

# Materiomics

High-Throughput Screening of  
Biomaterial Properties

Edited by **Jan de Boer**  
and **Clemens A. van Blitterswijk**

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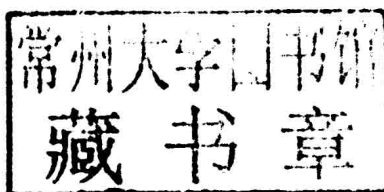
## High-Throughput Screening of Biomaterial Properties

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## **Materiomics**

This complete, yet concise, guide introduces you to the rapidly developing field of high-throughput screening of biomaterials: materiomics. Bringing together the key concepts and methodologies used to determine biomaterial properties, it will allow you to understand the adaptation and application of materiomics in areas such as rapid prototyping, lithography and combinatorial chemistry. Each chapter is written by internationally renowned experts, and includes tutorial paragraphs on topics such as biomaterial-banking, imaging, assay development, translational aspects and informatics. Case studies of state-of-the-art experiments provide illustrative examples, while lists of key publications allow you to read up easily on the most relevant background material. Whether you are a professional scientist in industry, a student or a researcher, this book is not to be missed if you are interested in the latest developments in biomaterials research.

**Jan de Boer** is a Professor of Applied Cell Biology at the University of Twente, the Netherlands, at the MIRA Institute for Biomedical Technology and Technical Medicine, where his team performs innovative research on molecular and cellular engineering of bone tissue. He is chair of the Netherlands Society of Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering, and co-founder of the biotech company Materiomics B.V.

**Clemens A. van Blitterswijk** is Professor of Tissue Regeneration at the University of Twente, and chair of the Department of Tissue Regeneration at MIRA. Clemens has published over 300 papers and is co-inventor on over 100 patents. He is one of only two individuals to have received both the Jean Leray Award and the George Winter Award, the two prestigious prizes of the European Society for Biomaterials. He was recently appointed as a fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences and is a fellow of the Netherlands Academy of Technology and Innovation.



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## Preface

It's that sense of unease when you step out of the airport terminal building and onto the streets of Kathmandu. Or the moment when you open the door to your new office to see unfamiliar faces waiting for you. Step out of your comfort zone and discover how exciting, thrilling and liberating it can be: a new world is waiting for you. This book is about stepping out of the comfort zone of your own scientific discipline and about exposing yourself to something new. Embrace all the scientific disciplines that build modern-day biomaterials research, in the cultural hotpot of materiomics. Don't let the jargon and three-letter abbreviations of cell biology hold you back, nor the abracadabra of statistical models, nor the Latin terms for body parts and diseases. Learn a new language and a whole new culture is waiting for you.

The compilation of this book was initiated after an exciting conference termed 'High throughput screening of biomaterials: shaping a new research area', held beside the Amsterdam canals in April 2011. The meeting was attended by 50 selected scientists from all over the globe and across all the disciplines of biomaterials research, and the format of the conference took away that sense of unease. Chemists talked to clinicians, biologists listened to information scientists, engineers brainstormed with policy makers. We decided to bring this open and inviting atmosphere to the public through this book. Therefore, each chapter contains a tutorial on the topic for non-experts, gives an overview of the current status of that field and discusses how this technology will further shape the future of materiomics. The result of this exciting journey is presented here and was made possible only with the help of all the authors and those who contributed to the organization of the conference (Anouk Mentink), the editing of the book (Ruben Burer) or the chapters (Kristen Johnson). We hope that this book will be a scientific passport which lets you travel across the border of your discipline and helps you to learn to appreciate that of others. You won't be disappointed. Enjoy your journey!

Jan de Boer

‘The adventurous spirit of this book, and indeed the field of materiomics, is excellently prefaced by Jan de Boer in this thorough compilation of concise chapters produced by an international cast of experts. It succeeds in its aim to be of use to both the student and the experienced practitioner in the multi-faceted emerging discipline of materiomics, containing both useful information and thought-provoking discussion and future perspectives. I would recommend it both to those interested in and to those already immersed in this rapidly evolving field.’

*Morgan Alexander, The University of Nottingham*

‘By dissecting the contribution of various disciplines of diverse nature, ranging from chemistry to informatics or from advanced imaging to rapid prototyping, the book organically defines Materiomics as a field of its own. The reader is ultimately left with the awareness that the field of Materiomics will play a central role in future approaches to design complex material systems with predictable properties, for biomedical or industrial applications.’

