immunization. The chapter gives a critical and well balanced overview about the many algorithms in current use to predict B cell and T cell epitopes. A new algorithm, developed in the authors’ own laboratory and based on the apparent preponderance of β-turns in protein epitopes, is presented. In spite of all their sophistication, the success rate of the prediction methods remains modest.

The ever increasing use of peptide antigens has been fostered by tremendous improvements in automated solid-phase peptide synthesis and by new and ingenious methods to rapidly and simultaneously synthesize large numbers of peptides in small amounts and in forms suitable for different immunological applications. Three chapters are related to the chemical synthesis of peptides. In chapter 3, B. Walker gives a concise and clear presentation of current synthetic procedures, covering the pros and cons of Boc and Fmoc protection strategies as well as of the attention that has to be given to the proper choice of side chain protection. Peptides are generally poor immunogens and a recurrent task is to render them immunogenic, which in the past has been achieved mainly by coupling the peptides to a high molecular weight carrier that helps to improve immunogenicity and to enhance T cell help. A purely synthetic approach has been taken by J.P. Tam. His multiple-antigen peptide system is presented in chapter 4 and discussed together with the more traditional carrier approach.

Also dealing with new methods of peptide synthesis is chapter 7 on ‘Epitope mapping using synthetic peptides’ (J. Worthington and K. Morgan). Practical aspects of Geyser’s ‘Pepscan’ technology in which hundreds to thousands of short peptides are synthesised onto plastic pins and directly used in immunoassays are surveyed and the use of this astonishingly simple method for the mapping of B cell and T cell epitopes is illustrated by examples from the authors’ own work. Multiple peptide synthesis has had a strong influence on the way epitopes are conceived by many researchers. This is unfortunate as epitope mapping with peptides is necessarily limited to the detection of sequential epitopes, that is, epitopes of proteins that can be successfully mimicked by a short synthetic peptide. Although I do not share the minority view of those who doubt that peptides are at all useful for epitope mapping, I find that the problems with the peptide approach of epitope mapping have not been sufficiently considered in this chapter. The allusion given that all possible epitopes of a particular protein can be identified by the peptide approach is a misconception of what epitopes are and of the very disparate nature of epitopes: Epitopes are not an intrinsic property of a protein per se but exist only by virtue of a connection with complementary antibodies, hence it is conceptually impossible to identify all possible epitopes’ (p. 81) not even all possible sequential epitopes. The reaction of antisera with peptides cannot disclose the majority of epitopes on a native protein as these are mostly discontinuous and often cannot be mimicked by short peptides. The situation is simpler for monoclonal antibodies, but also here the peptide mapping approach is restricted. The same applies to ‘Epitope mapping using libraries of random peptides displayed on phage’, the title given to the chapter by W.J. Dower and S.E. Cwirla. Unfortunately, I also could not find a reference of caution about the limits of this otherwise most elegant and highly proficient technique. Chapters on the use of peptides for preparative immunofluorimetry and the preparation of ‘epitope mapping’ phages are also included.

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Immunocytochemistry is important to many disciplines that need to evaluate the distribution and cellular heterogeneity of antigens. A vast number of techniques are available today and the novice will need guidance through the many complicated steps involving cell and tissue fixation, pretreatment, staining and evaluation. Immunocytochemical Methods and Protocols consists of 48 chapters divided into sections dealing with antibody preparation, tissue preparation for light microscopy, light microscopic immunocytochemical detection systems, fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS), colloidal gold detection systems for electron microscopy, photomicroscopy, and special applications including immunocytochemical detection of non-radioactive in situ hybridizations, confocal microscopy and laser microbeam applications. This volume, hence, has a big scope and guides the reader through many different techniques in many chapters. A few of these, like some of the FACS chapters, have nothing to do with immunocytochemistry but nevertheless represent fascinating reading.

The book contains some outstanding contributions. Particularly chapter 8 by Melissa A. Melan gives a competent and critical overview of cell fixation and permeabilization which successfully balances the subsequent chapters 9–11. These chapters take the everyday problems of a pathology department as their starting point, including the practical compromises that are necessary in such a setting. They may therefore not be entirely relevant to a more experimental setting. Mark C. Willingham has contributed two excellent treatises on immunocytochemistry of tissue culture cells and Lorette Javois writes about the important aspects of whole-mount stainings. Gary Brathauer describes well the use of different immunoenzymatic detection procedures and Robbert Cunningham and associates treats the important aspects of immunofluorescence and FACS. Good descriptions of colloidal gold methods are provided by Constance Oliver and Liana Harvath provides a nice overview of confocal microscopy. Treatment of non-radioactive in situ hybridizations, confocal microscopy and laser microbeam applications. This volume, hence, has a big scope and guides the reader through many different techniques in many chapters. A few of these, like some of the FACS chapters, have nothing to do with immunocytochemistry but nevertheless represent fascinating reading.

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In the field of cytokines a guide is as important as on the way to the Matterhorn. Guides should show the way and prevent false steps (which are much more frequent, but less deadly in the cytokine field). The book begins with color diagrams of the 3D structure of prototypic cytokines and schemes of cytokine receptors, and two introductions (to cytokines and cytokine receptors), which are very useful as they emphasize common structural and functional features, and ends with tables listing the chromosomal location of the