

**METHODS
IN
MICROBIOLOGY**

VOLUME 8

METHODS in MICROBIOLOGY

Edited by

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

With the publication of Volume 7 the initial Series of "Methods in Microbiology" was completed. As work on the Series progressed, we were encouraged by receiving several suggestions for further topics and offers of contributions over and above the areas covered in the planned Volumes, and we decided to put some of these together to form a single continuation Volume.

Inevitably the topics are diverse and there is no connecting theme for Volume 8. Nevertheless, we have continued with our policy of treating subjects which are not adequately detailed elsewhere in the literature, or which represent technical developments at the advancing forefront of microbiology—attractive by virtue of their evident potential rather than by their established value in the armoury of the research worker.

As with earlier Volumes, we have allowed individual contributors largely to determine the nature of their presentations. In some areas it is clearly appropriate and valuable to present detailed operating instructions; in others a more general orientation with adequate references to technical methods is more useful. As with earlier Volumes we are grateful for the friendly co-operation we have received from authors during the preparation of Volume 8. We have no firm plans for continuing the Series but will re-assess the situation periodically to see whether advances in technique and methodology suggest that the production of a further Volume would be useful.

J. R. NORRIS

D. W. RIBBONS

March, 1973

CONTENTS OF PUBLISHED VOLUMES

Volume 1

- E. C. ELLIOTT AND D. L. GEORGALA. Sources, Handling and Storage of Media and Equipment
- R. BROOKES. Properties of Materials Suitable for the Cultivation and Handling of Micro-organisms
- G. SYKES. Methods and Equipment for Sterilization of Laboratory Apparatus and Media
- R. ELSWORTH. Treatment of Process Air for Deep Culture
- J. J. MCDADE, G. B. PHILLIPS, H. D. SIVINSKI AND W. J. WHITFIELD. Principles and Applications of Laminar-flow Devices
- H. M. DARLOW. Safety in the Microbiological Laboratory
- J. G. MULVANY. Membrane Filter Techniques in Microbiology
- C. T. CALAM. The Culture of Micro-organisms in Liquid Medium
- CHARLES E. HELMSTETTER. Methods for Studying the Microbial Division Cycle
- LOUIS B. QUESNEL. Methods of Microculture
- R. C. CODNER. Solid and Solidified Growth Media in Microbiology
- K. I. JOHNSTONE. The Isolation and Cultivation of Single Organisms
- N. BLAKEBROUGH. Design of Laboratory Fermenters
- K. SARGEANT. The Deep Culture of Bacteriophage
- M. F. MALLETT. Evaluation of Growth by Physical and Chemical Means
- C. T. CALAM. The Evaluation of Mycelial Growth
- H. E. KUBITSCHK. Counting and Sizing Micro-organisms with the Coulter Counter
- J. R. POSTGATE. Viable Counts and Viability
- A. H. STOUTHAMER. Determination and Significance of Molar Growth Yields

Volume 2

- D. G. MACLENNAN. Principles of Automatic Measurement and Control of Fermentation Growth Parameters
- J. W. PATCHING AND A. H. ROSE. The Effects and Control of Temperature
- A. L. S. MUNRO. Measurement and Control of pH Values
- H.-E. JACOB. Redox Potential
- D. E. BROWN. Aeration in the Submerged Culture of Micro-organisms
- D. FREEDMAN. The Shaker in Bioengineering
- J. BRYANT. Anti-foam Agents
- N. G. CARR. Production and Measurement of Photosynthetically Usable Light
- R. ELSWORTH. The Measurement of Oxygen Absorption and Carbon Dioxide Evolution in Stirred Deep Cultures
- G. A. PLATON. Flow Measurement and Control
- RICHARD Y. MORITA. Application of Hydrostatic Pressure to Microbial Cultures
- D. W. TEMPEST. The Continuous Cultivation of Micro-organisms: 1. Theory of the Chemostat
- C. G. T. EVANS, D. HERBERT AND D. W. TEMPEST. The Continuous Cultivation of Micro-organisms: 2. Construction of a Chemostat

