Preface to the fourth edition

This fourth edition updates the third edition to reflect the changes in Stata 12, released in July 2011, and Stata 13, released in June 2013.

Since the first edition of the book, many nice things have happened with Stata, and these changes are also reflected in the book. One of the nice developments is the PDF manuals, which give you immediate access to "everything" about Stata. While previous editions of the book included lots of references to specific entries in the manuals, you find few such references in the present edition. Instead, you are guided to use the `help` command, which efficiently leads you to the information you need. This also means that the text reads much more fluently.

In several other ways, Stata has become more user friendly, which means that we could drop quite a bit of tedious stuff from the book. We need no longer explain the `set memory` command or the importance of the `update swap` command. And we need no longer explain that when the Data Editor is open, you cannot do anything else in Stata.

Among other important developments are the introduction of factor variables (Stata 11), date-and-time variables (Stata 10), and a much improved `merge` command (Stata 11).

This is an introductory book aimed at people working in health research, and we have made several decisions about what to include and what to omit. If you miss something that is not described in the book, it does not necessarily mean that Stata cannot do it. In appendix A, you will find an overview of the Stata documentation illustrating the breadth of Stata.

The former versions of the book were written for Windows users only. In this edition, we have included information for Mac users.

David Culwell at StataCorp took care of the technical editing, Bill Rising gave several useful suggestions to improve the quality of the book, and Lisa Gilmore coordinated everything.

User reactions are welcome and can be good inspiration for further improvements, so please feel free to send comments to sj@soci.au.dk or morten@biostat.au.dk.

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