

The Uses of Life: A History of Biotechnology

By Robert Bud

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This book shows, for the first time, how modern biotechnology grew out of this century's hopes for a new relationship between biology and engineering. Long before recombinant DNA, these promised a new kind of technology. By exploring the rich and surprisingly overlooked complex of prophesies, industrial and scientific development and government programs, the book sheds new light on the expectations now held for biotechnology. A world-wide view, covering developments, not just in America but also in Europe and Japan, uncovers surprising links. This makes possible a coherent story to supersede the historical notes which have been available until now. This first history of biotechnology provides a readable and challenging account that will appeal to anyone interested in the development of this key component of modern industry.

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The Uses of Life: A History of Biotechnology By Robert Bud Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1912614 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cambridge University Press
- Published on: 1994-05-27
- Released on: 1994-06-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .71" w x 6.22" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

Review
"...will be of interest to the general reader as well as to biologists, chemists, engineers, and historians." Biosis

"...really quite a nice treatment of fields that used biotechnology in early and what we would now consider nontraditional ways." Thomas D. Brock, Chemical and Engineering News

"...the best introduction to the comparative and cultural history of biotechnology." Glenn E. Burgos, Science

"...a delightful, informative, readable, slightly pedantic, and interesting account of the development of biotechnology in the 20th century....should be read by anyone with an interest in biotechnology and certainly by those who teach biotechnology. It can easily be assigned as reading to upper-level undergraduate students." Jack Pasternak, ASM News

"...painstakingly researched, measured in argument, attractively written and a thoroughly interesting and informative read. It has clearly been a labor of love for the author...the most enjoyable book on biotechnology that I, at least, have come across for some time." Paul Wymer, Tibtech

"...a valuable and erudite account of the earlier tradition of [biotechnology]." Robert Olby, The Times Higher Education Supplement

"...an impressive overview of a century of biotechnology." Markus Heissler, Biotechnology and Development Monitor

"...In this sweeping history of biotechnology, Robert Bud shows how the hopes and fears for the combination of biology with engineering have been an integral part of the culture of the twentieth century...based on a decade of original research, this book has been carefully written in a nontechnical language, so it will appeal to a wide range of scientists, engineers, historians, and general readers from other disciplines." Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society

"The strengths of Bud's book are its breadth and its impressive documentation: at times the book partakes of 'popular culture' or science fiction, at other times of business history, and elsewhere of the history of chemical engineering. Bud moves easily among the historical, literary, technical, and political literatures....This is an interesting attempt to identify and bring into chronological order the several early forms of 'biotechnology.'" Margaret W. Rossiter, American Historical Review

"...makes an important contribution to the growing scholarly literature concerning the development of molecular life sciences and the emergence of biotechnology as a major economic force....For historians of science, this ambitious book is remarkable for the degree to which it avoids becoming mired in any conventional disciplinary history or trapped in historicizing the usual elite academic settings. In addition, Bud is to be commended for the degree to which he succeeds in attending to multiple national situations, and his account of the development of fermentation and enzyme technologies in Japan should inspire historians to pay closer attention to non-Western science....[Bud's] fascinating account provides a model of how a historian may investigate the interplay between science, technology, and government policy in order to understand how a word comes to convey an industry." Angela N.H. Creager, Isis

From the Back Cover
Good or bad? New or old? The rich connotations of the word 'biotechnology' reflect a history that stretches back more than seventy years. To some, the concept describes the evolving crafts of industrial production using micro-organisms. To others, biotechnology is a product of the recombinant techniques only recently developed by molecular biologists. It has been seen simply as a means of wealth production and as a new kind of technology--sometimes as distinctively benevolent and at all other times as particularly dangerous.

Robert Bud shows how the hopes and fears for the combination of biology with engineering have been an integral part of the history of the twentieth century, including the Great Depression of the 1930s, the two world wars, and the more recent anxieties over genetic and entrepreneurial industry. Skillfully, the author relates biotechnology's origins in the chemistry and microbiology of the nineteenth century. Personalities with influential roles in its subsequent development such as Chaim Weizmann, Kark Ereky, Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, Joshua Lederberg, and Jeremy Rifkin, among many others, are discussed. Analysis of the changing roles and hopes for biotechnology in government and society takes the book to the end of the 1980s, when recombinant DNA techniques had become the dominant driving force behind what today we think of as biotechnology.

This first history of biotechnology provides a readable and challenging account for anyone interested in the development of this key component of modern industry.

Users Review

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Frank Monroe:

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Amanda Stone:

In this period globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make someone to understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, newspaper, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended to you is The Uses of Life: A History of Biotechnology this publication consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some study when he makes this book. That's why this book ideal all of you.

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