

Proteomics Sample Preparation

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Contents

Preface XIX

List of Contributors XXI

List of Abbreviations XXIX

Part I	Perspectives in Proteomics Sample Preparation	1
1	Introduction	3
	<i>N. Leigh Anderson</i>	
2	General Aspects of Sample Preparation for Comprehensive Proteome Analysis	5
	<i>Sven Andrecht and Jörg von Hagen</i>	
2.1	The Need for Standards in Proteomics Sample Preparation	5
2.2	Introduction: The Challenge of Crude Proteome Sample Analysis	6
2.3	General Aspects: Parameters which Influence the Sample Preparation Procedure	8
2.3.1	Technical Dependent Aspects for Sample Preparation in Proteomics	9
2.3.2	Sample-Dependent Aspects for Sample Preparation in Proteomics	11
2.3.2.1	Enrichment or Depletion Strategy	11
2.3.2.2	Sample Recovery and Standardization	12
2.3.2.3	Quantification, Internal Standards and Spiking	13
2.3.2.4	Calculating the Amount of Sample for Proteomic Approaches	13
2.3.2.5	Developing Procedures for Different Model Systems: From Bench to Bedside	15
2.3.2.6	Sample Matrix	15
2.3.2.7	Localization of Target Protein	15
2.3.3	An Example of Subcellular Protein Extraction	17
2.3.3.1	Subcellular Extraction and Monitoring the Redistribution of Regulatory Proteins	17

2.4	Summary and Perspectives	17
	References	19
3	Proteomics: A Philosophical Perspective	21
	<i>Erich Hamberger</i>	
3.1	Introduction: "In the Beginning was the Word"	21
3.2	The Experiment as a Scientific Method and a Tool of Cognition	23
3.2.1	The Experiment Historically Viewed	23
3.2.2	The Experiment Theoretically Viewed	23
3.2.3	The Entanglement Between Theory and Experiment	25
3.3	The Experiment as a Method (Tool) of Cognition Within the Scope of Biology: The So-Called "Life Sciences"	26
3.4	Proteomics as a Cognition-Theoretical Challenge	30
3.4.1	Cognition-Theoretic Support from Physics	31
3.4.2	The "Pietschmann Axioms" of the Experiment in Biological View	32
3.5	Conclusion	36
	References	37
Part II	Methods	41
4	Mass Spectrometry	43
4.1	A Practical Guideline to Electrospray Ionization Mass Spectrometry for Proteomics Application	43
	<i>Jon Barbour, Sebastian Wiese, Helmut E. Meyer, and Bettina Warscheid</i>	
4.1.1	Introduction	43
4.1.1.1	Electrospray Ionization	43
4.1.1.2	Nano-Electrospray Ionization	45
4.1.1.3	ESI-MS Instrumentation	45
4.1.1.4	Protein Identification Strategies	46
4.1.2	Sample Preparation	47
4.1.2.1	Purification	48
4.1.2.2	Protein Digestion	51
4.1.3	ESI-MS Analysis	52
4.1.3.1	Protein Analysis by ESI-MS	52
4.1.3.2	Peptide Analysis by Nano-HPLC/ESI-MS	53
4.1.4	Application Example of ESI-MS in Proteomics	60
4.1.5	Concluding Remarks	64
4.1.6	Recipes and Methods	64
4.1.6.1	MeOH/Chloroform Protein Precipitation to Remove Salts and Detergents	64
4.1.6.2	Preparation and Washing of a Crude Membrane Pellet	65
4.1.6.3	Proteolytic Digestion and Peptide Extraction	65

- 4.1.6.4 Off-Line Analysis of Intact Proteins 67
- 4.1.6.5 ESI Sample Preparation Checklist 67
- References 68

- 4.2 Sample Preparation for the Application of MALDI Mass Spectrometry in Proteome Analysis 73
Andreas Tholey, Matthias Glückmann, Kerstin Seemann, and Michael Karas
- 4.2.1 Introduction 73
- 4.2.2 Sample Preparation for MALDI-Based Protein Identification 75
- 4.2.2.1 Selection of the MALDI Matrix 75
- 4.2.3 Sample Preparation 78
- 4.2.4 LC-MALDI 84
- 4.2.5 Application Example 85
- 4.2.5.1 Gel-Based Workflow 85
- 4.2.5.2 Application Example: LC-MALDI Workflow 87
- 4.2.6 Summary 88
- 4.2.7 Perspectives 89
- 4.2.8 Recipes for Beginners 90
- 4.2.8.1 Sample Spotting Techniques 90
- 4.2.8.2 Sample Cleaning Procedures 90
- References 91