- J. ŘIČICA. Multi-stage Systems
 R. J. MUNSON. Turbidostats
 R. O. THOMSON AND W. H. FOSTER. Harvesting and Clarification of Cultures—
 Storage of Harvest

Volume 3A

- S. P. LAPAGE, JEAN E. SHELTON AND T. G. MITCHELL. Media for the Maintenance and Preservation of Bacteria
 S. P. LAPAGE, JEAN E. SHELTON, T. G. MITCHELL AND A. R. MACKENZIE. Culture Collections and the Preservation of Bacteria
 E. Y. BRIDSON AND A. BRECKER. Design and Formulation of Microbial Culture Media
 D. W. RIBBONS. Quantitative Relationships Between Growth Media Constituents and Cellular Yields and Composition
 H. VELDkamp. Enrichment Cultures of Prokaryotic Organisms
 DAVID A. HOPWOOD. The Isolation of Mutants
 C. T. CALAM. Improvement of Micro-organisms by Mutation, Hybridization and Selection

Volume 3B

- VERA G. COLLINS. Isolation, Cultivation and Maintenance of Autotrophs
 N. G. CARR. Growth of Phototrophic Bacteria and Blue-Green Algae
 A. T. WILLIS. Techniques for the Study of Anaerobic, Spore-forming Bacteria
 R. E. HUNGATE. A Roll Tube Method for Cultivation of Strict Anaerobes
 P. N. HOBSON. Rumen Bacteria
 ELLA M. BARNES. Methods for the Gram-negative Non-sporing Anaerobes
 T. D. BROCK AND A. H. ROSE. Psychrophiles and Thermophiles
 N. E. GIBBONS. Isolation, Growth and Requirements of Halophilic Bacteria
 JOHN E. PETERSON. Isolation, Cultivation and Maintenance of the Myxobacteria
 R. J. FALLON AND P. WHITTLESTONE. Isolation, Cultivation and Maintenance of Mycoplasmas
 M. R. DROOP. Algae
 EVE BILLING. Isolation, Growth and Preservation of Bacteriophages

Volume 4

- C. BOOTH. Introduction to General Methods
 C. BOOTH. Fungal Culture Media
 D. M. DRING. Techniques for Microscopic Preparation
 AGNES H. S. ONIONS. Preservation of Fungi
 F. W. BEECH AND R. R. DAVENPORT. Isolation, Purification and Maintenance of Yeasts
 MISS G. M. WATERHOUSE. Phycomycetes
 E. PUNITHALINGHAM. Basidiomycetes: Heterobasidiomycetidae
 ROY WATLING. Basidiomycetes: Homobasidiomycetidae
 M. J. CARLILE. Myxomycetes and other Slime Moulds
 D. H. S. RICHARDSON. Lichens

- S. T. WILLIAMS AND T. CROSS. Actinomycetes
 E. B. GARETH JONES. Aquatic Fungi
 R. R. DAVIES. Air Sampling for Fungi, Pollens and Bacteria
 GEORGE L. BARRON. Soil Fungi
 PHYLLIS M. STOCKDALE. Fungi Pathogenic for Man and Animals: 1. Diseases of the Keratinized Tissues
 HELEN R. BUCKLEY. Fungi Pathogenic for Man and Animals: 2. The Subcutaneous and Deep-seated Mycoses
 J. L. JINKS AND J. CROFT. Methods Used for Genetical Studies in Mycology
 R. L. LUCAS. Autoradiographic Techniques in Mycology
 T. F. PREECE. Fluorescent Techniques in Mycology
 G. N. GREENHALGH AND L. V. EVANS. Electron Microscopy
 ROY WATLING. Chemical Tests in Agaricology
 T. F. PREECE. Immunological Techniques in Mycology
 CHARLES M. LEACH. A Practical Guide to the Effects of Visible and Ultraviolet Light on Fungi
 JULIO R. VILLANUEVA AND ISABEL GARCIA ACHA. Production and Use of Fungal Protoplasts