*Ivan Martin, University Hospital Basel*

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# 1 Introducing materiomics

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Nathalie Groen, Steven W. Cranford, Jan de Boer,  
Markus J. Buehler and Clemens A. Van Blitterswijk

## 1.1 Introduction to materiomics

The ability to regenerate and repair tissues and organs – using science and engineering to supplement biology – continuously intrigues and inspires those hoping that the frailty of our bodies can be ultimately avoided. From ancient times, a surprising range of unnatural materials have been used to (partially) substitute human tissues for medicinal purposes. For example, in the era of the Incas (*c.* 1500), moulded materials such as gold and silver were used for the ‘surgical’ repair of cranial defects. In addition, archaeological findings reveal a wide range of materials, such as bronze, wood and leather, being used to replace and repair parts of the human body. Continuous refinement led to the first evidence of materials successfully implanted *inside* the body, reportedly used to repair a bone defect in the seventeenth century (see Further Reading).

Even earlier than this, the relationships between anatomy (i.e. structure) and function of living systems had been explored by Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo Galilei, who were among the first few to apply fundamental science to biological systems. In the current age of technology, new materials for biomedical and clinical application have undergone a modern Renaissance, resulting in a surge in design and successful application (1–5). The concepts of tissue repair and substitution are constantly improving and becoming more accessible, as proven for example by the widespread occurrence (and popular approval) of total hip and knee replacements. But rather than replacement with synthetic analogues, can biological tissue(s) be directly engineered?

The first biomaterials arose to solve specific clinical problems, and it was only later that this became a field of research in itself. Polymers and ceramics (and other effective biomaterials) were not developed for implants *per se*, but rather were used because of their availability and proven (known) material properties. This need not be the case. The field of biomaterials has witnessed exciting and accelerating progression, partly owing to the emergence of physical-science-based approaches in the biological sciences. Consequently, developments have led to a number of blockbuster materials which currently play a substantial part in modern healthcare, with various clinical applications ranging from degradable intraocular lenses and sutures to coronary stents, heart valves and orthopaedic implants. But ultimately, where does this field lead?



## 1.2 The challenge of 'living' materials science

Hitherto, the field of biomaterials has largely been characterized by trial-and-error experimentation, practical intuition and low-throughput research (6). As a result, identification and development of successful biomaterial candidates has frequently been iterative, employing *ad hoc*, piece-wise or one-off approaches to design and characterize materials for a specific application (7). Currently lacking is a single set of 'design parameters' that can satisfy more than the most rudimentary system – there is neither a standard 'code' for biological systems nor a standard 'toolset' for analysis.

Despite continuous advances both in the understanding of the natural function of biological materials and systems and in the synthesis and regeneration of certain tissues (such as bone), a cohesive and systematic approach is still wanting. What is the primary impediment? Biological tissues, organs and materials exploit multiple structures and functions across scales – they are universally hierarchical (8, 9). Such multiscale *hierarchies* consequently make any single-scale analysis and prediction a hypothesis at best. While studies have successfully characterized components at specific scales (e.g. the molecular structure of DNA or the sequence of a multitude of proteins), superposition of the structure or the functional properties of individual components (defined differently according to scale) is insufficient to understand the complete system (10). In simpler terms, ' $1 + 1 \neq 2$ '. We utterly fail in the 'design' and 'construction' of such material systems – we cannot accurately or reliably predict behaviour of the final product. Indeed, whether through a lack of critical system variables or understanding of system response, we are unable to model larger (living) multiprotein systems and networks, let alone the structural role that such materials play in a cellular tissue. This is the exact opposite of the definition of engineering, where it is necessary to prescribe the performance of system components with reliable and repeatable accuracy.

Conversely, understanding the interaction of materials with biological ('living') tissues across all scales – from atoms and molecules to tissues and eventually at the organism level – remains a crucial hurdle in tissue engineering and biomaterial development. The challenge is intrinsically double-sided, yet highly intertwined. The scientific complexity at both sides of the interface – the material on the one hand and the organism on the other – needs to be considered (Figure 1.1). The fundamental problem of combining living (biological) and non-living (synthetic) components can be encapsulated by the popular adage, 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts' (commonly attributed to Aristotle, who probably was not referring to the interface of biology and materials). The complex interactions between materials and biological systems require a certain flair to analyse deterministic (or predictive) behaviours and material properties. Nature, through meticulous trial and error over centuries of optimization and refinement, has intricately combined material structure, properties and functionality (9). Structure and function are so intimately linked that one-to-one substitution of other potential materials is currently not possible – but need this be the case?