- 4.3 Sample Preparation for Label-Free Proteomic Analyses of Body Fluids by Fourier Transform Ion Cyclotron Mass Spectrometry 95
Cloud P. Paweletz, Nathan A. Yates, and Ronald C. Hendrickson
- 4.3.1 Introduction 95
- 4.3.2 Perspective 99
- 4.3.3 Recipe for Beginners 100
- 4.3.3.1 Step-By-Step Instructions 102
- References 103

- 4.4 Sample Preparation for Differential Proteome Analysis: Labeling Technologies for Mass Spectrometry 105
Josef Kellermann
- 4.4.1 Introduction 105
- 4.4.2 Isotopic Labeling of Peptides and/or Proteins 107
- 4.4.2.1 Stable Isotope Labeling of Proteins in Cell Culture 107
- 4.4.2.2 Chemical Isotopic Labeling of Peptides or Proteins 108
- 4.4.2.3 Spiking of Labeled Peptides 111
- 4.4.3 Summary 111
- 4.4.4 Perspectives 112
- 4.4.5 Recipe for Beginners 112
- References 114

- 4.5 Determining Membrane Protein Localization Within Subcellular Compartments Using Stable Isotope Tagging 118
Kathryn S. Lilley, Tom Dunkley, and Pawel Sadowski
- 4.5.1 Introduction 118
- 4.5.2 Preparation and Treatment of Samples in the Early-Stage LOPIT Protocol 120
 - 4.5.2.1 Preparation and Fractionation of Organelles 120
 - 4.5.2.2 Carbonate Washing of Fractions to Lyse Organelles, and Removal of Soluble and Peripheral Proteins 123
 - 4.5.2.3 iTRAQ Labeling 124
- 4.5.3 Application of LOPIT to Map the Organelle Proteome of *Arabidopsis* 125
- 4.5.4 Summary 126
- 4.5.5 Recipe for Beginners 127
- References 127

- 5 Electrophoresis 129**
- 5.1 Sample Preparation for Two-Dimensional Gel Electrophoresis 129
Walter Weiss and Angelika Görg
- 5.1.1 Introduction 129
- 5.1.2 General Aspects of Sample Preparation for 2-DGE 130
 - 5.1.2.1 Cell Disruption 130
 - 5.1.2.2 Sample Clean-Up 132
 - 5.1.2.3 Protein Solubilization 135
- 5.1.3 Application Samples 137
 - 5.1.3.1 Mammalian Tissues 138
 - 5.1.3.2 Microbial Cell Cultures 138
 - 5.1.3.3 Plant Cells 138
- 5.1.4 Summary 139
- 5.1.5 Perspective 140
- 5.1.6 Recipes for Beginners 141
- References 142

- 5.2 Sample Preparation for Native Electrophoresis 144
Ilka Wittig and Hermann Schägger
- 5.2.1 Introduction 144
- 5.2.2 Sample Preparation: General Considerations 146
 - 5.2.2.1 Choice of Detergent and Detergent/Protein Ratio 146
 - 5.2.2.2 Choice of Ionic Strength and pH for Sample Solubilization 147
 - 5.2.2.3 Storage of Biological Membranes 148
 - 5.2.2.4 Effects of Adding Coomassie Dye to Sample and/or Cathode Buffer for BNE 149
- 5.2.3 Applications 150
 - 5.2.3.1 Solubilization of Bacterial Membranes, Yeast and Mammalian Mitochondria 150

