

broad topics can be extracted from the last 10 years of Annual Reviews Inc. publications to make up an attractive volume for the busy reader, and whether other Review Series follow suit.

ERIC REEVE
*Institute of Animal Genetics,
University of Edinburgh*

Methods in Microbiology, Vol. 17: *Plasmid Technology*. Edited by PETER M. BENNETT and JOHN GRINSTED. Florida: Academic Press. 1985. 336 pp. £25.00. ISBN 0 12 521517 7.

Plasmids have now been detected in nearly fifty genera of bacteria, including members of all the main bacterial groups, and it seems that no genus (and perhaps no species) will be found which has managed to do without them. So plasmids have a great intrinsic interest, due to the varied contributions they make to bacterial life and their ability to evolve for the benefit of their hosts, quite apart from their major contribution to genetic engineering progress. This book succeeds in giving at the same time both a brief survey of current knowledge on many aspects of plasmid biology, with useful historical information and references incorporated, and also a series of well-tryed recipes for performing the main techniques available for studying and making use of plasmids.

The topics covered, after a general introduction on identification of plasmids at the genetic level, include conjugation, transformation by plasmid DNA, study of plasmid replication *in vivo*, isolation, purification and electron microscopy of plasmid DNA, use of restriction endonucleases, analysis of clones based on hybrid plasmids, the detection and use of transposable elements, minicell systems, and DNA sequencing. The articles generally assume a rather minimal technical experience in the reader, and include sufficient detail in describing procedures and notes on what is critical in the various techniques, for them to be useful to students and newcomers in the field. The simplified procedure for extraction with phenol (chapter 6), and the details of different transformation procedures (chapter 4) are good examples. The editors have also taken care to avoid too much duplication between different articles. The book is comparatively cheap for a hardback at £25.00, and should be of value as a handbook in many laboratories as well as on the shelves of Biology Department Libraries. It stands up well to the competition from the many books on genetic engineering which have recently appeared, and I don't think it will rapidly become outdated.

ERIC REEVE
*Institute of Animal Genetics,
University of Edinburgh*

Psychological Aspects of Genetic Counselling. Edited by ALAN E. H. EMERY and IAN M. PULLEN. Florida: Academic Press. 1984. 256 pp. £19.50 (Cloth). ISBN 0 12 238220 X.

Doctors are increasingly aware that most if not all aspects of clinical practice have psychological implications for the patient. Paradoxically, patient counselling receives little or no emphasis in the medical undergraduate curriculum and most learn piecemeal by practical experience. This is especially relevant to genetic counselling which if poorly performed can have disastrous consequences for the consultands and their families.

This book has 17 contributors and covers a wide variety of topics which are broadly related to genetic counselling and reproductive planning. Certain messages are recurrent