Reviews and Resources

BOOKS

**Microbe, 2nd Edition**
Michele Swanson, Gemma Reguera, Moselio Schaechter, Frederick Neidhardt, with Rachel Horak. ASM Press, 2016, Washington, DC, 833 p., $100

Twenty years ago, I took the transformative “Microbial Diversity” course at the Marine Biological Laboratories in Woods Hole, Mass., taught by the late Edward Leadbetter and the late Abigail Salyers. Aided by the depth and breadth of what I soon called “matters microbial,” and perplexed by textbook options for use in the classroom, Ed laughed and told me I needed three texts: one for the students, and two for me. Microbiology is changing constantly, and expanding its scope to so many other disciplines as it changes. There was simply, as he put it, not enough paper for the subject matter in one book.

Over the years, I have used several textbooks to teach microbiology; they appear to be growing in size, depth, and sheer weight. Since I adore microbiology, this is not a problem. However, I only teach one microbiology course at my institution. In the classroom, having students drink from a metaphorical firehose of microbial information is not pedagogically optimal.

In 2005, the first edition of Microbe squarely hit the microbial “sweet spot” for my pedagogical needs: accessible in size and scope, conceptually driven, filled with fascinating images and relevant information, and clearly written with boundless enthusiasm. It was a pleasure to teach with such a text, and students responded well.

I was thus delighted when 11 years later, the second edition of Microbe appeared. It does not disappoint. The authors of the first edition bring their near-encyclopedic knowledge and overview of matters microbial to bear to this essential update, and are joined by Swanson and Reguera. The latter two authors bring medical and environmental microbiology to the forefront, respectively, as well as great clarity, fine prose style, and enthusiasm to the subject matter. Finally, Schaechter (and now Reguera) write for the wonderfully accessible microbiology blog “Small Things Considered” (http://schaechter.asmblog.org/). It is thus no surprise to see the microbial enthusiasm, clarity, topicality, and accessibility evident on each page.

Microbe is less weighty than many microbiology texts, but has enhanced value in many respects. The conceptual divides in sections and chapters make sense, and relate well to one another. As expected from a 2016 copyright, there is much up to date information as well as well-loved familiar topics. In particular, I appreciated the pathogen-driven sections on medical microbiology, as well as overarching microbiological themes throughout. A chapter on “Succeeding in the Environment” was particularly pleasing to me. The glossary and index are well organized and clear (particularly important for students).

In addition, Horak brings the ASM Curricular Guidelines into the mix. This respect for pedagogy is reflected in a “key concepts” section (relating to the curricular guidelines) in each chapter. Learning outcomes are present in most chapter subsections. Special topics and case studies appear plentifully; there is great respect to both written and visual resources. I particularly appreciated the supplemental activities and “Dig Deeper” sections at the conclusion of each chapter.

I have used many microbiology textbooks over the years. For a one-semester course in microbiology, I can think of very few choices to match this new edition of “Microbe” in terms of thematic/conceptual coverage, current knowledge, accessibility to students, and clear enthusiastic prose.

Ed Leadbetter would be happy with the choice of this textbook for my own students, I think. There is no higher praise in my opinion.

Note: My condolences to friends, family, and students of the late Frederick Neidhardt (http://schaechter.asmblog.org/schaechter/2016/10/frederick-c-neidhardt-19312016an-obituary.html).

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**Infections of Leisure, 4th edition**

What a happy title! This book could have been called “The Wages of Sin” or something equally judgmental. It deals with the microbial penalties that may accompany such pleasurable activities as ocean cruising, immersing in hot tubs, camping, or having pets. Even taking your kids to the petting zoo may come at a cost. And never mind such items as body piercing and tattoos, or, as one chapter says: “Sexually Transmitted Diseases: From Boudoir to Bor dello.”

Written by experts (and there are some for every kind of people-microbe interactions), this is perhaps the most...