- 5.2.3.2 Homogenization and Solubilization of Mammalian Cells and Tissues 150
- 5.2.3.3 Recipe for Beginners: Mass Calibration Ladder for BNE 151
- 5.2.4 Summary and Perspectives 151
 - References 152
- 5.3 Sample Preparation for LC-MS/MS Using Free-Flow Electrophoresis 155
 - Mikkel Nissum, Afsaneh Abdolzade-Bavil, Sabine Kuhfuss, Robert Wildgruber, Gerhard Weber, and Christoph Eckerskorn*
 - 5.3.1 Introduction 155
 - 5.3.2 The Problems of Sample Preparation: The Pros and Cons 157
 - 5.3.2.1 Separation 157
 - 5.3.2.2 Extraction 158
 - 5.3.2.3 Media Composition 158
 - 5.3.3 Application Example 159
 - 5.3.3.1 Reagents 159
 - 5.3.3.2 Sample Preparation for FFE 160
 - 5.3.3.3 FFE Separation of Peptides 160
 - 5.3.3.4 RPLC-MS/MS Analysis 161
 - 5.3.3.5 Data Processing 161
 - 5.3.4 Summary 161
 - 5.3.5 Perspective 165
 - 5.3.6 Recipe for Beginners 166
 - 5.3.6.1 FFE Set-Up Procedure 166
 - 5.3.6.2 Pre-Experimental Quality Control (QC) 167
 - 5.3.6.3 Experiment 168
 - References 168
- 5.4 Sample Preparation for Capillary Electrophoresis 171
 - Ross Burn and David Perrett*
 - 5.4.1 Introduction 171
 - 5.4.2 Sample Preparation 173
 - 5.4.2.1 Sample Collection and Storage 174
 - 5.4.2.2 Sample preparation for CE 174
 - 5.4.2.3 Sample Concentration 175
 - 5.4.2.4 Off-Line Preconcentration 175
 - 5.4.2.5 On-Line Preconcentration 175
 - 5.4.2.6 Desalting 176
 - 5.4.2.7 Analyte Modification 176
 - 5.4.3 Background Electrolyte 177
 - 5.4.4 Capillary Preparation 178
 - 5.4.4.1 Capillary Dimensions 178
 - 5.4.4.2 Capillary Conditioning 178
 - 5.4.4.3 Capillary Coating 179
 - 5.4.5 Summary 179

- 5.4.6 Perspective 179
- 5.4.7 Recipe for Beginners 180
 - 5.4.7.1 Method 1: Analysis of Human Serum/Plasma by CZE 180
 - 5.4.7.2 Method 2: Analysis of Tryptic Digests by CZE 182
 - 5.4.7.3 Method 3: Analysis of Proteomes by CIEF 183
- References 185

- 6 Optical Methods 187**
- 6.1 High-Throughput Proteomics: Spinning Disc Interferometry (SDI) 187
Patricio Espinoza Vallejos, Greg Lawrence, David Nolte, Fred Regnier, and Joerg Schreiber
- 6.1.1 Proteomics as a Tool for Health Assessment 187
- 6.1.2 Translational Proteomics 188
- 6.1.3 The Principles of Spinning Disc Interferometry 189
 - 6.1.3.1 The Spinning Disc 189
 - 6.1.3.2 Why Spin? 191
 - 6.1.3.3 In-line Quadrature 192
 - 6.1.3.4 Scaling Mass Sensitivity 194
- 6.1.4 The Spinning Disc as a High-Throughput Immunological Assay Platform 196
 - 6.1.4.1 Immunological Assays Using a Disc Array Format 197
 - 6.1.4.2 Assay Formats 198
 - 6.1.4.3 Assay Protocols 199
- 6.1.5 Types of Assay that Fit the Spinning Disc 200
 - 6.1.5.1 Assay Structure 200
 - 6.1.5.2 Assay Development Kit (ADK) 201
- 6.1.6 Assay and Sample Processing 201
 - 6.1.6.1 High-Throughput System 201
 - 6.1.6.2 The ADK 203
- 6.1.7 Conclusions 205
References 206

- 6.2 Optical Proteomics on Cell Arrays 208
Andreas Girod and Philippe Bastiaens
- 6.2.1 Introduction 208
- 6.2.2 A Description of the Problem with Regards to Sample Preparation 211
 - 6.2.2.1 General Remarks 211
 - 6.2.2.2 Cell Line Selection 211
 - 6.2.2.3 Sample Preparation 212
 - 6.2.2.4 Choice of Transfection Reagent 212
 - 6.2.2.5 Nucleic Acid Preparation 213
 - 6.2.2.6 Sample Scale: How Many Duplicates are Required? 213
 - 6.2.2.7 Choice of Microarrayer/Microspotting System (Spotter) 213
 - 6.2.2.8 Layout Design (Spotting Pattern) 214

