Preface to Series

This first volume of From Pole to Pole introduces a series of volumes on the results of, in particular, environmental research during the International Polar Year 2007–2008. In fact, this book series represented one of the earliest internationally endorsed Projects of the 4th IPY, and it now presents and synthesizes one of the first substantial products. This ambitious project represents successful combinations of vision, initiative, and energy by key individuals and their international colleagues.

The Pole to Pole series shares several characteristics with the 4th IPY. It will cover a wide range of scientific disciplines, from geology to biodiversity to atmospheric chemistry. IPY 2007–2008 likewise covers the full range of geophysical, biological and social sciences because a comprehensive understanding of polar science in a global setting demands the broadest scientific participation. This book project emphasizes the necessity and benefit of international collaboration in polar science, a feature it shares with other IPY Projects. The series will also represent a tangible and, I expect, an ultimately successful step forward toward the IPY goal that polar science will achieve global impact.

The first volume of the series focuses, as it should, on the history of IPYs. Achieving the central and original IPY idea, that it requires international coordination and collaboration among many national and institutional partners to realize an improved and renewed understanding of polar regions, has required differing strategies and tactics according to the political, economic, technical, and scientific conditions and expectations extant at the time of each IPY. The history recounted here shows clearly the urgency of this IPY, the necessity of including biological and social sciences, and the key role of outreach, features to be well represented by the contents of subsequent volumes and by the series itself.

Subsequent volumes of the Pole to Pole series will remind us that not only warming and thawing, but also biodiversity disturbance and ecosystem contamination represent forces of change in polar regions. Given the very rapid rates of discovery in polar science, driven at least in part by IPY, any monograph or series of monographs represents an act of deliberate optimism: that the value of this effort at this time will endure. Despite, or perhaps because of, the many alternative but ephemeral scientific reporting mechanisms of this IPY, including blogs, press releases, videos, and

scientific and public presentations, a comprehensive assessment of current understanding in print remains vital and essential. The editors of this volume, and the organizers and leaders of the “Pole to Pole” series are to be congratulated on their remarkable contributions to this IPY.

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http://www.springer.com/978-3-642-12401-3

The History of the International Polar Years (IPYs)
Barr, S.; Lüdecke, C. (Eds.)
2010, XII, 320 p. 98 illus., 36 illus. in color., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-642-12401-3