Volume 5A

- L. B. QUESNEL. Microscopy and Micrometry
 J. R. NORRIS AND HELEN SWAIN. Staining Bacteria
 A. M. PATON AND SUSAN M. JONES. Techniques Involving Optical Brightening Agents
 T. IINO AND M. ENOMOTO. Motility
 R. W. SMITH AND H. KOFFLER. Production and Isolation of Flagella
 C. L. OAKLEY. Antigen-antibody Reactions in Microbiology
 P. D. WALKER, IRENE BATTY AND R. O. THOMSON. The Localization of Bacterial Antigens by the use of the Fluorescent and Ferritin Labelled Antibody Techniques
 IRENE BATTY. Toxin-antitoxin Assay
 W. H. KINGHAM. Techniques for Handling Animals
 J. DE LEY. The Determination of the Molecular Weight of DNA Per Bacterial Nucleoid
 J. DE LEY. Hybridization of DNA
 J. E. M. MIDGLEY. Hybridization of Microbial RNA and DNA
 ELIZABETH WORK. Cell Walls

Volume 5B

- D. E. HUGHES, J. W. T. WIMPENNY AND D. LLOYD. The Disintegration of Micro-organisms
 J. SYKES. Centrifugal Techniques for the Isolation and Characterization of Sub-Cellular Components from Bacteria
 D. HERBERT, P. J. PHIPPS AND R. E. STRANGE. Chemical Analysis of Microbial Cells
 I. W. SUTHERLAND AND J. F. WILKINSON. Chemical Extraction Methods of Microbial Cells
 PER-ÅKE ALBERTSSON. Biphasic Separation of Microbial Particles

- MITSUHIRO NOZAKI AND OSAMU HAYAISHI. Separation and Purification of Proteins
 J. R. SARGENT. Zone Electrophoresis for the Separation of Microbial Cell Components
 K. HANNIG. Free-flow Electrophoresis
 W. MANSON. Preparative Zonal Electrophoresis
 K. E. COOKSEY. Disc Electrophoresis
 O. VESTERBERG. Isoelectric Focusing and Separation of Proteins
 F. J. MOSS, PAMELA A. D. RICKARD AND G. H. ROPER. Reflectance Spectrophotometry
 W. D. SKIDMORE AND E. L. DUGGAN. Base Composition of Nucleic Acids

Volume 6A

- A. J. HOLDING AND J. G. COLLEE. Routine Biochemical Tests
 K. KERSTERS AND J. DE LEY. Enzymic Tests with Resting Cells and Cell-free Extracts
 E. A. DAWES, D. J. MCGILL AND M. MIDGLEY. Analysis of Fermentation Products
 S. DAGLEY AND P. J. CHAPMAN. Evaluation of Methods to Determine Metabolic Pathways
 PATRICIA H. CLARKE. Methods for Studying Enzyme Regulation
 G. W. GOULD. Methods for Studying Bacterial Spores
 W. HEINEN. Inhibitors of Electron Transport and Oxidative Phosphorylation
 ELIZABETH WORK. Some Applications and Uses of Metabolite Analogues in Microbiology
 W. A. WOOD. Assay of Enzymes Representative of Metabolic Pathways
 H. C. REEVES, R. RABIN, W. S. WEGENER AND S. J. AJL. Assays of Enzymes of the Tricarboxylic Acid and Glyoxylate Cycles
 D. T. GIBSON. Assay of Enzymes of Aromatic Metabolism
 MICHAEL C. SCRUTTON. Assay of Enzymes of CO₂ Metabolism

