

Preface

This sixth edition of *A Dictionary of Science*, like its predecessors, aims to provide school and first-year university students with accurate explanations of any unfamiliar words they might come across in the course of their studies, in their own or adjacent disciplines. For example, students of the physical sciences will find all they are likely to need to know about the life sciences, and vice versa. The dictionary is also designed to provide non-scientists with a useful reference source to explain the scientific terms that they may encounter in their work or in their general reading.

At this level the dictionary provides full coverage of terms, concepts, and laws relating to physics, chemistry, biology, biochemistry, palaeontology, and the earth sciences. There is also coverage of key terms in astronomy, cosmology, mathematics, biotechnology, and computer technology. In addition, the dictionary includes:

- over 160 short biographical entries on the most important scientists in the history of the subject
- ten features (each of one or two pages) on concepts of special significance in modern science
- ten chronologies showing the development of selected concepts, fields of study, and industries
- eight Appendices, including the periodic table, tables of SI units and conversion tables to and from other systems of units, summary classifications of the plant and animal kingdoms, and useful websites.

For this sixth edition nearly 700 new entries have been added to the text, incorporating recent advances in all the major fields and increased coverage of astronomy, forensic chemistry, and computing.

In compiling the dictionary, the contributors and editors have made every effort to make the entries as concise and comprehensible as possible, always bearing in mind the needs of the readers. Particular features of the book are its lack of unnecessary scientific jargon and its extensive network of cross-references. An asterisk placed before a word used in an entry indicates that this word can be looked up in the dictionary and will provide further explanation or clarification. However, not every word that is defined in the dictionary has an asterisk placed before it when it is used in an entry. Some entries simply refer the reader to another entry, indicating either that they are synonyms or abbreviations or that they are most conveniently explained in one of the dictionary's longer articles. Synonyms and abbreviations are usually placed within brackets immediately after the headword. Terms that are explained within an entry are highlighted by being printed in boldface type. Where appropriate, the entries have been supplemented by fully labelled line-drawings or tables *in situ*.