

## Book Review

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*Topley & Wilson's Microbiology and Microbial Infections*, 9th edition. Eds. L. Collier, A. Balows and M. Sussman. 6 vols. Edward Arnold 1997. Full set and CD-ROM, £1295; print only, £995; CD only £995.

Until about 1970 microbiologists could be dated on the basis of the edition of Topley from which they learnt their microbiology. Since that time there has been a burgeoning of microbiological texts. However, this classic text has retained its role as a comprehensive work of reference.

There have been major changes in the last two editions and the 9th edition takes this process further. In order to ensure that individual sections and chapters remain authoritative, the pool of those called upon to contribute has been expanded. There is a strong international presence among the editors, though British microbiology is still strongly represented. Spot your colleague among the contributors is among the first tasks of the reader.

The scope has been enhanced by the inclusion of volumes

on medical mycology and parasitology and the change of title to *Microbiology and Microbial Infection* reflects this. Among the other changes of particular note is the inclusion of references of titles of papers and first and last page numbers.

Volume 2 on systematic bacteriology, which for me is the core of the treatise, has adapted to recent advances in taxonomy that has resulted from application of molecular biology. The volume remains an authoritative source as the taxonomy of all bacteria of medical importance but has gained in accessibility. For the clinical laboratory, this must be among the primary resources available to deal with difficult organisms.

This may not be the only text that microbiologists need, but it is a text that they do need and, if available, will use in their professional lives. It is a pity that the price means that it will usually be an institutional purchase.

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