

This Week's Citation Classic

CC/NUMBER 32
AUGUST 10, 1981

Pearse A G E. *Histochemistry, theoretical and applied*.
London: Churchill. 1960. 998 p. (Royal Postgraduate Med. Sch.,
Univ. London, London, England]

This book covers histochemistry in its entirety including, as a separate chapter, its extension to the field of cytochemical ultrastructure. The text, with some 3,000 references and fully illustrated throughout, successfully achieves the delicate balance between theory and practice. [The SOI® indicates that this book has been cited over 11,580 times since 1961.]

Anthony G.E. Pearse
Royal Postgraduate Medical School
University of London
London W12 OHS
England

April 30, 1981

"The work cited belongs to a series which began in 1953¹ with the publication of a single volume treatise entitled *Histochemistry, Theoretical and Applied*. The cited second edition appeared in 1960, a two volume third edition in 1968/1972,² and the first volume of the three volume fourth edition in 1980.³

"Why did I ever embark on such a saga? Well, in 1947 I became assistant lecturer in pathology at the Postgraduate Medical School of London (old terminology) and one day, early in 1948, Henry Dible, the director of the department, suggested to me that I should construct a monograph on the histochemistry of the nucleic acids. He had (rightly) become excited by recent publications from the pen of the Belgian biochemist Jean Louis Brachet.⁴ Histochemistry had been welded into some sort of a whole by another Belgian, Lucien Lison, with his book *Histochimie Animale*." Readers of *Current Contents*® (CC®) will know that nobody (except me) read this because it was written in French.

"I replied that I would write a text embracing the whole subject or nothing and

six days later, a publisher's contract to do just that was put before me. With its signing I embarked on a life of unceasing authorship, with all its entailed enquiry into the works of others. Hence my chosen epigram, the Horatian tag *Nam proprium est nihil*, in its true context not the modest 'nothing is original' but 'nothing is your own property.' From the pirated Russian first edition (1956), only this epigram was missing! So it is this, which in 1948 one of my colleagues called a future 'millstone around my neck,' which seems to have become a *Citation Classic*.

"This should be no matter for surprise, for it is evident that a goodly proportion of works which reach this elevated status are concerned with methodology I can do no better by way of explanation for the apparent success of the 1960 edition than to quote from the 'Historical Introduction' to the fourth edition of *Histochemistry, Theoretical and Applied*:

It may be that even in its modern form histochemistry has some way to go before it receives proper recognition from those workers in the basic sciences whom it serves so well. If verbal acknowledgement is still lacking, histochemists can take heart from the statistics provided by the records of the *Science Citation Index*® for the years 1961-72. During this period, in the total field of biochemistry and biomedicine, some 29 texts were cited more than 200 times. Five of the 29 were histochemical and these five amassed between them no less than 22 269 per cent of the total number of citations (13,543) The inference to be drawn from these statistics is obvious. It is that the techniques which comprise the discipline of histochemistry have been found useful, and that they are used, by workers in all the biological sciences³

"While I am pleased to be a member of the prestigious CC Club, offered the choice I would certainly prefer election by virtue of one or other of my essays in applied histochemistry, dealing with the diffuse neuroendocrine (APUD) system and its tumors.^{6,7}

1. Pearse A G E. *Histochemistry, theoretical and applied*. London: Churchill. 1953. 530 p.
2. *Histochemistry, theoretical and applied*. London: Churchill. 1968-1972. 2 vols.
3. *Histochemistry, theoretical and applied. Vol. 1. Preparative and optical technology*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1980.
4. Brachet J. Nucleic acids in the cell and the embryo. *Symp. Soc. Biol Nucleic Acid*. 1:207-24, 1947.
5. Lison L. *Histochimie animale*. Paris: Gauthier-Villars. 1936. 320 p.
6. Pearse A G E. The cytochemistry and ultrastructure of polypeptide hormone-producing cells of the APUD series and the embryologic, physiologic and pathologic implications of the concept. *J. Histochem. Cytochem*. 17:303-13. 1969 [The SCI® indicates that this paper has been cited over 735 times since 1969.]
7. The APUD concept and hormone production. (*Jm. Endocrinol. Mrtab*. 9:211 -12, 1980.