Volume 6B

- J. L. PEEL. The Use of Electron Acceptors, Donors and Carriers
 R. B. BEECHY AND D. W. RIBBONS. Oxygen Electrode Measurements
 D. G. NICHOLLS AND P. B. GARLAND. Electrode Measurements of Carbon Dioxide
 G. W. CROSBIE. Ionization Methods of Counting Radio-Isotopes
 J. H. HASH. Liquid Scintillation Counting in Microbiology
 J. R. QUAYLE. The Use of Isotopes in Tracing Metabolic Pathways
 C. H. WANG. Radiorespirometric Methods
 N. R. EATON. Pulse Labelling of Micro-organisms
 M. J. ALLEN. Cellular Electrophysiology
 W. W. FORREST. Microcalorimetry
 J. MARTEN. Automatic and Continuous Assessment of Fermentation Parameters
 A. FERRARI AND J. MARTEN. Automated Microbiological Assay
 J. R. POSTGATE. The Acetylene Reduction Test for Nitrogen Fixation

Volume 7A

- G. C. WARE. Computer Use in Microbiology
 P. H. A. SNEATH. Computer Taxonomy

- H. F. DAMMERS. Data Handling and Information Retrieval by Computer
M. ROBERTS AND C. B. C. BOYCE. Principles of Biological Assay
D. KAY. Methods for Studying the Infectious Properties and Multiplication of Bacteriophage
D. KAY. Methods for the Determination of the Chemical and Physical Structure of Bacteriophages
ANNA MAYR-HARTING, A. J. HEDGES AND R. C. W. BERKELEY. Methods for Studying Bacteriocins
W. R. MAXTED. Specific Procedures and Requirements for the Isolation, Growth and Maintenance of the L-Phase of Some Microbial Groups

Volume 7B

- M. T. PARKER. Phage-Typing of *Staphylococcus aureus*
D. A. HOPWOOD. Genetic Analysis in Micro-organisms
J. MEYRATH AND GERDA SUCHANEK. Inoculation Techniques—Effects Due to Quality and Quantity of Inoculum
D. F. SPOONER AND G. SYKES. Laboratory Assessment of Antibacterial Activity
L. B. QUESNEL. Photomicrography and Macrophotography

CONTENTS

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
PREFACE	vii
Chapter I. Scanning Electron Microscopy—L. A. BULLA, JR., G. ST. JULIAN, C. W. HESSELTINE AND F. L. BAKER	1
Chapter II. Mathematical Models in Microbiology—H. H. TOPIWALA	35
Chapter III. Isolation, Growth and Maintenance of Anaerobic Free-living Spirochetes—E. CANALE-PAROLA	61
Chapter IV. Borrelia—O. FELSENFELD	75
Chapter V. Methods for Assessing Damage to Bacteria Induced by Chemical and Physical Agents—A. D. RUSSELL, A. MORRIS AND M. C. ALLWOOD	95
Chapter VI. Different Light Scattering Techniques for Micro- biology—P. J. WYATT	183
AUTHOR INDEX	265
SUBJECT INDEX	275

CHAPTER I

Scanning Electron Microscopy

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I. Introduction	1
II. The Scanning Electron Microscope	2
A. Imaging system	2
B. Electron-optical column	4
C. Vacuum system	7
D. Mechanisms of contrast formation and signal detection	7
E. Visual and record display	11
F. Lens aberrations	12
G. Magnification, resolution, and depth of focus	13
III. Specimen Preparation	13
A. Sample washing	14
B. Fixation and dehydration	14
C. Critical point drying and freeze-drying	14
D. Specimen mounting	15
E. Specimen surface coating	17
IV. Applications	18
A. Bacterial spore morphology	18
B. Bacterial colony morphology	20
C. Systematics	20
D. Spore germination and outgrowth	25
V. Ancillary Techniques	28
A. Scanning transmission electron microscopy	28
B. Three-dimensional analysis	28
C. Y-modulation	29
D. Ion etching	29
E. Low voltage operation	30
VI. Conclusion	30
VII. Some Scanning Electron Microscope Manufacturers	31
References	31

