

# A letter from Bruce Alberts

(author of Molecular Biology of the Cell)



To: "Usha Mina" <[ushamina@mail.jnu.ac.in](mailto:ushamina@mail.jnu.ac.in)>

Sent: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 11:14:02 AM

Subject: Re: Review of book

## Some feedback on your two Life Sciences volumes – for authors only Bruce Alberts

Dear Usha and Pranav,

I have finally finished reading through many sections of your large two-volume introductory biology textbook, and I write to provide some feedback that might possibly help with your next edition.

Let me start by saying how impressed I am that such a wide-ranging textbook was written by only two authors. For those sections where I am most knowledgeable – which I read closely -- I find it to be remarkably accurate. As you well know, most such textbooks that attempt to cover all of biology are written by a sizeable team of authors – each with a different expertise -- who in addition acknowledge help from a large number of other experts. And it is great to learn that you are able to provide these two volumes at a low price that Indian students can afford.

My first question concerns the way that this material has been divided up into two separate volumes. If I were a student, I would have felt a need to learn about genetic mechanisms (which you call “genetics”) in volume 1, before learning about how proteins are sorted through internal membranes, for example.

A major concern that I would have is one of level. I find that in many places you go into considerably more detail than we do in MBOC (molecular biology of the cell), even though the latter book is aimed at a more advanced student population than I believe yours is. Biology is such a huge subject that we can easily lose students in all the details, when what is most important for them learn are the concepts. Students often feel a need to memorize such details: in our interviews with sets of students who had just used our textbook, we found that many (most?) lack the judgement to ignore them when preparing for exams. For the same reason, we also leave out many of the scientific words in our book, like 2.2<sub>7</sub> helix, linking number, abzyme, etc.

I hope that you find these comments useful, and I write to wish you the very best in 2023, as well as to encourage you in all of your future efforts!

With my best wishes,

Bruce