6.2.3	Summary	215
6.2.4	Perspectives	215
6.2.5	Sample Preparation: Short Protocol	215
6.2.5.1	Recommended Equipment and Consumables	215
6.2.5.2	Preparation of the Source Plate	216
6.2.5.3	Spotting	217
6.2.5.4	Cell Culture and Experiment	217
	References	218
6.3	Sample Preparation by Laser Microdissection and Catapulting for Proteome Analysis	219
	<i>Karin Schütze, Andrea Buchstaller, Yilmaz Niyaz, Christian Melle, Günther Ernst, Kerstin David, Thorsten Schlomm, and Ferdinand von Eggeling</i>	
6.3.1	Introduction: Laser Microdissection and Functional Proteomic Research	219
6.3.2	The Relevance of Pure Starting Material for Proteomics	219
6.3.3	Examples of Combined LMPC and Proteomic Analyses	220
6.3.3.1	LMPC and Preeclampsia	220
6.3.3.2	LMPC and Renal Cell Carcinoma	221
6.3.3.3	LMPC and Hepatocellular Carcinoma	221
6.3.3.4	LMPC and Brain Disorders	221
6.3.3.5	LMPC and Plant Biology	221
6.3.4	LMPC Adapted for Proteomic Applications	222
6.3.5	LMPC Combined with SELDI-TOF MS: A Promising Approach for Patient-Specific Analyses	224
6.3.6	Correlation of Gene and Protein Expression: The Best Data Capture for Comprehensive Diagnosis	228
6.3.7	Recipe for Beginners	228
6.3.7.1	Patients and Specimens	228
6.3.7.2	Laser Microdissection of Tissue Sections	230
6.3.7.3	ProteinChip Array Preparation and Analysis	230
6.3.8	Summary and Outlook	231
	References	232
6.4	Sample Preparation for Flow Cytometry	234
	<i>Derek C. Davies</i>	
6.4.1	Introduction	234
6.4.2	Sample Preparation for Flow Cytometry	236
6.4.2.1	Preparation from Cells in Suspension	236
6.4.2.2	Preparation from Adherent Cells	237
6.4.2.3	Preparation from Solid Tissue	237
6.4.2.4	General Considerations	237
6.4.3	Identification of Relevant Cells	238
6.4.4	Cell Sorting	238
6.4.4.1	Cells and Samples	238
6.4.4.2	Cytometer Considerations	239

6.4.5	Application Example	240
6.4.6	Summary	242
6.4.7	Perspectives	242
6.4.8	Recipes for Beginners	242
6.4.8.1	Cultured Suspension Cells	242
6.4.8.2	Adherent Cells	242
6.4.8.3	Solid Tissue	243
	References	243
7	Chromatography	245
7.1	Sample Preparation for HPLC-Based Proteome Analysis	245
	<i>Egidijus Machtejevas and Klaus K. Unger</i>	
7.1.1	Introduction	245
7.1.2	Problems Related to Direct Sample Injection in HPLC	246
7.1.3	Trial and Error Selection of the Sample Preparation Method	247
7.1.4	Classical Approaches	249
7.1.5	Specific Approaches Applied to Sample Clean-Up in Proteomics	250
7.1.5.1	Miniaturized Extraction Techniques	250
7.1.5.2	Most Abundant Component Depletion	250
7.1.5.3	Affinity-Enrichment Approaches	251
7.1.6	On-Line Sample Clean-Up Approaches	252
7.1.7	Restricted Access Technology	254
7.1.8	Application Example: The Case Study	259
7.1.9	Conclusion and Perspectives	260
	References	262
7.2	Sample Preparation for Two-Dimensional Phosphopeptide Mapping and Phosphoamino Acid Analysis	265
	<i>Anamarija Kruljac-Letunic and Andree Blaukat</i>	
7.2.1	Introduction	265
7.2.2	Important Aspects in Sample Preparation Procedures	265
7.2.3	Application Example	267
7.2.4	Summary	267
7.2.5	Perspective	269
7.2.6	Recipe for Beginners	269
7.2.6.1	2-D Phosphopeptide Mapping Procedure	269
7.2.6.2	Phosphoamino Acid Analysis Procedure	271
	References	271
8	Structural Proteomics	273
8.1	Exploring Protein–Ligand Interactions by Solution NMR	273
	<i>Rudolf Hartmann, Thomas Stangler, Bernd W. König, and Dieter Willbold</i>	
8.1.1	Introduction	273
8.1.2	Localization of Interaction Sites by Chemical Shift Perturbation (CSP) Mapping	274