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of scanning electron microscopy dates back to that of conventional transmission electron microscopy. The initial patent application for a scanning electron microscope was made in 1927 (Stintzing, 1929),

but the first instrument was not built until 1938 (Von Ardenne, 1938). Shortly thereafter though, several instruments were constructed for experimental use. Only a few scanning electron micrographs appeared in the literature (Zworykin *et al.*, 1942). During the middle to late forties, emphasis was placed on instrumental development; and as a result of the concerted efforts of Oatley *et al.* (1965) in England, the first commercial instrument was produced. Now there is available a variety of commercial designs.

The scanning electron microscope has several features that render it advantageous for various kinds of microscopic observation. Information can be obtained from different electron beam-induced signals that include (1) secondary electrons, (2) back-scattered electrons, (3) X-rays, (4) visible light or infrared energy, and (5) currents from semiconductors. Thus, it is possible to gather information on the chemical composition and electrical properties of biological materials as well as interaction of such materials with specific stains. The scanning electron microscope affords image production comparable to light, ultraviolet, fluorescence, and X-ray microscopes. Furthermore, it has great depth of focus and produces images with three-dimensional quality. Specimen preparation usually is reduced to a minimum and, sometimes, requires no chemical fixation or physical pretreatment. Consequently, biological material can be viewed directly as it actually is, only magnified.

This Chapter is intended to provide a better insight into the usefulness of the scanning electron microscope, to summarize the principles of scanning electron microscopy; to describe briefly the methods for specimen preparation; and to outline some applications in microbiology. For a comprehensive treatise on the theory and principles of scanning electron microscopy, the reader is referred to the text by Thornton (1968). Other theoretical considerations of microscopy were presented earlier (see Quesnel, this Series, Volume 5A) as were methods of specimen preparation for electron microscopy (see Greenhalgh and Evans, this Series, Volume 4).

II. THE SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPE

A. Imaging system

A fundamental and unique characteristic of the scanning electron microscope is its imaging system. Fig. 1 compares the imaging system of a scanning microscope to those of optical and transmission electron microscopes. In a light microscope (Fig. 1a), the light beam passes through a transparent specimen, and the resulting image is magnified by glass lenses. An analogous situation exists in a transmission electron microscope

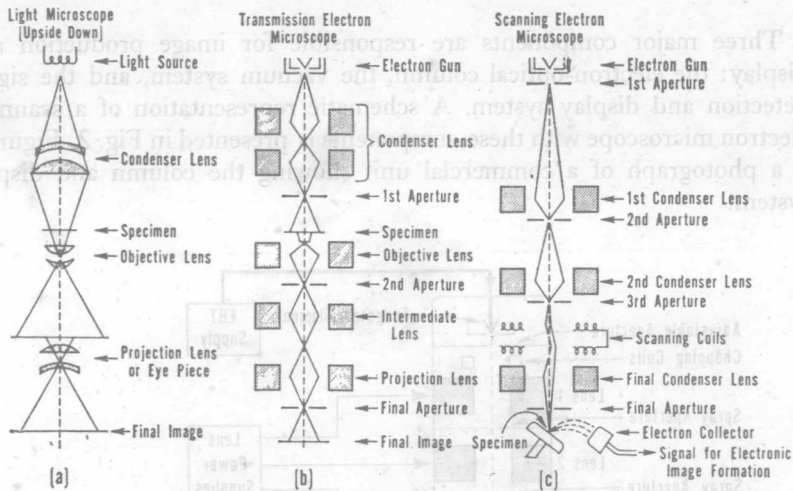


Fig. 1. Diagrammatic comparison of imaging systems in (a) optical microscope, (b) transmission electron microscope, and (c) scanning electron microscope.

