Preface to the Second Edition

I cannot believe that it has been over three years since the release of the first edition of this book. A lot has changed since then, and that includes the way that Stata graphics have evolved. Although the core features remain the same, there have been many enhancements and more features added, the most notable being the addition of the interactive point-and-click Stata Graph Editor.

The second edition of this book has been thoroughly revised to address these new features, especially the Graph Editor. This edition has an entire chapter devoted to the use of the Graph Editor; see chapter 2. Also, almost every example in this book has been augmented to include descriptions of how the Graph Editor can be used to create the customizations being illustrated via commands.

The Stata Graph Editor and Stata `graph` commands offer powerful tools for customizing your graphs, and I hope that the coverage of both side by side helps you to use each to their fullest capacity. To emphasize this point, I wrote a section that describes certain areas where I feel that commands are especially superior to the Graph Editor, and areas where I feel the Graph Editor is especially superior to commands; see section 2.9. Although I still feel that commands provide a primary mode of creating graphs, you need to use the Graph Editor for only a short amount of time to see what a smart and powerful tool it is. Whereas commands offer the power of repeatability, the Graph Editor provides a nimble interface that permits you to tangibly modify graphs like a potter directly handling clay. I hope that this book helps you to integrate the effective use of both of these tools into your graph-making toolkit.

As with the first edition, updating this second edition has been both a challenge and a delight. I have endeavored to make this book a tool that you would find friendly, logical, intuitive, and above all, useful. I really hope you like it!

Simi Valley, California
April 2008