- 8.1.3 Saturation Transfer Difference Spectroscopy 276
- 8.1.4 Ligand Screening by NMR 278
 - References 279
- 8.2 Sample Preparation for Crystallography 281
 - Djordje Musil*
 - 8.2.1 Introduction 281
 - 8.2.2 Use of Recombinant Proteins in Crystallization 282
 - 8.2.3 Protein Solubility and Crystallization 284
 - 8.2.4 Protein Crystallization 286
 - 8.2.5 Practical Examples 291
 - References 292
- 9 Interaction Analysis 295**
 - 9.1 Sample Preparation for Protein Complex Analysis by the Tandem Affinity Purification (TAP) Method 295
 - Bertrand Séraphin and Andrzej Dziembowski*
 - 9.1.1 Introduction 295
 - 9.1.2 The Problem with Regards to Sample Preparation: The Pros and the Cons 296
 - 9.1.3 Application Example 300
 - 9.1.4 Summary 301
 - 9.1.5 Perspective 301
 - 9.1.6 Recipe for Beginners 301
 - References 302
 - 9.2 Exploring Membrane Proteomes 303
 - Filippa Stenberg and Daniel O. Daley*
 - 9.2.1 Introduction 303
 - 9.2.2 Defining Membrane Proteomes 303
 - 9.2.3 Separation of Membrane Proteomes 304
 - 9.2.4 Experimental Identification of Membrane Proteins 307
 - 9.2.5 Mapping Membrane Interactomes 307
 - 9.2.6 Structural Analysis of Membrane Proteomes 308
 - 9.2.7 Summary and Perspective 309
 - 9.2.8 Recipe for Beginners 311
 - 9.2.8.1 Sample Preparation 311
 - 9.2.8.2 BN-PAGE 311
 - 9.2.8.3 SDS-PAGE 312
 - References 312
- 10 Post-Translational Modifications 317**
 - 10.1 Sample Preparation for Phosphoproteome Analysis 317
 - René P. Zahedi and Albert Sickmann*
 - 10.1.1 Introduction 317
 - 10.1.2 General Sample Preparation 317

- 10.1.3 Reduction of Sample Complexity 318
 - 10.1.3.1 Gel Electrophoresis 318
 - 10.1.3.2 Isoelectric Focusing 318
- 10.1.4 Methods for Phosphopeptide/Protein Enrichment 319
 - 10.1.4.1 Immunoprecipitation 319
 - 10.1.4.2 Immobilized Metal Ion Affinity Chromatography (IMAC) 319
 - 10.1.4.3 Metal Oxides 320
 - 10.1.4.4 Cation-Exchange Chromatography 321
 - 10.1.4.5 Derivatization Approaches 322
- 10.1.5 Summary 323
- 10.1.6 Perspective 324
- 10.1.7 Recipe for Beginners: IMAC 324
- References 325

- 10.2 Sample Preparation for Analysis of Post-Translational Modifications: Glycosylation 328
David S. Selby, Martin R. Larsen, Miren J. Omaetxebarria, and Peter Roepstorff
 - 10.2.1 Introduction 328
 - 10.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Sample Preparation Methods 331
 - 10.2.3 Example Applications of Enrichment Methods 334
 - 10.2.3.1 ZIC-HILIC Microcolumns for Preparation of N-Linked Glycan-Containing Samples 334
 - 10.2.3.2 Titanium Dioxide Microcolumns for Enrichment of Sialic Acid-Containing Glycopeptides and Glycosylphosphatidylinositol Lipid-Anchored Peptides 336
 - 10.2.4 Summary 337
 - 10.2.5 Perspective 338
 - 10.2.6 Recipe for Beginners: Enrichment of Glycopeptides with a HILIC Microcolumn 338
 - 10.2.6.1 Materials 338
 - 10.2.6.2 Procedure: Purification of Glycopeptides 339
 - 10.2.6.3 Procedure: Deglycosylation of N-Linked Glycopeptides 339
 - References 340

