

# Foreword

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The near-doubling of life expectancy in the twentieth century represents extraordinary opportunities for societies and individuals. Just as sure, it presents extraordinary challenges. In the years since the last edition of the *Handbook of Aging* series was published, the United States joined the growing list of “aging societies” alongside developed nations in Western Europe and parts of Asia; that is, the U.S. population has come to include more people over the age of 60 than under 15 years of age. This unprecedented reshaping of age in the population will continue on a global scale and will fundamentally alter all aspects of life as we know it.

Science is responsible for the extension of life-expectancy and science is now needed more than ever to ensure that added years are high quality. Fortunately, the scientific understanding of aging is growing faster than ever across social and biological sciences. Along with the phenomenal advances in the genetic determinants of longevity and susceptibility to age-related diseases has come the awareness of the critical importance of environmental and psychological factors that modulate and even supersede genetic predispositions. The *Handbooks of Aging* series, comprised of three separate volumes, the *Handbook of the Biology of Aging*, the *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, and the *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, is now in its eighth edition and continues to provide foundational knowledge that fosters continued advances in the understanding of aging at the individual and societal levels.

Attention to the science of aging involves a concomitant increase in the number of college and university courses and programs focused on aging and longevity. With this expansion of knowledge, the *Handbooks* play an increasingly important role for students, teachers and scientists who are regularly called upon to synthesize and update their comprehension of the broader field in which they work. The *Handbooks of Aging* series provides knowledge bases for instruction in these continually changing fields, both through reviews of core and newly emerging areas, historical syntheses, methodological and conceptual advances. Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of aging research is exemplified by the overlap in concepts illuminated across the *Handbooks*, such as the profound interactions between social worlds and biological processes. By continually featuring new topics and involving new authors, the series has pushed innovation and fostered new ideas.

One of the greatest strengths of the chapters in the *Handbooks* is the synthesis afforded by preeminent authors who are at the forefront of research and thus provide expert perspectives on the issues that current define and challenge each field. We express our deepest thanks to the editors of the individual volumes for their incredible dedication and contributions to the series. It is their efforts to which the excellence of the products is largely credited. We thank Drs. Matt Kaerberlein and George M. Martin editors of the *Handbook of the Biology of Aging*;

Drs. K. Warner Schaie and Sherry L. Willis, editors of the *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*; and Drs. Linda K. George and Kenneth F. Ferraro, editors of the *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*. We would also like to express our appreciation to our publishers at Elsevier,

whose profound interest and dedication has facilitated the publication of the *Handbooks* through their many editions. And we continue to extend our deepest gratitude to James Birren for establishing and shepherding the series through the first six editions.

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