Cover illustration: *C. difficile* makes intimate contact through numerous flagella with microvilli on the mucosal lining of hamster cecum following a 48 hour oral infection with spores. We compare this 630 fully sequenced strain (originating from a patient with pseudomembranous colitis) with that of B1 (isolated from a patient with diarrhea) to reveal differences in behaviour during infection of the host. Scanning electron micrograph: bacterium length 4.5 μm.
Preface

*Clostridium difficile* is a major nosocomial pathogen and has been shown to be a primary cause of antibiotic-associated disease. Recently, there has been an emergence of highly transmissible and frequently antibiotic-resistant strains, and the organism has become a considerable burden on health-care systems worldwide. At the same time, there has been a dramatic increase in our ability to study the organism. This book brings together the key workers in *C. difficile* research to describe the recently developed methods for studying the organism. These range from methods for isolation of the organism, molecular typing, genomics, genetic manipulation, and the use of animal models. We are now therefore in a position to gain an in-depth understanding of how this organism is transmitted and how it causes disease.

*Peter Mullany*

*Adam P. Roberts*
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