- 11 Species-Dependent Proteomics 343**
 - 11.1 Sample Preparation and Data Processing in Plant Proteomics 343
Katja Baerenfaller, Wilhelm Gruissem, and Sacha Baginsky
 - 11.1.1 Introduction 343
 - 11.1.2 Plant-Specific Considerations in Proteomics 344
 - 11.1.2.1 Cell Walls 344
 - 11.1.2.2 Plastids 344
 - 11.1.2.3 Protein Extraction from Plant Tissue 345
 - 11.1.2.4 Extraction from Recalcitrant and Resistant Tissue 345

11.1.2.5	Dynamic Range Limitations	346
11.1.2.6	Proteomics in As-Yet Unsequenced Organisms	346
11.1.3	Sample Preparation Protocols	347
11.1.3.1	Cell Wall Protein Extraction	348
11.1.3.2	Plastid Isolation	349
11.1.3.3	Protein Extraction with TCA/Acetone	350
11.1.3.4	Phenol Extraction	351
11.1.3.5	Serial Extraction	351
11.1.3.6	Extraction from Recalcitrant and Resistant Tissue	352
11.1.3.7	Extraction and Fractionation with Polyethylene Glycol (PEG)	353
11.1.3.8	Stages Following Protein Extraction	353
11.1.4	MS/MS Data Processing for Unsequenced Organisms	354
11.1.5	Concluding Remarks	355
	References	356
11.2	Sample Preparation for MudPIT with Bacterial Protein Samples	358
	<i>Ansgar Poetsch and Dirk Wolters</i>	
11.2.1	Introduction	358
11.2.2	The MudPIT Technology	359
11.2.3	Membrane Proteins and MudPIT	361
11.2.4	Quantitative MudPIT	363
11.2.5	Limitations of MudPIT	364
11.2.6	Pitfalls of MudPIT	365
11.2.7	Summary	365
11.2.8	Perspective	365
11.2.9	Recipe for Beginners: MudPIT: Soluble and Membrane Proteins	366
	References	368
11.3	Sample Preparation for the Cell-Wall Proteome Analysis of Yeast and Fungi	371
	<i>Kai Sohn, Ekkehard Hiller, and Steffen Rupp</i>	
11.3.1	Introduction	371
11.3.2	Description of the Problem with Regards to Sample Preparation	372
11.3.3	Application Example	373
11.3.4	Summary	375
11.3.5	Perspective	376
11.3.6	Recipe for Beginners	376
11.3.6.1	Cultures	376
11.3.6.2	Preparation of Soluble Cell-Surface Proteins	376
11.3.6.3	Preparation of Peptides from Covalently Linked Cell-Wall Proteins	377
	References	378
12	The Human Proteosome	379
12.1	Clinical Proteomics: Sample Preparation and Standardization	379
	<i>Gerd Schmitz and Carsten Gnewuch</i>	
12.1.1	Introduction	379

12.1.2	The Preanalytical Phase: Sample Preparation, Standardization, and Quality Management	380
12.1.2.1	Standardization of the (Pre)-Analytical Process	381
12.1.3	Proteomics in Body Fluids	382
12.1.3.1	Techniques for Proteomic Analysis	382
12.1.3.2	Applications	383
12.1.3.3	Preparation of Clinical Samples for Fluidic Proteomics	386
12.1.4	Cellular Proteomics (Cytomics)	389
12.1.4.1	Sample Preparation and Standardization for Clinical Cytomics	389
12.1.4.2	Tissue Arrays	390
12.1.4.3	Bead-Based Immunoassays for Protein Analysis	391
12.1.4.4	Preparative Methods	391
12.1.4.5	Clinical Applications in Cytomics	399
12.1.5	Conclusion	404
	References	405
12.2	Stem Cell Proteomics	412
	<i>Regina Ebert, Gabriele Möller, Jerzy Adamski, and Franz Jakob</i>	
12.2.1	Introduction	412
12.2.2	Stem Cell Niches	413
12.2.3	Why Study Proteomes in Stem Cells?	413
12.2.4	Technical Challenges and Problems	414
12.2.4.1	Stem Cell Preparation	414
12.2.4.2	Cultivation	415
12.2.4.3	Treatment	415
12.2.4.4	Whole-Cell Proteome	415
12.2.4.5	Secretory Proteome	415
12.2.5	Recipes for Beginners	417
12.2.5.1	Whole-Cell Lysate	417
12.2.5.2	Secretory Proteome Procedure	418
12.2.5.3	Labeling with ^{35}S	418
12.2.5.4	Ethanol Precipitation	419
12.2.5.5	TCA Precipitation	419
	References	419
13	Bioinformatics	423
13.1	Bioinformatics Support for Mass Spectrometric Quality Control	423
	<i>Knut Reinert, Tim Conrad, and Oliver Kohlbacher</i>	
13.1.1	Introduction	423
13.1.2	Problem description	423
13.1.2.1	Signal Processing Pitfalls	424
13.1.2.2	Map Quality Control	425
13.1.2.3	Statistical Validation Results	425
13.1.3	Quality Assessment for One-Dimensional (1-D) MS Data	426
13.1.3.1	Filter	427

