
Series Preface

Mycology, the study of fungi, originated as a sub discipline of botany and was a descriptive discipline, largely neglected as an experimental science until the early years of this century. A seminal paper by Blakeslee in 1904 provided evidence for self incompatibility, termed “heterothallism”, and stimulated interest in studies related to the control of sexual reproduction in fungi by mating-type specificities. Soon to follow was the demonstration that sexually reproducing fungi exhibit Mendelian inheritance and that it was possible to conduct formal genetic analysis with fungi. The names Burgeff, Kniep and Lindegren are all associated with this early period of fungal genetics research.

These studies and the discovery of penicillin by Fleming, who shared a Nobel Prize in 1945, provided further impetus for experimental research with fungi. Thus began a period of interest in mutation induction and analysis of mutants for biochemical traits. Such fundamental research, conducted largely with *Neurospora crassa*, led to the one gene: one enzyme hypothesis and to a second Nobel Prize for fungal research awarded to Beadle and Tatum in 1958. Fundamental research in biochemical genetics was extended to other fungi, especially to *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, and by the mid-1960s fungal systems were much favored for studies in eukaryotic molecular biology and were soon able to compete with bacterial systems in the molecular arena.

The experimental achievements in research on the genetics and molecular biology of fungi have benefited more generally studies in the related fields of fungal biochemistry, plant pathology, medical mycology, and systematics. Today, there is much interest in the genetic manipulation of fungi for applied research. This current interest in biotechnical genetics has been augmented by the development of DNA-mediated transformation systems in fungi and by an understanding of gene expression and regulation at the molecular level. Applied research initiatives involving fungi extend broadly to areas of interest not only to industry but to agricultural and environmental sciences as well.

It is this burgeoning interest in fungi as experimental systems for applied as well as basic research that has prompted publication of this series of books under the title *The Mycota*. This title knowingly relegates fungi into a separate realm, distinct from that of either plants, animals, or protozoa. For consistency throughout this Series of Volumes the names adopted for major groups of fungi (representative genera in parentheses) areas follows:

Pseudomycota

Division: Oomycota (*Achlya*, *Phytophthora*, *Pythium*)
Division: Hyphochytriomycota

Eumycota

Division:	Chytridiomycota (<i>Allomyces</i>)
Division:	Zygomycota (<i>Mucor</i> , <i>Phycomyces</i> , <i>Blakeslea</i>)
Division:	Dikaryomycota
Subdivision:	Ascomycotina
Class:	Saccharomycetes (<i>Saccharomyces</i> , <i>Schizosaccharomyces</i>)
Class:	Ascomycetes (<i>Neurospora</i> , <i>Podospora</i> , <i>Aspergillus</i>)
Subdivision:	Basidiomycotina
Class:	Heterobasidiomycetes (<i>Ustilago</i> , <i>Tremella</i>)
Class:	Homobasidiomycetes (<i>Schizophyllum</i> , <i>Coprinus</i>)

We have made the decision to exclude from *The Mycota* the slime molds which, although they have traditional and strong ties to mycology, truly represent nonfungal forms insofar as they ingest nutrients by phagocytosis, lack a cell wall during the assimilative phase, and clearly show affinities with certain protozoan taxa.

The Series throughout will address three basic questions: what are the fungi, what do they do, and what is their relevance to human affairs? Such a focused and comprehensive treatment of the fungi is long overdue in the opinion of the editors.

A volume devoted to systematics would ordinarily have been the first to appear in this Series. However, the scope of such a volume, coupled with the need to give serious and sustained consideration to any reclassification of major fungal groups, has delayed early publication. We wish, however, to provide a preamble on the nature of fungi, to acquaint readers who are unfamiliar with fungi with certain characteristics that are representative of these organisms and which make them attractive subjects for experimentation.

The fungi represent a heterogeneous assemblage of eukaryotic microorganisms. Fungal metabolism is characteristically heterotrophic or assimilative for organic carbon and some nonelemental source of nitrogen. Fungal cells characteristically imbibe or absorb, rather than ingest, nutrients and they have rigid cell walls. The vast majority of fungi are haploid organisms reproducing either sexually or asexually through spores. The spore forms and details on their method of production have been used to delineate most fungal taxa. Although there is a multitude of spore forms, fungal spores are basically only of two types: (i) asexual spores are formed following mitosis (mitospores) and culminate vegetative growth, and (ii) sexual spores are formed following meiosis (meiospores) and are borne in or upon specialized generative structures, the latter frequently clustered in a fruit body. The vegetative forms of fungi are either unicellular, yeasts are an example, or hyphal; the latter may be branched to form an extensive mycelium.