(Fig. 1b) where the electrons likewise pass through the specimen and are focused by electron lenses to form an enlarged image on a fluorescent screen or a photographic plate. The image produced by light optics contains an abundance of information. Such aspects as chemical composition, localized interaction of biochemical stains, and general specimen shape can be determined. Of course, the major limitation of a light microscope is its low resolving power. In contrast, electron optics of a conventional transmission electron microscope provide high-resolution images. An inherent limitation of this system, however, is a restricted amount of image information content.

The scanning electron microscope has a quite different imaging system (Fig. 1c) that depends upon electron beam radiation for localization and upon visible light energy for information gathering. Electrons are formed into a fine probe as a result of demagnification by condenser lenses. The probe is moved over the surface of a specimen in a rectangular or zigzag pattern by two pairs of scanning coils powered by a generator. At the same time, the generator current passes through scanning coils of a cathode ray tube to produce a magnified raster identical to that on the specimen. Electrons emitted from the specimen are collected and the resulting current is amplified for regulating brightness of the cathode ray tube. In this way, an enlarged picture of the specimen is viewed on the face of the cathode ray tube with point-by-point correspondence. Such a system provides both high-resolution images and a great deal of information about the image.

Three major components are responsible for image production and display: the electron-optical column, the vacuum system, and the signal detection and display system. A schematic representation of a scanning electron microscope with these components is presented in Fig. 2. Figure 3 is a photograph of a commercial unit showing the column and display system.

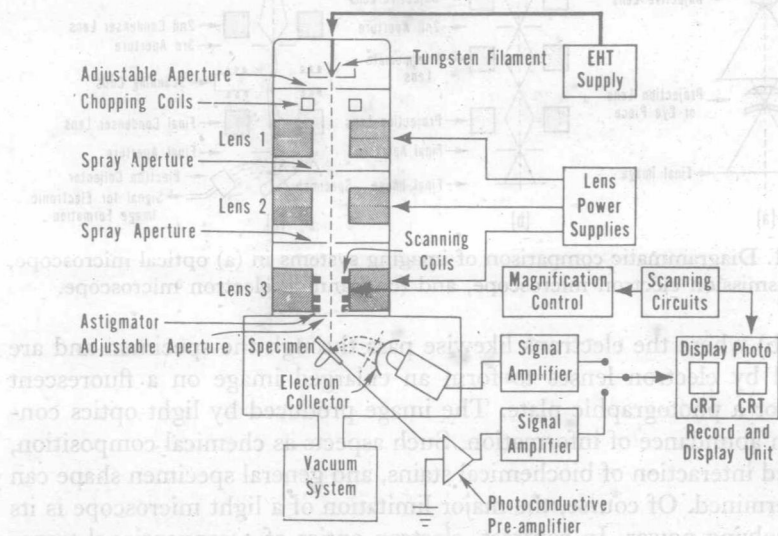


Fig. 2. Schematic diagram of a scanning electron microscope. CRT, cathode ray tube; EHT, electron gun-accelerating voltage.

B. Electron-optical column

The electron-optical system (see Fig. 2) is composed of an electron gun, two to four electron lenses, a set of apertures, an astigmator, and a set of beam modulating coils (chopping coils). Usually the electron gun is of triode design (Fig. 4) and produces a crossover of high-current density (Thornton, 1968). It contains a cathode consisting of a tungsten hairpin filament housed in a cylindrical shield with a circular aperture of about 2-mm diameter, and an annular cylindrical anode with a coaxial aperture. Electrons are boiled off the tungsten filament, heated by a high-voltage (EHT or electron gun-accelerating voltage) source, and passed through an aperture in the cylindrical shield that is negatively biased. The shield aids in controlling the electron source by forming a crossover point, or disc of least confusion, through which all electrons pass. By adjusting the bias voltage, the position of the crossover point can be regulated. The anode,