13.1.4	Application Example: Absolute Quantification of an Unknown Peptide Content	428
13.1.5	Summary	429
13.1.6	Perspective	430
13.1.7	Recipe for Beginners	430
13.1.7.1	Acquiring the Raw Data	430
13.1.7.2	Preprocessing the Data	431
13.1.7.3	Analyzing the Preprocessed Data	431
	References	431
13.2	Use of Physico-Chemical Properties in Peptide and Protein Identification	433
	<i>Anastasia K. Yocum, Peter J. Ulintz, and Philip C. Andrews</i>	
13.2.1	Introduction	433
13.2.2	Isoelectric Point	434
13.2.3	Ion-Exchange Chromatography	436
13.2.4	Reversed-Phase Chromatography	438
13.2.5	Mass Accuracy	442
13.2.6	Summary	443
	References	444
	Index	449

Preface

Why is there a need to consider *Sample preparation* in proteomics? Following the successes of the genome era, researchers have switched their efforts to analyzing complex protein mixtures, hopefully to obtain deeper insights into the molecular development of diseases by comparing whole proteomes from healthy versus disease tissues, body fluid samples, or other sources. Proteomics was born on the waves of these advances and, as a consequence, enormous investments were made in many attempts to unravel the proteome for biomarker identification. The first wave of proteomics resulted in a re-arming of the laboratories which, by this time, no longer required vastly expensive equipment such as mass spectrometers. Inevitably, this surge of interest led to a vast number of reports in which biomarkers had, supposedly, been identified. The second wave of proteomics has been characterized more by the establishment of diverse methods and their combination, as so-called “standard proteomic workflows”. Today, this subset of methodologies, databases and workflows appears largely to have been optimized, and the numbers of applications for the funding of studies and grants which include the catchword “proteomics” are rapidly increasing as the research teams continue their quests for meaningful data. Yet, the best way to obtain high-quality data and ensure consistency is not only to perform analyses in replicate but also – and more importantly – to standardize the methods of sample preparation.

What is meant by the term “proteomics”? Whilst this is to some extent a philosophical question, the answer depends heavily on an individual’s point of view. Some researchers describe proteomics as a unique scientific area for the analysis of whole proteomes, as notably do clinical proteome scientists. Others define proteomics as a subset of methodologies that are valuable in the analysis of proteins, as proteins represent the most common drug targets today and are the molecules closest to the point of invention in living cells. Despite these differences of opinion, common sense among the scientific community decrees that sample preparation procedures must be kept as simple as possible. In this way, such procedures will go hand in hand with high accuracy and standardization. Clearly, proteomics – in contrast to genomics, which embraces sensitivity, abundance and a combination of different methods – depends on the state of the biological sample

itself. The main question, therefore, is how to create an optimal workflow for each particular experimental set-up.

This book will provide those scientists on the third wave of proteomics – whether researchers or simply users of protein biochemical methodologies – with a comprehensive overview of the different requirements for sample preparation when using today’s technologies. Hopefully, it will also provide any “beginners” in proteomics with some very brief “recipes” designed by well-known experts in each particular field.

I believe that this book will “sensitize” the need for sample preparation in proteomics, and will illustrate – with many useful practical applications – the problems which stem from the complexity of whole proteome samples. In this way it will provide solutions for those scientists who are new to this intriguing field of proteomics.

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