitable for biological chemistry but not for life science researchers and students.

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Comprehensive Natural Products Chemistry, Volume 7: DNA and Aspects of Molecular Biology

E.T. Kool (Volume Editor), Pergamon, an Elsevier Science Imprint, Oxford, 1999, 733 pp., ISBN 0-08-043159-3. Price EUR 387.50, US\$ 387.50.

I am very fond of telling 'lay' audiences that although DNA is the genetic material we can handle it like a 'piece of chemistry' in the test tube. Of course, analysis of my remark would show that I do not strictly mean what I say. What I actually mean is that molecular biologists can carry out biochemical reactions on DNA in the test-tube, leading us to cut, re-join, clone and sequence DNA.

However, here is a book that does in fact deal with DNA from an almost entirely chemical standpoint. DNA is of course a natural product even when it is in the form of recombinant DNA molecules and thus is an entirely legitimate subject for a book in a series entitled *Comprehensive Natural Products Chemistry*.

The series has been produced as a result of the vision and persistence of one of the most brilliant and prolific organic/natural product chemists of the 20th century, Sir Derek Barton. Sadly, he died before the project was complete. Indeed, two of the 38 'prepages' are a reprint of a previously published obituary while another 18 form both a very interesting and informative preamble