Regardless of these details, it is the accessibility of spores, especially the direct recovery of meiospores coupled with extended vegetative haploidy, that have made fungi especially attractive as objects for experimental research.

The ability of fungi, especially the saprobic fungi, to absorb and grow on rather simple and defined substrates and to convert these substances, not only into essential metabolites but into important secondary metabolites, is also noteworthy. The metabolic capacities of fungi have attracted much interest in natural products chemistry and in the production of antibiotics and other bioactive compounds. Fungi, especially yeasts, are important in fermentation processes. Other fungi are important in the production of enzymes, citric acid and other organic compounds as well as in the fermentation of foods.

Fungi have invaded every conceivable ecological niche. Saprobiic forms abound, especially in the decay of organic debris. Pathogenic forms exist with both plant and animal hosts. Fungi even grow on other fungi. They are found in aquatic as well as soil environments, and their spores may pollute the air. Some are edible; others are poisonous. Many are variously associated with plants as copartners in the formation of lichens and mycorrhizae, as symbiotic endophytes or as overt pathogens. Association with animal systems varies; examples include the predaceous fungi that trap nematodes, the microfungi that grow in the anaerobic environment of the rumen, the many insect associated fungi and the medically important pathogens afflicting humans. Yes, fungi are ubiquitous and important. There are many fungi, conservative estimates are in the order of 100,000 species, and there are many ways to study them, from descriptive accounts of organisms found in nature to laboratory experimentation at the cellular and molecular level. All such studies expand our knowledge of fungi and of fungal processes and improve our ability to utilize and to control fungi for the benefit of humankind.

We have invited leading research specialists in the field of mycology to contribute to this Series. We are especially indebted and grateful for the initiative and leadership shown by the Volume Editors in selecting topics and assembling the experts. We have all been a bit ambitious in producing these Volumes on a timely basis and therein lies the possibility of mistakes and oversights in this first edition. We encourage the readership to draw our attention to any error, omission or inconsistency in this Series in order that improvements can be made in any subsequent edition.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the willingness of Springer-Verlag to host this project, which is envisioned to require more than 5 years of effort and the publication of at least nine Volumes.

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KARL ESSER
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Series Editors

Volume Preface

The central aspects of fungal genetics and biology are fungal growth (either as yeast-like growth or hyphal growth), differentiation, generation of an elaborate fruiting-body structure, and sexuality, which is regulated by central mating loci and mating-type genes. Therefore, this volume was chosen as the first volume of *The Mycota* series more than 20 years ago. Since the second edition in 2006 another ten years have passed, necessitating an update and extension. This is now the third edition of Volume I of the series *The Mycota*. We have put great effort into renewing the chapters and have included new authors that have actively advanced novel research topics in the field.

We start the section on vegetative processes and growth from the inside of the fungal cell by looking at organelle inheritance and nuclear dynamics in multinucleate fungal cells. Both of these fields have progressed considerably in recent years. The molecular understanding of polarized hyphal growth at the hyphal tip has deepened over the last few years. Growth requires remodeling of the fungal cell wall and, at intervals, also the demarcation of hyphal cells by septation. A phenomenon that has been fascinating mycologists for decades has been hyphal fusion of vegetative cells. This can trigger incompatibility reactions or result in the generation of a network of interconnected hyphae. The general and molecular mechanisms and signal transduction cascades leading to hyphal fusion have been studied intensely and both are covered in this volume. This section is completed by a discussion on aspects of aging and longevity in fungi.

The section on signals in growth and development deals with autoregulatory signals, pheromone action, and abiotic signals of photomorphogenesis and gravitropism. This field is receiving growing attention and will gain ground over the next few years.

Reproductive processes in fungi are certainly of key interest for biotechnological applications and for the food industry. We cover both asexual and sexual development in fungi, with a close look at molecular genetics with respect to mating-type locus organization and regulatory genes.

With these sections, this volume of *The Mycota* covers specific topics that are presented in depth from their historic early days to today's detailed and mechanistic molecular characterizations. This volume thus contains information for both the student and advanced fungal biologist. It will, therefore, serve as a reference and as a starting point for further investigations.

With great delight we see that this field of molecular fungal biology is advancing rapidly and that new models are being established to allow representation of a greater biodiversity. We understand that it is always difficult to follow such rapidly changing fields, so we are indebted to the chapter authors for their

excellent contributions. Finally, we acknowledge the great collaboration with Springer and the project coordinator Dr. Andrea Schlitzberger, which made editing this book a pleasure.

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