BOOKS RECEIVED

Anaerobes today

Edited by J. M. HARDIE and S. P. BORRIELLO. 1988. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester. Pp. xix and 272. £34.50.

This book presents the proceedings of the fifth biennial international symposium organised by the Anaerobe Discussion Group and held in Cambridge in July 1987. The members of the organising committee have chosen their topics well and succeeded in bringing together a selection of subjects in diverse aspects of anaerobic bacteriology. The scope of the book is broad and there is much here of interest to the expert and non-expert reader alike. An excellent introductory chapter by Finegold and Edelstein on "Coping with anaerobes in the 80s" contains so much sound, commonsensical advice that it could profitably be read by all practising diagnostic microbiologists. Thereafter, a further 22 chapters from many different authors of international standing or up-and-coming in this field cover six major aspects of recent research on anaerobic bacteria: (i) immune defences against anaerobes; (ii) toxins of anaerobes; (iii) archaeobacteria; (iv) genetics of clostridia; (v) immunochemistry of anaerobes; and (vi) treatment and control of anaerobes. As the proceedings of a symposium, these chapters include research articles, short reviews and papers on methodologies; most of them are short—about 8–10 pages—and each is supplemented with critical references that should provide access to other key works in the subject areas. Despite variations in style of presentation, the overall standard is generally high and the editors are to be congratulated on producing a book that is both enjoyable to read and pleasantly free from the typographical and other errors that can so easily distract. The seventh section of the book contains 38 abstracts of posters presented at the symposium; the subjects covered are again diverse and afford much additional information of value. A competent index should aid the reader who wishes to read selectively. This is an enjoyable book revealing many useful insights into current anaerobe research and defining the state of anaerobes today. It is reasonably priced for both individuals and institutions and should appeal to a wide readership including medical, dental, veterinary and industrial microbiologists as well as biochemists, geneticists and clinicians—indeed, anyone who wants to know a bit more about anaerobes.

D. C. OLD

A laboratory manual for legionella

Edited by T. G. HARRISON and A. G. TAYLOR. 1988. John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Chichester. Pp. xi and 181. £22.50.

Information available on the subject of legionella and legionnaires' disease is now comprehensive, but in certain

areas may be somewhat confusing. One such area is the technical information required by laboratory workers for the isolation, culture and identification, including serology, of legionella. However, this new book, edited by two experts, is an excellent laboratory manual covering these aspects. It is written in a concise and clearly defined style and is up to date.

The first section describes the clinical features of legionnaires' disease. This is somewhat brief but serves to remind the reader not only of the presentation of the disease but that investigations for this organism should be more frequently attempted. The next chapter describes the isolation of legionella from clinical specimens, including optimal timing of specimen collection, transport and processing of specimens, and examination of culture plates. Methods for presumptive identification of legionella and preparation and quality control of media are also described. Without doubt, this section should be of immense value to microbiologists involved in the routine isolation of the organism from clinical specimens. The subsequent chapter deals with environmental specimens. The collection of samples, with data on water services within buildings and cooling towers, is described, which should be of further practical value to laboratories testing environmental samples for legionella.

The phenotypic characteristics of legionella are next described. The information is clearly presented and practical, and the excellent colour illustrations will certainly increase the confidence of the reader when carrying out the tests described. The editors then describe its identification by serological methods. The preparation of antisera and antigen suspensions is described, and there is a very useful discussion on the limitations of the technique and the interpretation of results.

A description of the serological diagnosis of legionnaires' disease follows, with the same excellent pattern of presentation as the earlier chapters. The antibody response is described in detail, with examples of its variability. These illustrate the important point that negative legionella serology in a patient in the early stages of pneumonia does not exclude the possibility of legionnaires' disease.

In the final chapter, the application of nucleic-acid probes and monoclonal antibodies to the investigation of legionella infections is described. Nucleic-acid probes are already of value in the research laboratory and seem likely to become more widely used.

In summary, this excellent, short book describes comprehensively the methods available for the laboratory diagnosis of legionnaires' disease, offering practical advice to workers involved in the isolation and identification of legionella. Within the confines of the 181 pages, the authors appraise critically the various methods, and, in contrast to many other laboratory manuals, the text is well presented and easily read. The editors are to be congratulated for a production which will be of value to many workers in the field of microbiology.

T. S. J. ELLIOTT