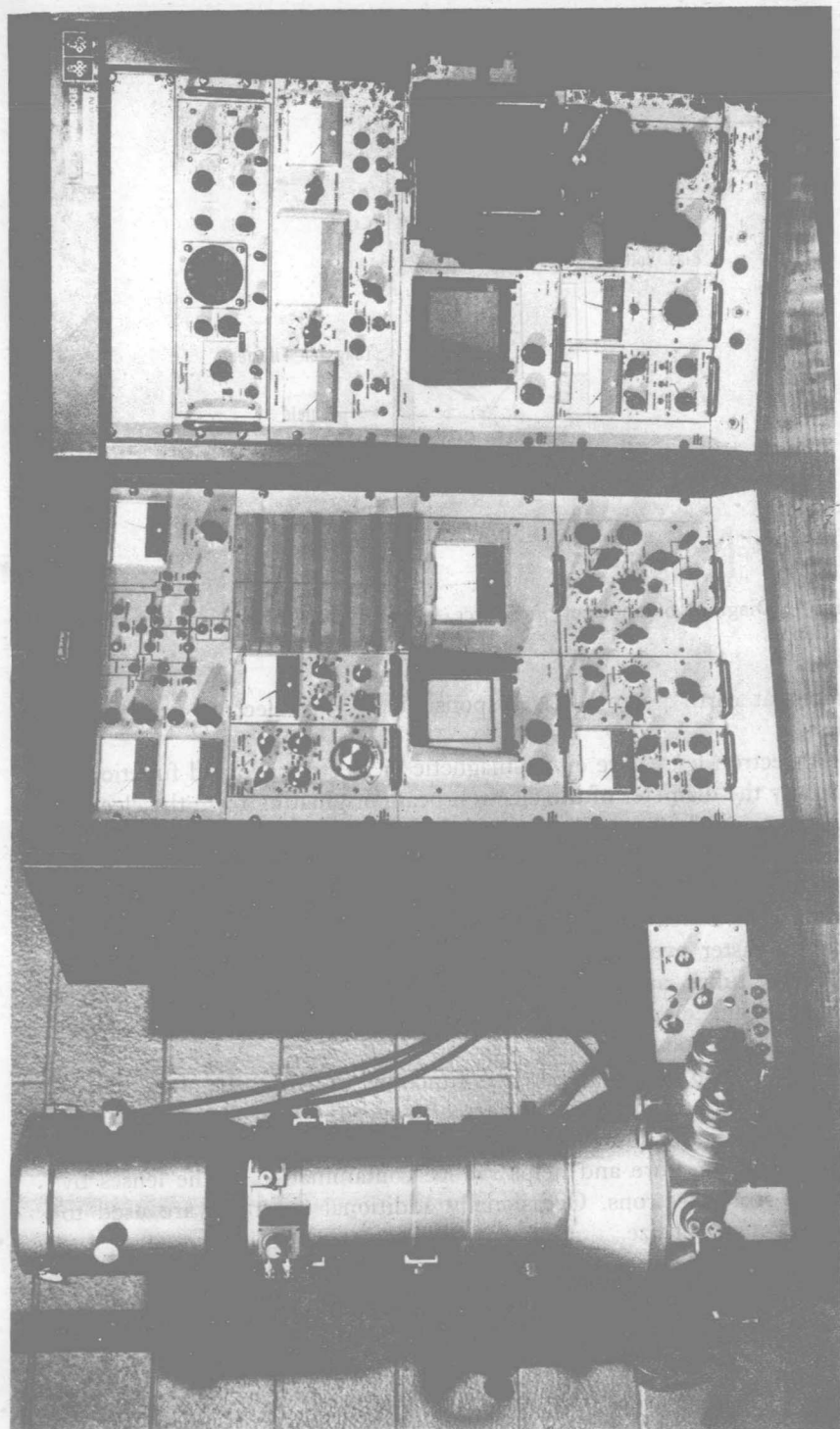


Fig. 3. Photograph of a "Stereoscan" scanning electron microscope (Mark 2A, Cambridge Scientific Instruments Ltd., Cambridge, England).]